

Kobe Bryant's Achilles heel injury hamstringing Lakers

THIRTY-FOUR-YEAR-OLD BASKETBALL LEGEND OUT FOR NINE MONTHS

BY MICHAEL CASWELL
STAFF WRITER

Kobe drives left towards the basket. What's next, an electrifying dunk? His unstoppable pull-up jumper? Bryant goes down. Is this a dream?

Bryant was leading a charge to push the injury-plagued Los Angeles Lakers into playoff contention after an incredible individual season. This may have been the 34-year-old's best season yet until the move.

On a simple dribble to the basket against the Golden State Warriors, Bryant's memorable season came to an end. An MRI showed a torn Achilles tendon. Just the night before, the Black Mamba had scored a dominating 47 points against conference rival, Portland Trail Blazers.

This season, the Lakers have been burdened with team chemistry and coaching changes, yet Bryant has still managed to make a push for the playoffs. The only playoffs Bryant will see this year will be in front of his big screen.

Bryant is expected to be out nine months with an injury Guilford College Head Athletic Trainer Gary Rizza called "possibly career ending."

How could something like this happen to an elite athlete who keeps himself physically in shape year-round?

"Fatigue may have something to do with it," said Rizza. "Then again, it could be anything."

"The Human Highlight Film" Dominique Wilkins had the same injury when he was 32 after years of rim rocking. Wilkins rehabbed for 11 months after surgery and returned successfully the next season to average a stunning 30 points per game.

Bryant knows how to work hard, so there is no question

that he will be back next season. The question is will he still be able to perform up to Kobe standards?

"Kobe is the best player in the game with a tremendous amount of talent," said Caleb Kimbrough, assistant basketball coach. "I expect a full recovery and a productive season from Bryant next season."

Some aren't as optimistic about his return. Too many variables must be answered.

"I believe Kobe will be back next year, but I do not know if he can maintain the numbers we are use to seeing from him," said Terry Whisnant II, Florida State University shooting guard. "It's a serious injury combined with old age. It should slow him down a good bit."

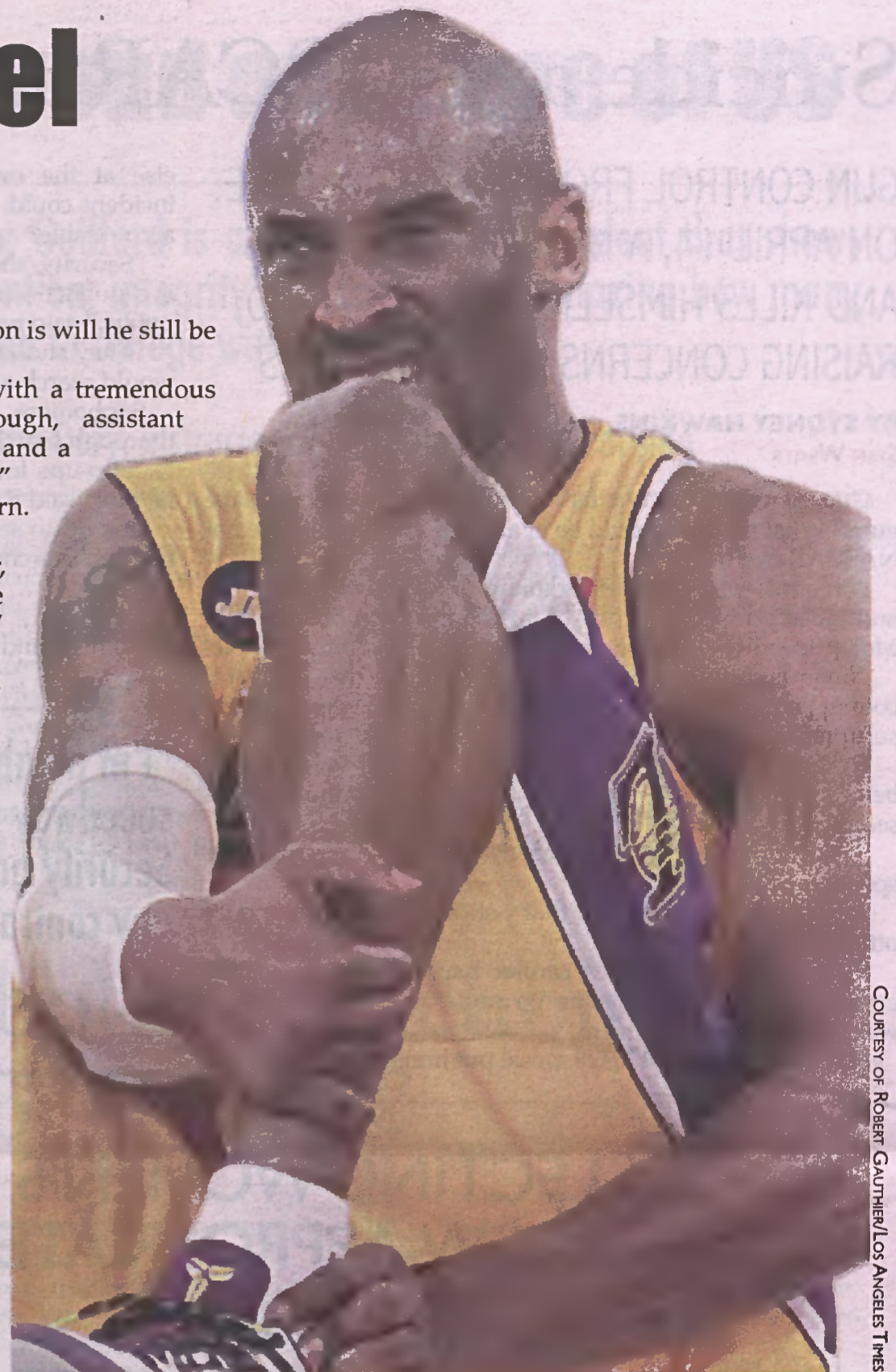
Known for his tremendous work ethic, it's pretty much a fact that he will rehab to be game-ready by next season. But, will he be able to handle the number one option duties? Bryant was in the top three for minutes played this season, and he's not getting any younger.

"Even if you take Kobe out of a game, there's a lot of times where he'll just get up and put himself back in," said Laker General Manager Mitch Kupchak according to InsideSocal.com.

At the tender age of 34, Bryant monitored his own minutes without regret. Coach D'Antoni, grow a pair and sit your best player down.

The NBA is just not the same without number 24 on the floor. The Lakers without Bryant is like Kool-Aid without sugar.

Get well Mamba, get well.



COURTESY OF ROBERT GAUHER/LOS ANGELES TIMES

Jim Caldwell finishes athletic speaker series strong, motivates new students

BY NATALIE SUTTON
STAFF WRITER

Super Bowl-winning coach Jim Caldwell concluded the Guilford Athletics Leadership Forum for student-athletes on Sunday, April 14.

Caldwell is the offensive coordinator for the Baltimore Ravens, the 2013 Super Bowl Champions. Before that campaign, he led Peyton Manning and the Indianapolis Colts to the Super Bowl in 2009.

Among many other accomplishments, Caldwell made history as the first African-American head coach in the Atlantic Coast Conference in 1993 at Wake Forest.

"Jim Caldwell encompasses everything that a great leader should possess," said former Wake Forest head coach Dave Odom '65. "He's got great character. He's got great commitment. He's highly motivated. He's caring."

"I just think he was a great finisher. He capsules it all together and puts a nice bow on the whole thing."

The forum focused on what Caldwell called the Six Pillars of Effective Leadership.

According to Caldwell, in order to become a good leader, one must possess competence, humility, motivation, passion and, above all, serve the community for the greater good.

"I thought Coach Caldwell's remarks were some of the best that we've had in this series," said Dave Walters, sports information director and assistant director of athletics. "He kept the audience's attention and presented some pretty clear principles for the students to walk away and apply in their own situation as leaders."

As Walters predicted, many students left the presentation feeling like they had acquired useful and relevant skills.

"It was awesome," said junior Madisen Forehand. "He showed us great leadership qualities that we could all use and apply in real life as student athletes on campus."

Jonathon Cooper, who played football for the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, found Caldwell's words to be invaluable.

"I thought it was very good," said Cooper. "I was just in (Guilford athletes') places as a student athlete, and I feel like they could really apply what he was saying on just being a leader and the effect of the business world, and I really appreciated it."

Although Caldwell's expertise lies within football, he referenced subjects all across the board during the presentation from the Kentucky Derby to NASCAR in order to explain the importance of commitment and passion to a sport and to life.

"Jim Caldwell was a very strong presenter and well spoken individual," said junior Michael Robles. "He motivated a lot of us, and I'm glad I had the opportunity to hear him."

Overcoming obstacles, he humbly reflected on the struggles of being one of few African-American coaches in the big leagues.

"When I was first coming through the rings, there weren't many African-American head football coaches," said Caldwell. "But, I had the chance to work for some great people that certainly gave me some great direction, which helped me out quite a bit."

Caldwell ended by painting a picture of a glass full of water. He used this imagery to describe how he stays balanced between all of the different realms of his life.

Considering a typical off-season day for Caldwell consists of 15 hours at the Baltimore Ravens Corporate Headquarters and Training Facility, he understands the difficulties of the juggling act but offered advice to listeners.

"When I'm at work, I pour it all into my work," said Caldwell. "When I'm home, I pour everything I have into home. I don't take work home with me. When I'm at church, I focus on worship. I pour everything I have into church."

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Dave Odom '65, former Wake Forest University head coach