



Brunson to Make All-Star Debut Where It All Started

By Marc Carig
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When the [Sacramento Monarchs](#) selected [Rebekkah Brunson](#) with the 10th overall pick in the 2004 [WNBA](#) draft, she prepared to leave the Washington area for the first time in her basketball life.

Brunson, 25, garnered first-team All-Met honors at [Oxon Hill](#) in 2000, averaging 23 points and 16 rebounds. For college, she stayed local at [Georgetown](#), where she became the program's all-time leading rebounder and second-leading scorer. She is the only Hoya to earn [Associated Press](#) all-American honors.

On Sunday, she will add another accolade to her résumé. And again, she will do it in Washington, where she'll take the court for the Western Conference team in the WNBA All-Star Game at [Verizon Center](#).

"It's been so long," Brunson said of her return to Washington, where she maintains a home. "You go overseas, you travel, and then when you get back from offseason you jump right into the WNBA season. So I haven't had the opportunity to be home as often as I would like to. But it's a great way to get back."

Brunson is one of three Monarchs with local ties who will make their all-star debuts in Washington. Monarchs guard Kara Lawson, a former All-Met selection, led [West Springfield](#) to the [Virginia](#) state championship as a senior. She will replace injured [Seattle](#) guard Sue Bird on the Western Conference roster. And Monarchs Coach Jenny Boucek will coach the Western all-stars.

Boucek, who has led the Monarchs to a 12-7 record in her first season as head coach, was a four-year starter at Virginia, where she helped the Cavaliers to three appearances in the region final.

"Life is interesting like that," said Boucek, who landed her first job as an assistant coach in the league with the [Mystics](#) in 1999. "With the journeys, you always realize later there's never any coincidence, never any accidents."

Part of Boucek's success in her first season has been tied to Brunson's emergence.

The fourth-year player had never been a regular starter. But veteran Monarchs forward DeMya Walker suffered a season-ending knee injury on June 2, and Brunson has starred as her replacement.

In 18 games (14 of them as a starter), the 6-foot-2 Brunson leads the WNBA in offensive rebounds with 3.4 per game and ranks fourth in rebounds overall at 8.5 per game. Brunson's offensive numbers have seen a jump as well. She's averaging 12.3 points per game, nearly doubling her career average entering the season.

"I was hoping and expecting a big year from her whether DeMya was here or not," Boucek said. "But with her out, that made it an even bigger hole that needed to be filled, and she's done that very, very well."

But Brunson needed to show a measure of patience before her breakout season. When Sacramento Monarchs General Manager John Whisenant selected Brunson in the draft, he endured criticism for adding another post player to a team that already featured Walker and perennial all-star Yolanda Griffith.

Whisenant said he couldn't resist; he was drawn in by Brunson's athleticism, quickness and savvy -- traits she used to offset her smaller size compared with other post players in the league.

"I just couldn't turn her down," he said.


The pick has paid dividends this season. Brunson's six double-doubles are tied for third most in the league behind only fellow all-stars [Lauren Jackson](#) of Seattle and Candice Dupree of [Chicago](#).

"It's a confidence booster," Brunson said. "I'm playing on the Monarchs and we have a lot of great people. And it was like I had to wait in line until an opportunity presented itself. It did and I've just tried to take full advantage of it. So far, so good."

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