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BIG TIME BALLERS WIN CHAMPIONSHIP OVER HOOP STARS IN CLOSE FINISH

In a game that came down to an icing the shooter moment, the BIG TIME BALLERS won the 2018 NT Youth Center 15-18 Summer League Championship over the HOOP STARS, 44-43. Star guard Ryan Mellerski led the way for the BTBers with 17 points while the Kish brothers, Jake and Joe, scored 11 points and 9 points respectively. After a slow start, Noah Fox finished with a 14-point, 9-rebound, 3-assist and 3 steal outing for the HOOP STARS while Sean Ferry and Austin Johnson had 9 points apiece.

It seemed that in the first quarter the BTBers, coached by Jake Lemke, were going to run away with the game as they built a 9-3 lead thanks to a three-pointer and a pair of free-throws by Joe Kish, a basket by his brother, Jake, and a lay-up from Mellerski. Jay Smith had the lone three-pointer for the HOOP STARS.

The BTBers were still out in front heading into halftime as they built a 26-12 lead. Mellerski scored a game-high 8 points in the frame with two treys while Jerry Amrhein scored all of his 4 points. Jake Kish had a three-pointer and his older brother Joe scored a basket. But the HOOP STARS slowly built momentum as Fox scored a three-pointer and a pair of free-throws while Johnson and Caleb Royer had a basket each (also had 2 rebounds.)

In the third quarter, the HOOP STARS, coached by Alex Quinn, outscored the BIG TIME BALLERS, 13-8, to trim the deficit to 34-25. Johnson led the way scoring 7 points while Fox, Smith and Carly Hall scored a basket each. For the BTBers, Jake Kish and Alex Fletcher scored a three-pointer each.

But in the fourth quarter, Ferry emerged for the HOOP STARS, scoring all 9 of his points. His second three-pointer of the night cut the deficit to 42-36 with less than 3 minutes remaining. Then, on the next possession, Smith hit a corner jumper to make the score 42-38. Then, with 11 seconds left in regulation, Fox knocked down a trey to make the deficit 42-41. However, to stop the clock, the HOOP STARS had to foul to put Mellerski at the line for the 1-and-1. Mellerski knocked both free-throws to make the score 44-41 with 1 second left.

Fox attempted a final three-pointer but was fouled and was sent to the free-throw for three shots. Fox made the first two before Coach Lemke had a trick up his sleeve, calling a time-out before the third shot.

It worked as Fox's final free-throw attempt hit off the front of the rim to ensure the BIG TIME BALLERS their first title in franchise history.

In the victory, Amrhein added 7 rebounds while Joe Kish had 6 rebounds, 3 steals and a block. The championship is Lemke's third title as a coach and his sixth overall.

In the loss, Sean Ferry added 4 rebounds, 3 assists and a block while his brother, Aidan, had 7 rebounds, 2 assists, 2 steals and a block.