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NBA Finals Creates Quandary for Fans

By Michael Sakoda



Stephen Curry and Matthew Dellavedova
Photo Tod Fierner

We've all heard it before: "If you're not going to root for the home team, get out of the stadium," but what happens when there's a hometown connection on both sides?

That's the case for Lamorinda and the NBA Finals.

On the one hand, there's Stephen Curry, the MVP, two-time All-Star, the Chosen One, who led the Warriors, the Bay's team, to their first NBA Finals in 40 years. On the other hand, there's Matthew Dellavedova, unknown to many before a few weeks ago, but famous in Lamorinda for playing at Saint Mary's. He's a scrapper, playing for Cleveland, a city that hasn't had a title in any sport since 1964, and he is making a name for himself, against all odds, on the biggest stage.

Curry, who played his final collegiate game at McKeon Pavillion on March 23, 2009, and makes his home in Orinda, was somewhat stifled since

Dellavedova, who played his college ball at Saint Mary's, moved into a starting role for the Cavaliers in the second game of the NBA Finals.

Both players had huge impacts at the college-level. Curry and Dellavedova attended and played for mid-major colleges and both had historic careers.

Curry left after his junior season as Davidson's all-time leader in scoring (2,635), made three-pointers (414), made free-throws (479), 30 and 40 point games (30; 6), with single season records for freshman points (730), points (974), and steals (86), and NCAA single season records for three-pointers made by a freshman (122) and three-pointers made (162). Dellavedova finished his senior year as the Gaels' all-time leader in scoring (1,933), assists (778), games played (136), free throw percentage (.860) and three-point shots (288).

So who do you like?

"Warriors all the way," said Lori Musser, 56, of Lafayette. "You have to admire [Dellavedova's] level of physical play, especially defending one of the best in the game, but it makes no difference that Dellavedova played for Saint Mary's. I'm a Villanova fan."

A sense of conflict was echoed around Lamorinda. Most fans this reporter spoke to were rooting for Dellavedova to play well, but were pulling for the Warriors to win it all.

"I'm happy for Dellavedova, but he's a Cleveland guy now," said Jeff Chon, 40, of Moraga.

Lafayette's Aaron Hill, 16, said, "[Dellavedova] was my favorite player, on my favorite [college] team, but when it comes to playing my Warriors, just because he was a friend, doesn't mean he can't be a foe."

"It doesn't change anything," said James Scott, 28, from Orinda. "I'm happy for his success since he played at Saint Mary's, but when he plays against the Warriors, I'm rooting against him."

Susan Karr, 60, of Lafayette, said Delly's loss would be the Bay Area's gain. "I'm rooting for the Warriors because I'm a Bay Area girl, and Oakland could use some positive attention."

Some Saint Mary's fans were pulling for Dellavedova's moral victory.

"I've been wearing my Curry jersey during the games; however, since we were losing, I switched to my Dellavedova shirt, and the Dubs won. Going to wear it for every game now," said Moraga's Jeanne Kosta, 67.

Kosta and her husband, a Saint Mary's graduate, have had season tickets to Saint Mary's

basketball for the last 10 years, but even they didn't want Delly to leave the series with a ring.

"It's hard to root against Delly since we know him," she said. "We want his team to lose, but we want him to do well."

Reach the reporter at: sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

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