

7/14/2013: PTL Notebook – Marble, Gesell guide PTL squads to semifinals

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

NORTH LIBERTY, Iowa – Of the two Prime Time League games to take place Sunday afternoon inside the North Liberty Community Center, one went as expected while the other was a bit more of a surprise. But if there was a parallel between the two contests, it was the difference in guard play.

Prior to Sunday, Greater Iowa Financial Group/Vinton Merchants had won one game all summer and was the No. 5 seed entering its playoff contest against No. 4 Comfort Care Medicare/Mike Gatens Real Estate. The script flipped from the previous meeting between the two teams. On that day, Financial/Merchants was without both senior guard Devyn Marble and junior guard Josh Oglesby. Not only did it have both players Sunday, but Comfort Care/Gatens was missing its leading scorer in freshman guard Peter Jok and that absence proved costly.

Financial/Merchants having both of its starting guards this time around, combined with Comfort Care/Gatens missing its best shooter is what led to the former pulling out a 90-85 win and advancing to face top-seeded L.L. Pelling/Hawkeye Report in the semifinals July 18. This was most evident late in the second half of this game.

Comfort Care/Gatens trailed 74-66 late in the second half before going on an 11-0 run to take a 77-74 lead. Marble converted a 3-point play to tie the game at 77-77 apiece and took over the game from there, scoring at will in the closing

minutes to keep Financial/Merchants ahead and then knocking down free throws to secure its victory following a missed 3-pointer by redshirt freshman forward Kyle Meyer that would've tied the game.

Marble finished the game with 26 points on 8-of-21 shooting, along with six assists and four rebounds, while Oglesby tallied eight points on 3-of-10 shooting and also had six assists for Financial/Merchants.

"I just wanted to win," Marble said. "We found a way to get it done and the plays I made down the stretch are the things I got to do coming into next season, so this is just taking a step, working on it. I know it's PTL, but I just got to embrace that and just kind of make it seem kind of bigger than it probably really is, so you get the most out of it."

In what turned out to be a losing effort for Comfort Care/Gatens, it was led by sophomore center Adam Woodbury, who scored a game-high 27 points while shooting 11-of-23 from the floor and also hauled in eight rebounds. Meyer finished with 14 points on 7-of-16 shooting and had four boards.

Jok missed the game due to a fractured knuckle in his left hand. He said the injury occurred two weeks prior to arriving on the UI campus and that it was re-aggravated in his last PTL game against BlendCard back on July 11. He also said this injury shouldn't prevent him from playing in any of Iowa's overseas exhibitions in August.

"It just got worse," Jok said in reference to re-spraining his hand the other night during PTL action. "I'll be good in a couple of weeks. That's what the trainer said."

As for the second game, it was the play of sophomore guard Mike Gesell that proved to be the ultimate difference-maker as third-seeded Jill Armstrong of Skogman Realty was able to notch a third victory this summer over Culver's/McCurry's 96-88 to advance to the semifinal round against second-seeded

BlendCard.

For the second game in a row, Gesell's scoring made a noticeable leap. In Armstrong's 110-100 victory over this same Culver's/McCurry's squad back just three nights earlier, Gesell scored 22 of his 25 total points during the second half. On Sunday, Gesell actually scored fewer points in the second half, but had a stretch early on in that half where he hit four straight jumpers and Armstrong's lead went from eight points at halftime up to as many as 13 points with a little over 10 minutes to play.

Gesell finished with a game-high 32 points on 12-of-23 shooting and also tallied eight assists and eight rebounds. He said Sunday was an example of him experimenting with things such as adding a floater to his shot and more importantly for him, working on "change of pace" dribbles.

"I've been watching Tony Parker and Steph Curry a ton," Gesell said. "You know, they have some of the best change-of-pace dribbles in the game. They're not the quickest guys, but they get by people."

"I'm just trying to add that to my game and just kind of learn from those guys."

Culver's/McCurry's finished this summer winless going 0-7 in large part because of the absence of junior forward Aaron White, who was the league's top overall draft pick before trying out for and making the U.S. squad competing in the World University Games. But for just the second time all summer and first time since the PTL's opening night, it wasn't completely short-handed either.

Junior walk-on forward Darius Stokes played his first game in over three weeks Sunday after injuring his ankle in Culver's/McCurry's first contest. He made four buckets on his first five attempts to help give Culver's/McCurry's an early 14-7 lead and ended up finishing the game with 22 points on

10-of-15 shooting, along with six rebounds.

"My ankle's still pretty sore. It's the playoffs, so I just wanted to come out, play a little bit and see what I can do," Stokes said, adding that he hadn't been able to do much during individual workouts other than work on ball-handling and shooting.

The PTL playoffs continue on the night of July 18 with the league's semifinals, which begin at 6 p.m. Central with Financial/Merchants facing Pelling/Report in the first game, while Armstrong faces BlendCard in the 7:30 p.m. nightcap. Pelling/Report features the 1-2 punch of senior forward Zach McCabe and junior center Gabe Olaseni, while BlendCard features the Hawkeye sophomore duo of forward Jarrod Uthoff and guard Anthony Clemmons.

**Be sure to visit HawkeyeDrive.com throughout the summer for ongoing coverage of the 2013 Prime Time League.*

Playoff schedule:

Thursday, July 18:

6 p.m. – No. 5 Greater Iowa Financial Group/Vinton Merchants vs. **No. 1** L.L. Pelling/Hawkeye Report (6-0)

7:30 p.m. – No. 3 Jill Armstrong of Skogman Realty vs. **No. 2** BlendCard (5-1)

Sunday, July 21:

4:30 p.m. – 2013 Prime Time League Championship Game: *Financial/Merchants-Pelling/Report winner vs. Armstrong-BlendCard winner*

**All games will be played in the Roberts Gym at the North Liberty Community Center. All times listed are Central Standard.*

VIDEOS:

FIRST HALF: Financial/Merchants (GOLD) VS. Comfort Care/Gatens (BROWN):

SECOND HALF: Financial/Merchants (GOLD) VS. Comfort Care/Gatens (BROWN):

FIRST HALF: Armstrong (NAVY) VS. Culver's/McCurry's (LIGHT BLUE):

SECOND HALF: Armstrong (NAVY) VS. Culver's/McCurry's (LIGHT BLUE):

INTERVIEWS:

Adam Woodbury:

Devyn Marble:

Mike Gesell:

Darius Stokes: