

7/15/2012: PTL Notebook – Uthoff propels PTL team to top seed

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

NORTH LIBERTY, Iowa – In a Prime Time League game where the playoffs' top seed was at stake, it seems only fitting that the league's top pick would set the tone.

Not even six weeks have past since Jarrod Uthoff announced he would be transferring to Iowa from Big Ten rival Wisconsin, and the Cedar Rapids native still has to wait another month before he's allowed to even have contact with head coach Fran McCaffery, let alone participate in a team practice.

His training regimen this summer doesn't compare to anything Iowa (or Wisconsin for that matter) is doing right now. But Uthoff has done what's necessary to not only stay in basketball shape, but have enough of an impact in the PTL.

On Sunday, he showcased a little of everything. He scored 16 points, with the bulk of the scoring coming in the first half, and collected a team-high 10 rebounds in Vinton Merchants/Mike Gatens Real Estate's 92-82 win over L.L. Pelling Company/McCurry's, a victory that secured the league's top seed for the playoffs starting next week.

In the first half, he showed versatility with his offensive production. Whether it was dunking on a breakaway or nailing a long-distance 3-point shot, Uthoff put on a display.

"He had a mentality to keep shooting, and he got us going more," junior forward Zach McCabe said. "We had a tough time hitting shots, but he was still hitting them."

The second half didn't feature as much scoring from him, but it didn't need to as he made plays at both ends of the court to his team's benefit. Uthoff was among a plethora of double-digit scorers for Merchants/Gatens on Sunday. McCabe finished with 18 points, nine rebounds and seven assists, with the scoring and assists both team-highs. Also, incoming freshman center Adam Woodbury had 12 points and nine rebounds and sophomore guard Josh Oglesby had 10 points on the afternoon.

When it comes to his game, the one area Uthoff believes he has made the most strides has been with his ball-handling, which he singled out as the biggest area of concern he had when the summer began.

"I still have a lot of improvement to do with my ball-handling, but I've come a long ways with it and hope to go further with it," Uthoff said.

For Pelling/McCurry's, leading the way were junior guard Devyn Marble and sophomore forward Gabe Olaseni. Marble collected a team-high 24 points, while Olaseni finished with 12 points and six rebounds. Despite the loss, Pelling/McCurry's won the tiebreaker for the No. 2 seed in next week's playoffs via a coin flip done by PTL director Randy Larson following the conclusion of both games Sunday.

Merchants/Gatens will face Culver's/Iowa City Ready Mix in the PTL semifinals after Culver's/Ready Mix fell to 0-5 this summer with a 103-96 loss to Jill Armstrong of Skogman Realty in Sunday's first contest.

Armstrong/Skogman had solid performances across the board Sunday. Leading the way in scoring was former Iowa center Jarryd Cole, who had 24 points and eight rebounds. Junior forward Melsahn Basabe and incoming freshman guard Mike Gesell both finished with double-doubles – Basabe with 22 points and 11 rebounds, while Gesell had 20 points and 11 assists. Also of note, sophomore forward Darius Stokes had nine points and

six rebounds.

Culver's/Ready Mix was led once again by sophomore forward Aaron White, who had 27 points and 13 rebounds. Senior forward Eric May also posted a double-double of 12 points and 18 rebounds and incoming freshman forward Kyle Meyer had four points and eight rebounds.

Then there was the play of incoming freshman guard Anthony Clemmons. In what was easily his best PTL performance this summer, Clemmons finished with 20 points, shooting 7-of-12 from the floor. But what isn't in the box score is what the Lansing, Mich., native's M.O. will be as a Hawkeye – his tenacity at the defensive end of the floor.

"He's tough to get around and he's always in your face," Gesell said. "He's one of those defenders that's always up in you and bugging you."

Clemmons attributed his improved play to two things – being more comfortable with the PTL format and his Iowa teammates encouraging him to play with the same swagger they've seen from him in practice.

"I've been telling him to just play basketball. He has been thinking too much," Basabe said. "I told him to play like you would in your neighborhood, like you're in the park. Don't think about nothing. It's summer league. Just attack. That's what he did today."

Knowing that his defensive prowess is a strength, Clemmons continues to play heavy emphasis on that end of the court. He realizes the number of minutes he plays for the Hawkeyes in 2012-13 will be largely dictated by how he plays defensively.

"The offense is going to come," Clemmons said. "If I'm playing defense, I'm going to stay on the floor."

Both semifinal games will take place July 22 inside the Jones

Gym at the North Liberty Community Center. The first semifinal contest featuring Merchants/Gatens against Culver's/Ready Mix will start at 3 p.m. Central. Armstrong/Skogman and Pelling/McCurry's will meet in the second semifinal that is immediately following. Both games will be televised locally by Mediacom Connections.

Armstrong/Skogman (BLUE) VS. Culver's/Ready Mix (BLACK) (FIRST HALF VIDEO):

Armstrong/Skogman (BLUE) VS. Culver's/Ready Mix (BLACK) (SECOND HALF VIDEO):

Merchants/Gatens (GOLD) VS. Pelling/McCurry's (WHITE) (FIRST HALF VIDEO):

Merchants/Gatens (GOLD) VS. Pelling/McCurry's (WHITE) (SECOND HALF VIDEO):

INTERVIEWS:

ANTHONY CLEMMONS:

MELSAHN BASABE:

JARROD UTHOFF: