

## A Dark Day in Sports

On the day of January 26, 2020, all of us in the sports world had a terrible nightmare. Something that we all wish never happened, and never existed. But the reality of all of it is this. We didn't just lose a legend or one of the greatest players in the history of sports, we lost an amazing human being. In case you've been living under a rock, Kobe Bryant passed away at the age of 41. He died in a helicopter crash at Calabasas, California on his way to take his daughter Gianna or as everyone knows as "Gigi" to her basketball game. What makes this whole thing even worse is that Gianna was in the helicopter and was also killed in the accident. You just stop and think about Kobe's wife Vanessa and his other daughters. Not only did they lose their father but they also lost one of their siblings on the same day.

When I was growing up, the Celtics, Lebron, and Kobe were the reasons why I started watching basketball. One of the first basketball games that I ever went to was against who? Kobe Bryant and the Lakers. The game was on November 22, 2007, shortly after the Red Sox won the World Series. Kobe dropped 28 points on 3 assists and 4 rebounds. Ultimately the Celtics big 3 killed it, combining for a total of 59 points as the Celtics won 107-94. The hype around this game was insane because of the rivalry, and the fact that this match was a finals preview. That now brings me to my next Kobe game that I went to which was Game 2 of the 2008 NBA Finals. Kobe Bryant and Paul Pierce went on a battle that night. The atmosphere at the TD Banknorth Garden was completely different compared to a regular season game. "Let's go, Celtics" chants erupted all night long and the crowd was into the whole entire game. No one got out of their seats as they witnessed every second of the game. Kobe was Kobe dropping 30 points on 8 assists and 4 rebounds as Paul Pierce dropped 28 points on 8 assists and 4 rebounds as well. In the end the Celtics took a 2-0 lead in the Finals as the big 3 were too much for the other Laker players as the Celtics went on to win 108-102. As a Celtics fan, you were

taught 2 things, to love the Celtics, and to hate the Lakers. However, I loved the Celtics but I respected Kobe for his mentality and his greatness.

Kobe was an inspiration to not just me, but everyone in the world. Kobe had the mentality of pushing yourself to the limit. Work your “tail” off to get somewhere you want to get to. You don’t never stop, you go harder. This is not only for basketball but this is life in general. If you want something, you will have to find a way to get what you want. It’s a process. There’s a huge difference between being good at something, or being great at something. Being good at something means that you’re just doing enough to get there. Being great at something means that you’re exceeding what you’re doing to become better at what you want to do. You’re putting the time, effort, and caring a lot about what you’re doing. Yes Kobe’s “Mamba Mentality” gave players in the NBA a reason to push harder, and to become great in their careers, but he helped millions of people in the world to push harder in order to become better for themselves. He did this because of his work ethic and what he accomplished on the court. It inspired people to push harder to make themselves better just like Kobe made himself better.

This day hurt everyone in the sports world. It was just shocking and unexpected. Everyone was on social media posting about Kobe showing their love and care for him, Gianna, and the family. What made me even more emotional was the players who were playing that day. Watching their emotions on tv. Players like Devin Booker, Trae Young, Jayson Tatum, everyone who was playing really was crying, hurt and clearly nonfunctional. Games in my opinion should have been postponed, but I understand why they weren’t because of how sudden it was and how close it was to some games. Some players made the decision to not play at all. Kyrie Irving was one of them who had a close, and personal relationship with Kobe. The Lakers were in the air when they got the news, and to make this even scarier, LeBron James just passed Kobe Bryant for 3rd place on the all time scoring list the night before. The night before we were all

celebrating Lebron's accomplishment to pass the great Kobe Bryant and acknowledging Kobe's career with Lebron's career. Lebron got off the plane in shock and in tears as he, like all of us, could not believe what happened.

Kobe has left us with a giant wound in our hearts. It's going to take time for us to heal, but think of the best times with Kobe, not what just recently happened. Is it sad and hard, yes, but it's better to remember the good times rather than the bad. Thank you Kobe for all you've done for us and being a role model to many of us. You are a legend forever and we will never forget you. Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims' families and friends, the players, the fans, Gianna Bryant, Kobe Bryant, John Altobelli, his wife, Keri, and their daughter Alyssa, Sarah Chester, and her daughter Payton, Christina Mauser, and Ara Zobayan. I leave you all with this. Don't take anything for granted. Live in the moment. You were gifted it, life could change in a blink of an eye. Make the most of the time you are given in your life. If you want to do something, do it. Push yourself to the limit. "If you do the work, if you work hard enough, dreams come true. Those times where you get up early, and work hard, those times where you stay up late and work hard, those times where you don't feel like working, you're too tired and you don't want to push yourself but you do it anyway, that is actually the dream. It's not the destination, it's the journey. If you guys can understand that, then what you will see happen is that you won't accomplish your dreams, your dreams won't come true. Something greater will (Kobe Bryant)." That's the Mamba Mentality. Rest in Peace to all the victims in this terrible tragedy including Gianna Bryant and Kobe Bryant.