

7/6 PTL Notebook: Four-way tie for first place with two games left

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NORTH LIBERTY, Iowa – Entering Tuesday's action, there was only one team in first place. Now, with two games remaining before the Prime Time League playoffs start on July 20, there are now four teams tied atop the standings.

McCurry's/Mike Gatens Real Estate came into its game against Bob's Your Uncle & Monica's/Iowa City Ready Mix having lost two straight after opening the summer 2-0. Thanks in large part to a strong performance by Iowa sophomore point guard Cully Payne, McCurry's/Gatens is back in first place after a 105-87 victory over Bob's/Ready Mix, who remains in last place now possessing a 1-4 record in the PTL.

It was a game that was close early on. In fact, by the time Iowa incoming freshman Devyn Marble had finally arrived at the North Liberty Community Center (he said after the game his ride to North Liberty was what caused his late arrival), Bob's/Ready Mix was only trailing 23-20 eight-and-a-half minutes in.

Marble still managed to finish the contest with 19 points and seven rebounds, but he knew what the root of his team's demise was Tuesday night – poor defense. McCurry's/Gatens shot 39-of-71 from the field.

"Defensively, we were getting beat off the ball dribble, and they'd just kick it out to the open shot," Marble said. "They made their shots tonight."

As for Payne, he compiled another double-double on Tuesday, finishing with 15 points and 14 assists. From his perspective, though, it was all about being able to come out of this game with a win after falling back to .500 in league play.

"We played really well as a team," Payne said. "We shot the ball well, and our big guys played great."

McCurry's/Gatens' next contest will be a July 11 rematch against Vinton Merchants/Hawkeye Title & Settlement, who fell back to 3-2 on Tuesday. McCurry's/Gatens won the previous meeting, 104-91.

George Etre, Inc./Culver's of Coralville 102, Vinton Merchants/Hawkeye Title & Settlement 100

Once again, Melsahn Basabe had a dominating performance. This time, his outing not only led George Etre, Inc./Culver's of Coralville to a 102-100 win over Vinton/Hawkeye, but put his team into a four-way tie for first place that includes Vinton/Hawkeye as well.

Basabe, a 6-7 forward, had another double-double to lead the way for Etre/Culver's. The Glen Cove, N.Y., native had a game-high 36 points and 18 rebounds, shooting 13-of-23 from the field in the process.

Meanwhile, Vinton/Hawkeye was without the services of Iowa forward Devon Archie, but got some solid performances from a couple of former collegiate players. Former UNI star Ali Farokhmanesh had 28 points, while former Hawkeye Darryl Moore added 17 to the cause. The loss snapped a three-game winning streak Vinton/Hawkeye had coming into Tuesday, which had it alone in first place.

While Vinton/Hawkeye looks to seek revenge for its other defeat this summer on July 11 against McCurry's/Gatens, Etre/Culver's will also be looking for payback as well against the fourth team to tie for first place, L.L. Pelling

Company/Goodfellow Printing, who beat Etre/Culver's on June 15, 100-84.

L.L. Pelling Company/Goodfellow Printing 74, Jill Armstrong of Lepic-Kroeger Realtors 72

Jill Armstrong of Lepic-Kroeger Realtors made a valiant comeback from a 10-point halftime deficit against Pelling/Goodfellow, but it proved to be too much. In a battle of 2-2 teams coming in, it was Pelling/Goodfellow, led by sophomore Eric May and incoming freshman Zach McCabe, getting the best of Jill Armstrong, 74-72.

In fact, it was May who hit the game-winning shot, banking a mid-range jumper with 8.9 seconds remaining to preserve the win for Pelling/Goodfellow, its second straight victory.

Leading the way for Pelling/Goodfellow was McCabe, who came up one rebound short of a double-double with 23 points and nine boards, while May had 12 points and six rebounds.

In defeat, Iowa junior Matt Gatens led all scorers, finishing with 35 points for Jill Armstrong. Junior Andrew Brommer also contributed with six points and eight rebounds. The Rosemount, Minn., native also had the play of the summer in the PTL, flying in from the 3-point line to slam home a missed 3-point shot, which sparked Jill Armstrong's near comeback.

Now at 2-3, Jill Armstrong looks for a second win over Bob's/Ready Mix on July 11, while Pelling/Goodfellow will try to beat Etre/Culver's again and remain in first place.

The Prime Time League resumes on Sunday, July 11 at the North Liberty Community Center with the first game taking place inside the New Gym at 3 p.m. between Jill Armstrong of Lepic-Kroeger Realtors and Bob's Your Uncle & Monica's/Iowa City Ready Mix. That first game can be heard on KRUI-FM 89.7 with Rob Miller and former PTL participant Robbie Lehman on the call.