

6/24/2012: PTL Notebook – Presence of bigs quite noticeable

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HawkeyeDrive.com

NORTH LIBERTY, Iowa – If there's one aspect to next season's Iowa basketball team that proved very apparent during Prime Time League play on Sunday, it's the depth the Hawkeyes will have inside.

When asked about that depth following his Vinton Merchants/Mike Gatens Real Estate squad's 103-92 win over Culver's/Iowa City Ready Mix, junior forward Zach McCabe – who started 30 of Iowa's 35 games last season – couldn't hide the excitement as he began talking about it.

"I think it's a good thing for us that we have so many guys because we're all going to compete for minutes and we're all going to play hard," McCabe said. "We're all going to push each other and that eventually makes us a better team."

In that first game of the afternoon, the story for Merchants/Gatens was the improved play of the tallest guy from that bunch, incoming freshman center Adam Woodbury. After the 7-1 center had a little difficulty holding his own in his PTL debut last week, Woodbury was back with a vengeance on Sunday, posting a double-double of 10 points and 11 rebounds.

Woodbury attributed part of his improved play to being more comfortable in his new surroundings. The Sioux City native had just made the move to Iowa City the weekend before his PTL debut after taking part in the USA U18 squad's training camp earlier this month.

"I felt way more comfortable today than the first time I stepped out here," Woodbury said. "It was definitely a learning experience and I think I need to be comfortable playing my own game. I was kind of rushing last week and the game was really fast for me. It didn't slow down that much.

"It was still a little bit faster today, but it was slower than it was."

His presence had an impact in both halves. After picking up his second foul of the game in the first half, Woodbury was the lone player on his team who didn't go to the bench. He then proceeded to pull down a rebound off the missed second free-throw attempt and quickly scored a pair of buckets inside at the other end.

Then in the second half, Merchants/Gatens began to pull away after Woodbury put it ahead 62-61. Once the lead got to 78-70, it was the 3-point shooting of McCabe and sophomore guard Josh Oglesby that sealed it for good. McCabe finished with a double-double of 22 points and 10 rebounds and Wisconsin transfer Jarrod Uthoff had 12 points and nine boards. Oglesby, who played Sunday after missing the league opener due to a Tuesday night class, had 20 points on 6-of-9 shooting, with all of his field goal attempts coming from behind the arc.

"We had to make stops on defense and they hit shots," senior forward Eric May said. "They hit some big 3s and we missed some shots."

Culver's was once again led in defeat by sophomore forward Aaron White, who followed up a 40-point, 16-rebound effort last week with 22 points and seven rebounds. May had 17 points and nine rebounds, and incoming freshman guard Anthony Clemmons had 11 points on 5-of-9 shooting.

As for the second game, Jill Armstrong of Skogman Realtors overcame a 66-59 deficit early in the second half to defeat L.L. Pelling Company/McCurry's, 106-98. Much like the game

prior, Armstrong/Skogman's second-half surge was sparked by a pair of Hawkeye bigs – one former and one current.

Leading the way was former Iowa center Jarryd Cole, who scored a team-high 32 points and tallied 11 rebounds. Right there with him was junior forward Melsahn Basabe, who had a double-double himself of 29 points and 14 rebounds. Cole was the cog that ignited the Armstrong/Skogman comeback, and once it was ahead, Basabe played the biggest part in sealing up the win.

A motivated Basabe acknowledged afterwards that not only having Cole on his team this summer, but just having him around in general, has been of great benefit to him this offseason.

"Jarryd was a safety net for me my freshman year, and last year, that was part of the reason why I was lost as well," Basabe said. "I realized that anytime a time was rough, he was always coaching me up.

"Last year was really a blessing if you ask me, because it just taught me so much and I feel like that's what I needed to maximize my potential. It just woke me up as a person."

Battling wits with Basabe and Cole for most of the game and holding his own for that matter was sophomore forward Gabe Olaseni, who finished with nine points, five rebounds, and kept both in check during the portion of the game controlled by Pelling/McCurry's.

Olaseni credits the strides he has made this offseason to three main things – getting stronger, having a better understanding how plays develop before they happen and being more confident. Part of that confidence has also come from the experience he did gain last season, even though he said he understands why those on the outside might have thought redshirting may have served him better.

"I was pretty raw back then and I hadn't played very long,"

Olaseni said. "But I think the small bits of game opportunity and a chance to actually work out with the guys and go hard, I think I worked harder knowing I may get in the game.

"With the idea that I could play, I obviously worked harder and it has gotten me to this point, so I'm happy that I wasn't redshirted."

Other noteworthy performances include junior guard Devyn Marble scoring a game-high 34 points on 12-of-19 shooting for Pelling/McCurry's, while incoming freshman guard Mike Gesell had 14 points, nine assists and five rebounds for Armstrong/Skogman. In addition, incoming freshman forward Kyle Meyer had a better outing Sunday with four points and seven rebounds and sophomore forward Darius Stokes had five points.

The ability showcased at both the forward and center positions Sunday might have been enough of a tease for what's to come later this year.

"It gets me up in the morning because I know if I'm slacking, Aaron White's there, Devyn [Marble]'s there, Gabe's there, and there are people behind me," Basabe said. "There are a lot of people with talent and that's what you need to be good."

PTL play resumes July 1 at the North Liberty Community Center, starting at 3 p.m. Central when Merchants/Gatens takes on Pelling/McCurry's. Armstrong/Skogman will play Culver's/Ready Mix in the second game at 4:30 p.m. Central. Both games will be played in the Jones Gym.

Merchants/Gatens (GOLD) VS. Culver's/Ready Mix (BLACK) (FIRST HALF VIDEO):

Merchants/Gatens (GOLD) VS. Culver's/Ready Mix (BLACK) (SECOND HALF VIDEO):

Armstrong/Skogman (BLUE) VS. Pelling/McCurry's (WHITE) (FIRST

HALF VIDEO):

Armstrong/Skogman (BLUE) VS. Pelling/McCurry's (WHITE) (SECOND HALF VIDEO):

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