

7/18/2013: PTL Notebook – Top seed upset; Gesell injures hand

By Brendan Stiles

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NORTH LIBERTY, Iowa – On a night that decided who would be playing in the 2013 Prime Time League championship game this weekend, there was an upset, and a moment that might be leaving Hawkeye fans upset.

The latter came in the evening's second contest when sophomore guard Mike Gesell left his Jill Armstrong of Skogman Realty squad's semifinal against BlendCard during the second half with an injury to his left hand. Grimacing in pain on his team's bench, Gesell had an ice pack wrapped around the hand, then left the North Liberty Community Center along with family members who were in attendance to get his injury checked by Iowa's training staff.

As of late Thursday evening, the severity of Gesell's injury was unknown.

When the injury occurred, Gesell had 22 points on 8-of-18 shooting, along with nine rebounds and five assists for third-seeded Armstrong, who wound up losing its semifinal contest to second-seeded BlendCard 102-95.

"It was weird because I didn't know he wasn't going to come back, but his team still fought hard for him," sophomore guard Anthony Clemmons said. "When they were making their little run, we just told each other to pick up the intensity."

Without the services of Gesell for the game's final 12 minutes, Armstrong did rally within striking distance as

Clemmons mentioned. But BlendCard never relinquished a lead it built to as many as 20 points in the first half thanks in large part to the play of sophomore Jarrod Uthoff. In what was his final PTL game this summer (Uthoff will be traveling to New York City this weekend and later Estonia with the East Coast All-Stars), the 6-8 forward scored 15 of his 21 points during the first half and also tallied five rebounds to help blow the game open.

“It was a fun experience,” Uthoff said about playing in the PTL one last time before finally becoming eligible to play for Iowa in 2013-14. “Just being able to play basketball, every time you play basketball, you get game experience and you get better.”

BlendCard also received another productive performance from Clemmons, who finished with a game-high 30 points on 10-of-15 shooting from the floor, seven assists and now is one victory away from a second consecutive PTL title after winning the league last summer along with former Hawkeye player Eric May and current forwards Aaron White and Kyle Meyer.

The evening’s surprise came earlier in the first semifinal when fifth-seeded Greater Iowa Financial Group/Vinton Merchants handed top-seeded L.L. Pelling/Hawkeye Report its first loss of the summer, defeating it 109-95 to set up a championship game that will showcase Iowa’s guard play with Clemmons going against senior Devyn Marble and junior Josh Oglesby.

This contest drew the crowd in from the get-go, as Oglesby knocked down his first two 3-point attempts of the game for Financial/Merchants and junior center Gabe Olaseni scoring Pelling/Report’s first 10 points of the night. Oglesby went on to shoot 9-of-18 from the floor (including 6-of-13 from behind the arc) and finished with 24 points for Financial/Merchants. Afterwards, he mentioned how confidence began to kick in for him after knocking down those first two shots.

"I've always said that I feel like as a shooter, when you make your first or second or something like that, you get into a rhythm," Oglesby said. "Early on, I got into the rhythm of the game and I'm proud of our team. Hopefully, we can get a win Sunday."

Marble and Oglesby both had 15 points each for Financial/Merchants in the first half to help give it a 57-47 lead at halftime. The margin reached double figures in the final seconds when Marble hit a trio of free-throw attempts with 0.4 seconds left in the half. The 6-5 guard scored a team-high 28 points thanks in large part to shooting 10-of-11 from the charity stripe on Thursday.

"I told you guys we were going to be here when we were 0-4," Marble said. "We were very optimistic that once we had our whole team back, we were going to be dangerous."

"I'm a competitor. Even though it's PTL, I don't like losing. I want to be the one that can talk at the end of the day."

Pelling/Report's aspirations of a PTL title came up short, but even in defeat, it still received a dominant performance from Olaseni. The London native shot 15-of-20 from the floor and finished with game-highs of 35 points and 17 rebounds. It also got a boost from senior forward Zach McCabe, who tallied 27 points on 10-of-14 shooting along with five boards.

This now sets up the PTL Championship Game, which takes place July 21 at 4:30 p.m. Central inside the Roberts Gym at the North Liberty Community Center. BlendCard won its lone meeting against Financial/Merchants 103-83 back on June 30, but Financial/Merchants was without Oglesby, who was still being held out due to a broken right pinky finger. Even though BlendCard will be the team short-handed this time around with Uthoff unavailable, Clemmons was very blunt about facing off against both Marble and Oglesby this weekend.

"Get ready for a show," Clemmons said.

**Be sure to visit HawkeyeDrive.com on the night of July 21 for complete coverage of the 2013 Prime Time League Championship Game between No. 2 BlendCard and No. 5 Greater Iowa Financial Group/Vinton Merchants.*

VIDEOS:

FIRST HALF: Financial/Merchants (GOLD) VS. Pelling/Report (GREEN):

SECOND HALF: Financial/Merchants (GOLD) VS. Pelling/Report (GREEN):

FIRST HALF: BlendCard (SILVER) VS. Armstrong (NAVY):

SECOND HALF: BlendCard (SILVER) VS. Armstrong (NAVY):

INTERVIEWS:

Zach McCabe:

Josh Oglesby:

Jarrold Uthoff:

Anthony Clemmons: