

# Ty Ankrom's Here's What I Think ...

**M**y sport of choice in my youth was playing baseball.

But every spring, my son and I go to Columbus to watch the best high school basketball teams in the state compete in the OHSAA tournament.

I am an educator first and foremost but I am a fan of sports and the athletes who hone their talent and skills into something that propels them to greatness in that arena.

Athletes have a finite career span, as wear and tear on the body or injuries can end a player's game at a young age.

So athletes retire and come up with a "second act" such as becoming sports analysts or commentators, coaching or entering the business world.

Basketball great Kobe Bryant's death Sunday in a helicopter crash — which also took the life of his 13-year-old daughter, Gianna; John Altobelli, head baseball coach at Orange Coast College, his wife, Keri, and daughter Alyssa; girls basketball coach Christina Mauser; Sara Chester and her daughter Payton, a teammate of Gianna's; and pilot Ara Zoybayan — rocked fans.

When he retired in 2016 after 20 years with the Lakers, he had won five NBA championships and was the career leader in points and games played for the Lakers.

But it was his second act that fans have been

Kobe Bryant posted this photo of himself with his daughter Gianna on his Instagram page in September. Kobe frequently spoke of how much he loved having daughters.



January 31, 2020

"The most important thing is to try and inspire people so that they can be great in whatever they want to do."  
~ Kobe Bryant ~

remembering this week.

When he announced his retirement, he did so in the form of a poem, *Dear Basketball*, that became an animated short and earned him an Oscar in 2018. (Read the poem here: [www.theplayer-s Tribune.com/en-us/articles/dear-basketball](http://www.theplayer-s Tribune.com/en-us/articles/dear-basketball).)

Also in 2018 he co-founded Mamba Sports Academy that sought to "support youth, amateur and elite athletes with a full-circle approach that includes body, performance and cognitive training."

There was no shortage of tributes on social media from fans, fellow athletes and celebrities. But I was especially touched by how educators were handling the trauma with students.

A local radio personality said that his son's class crumpled up pieces of paper and, at 8:24 (for Kobe's jersey numbers 8 and 24) students made baskets in the trashcan.

Other educators, according to an article on Education Week's Web site, used Kobe's poem as a prompt for students to write their own poems about something they loved.

Kobe's light was extinguished far too soon but like others before him, he leaves a legacy that resonates.

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