

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2019 CHAMPIONS

THRILL OF RAPTORS VICTORY IGNITES DOWNTOWN TORONTO



'I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS! KAWHI HAS TO STAY HERE FOREVER.' - FAN STEVE LOURGOS

The thrill of victory was certainly evident among Toronto fans who partied long into the night, following the Toronto Raptors thrilling 114-110 win over the host Golden State Warriors to win the NBA championship title in six games.

Yonge Street was the place to be as people looking to party took over the street from Steeles Avenue in the north to Front Street in the south. The biggest crowds were reserved for Yonge-Dundas Square, where fireworks exploded and the size of the crowd continued to

swell as fans chanted, sang and cried. Champagne corks popped and people climbed everything in sight.

In Jurassic Park outside Scotiabank Arena, where fans kept the faith throughout the NBA finals, nobody wanted to leave as fans soaked in the moment of the win with tears of joy, hugs and high fives for everyone. They also soaked up the champagne as Drake, the team's global ambassador, jubilantly sprayed fans when the buzzer sounded.

"I can't believe this! Kawhi has to stay here forever,"

shouted Steve Lourgos as Kawhi Leonard was handed the MVP trophy.

But the biggest cheers were for Kyle Lowry hoisting the Larry O'Brien trophy.

As the crowd drifted toward the downtown core, some set off fireworks and flares, filling the air with the smell of sulphur. Men climbed up traffic lights at the intersection of Front and University, waving Raptors flags as fans below shouted "don't fall!"

Overall, the atmosphere was peaceful and joy-filled as Torontonians basked in the glory of a historic win, the first in the franchise's 24-

year history.

At Bay and Front streets, a man was playing a dhol, a drum that gave the celebration a bit of an Indian wedding vibe. At all four points of the intersection, people had climbed traffic poles. But even then, other fans looked out for them. On the ground, people yelled "Hey, be careful! No one wants you to die tonight!" Another called out: "Don't abuse our free health care!"

Just after 1 a.m., revellers smashed the windows of a police cruiser in York Street tunnel south of Front. Police made a wall around the vehicle and the crowd dispersed at about 1:15 a.m.

Otherwise, police were

present in the streets, but seemed content to hang back and smile as they watched the celebration. Some officers even took selfies with overjoyed fans.

A few people climbed scaffolding outside the Nordstrom store on Yonge just south of Dundas and a group of people also piled on top of a TTC bus parked across the intersection of Yonge and Queen streets.

The TTC confirmed that somebody set off fireworks at Bay station shortly after the victory, delaying service for 14 minutes. No one was injured.

"People are being pretty good. It's Toronto, there will probably be some idiots, but

most people are just happy," said Sam Fowler, 25, near Bay and Front, as nearby fans, overcome with that happiness, started singing "O Canada."

Everybody was singing at Bottom Line sports bar on Front Street, when the crowd burst into a round of Queen's "We are the Champions," hugging each other and calling loved ones to say "we won!"

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Toronto Raptors' fans celebrate their first NBA championship after the Raptors' 114-110 victory over the Golden State Warriors in Game 6 of the NBA Finals last Thursday.

Justin Greaves/Torstar



24 YEARS IN THE MAKING

#WETHECHAMPS

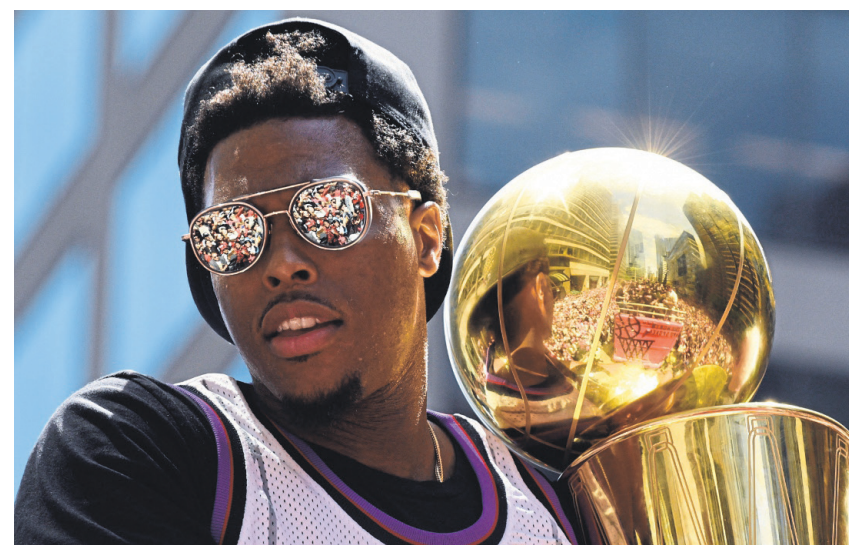


The screaming cheers of about two-million fans echoed across downtown Toronto streets as five double-decker buses full of the victorious Toronto Raptors made their way through Canada's busiest city.

As far as the eye could see, a mush of red, white and black attired fans lined anything and everything to get a glimpse of their favourite team who defeated the Golden State Warriors in six games to win the NBA Championship.

As I walked along the parade route, next to the teams' buses, all I could see was pure joy and wonder in the eyes of children and adults alike, as the superhero-like players sprayed mists of champagne and celebrated along with their fans.

Clockwise from left; Serge Ibaka and other Toronto Raptors make their way through a sea of people during the victory parade, which shut down traffic from Exhibition Place to Toronto City Hall. Toronto Raptors' Kyle Lowry shows off the Larry O'Brien NBA Championship Trophy to the throngs of supporters. Fans capture a moment in history as the parade goes by, while NBA Championship MVP Kwahi Leonard celebrates with the crowd.



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