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BASKETBALL FOR THOUGHT by Kris Gardner, e-mail: KGardner@TheHRR.com

Kobe? Not Kobe!



cannot believe it! I just can't believe it!

"Kobe Bryant?!" "No way, not Kobe Bryant!"

Those words were uttered by numerous people across the United States as well as around the world July 7 when Kobe was accused of sexually assaulting a 19-year old woman. Then, Friday, July 18, Kobe was officially charged with one count of sexual assault by a Colorado District Attorney. "I still don't believe it!" "Kobe wouldn't commit a crime!" "Kobe wouldn't do something like that!"

I have a very simple, yet cynical answer: Why don't you believe it? I'm not saying Kobe is guilty of committing the crime; but, I've grown tired of people saying "Of all the athletes, I never thought Kobe would get in trouble?"

I don't care how many points Kobe has scored. I don't care how many championship rings he's won with the Lakers. I don't care how many endorsements he has or how many times Kobe is on television or in the news. I don't care about how intelligent he is or who his parents are or anything else. All those aspects are just a part of who Kobe is; but, at

the end of the day, Kobe is but a man. No more, no less. Since he's a man, he's a human being; and, human beings



made a mistake. I'll cite criticisms toward Kobe I've heard and kicked around with friends, radio callers, and

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are not perfect which means human beings make mistakes. Kobe made a mistake. Period.

It has to be proven in a courtroom whether Kobe committed a crime; but, damage has already been done to his reputation. Can his reputation be restored? Probably so because America is an extremely forgiving country. Kobe has already publicly admitted he committed adultery; so, should he be found innocent, his reputation will recover in time.

I can already hear people responding; but, "Kobe just didn't seem to be the type to do this." What type is Kobe? Regardless of any label placed upon him, Kobe is simply a man.who

colleagues like:

"Young fella was stupid. If he knew what he was doing, he wouldn't have been caught."

"Kobe should have 'got with' a 'professional' and just paid for it."

"Kobe, you're married, man. Married people aren't supposed to cheat." (I won't open that Pandora's box except to say if I **ever** get married, I will not cheat on my wife. However, saying 'I won't cheat' is a very easy thing to say; but, it could be a very difficult promise to keep. I don't care who you are.)

"That's what Kobe gets for messing with a white girl. It's bad enough his wife is white." (Actually,

his wife is Latina); but, I have to admit that is one of my favorite statements because I've had problems (re: drama) from practically women of every race not just white women. Yes, I dated a 'white girl'. Are you going to stop reading this commentary because of that? If so, bye-bye.

Society continues to place athletes, entertainers, politicians, and other 'famous' people on pedestals. Why? Each of those famous people has human frailties. No matter how many times a 'star' is seen in public, you don't actually 'know' what that person is like away from the flashing lights. I'm very cynical; and, I am (way past) tired of the entertainment television shows which spew out information that I absolutely don't give a damn about. I don't care 'who's dating whom' or 'who's dating so and so'. If a famous person commits a crime, please don't act shocked or surprised. First of all, wait until the person has been found guilty in court of the accusation. Next, please realize everybody makes mistakes. Some mistakes are simply careless and stupid while some may actually involve criminal activity.

Each day I try very hard to not judge anyone for two reasons: one, I'm not God and two, all I know how to be is Kristopher Morris Gardner and no one else.