

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1766 What Can We Learn From a Legendary NBA Trashtalker?

It was perhaps one of the more unique uses of language the sports world had seen. The late Kobe Bryant, one of the best players in the history of pro basketball, more than once used the power of speaking in a tongue not his own to reach an opponent. I'm Jerry Roberts, and when we unravel this story we'll learn a valuable lesson that all of us can benefit from. We'll tell you what it's all about, next on The Extra Point.

Kobe Bryant was one of the NBA's all-time great players. He played 20 years for the Los Angeles Lakers, winning five NBA championships in that time.

He also finished fourth on the all-time top scoring list, behind fellow Lakers LeBron James, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, and Utah Jazz star Karl Malone.

What many people don't know is that Kobe was also one of the game's world class trashtalkers.

If you're not familiar with the term, "trashtalking" is a player saying things to an opponent with the purpose being to gain a psychological advantage over them.

The aim is to disrupt their focus, make them doubt their abilities, or provoke them into making mistakes. A couple of mistakes can often decide a game, and that's why it's done.

Whenever Bryant and the Lakers played the San Antonio Spurs, Bryant would focus his attention on the Spurs' all-star guard, Tony Parker. Here's the thing, Parker is French and Kobe would say outrageous things to him in his native tongue.

At first, Parker was shocked. "Sacre bleu!, he is trashtalking me in Francais!", thought Parker. Initially surprised that Bryant knew French well enough to do that on the basketball court, he came away impressed that Bryant had gone to that extreme to try to get an edge against him.

This was part of his strategy, to learn things about his opponents, then to wait until the right moment to throw a jab their way.

Some players were upset at his tactics, but ended up respecting not just Bryant's strategy, but also the degree of skill he had with using the right words at the right time.

Many players, initially strong adversaries, likely strengthened their trashtalking game because of what they picked up from Kobe. Several eventually became friends with him.

The lesson here for the workplace and for any manager, is not about trashtalking. It's about getting to know players, your players, and personalizing your approach to influence their performance.

We touch upon this in our course, *RPM: Recognition, Praise and Motivation*. Managers do better when they know and understand their team members.

Team members, in turn, feel a closer bond with a supervisor when there is more interest and greater attention paid to them.

What do you know about each individual on your team? If I asked you to give me five minutes on their background, their specific skills, likes and dislikes, would you be able to do that for everyone who reports to you?

The more you know about a worker, the more ways you have to reach them and, as Kobe knew, the more ways you can influence them.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3FM, the Ray Gibson Show, and First Hawaiian Bank, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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