

# 7/11/2013: PTL Notebook – Examining the Gesell-Marble guard combo

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NORTH LIBERTY, Iowa – When the 2013-14 season finally gets underway in November, Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery will have good problems to figure out. The most obvious case will be with depth and how he divides minutes among 12 scholarship players he'll have on board.

But perhaps just as intriguing as how many minutes each player gets is how many minutes at certain positions there are and the best example of this comes in the forms of senior guard Devyn Marble and sophomore guard Mike Gesell.

When both players were healthy, Marble and Gesell started every game they each played in last season. Marble missed one game against Michigan State due to a toe injury, while Gesell missed the last four contests before the Big Ten Tournament due to a stress reaction in his foot. Initially, Gesell started as a true freshman at point guard and Marble was at the 2-guard. This changed when Anthony Clemmons was inserted into the starting lineup, pushing Gesell to the 2 and Marble over to the 3.

Then when Clemmons was taken out of the starting five in favor of forward Melsahn Basabe, Marble began to play significant minutes at the point like he did his sophomore season while Gesell remained at the 2. McCaffery has always had plays designed for both players at both guard positions and assuming they both remain in the starting five entering this upcoming season, there's no reason to think they won't see minutes at

each spot. But with that in mind, the question now becomes how much they play at each position, especially after Marble described both he and Gesell as “scoring point guards.”

This summer, Gesell has shown flashes of having to play both spots. On one hand, no Iowa player has attempted more shots (149) in the Prime Time League this summer than the 6-1 guard. But on the other hand, he also leads the PTL with 75 assists. To put that in perspective, the next closest Hawkeye player in assists is Clemmons, who has 38 of them.

Throughout the course of his freshman campaign, Gesell said he envisioned himself as a point guard. While he’s not nearly as defiant about it as he may have been when he first arrived on campus last year, his feeling about playing point remained the same following his PTL game Thursday night.

“I see myself more as a 1,” Gesell said. “Even though Devyn played very well at the 1 down the stretch, I feel like he’s a natural 2 and I feel like that can help him. But at the same time, I’m going to do whatever’s best for the team. I feel like I can run both and I feel like I can defend both.

“I have confidence in my ability that I can guard both positions and play both positions.”

While Marble has only played in four of six PTL games this summer, he has also gotten a chance to work at both positions on the court. Because of those two missed games, his assist total of 28 pales in comparison to Gesell’s, but the scoring is nearly similar. Marble has shot 43-of-94 and has accumulated 122 points, an average of 30.5 points per game.

Given what’s known, one would probably conclude that Gesell is better suited to play the point and Marble the 2-guard like they started out last season. But towards the end of last season, when Marble began to really hit his stride during Iowa’s NIT run, McCaffery hinted at keeping Marble at the point.

Either way McCaffery goes, this appears to be a good problem for him to have and Marble and Gesell both want to keep it that way.

"I think the big dynamic really changes when he's at the 2 and I'm at the 1," Marble said. "I really couldn't tell you why. I understand what he's trying to say.

"I don't have a preference. When I'm at the point, I try to get everybody involved, still score and be aggressive. I don't necessarily mind. It just depends on whatever Coach McCaffery feels is best for the team."

"When I'm on the 2 out there, I'm basically a second point guard. Same with Dev, Anthony and even Josh [Oglesby]," Gesell said. "Any of us can take the ball up the court."

## **PTL playoffs set**

By Thursday's end, the PTL's playoff picture became clear as the top two teams all summer both secured first-round byes while a coin flip was used to break a third-place tie and set up the two games to be played July 14 at the North Liberty Community Center.

Thanks in large part to dominating performances by both senior forward Zach McCabe and junior center Gabe Olaseni, L.L. Pelling/Hawkeye Report remains unbeaten at 6-0 following its 120-94 win over Greater Iowa Financial Group/Vinton Merchants and will be the playoffs' top seed.

Both McCabe and Olaseni made their presences felt early on as Pelling/Report jumped out to an early double-digit lead that would balloon up to 24 points at one point in the second half. Statistically speaking, Olaseni had his most dominant performance of the entire summer finishing with 30 points while going 14-of-16 from the floor, plus 17 rebounds. Like he did the first time the first time Pelling/Report faced Financial/Merchants, McCabe came away with a double-double of

22 points and 12 rebounds.

When asked about McCabe's summer development, Olaseni likened his role to that of former Hawkeyes Matt Gatens and Eric May when they each entered their senior seasons as McCabe is about to.

"He has always been a hard worker and he has always been the guy to dive first to the floor, but I feel like he's just going to take that next step in terms of his leadership next year," Olaseni said. "In the weight room, he's always working hard. On days you don't really want to work, Zach's in the gym and he's in the weight room. He sets a good example for us.

"Just from the get-go, he's organizing pick-up games, he's breaking us down. He's taken Kyle Meyer, myself and [Adam] Woodbury to the side when we're doing drill work. He's just there in terms of leadership and I think it has translated into everything basically."

In defeat, Marble had 25 points, six assists and five rebounds and junior guard Josh Oglesby had 11 points for Financial/Merchants, who possesses a 1-5 record and will be the No. 5 seed in the PTL playoffs.

After losing to Pelling/Report last weekend, BlendCard bounced back with a 95-92 victory over Comfort Care Medicare/Mike Gatens Real Estate that puts it at 5-1 and drawing the playoffs' No. 2 seed. The game was back-and-forth throughout the first half and with a little under four minutes remaining, Comfort Care/Gatens had a 87-81 lead and looked to be in control.

But then sophomore Jarrod Uthoff ignited a BlendCard comeback by scoring a behind-the-back lay-up off a Comfort Care/Gatens turnover to cut the deficit to 87-83. Uthoff then scored four more unanswered points to tie the game and ended up with 33 points on 11-of-19 shooting to lead the way for BlendCard.

"It's something you do when you don't even think about it," Uthoff said. "It just happens. You look back on it and you're like, 'Wow, how did I do that?' But it just happens."

With the game tied at 89-89, former Iowa guard Jason Price hit a 3-pointer to give Comfort Care/Gatens a 92-89 lead before BlendCard scored six unanswered points to win it. The last bucket came on a dunk by Clemmons that Uthoff described as "nasty." Clemmons finished the game with 21 points and six assists.

"I came off a screen and the objective role of the play was to come off hard and make a play off of that," Clemmons said. "I was going to lay it up, shoot it or drive to the basket and do what I did. They gave me a free lane, so I took it."

Comfort Care/Gatens was led once again by freshman guard Peter Jok, who finished with 30 points on 9-of-18 shooting and continues to lead the PTL in scoring this summer with 177 total points through six games. It also received another strong outing from sophomore center Adam Woodbury of 18 points and 17 rebounds. But it wouldn't be enough on Thursday and even worse for Comfort Care/Gatens, it ended up on the short end of a third-place tie with Jill Armstrong of Skogman Realty despite winning head-to-head after Armstrong won the tiebreaker on a coin flip when all the games concluded.

Armstrong reached that 3-3 mark by winning 110-100 over winless Culver's/McCurry's earlier in the evening and will now face Culver's/McCurry's again July 14 in the first round. As it has all summer long, Armstrong was led again by Gesell after he finished with 25 points on 9-of-21 shooting, 16 assists and seven rebounds. This marked the third consecutive game where Gesell had 15 or more assists.

But perhaps even more impressive for him was that 22 of his 25 points came in the second half.

"I just wasn't hitting shots in the first half, so I was just

starting to try and find teammates,” Gesell said. “Then when I started hitting my shot, I kept looking to get that.”

***Playoff schedule:***

**Sunday, July 14:**

**3 p.m. – No. 4** Comfort Care Medicare/Mike Gatens Real Estate (3-3) vs. **No. 5** Greater Iowa Financial Group/Vinton Merchants (1-5)

**4:30 p.m. – No. 3** Jill Armstrong of Skogman Realty (3-3) vs. **No. 6** Culver’s/McCurry’s (0-6)

**Thursday, July 18:**

**6 p.m. –** Comfort Care/Gatens-Financial/Merchants winner vs. **No. 1** L.L. Pelling/Hawkeye Report (6-0)

**7:30 p.m. –** Armstrong-Culver’s/McCurry’s winner vs. **No. 2** BlendCard (5-1)

**Sunday, July 21:**

**4:30 p.m. –** 2013 Prime Time League Championship Game

*\*All games will be played in the Roberts Gym at the North Liberty Community Center. All times listed are Central Standard. Be sure to visit [HawkeyeDrive.com](http://HawkeyeDrive.com) for ongoing coverage of the Prime Time League this summer.*

***PTL Video #1: Armstrong 110, Culver’s/McCurry’s 100***

***PTL Video #2: Pelling/Report 120, Financial/Merchants 94***

***PTL Video #3: BlendCard 95, Comfort Care/Gatens 92***