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Obsession Is Natural | By Kobe Bryant

By Kobe Bryant

2-3 minutes

On November 12, 1996, Allen Iverson dropped 35 on the Knicks in a win at the Garden.

On November 12, 1996, I played five minutes and finished with two points in a Lakers win at Houston.

When I checked into my hotel room later that night and saw the 35 on *SportsCenter*, I lost it. I flipped the table, threw the chairs, broke the TV.

I thought I had been working hard.

Five minutes. Two points.

I needed to work harder.

I did.

On March 19, 1999, Iverson put 41 points and 10 assists on me *in* Philadelphia.



Tom Mihalek/AFP/Getty

Images

Working harder wasn't enough.

I had to study this man maniacally.

I obsessively read every article and book I could find about AI. I obsessively watched every game he had played, going back to the IUPUI All-American Game. I obsessively studied his every success, and his every struggle. I obsessively searched for any weakness I could find.

I searched the world for musings to add to my AI Musepage.

This led me to study how great white sharks hunt seals off the coast of South Africa.

The patience. The timing. The angles.

On Feb 20, 2000, in Philadelphia, PJ gave me the assignment of guarding AI at the start of the second half. No one knew how much this challenge meant to me.

I wanted him to feel the frustration I felt.

I wanted everyone who laughed at the 41 and 10 he put on me to choke on their laughter.



Tom

Mihalek/AFP/Getty Images

He would publicly say that neither of us could stop the other.

I refused to believe that.

I score 50.

You score zero.

THAT is what I believe.

When I started guarding AI, he had 16 at the half. He finished the game with 16.

Revenge was sweet.

But I wasn't satisfied after the win. I was annoyed that he had made me feel that way in the first place.

I swore, from that point on, to approach every matchup as a matter of life and death. No one was going to have that kind of control over my focus ever again.

I will choose who I want to target and lock in.

I will choose whether or not your goals for the upcoming season compromise where I want to be in 20 years.

If they don't, happy hunting to you. But if they do....

I will hunt you obsessively. It's only natural.

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