



SEATTLE STORM

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NEWS RELEASE

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SEATTLE FALLS IN PRESEASON OPENER TO PHOENIX, 81-73

Seattle Heads to Phoenix for Final Preseason Tune-Up on May 8

SEATTLE – In its first game of the 2016 preseason, the Seattle Storm fell 81-73 to the Phoenix Mercury at KeyArena on Wednesday. The long-awaited debut of No. 1 draft pick Breanna Stewart saw the Connecticut product score 11 points and pull down a team-high eight rebounds in 29 minutes of action.

As the starting center, Stewart got going right away, scoring the Storm's first five points to help her team jump out to a 12-2 lead. The deficit was cut to four by the end of the first quarter despite six points apiece from Stewart and point guard Sue Bird. At halftime, the teams were tied at 39 with Phoenix's Penny Taylor pacing all scorers at 13 points.

The Mercury then went on a 15-1 run spanning the late part of the third quarter and the early portion of the fourth quarter, seizing control of the game.

"Those are the lessons we have to learn moving forward. It's small plays that can add up to large deficits," Bird said after the game. "All it takes is going brain-dead for a minute, and you could lose by 10 or 15 points. Because we're a young team, we're going to have those moments and it's about how quickly we can eliminate them."

As planned by head coach Jenny Boucek, Bird didn't play in the second half after helping the Storm to a strong start early on. Boucek chose to watch some of the younger guards show what they can do in a WNBA exhibition.

Jewell Loyd, the reigning Rookie of the Year, paced the Storm with 16 points on 5-of-8 shooting and 2-of-3 from the three-point line. Rookie guards Lexi Eaton Rydalch and Blake Dietrick each played about 15 minutes, and Eaton Rydalch contributed eight points to lead the bench.

Rookie Courtney Williams and veteran Taylor led Phoenix with 15 points apiece on Wednesday. Taylor scored 13 points in the second quarter alone, helping the Mercury overcome an early deficit.

"I think we'll learn a lot from it," Boucek said. "After watching the film, we'll learn a lot. It's our starting point. You can't really recreate a WNBA game without playing one. ...We have some tough decisions in terms of roster spots, but we're also trying to build chemistry with our core players because they haven't played together before."

For the Storm, Kaleena Mosqueda-Lewis, Quanitra Hollingsworth and Jenna O'Hea were not with the team due to overseas commitments. Veteran forward Crystal Langhorne, the team's leading scorer and rebounder for two straight years, was inactive on Wednesday due to rest.

In the second and final preseason game, the two teams will meet in Phoenix on Sunday at 3 p.m. Seattle opens the regular season at Los Angeles the following Sunday.

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