On the night of April 13th, 2016; Kobe Bryant prepared for the final game of his storied career. Despite all the pregame hoopla and Kobe worshipping at Staples Center, Bryant went through his usual pregame routine. His monotonous warm up program suggested an unmemorable ending for the 37-year old veteran. With 57,278 minutes, played over 20 seasons, it was hard to imagine that Kobe had enough left in the tank to score 40 or even 30. But at the same time, everyone and their grandmother knew the other Lakers players had one thing on their minds: get Kobe the ball. No one wants to be remembered as the guy who didn’t pass Kobe the ball in his last game ever.

What transpired at the Staples Center that night was nothing short of amazing. Seriously, I was amazed. 60 points?? 37 years old?? 50 shots?? Did that really happen?? The age-defying performance capped off what was already an incredible night of basketball. The night saw the Celtics erase a 26-point deficit en route to the 5th seed in the East before Curry and The Warriors broke two records once considered to be unbreakable. 73 wins and Steph becoming the first player to make 400 threes in a season (the same season he became the only player to ever notch 300 threes in a season) ended up being a footnote that night. This was Kobe’s night. He relished the moment, brought his team back, and, fittingly, hit the game-winning shot. Kobe fans couldn’t have asked for a better memory to be left with. And so, in honor of Kobe Bryant and his final game, let’s take a look at The Kobe Bryant 60-point Timeline.

## **The Most Underappreciated Scoring Outburst in Modern NBA History**

#### 62 points, 18-31 shooting, Dec 20, 2005, Lakers vs Mavericks

#### obe Bryant Full Highlights 2005.12.20 vs Mavericks - 62 Pts in 3 Quarters,

Kobe’s 2006 season will go down as one of the greatest individual seasons in NBA history (he would have received more praise and recognition—and an MVP award—had this not come on the heels of the infamous Eagle, CO debacle). And it really started on that day. Not only was that night the foundation for a transcendent season, it was also Kobe’s first 50+ point game since Shaq’s departure. The Lakers entered the second half with a 9-point lead, and it didn’t take long for Kobe to blow that lead wide open. The score at the end of the third: Mavericks 61, Kobe 62. That’s right, Kobe outscored the entire Mavericks team through three-quarters. He sat the rest of the game. To me, this is more impressive than the 81-point game that would come only a month later. Keep in mind this was against a 60-22 Mavericks team that made the NBA Finals that year.

## **The Defining One**

#### 81 points, 28-46 shooting, Jan 22, 2006 Laker vs Raptors

Not much needs to be said here. Everyone knows this game. Kobe had 26 points in the first half, but his team trailed the lowly Raptors by 14 at the break. So, Kobe—who was not going to be cool with losing to Toronto at home—came out and scored an NBA record 55 points in the second half to seal the deal for the Lakers. Ultimately, this became the defining game for Kobe Bryant; a guy who loved to score, but more notably, a guy who loved to shoot.

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## **Kobe’s Best 60-point Game**

#### 65 points, 23-39 shooting, Mar 16, 2007, Lakers vs Trail Blazers

Another one of KB’s great games that hasn't received its worthy recognition. And another come-from-behind win. It was a tight game that saw Kobe (now in #24) put up 24 points in the fourth quarter, including a flurry of threes in the last two minutes to force overtime where the Lakers would prevail. I consider this his best 60+ game because he hit so many clutch shots. The Blazers had a 7-point lead with less than two minutes to go in the fourth. The next two minutes went like this:

**(1:41)** Kobe takes the handoff from Odom and drains tough pull-up 3 to make it 96-92.

**(0:49)**Grizzlies fail to score. Kobe hits another 3 with a hand in his face. 96-95.

**(0:17)**Following a Brandon Roy layup Kobe tightropes the sideline, elevates and hits      yet another 3 with a hand in his face. 98-98. Overtime. Lakers pull out the W.

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## **The Forgettable One**

#### 60 points, 20-37 shooting, Mar 22, 2007 Lakers @ Grizzlies

There’s really nothing special about this 60-point performance beyond it being a 60-point game. It was his first such game on the road. It was a close game most of the way, LA prevailed. Next.

## **Kobe puts on a show at Madison Square Garden**

#### 61 points, 19-31 shooting, Feb 2, 2009 Lakers @ Knicks

"It's a blessing to do what you love and to have moments like this," Bryant said. "On a lighter note, I'm going to review this documentary I'm doing with Spike Lee tonight after the game, and I didn't feel like sitting next to him and hearing him talking trash about the Knicks, so that was added incentive as well. Seriously. He's going to get an earful tonight." – Kobe Bryant after scoring 61 on the Knicks.

The pregame show essentially turned into a promotional event for the new Spike Lee joint, “Kobe Doin’ Work.” At a certain point during all the hoopla you had to think Kobe might try to do something special tonight. Now, maybe he was deliberately going for the record. Maybe Spike said something irksome like, “You’ll never eclipse MJ’s ‘Double-Nickel’ game!” or, “Our documentary sucks.” Maybe Kobe was just trying to promote his new movie with Spike. Or maybe he was just feeling it. It doesn’t matter. From the outset, it was clear what kind of night it was going to be. Kobe buried the Knicks with an array of difficult jumpers, fadeaways, leaners, and pivot moves. He finished with 61—breaking Bernard King’s Garden record of 60—on 31 shots. Career wise, this was his most efficient 60+ game, shooting .613 from the field. Watch the highlights. His footwork is textbook, his pump fakes are flawless, and his stroke is sublime. His offensive mastery and ever-expanding arsenal of moves were on full display at the Garden that night. Carmelo may have the Garden record now (62), but I will remember Kobe’s seemingly effortless scoring clinic with much greater fondness.

## **Going out with a bang**

#### 60 points, 22-50 shooting, Apr 13, 2016 Lakers vs Jazz\*

\*Only Kobe and Wilt have 6 or more 60-point games

Considering that it had been more than six years since his last 50-point game, it was hard to imagine Kobe mustering up one last 40 point game even as it was happening right before my eyes. It was even harder once he hit 50. By the time he had 58 I was dancing, jumping around, and pinching myself to make sure I wasn’t having an awesome dream. Nope, just awesome real life. Kobe’s awesome performance capped off an awesome night of basketball and a truly awesome career. I don’t use that word lightly. Kobe Bryant was, is, and always will be **awesome.**

## Mamba out!

