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Continued Writing Practice

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Kobe Bean Bryant is much more to me than just my favorite NBA player and professional athlete. I have idolized him since I was a teenager. Ever since he joined the NBA straight out of high school, I was captivated and knew that he was bound for greatness. He was like a real-life superhero to me and others. He seemed invincible and larger than life. He embodied everything that I wish I were. He was smooth, tenacious and had drive and passion that very few people are capable of. He had style, charisma, charm and was incredibly motivated. He was a cultural icon and inspired millions of people around the world.

Saying that Kobe Bryant lived a remarkable and accomplished life is a monumental understatement. He won 5 NBA Championships with the Los Angeles Lakers, where he played for his entire 20-year career. In the age of “super teams” and free agency, that in itself is a remarkable feat. His career earnings from his NBA salary alone were over \$328 million and he had numerous endorsements to supplement his income. These include Adidas, Sprite, Nike and several others. He won 2 Olympic gold medals with Team USA, was league MVP in 2008, a 17 time All Star, won the Slam Dunk contest as a rookie, scored 81 points in one game and numerous other accolades. He was nicknamed the “Black Mamba” and his tireless work ethic and his ability to dominate a game are because of his “Mamba Mentality.”

His father Joe Jellybean Bryant was a professional basketball player and played in Italy, bringing his wife, daughters Sharia and Shaya and son Kobe with him. Kobe spent 7 years of his childhood there and became fluent in Italian. He developed his passion for basketball while

there, and played soccer as a second hobby. The Bryants returned to Philadelphia in 1991 and Kobe joined the Lower Merion High School basketball team, helping them win the state championship in his senior season. He caught the attention of professional and college scouts since he was 14 years old but decided to forego college and go straight to the NBA. He was only 17 years old, the youngest NBA player ever and one of the last players to go straight to the NBA fresh out of high school. He was selected by the then Charlotte Hornets with the 13th pick of the 1996 NBA Draft, then traded to the Los Angeles Lakers. That is one of the worst decisions by Charlotte (now called the Bobcats) in the history of their franchise. His first few seasons with the Lakers were unremarkable. But things with the team started to work out and he was an integral part of the Lakers dominating three-peat from 1999-2002.

Unfortunately Kobe, daughter Gianna and 7 others were killed in a helicopter crash on January 26th, 2020. It was a foggy morning in Calabasas, California and the pilot got disoriented. That was a very sad day for me and the world. I never got to meet him or see him play in person. He impacted me and millions of others profoundly and will never be forgotten.