

PTL playoffs preview: 7/14/2013 (First Round)

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HawkeyeDrive.com

Here's a rundown of what Iowa basketball fans can expect Sunday afternoon when the opening round of the Prime Time League playoffs gets underway at the North Liberty Community Center:

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

3 p.m., Roberts Gym

The first playoff contest of the day features Hawkeye players between the two PTL squads. Comfort Care/Gatens comes off a tough 95-92 loss to BlendCard on July 11 and found itself losing a coin flip to decide the No. 3 seed, thus finding itself in this game as a result.

Comfort Care/Gatens won the only previous meeting between these two teams 93-81 back on June 23, but Financial/Merchants was minus the services of both senior guard Devyn Marble and junior guard Josh Oglesby that afternoon and will have both at its disposal on Sunday. Since returning from his World University Games tryout, Marble has posted 93 points on 32-of-68 shooting over the past three PTL games and had a triple double of 35 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists in Financial/Merchants' lone win back on July 7. On that same day, Oglesby played for the first time this summer after breaking his right pinky finger. Over the last two games, the Cedar Rapids native has shot 14-of-30 from the floor, including 8-of-19 from behind the 3-point line.

The key individual match-up here will be how Oglesby fares against freshman guard Peter Jok, who is coming off a 30-point performance on July 11 and currently leads the PTL with 177 total points scored over six games. Whichever player shoots better from behind the arc Sunday will likely give his team a better chance of advancing to a semifinal contest against top-seeded L.L. Pelling/Hawkeye Report on July 18.

In addition to Jok, Comfort Care/Gatens will have an edge inside with both sophomore center Adam Woodbury and redshirt freshman forward Kyle Meyer. Woodbury has posted double-doubles in all but one game this summer, including an 18-point, 17-rebound showing most recently against BlendCard on July 11 and a 23-point, 10-rebound outing against Financial/Merchants back on June 23. Meyer had nine points and eight rebounds in that contest, while Jok had 22 points in what was only his second ever PTL game.

No. 6 Culver's/McCurry's (0-6) vs. No. 3 Jill Armstrong of Skogman Realty (3-3)

4:30 p.m., Roberts Gym

As a result of winning a coin flip for the No. 3 seed, Armstrong gets the luxury of playing winless Culver's/McCurry's for the second consecutive time and third time this summer. The outcomes were similar in both previous contests, but the circumstances were different each time around.

When these teams met on June 20 in the league opener, Culver's/McCurry's had both junior forward and top PTL draft pick Aaron White, as well as junior walk-on forward Darius Stokes. White has since made the US squad for the World University Games, Stokes has been dealing with an ankle injury since that game and Culver's/McCurry's is still without a win this summer.

In that game White and Stokes both played, Armstrong won

104-96 behind the play of both sophomore guard Mike Gesell (who currently leads the PTL in assists) and sophomore walk-on forward Okey Ukah, who posted 20 points and eight rebounds on both occasions against Culver's/McCurry's. In their most recent meeting on July 11, Gesell finished with 25 points on 9-of-21 shooting and also had a game-high 16 assists and seven boards to lead the Armstrong charge.

The winner of this game will play second-seeded BlendCard in the semifinals on July 18.

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