

# 7/19/2011: PTL Notebook – Championship game set

By Brendan Stiles

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NORTH LIBERTY, Iowa – Even with the twist that came last week with Anthony Hubbard's departure from the Iowa men's basketball program, the championship game many who followed the Prime Time League this summer envisioned is set.

Despite Hubbard's absence, top-seeded Coach's Corner/Two Rivers Bank & Trust found a way to defeat fifth-seeded Jill Armstrong of Lepic-Kroeger Realtors 92-82 on Tuesday to set up a PTL championship bout on July 24 against third-seeded Falbo Bros Pizza/Culver's of Coralville, who defeated second-seeded Iowa City Ready Mix/Vinton Merchants earlier in the night, 97-86.

For Falbo/Culver's, this was a somewhat significant victory over Ready Mix/Merchants, who had won both of the previous meetings between the two teams this summer by a combined 56 points. Freshman forward Aaron White, who was the only Iowa player to participate in all three contests, felt a little satisfaction in being on the winning side this time around.

"You never want to lose to a team three times, especially in a league like this," White said. "It was good to get a win."

Early on, Ready Mix/Merchants looked to be in control, building an early lead thanks in large part to the play of the PTL's top pick, Bryce Cartwright. The senior point guard finished with a game-high 29 points, as well as seven rebounds and five assists. With Falbo/Culver's keying on freshman forward Gabe Olaseni, who finished with six points and four rebounds, Cartwright knew the game would be in his hands.

"I knew we needed an extra offensive lift, so I just tried to exert myself on that end," Cartwright said. "We just ran out of gas. We couldn't continue rebounding."

Ready Mix/Merchants was ahead at halftime, 49-43, but Falbo/Culver's began to turn it on in the second half. Its second-half dominance was highlighted by an alley-oop from senior guard Matt Gatens to sophomore forward Melsahn Basabe, with Basabe finishing with one hand and a defender in front of him.

"The play before that, the guy stuffed my shot. I tried to dunk on him, and he stuffed it," Basabe said. "I wasn't upset, but I was like, 'I got to get him back.' I just ran the floor and was like, 'That's the guy that blocked my shot, so he got to pay for that.' I had to make him pay."

Basabe led the way for Falbo/Culver's with 27 points and nine rebounds, while White finished with 18 points and nine rebounds and Gatens had 20 points and seven assists.

Now Falbo/Culver's has its sights set on Corner/Rivers, who won the lone meeting between the two teams in overtime on July 5 by a 121-114 margin. On Tuesday, Corner/Rivers was without Hubbard, but that didn't mean there wasn't anyone worthy of relying on.

Upper Iowa's Joey Woods finished with a game-high 30 points. The lone Hawkeye remaining on Corner/Rivers, senior walk-on Jordan Stoermer, came away with 17 points on 5-of-10 shooting from the floor.

Afterwards, Stoermer said not having Hubbard wasn't going to deter him or the rest of his PTL teammates from playing like they have all summer.

"We're still playing with five guys out there whether he's out there or not," Stoermer said. "You got to play the same way. Everybody has to step up a little bit. Not one guy is going to

get all that scoring back, so if all five guys out there can pick up 4-5 more points per game, it will just be fine.”

Jill Armstrong was led in defeat by sophomore forward Zach McCabe, who finished with 29 points on 11-of-25 shooting, 15 rebounds and seven assists. It was also without the services of its top pick, former UNI guard Ali Farokhmanesh.

With 3:38 remaining in the game, Jill Armstrong had managed to overcome an 11-point halftime deficit to take a 75-74 lead, only to see Corner/Rivers close it out with an 18-7 run to set up the title game.

“I think we got a little bit tired at the end,” McCabe said. “I thought we played well together. We all had heart at the end of the game and that’s what every team needs if they want to win.”

Tip-off of the PTL championship game on July 24 between Corner/Rivers and Falbo/Culver’s is set for 4:30 p.m. Central inside the Roberts Gym at the North Liberty Community Center.