Lin could have remained a Knick

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NEW YORK: Jeremy Lin confided to Sports Illustrated that he would have liked to remain a New York Knick, but mostly he’s relieved his NBA future with the Houston Rockets is clear.
“Honestly, I preferred New York,” Lin said in an interview posted on Sports Illustrated’s website on Wednesday—a day after the Knicks confirmed they wouldn’t match the Rockets’ offer for the point guard.

That decision had Lin headed to Houston as a free agent, and while he sounded a bit wistful he was pleased that his three-year, $25 million deal from the Rockets proved they had big plans for him.
Jeremy Lian AFP FILE PHOTO
“But my main goal in free agency was to go to a team that had plans for me and wanted me,” he told Sports Illustrated. “I wanted to have fun playing basketball . . . Now I’m definitely relieved.”

Lin burst from NBA obscurity in February when he was pulled from the Knicks’ bench because of injuries to other players and sparked a seven-game winning streak that hauled the Knicks out of a mid-season slump.

He thrilled New York fans with his clutch shooting and passing skills and became a global sensation, especially in Asia, as his parents are from Taiwan and he has a grandmother from China.

Although Houston is a smaller market than New York, Jeff Nalley, chief executive of Houston-based agency Select Sports, told USA Today he believes Lin can thrive there.

“Houston is such an international city, a melting pot, that for a number of reasons, he’d be well-received,” Nally said.

Lin is actually rejoining a Rockets team that claimed him off waivers shortly before the last lockout-shortened season but quickly released him.

Although he said he’ll “cherish” his experience with the Knicks, he called the Rockets’ effort to lure him back “compelling”.

“I loved this past year with the Knicks and truly appreciate the opportunity that New York gave me,” he said in a statement.

“The way the fans fully embraced me and our team was something I’ll always cherish forever. It was an extraordinary and unforgettable time that was easily the best year of my life.

“Now I am excited to be back with the Rockets. They made a very compelling pitch in terms of what I could bring to the team and for the city. I’m excited about contributing to the Rockets winning tradition and competing with my new teammates.”