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**TOP STORIES**

# A full life after NBA

## Bryant was an author, producer entrepreneur

BY MICHAEL O'KEEFFE

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Kobe Bryant wore No. 24 during the second half of his storied professional career because, the NBA superstar said in a Kidsday interview published last month, it reminded him that time and life are precious.

"As far as 24, that symbolized every single day," Bryant told Kidsday reporters in an interview published Dec. 19, referring to the 24 hours in a day. "Can't waste a single day. Get better every day. And that was like a reminder for me."

Bryant, 41 — killed along with his 13-year-old daughter and seven others who are presumed dead after a helicopter crash near Calabasas, California — didn't waste a lot of time. When he retired from the NBA in 2016 after winning five championships and two Olympic gold medals, Bryant launched a career as a businessman, author and producer that netted him an Academy Award and a Sports Emmy.

He began preparing for life after basketball several years before he retired as the third-leading scorer in NBA history, deciding he didn't want to simply endorse sneakers or lend his celebrity to other people's projects. He wanted to be hands-on, he said.

"I want to be a part of something and if you want to be a true entrepreneur you have to put skin in the game," Bryant told ESPN in 2014. "At this stage in my life, I don't have the interest in taking on any more endorsements."

Bryant's first investment was in BODYARMOR, a sports drink company, but the venture that seemed closest to his heart was Granity Studios, a multimedia company that creates content for young adults.

The studio's animated film "Dear Basketball," which was narrated by Bryant and based on a poem he wrote, won an Academy Award for Best Animated Short Film in 2018, as



**Kobe Bryant with Kidsday reporters Humberto Guevara, left, Ian Codio, Alan Turcios and Jose Munguia, of The De La Salle School in Freeport, at the Barnes & Noble in Union Square last year.**

well as a Sports Emmy Award.

"I can write. I can edit. I can produce," Bryant told Newsday's Neil Best in April 2018. "I can do those things at a serious level. It's not something that's kind of a one-time passion sort of thing. It's just something we do every single day."

Bryant also that spring kicked off "Detail," a subscription-based ESPN+ show in which he analyzed that year's NBA playoffs. Bryant said he had no interest in following fellow NBA superstars into game or studio analysis.

"I love coming to the office writing, editing, creating," Bryant told Newsday. "Building a small studio is no small task. It's all encompassing. I just don't have the time to sit in a (television) studio and do that."

Bryant also teamed up with author Wesley King to create a Young Adult book franchise called "The Wizenard Series," described by Parade magazine as "the intersection of Harry Potter-esque fantasy and traditional sports." The first book, "The Wizenard Series: Train-

ing Camp," was published in 2019. The second book, "The Wizenard Series: Season One," was scheduled to be released in March.

Bryant told the Kidsday reporters he never imagined during his 20-year NBA career that he would some day be an author.

"I had no idea that this is what I'd be doing," Bryant told the reporters, students at De La Salle School in Freeport. "If you told me this is what I was going to do when I first started basketball, I would have thought you were crazy. Life has a way of bringing your passions to you."

Bryant told the young journalists, Ian Codio, Humberto Guevara, Jose Munguia and Alan Turcios, that he surprisingly didn't miss life in the NBA.

"Again, if you told me I would have felt that way 10, 15 years ago . . . no way," Bryant said. "That's the beautiful thing about life is that it takes you on different roads. And now writing, I love it every much as I love playing basketball."



**Kobe Bryant with the Oscar for Best Animated Short Film, "Dear Basketball," in 2018.**