

Lauren Jackson of Australia brings her sensational all-around game to the WNBA

Last April, the Seattle Storm crossed the Pacific Ocean for the most sought-after prize in the 2001 WNBA draft: 19-year-old Lauren Jackson of Australia.

Lauren, a 6' 5" center, was the best player in Australia's Women's National Basketball League. In 2000-01, she averaged 21.6 points per game, led the league in rebounds (14.2) and blocks (4.3), and was named league co-MVP.

Lauren is unstoppable in her country. But now the Aussie superstar is in the homeland of hoops, competing against more physical WNBA players.

"They'll want to get me out there and chew me up in front of everybody," says Lauren.

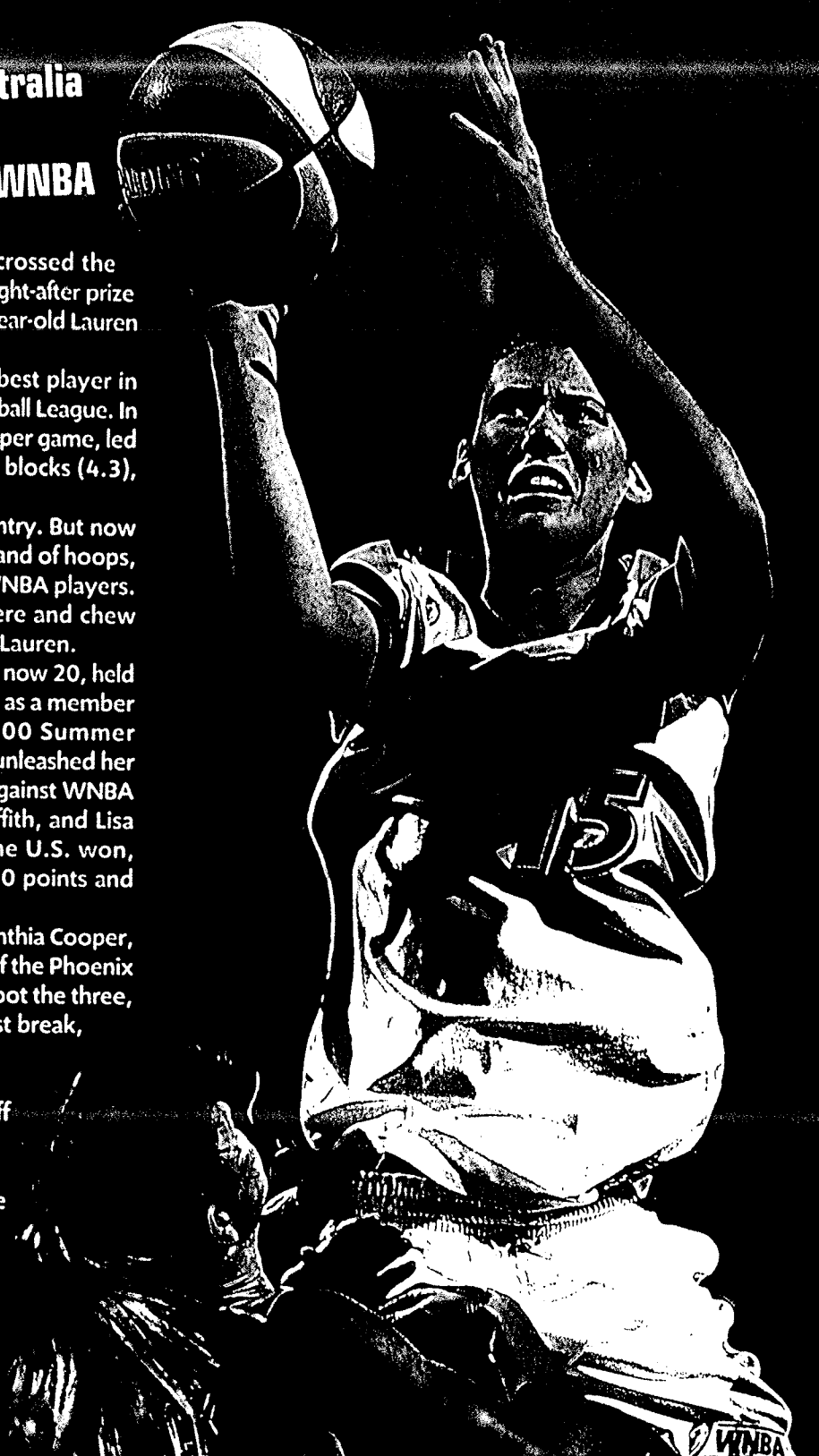
That's not likely to happen. Lauren, now 20, held her own against elite WNBA players as a member of the Australian team at the 2000 Summer Olympics, in Sydney, Australia. She unleashed her sweet jumper and her quick hops against WNBA stars Natalie Williams, Yolanda Griffith, and Lisa Leslie in the gold-medal game. The U.S. won, but Lauren finished with a strong 20 points and 13 rebounds.

"Lauren's a great talent," says Cynthia Cooper, former WNBA star and head coach of the Phoenix Mercury. "It's rare for a center to shoot the three, defend well, run the floor on the fast break, and show her type of leadership."

In her WNBA debut on May 31, Lauren showed some serious stuff against the Mercury: 21 points and three steals. She led the Storm to its first season-opening win. As of June 19, she was averaging 16.1 points and 5.2 rebounds per game.

Lauren is primed to be the WNBA's next big thing. Judging by her immediate impact on her team, this Storm is ready to rage.

— by Andrea N. Whittaker



She's All That

1. Where is Lauren Jackson from?
2. Why did the Seattle Storm cross the Pacific Ocean?
3. What award did Lauren receive in the Australian league?
4. What will Lauren find different when competing in the WNBA?
5. Where was the 2000 summer Olympics held?
6. What team does Cynthia Cooper coach?
7. What four characteristics does Lauren demonstrate while playing basketball?
8. When Lauren first played in the WNBA, what was her accomplishment?
9. By Lauren's performance, what did she lead the storm to?
10. What does Lauren bring to the WNBA?