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Ray Allen making memories in Miami

By Israel Gutierrez
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MIAMI -- Like any other 37-year-old father, [Ray Allen](#) had just dropped off his children at school in late February and was headed to work, before suddenly realizing he should probably make one more stop.

A party store was the destination -- of course.



Because he and his teammates were going to film a Harlem Shake video -- of course.

In the middle of a long winning streak -- of course.

So Allen filled his cart with, among other items, a giant horse head, an astronaut suit, a Phantom of the Opera mask and a giant gold boom box.

Of course he did.

"I didn't know how serious guys were taking it," Allen said. "So I went to the party store, I got a sombrero, I got a Phantom mask, I got the Jabbawockeez mask, I had the king costume, I had a nerd outfit, I got a mustache.

"Once we got here [to the Heat locker room], everybody threw everything in the middle of the floor and said, 'I'm gonna do this, I'm gonna grab that.'

"[\[Chris Bosh\]](#) grabs the stereo, and Shane [\[Battier\]](#) grabbed the astronaut suit with the horse head. People were just picking parts of costumes and being as weird as they could possibly be."

That left Allen to suit up in the Phantom mask, a king's cape and a pair of astronaut boots before clowning around with his teammates on camera. Oddly enough, the man his teammates still call "Jesus" because of his role in the 1998 film "He Got Game" fit right in with those crazy kids.

“

It's funny because some of these guys joke with me because they say, 'Ray always has a story.' I had to think about it, and I said, 'You know what, I do.'

” -- *Ray Allen*

"He'd probably never seen a Harlem Shake video, and now he's acting in one," [Norris Cole](#), 13 years Allen's junior, said. "That was great."

Interestingly enough, Allen is a fan of videos in the locker room. Perhaps the nostalgia of playing in the NBA for 16-plus years has gotten to him, because for the last few years of his career Allen has been a fan of chronicling as much of his experiences as possible.

He not only wants to make an impact, which he has throughout his career, but he wants it to be remembered - - by him, or anyone who's curious to know what being an NBA player is like.

It's why he willingly passes along basketball pointers, mostly relating to that gorgeous jump shot of his. It's why he has gotten along so famously with Heat president Pat Riley, the two sharing stories constantly and Allen calling Riley "a treasure trove of information. ... He talks about yesteryear like it was yesterday."

And it's why this, the fourth stop in his brilliant career, has been an exceptional experience for the Heat's living legend despite having made the difficult adjustment of playing a reserve role.

"I told the guys, [Bill Russell](#) has been retired for 50 years," Allen said of the Celtics great who last played in 1969. "I told them, I bet he'd love to have some of the conversations back, or listen to some of the conversations he had on the championship teams and see some of the footage of him when he was younger. I said we should allow that into our locker rooms more.

"It's funny because some of these guys joke with me because they say, 'Ray always has a story.' I had to think about it, and I said, 'You know what, I do.'"

But to these particular teammates -- the ones who were in absolute awe when they'd heard Allen was joining the Heat last July -- Ray Allen is usually the story.

His obsessive shooting routine, his over-the-top fitness commitment, his impact not just on the court but on the entire team's gameday procedures.

Erik Spoelstra got a shocking sample of Allen's intense fitness commitment well before the league's all-time leading 3-point shooter became a member of the Heat.

It came the day after Game 2 of the Heat-Celtics 2010 first-round playoff series. The Heat had fallen behind 0-2 in the series, as the scene shifted to Miami for Game 3. Spoelstra needed a quick break to get his mind off the series for a moment and chose to attend a spin class at Sports Club L.A. in Miami. As he was leaving his session, Spoelstra noticed Allen entering the room to take the following class.

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"I put my head down," the Heat coach said. "We didn't even say hello to each other. I didn't want to see him. He did not see me, either.

"Later on that night, it kind of just struck me. I had just read an article online that Boston had practiced, then flown down."

At that point, Spoelstra just couldn't let it go. He had to know more. After all, Game 3 was the next day, and this just didn't seem like normal NBA-player behavior.

"So I ended up calling the athletic club and had them track down this spin instructor for me. I just said, 'Hey, this is Erik Spoelstra, I just took your class.' Then I said, 'Well, Ray Allen just came in after me and did your class. Out of curiosity, was he just trying to get the lactic acid and jet lag out of his legs?'

"[The instructor] said, 'Oh no, don't worry. I took care of him.' He said, 'He cranked it. He went as hard as anybody in the class. I made sure I pushed that class as hard as they could go to fatigue him for tomorrow.'

"I said, 'Man, he's really pushing himself that hard the day before Game 3?'"

So one day after practicing in Boston, flying to Miami and taking a spinning class, Allen had 25 points on 8-of-16 shooting, five assists, three rebounds and a steal in a 100-98 Celtics win.

Of course he did.

This is the same player who, after practicing in Washington D.C. this winter, jogged back about three miles to the team hotel in near-freezing temperatures, and convinced [LeBron James](#) to make the trek with him. The same guy who ran the Great Wall of China twice with his coach, just as much for fitness as for sightseeing.

The same player who was responsible for the Heat requiring a third "shooters' bus" on game days so he and [Mike Miller](#) and [James Jones](#) can get to the arena as early as possible to go through shooting routines. His lower body is so important to his jump shot -- even if he can't get the same lift he did as a collegiate or a young NBA player -- that he obsesses over it, even trying items like Titanium Disc stickers on his legs that supposedly promote blood flow.

It's all part of what makes Allen a living legend in his own locker room.

"He's one of those guys, every time I walk in the gym I see him doing squats, calf raises and different things to take care of his lower body," said [Rashard Lewis](#), a teammate of Allen's for the second time in their careers.

"He got me riding a bike in Seattle. I saw him doing it, and I went out and bought me a bike and started riding it to work on my lower body.

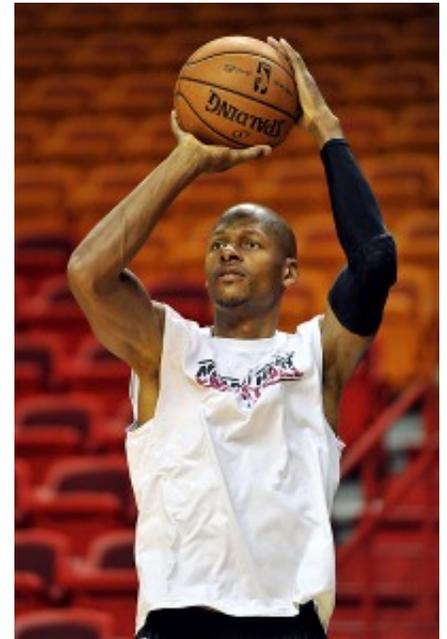
"Look at his calf muscles. It's like Popeye after eating some spinach, or something."

Allen hasn't been as much of a vocal presence on this team, at least through the media, in large part because it hasn't been required of him. But with his teammates, he remains as critical a voice as there is on the team.

What he often passes along are suggestions for improving a jump shot.

Cole, the second-year Heat point guard, doesn't entirely credit Allen for his jump from a 28 percent 3-point shooter last season to a 32-percent distance shooter this season. But there is an element of Allen's approach that has certainly rubbed off.

"Shoot your same shot over and over, and don't have wasted shots," Cole said. "That's one thing we all noticed. Anytime we're just shooting around, or even playing a game of H-O-R-S-E, he's serious, he's shooting the shot he's going to shoot in the game.



Practice pays off. Allen is shooting 42 percent from 3-point range.

"Whether he's joking around or not, he shoots the same shot. I find myself telling myself, 'Shoot your same shot all the time,' because for him, his shot is automatic."

So perhaps it's no coincidence that Cole has been a 48 percent 3-point shooter since March 1 (16 of 33). Maybe it's "Jesus" work?

Yet it's not as if Allen immediately began bestowing his knowledge upon Heat players and comfortably slid into his current role as reserve extraordinaire/shooting mentor. It wasn't easy for a player whose career minutes average is 36-plus to quietly settle into a 25-minutes-a-game role off the bench. And it wasn't easy for a player who excels at catch-and-shoot plays to not have many, if any, catch-and-shoot plays designed specifically for him.

It took a series of conversations with Spoelstra, many of them in front of his teammates, before Allen truly settled into his current position.

"I always tell the guys, there's nothing wrong with being frustrated," Spoelstra said. "If we just push things under the rug, that's when it boils up and ends up being something else. Acknowledge it, because it is different.

"We just reminded each other about the talk we had in July, and just to be patient with it.

"Ultimately, you're here to be the fourth-quarter closer that he is. And he's one of the best of all time in the fourth quarter. He's hit as many big shots for us in the fourth quarter as anybody."

Of course, coming off the bench to be the calm assassin he has always been, only adds to the Allen legend.

Allen says he's been "fighting his shot" for 10 years, which sounds like a ridiculous thing to hear from the

greatest outside shooter the NBA has seen. But it's that constant pursuit of perfection that has made him who he is.

And now that he's not required to do it quite as much, Spoelstra believes Allen could play this role for at least another five years. That would mean he'd play until he's 42. Allen's head coach is 42.

"We have this saying, 'The ball will find energy,'" Spoelstra said. "He is the epitome of that. The ball finds him because he's working to get to open spots. You can call it, 'The ball will find Ray.'"

Hopefully the cameras find him, too. Because his already remarkable career would be infinitely more amazing if he's able to play and contribute as long as Spoelstra suggests he could.

And Allen wants it all on the record. So he can enjoy it all again -- the Harlem Shakes, the off-day experiences, the post-practice workouts, the crazy winning streaks -- even after he eventually leaves the game.

"You have to savor these moments," Allen said. "We're all going to have grandkids, hopefully, one of these days. And they're going to look at you like you're lying."

"I want people to come in and see what we're dealing with, because this is a special time."
