

PTL playoffs preview: 7/17/2014 (First Round)

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Here's a rundown of what Iowa basketball fans can expect Thursday evening when the opening round of the Prime Time League playoffs gets underway at the North Liberty Community Center:

No. 5 Vinton Merchants/Marion Iron Company (2-2) vs. No. 4 Westport Touchless Autowash/IAHomesForSale (2-2)

6 p.m., Roberts Gym

The first playoff game of the evening features a pair of 2-2 teams that ended up on the wrong end of a four-way coin flip and found themselves pitted against one another right away.

Merchants/Iron is coming off a 109-89 loss to Pelling/Comfort Care last week. However, it did beat Autowash/Homes the previous time these teams met on July 3 in Waterloo. In that contest, Merchants/Iron received a 23-point showing from junior guard Mike Gesell, as well as a 17-point effort from incoming freshman forward Dominique Uhl.

As for Autowash/Homes, it's coming off a convincing 98-76 win over Armstrong where junior guard Anthony Clemmons led the way with 26 points after only scoring three points against Merchants/Iron the previous go-around. Autowash/Homes also features junior center Adam Woodbury, who has arguably been the best Iowa player in the PTL this summer. Woodbury is currently averaging 26 points and 11 rebounds per game and has posted double-doubles each of the past two weeks. Against Merchants/Iron, he finished with 24 points and 14 rebounds.

The winner of this contest faces top-seeded Armstrong in the semifinals on July 24.

No. 6 BlendCard (1-3) vs. No. 3 L.L. Pelling/Comfort Care Medicare (2-2)

7:30 p.m., Jones Gym

Thursday's playoff nightcap features a BlendCard team that earned its first win of the summer last week and will look to make it two straight. It also features a Pelling/Comfort Care squad with two consecutive wins to its name after starting the summer 0-2.

The big story here will be BlendCard not having the services of sophomore guard Peter Jok for this game. Jok is currently serving an indefinite suspension from all Iowa basketball-related activities following an arrest earlier in the week. His absence will be enormous for BlendCard, as Jok has scored a combined 59 points each of the past two weeks, including 29 points in a 77-75 loss to Pelling/Comfort Care back on July 3 in Waterloo.

As for Pelling/Comfort Care, it will be seeking strong performances yet again from its senior duo of Gabe Olaseni and Josh Oglesby. Against BlendCard two weeks ago, Olaseni posted a double-double of 22 points and 16 rebounds and he's more recently coming off a 33-point showing last week. Meanwhile, Oglesby will look to build off a solid showing last week against Merchants/Iron where he finished with 15 points and six assists.

The winner of this game earns a spot in the PTL semifinals next week and will face second-seeded Culver's/McCurry's, who won the four-way tiebreaker for the first round bye via coin flip following the conclusion of last week's games.

(Exhibition) No. 1 Jill Armstrong of Skogman Realty (3-1) vs. No. 2 Culver's/McCurry's (2-2)

6 p.m., Jones Gym

Although this game won't actually count, the league's top two seeds will play a pick-up game against each other during the first playoff game taking place Thursday night in North Liberty. Both Armstrong and Culver's/McCurry's are coming off defeats last week despite earning automatic spots in next week's semifinal contests.

When these teams met on July 3 in Waterloo, Armstrong emerged victorious with a 102-78 win. That night (and really, all summer long), it was led by junior forward Jarrod Uthoff, who had a double-double consisting of 29 points and 16 rebounds.

Culver's/McCurry's has lost two straight, but will have the services of senior forward Aaron White on Thursday after he missed last week's game against BlendCard to participate at the LeBron James Skills Academy in Las Vegas. Thursday will also mark the first PTL appearance in North Liberty for incoming sophomore guard Trey Dickerson, who made his only other two appearances the last two weeks when games were being played in Waterloo.