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## Kevin Love is sharing the swagger with kids

By Dave McMenamin



Kevin Love gets in a selfie with his "Little Stars" partner, Andrew Caronchi.

CLEVELAND -- Second-grader Andrew Caronchi watched the Cavaliers win the title over the Warriors last June. But he doesn't remember "The Stop" that [Kevin Love](#) had late against Steph Curry. He doesn't particularly remember [LeBron James'](#) block or [Kyrie Irving's](#) 3, either.

What he does remember is running out of his house to celebrate the Cavs winning the first professional championship in Cleveland in 52 years and right into a skunk stench for the ages.

"I watched the championship, and I stayed up until 10 o'clock, and I went outside, and we heard skunks and stuff in the backyard," Andrew says. "Our backyard's got skunks and raccoons. Once a raccoon got caught in our garbage."

A few weeks ago, 8-year-old Andrew took the stage with Love. Love would later reflect that he "nailed" the fancy handshake they had rehearsed: a pound, blowing up the pound and then a WWE-style flex at the end, complete with gratuitous mean mugging. "I thought he looked better than me, which is hard to do," Love says.

The event was the Cavs' annual "Big Shots and Little Stars" fundraiser for the Flashes of Hope charity. Andrew, who was diagnosed with stage 2 Hodgkin's Lymphoma when he was just 4 years old, was a guest of honor.

For the third straight year since joining the Cavs, Love was a part of the event and chose to dress up with his "Little Star" as twins. This year he teamed up with Banana Republic for the outfits.



Love's opinion of the elaborate handshake he prepared with Andrew? Nailed it.

"That's what makes it fun," Love says. "While it's a great event, I also get to throw a little bit of the fashion element into it ... Same pocket squares, same socks, same colored suit. I went with the turtleneck, he went with the tie."

If it sounds vain, that's the point. Flashes of Hope, since it was founded in Cleveland in 2001, has photographed close to 60,000 kids fighting cancer to help them look and feel attractive and invigorated again through a still image as a confidence booster, as they cope with the depths of the disease.

"Big Shots and Little Stars" is the charity's most impactful annual fundraiser, raising more than \$1 million each of the last three years to fund research to accelerate a cure for children's cancer. The night culminates with a strut on a fashion runway spanning the floor of Quicken Loans Arena where the Cavs' court usually is, with players chaperoning the child they're partnered up with for their moment in the spotlight.

Andrew was less impressed by Love's 6-10 frame that more than doubles his size, than he was by what was atop Love's head.

"He had curly hair," Andrew says, matter-of-factly. "And I used to have curly hair."

Jenny May-Caronchi, Andrew's mother, explains: "He had straight hair. And then when he had chemo, it all fell out. And it grew back super curly and blonde. It was a completely different texture and color."

Andrew's hair was back matching Love's the night of the fundraiser -- perfectly coiffed and combed -- as did his outfit. Twins.

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This year's event had a Star Wars theme, and event organizers went all out, with character costumes, "flown in from Hollywood, not the cheap stuff," according to one Cavs staffer. There was Darth Vader making his signature breathing sounds, a motorized R2-D2 that would literally roll up to the surprised children and several near-7-foot-tall Chewbaccas that elicited more than a few Chris "Birdman" Andersen jokes from the Cavs.

"One of the best

things to come of it is that Andrew's peers at school have been talking to him about cancer and asking him questions," May-Caronchi says. "Cancer can be a very scary thing for kids to discuss. But this experience with Kevin Love and the show has made it a more approachable topic for them, which is wonderful."



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As great as the night was for Andrew, it was just a temporary respite. In fact, he didn't know if he would make it there.

"I was sick yesterday, and I'm on medicine now, so I'm doing good," Andrew says, matter-of-factly, as someone who has already been through chemotherapy and needed five surgeries throughout his treatment, including one to remove his mediport which became infected.

What does he do when he's feeling sick? "I think of happy stuff," Andrew says. "That God will keep me safe." Does he pray? "Whenever [other] people are sick I like to do that. I'm in Cub Scouts. I'm a Wolf. And someone's dad was sick and in the hospital, and when we were going home from Cub Scouts, I prayed for him and actually, he got all better."

At 4, Andrew wrestled with severe weight loss and depression stemming from cancer. Love is blown away at his mood now: "He's already gone through so much, and at that time in my life, I felt like I didn't have a worry in the world, and at some point, he was fighting for his life," Love says. "Seeing the photo and walking out there with the photo that we had of him when he was going through the treatment, you have to take a step back, and I mentioned perspective, that's really what you get from it."

And Andrew, well, he just got a new big buddy that invited him back to The Q to see the Cavs play sometime this season.

"You can look and say, 'Hey, that's my friend,'" Love says.

"Yeah," Andrew agrees.

"I'll be like this, I'll score one, and then I'll give you a little, 'What up,'" Love says, pantomiming a wave.

And Andrew smiled a carefree smile.

