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Saturday, February 12th, 2011 at 5:36 pm | 5 responses

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Kobe Bryant Rocks The Big Apple

The Black Mamba releases the Kobe VI Supreme on New York City.

by Kyle Stack / @KyleStack

The "MVP" chants cascaded in from the crowd seconds after he appeared on stage. Even though that stage was within a Foot Locker store blocks from New York City's Madison Square Garden, it wasn't hometown Knick Amar'e Stoudemire who was feeling the love from the boisterous crowd. It was Kobe Bryant, whose 33-point, 10-rebound effort hours earlier at the Garden had just helped his Los Angeles Lakers deliver the New York Knicks their fourth loss in five games.

The crowd, many of whom were likely Knicks fans, weren't worried about their team's struggles at that moment. They just wanted to see Bryant, to hear him speak.

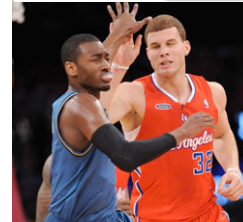
The Black Mamba enters rooms with as much of a rock star-like feel as any athlete today. And there aren't many places where he receives more admiration from his legions of fans than in New York City. That's what made this stage at the Foot Locker on W. 34th St. such an appropriate venue on which to discuss the newest version of his mega-popular Nike Kobe VI shoe.



The latest edition, his neon green Kobe VI Supreme, went on sale at midnight February 12. So, Kobe strolled into the store at slightly past 11:30 p.m. following the Lakers-Knicks game. The crowd went nuts, and Bryant smiled sheepishly as he greeted the event's emcee, Hot 97's Peter Rosenberg. Many of the folks who had lined up on 34th St. all the way east toward Broadway to catch a peek of Bryant couldn't get in the store. Nevertheless, the place was already packed.

Rosenberg conducted a 10-minute interview with Bryant, which was followed by Bryant answering a few questions from the grade school and high school kids in attendance. The interview was wide-ranging, covering everything from Kobe's appreciation of the atmosphere at the Garden to his new shoe to what goals he has for

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the rest of his career. Here are some highlights:

On what it feels like to play well at the Garden:

"It's something that you can feel. As a player, when you come in the fans are so excited about it. There is so much history in the arena."

On what he told Nike he wanted from the Kobe VI:

"I wanted the shoe to become lighter, and I still wanted to feel like I was playing close to the ground. I also wanted it to be softer. I wanted to feel like I was walking on pillows. I didn't want to lose that speed that we did with the previous shoe."

On the connection he shares with Kanye West, who appears along with Bruce Willis in his Robert Rodriguez-directed Kobe VI commercial:

"He does the same thing I do in basketball — you just continue to think outside the box. When everybody is zigging, you zag."

On the significance of next weekend's NBA All-Star Game in Los Angeles:

"Most of the times through the span of a player's career, you have one All-Star Game in front of your home crowd — this'll be my second. I've been out in L.A. for 15 years now, and to have an All-Star Game there is good, to be able to put on a show for the home crowd."

Finally, on his future goals in the NBA, aside from winning NBA titles:

"For me, it's about leading my guys the right way. That's the hardest part. That's the challenge. It's not scoring...that stuff comes easy."

"The challenge is learning how to take a collection of guys that all have different personalities and different backgrounds and making sure everybody stays on the same page, everybody stays motivated and stays focused on what the job is. That's the biggest challenge."

Bryant's remark about scoring being easy drew a loud "Ohhhhhh!" from the crowd, to which Bryant retorted, "It does." Nobody could argue that, especially since Bryant recently passed Hakeem Olajuwon for eighth on the NBA's all-time scoring list. Given the love and admiration showered upon him at this Foot Locker store Friday night, nobody was going to tell him otherwise.

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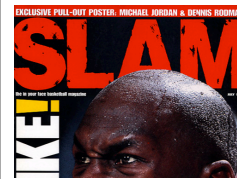


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Tags: Black Mamba, Foot Locker, Kobe Bryant, Kobe VI Supreme



5 Responses to "Kobe Bryant Rocks The Big Apple"

James Posted: Feb. 12 at 6:27 pm
Those Christmas day shoes were horrific eyesores.

hay Posted: Feb. 12 at 9:37 pm
"...that stuff comes easy"
Damn Kobe, that's a terrifying word to say

TruthTeller Posted: Feb. 12 at 9:42 pm
The guys Kobe's passing up on the scoring list were running on fumes when they were punching in their final points. This guy is still a premiere scorer and will most likely pass up Kareem before it's all said and done. I just hope the owners and players don't f**k up negotiations this summer and end up having Kobe scoring his last years in Europe.

kc Posted: Feb. 13 at 10:59 am
Whats with the garden fans always chanting for players on other teams????
Kobe, Bron, Melo.... That has to be some type of violation.

zoom Posted: Feb. 13 at 6:02 pm
@ kc: Totally agree. It disgusts me to the fullest.

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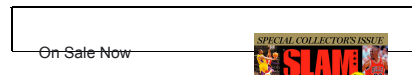
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