

Clemmons wins second straight PTL championship

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

NORTH LIBERTY, Iowa – Last summer as an incoming Iowa freshman, Anthony Clemmons got to taste immediate success by being part of a team that won the Prime Time League in 2012. Clemmons once again experienced similar PTL success as his second-seeded BlendCard squad won the 2013 title game Sunday afternoon by beating No. 5 Greater Iowa Financial Group/Vinton Merchants, 96-78.

Except this time around, his role was far more significant.

When Clemmons won in 2012, he was in more of a supporting role while playing alongside the likes of Eric May and Aaron White. On Sunday, Clemmons was the reason for his team's success. After a sluggish first half where neither team seemed to shoot well, the sophomore guard took control by scoring 19 of his game-high 32 points in the second half while also coming away with 10 rebounds.

Making both his individual showing and his team's showing all the more impressive Sunday was that it was done despite fellow Iowa sophomore forward Jarrod Uthoff being unavailable, as he was in New York City this weekend training with the East Coast All-Stars for a tournament in Estonia. Then add in being named co-PTL MVPs along with Uthoff, and the summer was one to remember for the Lansing, Mich., native.

"Last year, I wasn't even in the nominees. I came out pretty sluggish and uncomfortable, really," Clemmons said, referencing the co-MVP honors he received afterwards. "For me to come back, bounce back and have a good year in the PTL, I

mean, it's unbelievable.

Coming into Sunday's title game, Financial/Merchants seemed to have an intangible edge, if for no other reason than being at full-strength unlike when it lost to BlendCard back on June 30. But even with both senior guard Devyn Marble and junior guard Josh Oglesby at its disposal this time around, it struggled shooting all afternoon. What started out as BlendCard opening the game with a 6-0 run eventually evolved into a 28-12 deficit for Financial/Merchants midway through the first half.

"We started off slow and kind of stayed slow," Oglesby said. "Overall, I thought the game was kind of sloppy and we didn't play too well."

Every time Financial/Merchants looked poised to make a run and inch closer, BlendCard countered with spurts to keep its advantage in double figures and it went into halftime with a 51-36 lead. Again, Financial/Merchants would get within 10 points early in the second half, but then Clemmons began heating up at both ends of the floor.

"We were wanting to challenge [Clemmons] and make him go against a little bit more pressure," Marble said. "That was a key in trying to win. We just came up short."

Suddenly, what was only a 51-41 deficit with plenty of time remaining became 76-53 with a little over 10 minutes remaining after Clemmons drained an open 3-pointer, one of only four he made the entire day on 13 attempts.

"The first half was really a struggle and I couldn't get shots to fall," Clemmons said. "You know, we just let the game come to us and made the right play instead of making the big home run. We played together and that got us the victory."

In defeat, Marble and Oglesby posted nearly identical stat lines as they both scored 16 points and both shot 5-of-10

inside the 3-point arc. Marble shot a combined 6-of-17 from the floor, 3-of-4 from the free-throw line and also tallied nine rebounds and four assists. Meanwhile, Oglesby shot 6-of-18 from the floor, was a perfect 3-of-3 from the charity stripe and also hauled in 10 rebounds to complete the double-double, plus three assists.

Over the next three weeks, attention will begin shifting from the PTL to the Hawkeyes' upcoming Europe trip. But for now at least, Clemmons (as well as Uthoff for that matter) has something on the rest of his teammates – bragging rights.

"I'm a little braggish type, but I don't try to rub it in," Clemmons said. "But if somebody brings it up, I get to hang high."

**Be sure to visit HawkeyeDrive.com on Monday for a complete statistical breakdown of every Iowa player competing in the Prime Time League this summer, as well as final thoughts on each player as the Hawkeyes prepare for both their European tour and the upcoming 2013-14 college basketball season.*

2013 PTL Championship: BlendCard (SILVER) VS. Financial/Merchants (GOLD) (FIRST HALF VIDEO):

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