

Openjobmetis, great among the greats: Avellino also beaten

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It was a sweet return to Masnago after more than a month, **for the Openjobmetis team**, who afforded themselves the luxury of **stopping another pretender** to the title – **Avellino** – after thrashing Venice, Milan and Brescia in this third quarterfinal of the championship. At the PalA2a arena, Varese gave the impression they were like a **tower with a very solid base**, able to withstand the head butts of a Sidigas team determined to demolish them, but instead, they **reacted fantastically to the only pass by Avellino** (67-69 at 34') and recovered and maintained control of the match until the end, when they were +7 points, **82-75**.

The red-and-white team were drawn into the attack, once again, by **Stan Okoye, 26 points with unreal percentages** (75% from the field); the Nigerian made the **initial sprint**, what Sacripanti would describe as decisive for the outcome of the match, and a **miraculous hat-trick** in the final quarter, which certainly helped. But it would be a mistake to think that the match was a one-man show by the Number 11, at home; there was good news **also from Avramovic**, also in defence, **and from Vene**, who demonstrated his qualities as an all-round player (5 assists).

And then, **Caja was right to say that everyone did something good**, to achieve two points: Cain and Delas stood up to the power of Fesenko, and, in the final quarter, the Croat also produced at least three heavy plays. Tambone and Ferrero allowed the holders to catch their breath, while Wells and Larson, unfortunately, were the only ones who failed to give an entirely positive performance, although, here and there, they did play some important shots to hurt the Avellino team. **This was all played out before a standing crowd in Masnago**, despite one **protest** (which was incomprehensible to most) by **ultras**, who stood for a long time outside the building and returned briefly only to **protest against Claudio Coldebella**. It was a pity for them: had they stayed to watch, they would have enjoyed an amazing Openjobmetis team.

AT A GLANCE

There was a large crowd in Masnago, with lots of past greats from different sports: there was **Ivan Basso**, who is taking a short pause from his job as a cycling manager, and, as always, **Aldo Ossola**, who, this time, had an extra reason to experience the stadium that bears his family's name. In the interval, **Von Karajan**, who has just celebrated his birthday, was made an **honorary member of the association "Il basket siamo noi"**.

A few minutes after the start, the **ultras removed the banners** and left. They reappeared for a few minutes, just to protest against Coldebella.

THE TIP OFF

Siim-Sander **Vene was the fourth player**, as Ferrero was certainly not yet at his best. Caja did not change the rest of the quintet, and kept **Avramovic as a sixth man**. On the opposite side, Sacripanti did not have N'Diaye (the leading player in the first leg), but for a week, has been able to deploy Lawal, although Fesenko remained the **pivot**. The manager was Ariel Filloy, with D'Ercole in the first five.

THE GAME

Two hat-tricks by the green-and-whites gave **Avellino their only advantage** in the game (except for 34'). Then **Okoye came alight immediately, with double figures** and designated bomber of Varese, who soon extended their advantage, by defending hard: **26-14** at 10'.

With Larson in trouble, Caja relied on **Tambone**, who made his presence felt. The OJM team did not leave the attack to just one player, but scored with eight different players in the quarter. **Only the baskets by Rich** and very permissive refereeing in favour of the hosts' defence enabled Sidigas to climb from -15, and end **44-33** for the long interval.

At the restart of play, **Avellino immediately tried to reduce the gap**, but Varese held up, maintaining their position thanks to the points scored by **Vene and Okoye**. On the other side, Dez Wells took off, bringing Sidigas back under, **65-57** at the half hour.

THE FINAL QUARTER

And the hint of a comeback by Avellino was completed in the first half of the last quarter, when **Dez Wells again, and above all Rich**, broke Caja's defence (Cain had four fouls) to strike and overtake. But only for a moment: Larson recovered his energy, scoring a hat-trick before Leunen, **Okoye scored a crazy basket**, falling back after a half contact, and the OJM team had recovered the advantage. Maybe Avellino had not expected such a comeback, and following a corner error (rare) by Rich, showed all of their concerns. Then, **Delas became the protagonist in defence, and Avramovic completed** the job from the semicircle after a 0/2 by Larson, who put fear into the opposing team. Then, this Varese team went on to take the full prize.

OPENJOBMETIS VARESE – SIDIGAS AVELLINO 82-75

(26-14, 44-33; 65-57)

VARESE: Larson 9 (3-7, 1-3), Wells 8 (3-5, 0-1), Okoye 26 (3-4, 6-8), Vene 12 (3-6, 2-3), Cain 2 (1-1); Avramovic 13 (3-6, 0-6), Tambone 6 (0-2, 2-4), Delas 3 (1-3), Ferrero 3 (1-2 da 3). Ne: Bergamaschi, Natali, Ivanaj. Coach Caja.

AVELLINO: Filloy 8 (1-2, 2-9), D'Ercole 3 (1-1 da 3), Rich 22 (6-12, 3-6), Leunen 9 (3-3, 1-2),

Fesenko 4 (1-3); Zerini (0-1 da 3), D. Wells 15 (3-7, 2-2), Fitipaldo 9 (0-1, 3-3), Lawal, Scrubb 5 (1-3, 1-1). Ne: Fucci, Parlato. Coach Sacripanti.

REFEREES: Filippini, Attard, Di Francesco.

NOTES. From 2: V 17-34, A 15-31. From 3: V 12-27, A 13-25. TL: V 12-16, A 6-12. Rimbalzi: V 36 (12 off., Okoye, Cain 8), A 29 (Scrubb 8). Assists: V 19 (Vene 5), A 15 (Leunen 7). Lost: V 12 (Vene 3), A 15 (Rich 5). Recovered: V 9 (Avramovic 4), A 6 (Fillooy, Rich 2). Out 5 fouls: none. Spectators: 4417. Receipts: €60,709.

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