

SPORTS



JONQUEL JONES
... crafted a superb WNBA season

Praises heaped on Jonquel Jones

The Associated Press panel members who select top sporting achievers were magnanimous. They were big-hearted and Jonquel Jones deserved the AP Most Improved Player Award in the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) for play during the recently completed regular season. AP also selected the Grand Bahama native to the All-WNBA Second Team, along with Breanna Stewart, Maya Moore, Brittney Griner and Diana Taurasi.

The AP First Team included WNBA Player of the Year Sylvia Fowles, Tina Charles, Skylar Diggins-Smith, Candace Parker and Nneka Ogwumike. Jones, modest as she is, takes everything in stride and expressed satisfaction in being mentioned in a conversation with the top players in the WNBA. The view here though is that she did more than enough to be on the first team. Nevertheless, around the WNBA, she is an accepted superstar.

Her Connecticut Sun Coach Curt Miller, who was named Coach of the Year, is proud of his standout center/forward.

"She's a very special elite rebounder and she's only scratched the surface. She will get better defensively and offensively. She will only get stronger around the basket," said Miller.

The other "very special" coach

"I mean, she is just good all over. Yes she can make the shot, from anywhere on the court. When she comes home, she comes straight to me and says 'Coach let's go' and I tell her she has to be prepared to shoot lots of ball. And, we go and she throws up 200, 300 balls. The three-pointer comes easy to her because she is always in rhythm. She's had a wonderful season and I can tell you, there is much more. She is a double/double threat every game, but I am sure she can up her offensive average and hike her rebound total as well."

~ COACH GLADSTONE 'MOON' MCPHEE
... gave Jones her early development



Sports Scope

BY FRED STURRUP



in Jones' life is a happy camper as well. I refer to the venerable Coach Gladstone "Moon" McPhee out of whose program, Jones got her early development. A lot of what she has become can be traced directly to Coach

Moon. On Wednesday, the iconic Bahamian sports mentor was effusive.

"Man, she is something else. Look at what she's done. She got a double record, the season

rebound total (403) and the rebounding average (11.9). On top of that she became the first WNBA player to hit the magic number of 400 rebounds. Man, that's superb. She always had it you know. She had that desire from small. I told her very early that I wanted her to work with the ball. She was doing that from the start. That's why she is doing things on the court with the ball in the style no big player has

ever done," said McPhee.

In truth, Jones is able to go coast to coast and finish, or hold up and pass to the point guard quite easily. She is effortless in her movements on court. It is just incredible however, how nifty she is in the paint with the ball in hand. In the usually congested area, she applies the kind of handle to the ball, few others can. She slips, spins, pivots, leans. She does it all without turning over the ball.

Nothing Jones does surprises McPhee. She was the second best three-point shooter this season.

"I mean, she is just good all over. Yes she can make the shot, from anywhere on the court. When she comes home, she comes straight to me and says 'Coach let's go' and I tell her she has to be prepared to shoot lots of ball. And, we go and she throws up 200, 300 balls. The three-pointer comes easy to her because she is always in rhythm. She's had a wonderful season and I can tell you, there is much more. She is a double/double threat every game, but I am sure she can up her offensive average and hike

her rebound total as well," said McPhee.

He called her performance this past WNBA season, one of the "best ever in Bahamian history."

"What she has done is beyond just about anything else I've seen. The country should heap praises on this girl. She has taken Bahamian basketball to another level. We need to parade her. We need to showcase her to the world and take full advantage of having someone as outstanding as she is.

"I just hope she gets justice," said McPhee.

Frankly, Jones has been just amazing over the last year. She had that astonishing season in Korea. In the Women's Korean Basketball League with the Woori Bank Wibee squad, she won a league title, a championship, the Most Outstanding Player Award and the All-WKBL First Team as well as the All-Defensive Team accolades.

She is entitled to be saluted in a grand fashion indeed.

Jonquel Jones deserves the praises.

• To respond to this column, kindly contact Fred Sturupp at sturupp1504@gmail.com

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~ COACH CURT MILLER
... WNBA Coach of the Year

