

Is Carter to blame for Toronto's loss to Philly?

By Rob Maaddi
The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Aaron McKie slashed past Vince Carter, caught a backdoor pass from Allen Iverson and scored an easy basket. Antonio Davis slammed the ball in frustration.

Too lazy to make the play on defense or too tired from a hectic day of travel?

Carter left himself open to intense scrutiny and heavy criticism by attending graduation ceremonies at North Carolina before Sunday's Game 7 of the Raptors' playoff series with the Philadelphia 76ers.

He could've silenced the critics with another one of his stellar performances. Instead, Carter looked nothing like the player who torched the Sixers for 39 points in Game 6 Friday night.

In the biggest game of his career, Carter had 20 points on just 6-of-18

shooting as Philadelphia eliminated the Raptors and advanced to the Eastern Conference finals with an 88-87 victory.

"I survived, I was there, I played, did what I needed to do," Carter said. "It all came down to one shot. It could've been a great day or a terrible day. I don't let what people say, I don't let people's opinions hold me down."

Carter missed a desperation jumper from just inside the 3-point line that would've given the Raptors a win at the buzzer. He put his head down, got a consolation pat from a teammate and walked off the court.

"It's a game, you make shots and you miss shots. He missed it. People who want to blame a graduation on losing a game, that's a scapegoat," said Carter's mother, Michelle Carter. "Graduations don't win or lose games. Shooting, rebounding, turning over the ball at

the wrong time — that will lose a game for you."

Jet lag may not have affected Carter as much as a swarming defense. He constantly had a hand or

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Vince Carter
Toronto Raptor guard

two in his face, often passed up shots and finished with nine assists.

"I admit the first two minutes I was a little winded," Carter said. "I was trying too hard early. I was tiring myself out."

Carter missed his first three shots, including two jumpers, before following his third miss with a

tip-in. He was 3-for-7 in the first quarter. He only scored three points — all on free throws — in the second.

In Toronto's three victories, Carter averaged 41.3 points, including a 50-point outburst in Game 3. He scored 22.3 in the four losses.

"It was the same old Vince," Sixers forward Rodney Buford said. "If he makes the last shot, it would've been a different story."

In the second half, Carter made a few clutch baskets, keeping the Raptors in the game. Isolated against McKie late in the third, he drove to the basket, got fouled, scored the layup and sank the free throw, giving Toronto its first lead, 65-64, since the opening minutes.

But the Sixers quickly reclaimed the lead and Carter missed his next two shots — a 3-pointer and a running 8-footer.

With the Raptors trailing 82-78

and just under five minutes left, Carter missed a 3-pointer. He made two free throws after Davis got the rebound, but didn't score again.

Carter, who left school for the NBA after his junior year in 1998, completed his final correspondence course this summer and earned his degree in Afro-American studies.

He was recognized with the rest of North Carolina's Class of 2001, left the ceremonies early to catch a flight to Philadelphia and arrived at Toronto's hotel in time to attend a pregame meeting at noon.

On Saturday, Carter traveled to North Carolina on team owner Larry Tanenbaum's private plane. Carter arrived on campus about 8:30 a.m. Sunday. After signing autographs and taking pictures outside the ceremony at Kenan Stadium, he walked out with the rest of the students.

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Horoscope by Linda C. Black

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (May 21): You sure do know a lot, but you don't know everything yet. You'll get a lot closer to your goals, and you'll realize just how far you have to go. No point in giving up. You can't anyway. You're smart. Now prove you're up for a challenge.

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 — You're getting stronger and quicker, both mentally and physically. You still have a few weights to lift, however. You used to think of them as burdens. Surprise! They're what's causing this magnificent transformation.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) — Today is a 6 — If you've noticed a growing concern about finances, congratulations. This is part of why you're so successful — or why you will be. If you're not making what you're worth, you're about to raise a fuss about it. Prepare facts that support your argument.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21) — Today is a 6 — There's a pile of stuff to be done. Don't put it off any longer. Opportunities beyond your wildest dreams could arrive in a day or two. Don't be doing your sorting and filing when your ship finally comes in. Get ready!

CANCER (June 22-July 22) — Today is a 6 — There's something going on that you can't even talk to your best friend about. It's wise not to wait until you understand a little better. Something you think is bad might actually be good, or vice versa. Mull it over a while longer.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) — Today is a 6 — A group you're working with is getting stronger every day. They're not quite ready to perform yet, but it won't be long. Enforce the rules. Allow no slack. The more discipline they learn now, the more freedom they'll have then.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) — Today is a 6 — What you'd like to do and what you get to do are two different things. You're not a complain-

er, but you're sorely tempted. Steal a few moments for yourself, but comply. You're outvoted or outranked this time.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) — Today is a 9 — You're the lucky winner of life's lottery. You get romance, travel, even an interesting lesson to learn. Don't go out and spend a lot of money. That's the one thing you could do to mess things up. Hold onto it.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) — Today is a 6 — A talk about money may be in order. You've set the goals, now how are you going to achieve them? Some may have to be discarded or postponed. Talk this over with your partner, as unemotionally as possible, but with compassion, of course.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) — Today is a 6 — The same old daily grind is easier if you share the load with a good friend. Some things you can't give away — only you know how. Other things, your friend can do better. Don't be jealous. Delegate.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) — Today is a 6 — The suffering you're enduring may not be worth the money. You can steal a few moments for love, but not many. That's the whole problem. It'll get worse before it gets better. Keep your chin up.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) — Today is an 8 — Your passions may be getting difficult to control. You'd stay up all night talking if you could. Maybe you can, either tomorrow or the next night. Tonight, you'd better get your beauty sleep. You'll want to look your best.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) — Today is a 6 — A friend can teach you how to do a chore at home that has been giving you fits. You would have done it years ago if you'd only known how. Don't be ashamed to admit it. A breakthrough in your education is close at hand.

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