

With reports that Allen Iverson will be back to practicing and playing with his team in Turkey, my basketball-loving heart doesn't skip a beat. It's been a few years since I have seen Iverson play a meaningful game; I don't think I will ever see one again.

I have never been a fan of the Sixers nor did I follow Iverson through his Georgetown days or his rookie year. I was only a 5-year-old kid playing marbles when he came into the league as a 21-year-old rookie from Georgetown, but I've seen videos of him balling like there was no tomorrow. Regardless, when Michael Jordan left the NBA; Allen Iverson, Shaquille O'Neal, and Kobe Bryant reigned the basketball world and the NBA was still a must-watch league.

Players like Allen Iverson don't come around too often. Iverson held the title for the toughest pound-for-pound player in the league for most of his career by sacrificing his body for every point scored. Some may say that today's point guards don't carry the toughness Iverson had in his days. To an extent, it's true. No other point guard has ever taken the beating Iverson took. The injuries piled up, but he kept playing—and, for the most part, winning.



Allen Iverson doesn't have much play for in Turkey. He has all the accolades any player can receive: 11-time All-Star, 2001 NBA MVP, Rookie of the Year, 1st overall draft pick, Scoring Champ, etc. The only thing missing is the coveted championship ring, and as much as it hurts me to say this, there is almost no chance Iverson will come back into the league and win a championship even less at least play another game with an NBA team.

I have witnessed almost all highlights and lowlights of Iverson's career. Before the 2001 season, Allen Iverson was almost traded. He almost-certainly would not have won the MVP the following season if he would have been traded. I would not have seen his Sixers defeat my Los Angeles Lakers in Game 1 of the 2001 Finals. I would not have witnessed one of the greatest scoring efforts in the NBA Finals when he averaged 35.6 points per game during those Finals. He was clearly a great NBA player.

But with all the success he has had in his career, Iverson has equaled that with drawbacks. Everyone knows the problems Iverson has brought out on himself: gambling, debts, "We Talkin' 'bout Practice?" and "quitting" on his team.

He wanted to win in Denver, it just didn't happen. In Detroit, he was looked upon to restore a struggling franchise that had been on top for many years, but that didn't work out so well. In Memphis, he just wanted to play, but by that time, many did not believe in him. He wasn't out to prove the doubters wrong, but everything that had made him special was fading from the memories of his most loyal fans.

I understand Iverson's heart and fire to just play the game he loves, the same game he's played since he was a kid. Even through all the injuries, he still brought that love to every game he played. He's had a lasting impression on the NBA and its most loyal fans. He made the arm-sleeve fashionable when he

wore it at after injuring his arm. He crossed over his role model in Michael Jordan as a rookie. Though, with every news report of Allen Iverson in Turkey, his iconic presence fades from the NBA world.

So, as every time Ray Allen shoots a jump-shot with his sleeve on, I still envision a #3 Sixers jersey shooting the same jump-shot. And with every no-look pass Rajon Rondo makes, every defender Derrick Rose crosses over, and every tough acrobatic lay-up John Wall makes, I will always see a hint of Allen Iverson. But I just can't bear to see Iverson attempt to do the same for nine more games in a country on the other side of the world. I still admire Iverson's fire, but, as fan, I won't be supplying any more fuel.

Whatever he's playing for in Turkey, whether it's the love of the game, the money, or pride, I don't want my memories of Allen Iverson to be filled with him playing in a non-NBA jersey in a non-NBA game.

Jeffrey Gomez is a lover of all things basketball and baseball. He has been to hundreds of Dodger games but never to an NBA game. Feel free to criticize him for that. You can follow him on Twitter: [@Jeffco3](https://twitter.com/Jeffco3)