

7/20/2013: PTL Championship preview

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2013 Prime Time League Championship Game:

No. 5 Greater Iowa Financial Group/Vinton Merchants (3-5) vs. No. 2 BlendCard (6-1)

When: Sunday, July 21, 4:30 p.m. CT

Where: Roberts Gym, North Liberty Community Center

How Financial/Merchants got to this point: *Financial/Merchants actually lost its first four PTL games of the summer, but was short-handed during the month of June. Senior guard Devyn Marble, who was the third pick of the PTL draft earlier this summer, missed two of those losses while trying out for the U.S. squad that recently competed in the World University Games. Junior guard Josh Oglesby missed all four games while recovering from a broken pinky finger on his right hand.*

Since returning to full strength with both Iowa guards in the lineup, Financial/Merchants has won three of its last four (including two playoff games) and just recently avenged the lone defeat on July 18 when it upset top-seeded and previously unbeaten L.L. Pelling/Hawkeye Report 109-95 in the semifinals. In that victory over Pelling/Report, Marble finished with a double-double of 28 points and 10 rebounds, while Oglesby had his best performance of the summer shooting 9-of-18 from the floor (including 6-of-13 from 3-point range) and coming away with 24 points.

How BlendCard got to this point: *Financial/Merchants is the surprise, whereas BlendCard is anything but. PTL director*

Randy Larson's squad has only lost once all summer, and after having a first-round bye, defeated Jill Armstrong of Skogman Realty 102-95 in the PTL semifinals on July 18. This team has been led throughout the summer by a pair of Hawkeye sophomores – forward Jarrod Uthoff and guard Anthony Clemmons. In BlendCard's most recent win over Armstrong, Clemmons shot 10-of-15 from the floor and came away with 30 points and seven assists, while Uthoff had 21 points and five rebounds.

However, the storyline with BlendCard entering Sunday's title bout is that it will be without the services of Uthoff, who is currently in New York City with the East Coast All-Stars preparing to play in a tournament over in Estonia. As a result, more of the load will be placed on Clemmons, who is seeking his second consecutive PTL championship [after winning the league last summer](#) alongside former Hawkeye player Eric May and current Iowa forwards Aaron White and Kyle Meyer.

How they've fared against each other: These two teams met once this summer [back on June 30, with BlendCard defeating Financial/Merchants, 103-83](#). This was Marble's first game back following his World University Games tryout and Financial/Merchants was still without Oglesby when this contest took place. Marble had 33 points on 11-of-28 shooting, eight rebounds and seven assists in this particular loss.

Interestingly enough, this game marked the lowest-scoring outputs for both Clemmons and Uthoff the entire summer. Uthoff had a double-double that included 15 rebounds, but he only had 14 points, while Clemmons finished with just 17 points in what was the only game all summer that he shot less than 50 percent from behind the 3-point arc and one of two games where he shot less than 50 percent altogether, going 5-of-12.

What to watch for: The most noteworthy match-up here is easily the point guard battle between Marble and Clemmons and [with sophomore Mike Gesell recently fracturing a bone in his left hand](#), this battle becomes all the more interesting as these

two players will likely be running the point for Iowa during its European tour in August.

Looking beyond individual match-ups, 3-point shooting will likely play a big role in Sunday's contest. Through seven PTL games, Clemmons has shot 33-of-54 from behind the arc this summer. Meanwhile, Oglesby has shot a combined 16-of-38 from 3-point range in the four games he has played in since coming back from his injury. Whichever of these two has the better day shooting from 3 will probably be leading his team to victory.

Another thing to keep track of Sunday will be free-throw shooting. BlendCard will be missing Uthoff's 28-of-29 from the charity stripe, but Clemmons has been just as effective shooting 28-of-31. Meanwhile, Marble has shot a combined 40-of-46 from the foul line in the six PTL games he has played in.

Possible X-factors: For Financial/Merchants, it's definitely Oglesby for the simple reason that he didn't play the only other time these teams faced each other this summer. If he gets off to another hot start shooting the ball like he did the other night against Pelling/Report, it'll take some of the load off Marble, who has played particularly well down the stretch in both of Financial/Merchants' playoff wins, one of which came against a short-handed Comfort Care Medicare/Mike Gatens Real Estate squad missing its top scorer, Iowa freshman guard Peter Jok.

As for BlendCard, the load gets bigger on Clemmons Sunday afternoon as this will be the first time his team has played without Uthoff all summer long. However, there's a non-Hawkeye on this team to keep a close eye on in former Iowa City West High product Dondre Alexander. When BlendCard beat Financial/Merchants back on June 30 and wasn't receiving much scoring from either Uthoff or Clemmons, it was Alexander who led the charge with 25 points that day and he could be a

difference-maker for this team both in and outside the arc.