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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 fa-

mous 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."

Headed for the Big Leagues

Four players with Lamorinda ties selected in 2015 MLB Draft

By Spencer Silva

Lamorinda's reputation as a baseball powerhouse crystallized this past week when four local players were selected in the annual MLB draft. Austin Rei (Campolindo, UW), Drew Jackson (Miramonte, Stanford), Paddy O'Brien (Miramonte, UCSB), and Collin Ferguson (Saint Mary's) were all selected to join the big leagues.

The Boston Red Sox selected Austin Rei with the sixth pick of the third round (81st overall) on June 9. Rei, a Campolindo grad, was sidelined for much of the Pac-12 season with a thumb injury. Upon his return, however, he quickly became one of the most feared hitters in the conference. He hit seven home runs in just 91 at-bats and led the conference in slugging percentage (.681). Rei's offensive performance shot him up draft boards, and by the time the draft rolled around, he was widely considered a top-five option at the catcher position.

Rei pointed out a sense of "Nor-Cal pride" and marveled at "the number of guys, from such a small area who have either made it big or might make it big in the future." He added that in Lamorinda there is a great deal of camaraderie among players and families. "The parental support, family, friends, they are always coming out to games. We've all played sports together and we all support each other," he explained.

The Seattle Mariners drafted former Miramonte star Drew Jackson with the 20th pick of the fifth round (155th overall). "Feels great, a lot of anticipation going in before my name got called, but big relief when the name does get called," Jackson explained of

the experience. "It was a surreal moment with my family, for sure."

Jackson, long known for his rangy defense at shortstop and canon-like throwing arm, was considered one of the best overall athletes in the draft. He had a breakout season at Stanford this spring, hitting over .300 for the first time in his college career and finishing second on the team with 27 runs scored, despite missing 17 games with a broken hand.

Jackson recalls growing up playing baseball in Lamorinda as a foundation for his love of the game. "Some of my best baseball memories are just going out, playing OBA [Orinda Baseball Association] with all my best friends," he noted. "It made baseball fun, and made me love the game. And, carrying that over into Miramonte, where I had some of the best years of my life both on the field and off the field with friends I'll cherish forever."

He is excited about playing for Seattle. It's on the West Coast and there will also be a legion of familiar faces in the Mariners' organization — they've drafted two Stanford players in each of the last three drafts.

Jackson is well prepared; he's seen his older brother Brett — a former first-round pick of the Cubs and current Giants farmhand — go through the same process. "It's really nice to have him as a mentor and role model. [He] always has been," Jackson said.

The New York Yankees drafted Jackson's former Miramonte teammate and friend Paddy O'Brien in the 24th round (723rd overall). Coincidentally, he served as a Yankees bat-boy at the age of 12. "This is something I've been trying to do since

I was a little kid," he said, "I'm just really happy and excited."

The 6-foot-4, 220-pound O'Brien will begin a new venture upon signing — pitching. He played catcher for the bulk of his amateur career, but the Yankees selected him for the potential they see in his size and superior arm strength. "It's definitely going to be a little journey," he noted.

Miramonte head coach Vince Dell'Aquila is proud of his former players. "You know when you see those kids who get scholarships ... and watch them play for three or four years that they're special." He explained, "As a high school coach, it's very cool."

Saint Mary's senior first baseman Collin Ferguson was drafted in the 17th round (497th overall) by the Rockies. He was drafted by the Oakland A's in the 23rd round last year, but he chose to stay another year. His decision paid dividends. Not only did he improve his draft stock with a career year at the plate that included a .337 average with eight home runs and 24 doubles (a Saint Mary's single-season record), but he also walks away with a degree in Business Administration.



Drew Jackson



Collin Ferguson



Austin Rei



Paddy O'Brien

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