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MAGAZINE



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HOUSEHOLD

Kobe Bryant, daughter Gianna die in helicopter crash

NBA legend Kobe Bryant and his daughter were among several people killed in a helicopter crash in Calabasas, California, on Sunday, a source confirmed to ESPN. Bryant was 41.

Bryant was on his way to a travel basketball game with his daughter Gianna Bryant, who was 13, when the helicopter crashed, sources said. Those aboard the helicopter included another player and parent. Los Angeles County Sheriff Alex Villanueva said in a news conference there were no survivors, and according to the flight manifest, there were nine people on board the helicopter.

Los Angeles County fire chief Daryl Osby said the Federal Aviation Administration is on the scene and will work with the National Transportation Safety Board to investigate the crash. He said authorities will not release names of victims until they are identified and next of kin notified.

Orange Coast College baseball coach John Altobelli was among the victims, his assistant, Ron La Ruffa, told the Orange County Register. Altobelli won four California community college titles in his 24 years at the school.

A source told ESPN's Ohm Youngmisuk that the Lakers found out about Bryant's death while on the team plane flying home from Philadelphia.

"Everyone is in shock," a team source said.

The crash comes one day after Bryant was passed by Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James for third place on the NBA's all-time scoring list. As late as 10:39 p.m. ET on Saturday, Bryant was active on social media, congratulating James on Twitter during the Lakers' 108-91 loss to the Philadelphia 76ers.

James inscribed his sneakers with "Mamba 4 Life" and "8/24 KB" in gold marker before the game, showing respect for Bryant, an 18-time All-Star with the Lakers who is eligible for the Basketball Hall of Fame this year.



All week, in the lead-up to the milestone, James was quick to laud Bryant.

"It's another guy that I looked up to when I was in grade school and high school," James said. "Seeing him come straight out of high school, he is someone that I used as inspiration. It was like, wow. Seeing a kid, 17 years old, come into the NBA and trying to make an impact on a franchise, I used it as motivation. He helped me before he even knew of me because of what he was able to do. So, just to be able to, at this point of my career, to share the same jersey that he wore, be with this historical franchise and just represent the purple and gold, it's very humbling and it's dope.

"Kobe's a legend, that's for damn sure."

A 6-foot-6 small forward with the ability to swing up front and play point or shooting guard, Bryant entered the NBA straight out of high school. In 1996, at age 18, he became the youngest player in NBA history.

He won five NBA titles in his time with the Lakers, as well as two Olympic gold medals playing for the United States. Now fourth on the NBA's all-time scoring list with 33,643 points, Bryant won two NBA Finals MVP awards and one NBA regular-season MVP nod in 2008.

Shaquille O'Neal, who won three titles with Bryant in Los Angeles, posted on Instagram: "There's no words to express the pain I'm going through now with this tragic and sad moment of losing my friend, my brother, my partner in winning championships, my dude and my homie. I love you brother and you will be missed. My condolences goes out to the Bryant family and the families of the other passengers on board. IM SICK RIGHT NOW !"


This week marked the 14-year anniversary of Bryant's 81-point game against the Toronto Raptors, still the second-most points ever scored in an NBA game, behind Wilt Chamberlain's 100.

"The NBA family is devastated by the tragic passing of Kobe Bryant and his daughter, Gianna," NBA commissioner Adam Silver said in a statement.

"For 20 seasons, Kobe showed us what is possible when remarkable talent blends with an absolute devotion to winning. He was one of the most extraordinary players in the history of our game with accomplishments that are legendary: five NBA championships, an NBA MVP award, 18 NBA All-Star selections, and two Olympic gold medals. But he will be remembered most for inspiring people around the world to pick up a basketball and compete to the very best of their ability. He was generous with the wisdom he acquired and saw it as his mission to share it with future generations of players, taking special delight in passing down his love of the game to Gianna.

Kobe Bryant Career

		LAKERS RANK
Points	33,643	1st
3-pt FG	1,827	1st
Steals	1,944	1st
Games	1,346	1st
Assists	6,306	2nd



"We send our heartfelt condolences to his wife, Vanessa, and their family, the Lakers organization and the entire sports world."

The NBA played its games Sunday -- something the fiercely competitive Bryant likely would have appreciated. A moment of silence was held at the first NBA game of the day -- the Nuggets vs. the Rockets in Denver. The Raptors and Suns each allowed 24 seconds to run off the clock on the first two possessions without playing. Orlando took a 24-second violation and the Magic followed with an eight-second backcourt violation. The Knicks and Nets also took shot-clock violations at Madison Square Garden, which was lit in purple and gold. The Pelicans and Celtics also took violations, and Boston's Jaylen Brown pretended to take a shot as the shot clock hit eight.

Bryant passed his childhood idol, Michael Jordan, on the all-time scoring list in 2014. Jordan embraced Bryant, fueling his passion for the game. The two had a memorable matchup in Bryant's first All-Star Game selection in New York's Madison Square Garden, and later, when Jordan played for the Washington Wizards, Bryant scored 42 points in a half (en route to 55 for the game) against him.

"He knows how much I've learned from him," Bryant said of Jordan in 2014, "from the other legends and him in particular."

"I am in shock over the tragic news of Kobe's and Gianna's passing," Jordan said in a statement. "Words can't describe the pain I'm feeling. I loved Kobe -- he was like a little brother to me. We used to talk often, and I will miss those conversations very much. He was a fierce competitor, one of the greats of the game and a creative force. Kobe was also an amazing dad who loved his family deeply -- and took great pride in his daughter's love for the game of basketball. Yvette [Prieto, Jordan's wife] joins me in sending my deepest condolences to Vanessa, the Lakers organization and basketball fans around the world."

A Philadelphia native, Bryant was selected No. 13 overall in 1996 by the Charlotte Hornets before being traded to the Lakers. He wore with the Lakers both Nos. 8 and 24, both of which were retired by the franchise. He was credited with changing how NBA front offices viewed wing talent coming out of high school into the draft.

"I'm happy just to be in any conversation with Kobe Bean Bryant. One of the all-time greatest basketball players to ever play, one of the all-time greatest Lakers," James said Saturday night. "The man got two jerseys hanging up in Staples Center. It's just crazy."

Bryant is the only player in NBA history to have multiple jerseys retired by a single franchise.





On Nov. 29, 2015, Bryant announced he intended to retire at the end of the season, which launched a farewell tour for the ages. He played in 66 games that season for Los Angeles, averaging 17.6 points, 3.7 rebounds and 2.8 assists.

Nichols: Kobe loved being a dad." Rachel Nichols discusses Kobe Bryant's relationship with his children, including his daughter Gianna, who died in a helicopter crash with Kobe.

In his final game, on April 13, 2016, he scored 60 points, leading the Lakers past the Utah Jazz 101-96.

Another Lakers legend, Magic Johnson, also said he was "heartbroken" over Bryant's death.

'As I try to write this post, my mind is racing. I'm in disbelief and have been crying all morning over this devastating news that Kobe and his young daughter, Gigi have passed away in a helicopter crash. Cookie and I are heartbroken.' While Bryant was an unqualified star on the court, he did have controversy off it. He was accused of sexual assault in Colorado in 2003. The criminal case was dropped the next year, but Bryant still issued an apology. He said he considered the encounter to be consensual but recognized that the woman "did not and does not view this incident the same way I did."

Bryant married Vanessa Laine Bryant in 2001, and they had four daughters together -- the youngest is just seven months old. Bryant's father, Joe "Jellybean" Bryant, is also a former NBA player.

Hundreds of people gathered at a makeshift memorial outside Staples Center in Los Angeles.

Bryant transitioned into a post-basketball life that was far from retirement. He won an Academy Award in 2018, taking home an Oscar for the animated short, "Dear Basketball." Bryant also created a children's book series, inspired by his love for "Harry Potter," and it became a New York Times bestseller.

Mets star Jeff McNeil played for Altobelli, who managed Brewster in the Cape Cod League in 2012.

"He's one of the main reasons I'm still playing professional baseball," McNeil told ESPN's Jeff Passan of Altobelli.

McNeil said he had struggled in college at Long Beach State, but one of his coaches called Altobelli, a California junior college legend, and asked him to bring McNeil to the Cape anyway.

"He took a chance on me, kept me the whole summer," McNeil said. "Him taking that chance on me, having me on his team, got me drafted."

Colin Storm was in his living room in Calabasas when he heard "what sounded like a low-flying airplane or helicopter."

"It was very foggy, so we couldn't see anything," he said, according to a report by The Associated Press. "But then we heard some sputtering, and then a boom."

The fog then cleared a bit, and Storm could see smoke rising from the hillside in front of his home.

Juan Bonilla of Calabasas said he was working on his roof Sunday morning when he heard a helicopter flying low. He said he thought it was a sheriff's helicopter on a training mission. He heard nothing amiss with the engine or rotors and said he did not see any mechanical issue with the chopper. It was foggy, but he said visibility didn't seem to be low at the time of the crash.

Osby said firefighters found a quarter-mile brush fire when they hiked into the scene. Paramedics were lowered from a helicopter.

FAA spokesman Allen Kenitzer said the downed chopper was a Sikorsky S-76.

The NTSB sent a "go team" of investigators to the site. The NTSB typically issues a preliminary report within about 10 days that will give a rough summary of what investigators have learned. A ruling on the cause can take a year or more.

Oscar Pareja opens Orlando City SC tenure with 3-0 preseason win

New manager Oscar Pareja opened his first preseason in charge of Orlando City SC on Saturday with a comfortable 3-0 victory over Stetson University at the club's training facility.

Orlando City SC
@OrlandoCitySC

The young Lions finish off the scrimmage 3-0 over Stetson. #VamosOrlando

The match was a closed-door friendly and results were not immediately available, though Pareja opted for a largely youthful lineup, according to the team's Twitter account.

Orlando City SC
@OrlandoCitySC
A young squad of Lions leads Stetson 1-0 at the half.
#VamosOrlando



In addition to hiring Pareja, the Lions have been one of the busier MLS teams this offseason in terms of acquisitions. Most recently, Orlando signed Peru national team goalkeeper Pedro Gallese on a free transfer. They also signed a pair of Brazilians in the last 30 days, making a permanent move for Corinthians winger Junior Urso and securing Palmeiras center back Antonio Carlos on loan.

Orlando's preseason continues next Saturday against Columbus Crew SC.

CREDIT: MLSsoccer staff Contributor

Zachary Brault-Guillard joins Montreal Impact via transfer from Olympique Lyonnais

TRANSFER TRACKER: Signing

Another familiar face is returning to the Montreal Impact for the 2020 season, as the club announced Saturday the permanent transfer of right back Zachary Brault-Guillard from French club Olympique Lyonnais. Brault-Guillard has signed a two-year contract with Montreal, with options for 2022 and 2023.

While on loan with the Impact last year, he featured in 13 matches (nine starts) and recorded one assist. He also started twice in the Canadian Championship, a competition Montreal won over Toronto FC to book entry into the 2020 Concacaf Champions League.

"We are glad to have completed the transfer of Zachary Brault-Guillard," said Impact sporting director Olivier Renard. "He is a promising young Canadian that showed his qualities last season, and we are happy to have him with us for many years."

Brault-Guillard, 21, has featured four times for Canada on the international stage, including once in the 2019 Concacaf Gold Cup. Originally born in Haiti, Brault-Guillard didn't make an appearance for Lyon's first team, though was their reserve team's captain.

Brault-Guillard is the second defender Montreal have signed this offseason, with Joel Waterman the other after he joined via transfer from Canadian Premier League side Cavalry FC.

The Impact now have six defenders under contract for the 2020 campaign, with their CCL return and Thierry Henry's debut as head coach set for Feb. 19 at Costa Rican side Saprissa. Montreal begin their MLS slate Feb. 29 at home against the New England Revolution..



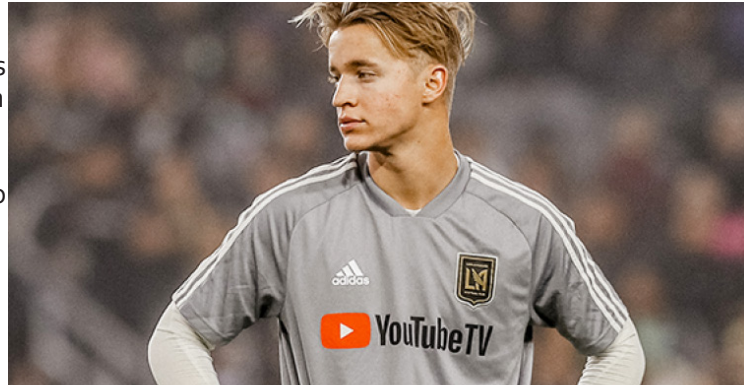
CREDIT: Jonathan Sigal Contributor

L AFC sign Bryce Duke after acquiring his Homegrown rights from Real Salt Lake

TRANSFER TRACKER STATUS: Signing

L AFC announced the signing of midfielder Bryce Duke as they opened their preseason slate with a 2-0 friendly win over Penarol on Saturday night, handing the 18-year-old his first appearance with the club after acquiring his Homegrown rights from Real Salt Lake and inking him to an HGP deal.

A native of Casa Grande, Arizona, former home of RSL's residential academy, Duke is a US youth international who arrives at the reigning Supporters' Shield holders from the Under-18/19 Development Academy side of the Barca Residency Academy, who succeeded RSL at the Casa Grande facility. L AFC sent Salt Lake \$50,000 in 2021 General Academy Money in order to acquire his rights.



"We have monitored Bryce's progress closely and we believe that he has what it takes to succeed at the next level," said L AFC EVP & GM John Thorington in a club release. "We are delighted that he has chosen to start his professional career with L AFC as he continues to develop as a person and player."

Duke scored five goals in 13 games (12 starts) for Barca AZ this season, after tabbing 16 goals in 59 games over three years in RSL's youth system. He played the second half of Saturday's friendly at Banc of California Stadium.

CREDIT: Charles Boehm National Writer

L AFC supporters steal the show in team's 2-0 preseason opening win vs Penarol

It's as if the offseason never happened.

The 3252 was rocking, MVP Carlos Vela was scoring an unbelievable bender and L AFC was posting a shutout win at a sold-out Banc of California Stadium. All this for the first preseason match of 2020.

Despite missing several starters on international duty, L AFC beat Uruguayan giants Penarol 2-0 and sent a message to the rest of the league that the reigning Supporters' Shield holders are on a mission in 2020.

Five academy players, three trialists (draft picks Younes Boudadi, Jorge Gonzalez and Jack Hallahan) and three guest players from Phoenix Rising (Kevon Lambert, Junior Flemmings, Jordan Schweitzer) saw action in the match, but the highlight came off the left foot of Carlos Vela who scored another magical curler into the far corner to open the scoring for L AFC:



Adrien Perez scored L AFC's second of the night, new goalkeeper Kenneth Vermeer made a key stop on a Penarol free kick and the supporters in the 3252 did the rest in providing a backdrop that few would expect during preseason.

Credit to the fans in the 3252, who had actor, writer and producer Keegan-Michael Key calling this preseason match "the best sporting event I've ever been in the city of Los Angeles and I've lived here for a long time. This is unbelievable. It's what football should be."

"This is the best sporting event I've ever been to in the city of Los Angeles, and I've lived here for a long time. It's unbelievable, this is what football should be." Actor, writer, producer, @KeeganMKey knows. #L AFC

CREDIT: MLSsoccer staff

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5 biggest MLS trades of the last 5 years

MLS witnessed several notable trades over the past few weeks, most notably Julian Gressel's move from Atlanta United to D.C. United, a transaction which could rise to over \$1 million in allocation money over the next two years.

But where does that deal stack up in comparison to the biggest ones in recent league history? Here's my take on the top five trades over the past five years in MLS.

Jack Harrison, CHI-NYC, 2016

We've all gotten accustomed to New York City FC being a card-carrying member of the Eastern Conference elite and their current roster ranks among the league's most talented and complete. But it was a whole different picture in the winter of 2015-16, after a woeful debut season marked by dysfunction and underachievement.

In one of their first moves after Patrick Vieira's hiring as head coach, the Cityzens brokered a draft-day deal in which the Chicago Fire picked Harrison No. 1 overall in the SuperDraft, then traded him to NYCFC for a package of general allocation money and the No. 4 overall pick, which Chicago used to select fullback Brandon Vincent.

Harrison quickly became an impact contributor in New York, earning England youth national teams call-ups and eventually fetching a reported \$6 million-plus transfer fee when he moved to Manchester City in 2018. And NYCFC haven't looked back since.

Jermaine Jones, NE-COL, 2016

Arriving on the back of head-turning performances for the US national team at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, JJ's time in MLS took him from New England to Colorado and eventually to the LA Galaxy, and was rarely boring. The all-action center midfielder led the Revolution to the 2014 MLS Cup final, only to fall out with the club over his contract terms and get shipped out to Colorado.

Playing with a point to prove, Jones and fellow newcomers Tim Howard and Shkelzen Gashi sparked one of the most dramatic year-over-year turnarounds in league history as the Rapids nearly won the Supporters' Shield, anchored by a ferociously stingy defense and collective bite under coach Pablo Mastroeni.

Dom Dwyer, SKC-ORL, 2017

Big transactions like the Gressel deal were pioneered by Sporting Kansas City's bountiful harvest for Dwyer, which reaped some \$1.6 million in allocation funds, \$900,000 guaranteed and \$700,000 in incentive-based clauses. The English-American striker had starred on loan for Orlando during their USL days, making the Lions hungry to bring him back, and Peter Vermes took full advantage.

Widely dubbed a "game-changer" that heralded new levels of intra-MLS transfer activity, the trade was notable not only for the name and sheer heft of assets involved, but also the multi-year spread over which they were distributed.

Ike Opara, SKC-MIN, 2019

Similar in scope to the Dwyer transaction, last year's big pickup by Minnesota United ended up eclipsing it – because whereas Dwyer largely struggled to match his previous scoring levels and lift Orlando into contention, Opara maintained his elite form with the Loons, and they duly became a playoff team last season.

Kansas City received \$900,000 in Targeted Allocation Money plus another \$100,000 in incentive-based compensation which reportedly kicked in when MNUFC qualified for the postseason. It surely felt less satisfying when they suffered in Opara's absence, however, leaking goals and missing the playoffs for the first time in eight years.

Darlington Nagbe, POR-ATL, 2018

It's a tribute to Nagbe's quality and unique skill set that he's been the centerpiece of not one but two blockbusters eligible for this list.

Picked No. 2 overall by the Portland Timbers in the 2011 MLS SuperDraft, the smooth engine-room metronome became a fan favorite and face of the franchise in the Rose City, especially after he helped PTFC win MLS Cup 2015. So it was a very big deal indeed when flashy newbies Atlanta United shelled out over a million bucks' worth of allocation money – potentially rising to a total of \$1.65 million depending on performance clauses – to bring him to the ATL.

The Five Stripes went even further by winging him and his family into town on a private jet, a blingy touch that sent a powerful message to players and fans alike. Even though he later sought (and eventually got) a nearly-as-big move to his native Ohio to join Columbus Crew SC, Nagbe's time down south was quite fruitful, encompassing trophy hoists in the 2018 MLS Cup and last year's U.S. Open Cup and Campeones Cup.

Who joins Chicharito, Carlos Vela in top 5 MLS Golden Boot contenders?

The LA Galaxy pulled off a huge coup by landing Javier "Chicharito" Hernandez, and at long last we all get to see how lethal the Mexico strike star can be in Major League Soccer.

The 31-year-old had been linked with stateside clubs numerous times over the years before he was finally captured from Sevilla this week, and now he'll be installed as the main man atop a reloaded Galaxy attack. Chicharito isn't just here to sell jerseys (but, oh yeah, he'll definitely do that). As he stated in an exclusive interview with MLSsoccer.com's Calen Carr, he's here to help fire the Galaxy to the MLS Cup.

But how many goals will the poacher extraordinaire provide? Enough to contend for the Golden Boot? That follow-up question compelled an attempt to slot Hernandez where he fits among the top horses running in the MLS scoring race this year.

Full disclosure: There were two guys that would definitely make the list if not for concerns over playing time. Toronto FC ace Jozy Altidore unfortunately has had a devil of a time staying fit enough to stay on the field (only one MLS season of at least 2,000 minutes played thus far), while one would think Seattle sniper Raul Ruidiaz will again spend a chunk of summer away on Copa America duty with Peru.

There's another absence that might surprise in new Sporting KC forward Alan Pulido. While some are very excited by the big-money signing, I can't see him being as prolific in front of goal as the group below. It has taken at least 22 goals to claim the Golden Boot in each of the last eight years, a tally that seems a bridge too far to me (and actually considerably more than he'd need to be a successful all-around addition in Kansas City).

Finally, we'll tip our cap to actual honorable mentions Heber, Ola Kamara and Diego Rossi, and then kick off the countdown.

No. 5: Gyasi Zardes

This spot nearly went to Heber, who could hit a new level in his second MLS season with pretty much the same attack crew back at NYCFc. In the end, however, I had to go with the Crew SC frontman. Darlington Nagbe has arrived to hog the ball, left flank serviceman Milton Valenzuela will be back, young DP winger Luis Diaz should continue blooming, and big splash signing Lucas Zelarayan offers a fresh playmaking gut punch. All Columbus roads lead to their finisher, so you'd best buy his stock now before it goes up.

No. 4: Javier Hernandez

Some may think this is a little high for someone that doesn't really create his own shot opportunities much. Luckily for Chicharito, the LA Galaxy have no shortage of players capable of teeing him up. If Cristian Pavon can step up his set-up game (he should), and new cogs Aleksandar Katai and Sacha Kljestan can create plenty of creative looks (they should), Hernandez could be an instant smash in Hollywood.

No. 3: Gustavo Bou

Some may be shocked to find the New England forward ahead of Chicharito. However, if the first half-season of Bou in Revs colors is any indication, league defenses and goalkeepers need to look out. He hit nine times in just 1155 minutes after arriving in summer, which breaks down to .70 goals per 90 minutes played. Only three returning MLS players that saw at least 800 minutes of action last year topped that strike rate. And that was before New England added a lead forward for the "underneath assassin" to play and run off of in Designated Player signing Adam Buksa. Bou can score in all manner of ways and has an able set-up crew returning. You've all been warned.

No. 2: Josef Martinez

The Atlanta United defense and midfield are in some state of flux, and now primary Martinez supply line Julian Gressel is off to feed Kamara in the nation's capital. We'll trust Carlos Bocanegra and staff to use their trade revenue from D.C. to capably replace the German cross-meister, and one could feasibly argue that playmakers Ezequiel Barco and Pity Martinez are set for production rises in 2020. One way or another, the competitive Five Stripes hitman will find the means to keep ringing the bell because that's what he does.

No. 1: Carlos Vela

To lead the pack, one has to beat the top dog. That's how it usually works, and especially when the goal hound everyone will try to chase is coming off a record-setting haul. Vela bagged 34 last season (and only two other players have ever topped 30). That's what all the attackers are chasing and what has all the defenders fretting. Most of the El Tri star's build/transition supporting cast will be back. You do the math.



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