

SIMMONS SAYS

JEFFERY
SIMMONS



What was JR Smith thinking?

Maybe he left the stove on at his house. Perhaps a "Walking Dead" marathon was just about to start on AMC. Conceivably, there were hundreds of things running through JR Smith's mind in the final seconds of Game 1 of the NBA Finals.

Apparently the score was the only thing not in the Cavalier guard's thoughts.

By now, most sports fans are familiar with Smith's brain fart which played a huge role in the Golden State Warriors taking the first game in the finals 124-114. Smith corralled a missed free throw with 4.7 seconds left in regulation of a tie game, but instead of quickly getting the shot back to the rim, Smith took off dribbling back toward midcourt.

LeBron James looked bewildered watching his teammate – probably best known for his three-day shirtless run after helping the Cavs win the 2016 Finals – run away from the rim in a tie game. James looked like a T-ball coach guiding a 3-year-old running the wrong way. And when the clock hit zero, he looked just as disappointed as a youth coach when a grounder rolls by a child making a dirt mound in the infield.

Of course the Warriors, a huge favorite to win the series and claim their third title in four years, took care of business in the five-minute overtime. If there was any chance the Cavs could sneak up on Golden State, Thursday's performance probably ended it. The Warriors are a sleeping giant, prone to ramping up their greatness only when truly pushed to the brink.

Cleveland did that in game one, but didn't have the win to show for it. Smith will get plenty of the blame for it (he should) but he's not alone.

George Hill got a giant pass when Smith took off with the ball, most instantly forgetting he missed a potential game-winning free throw as chaos ensued. Most of the Cavs supporting cast aside from Kevin Love – 21 points and 12 rebounds after clearing concussion protocol only hours before the game were awful. Cleveland players not named James or Love shot 16-for-47, a shade over 34 percent, while missing 16 3-pointers.

Most predictions before the series gave the Cavs a tiny chance, and only if James could turn in an all-time performance. The King delivered Thursday, scoring 51 points while dishing out eight assists and grabbing eight rebounds.

James gave the Cavaliers the lead with 32.1 seconds left on an absurd double-clutch layup, beating all-stars Draymond Green and Kevin Durant. It was probably the fifth- or sixth-most impressive play as he ascended to a higher level than any of the Warriors could meet, including former MVPs Durant and Steph Curry.

And yet, Smith will be all anybody remembers from a classic finals game.

Well, expect for Smith. If his memory of games is anything like his memory of scores, he's already forgotten.

Making memories in Morrison

BY JEFFERY SIMMONS
Sports Editor for the Southern Standard
(McMinnville, Tennessee)

When the lights come on at Morrison Ruritan ballpark, the whole community is invited for the festivities. Softball takes the main stage, but a booming concession stand and a family feel seems to be just as alluring.

"We see people all the time who stroll up, get a hamburger and set out the lawn chair to catch the games," said Mike Holland, chairman of the league. "It's all a part of Morrison Ruritan, which is a pretty strong club. We try to do things right and I believe the people have held the faith in us."

"Without this community, we couldn't do all the things we're able to do."

The sense of community is as prevalent as the singles and doubles flying through the air. Friendly rivalries may form over the years throughout the seven leagues, but traditionally good competition and great sportsmanship steal the show.

With 45 teams and nearly 470 players, things rarely slow down once games start nightly at 6 p.m. Holland believes years of good fun have kept people coming back, first as competitors and later as coaches of their own kids.

"We've raised a lot of kids out here. And now they're back with their kids playing," said Holland.

All hands are needed when the 2-year-old T-ball league takes the field. One parent for every player is usually the norm, especially when traffic on the base paths starts piling up and scrambles for the ball turn into rugby scrums.

"The little ones will run everywhere," said Leanne Morrison, a coach and umpire in the Morrison leagues. "But they're so much fun. It's really one of the main attractions of the league. There's nothing better than seeing a kid get a big hit, run to first and throw their hands up in celebration."

Continued on 2B



Thomas Myers launches a two-run single during Great Lakes Cheese's run-rule victory Friday.

Jeffery Simmons photos



Chelsea Knowles gives her daughter Kinsley some last-minute coaching before taking a swing in the 2-year-old T-ball league at Morrison. Knowles coaches for Family Care Clinic.



Carter Elliott, 2, shows off his arm for A Winning Attitude.



A little blue Gatorade was all Kayleigh Pelham needed to sprint the bases Friday in Morrison.



Haven King ropes a shot toward right field during her T-ball game Thursday at McMinnville Civic Center. King plays for 3 Rusty Nails in the 5-6 T-ball league.

Jeffery Simmons photos

T-ball tykes



Ellie Dixon gives her all sprinting the bases for K-9 Kampus in Thursday's T-ball game.




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