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Dransfeldt: Athletes' voices can be deceiving

Continued from page 13
with Alston after a Dec. 3, 2004 game in Boston. Alston threatened to leave the Raptors and at one point said he was considering retirement — at the ripe old age of 29.

Then came February, when there was another dispute.

Several newspaper reports said Alston and Mitchell came to blows at halftime. Fellow guard Morris Peterson said at the time, "It's like one big soap opera."

Mitchell denied any bodily contact. "There was no shoving; there was no physical contact. There were words exchanged and that was more or less the extent of it," Mitchell later told The Fan, an all-sports Toronto radio station.

Sounds reasonable, but this incident came after Alston was suspended in January for conduct detrimental to the team after walking out of a practice.

So it was not very surprising Tuesday to see Alston shipped to the Rockets for Mike James. Alston is

now more of a replacement for an injured Houston guard than a big-name free agent signee. Alston joins a Houston team oozing with potential with Tracy McGrady, Yao Ming and Stromile Swift.

When I talked to Alston, before he decided to leave Miami in the summer of 2004, he was straight forward and provided smooth answers. Alston gave no indication of anger management issues and sounded like countless other athletes I've spoken to.

There, at its roots, is the problem when determining an athlete's sincerity. As a sportswriter, I make every effort to take athletes at their word. But when they don't tell the truth, when they hide beneath an ego, it's harder to figure out.

I had another interview with another former Ventura College basketball player who I'll leave unnamed. He had had his share of legal problems and seemed to put them behind him. He returned to the basketball team and was a fan favorite and a

good interview. Months later I'm reading the newspaper and I see he's been accused of sexually assaulting a minor.

Athlete's intentions, unclear at times, make it difficult to get the whole story. Quality journalists get the truth, metering out the innuendo and the lies. Readers want the whole story.

It's a talent I'm trying to master, not being a naive sports fan who's excited to talk to professional athletes, but a seasoned pro who finds the facts. An interview with Alston, who has had a turbulent career helps. Hard questions that can lead to the truth sometimes result in rebuke from a player who is unhappy with a reporter's questions.

Alston did show some anger, bristling at a final query about his team's post players.

Maybe I'm onto something after all.

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Horoscope by Holiday Mathis

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (October 6). You attack this year's projects with such vigor that one of them is finished by the end of this month. The beginning of November brings a feeling of "now what?" but don't worry. The new "what" arrives almost as soon as you ask the question. Love gobbles your holiday time in a lovely manner. You are especially comfortable with Leo and Gemini. Your lucky numbers are: 4, 5, 39, 15 and 30.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You act as a buffer between warring parties. It's an unusual position for you to be in, as your usual modus operandi is to take one side or the other. Now you can appreciate what your parents used to feel.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You're still having some degree of difficulty being understood. Maybe you're not making yourself clear enough. Still, others would be wise to bet on you. A miraculous victory is in your near future.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Lazier and more pampered individuals simply can't relate to how much you do in a day and how tough it really can be. But don't waste time thinking about it. You're too busy trying to put your master plan into effect.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You're driven -- hyper vigilant, in fact -- when it comes to getting your prize. Now if everyone else would get out of your way ... A loved one is being a real pest. It's time to call them out.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Being inconvenienced can be a good thing. With a little petulance, you can extract a contribution to your favorite cause (which may very well be yourself -- there's nothing wrong with that).

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Your effectiveness is heralded, but perhaps not by those you

would like to herald you. Rumors of your hard work will soon spread. The evening features a (deliciously) disruptive presence.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You'll put up with a little bad behavior from people you like tremendously. But sometimes it's just time for someone to say sorry. Other times, like today, sorry isn't good enough. You want to see something tangible!

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Your relationship with the "money gods" is a unique and close one. You log in your request and are seldom disappointed. You could even receive a lump sum in the mail to expedite the purchase of your latest material want.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). It's very important that you are ethical in all dealings now and that you make sure others are treating you with the same respect. Consider that what some would call a polite request, others would call distortion.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You understand how the power is balanced in any given situation -- and you know what to do to make it work for you. Generosity of higher-ups impacts you favorably if you can recognize that you are being given a gift.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). An audience is key to doing fabulous work. When you activate the creative part of your life, your love life thrives. In that light, you might even be grateful for past heartache for giving you so much to express.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You're more successful because you set time limits that accommodate your process. Price your work higher though. Either that, or find another way to earn extra money -- an upcoming opportunity to travel is too juicy to miss.

085 GREEK ANNOUNCEMENTS

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The Other Coast

by Adrian Raeside