

## NATHAN PEARLMAN GAME WINNER GIVES ILLINOIS NARROW 29-27 VICTORY OVER WISCONSIN IN PLAY HARD HOOPS FALL LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP

The Big 10 Championship lived up to the hype as a spirited contest between Illinois and Wisconsin never saw a bigger lead than 6 points. Illinois took control of the game early after a 3point shot from Nathan Pearlman and a Kieran Fitzgerald Free Throw made the score 16-10. Both teams played with great energy on the defensive end, but the rebounding edge went to Illinois on this game.

The tide would turn after a Billy Kulwin Free throw and basket on a beautiful feed from Dean Guttman brought Wisconsin within 2 points. Dean and Oren Guttman would combine for 9 consecutive points as the Wisconsin transition game started to overwhelm Illinois. With the momentum on the side of Wisconsin, Reid Waco of Illinois used his pivot feet to perfection to free up a sweet 8 foot floater.

The teams headed to the final 5 minutes of the game locked in a one-point game with Wisconsin ahead 23-22. Wisconsin extended the lead to 3 points on a beautiful weave play on the perimeter that led to a Billy Kulwin basket. Understanding that this was crunch time, Illinois' floor leader Clark Tavas took control of the next few minutes scoring on 2 hard drives to the basket, including a tough finish resulting in a 3 point play.

Illinois was clinging to a 27-25 lead but missed a free throw and fouled on the rebound putting Murray Gibson of Wisconsin on the free throw line. Gibson calmly sunk 2 free throws to tie the game with under 30 seconds to play. Nathan Pearlman in his 2<sup>nd</sup> year at Play Hard Hoops would not be denied, and hit a tough floating shot from 10 feet to give Illinois the lead with 13 seconds and got the stop they needed to hold off Wisconsin and win the Big 10 Championship.

The efforts of all the players: Jackson Kavanaugh, Bennett Logan, Nico Scala, and Jacob Gonsky with those listed above gave so much to this game, had fun and participated in one of the best Play Hard Championships of all time!