

NBA FINALS

Kerr pushes all the right buttons in Game 1

Coach finds best matchups in win

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Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. - Even as he spent the first 43 games of the season on the sideline while recovering from back problems, Steve Kerr always kept his finger on the pulse of the Golden State Warriors.

That connection, the sense of what buttons to push and what whiteboards to smash, was all over Game 1 of the NBA Finals.

"He has just a great feel for the energy and the temperature of the team," said Warriors guard Shaun Livingston, who scored 20 points in Golden State's 104-89 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers on Thursday night. "He's great at just taking the temperature and finding the right matchups for us and putting us in places where we can excel."

The Warriors sent a statement to the Cavaliers that the "Strength In Numbers" message on those gold shirts that were draped over the seats at Oracle Arena is so much more than just a catchy slogan.

Kerr's first big move of the series was the one he didn't make. After veteran Andre Iguodala helped the Warriors tilt the West-

ern Conference finals and come back from a 3-1 deficit to beat the Oklahoma City Thunder, Kerr resisted the temptation to start him against LeBron James and the Cavs.

Iguodala was the Finals MVP a year ago for his all-around performance against the Cavaliers, but Kerr stayed with the same starting lineup that had worked during a record-setting 73-win regular season. The oft-criticized Harrison Barnes started at small forward and hit 3 of 4 shots in the first quarter to get the Warriors rolling.

"Harrison has started for two years and it's been a pretty good two years for us," Kerr said. "We've had a good run. It's been very effective playing the way we've played in terms of the lineup and the rotation. I didn't feel any need to change our lineup for Game 1 of the series."

The ability to step back and look at the bigger picture in the chaos of the moment has always been one of Kerr's strong suits and the Warriors have flourished under his even-keeled approach.

Even watching Stephen Curry and Klay Thompson morph from the greatest shooting tandem in NBA history into a pair of brick layers wasn't enough to rattle the seemingly unshakable coach.

The Splash Brothers combined for just 20



Golden State coach Steve Kerr, left, talks with guard Stephen Curry, right, and forward Draymond Green, second from right, during the second half of Thursday night's Game 1 of the NBA Finals against Cleveland in Oakland, Calif.

points on 8-for-27 shooting and were 4 for 13 from 3-point range. The Warriors' bench rose to the occasion, with Livingston, Leandro Barbosa and Iguodala picking up the slack and Kerr rode them during the turning point in the game, a run that really caught fire after guard Matthew Dellavedova swiped at the ball but hit Iguodala in the groin.

The Cavaliers had come back to take the lead in the third quarter, and Curry just couldn't find the mark. But Kerr trusted the depth of his team,

and let his reserves take center stage for the first five minutes of the fourth quarter.

The lead ballooned to 20 points during that stretch.

"He obviously plays the matchups well," Livingston said. "Just to be able to kind of rotate is impressive."

The only time he lost his cool was when the ball stopped moving and the turnovers started coming in the third quarter. The Cavs jumped in front and Kerr shattered his whiteboard with his marker

like a judo champion breaking a stack of bricks.

The move even worked out for the league's coach of the year.

"Destruction tends to ease some of the anger," Kerr quipped. "So I try to take it out on a clipboard instead of a player. So it's better that way. Better not to break your players."

Now the pressure is on Cavs rookie head coach Tyronn Lue to make adjustments. Lue's defensive game plan worked marvelously against Curry and Thompson, with

the Cavs getting physical with the two-time MVP and forcing Thompson into early foul trouble to get him out of rhythm.

But the Cavs still lost by a wide margin and had no answer for the Warriors surge that seemingly comes every game.

The Cavaliers shot 38 percent, turned the ball over 17 times and only had 17 assists.

"They're a great team when you just hold the ball and pound the ball," James said. "So we've got to do a better job with that, which coach Lue and the coaching staff will make sure we do in Game 2."

This is why the Cavaliers made that stunning coaching change in mid-season, firing David Blatt after he led them to the finals last year and a 30-11 start to this season.

The Cavaliers, and James in particular, trust Lue in ways they never did Blatt. And now it's up to him to match wits with one of the best coaching staffs in the NBA.

"Their bench played well," Lue said. "So we've got to go back to the drawing board and try to figure out how to take those guys out of the game."

Game 2 is Sunday in Oakland.

"I'm looking forward to the film session and seeing ways we can get better going into Game 2," James said. "And I think our team is as well."

TRACK AND FIELD

Inspired Johnson leads West Side at state

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BLOOMINGTON - West Lafayette senior Lauren Johnson gets through meets with the help of a bubbly, happy-go-lucky anxiety reliever named Alex Deryn.

Johnson didn't have her best friend at Friday's IHSAA girls state track and meet. Deryn remains in the hospital recovering from a single-car accident earlier in the week that took the life of Red Devils boys sprinter Christian Burns and injured two others.

After struggling to focus on the final races of her high school career all week, Johnson brought both Deryn and Burns with her into the Robert C. Haugh Track and Field Complex.

"Any time I was like, uh, I think I'm going to fade, I thought about Christian and Alex, and the pain in the race went away," Johnson said. "The voices in your head that tell you you can't? Those immediately went away when I thought about Christian and Alex."

Johnson capped her career with a pair of third-place finishes, leading the Red Devils to a sixth-place team finish. West Lafayette athletes opened an emotional weekend with five podium finishes. What Johnson called "a celebration" continues with Saturday's boys



From left, West Lafayette's Emma Tate and Kristen Johnson embrace after the preliminary round of the 3200 meter relay, during the IHSAA 43rd annual girls track and field state finals, Robert C. Haugh Track and Field Complex at Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind., Friday.

West Lafayette coach Lane Custer said his staff announced practice times this week but were understanding when athletes didn't show. As the week went on, more of them did, and this weekend unfolded as a tribute to the accident victims.

"None of us coaches knew what to expect," Custer said. "We didn't put any expectations on them about anything. This was totally on their own. It was generated by their own thoughts and feelings of their friends, and I couldn't be prouder."

Deryn, the No. 3 seed in the 300 and a medal contender in the high jump, was announced as a competitor for each of her

allowed to visit Deryn. She and other friends made posters and cards to decorate Deryn's hospital room.

"We kind of go back-and-forth with each other, giving each other pep talks," Johnson said of typical meets with Deryn. "I didn't have that today, but I imagined I did."

Johnson opened her night running 4:52.43 in the 1,600 - beating her seed time by almost five seconds. She was only seeded 10th in the 3,200, the event in which she finished runner-up last season. Johnson moved from the bottom third in the early laps, to sixth with three laps to go, then held off Carmel's Christina

Alex and Christian on my mind and it kind of just made me feel numb. Until the last lap, I was like, 'Here I go. I feel it. They're with me and I'm giving all I've got.'"

Sophomore pole vaulter Maria Siciliano was disappointed with last year's 13th-place finish. She'll remember her second state finals more fondly.

Siciliano set a personal best at 11 feet, 6 inches, then went three inches higher. Her 11-9 earned fifth place.

Two other West Lafayette entries finished eighth: Kaia Harris in the discus and the 3,200 relay squad of Mary Schultz, Ellie Tate, Kristen Johnson

they were with me."

Big finish

Harrison senior Jaden Mattox had an emotional night of her own. It hit her as she prepared for her final attempt in the long jump finals.

"I started crying," Mattox said. "It was my last jump in high school, so it was really emotional. My coaches were really encouraging me to do my best."

"And then I just got really serious. I have to get this. I have to keep my composure."

Mattox launched herself 18 feet, 8 inches on her final attempt. It crushed her own school record by six inches and earned her a fourth-place finish.

Looking up

Benton Central junior Kayla Schluttenhoer was motivated by a different emotion: anger. After failing to make the finals in the 100 hurdles, Schluttenhoer summoned something extra for her remaining high jump attempts.

She was one of only four competitors to clear 5-6, losing the tiebreaker for third with Zionsville's Katie Isenbarger based on misses at previous heights.

"I jumped what I jumped at regionals, and at regionals I PRed by 3

DISCUS

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Lafayette Jeff throws coach Jerry Madlung based Henderson's pre-state workouts on last year's experience. She took a single warm-up before her competitive throws, and he factored in the expected wait time between throws.

Madlung said Henderson was throwing 160 feet-over the past week.

"She's worked herself so hard this year," Madlung said. "You could see on that last throw she just let it rip."

She didn't know it at the time, but Henderson's 149-4 on her second preliminary throw easily would have won the title. She actually finished with the meet's three best throws, breaking off a 140-4 on her first finals try.

When Perry Meridian's Sade Hill settled for 137-5 on her last finals throw, Henderson had the title. But she didn't flinch before stepping into the circle and launching her best throw of the day. It seemed to ride the wind for a little extra distance.

Henderson yelled just a little louder on that launch. She'd been holding it in all season, and she wanted to end on a personal best.

"One, I've been waiting on this meet since I choked last year," Henderson said. "I didn't care about sectionals, regionals - it was all about today. On top of all that, I had my coach by my side