

Golden State's Delicate Rise to the Top

“If an ‘if’ were a fifth, we’d all be drunk right now... but we ain’t,” Warriors forward Draymond Green said to reporters after the Golden State Warriors took home the Larry O'Brien trophy in 2015. The “if,” Green speaks of is Kyrie Irving's sentiment that had he been healthy, the Cleveland Cavaliers would have won the finals. “But we ain’t,” is the Warrior’s leader way of saying, “too bad,” not just to Irving, but to the rest of the basketball world that Golden State finds itself on top of.

Before 2017, no NBA team had ever won more than 71 games. *Then Golden State won 72.* No NBA player had ever made more than 300 three-pointers in a single season. *Then Steph Curry made over 400.* In one quarter, no player had ever scored more than 34 points. *Then Klay Thompson erupted for 37.* This is what Golden State does. They are the NBA’s newest and most efficient dynasty that’s changed the global scheme of basketball.

But even their own leader entertains the idea of “what if?” Draymond Green, a second-round draft pick, knows better than anyone how many pieces need to fall into place for a dynasty to triumph. And upon further review, it’s clear that Green and the Warriors are a dynasty filled with “what ifs?” Like Silicon Valley, the Golden State Warriors are modern, outspoken, revolutionary. But without some blunders by opponents, poor decisions by their own personnel mixed with a hint of good luck, the innovative dynasty that’s changed the NBA may have never come to be.

Super Bowl XLIX will be remembered for one thing: Malcolm Butler's interception on the goal line to win the game for the Patriots. Seldom we remember how often great moments in sports come solely from someone's mistake. And on that play, anyone who'd watched a football game knew the better decision was to give the ball to Marshawn Lynch, the most punishing running back in the NFL that year.

And that's precisely how the Warriors landed point guard and two-time MVP Stephen Curry.

Flashback to the 2009 NBA Draft, where most would agree that Steph Curry should have been the 1st overall pick opposed to the 7th. However, the focus of this particular draft isn't necessarily geared towards Steph being the first pick. Rather, focus on picks number five and six, both of which belonged to the Minnesota Timberwolves.

Now, most NBA teams would consider it a blessing to have two lottery picks back to back. It's an opportunity bestowed upon only a few teams who likely hope to draft their "one, two punch," or their next pick and roll combo for years to come.

But Minnesota had other thoughts.

Instead, they went with the baffling strategy of not just one point guard, but two. Back to back. And neither of them were named Stephen Curry.

The Timberwolves instead rolled the dice on Ricky Rubio, a 16-year-old point guard from Spain who wouldn't come to the States for another two years. Their following selection was Johnny Flynn, a point guard from Syracuse and immediately after that, the Warriors drafted Steph Curry. Neither Rubio nor Flynn are with the Timberwolves today, the former now with the

Utah Jazz, the latter at home on his couch watching NBA games like the rest of the long list of NBA draft busts.

With about 45 minutes of Googling a history of international point guards and players under 6'0", the Timberwolves front office may have figured out Rubio and Flynn were destined for a decent career at best. Instead, their lack of effort forced them to watch a fellow western conference opponent enjoy the greatest shooter to ever play the game.

Another draft day blunder resulted in the Warriors' assembling of the greatest shooting backcourt in NBA history. Klay Thompson, a shooting guard from Washington State had high expectations as an NBA prospect. Throughout his college career, the son of former NBA star Mychal Thompson seemed to be a sure thing and was considered the best shooter in a draft.

However, on the day of the 2011 draft, reports of Thompson's arrest for marijuana possession caused a stir amongst NBA general managers. The once "no-brainer" pick that was Klay Thompson suddenly seemed questionable due to his history with the law. NBA busts like Jimmer Fredette, Jan Vesely, and Derrick Williams were all selected before Thompson as a result and Thompson soon fell out of the top ten, making him a steal for Golden State. But one may wonder what those lottery teams may have done with their respective picks had Klay Thompson just said no in college. Instead, all we can wonder is: What if?

Even Golden State's avant-garde coach wasn't a shoe-in to become the leader at the helm. Steve Kerr, the first NBA coach to give the "ok" to teams living and dying by the three-point shot, nearly signed with the NBA's dumpster fire: the New York Knicks. Had he

signed there, the Knick's personnel would not have allowed him to instill an offense that scored as quickly and as gracefully as Golden State. Instead, he would have joined the long list of NBA coaches who have been run out of town by Knicks fans.

As it stands in 2018, however, none of this ever happened. We came awfully close to living in a world which Stephen Curry would have been trapped in the lonely confines of Minnesota, or where Steve Kerr would have become the scapegoat of the Knicks. Instead, the pieces fell into place and gave us the splash brothers, the death lineup and the three-point revolution.

The rest of the NBA had its chance to build what the Warriors now have. But Draymond Green reminds us that an "if," isn't a fifth and that we aren't drunk. We are indeed sober, watching the new dynasty in the NBA reign over the basketball world. Like Silicon Valley, the Warriors will keep pumping out new trends and ideas that will help us forget the "what ifs?"

Instead, the question will be: What's next?