

7/20 PTL notebook: McCurry's/Gatens pulls off improbable playoff comeback

By Brendan Stiles

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NORTH LIBERTY, Iowa – It may not have quite been like the Bills-Oilers 1993 NFL playoff game, but Tuesday night had a comeback for the ages in the 2010 Prime Time League playoffs.

Trailing 61-40 at halftime, there was never a doubt in the mind of Iowa sophomore Cully Payne, who helped guide No. 5 McCurry's/Mike Gatens Real Estate to a 100-99 victory over No. 4 Jill Armstrong of Lepic-Kroeger Realtors in the first round. This win puts McCurry's/Gatens in a semifinal showdown on July 25 with top-seeded Vinton Merchants/Hawkeye Title & Settlement.

It was a game that started out close early on, but was in command by Jill Armstrong, who for the second straight game, let a 21-point halftime lead slip away from it. Having watched that July 18 game closely, it was something Payne took into account, even while his team was facing its enormous deficit.

"I knew the whole time it was possible," Payne said about being able to come back and win this game. "With my dad being a coach, I came and scouted them the other day. I knew as soon as we got down 20, we just had to keep pumping and keep believing, and we'd be all right."

In defeat, Jill Armstrong received strong performances from Iowa juniors Matt Gatens and Andrew Brommer. Gatens led it in scoring with 22 points, while Brommer chipped in with a near double-double of 18 points and nine rebounds.

But they both felt it was a matter of McCurry's/Gatens finding its shooting touch in the second half that ultimately proved to be what turned this contest into a tale of two halves.

"They hit a lot of shots," Gatens said. "They hit about every 3 they threw up, and hats off to them. They played hard in the second half.

"We played a good first half. We just couldn't finish them off."

In the first game Tuesday night, it was one where No. 6 Bob's Your Uncle & Monica's/Iowa City Ready Mix put up a strong fight, but ended up being outdone by No. 3 L.L. Pelling Company/Goodfellow Printing, who came away with an 89-67 win.

Pelling/Goodfellow will now face No. 2 George Etre, Inc./Culver's of Coralville on July 25 at 3 p.m.

Leading the way to a win, once again, was the Hawkeye duo of sophomore Eric May and incoming freshman Zach McCabe. May finished with 31 points, while McCabe posted a double-double with 30 points and 10 rebounds.

It was a game where Bob's/Ready Mix stayed close most of the way, and at one point in the second half, only trailed by four points. But just like it did in a win over McCurry's/Gatens on July 18, Pelling/Goodfellow bursted out to a big second-half run, beating the 2-3 zone Bob's/Ready Mix had implemented for this game.

"It wasn't as much transition, this time, we got really good ball movement," May said. "They were doing a 2-3 zone, which is kind of weird to see in the Prime Time [League], but they were doing that. Zach started hitting shots. Everybody was moving the ball really well, and we just kept ahead."

As for Bob's/Ready Mix, its summer ended with incoming Iowa freshman Devyn Marble coming away with 17 points.

PTL Playoff Schedule:

Sunday, July 25:

3 p.m. ☐– No. 2 George Etre, Inc./Culver's of Coralville vs.
No. 3 L.L. Pelling Company/Goodfellow Printing

4:30 p.m. – No. 1 Vinton Merchants/Hawkeye Title & Settlement
vs. No. 5 McCurry's/Mike Gatens Real Estate