

6/26/2014: PTL Notebook – Centers focus on strength

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

NORTH LIBERTY, Iowa – At this time last year, building up strength was atop Adam Woodbury's list of offseason priorities. Strength is an attribute centers need to have in order to survive the grind that is Big Ten basketball and this was something Woodbury recognized and addressed.

As he continues to address his strength even further though, Woodbury isn't the only Hawkeye center placing a priority on it. Senior center Gabe Olaseni played his entire junior season weighing between 220-225 pounds. Right now, he's undergoing a bulking up process similar to what Woodbury endured a year ago.

"Coach McCaffery had a conversation with me that he wanted me to bump my weight up to around 230," Olaseni said. "So I'm up to 233 right now. I feel like I can get up to 240. I feel as though I'm running the same and I'm jumping higher.

"It's all about strength this offseason."

Olaseni's present strength was the first thing Woodbury said he noticed as being different about him, even though the two go head-to-head with one another every day in practice and did so in Prime Time League action Thursday. With that in mind, Woodbury is continuing to stick to what allowed him to have more success as a sophomore and he believes it's making him better now.

"I think my jumper has gotten a little bit better from last year. I'm more confident in it," Woodbury said. "I think I may

be in a little bit better shape. I've gotten bigger and stronger this offseason and I've got a couple of months left to get even stronger.

"I feel really good about my game right now."

The physicality is on display when they go head-to-head. It might also be on display even more if the two wind up playing more minutes together in 2014-15 with Olaseni learning more about playing the 4-spot, which would in theory allow him to complement Woodbury inside.

"Last year, a lot of the fouls I got were just two shots to the line," Olaseni said. "I kind of want to translate those into And-1s. Just being able to finish around the rim, just being able to keep the ball high and finish high and just dunk everything around the rim.

"It's not just strength in my upper body. It's in my legs. I'm squatting a lot more. I'm doing what it takes to be able to take that next step in terms of finishing."

Culver's/McCurry's 105, Vinton Merchants/Marion Iron Company 90

Being short-handed for the second straight week didn't seem to phase Culver's/McCurry's in its 105-90 win over Merchants/Iron. In fact, it could have been worse than it ended up being.

Initially, senior forward Aaron White didn't have intentions of playing Thursday since he's participating at the Kevin Durant Nike Skills Academy this weekend in Washington, D.C. But since his flight to the nation's capital wasn't scheduled to depart until Friday morning, White decided to suit up Thursday for his Culver's/McCurry's squad and tallied 15 points and nine rebounds in the win.

White left the game for good during the second half as his

team built a lead that was as big as 82-56. Culver's/McCurry's moved to 2-0 with the win and is expected to have incoming sophomore guard Trey Dickerson making his PTL debut for it next week.

"I just wanted to play a little bit of pick-up and get my legs going," White said. "I'm fortunate enough that we were winning tonight and I didn't have to play in the second half." "I didn't play pick-up this week with the guys, so I needed something so I wasn't rusty tomorrow."

The story for Merchants/Iron was the play of junior guard Mike Gesell. He looked more aggressive attacking the rim on Thursday and it showed in the stat line as he finished with a team-high 25 points on 10-of-20 shooting from the floor.

"I'm looking to be a lot more aggressive this season," Gesell said. "With Dev, our leading scorer, moving on to the league, I think as a role for myself, I need to step up and be a little bit more of a scorer, especially being an upperclassman now. That's something that I'm looking to do to improve my offensive game."

Merchants/Iron, which dropped to 1-1 this summer with the loss, also received a 9-point, 6-rebound showing in defeat from incoming freshman forward Dominique Uhl. It also got an 8-point, 7-rebound game from incoming freshman walk-on Nicholas Baer.

Westport Touchless Autowash/IAHomesForSale 111, L.L. Pelling/Comfort Care Medicare 109

In the battle of big men, it was Woodbury who had the upper hand Thursday as his Autowash/Homes squad defeated Olaseni and Pelling/Comfort Care, 111-109.

But as intriguing as this contest sounded like it would be coming in, physicality played a role as both Woodbury and

Olaseni combined for 11 fouls between the two of them.

"We always go at each other," Olaseni said. "With the fouls, I guess it's kind of annoying. We shouldn't really be on the bench in PTL. We should be out there playing.

"But at the same time, we just have to play through our emotions and just play through it."

Woodbury led the charge for Autowash/Homes – who is now 1-1 this summer – by putting up nearly identical numbers to what he had last week, as he finished with 26 points on 12-of-20 shooting and nine rebounds. Olaseni on the other hand had 17 points on 8-of-16 shooting and six rebounds for Pelling/Comfort Care, who dropped to 0-2 with the loss.

"He's a tough match-up for anybody," Woodbury said. "I think his size and athleticism are pretty unmatched from anybody I've seen in the first two years of my college career. It's a really tough match-up for me, but I think I hold my own."

Pelling/Comfort Care also received a 17-point performance from senior guard Josh Oglesby, who shot 5-of-12 from the floor in defeat.

Jill Armstrong of Skogman Realty 87, BlendCard 78

Thursday's nightcap saw Armstrong move to 2-0 after defeating BlendCard 87-78. The loss drops BlendCard to 0-2.

The story here was mainly two things. One was Armstrong's ability to dominate the boards, out-rebounding BlendCard 53-27. The other was BlendCard's sloppiness with the ball, particularly in the early part of the second half when its halftime lead evaporated.

Armstrong received a double-double from junior forward Jarrod Uthoff, who finished with 19 points on 8-of-21 shooting along with 14 of those 53 rebounds his team tallied Thursday. In

defeat, BlendCard received a 15-point effort from sophomore guard Peter Jok, who shot 5-of-13 from the floor.

**PTL play resumes July 3 at the Cedar Valley SportsPlex in Waterloo, starting with two games at 6 p.m. Central – Westport Touchless Autowash/IAHomesForSale vs. Vinton Merchants/Marion Iron Company and Jill Armstrong of Skogman Realty vs. Culver's/McCurry's – followed by a 7:30 p.m. Central contest between L.L. Pelling/Comfort Care Medicare and BlendCard. Be sure to visit HawkeyeDrive.com for ongoing coverage of the PTL this summer.*

PLAYER INTERVIEWS:

Mike Gesell:

Adam Woodbury: