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Latrell Sprewell

## *Hospitality house welcomes new Wolves superstar*

By Maya Beechham  
Contributing Writer  
Photo by Suluki Fardan

Numerous kids crowded the entry way of the Hospitality House, in North Minneapolis. This may be a normal occurrence, but they took a different stance Thursday, July 31. Kids lined in two rows, with welcome signs reading, "#8", and "Sprewell", were expecting the company of four-time All Star, guard/forward Latrell Sprewell. Sprewell, an 11-year NBA veteran, drafted by the Minnesota Timberwolves, after playing five years with the New York Knicks.

Kevin McHale, MN Timberwolves Vice President of Basketball Operations/General Manager, began the press conference with greetings and introductions. "Thanks everybody for coming here first of all. I'd like to thank all the kids outside and all the people that showed up for a nice warm reception for Latrell. We're really excited to have him here. I said before it gives us an added dimension that we don't have. We have a big physical guard that can post up, defend the twos, defend threes if we need him to, can play two positions, attack the basket flat, and can make plays for himself and other people. We couldn't be more excited. I know Latrell is excited about this year and we're ready to get going."

Sprewell was one of five players who were a part of a four team trade. Former MN Timberwolves guard Terrell Brandon was traded to the Atlanta Hawks, and center Marc



Karen Eiland, Larry McKenzie, Basil Mohammed, and Latrell Sprewell

Johnson to the Philadelphia 76ers. The Philadelphia 76ers acquired former Atlanta Hawks forward Glenn Robinson. The New York Knicks acquired former Philadelphia 76ers forward Keith Van Horn. And Latrell Sprewell was acquired by the MN Timberwolves.

"Glad to be here. Coming from New York, it's going to be a bit of a change. I think with the team that Kevin [McHale] put together and with Flip [Saunders] coaching its an exciting opportunity for myself. I talked to Sam [Cassell] and he's excited. And I think in general a lot of people are excited about what has happened here. We're just going to make the most of it. I'm looking forward to getting here and doing my part to help this team be successful," said Sprewell.

In addition to the four team trade, the Timberwolves signed free agent Michael Olowokandi (center), July 16, and on June 27 traded forward Joe Smith and guard Anthony Peeler, for guard Sam Cassell and center Ervin Johnson.

Sprewell made no qualms about the eventual goal for himself and the team. "I

think the ultimate goal is to win and I know that's what KG [Kevin Garnett] wants. He's been in the playoffs I don't know how many years running. He wants that ring, I want it, and Sam [Cassell] knows what it's like to win. I don't think anybody on this team is hungrier than I am. I've been there once and being close didn't satisfy me. I really want it and I think KG is a guy that has that same passion and hunger. KG is the man, and he's always been looking for players like Sam, Olowokandi, and myself to help take a little bit of pressure off of him. And hopefully we can do that. The task for us will be to get on the same page and play together with the type of passion that it takes to win games. I don't think that that will be a problem with any of the starters. This was a real good team before we arrived, so when you add key players like Sam, Olowokandi and myself, it just makes you excited about the chances of this team being successful."

Sprewell, a 6-5, 195-pound product of the University of Alabama, averaged 16.4 points (.403 FG%, .372 3FG%, .794 FT%),

3.9 rebounds, 4.5 assists, 1.38 steals and 38.6 minutes per game in 74 contests (started 73) for New York in 2002-03. The 11-year NBA veteran ranked 23rd in the NBA in minutes, 32nd in assists, 36th in three-point shooting and 33rd in steals last season. Sprewell led the Knicks in scoring 23 times and in assists on 21 occasions. He posted 20-plus points 24 times and scored 30-or-more points on four occasions. Sprewell posted three double-figure rebound games, three double-doubles and three double-digit assist games. He recorded his second career triple-double on Feb. 28 versus Orlando, posting 28 points, 11 assists and 11 rebounds. In 751 NBA games over 11 seasons with Golden State (1992-93 through 1997-98) and New York (1998-99 through 2002-03), Sprewell has averaged 19.1 points (.428 FG%, .339 3FG%, .802 FT%), 4.2 rebounds, 4.3 assists, 1.54 steals and 39.6 minutes per game.

A Milwaukee, Wis. native, Sprewell was selected by the Warriors with the 24th overall selection in the 1992 NBA Draft. He was named to the NBA All-Rookie Second

