

Iverson agrees to change offensive lyrics in rap album

By Chris Sheridan
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — After meeting with Allen Iverson, NBA commissioner David Stern does not plan to fine or suspend the Philadelphia guard for recording a rap album with controversial lyrics.

Iverson agreed on Thursday to take steps to eliminate the most offensive words from the final version of his album.

"The lyrics that have been attributed to Allen Iverson's soon-to-be-released rap CD are coarse, offensive and anti-social," Stern said in a strongly worded statement. "However, I have come to understand, unfortunately, that certain

rap artists regularly spew such lyrics to a wide audience at great profit to some of America's most successful entertainment companies.

"Notwithstanding the music's wide popularity, Allen, by even recording his lyrics, has done a disservice to himself, the Philadelphia 76ers, his teammates and perhaps all NBA players. However, I do not believe that the NBA should be in the business of regulating artistic expression, no matter how repugnant," Stern said.

Stern's statement said Iverson had made a commitment to eliminate the offensive lyrics, which include violent references and derogatory terms about gays,

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David Stern
NBA Commissioner

women and blacks.

A players' union official who accompanied Iverson to the meeting said Iverson had already changed some of the lyrics prior to meeting with Stern.

"If he doesn't follow through on that commitment, then he, along with the 76ers and the NBA, will merit whatever criticism may be leveled at us," Stern said.

By agreeing to eliminate some of the lyrics, Iverson made a departure from his earlier stance. After a meeting with civil rights groups earlier this week, Iverson said he would not change any lyrics.

The album is due out in February; an edited version of one rap, "40 Bars," was released to radio sta-

tions this week. The song is peppered with references to women, blacks and gays and contains the following lyric: "Man enough to pull a gun, be man enough to squeeze it."

The song ends with the lyrics played over the sounds of a gun being cocked and fired.

"Everything in the album people are going to think is offensive, but I can assure you that the people out there picketing and protesting before, they're out there doing it for no reason," Iverson said. "I don't want an apology after it's all over, but the world will find out those people were wrong for picketing about something I didn't do or I didn't say."

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Horoscope by Linda C. Black

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (Oct. 16). You're brilliant and charming. Learn what you need to know and teach what you've mastered. Others seek your advice in October. Gain through strategic planning in November. A surprising development thwarts travel in December. A past dream is revived in February. Pay off an old debt in May. Celebrate with a romantic jaunt in June. Respect your elders in July and clean out your closets in September.

To get the advantage, check the day's rating: 10 is the easiest day, 0 the most challenging.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) — Today is a 7 — Postpone travel till tomorrow if you can. Have friends visit you, instead. Your get-together could include some neighbors, too. Somebody nearby knows something you've been trying to find out about for ages.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) — Today is a 6 — You could put the pennies you save with coupons into an interest-paying account. That's like having another coupon — at the bank! You have the self-discipline to do this. It'd be like pennies from heaven. This is a great day to start.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21) — Today is a 7 — Just because you think you're right, doesn't mean you are. Somebody else may still disagree with you — and with good reason. Yeah, you're cute, but when you listen and put in a correction, you'll look even better.

CANCER (June 22-July 22) — Today is a 7 — If you want to know what's going on, listen at keyholes. The changes upsetting your routine make sense once you understand the master plan. You're a good strategist. You can figure it out. Somebody you ask could blab.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) — Today is a 7 — You'd like your sweetheart to love everything you do — and all your friends, too. That may be too much to ask. If a loved one begs off on your excursion, don't worry. It's OK to have separate interests.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) — Today is a 7 — Don't let things get out of control even if you have to put your foot down. You like to keep a low profile and get along, but today you may have to speak up. Do it to keep others from making a horrendous mess.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) — Today is a 16 — A surprising development could change your travel plans. Stay alert. If you're going to be on the highway, listen to the radio traffic updates. Don't get talking with your passenger and zip right by your off-ramp, either.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) — Today is a 7 — If you get a bonus or find an extra stash of cash in an old purse, should you spend it on treats for yourself now or save it for some emergency later? If you have to ask, you probably ought to save it.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) — Today is a 7 — If you hold out for what you want, you might get it. Be as unreasonable as possible. Act a little crazy and unpredictable. Don't do this with your boss or a cop, however. Only do it with the competition or your mate.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) — Today is a 7 — All heck could break loose at work. Something you thought was fixed could fly apart. Pay attention to what you're doing and to what everybody else is doing, too. Prevent a mess and be the hero.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) — Today is a 9 — How about starting off your week with a bit of romance? A delicious encounter with your soul mate on a Monday? Sounds crazy, but you love being different. Either early or late should work marvelously.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) — Today is a 7 — Call and let the boss know if you're gonna sleep in or want to leave early. Be supportive. He or she needs all the help they can get. Don't be a distraction even if you have problems of your own. Offer a solution, instead.

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