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MINI READ

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Game Changer

Twelve-year-old basketball star Christian Collins doesn't let a health challenge hold him back

From the March/April 2020

(<https://storyworks.scholastic.com/issues/2019-20/030120.html>)

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The seconds on the clock ticked down closer and closer to zero. The score was tied. The crowd was still and silent. Then 12-year-old Christian Collins

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Text-to-
Speech

got the ball. He sprinted down the court and, *SWOOSH*, tossed in the game-winning shot.

Presentation
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Story

The crowd erupted in cheers. It was March 2019, and Christian's basketball team had just beaten one of the best teams in the country. They were going to the championship.

But there's something fans might not have known about the player behind this coup [koo]. He has a serious disease called cystic fibrosis (CF).

CF causes a thick, sticky mucus to build up in Christian's lungs. The mucus makes it hard to breathe and can cause infections. Running up and down the basketball court, Christian often feels like he is breathing through a straw. "I get tired a lot faster than everyone else," he says. "That just means I have to work a lot harder."



Courtesy of Family

To stay healthy, Christian uses an inhaler and a vibrating vest.

Living With CF

Christian takes many steps each day to keep his CF under control. He takes more than a dozen pills. He puts on a vibrating vest that loosens the mucus in his chest. And during basketball games, Christian uses a device called an inhaler. It sprays medicine that helps open up his lungs. Still, he sometimes has trouble catching his breath and needs to take a break.

But although living with CF can be challenging, Christian says it has made him stronger in many ways. "It's given me a lot of self-confidence," he explains. "It allows me to tell everybody else that nothing is impossible."

"Don't Give Up"

Christian hopes to one day be the first player with CF in the NBA. And he is already taking steps toward realizing that dream.

After their triumph at the game in March, Christian's basketball team went on to win the championship. Christian was named one of the top 40 players his age in California—a feat he is especially proud of.

According to Christian, the key to accomplishing your goals is to keep your eyes on the prize. "Never stop working hard," he says. "And don't give up just because there's a challenge you're facing."

WORD HUNT

In the article, find:

- 3 nouns that mean "achievement"
- 2 verbs that mean "achieving"

- 1 idiom that means *to continue working on a goal you want to achieve*

This article was originally published in the March/April 2020 issue.

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Steph Curry

Saving His Team

Basketball Paired Texts About Steph Curry & LeBron James

Steph Curry: Saving His Team

¹ Stephen Curry was one of the best college basketball players in the country in 2009. (Lots of people call him “Steph” instead of his full name.) Steph knew he was good, but he was still nervous about leaving college to play in the NBA. His father, Dell, played professionally for 16 years, so Steph knew what it took to be successful in the NBA. Dell was an excellent shooter who also made his teammates better. Steph now does the same thing, which has helped his team win many championships.

² Before Steph joined the NBA, some teams thought he was too skinny. They did not think he was strong enough to make it through the NBA’s 82-game season. They thought Steph was not as athletic as many other players.

³ That’s a reason why six players were chosen before Steph during the 2009 NBA Draft, which is when NBA teams pick college players. The Golden State Warriors were thrilled to see other teams pass on Steph. They gladly chose him with the 7th pick.

Steph Curry: Saving His Team

⁴ The Warriors were a terrible team when they chose Steph. They had only made the playoffs one time since 1995. During 12 of those 14 seasons, they lost many more games than they won. They knew a talented, hard-working player like Steph was just what they needed to help them win again.

⁵ Golden State's fans were excited too. His jersey sold more than any other player on the team during his first year. Steph had the most reporters asking him questions after many games. Steph played well in his first game in 2009 b, scoring 14 points and grabbing four steals. A newspaper article after that game said Steph could be the person to save the Warriors.

⁶ He played 77 games and averaged 17.5 points per game during his first season. He made 166 three-point shots, which was sixth best in the NBA. Steph was voted as the second best rookie behind Tyreke Evans of the Sacramento Kings.

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Steph Curry: Saving His Team

⁷ Steph played well, but the Warriors continued losing. They lost 145 games and won only 85 during Steph's first three years. Steph was good, but he was nowhere near as good as he wanted to be. He sprained his ankle several times during his second season. His ankle hurt so badly that Steph had surgery on it during his third season, which caused him to miss 40 games. It would have been easy for Steph to get discouraged after so many injuries and losses.

⁸ It helped Steph to remember the lessons he learned from watching his dad play in the NBA. He knew that succeeding in the NBA was going to take lots of time, perseverance, and hard work.

⁹ So Steph started taking 1,000 shots before practice. He spent lots of time exercising to get stronger. He watched athletes who played other sports. Steph watched a famous football player, Cam Newton, practice during the summer of 2012. Steph learned many

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Steph Curry: Saving His Team

valuable lessons from Cam, who was the leader of his football team. Cam showed Steph how to be more comfortable during games. He taught Steph leadership skills that would help him lead the Warriors to more victories.

¹⁰ All this hard work helped Steph and the Warriors improve dramatically during the 2012-2013 season. Steph had one of the most famous games by any player when he scored 54 points during a game against the Knicks in New York City. He made 11 of 13 three-pointers. Fans of the Knicks were even cheering for Steph during that game because he was playing so incredibly.

¹¹ Steph continued his amazing play all season. He led the NBA by making 272 three-pointers. The Warriors won 47 games and made the playoffs. Fans could tell that Steph was going to make the Warriors one of the NBA's best teams.

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Steph Curry: Saving His Team

¹² The Warriors won 51 games during the 2013-2014 season. Steph again led the NBA in three-pointers. He was voted to play in the NBA All-Star Game for the first time. Over one million fans voted for Steph to start in the All-Star Game.

¹³ Steph's breakout season was in 2014-2015. He set a record for most three-pointers made in one season. He had more votes than any other player to start in the All-Star Game. He led the Warriors to the most wins in the NBA. Steph was voted as the NBA's Most Valuable Player. He finished his dream season by leading the Warriors to an NBA Championship by defeating LeBron James and the Cleveland Cavaliers. It was the first time Golden State won the NBA championship since 1975.

¹⁴ Steph helped the Warriors continue their dominance during the next season. Golden State set a record with 73 wins in a season. He destroyed the NBA record by making 402

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Steph Curry: Saving His Team

three-point shots in one season. They made it back to the NBA Finals in 2016, but lost to Cleveland. Steph was sad that they couldn't win the championship after such an amazing season.

¹⁵ Steph made up for that by leading the Warriors to NBA titles in 2017 and 2018. He averaged over 26 points per game during the 2017 NBA Finals. In 2018, Steph set a record by making 9 three-pointers during one NBA Finals game.

¹⁶ Steph has proven the Warriors were smart to choose a small player from a small college to lead them back to greatness.

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LeBron James

A Basketball Legend

Basketball Paired Texts About Steph Curry & LeBron James

LeBron James: A Basketball Legend

¹ When basketball fans watched LeBron James play in high school, they knew he had the talent to be one of the best players ever. That's why it was no surprise when LeBron decided to start playing in the NBA right after he graduated high school in 2003. (Current rules say that players must play in college for at least one year before joining the NBA. That rule did not exist in 2003.) The Cleveland Cavaliers got to pick first in the NBA draft. Everyone knew they were going to pick LeBron. Fans in Cleveland loved that their new superstar grew up only 39 miles away.

² During LeBron's first NBA season, he helped Cleveland win 18 more games than they won the year before. He scored 41 points in one game against New Jersey. He won the NBA Rookie of the Year Award. He immediately established himself as one of the league's best players.

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LeBron James: A Basketball Legend

³ LeBron continued playing outstanding basketball during the next several years, but his dream was to win NBA championships. LeBron made it to the NBA Finals in 2007, but Cleveland lost to the San Antonio Spurs. Cleveland did not get back to the NBA Finals during the next three years.

⁴ That's one reason why LeBron decided to play for the Miami Heat after the 2010 season. People in Cleveland were devastated. The owner of the Cavaliers said some very mean things about LeBron, calling him "selfish" and "heartless" for choosing to leave his home state. LeBron's decision made some people mad, but it paid off for him because he helped the Heat get to the NBA Finals four straight years from 2011-2014. The Heat won the title in 2012 when they beat Oklahoma City and in 2013 by defeating the Spurs. LeBron finally experienced the joy of being an NBA champion.

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LeBron James: A Basketball Legend

⁵ Even though LeBron's basketball accomplishments soared in Miami, his heart was still in Cleveland. After the 2014 season, he returned to his home state to play for the Cavaliers. They were terrible after LeBron left, but in his first year back, he helped them get to the 2015 NBA Finals. Cleveland lost to Golden State, but it was incredible how much better the team played when LeBron returned.

⁶ In 2016, he helped the Cavaliers win the NBA title for the first time in the team's history. They had to beat Golden State, which had just set an NBA record with 73 wins during the season. The Cavs fell behind in the series three games to one. Then LeBron scored 41 points in games five and six to help Cleveland tie the series. After that, he played an incredible game seven to help Cleveland win the title. After he won game seven, LeBron cried for several minutes. He was so happy to help the Cavaliers win their first championship.

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LeBron James: A Basketball Legend

⁷ LeBron led Cleveland to the NBA Finals again in 2017 and 2018, but they lost to Golden State both times. He is one of the few players in NBA history who has played in the NBA Finals eight years in a row.

⁸ LeBron decided to join the Los Angeles Lakers in July 2018. The Lakers are one of the most famous teams in sports, but they had five straight losing seasons from 2013-2018. LeBron wants to help the Lakers return to greatness.

⁹ Since LeBron has had so much success, people debate whether he or Michael Jordan is the best player ever. He wore number 23 with Cleveland because that's the same number Michael Jordan had during most of his NBA career. LeBron loved watching Jordan play in the 1990s while he was growing up.

LeBron James: A Basketball Legend

¹⁰ LeBron has enjoyed winning many awards, just like Jordan did, but he also enjoys making his teammates better. “I’ve always loved the success of my teammates more than myself,” LeBron once told a reporter. He also said when he was a kid, he had a younger player on his team who could not catch the basketball. So his teammates would roll him the ball so he could pick it up off the ground. When this player finally caught the ball and made a shot, LeBron said, “It was the greatest thing for all of us. And I’ll always remember that.”

¹¹ He will always remember that moment, just like basketball fans will always remember LeBron James as one of the best players ever.

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Quiz: LeBron James & Steph Curry

Use the passages "A Basketball Legend" & "Saving His Team"

Your email address (michaeld@mail.orrville.k12.oh.us) will be recorded when you submit this form. Not you? [Switch account](#)

1. Which best describes Steph's first three seasons in the NBA?

- He immediately became the best player in the NBA.
- Steph played well, but he was often injured and the Warriors lost a lot of games.
- Steph helped the Warriors become one of the NBA's best teams.
- Everyone thought Steph was a terrible player.

2. Which statement is true about Steph and LeBron?

- Ankle injuries have forced them to miss many games.
- They have played for two teams during their NBA career.
- They make their teams better.
- They have played in the NBA Finals six straight seasons.



3. In the article "A Basketball Legend," which statement could best be supported by the details in paragraphs five and six?

- The Cavaliers need LeBron in order to be successful.
- The Cavaliers are good without LeBron.
- The Cavaliers could probably win an NBA championship without LeBron.
- LeBron should have stayed with the Miami Heat.

4. Which event upset the most people?

- Steph needed ankle surgery during his third season.
- Steph watched Cam Newton to learn lessons about leadership.
- LeBron played in the NBA immediately after he graduated from high school.
- LeBron decided to play for the Miami Heat in 2010.

5. Do you think Steph Curry or LeBron James is a better player? Use the OREO strategy and plenty of text evidence to support your answer. *

Your answer

Type your name.

Your answer

Send me a copy of my responses.

