

PTL preview: 7/11/2013 games

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Here's a rundown of what Iowa basketball fans can expect Thursday evening with the three Prime Time League games taking place inside the Jones & Roberts Gyms at the North Liberty Community Center, all of which are rematches of the league's opening night on June 20:

Jill Armstrong of Skogman Realty (2-3) vs. Culver's/McCurry's (0-5)

6 p.m., Roberts Gym

Thursday marks the final night before the PTL's playoff format takes shape and the evening starts with a match-up of teams that will play again July 14 regardless of seeding in Armstrong and Culver's/McCurry's. Armstrong won the first meeting between these teams 104-96 back on June 20, the only time all summer Culver's/McCurry's has been at full strength having the services of Iowa juniors Aaron White and Darius Stokes. White posted a double-double that night of 29 points and 14 rebounds, while Stokes had 16 points and eight boards.

Culver's/McCurry's looks to avoid entering the PTL playoffs winless and will have to do so for sure without the services of White, who is currently playing for Team USA in the World University Games. Stokes, who has missed the last four PTL contests due to an ankle injury, was on the team's bench in street clothes during its 134-98 loss to Financial/Merchants on July 7.

Meanwhile, Armstrong comes off a 107-92 loss to Comfort Care/Gatens last weekend in a game where sophomore guard Mike Gesell almost compiled a triple-double, finishing one rebound

short on top of scoring 24 points and handing out 16 assists. In Armstrong's win over Culver's/McCurry's last month, Gesell shot 13-of-21 from the floor and had 28 points along with 11 assists. Sophomore walk-on Okey Ukah also performed well in that first contest, finishing with 20 points and eight rebounds.

Should Armstrong win Thursday and then win a potential coin flip tiebreaker later in the evening for the No. 3 seed, it would set up a rematch between these two teams next weekend in the first round of the playoffs.

Greater Iowa Financial Group/Vinton Merchants (1-4) vs. L.L. Pelling/Hawkeye Report (5-0)

7:30 p.m., Roberts Gym

Pelling/Report remains the lone unbeaten remaining in the PTL and has already secured a first-round bye after beating BlendCard 95-93 last weekend. It can secure the top seed in the PTL playoffs with a win Thursday over Financial/Merchants, who is coming off its first victory of the summer after beating Culver's/McCurry's.

The first meeting between these teams on June 20 resulted in a 104-92 win for Pelling/Report, who received double-doubles that night from both senior forward Zach McCabe (22 points, 11 rebounds) and junior center Gabe Olaseni (19 points, 12 rebounds). In their most recent victory over BlendCard, both players continued to shine with Olaseni scoring 22 points and hauling in 15 boards, while McCabe finished with 25 points to lead the way.

As for Financial/Merchants, it did have senior guard Devyn Marble the first time these teams met as he scored 29 points and also had six rebounds and five assists in that defeat. It did not, however, have sophomore guard Josh Oglesby, who played in his first game of the summer this past weekend after dealing with a broken pinky finger.

In that win over Culver's/McCurry's, Oglesby came away with 26 points in that contest – shooting 7-of-11 from behind the 3-point line – while Marble finished with a triple-double of 35 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists. Now that Financial/Merchants is at full strength, this is far from a for-sure lock for Pelling/Report on Thursday.

Comfort Care Medicare/Mike Gatens Real Estate (3-2) vs. BlendCard (4-1)

7:30 p.m., Jones Gym

This contest between Comfort Care/Gatens and BlendCard will likely be the best of the evening, not only because the first meeting between these teams ended in a 111-106 victory for BlendCard, but because plenty will be at stake for both teams.

Should BlendCard win again Thursday, it will at the very least guarantee itself a first-round bye and avoid playing this coming weekend. It could even still get the top seed in the playoffs if Pelling/Report loses because the tiebreaker is determined via coin flip as opposed to head-to-head. That being said, a Comfort Care/Gatens victory would have these teams tied for second place and that coin flip would dictate who plays Sunday afternoon and who doesn't.

Comfort Care/Gatens enters this contest having won two straight and in its most recent victory – a 107-92 win over Armstrong – it received a 33-point performance on 13-of-19 shooting from freshman guard Peter Jok and a 18-point, 16-rebound double-double from sophomore center Adam Woodbury. Against BlendCard last month, these two players combined for 67 of the 106 points their team accumulated.

As for BlendCard, it suffered its first loss of the summer last weekend after starting 4-0. In defeat, sophomore guard Anthony Clemmons finished with 24 points on 7-of-13 shooting to lead the way. He had 23 points on 9-of-15 shooting in BlendCard's first meeting with Comfort Care/Gatens, a game

where sophomore forward Jarrod Uthoff had a double-double of 26 points and 10 boards. Uthoff had 15 points and eight rebounds last weekend.

****Be sure to visit HawkeyeDrive.com following Thursday's action at the North Liberty Community Center for ongoing coverage of the Prime Time League this summer.****