

# The Block (basketball)

In basketball, **The Block** refers to a defensive play in Game 7 of the 2016 NBA Finals. With less than two minutes remaining in the deciding game of the championship series, Cleveland Cavaliers forward LeBron James chased down Golden State Warriors forward Andre Iguodala and blocked Iguodala's layup attempt, ensuring the game remained tied. The name echoes a series of bitter moments during Cleveland's 52-year championship drought, including The Drive, The Fumble, The Shot, and James' own 2010 televised special *The Decision*.<sup>[1]</sup> Unlike these other events, however, "The Block" was in Cleveland's favor, and helped the Cavaliers win the city's first major sports title since 1964.<sup>[2]</sup>



LeBron James (top) blocked Andre Iguodala (bottom) in the final minutes of the 2016 NBA Finals.

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## The game

The first half featured back-and-forth play from the two teams. Neither team was able to build a large lead like the previous six games. The Warriors built a 7-point lead early, but Cleveland bounced back to take the lead late in the first quarter. After a second quarter where neither team built a lead larger than 3, Golden State ended the half on an 11-4 run to take a 49-42 lead into the break.

Five straight points by Klay Thompson early in the third quarter gave the Warriors an 8-point lead at 54-46. Back-to-back 3-pointers by shooting guard J.R. Smith and a layup by Kyrie Irving briefly tied the game at 54. Warriors' guard Stephen Curry made a layup in transition and a 3-pointer on the following possession to give Golden State a 59-54 lead. Cleveland responded with a 14-2 run-including 10 points from Irving- to take a 68-61 lead with 4 minutes remaining in the quarter. The Warriors then fired back with 15-7 run to close out the quarter taking a 76-75 lead into the final 12 minutes.

Scoring was slow early in the fourth quarter for both teams, but the Cavaliers built an 83-80 lead with 7 minutes remaining. The Warriors pushed back with a Curry 3, Thompson hitting a jump shot from the left corner, and Draymond Green converting a put-back layup on consecutive possessions to take an 87-83 lead with 5:39 left. LeBron James responded with six straight points, making 3/3 free throws after being fouled on a shot fake, and then connecting on his only 3-pointer of the night with 4:53 to play. After Klay Thompson put in a layup off the glass with 4:39 remaining to tie the game, Cleveland and Golden State began trading missed chances. At this point, the score in the period was just 14-13 in favour of Cleveland.

With 1:56 to play, Irving released a floater that bounced off the glass and was eventually coralled by Iguodala with the game tied, 89-89.

## The play

Iguodala immediately streaked up the floor as Stephen Curry sprinted ahead on the left wing. The only Cavaliers player who appeared to be in position to defend the fast break was J.R. Smith, who quickly began back-pedaling towards his own basket. James, standing in the corner in front of the Warriors bench, took off after them. Iguodala passed half court, threw a chest pass to Curry who immediately gave it back with a bounce pass. Iguodala gathered the ball, took two steps as he powered past Smith and toward the hoop before going airborne. Good defense on the initial layup attempt by Smith forced Iguodala to delay the release of his shot by a few tenths-of-a-second, double-pumping before softly floating the ball up toward the glass. James, who had been trailing the play the entire length of the floor, sized up the shot and sprung at the ball from behind, knocking the potential layup off the glass with 1:50 remaining. The ball was grabbed by Smith and brought back up the floor. After James and Curry traded misses, Irving hit a three-pointer with 53 seconds left to put the Cavaliers in the lead for the remainder of the game. This is cited as a key sequence in deciding the outcome of the 2016 championship.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Reaction to the play

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James later recalled to [Cleveland.com](#), "I was like, just don't give up on the play. Just don't give up on the play. Kyrie made a move into the lane, missed it, it shot long, and Iguodala, one of the best guys we have in the open court, gets the rebound, pushes it to Steph, and I was just like, do not give up on the play. If you got an opportunity, just try to make this play. I was also thinking like, 'J.R., please don't foul him. I know I'm right there, I can get it, I can get it.' I was like, 'J. R., don't foul him, and Bron, get the ball before it hit the backboard.' And we did that."<sup>[4]</sup>

ESPN's [Mike Breen](#), who called the Finals for [ABC](#), added: "It's just another example of how he's just not going to let them lose. That was the thought as well after he blocked the shot: This guy is just not going to let this team lose tonight."<sup>[A]</sup>

Breen described the play thusly:

“ Iguodala to Curry, back to Iguodala, up for the layup! Oh! Blocked by James! LeBron James with the rejection! ”

## Notes

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- A. It was the Cavs' 110th game since the start of training camp, adding up preseason, regular-season and postseason contests, and James was playing in the 45th minute of the 47 he would log in Game 7 when he made The Block.

## References

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