

7/7/2013: PTL Notebook – Basketball IQ a strong suit for Uthoff

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

NORTH LIBERTY, Iowa – Every summer during the Prime Time League, Iowa basketball players talk about how they strive to be more consistent with their game. Whether it's being more consistent with shooting, more consistent with attacking the rim or with defensive effort, the message remains the same.

In fact, that message may be more prominent than ever before following a season where the Hawkeyes played in the NIT Championship Game. One of the reasons why is there might not be a more consistent player Iowa has right now than a sophomore forward who hasn't been able to play for two years now, Jarrod Uthoff.

"It's tough because you know how good of a player he is and how hard of a match-up he is," senior forward Zach McCabe said in reference to defending Uthoff during practice and workouts much like he had to during their PTL game Sunday. "His basketball IQ, I mean, you can tell he makes the right plays when he needs to.

"He's just an all-around tough player."

The story surrounding his transfer to Iowa from Big Ten rival Wisconsin has been well-chronicled for over a year, leaving those who visit the North Liberty Community Center this summer with opportunities to see what he can provide the 2013-14 version of the Hawkeyes. So far, he has displayed quite a bit.

While the scoring isn't always there for Uthoff, the effort

is. His length is such that he can frustrate anyone defensively, whether he blocks a shot or makes a steal. Offensively, he can drain 3-pointers when someone's in his face or dunk when a lane opens itself.

"He's just a threat on the court because he's so long and he can shoot the ball, which makes him more deadly than he already is," sophomore guard and PTL teammate Anthony Clemmons said. "He's able to hang in the post, he's able to stretch the offense, he doesn't take bad shots and he can attack the rim.

"His IQ is pretty high and that's something we're going to need on our team."

When it comes to Uthoff, the consistency he displays night in and night out isn't so much in terms of what one sees in a box score, but rather what one sees with his or her own eyes. His knowledge of the game stands out as much as his physical capability does and he doesn't need to have the ball in his hands for that to be seen by those who watch him play.

On Sunday, it was McCabe who found himself guarding Uthoff a majority of the time. But there were also portions of their game where Uthoff was matched up against junior center Gabe Olaseni. McCabe and Olaseni presented different challenges that Uthoff expected to face and didn't seem phased regardless of who was on him.

"I think the more you play basketball, the higher the IQ because you get more and more experience," Uthoff said. "I've definitely matured because even though I haven't played in games, I have played in practices and what not.

"There are little things you learn every time and you learn from your teammates the things they do and then add them into your repertoire."

By the time he joins his Hawkeye teammates on their Europe trip next month, he'll have already been to Europe this summer

as Uthoff will be playing for the East Coast All-Stars from July 19-29 in Estonia. By the time the 2013-14 season arrives, there's a good chance he finds himself in Iowa's starting lineup, mainly because the strengths of his game – both physically and mentally – will have only gotten stronger.

L.L. Pelling/Hawkeye Report 95, BlendCard 93

In what was a battle of the PTL's top two teams, Pelling/Report found itself remaining as the lone unbeaten after escaping the North Liberty Community Center with a 95-93 win over BlendCard, who suffered its first loss of the summer after a 3-pointer that would've won the game at the end fell short.

For most of the first half, it was a back-and-forth contest. BlendCard would go on a run late in the first half though that saw it ahead by as many as 10 points and eventually become a 49-41 halftime lead. This run was ignited by Uthoff, who took advantage of being guarded by Olaseni after McCabe defended him the majority of the time.

"I'm pretty familiar with both of them and I knew what each one would do most of the time, so it wasn't that big of an adjustment," Uthoff said.

With BlendCard ahead 61-53, Pelling/Report went on a 38-18 run of its own to go ahead 91-79 inside of four minutes remaining. It went ahead 68-67 when McCabe knocked down a go-ahead 3-pointer and Pelling/Report never relinquished its advantage from that point forward.

The 1-2 punch of McCabe and Olaseni made the difference for Pelling/Report. McCabe led the way in scoring with 25 points on 11-of-18 shooting and also had eight rebounds and four assists, while Olaseni finished with a double-double of 22 points on 7-of-11 from the floor and 15 rebounds. In addition to his 7-of-11 shooting, Olaseni shot 8-of-12 from the charity

stripe.

"It was a pretty good game," McCabe said. "I mean, you got two undefeated teams who are trying to win. It got a little too close at the end, but everyone played well."

As for BlendCard, it received a 24-point, 5-assist performance from Clemmons, who shot 7-of-13 from the floor. Uthoff finished two boards shy of a double-double, coming away with 15 points on 5-of-10 shooting and eight rebounds in defeat.

Greater Iowa Financial Group/Vinton Merchants 134, Culver's/McCurry's 98

Financial/Merchants was finally at full strength for the first time this summer and it showed as the squad won its first game Sunday afternoon 134-98 over a short-handed Culver's/McCurry's team.

Leading the way for Financial/Merchants was senior guard Devyn Marble, who finished with a triple-double Sunday consisting of 35 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists. But the story here was junior guard Josh Oglesby playing for the first time this summer after a broken finger kept him from playing in his PTL team's first four games.

Oglesby, who said he broke his right pinky on a backboard, still conditioned with the team over the course of his recovery. He had the finger taped heavily while playing Sunday, but it didn't seem to bother him much as he shot 9-of-17 from the floor (including 7-of-11 from 3-point range) and finished with 26 points on the afternoon.

After having a sophomore season where he shot just 26.9 percent from behind the 3-point line, it should come as no surprise when Oglesby said shooting is where he's placing the most emphasis towards getting better this offseason.

"To get my shot off quicker, I've been working on it this

summer. It takes time,” Oglesby said. “I was frustrated, especially because I was shooting so well in practice last year and then I’d get in a game and wouldn’t make anything.”

Once again, Culver’s/McCurry’s was without both junior forward Aaron White and junior walk-on forward Darius Stokes. White is currently playing in the World University Games for Team USA and actually had 16 points on 5-of-6 shooting while playing 21 minutes of its 140-46 win over the United Arab Emirates on Sunday in Kazan, Russia. Stokes didn’t play and hasn’t played since injuring his ankle in the PTL opener, but was on the Culver’s/McCurry’s bench for the first time Sunday since the injury first occurred.

Comfort Care Medicare/Mike Gatens Real Estate 107, Jill Armstrong of Skogman Realty 92

Freshman guard Peter Jok and sophomore guard Mike Gesell entered their contest against one another as Iowa’s top two leading scorers in the PTL this summer. On Sunday, neither player disappointed.

Comfort Care/Gatens came away victorious 107-92 over Armstrong and one of the biggest reasons why was Jok’s performance. For the third time this summer, the 6-5 guard scored in the 30s by tallying 33 points on 13-of-19 shooting from the floor, including 5-of-9 from behind the arc.

Jok attributed his showing on Sunday to having the additional three days in between games as the PTL stepped aside for the Fourth of July holiday. It not only meant a break from the PTL, but also from the Hawkeyes’ summer workouts and the 12 semester hours worth of UI courses he’s currently taking.

“I got to sleep in a lot,” Jok said about being able to return home and spend four days back in Des Moines with his family. “I think we were rested up because we came out ready and played real good.”

As for Gesell, he came up one rebound shy of a triple-double for the second consecutive time Sunday as he finished with 24 points on 9-of-25 shooting, along with 16 assists and nine boards for Armstrong. Comfort Care/Gatens also got a double-double of 18 points and 16 rebounds out of sophomore center Adam Woodbury and a 9-point, 5-rebound showing from redshirt freshman forward Kyle Meyer.

**PTL play resumes July 11 at the North Liberty Community Center, starting at 6 p.m. Central with the Armstrong vs. Culver's/McCurry's. Two games will follow at 7:30 p.m. – Financial/Merchants vs. Pelling/Report and Comfort Care/Gatens vs. BlendCard. All three contests are rematches of the league's opening night last month. Be sure to visit HawkeyeDrive.com for ongoing coverage of the PTL this summer.*

PLAYER INTERVIEWS:

Zach McCabe:

Josh Oglesby: