

CELTICS NOTEBOOK

Allen anticipating early return Rivers ready to activate guard

By Shira Springer, Globe Staff | December 1, 2005

The trademarked name on the compression sleeve worn by **Tony Allen** last night was "**Game Ready**." That same phrase perfectly describes the shooting guard's current status.

After just one practice with the Celtics, coach **Doc Rivers** considered activating Allen for last night's victory over the Sixers at the TD Banknorth Garden. But both Rivers and Allen figured it was best to wait one more practice. If all goes well in another team workout today, Allen will be back on the court for tomorrow night's game against the Bulls, almost two weeks earlier than expected. Rivers will likely deactivate **Ryan Gomes** or **Orien Greene**.

"We honestly considered doing it [activating Allen] today, just so you know," said Rivers in his pregame press conference. "At the end of the day, after just one practice, I didn't want to take that gamble. He went hard again today. It will be interesting after tomorrow's practice to see how he feels. If he feels good, we'll probably activate him."

Allen said his surgically repaired right knee looked and felt the same before and after hard workouts Tuesday and yesterday, with no visible increase in swelling, tenderness, or stiffness. For Allen, the most difficult part of the rehabilitation process has been regaining confidence in his knee.

"I'm just not too sure about [the knee] right now," Allen said. "I think I needed a couple more practices. After [today], I'll know if I'm going to play in the game or not . . . It was a thought [to play last night], but I was skeptical about it. Right now, it's all mental. I've just got to get my mind to react to my knee. Confidence in my knee. My game is still there."

Allen, who averaged 6.4 points and 2.9 rebounds in 16.4 minutes a game as a rookie last season, will give Rivers another pure shooting guard to work into the rotation. Allen also allows Rivers to go with a smaller lineup. Last year, Allen started 34 games and allowed **Ricky Davis** to build his sixth man résumé. It remains to be seen whether the return of Allen will mean Davis returns to his reserve role. It also remains to be seen how long and how hard Allen can play. But with coaches now allowed to activate players for each game, Rivers has no problem testing Allen against Chicago, then deactivating him if he doesn't look ready or becomes very sore.

Allen likely will miss upcoming games because of court dates. His arraignment on battery charges is scheduled for Tuesday in Chicago; the Celtics play at Houston later that night.

"It has to be a disruption," Rivers said. "Let's say he plays against Chicago, then we go on the road, he might have to miss a game, he might have to travel. It's there. There's no way around it. The legal part is first because that's his real life, then he can get into the fantasy of basketball after that."