



A Letter to the Fans and Media Voters of the WNBA

"Why Tamika Catchings Is the MVP of the WNBA – Why Not?"

It's time for the Fever PR guy to begin rolling out his campaign for Tamika Catchings as MVP. She is one of the world's most likeable and respected female athletes; one of the WNBA's most accomplished and experienced veterans; and one of the league's most gifted and yet hardest-working competitors. Yet she has never been honored as the MVP of the league which she has dominated for a decade.

First, allow me to point out a few myths and stereotypes in annual MVP voting ...

- The MVP always comes from among the league's top scoring leaders.
- The Defensive Player of the Year is not MVP-worthy.

My campaign begins with the fact that Tamika Catchings has finished among the top three in balloting for the WNBA MVP Award in four of her eight active seasons. She has finished among the top five in MVP balloting in 7 of 8 active seasons.

Why hasn't she won the award? Over eight previous active seasons, voters could point to one of four possible deficiencies:

1. Catchings does EVERYTHING, but she's just not a great shooter.
2. Somebody always scores more points than her.
3. She's recognized as the game's best defensive player, but that's not enough for the MVP.
4. Her team has not always been a winner.

Nobody in the history of the WNBA has posted such gaudy, stat-sheet filling numbers as Tamika Catchings. She is destined to become the league's all-time steals leader and she is 87 points and 11 assists from becoming the first player in league history with 4,500 points, 2,000 rebounds and 1,000 assists. But it has never been good enough for MVP voters. Among WNBA statistical leaders, she is currently 9th in points (16.6), 11th in rebounds (6.8), 12th in assists (4.0), 11th in FG% (.494), 9th in 3-pt FG% (.433), 1st in steals (2.74) and 9th in blocks (1.04). The ONLY categories in which she does not rank among the top 12 are minutes (23rd, 30.3) and FT% (18th, .821). She is, though, eighth in the league in total free throws made (92).

So let's address and refute each of Catchings' so-called MVP "deficiencies."

Catchings does EVERYTHING, but she's just not a great shooter.

This season, she is shooting a career-high 49.4 percent from the floor and is 11th in the league in field goal percentage. Nine of the 10 players she trails are post players! Catchings is shooting 43 percent on 60 3-point attempts, good for ninth in the league, just ahead of 3-point champion and Fever teammate Katie Douglas! If her shooting prowess was a knock against her candidacy, she has knocked down that argument in dramatic fashion!

Somebody always scores more points than her.

With this argument, why don't we just give the MVP annually to the WNBA's Peak Performer for Scoring? Is a 16.5-point career average not enough to warrant an MVP award when this person does everything else that other top scorer's don't do? Catchings is averaging 16.6 points through 23 games this season, but on top of that, she ranks in the league's top 12 in points, rebounds, assists, steals, blocks, FT% and 3FG%. Oh, and she is fifth in the league in steals per turnover (1.05) and she consistently makes big plays when games are on the line. Oh ... and she is barely averaging 30 minutes per game this year. When she does more than everybody else in every facet of the game, why should she be required to be among the top three scorers to be eligible for an MVP award?

She's recognized as the game's best defensive player, but that's not enough for the MVP.

True, Catchings has won the Defensive MVP three times, joining Sheryl Swoopes as the only three-time recipient. True to form, she leads the WNBA with 2.74 steals per game in 2010 and is the league's only player averaging more than two steals per contest. She also is ninth in the WNBA with 1.04 blocks per game. Is there another athlete more versatile than Catchings? Let's analyze the other MVP candidates – Jackson, McCoughtry, Fowles, Charles, Taurasi, Pondexter, Langhorne, Dupree, Lyttle – if any of them rank highly in a defensive category, are they even among the top 20 in another? No! That's not just versatility, it is dominance. Shouldn't dominance count on either end of the court? Catchings is the arguably the league's most versatile and dominant player on BOTH ends!

[Let's check that research, in fact, measuring 10 top MVP candidates and their rank in steals and blocks categories. Catchings ranks 1st and 9th, respectively. The closest MVP candidate to rank in the top 20 for both is Angel McCoughtry who is 4th in steals and 22nd in blocks. The only other candidates in the top 10 in EITHER category are Tina Charles (4th in blocks) and Lauren Jackson (5th in blocks), but neither ranks among the top 40 in steals.]

Her team has not always been a winner.

That has certainly not been the case through most of her career. The defending Eastern Conference champions are vying for their seventh playoff appearance in 11 seasons – all led by Catchings. The Fever currently sits atop the East standings with Catchings as its top player making big plays in key situations in its biggest battles.

Make another argument and Catchings will shoot holes through that one, too. She is the game's most complete and best all-around player.