

# Longtime Lakers star Kobe Bryant says he'll retire at end of season

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Los Angeles Lakers forward Kobe Bryant (24) drives against Indiana Pacers forward Paul George during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Los Angeles, California, Nov. 29, 2015. Photo: AP/Alex Gallardo

LOS ANGELES, Calif. — After a lifetime in basketball, Kobe Bryant announced Sunday that he will retire after this season. Bryant kept his vow that he would never play for another team and ends a 20-year career spent entirely with the Los Angeles Lakers.

"I had to just accept the fact that I don't want to do this anymore, and I'm OK with that," Bryant said.

Bryant made the long-expected announcement in a poem titled "Dear Basketball," posted Sunday on The Players' Tribune.

"My heart can take the pounding. My mind can handle the grind. But my body knows it's time to say goodbye," wrote Bryant, who is the third-highest scorer in NBA history. "And that's OK. I'm ready to let you go. I want you to know now. So we both can savor every moment we have left together. The good and the bad. We have given each other all that we have."

## **An NBA All-Star 17 Times**

At the Lakers game against the Indiana Pacers Sunday, fans received a letter from Bryant in a black and gold envelope.

"What you've done for me is far greater than anything I've done for you," wrote Bryant in the letter. "I knew that each minute of each game I wore purple and gold," the team colors.

Bryant's announcement fit his dramatic career. He has played in five NBA championships and was named an NBA All-Star a total of 17 times. No other NBA player has spent longer on a single team than Bryant.

In 1996, Bryant joined his favorite team straight from high school in suburban Philadelphia. He made the highest score in Lakers history and inspired a generation of fans and players. Only 13 players in NBA history have played on more championship teams than Bryant.

"Kobe was my Jordan," said Paul George, an Indiana Pacers player, who was referring to basketball superstar Michael Jordan. "Watching him win championships when I was growing up, that's who I idolized. That was the standard."

## **"Very Solid In My Decision"**

Bryant's last three seasons ended early because of injuries, and in the last two years, he played only 41 games. In the first 16 games of this season, he made just one of every three of his shots, and he has dealt with pain and exhaustion every day.

Bryant said that he does not have a burning desire to continue playing basketball. "I feel very solid in my decision," he said.

NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said that "Kobe Bryant is one of the greatest players in the history of our game."

Before Sunday's game, as Bryant warmed up, more people than usual took cellphone pictures of him. Bryant then missed his first six shots. He made two important shots later in the game.

Neither Bryant nor the Lakers are doing well this season, but he intends to keep going.

"There's nothing I would love more than to be able to play this entire season," he said. Bryant added that he would like to play on all the basketball league's courts one last time.

## **He's The Highest-Paid Player**

Bryant earns \$25 million and is the NBA's highest-paid player this season.

Lakers General Manager Mitch Kupchak said the team is not playing well enough to challenge Bryant. "So I'm not surprised that he would make the announcement now," Kupchak said. "I think the game will be easier for him now. I think he'll be able to enjoy the rest of the season."

In his first public comments since his decision, Bryant said his decision has given him peace of mind. He did not say much about his plans for the future, although he said it would be an "an honor" if he is picked for the U.S. Olympic team this summer.

"Honestly, when I'm sitting in meditation, my mind starts drifting, and it always drifted toward basketball, always." Bryant added that he does not think about basketball all the time now, which make him think that it is time to move on to other things.

## Quiz

- 1 What is MOST likely the reason why the author included the quote by Paul George in the section "An NBA All-Star 17 Times"?
- (A) to show that George wants Bryant's job
  - (B) to show that Bryant influenced other NBA players
  - (C) to explain how other players feel about Bryant's announcement
  - (D) to explain how Michael Jordan influenced George

- 2 Read this excerpt from Bryant's poem.

*"So we both can savor every moment we have left together."*

Which word could replace the word "savor" WITHOUT changing its meaning?

- (A) decide
  - (B) enjoy
  - (C) know
  - (D) discover
- 3 Based on the article, which statement BEST describes how Bryant feels about his decision to retire?
- (A) He is worried and scared.
  - (B) He is excited and eager.
  - (C) He is accepting and at ease.
  - (D) He is mad and upset.

- 4 Read the sentence from the article.

*Bryant made the long-expected announcement in a poem titled "Dear Basketball," posted Sunday on The Players' Tribune.*

What does "long-expected" tell you?

- (A) The announcement was shocking.
- (B) The announcement was of interest to many people.
- (C) The announcement took a long time to make.
- (D) The announcement was not a surprise.