

# Kobe: Europe's players more skillful

Updated: January 3, 2015, 1:27 PM ET

By [Arash Markazi](#) / *ESPN.com*

## Kobe: Euro Players More Skillful

ESPNLosAngeles.com's Arash Markazi discusses Kobe Bryant's comments about European basketball players being more skillful than American basketball players because of the coaching at the AAU level, and what can be done to fix it.

**Tags:** [NBA](#), [Kobe Bryant](#), [Los Angeles Lakers](#)

LOS ANGELES -- [Kobe Bryant](#) believes European basketball players are more skillful than American basketball players, and says it's a growing trend that can be blamed on the greed and coaching at the AAU level.

"I just think European players are just way more skillful," Bryant said Friday night after the [Los Angeles Lakers' 109-106 loss](#) to the [Memphis Grizzlies](#). "They are just taught the game the right way at an early age. ... They're more skillful. It's something we really have to fix. We really have to address that. We have to teach our kids to play the right way."

Bryant was quick to point the finger for the decline of skilled players in the United States.

"AAU basketball," Bryant said. "Horrible, terrible AAU basketball. It's stupid. It doesn't teach our kids how to play the game at all so you wind up having players that are big and they bring it up and they do all this fancy crap and they don't know how to post. They don't know the fundamentals of the game. It's stupid."

Bryant was born in Philadelphia, but when he was 6, his father, former NBA player Joe Bryant, moved the family to Italy to continue his playing career. Kobe spent his childhood in Europe until Joe retired in 1991 and moved the family back to the United States.

"When you have limitations and you understand your limitations and you stay within yourself, you can be great," Kobe Bryant said. "You know what you can do and what you can't do. In America, it's a big problem for us because we're not teaching players how to play all-around basketball. That's why you have [Pau](#) and [Marc \[Gasol\]](#), and that's the reason why 90 percent of the Spurs' roster is European players, because they have more skill."

Bryant smiled when asked what type of player he would have become if his family had never moved to Italy and he hadn't learned how to play the game in Europe.

“Horrible, terrible AAU basketball. It's stupid. It doesn't teach our kids how to play the game at all so you wind up having players that are big and they bring it up and they do all this fancy crap and they don't know how to post. They don't know the fundamentals of the game.

”- *Kobe Bryant*

"I probably wouldn't be able to dribble with my left and shoot with my left and have good footwork," Bryant said. "I was kind of fortunate because when I was growing up in Italy, the Red Auerbachs and the Tex Winters and all those great coaches were doing clinics and camps in Europe. They were teaching all the club coaches, and the club coaches were following their advice and their fundamentals like the bible, and they were teaching all of us kids that type of stuff. Me, [Manu \[Ginobili\]](#) and all these guys that grew up around that same time, we're a product of that. It's a big difference."

Bryant had a simple solution to the problem.

"Teach players the game at an early age and stop treating them like cash cows for everyone to profit off of," he said. "That's how you do that. You have to teach them the game. Give them instruction."

But Bryant, who holds an annual summer basketball camp, also was quick to point out that any solution involving changing the current culture of AAU basketball won't happen overnight.

"That's a deep well because then you start cutting into people's pockets," Bryant said. "People get really upset when you start cutting into their pockets because all they do is try to profit off these poor kids. There's no quick answer."

"I just think European players are just way more skillful," Kobe Bryant said Friday. "They are just taught the game the right way at an early age."