

NBA

Warriors rally past Rockets in Game 1 of West finals

By ANTONIO GONZALEZ Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Golden big at home, the Golden State Warriors went small.

It turned out to make a huge difference.

Stephen Curry hit two free throws in the final seconds to finish with 34 points, and the Warriors rallied from a 16-point deficit in the second quarter to beat the Houston Rockets 110-106 on Tuesday night in Game 1 of the Western Conference finals.

With the Rockets seemingly ready to rout the home team, the Warriors used a smaller lineup featuring 6-foot-7 Draymond Green at center and closed the first half on a 21-4 run. Shaun Livingston scored 14 of

his 18 points in the quarter, helping Golden State go ahead 58-55 at halftime.

The Warriors held off James Harden and Houston in the fourth quarter again behind their undersized lineup, which worked especially well after Rockets center Dwight Howard departed with a left knee injury.

"It really stretches people out," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said of his lineup full of shooters. "Houston does the same thing. It was an interesting chess match, because they like to go small and we like to go small."

Harden, the runner-up to Curry in the MVP voting, nearly brought the Rockets back without Howard in the fourth. Harden finished with 28 points, 11 rebounds, nine assists and four steals, but his



Golden State Warriors' Stephen Curry, right, drives the ball against Houston Rockets' Trevor Ariza during the second half of Game 1 of the NBA basketball Western Conference finals Tuesday in Oakland, Calif.

late push fell short.

"You can't give a really good shooting team easy layups and confidence," said

Harden, who shot 11 of 20 from the field. "That's what we did in the second quarter."

Game 2 is Thursday night

in Oakland, and it's unclear if Howard can play. Howard doesn't think the injury will sideline him for the series.

"Hopefully Dwight is healthy and we can play big," Rockets coach Kevin McHale said. "We didn't have that option with Dwight out."

Harden, serenaded with chants of "Over-rated!" from Warriors fans, mixed in a series of step-back jumpers and driving layups to help Houston even the score at 95-94 midway through the fourth.

But the Warriors shut down Houston for long stretches, and Curry kept hitting shots to match Harden's brilliance. Curry connected on a 3-pointer and converted a layup to put Golden State up 108-97 with 2:01 remaining. "It's entertaining basket-

ball. We're both supposed to help our team win and do what we can to impact the game," said Curry, whose 2-year-old daughter Riley, playfully interrupted him during his postgame news conference.

The Rockets never relented, though, with Trevor Ariza making a 3-pointer that trimmed the Warriors' lead to 108-106 with 14.6 seconds to play.

Curry twice caught the inbounds pass, and the Rockets were forced to foul him both times. He hit both free throws to seal Golden State's win.

"When we go small, it's not necessarily small. We have guys out there that can guard multiple positions," Livingston said. "From there, it's just feeding off our crowd."

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