

Granger Taken By Indiana With the 17th Pick

Former Lobo is the sixth first round pick in school history.

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Former University of New Mexico men's basketball star Danny Granger was selected with the 17th pick of the 2005 NBA Draft by the Indiana Pacers. He is the sixth player in school history to be selected in the first round and the first Lobo taken in any round since Kenny Thomas was chosen by the Houston Rockets with the 22nd pick in 1999. Granger, a 6-8 forward from Metairie, La., led New Mexico to the 2005 MWC Tournament Championship and a trip to the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 1999.

Granger just missed being a lottery pick, a distinction that goes to the first 14 taken in the first round. "I feel really good about my position," stated Granger. "I'm grateful for going to a winning team in Indiana. I hope to contribute to the organization in any way that I can."

Granger averaged 18.8 ppg and 8.9 rpg last season, earning All-American (AP-Honorable Mention and Sporting News 3rd-Team), 1st Team All-MWC and MWC Tournament MVP honors. He was the only player in the NCAA to average 18 ppg, 8.9 rpg, 2 bpg, 2 apg and 2 spg during the 2004-05 season. According to several draft web sites, Granger was rated as a low first to high second rounder during his senior year and elevated his stock in his pre-draft workouts.

"Obviously we are very excited for Danny," stated UNM head coach Ritchie McKay, who was with Granger at tonight's draft in New York City. "Danny said the one team he wanted to go to was Indiana and he got his wish. He was elated about that. It is a class organization and he will have a chance to grow under (general manager) Larry Bird and (head coach) Rick Carlisle."

The Pacers posted a 44-38 record last season, finishing third in the Central Division of the Eastern Conference. They made the playoffs as the sixth seed in the Eastern Conference, falling to the Detroit Pistons 4-2, in the semifinals. One Lobo connection to the Pacers is Mel Daniels, the first New Mexico player ever selected in the first round of the NBA Draft. Daniels was selected with the ninth pick by the Cincinnati Royals in 1967, and is now the Director of Player Personnel for the Indiana Pacers.

"I think Mel being there will help Danny's transition a little bit," added McKay. "He is going into a situation that is perfect for him. It is a winning program and there is an opportunity for him to improve. People don't remember where you are drafted once you start winning championships."



Danny Granger is the first Lobo draft pick since Kenny Thomas in 1999. (PC: NBAE/Getty Images - Nathaniel S. Butler)