



Mamba Mentality

“The most important thing is to try and inspire people so that they can be great in whatever they want to do” - Kobe Bryant

By: Austin Rader

January 26, 2020 — The day was March 17, 2008. I was in the fourth grade and I was finally going to my first NBA game. My dad had arranged it months in advance. Growing up in St. Louis, we didn't have a professional basketball team. So we decided we were going to Dallas to watch the Mavericks face the Los Angeles Lakers, led by Kobe Bryant. My dad asked, what player are you most interested in seeing? And I said without hesitation: “Kobe.”

I couldn't have been more excited. I grew up idolizing Kobe like so many other kids. When we got to the airport, we raced through security, and then were told the most devastating news.

Our flight was cancelled.

I had been a big fan of the NBA dating back to 2005. I was in tears at the airport. I had been waiting three years to watch a game live. And to be able to see an icon like Kobe. I remember standing in the gift shop with tears in my eyes.

We knew there was another NBA game that same night. So we quickly changed our plans and flew to Houston to watch the Boston Celtics end the Houston Rockets 22 game winning streak.

Kobe went on to defeat Dirk and the Dallas Mavericks in a two point victory.



When I think of Kobe Bryant, so many things come to mind. Sure, the 5 NBA Championships, the 2 Most Valuable Player awards (to go along with 2 Finals MVPs). The all star appearances, the famous feud with Shaq. They all come to mind.

But what stands out the most was his work ethic. The 5 am workouts. The guy that was obsessed with surpassing Michael Jordan as the greatest player to play the game of basketball. Kobe would do anything to win. He was so intense. Early on in his career, he

didn't connect with his teammates. If he wasn't in the gym, he was watching film. Kobe really loved basketball. He simply out-worked his competition. It was how he was raised.

He inspired so many kids to play the game of basketball. In my mind, he is definitely on the Mount Rushmore of NBA legends.

But it's not just what Kobe did on the court. It's what he did off the court that made him so legendary. He was a dad, a husband, a business person, a mentor and a human.

Just a few weeks ago in Newport Beach, Kobe witnessed a major car accident on the side of the road and stayed to comfort victims and redirect traffic until help arrived.

Kobe Bryant was a human being, that truly cared for other people.

This clip of Kobe talking with his daughter Gigi sitting courtside recently gives you a sense of Kobe, the father: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PuczDyTA4DE&t=10s>

She also was on the helicopter today.

This feeling I have (similar to others around the world) is an indescribable feeling. Kobe was a hero to many and was a rockstar in the way he took over games night after night. It was like watching a movie.

I will always remember watching him on the scorer's table after beating the Boston Celtics in game seven of the NBA Finals (the last one he won). I love that Coach Saban brought him to Alabama last year to talk to the team. His message? "Edit your life to be sure you choose what will help you win." Coach Saban talks about outworking yesterday. Kobe is the greatest example on how to do it.

What we have in life is special. It's fragile. We will all at some point in our lives fall. And we can't take it for granted.

"The most important thing is to try and inspire people so that they can be great in whatever they want to do" - Kobe Bryant

Words cannot express what you meant to the lives of many.

#8, #24, you inspired us all.