



BREAKING NEWS

Kobe Bryant, four others killed in helicopter crash in Calabasas

CALIFORNIA

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The crash site in Calabasas where Kobe Bryant and four others were killed on Sunday. (Christina House/ Los Angeles Times)

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Kobe Bryant, 41, the legendary basketball star who spent 20 years with the Los Angeles Lakers, was

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Bryant's death stunned Los Angeles and the sports world, which mourned one of basketball's greatest players. Sources said the helicopter took off from Orange County, where Bryant lived.

The crash occurred shortly before 10 a.m. near Las Virgenes Road, south of Agoura Road, according to a watch commander for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. Four others on board also died.

Bryant excelled at Lower Merion High in Ardmore, Pa., near Philadelphia, winning numerous national awards as a senior before announcing his intention to skip college and enter the NBA draft. He was selected 13th overall by Charlotte in 1996, but the Lakers had already worked out a deal with the Hornets to acquire Bryant before his selection. Bryant impressed Lakers General Manager [Jerry West](#) during a pre-draft workout session in Los Angeles. Less than three weeks later, the Lakers traded starting center [Vlade Divac](#) to the Hornets in exchange for Bryant's rights. Bryant, whose favorite team growing up was the Lakers, had to have his parents co-sign his NBA contract because he was 17 years old.

The 6-foot-6 guard made his pro debut in the 1996-97 season opener against Minnesota; at the time he was the youngest player ever to appear in an NBA game. He started in only a handful of games during his rookie season, coming off the bench in support of [Nick Van Exel](#) and [Eddie Jones](#). However, coach [Del Harris](#) played him more as the season progressed, allowing Bryant to showcase the skills that made him a top candidate for rookie of the year. Those skills were also on display when Bryant won the 1997 NBA slam dunk competition.

Bryant continued to improve during his sophomore season in the league, averaging 15.4 points per game. However, his breakout came in the lockout-shortened 1998-99 season when he started in all 50 games after the Lakers traded away Van Exel and Jones.

Bryant and leading scorer [Shaquille O'Neal](#) quickly morphed into one of the most lethal scoring and defensive combinations in the league. Together, with coach [Phil Jackson](#) guiding them, they led the Lakers to three consecutive championships (2000-02) as Bryant began to cement his place as the game's top player.

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build during the 2002-03 and 2003-04 seasons as the Lakers failed to capitalize on their status as top contenders for the NBA title. Making matters worse, Bryant was arrested in July 2003 on allegations of sexual assault.

The charges were eventually dropped, but Bryant's reputation took a hit.

After the Lakers lost to Detroit in the NBA Finals with a star-studded team that included [Karl Malone](#) and [Gary Payton](#), O'Neal was traded to Miami and Jackson's coaching contract was not renewed. As the team's undisputed leader, Bryant signed a seven-year contract to remain with the team.

Bryant summed up the tensions between him and O'Neal after the Lakers won the NBA title in 2009: "We're great as individuals, but ... it's probably the first dynamic duo that had two alpha males on one team. We managed to make it work for three championships."

Bryant posted some of the best offensive numbers of his career over the next three seasons, but the team struggled, failing to make the playoffs in 2005 before suffering consecutive first-round defeats to Phoenix in 2006 and 2007. Jackson returned to the team for the 2005-06 season, and Bryant went on to lead the league in scoring that season with a career-best 35.4 average. He scored 40 points or more in 27 games and became the first player since Wilt Chamberlain in 1964 to finish with 45 points or more in four consecutive games.

His biggest single-game achievement came Jan. 22, 2006, against Toronto when he scored a career-high 81 points, the second most in NBA history. Earlier that season, on Dec. 20, 2005, he scored 62 points in 33 minutes through three quarters of a game against Dallas; he had outscored the entire Mavericks team, 62-61, entering the final quarter, in which Bryant did not play. Bryant continued to impress during the 2006-07 season, scoring 50 or more points in a team-record 10 games and averaging 31.6 points a game to capture his second NBA scoring title.

"He is the No. 1 player in the league, by far," Washington guard Gilbert Arenas said in 2006. "With a player like him, he just wants that challenge. He's just that fierce competitor. He doesn't want to

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Bryant's 2007-08 NBA MVP season got off to a tumultuous start after he reportedly demanded to be traded. He was reportedly unhappy with Lakers General Manager [Mitch Kupchak](#) and Jackson. "I would like to be traded," Bryant said during a radio interview. "Tough as it is to come to that conclusion, there's no other alternative. It's rough, man, but I don't see how you can rebuild that trust. I just don't know how you can move forward in that type of situation."

Bryant eventually backtracked on his trade demands and posted perhaps his best all-around season, leading a team re-energized by [Pau Gasol's](#) arrival from Memphis in February 2008 to a first-place finish in the Western Conference. The Lakers embarked on a memorable playoff run before losing to Boston in the Finals. Later that year Bryant went on to win a gold medal with the U.S. team at the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing.

With Bryant pleased about the direction the team was heading, he guided the Lakers to back-to-back titles in 2009 and 2010. He was named the NBA Finals MVP both years as the team once again ascended to the top of the NBA.

Ongoing soreness in Bryant's knee and ankle coupled with the team's heavy reliance in him played a role in the Lakers' championship run coming to an end in 2011. Bryant posted his lowest points per game totals since the 2003-04 season as he dealt with the aftereffects of offseason arthroscopic knee surgery. He went on to win his fourth NBA All-Star Game most-valuable-player award but fell short of his ultimate goal of winning a sixth NBA title. Bryant also became the youngest player in NBA history to amass 27,000 career points.

Bryant finished third in league scoring in 2011-12 despite dealing with ongoing knee and ankle issues. In January 2012, he scored at least 40 points in four consecutive games, which included a 48-point effort against the Phoenix Suns.

Following the team's acquisition of Dwight Howard in August 2012, the Lakers were regarded as a favorite for the NBA title. However, friction between Bryant and Howard started to develop as the team struggled. Despite this, Bryant led the NBA in scoring for much of the first half of the season and surpassed NBA great Wilt Chamberlain for fourth all-time in league scoring. But Bryant's

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Bryant, who signed a two-year, \$48.5-million contract extension with the Lakers before the start of the 2013-14 season, did not return from injury until December. He played in only six games before suffering a lateral tibial plateau fracture in his left knee. The injury forced him to miss the remainder of the season as the Lakers limped to a 27-55 record, missing the playoffs for only the second time since Bryant joined the franchise.

He retired from the NBA but began a new career in Hollywood.

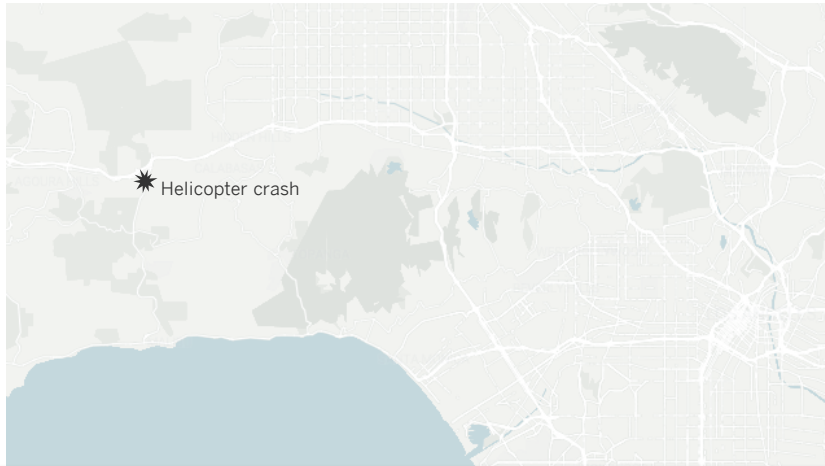
In 2018, he won an Oscar along with director Glen Keane for the animated short film “Dear Basketball.”

Just Saturday night, Laker LeBron James passed Bryant for third on the NBA’s all-time scoring list.

Allen Kenitzer, an FAA spokesman, said his agency and the National Transportation Safety Board were investigating the helicopter crash.

Helicopter crash in Calabasas

A helicopter crashed near Las Virgenes Road, south of Agoura Road, on Sunday morning.



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