

Kobe demands, retracts Lakers' trade request

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Believing he had been insulted and misled, Kobe Bryant asked the Los Angeles Lakers for a trade Wednesday and insisted nothing could change his mind. Then something did. He spoke with coach Phil Jackson and backed off his request.

"I don't want to go anywhere, this is my team," Bryant told KLAC radio. "I love it here. I called Phil, man, he and I talked, it was an emotional conversation, but he just said, 'You know what, Kobe? Let us try to figure this thing out.'"

"Phil is a guy I lean on a lot."

Some three hours earlier, in an interview with ESPN radio, Bryant said: "I would like to be traded, yeah. Tough as it is to come to that conclusion, there's no other alternative. It's rough, man, but I don't see how you can rebuild that trust. I just don't know how you can move forward in that type of situation."

Bryant also told KLAC, the Lakers' flagship station, that he hadn't heard from owner Jerry Buss, indicating a conversation could go a

long way toward resolving the matter.

Buss issued a statement after Bryant's request, saying: "We are aware of the media reports. However, Kobe has not told us directly that he wants to be traded. We have made it very clear that we are building our team around Kobe and that we intend for him to be a Laker his entire career. We will speak directly to Kobe and until we do that, we will not comment publicly about this."

Bryant told KLAC that his agent had contacted general manager Mitch Kupchak early Wednesday.

Bryant, who helped the Lakers win three consecutive NBA championships, has four years left on the seven-year, \$136.4 million contract he signed July 15, 2004. That was a day after Shaquille O'Neal was traded to the Miami Heat.

Bryant became infuriated Tuesday when a Los Angeles Times columnist quoted a Lakers "insider" as saying it was Bryant's insistence on getting away from O'Neal that prompted the trade to Miami.

Bryant told KLAC he

knew who the so-called insider was, but wouldn't identify the person.

Bryant also said he feels Buss misled him three years ago — right before he resigned with the Lakers — by

telling him one thing and Jackson something else about the team's goals.

Bryant said he was told the Lakers would immediately try to rejoin the NBA's elite. But he said Jackson told

him Tuesday that Buss was not bringing him back as coach following the 2003-04 season because the Lakers were committed to reducing payroll and rebuilding long term.

"They said nothing to me about a long-term plan. Absolutely nothing," Bryant told KLAC. "They told Phil one thing and they told me another. Actions speak louder (See Kobi, Page 19)

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