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Forget the Statistics: Kobe Bryant is the King of Clutch



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Ask any coach, general manager, or player-or almost anybody who watches basketball. What current [NBA](#) player would you have take the final shot with a game on the line?

Every time, Bryant wins the vote. In fact, in a general-manager poll last season, he earned 79 percent of the vote, his ninth consecutive blowout.

They say Kobe's clutch play is overrated. They say that the statistics show that he misses far more late shots than he makes.

More specifically, they point out that in the final 24 seconds of a game, Bryant has [managed to hit a field goal a paltry 31.3 percent](#) of the time, lower than the likes of Carmelo Anthony (47.7 percent), Chris Paul (45.2 percent), Dirk Nowitzki (38.5 percent), and even [LeBron James](#) (33.3 percent).

However, these statisticians fail to account for how these players cherry-pick when they try to take the game-winner, passing on all but the most favorable opportunities.

Case in point: in the 2011 All-Star game, LeBron passed up an open three-point shot that would have tied the game, surrendering the ball to Chris Bosh. Why? He was scared. Kobe, on the other hand, never backs down from the final shot, even if it is far from the perfect look.

The Black Mamba himself understands that the [statistics are meaningless](#).

"If somebody had their life on the line, and they've got their options on who they want to save their life - tell me who you're going to pick?" Bryant asked. "You're going to look at the stats first?"

Sure, Anthony nailed a jump shot over LeBron to win a regular season game in 2009. LeBron single-handedly brought his team to the NBA Finals with a fourth quarter massacre against the Detroit Pistons in 2007.

But can anyone even count Kobe's game-winners? Exactly.

The truth is that no current NBA player has a crunch-time resume with half the excitement or sheer bulk that can compare to that of Bryant.

But then the critics argue that we only remember the good and ignore the bad.

Perhaps. However, some moments are more important than others. His plays and shots have won championships. Melo's few clutch shots have not come in the NBA Finals, with a championship at stake.

Is Kobe clutch? The debate rages on. But with the number of teams I've seen him kill for over a decade, I am definitely not going to bet against him anytime soon.

Truth is, if you are rooting against the Lakers and Bryant has the ball in the final seconds of a close game, you are probably holding your breath. He is the definition of clutch.

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He knows ball belongs in his hands because the clutch moments belong to him. He is cool, polished, fearless, and ruthless. He steps into the pivotal moments of a game with a mental toughness that is unrivaled.

In all, Kobe knows the real reason why this clutch argument against him continues to persist.

"People kind of get bored with things that I've done, so they try to find new ones to talk about or try to find numbers to justify certain things. That's what happens when you win. I remember Magic and Michael [Jordan] going through similar things. Hey, the talk before was that I couldn't do it without Shaq. Well I did that. And then I did it again. Now it's something else. They're always going to come for something else. But I win. We win."

1. John Paulsen. "[Who is best in the clutch? \(Hint: It's not Kobe.\)](#)", The Scores Report.
2. Adrian Wojnarowski. "[Kobe full of fuel for title drive](#)", Yahoo! Sports.

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