

Celtics sign Giddens

By Marc J. Spears
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J.R. Giddens agreed to a two-year, guaranteed contract with the Celtics yesterday, with team options for another two seasons that could push the value of the deal to a little more than \$5 million.

The 30th pick in the first round of this year's NBA draft also was receiving interest from teams in Italy, Greece, and Eastern Europe.

Giddens, a 6-foot-5-inch shooting guard, averaged 16.3 points and a league-best 8.8 rebounds last season for the University of New Mexico in being named co-Mountain West Conference player of the year.

Celtics general manager Danny Ainge, who visited Giddens in Los Angeles recently, said he is most impressed by Giddens's defense.

"He has some great physical skills that allow him to be special at defense," Ainge said. "He just has to learn our schemes. He's kept himself in good shape.

"He can play in an NBA game right now. Whether he gets an opportunity is [based] on how well he plays. It depends on how he transitions as a rookie. He's definitely talented enough to step in and contribute."

Giddens, 23, hopes to be in Waltham next week to begin working out at the Celtics' practice facility, which he hasn't been to since his press conference the day after the draft.

Ainge said contract extensions for coach Doc Rivers and his staff are expected to be wrapped up by the time training camp begins in October in Newport, R.I.■