

Sports

NBA PLAYOFFS: WESTERN CONFERENCE FINALS

Warriors eliminate Blazers

■ For the third straight game, Portland fails to hold on to a double-digit lead in the second half

By Anne M. Peterson

AP Sports Writer

PORTLAND — Experience bred confidence for the Golden State Warriors, even when challenged by the upstart Portland Trail Blazers.

No matter how far they were down, they've been through too much to ever think they're out.

"We just really understand what we're capable of on both sides of the basketball," Draymond Green said. "We're never out of the fight. That's just always our mindset."

The Warriors swept their way to a fifth straight NBA Finals, getting triple-doubles from Stephen Curry and Green in a 119-117 overtime victory on Monday night.

The two-time defending champions overcame a double-digit deficit for the third straight game against the Blazers, back in the conference finals for the first time since 2000.

Green had 18 points, 14 rebounds and 11 assists, and made a key 3-pointer in overtime. Curry added 37 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists. They became the first teammates to have triple-doubles in the same playoff game.

The Warriors will face the winner of the Eastern Conference finals between Toronto and Milwaukee.

The Warriors came back from 17 down after erasing an 18-point deficit in Game 3 and a 17-point hole in Game 2.



Craig Mitchell/Idyer / Associated Press

Golden State Warriors center Andrew Bogut, top, dunks over Portland Trail Blazers guard Evan Turner during the first half of Game 4 of the NBA basketball playoffs Western Conference finals Monday in Portland.

"We've been here before. We've seen everything, every experience you can imagine. So we relied on that," Curry said.

Playing without Kevin Durant, Andre Iguodala and DeMarcus Cousins, the Warriors became the first team to reach five straight finals since the Boston Celtics went to 10 in a row from 1957 to 1966.

Damian Lillard, playing with separated ribs, had 28

points and 12 assists for Portland. He missed a 3-point attempt as time ran out in the extra period. Meyers Leonard added a career-high 30 points along with 12 rebounds.

The Warriors were up 114-113 in the extra period after Green missed the first of a pair of free throws. CJ McCollum's jumper from out front briefly gave Portland the lead but Alfonzo McKinie's basket put Golden State

back ahead and Green made a 3-pointer to push it to 199-115 with 39 seconds left.

Lillard made a layup and Curry missed a jumper to give Portland back the ball. Facing stifling defense from both Green and Klay Thompson, Lillard couldn't get off a shot but the ball went out of bounds in the scramble. The Blazers got it back with 3.3 seconds left but Lillard's final shot didn't fall.

Blazers coach Terry Stotts was asked if he was expecting another buzzer-beating winner from Lillard, who had a memorable 3-pointer at the buzzer to clinch the first-round series against Oklahoma City.

"Yeah, I did. I thought it was going to — kind of meant to be," Stotts said. "When he shot it, it had a good arc. I thought it had a chance."

The Blazers stretched the lead to 17 points in the third quarter, but the Warriors went on a 12-0 run to close within 95-90 early in the final period.

Green's long baseline jumper gave the Warriors a 108-106 lead with 3:30 left. Lillard's 3-pointer put the Blazers back ahead and Leonard's dunk extended it to 111-108 with just under 2 minutes to go.

After Thompson's 3-pointer tied it up again both Curry and Lillard missed 3s. Curry made a 3 from the corner with 10.7 seconds left but he

was called for traveling first and it didn't count.

Lillard's layup bounced around the rim and out and the game went to overtime.

Iguodala was out because of a sore left calf. The veteran swingman, who is averaging 10.1 points in the playoffs, was hurt in the second half of Saturday's Game 3 victory.

It was not known how long he'd be out, but the Warriors said an MRI Sunday was clear.

Golden State was already missing Durant because of a sore right calf. It's unknown when the two-time NBA Finals MVP will return. Also sitting is Cousins, who injured his left quadriceps in the opening round.

Lillard separated his ribs in Game 2 but was playing through the pain. He averaged 33 points in the first-round playoff series against Oklahoma City but struggled against Golden State's defensive focus on him.

Playing with urgency in an elimination game, Portland pulled in front 30-28 in the opening quarter on CJ McCollum's layup and free throw, but Curry answered on the other end with a step-back 3-pointer.

Portland went ahead 59-50 after back-to-back 3-pointers from Leonard, who finished with five 3s in the first half.

Curry hit a 3-pointer with 2.6 seconds left in the half to close the Warriors within 69-65 at the break.

HOCKEY

Blues, Bruins for the Stanley Cup

By Stephen Whyno

AP Hockey Writer

Seeing the famous photo of Bobby Orr scoring the 1970 Stanley Cup-winning goal to beat his St. Louis Blues doesn't bring back bad memories for Scotty Bowman.

"Not really," the legendary coach said. "Because we didn't have a big opportunity to win that series."

Orr and the big, bad Boston Bruins swept Bowman's overmatched, expansion-era Blues in that series. Now 49 years later, Boston is in its third final in nine seasons and St. Louis is back for the first time since 1970, but this Bruins-Blues rematch is a showdown between two of the NHL's best teams since Jan. 1.

Coming off a sweep of Carolina in the Eastern Conference final, the Bruins are favored in the series that begins Monday in Boston. Goaltender Tuukka Rask is the front-runner to win the Conn Smythe Trophy as playoff MVP. Brad Marchand is playing some of the best hockey of his career with 18 points in 17 games, and there's a mix of veterans from the 2011 Stanley Cup-winning team and fresh players eager to get their names etched on the trophy.

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