

NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB

PRESS RELEASE

“Thunder” miss an opportunity to advance in the National Shield

Men’s National Shield

Oxford City “Hoops” 82 – 77 Norhants “Thunder”

The Northants senior men travelled to Oxford to play the Division 3 team Oxford City “Hoops”, who boasted in their ranks the 7’ 4”, ex-NBA player ‘Priest Lauderdale’. “Thunder’s” game plan was to run the game at a high tempo, and try to minimize the size advantage of such large body. The tactics went completely to plan, until it came to Northants putting the ball in the basket. “Thunder” pressed the ball for the majority of the game, and came away with a multitude of steals; however, this just resulted in missed open lay-ups on so many occasions, and the coaching staff were beginning to think there was a lid on the basket.

After a very poor start, the shooting power of Northants guard Curtis Hadley began to tell, and thanks to his efforts he made “Thunder’s” shooting percentage better from beyond the arc, than from within it. “Thunder” battled back to lead the game through grit and determination, but defensive lapses in concentration allowed Oxford to stay within touching distance, and then finish with a flurry to take the first quarter 26-24.

The next two periods of play were just a repeat of the first with “Thunder” conceding too many easy scores while missing numerous ‘put-backs’ themselves. Oxford edged the second quarter 20-15 to lead 46-39 at half time. “Thunder” did reduce the deficit by three points during the third quarter and with a 61-57 score line the game was very much still on the line going into the final stanza.

“Thunder” had travelled with just eight players, so the coaching staff were concerned about physical fitness and the foul count. However, the “Thunder” squad showed real determination throughout the game refusing to give up and with three minutes of the game remaining they had somehow managed to drag out a six point lead. Perhaps it was mental tiredness that eventually got to “Thunder” as, they then gifted Oxford a 15-4 run in the final minutes to leave the arena scratching their heads and wondering what had happened.

Once again the undersized forwards of Benji Henry, Linas Bajorunas and Jacob Holt worked their socks off, and it’s not very often they will have to challenge a player over 12 inches taller than them. Holt and Bajorunas scored 20 pts, and 18 pts respectively, well supported by Hadley with 13 pts.

It was good to see Adam Thomas back in a Northants uniform after a number of seasons playing in the Worcester university programme. His intelligence and determination on court will only add to the team through the season.

Coach Rob Eddon was philosophical in defeat, “It was a missed opportunity because we really wanted to go far in the Shield this season after a similar disappointment last season. However, even with the ‘negatives’ of our game today, it was refreshing to see a group of young men stay together through the tough times, and work for each other. That is a strength that will win us more games than we lose this season.”

“Lightning” senior women open their league campaign with a win

Senior Women’s Division 2 North

Northants “Lightning” 68 - 46 Leicester “Riders II”

The newly formed Northants senior women’s team picked up their first league win of the season with a 22 points triumph over the Leicester “Riders” second string. “Riders” arrived with just six players including Northants born Jordan Elliott-King so the “Lightning” game plan was simple, pressure on defence and up-tempo offence.

This may have been the plan but initially “Lightning’s” execution was poor with their defence unable to force the hope for errors. It did limit “Riders” to just ten first quarter points but they could manage only 11 themselves. Coach Karen Goodrich switched her charges to a full court zone defence and despite some misunderstandings this helped “Lightning” to take the second period of play 19-12 so establishing a 30 to 22 half time lead.

The half time break allowed the “Lightning” coaching staff time to make a few adjustments and their pressure forced a number of Leicester errors which were punished by some impressive fast break attacks. “Lightning” took the quarter 19-10 to extend their lead to 17 points at 49-32 and they were able to cement their first win by taking the final period 19-14.

For “Lightning”, Manal Cali top scored with 10 points a total matched by rookie Ruchae Walton. Angelina Browne and Stephanie Ogden both contributed nine points while Elliott-King top scored for “Riders” with 24 personal points.

Goodrich was pleased with the win but conceded there was still a lot of hard work to be done if the team is to achieve its full potential.

Gutsy Junior Men win ‘ugly’.

Junior Men’s Midland Conference

Leicester “Dynamite” 57 - 58 Northants “Thunder”

The Northants junior men travelled to Leicester “Dynamite” for their first away fixture of the season looking to bounce back from their disappointing loss to Sheffield “Saints” two weeks previously.

It was the home team that took control of the first quarter surging straight into an 11-0 run. “Thunder” responded with a 7-0 run of their own with scores from Carlo Nieva and George Paul but the Northants boys were guilty of not boxing out for defensive rebounds allowing Dynamite to score second chance points and it was the home side that led 19-13 end of the first quarter.

“Dynamite” extended their lead to 10 points at the start of the second quarter, but some aggressive play inside from George Calvey supported by Jacob Killeya helped reduce the deficit to 23-29. The “Thunder” players were beginning to be affected by some of the referees’ decisions; and these seemed to spur the team to greater efforts and they finished the quarter with a 8- zero run to close the first half leading 32-31.

Very little separated the two teams in the second half as they exchanged baskets but a three pointer from point guard Ollie Thomas extended the “Thunder” lead to 40-37. “Thunder’s” efforts were hindered when George Calvey picked up his third foul forcing Coach Rob Crump to field a much smaller line up. Late in the quarter Crump re-introduced Calvey back into the game late into the quarter because his team was struggling with the match ups. Calvey responded well with back to back baskets in the final minute of the quarter as “Thunder” regained their three point advantage but once again they were guilty of not securing a defensive rebound and Leicester were able to score a ‘buzzer beater’ from an offensive rebound to reduce the lead to 45-46.

With everything to play for; “Thunder” extended their lead thanks to a Carlo Nieva three point play but “Dynamite” refused to give in and surged into a 5-zero run to take the lead 50-49. Once again Nieva stepped up for Northants, nailing back to back three pointers for give his team a 55-50 lead, but “Dynamite” still continued to battle as the game went ‘down to the wire’ with “Thunder” leading by one point. “Dynamite” had the possession of the ball but some great pressure defence by “Thunder” forced a rushed shot which was unsuccessful. Both teams scrambled for the rebound, but despite Leicester gaining possession the buzzer sounded before they could get a shot off, securing Thunder’s first win of the season by 58 points to 57.

This had been a truly ‘ugly’ encounter, with “Thunder’s” scoring led by Carlo Nieva with 18 points and he was well supported by Jacob Killeya with 12 points along with George Calvey and Ollie Thomas who both contributed 11 points.

Coach Crump commented “It was satisfying to earn our first win of the season, despite a sluggish and disjointed game. We showed good character down the stretch to earn a victory which hopefully, will provide us with some confidence and momentum”. Coach Crump was particularly impressed with the performance of Carlo Nieva who hit some key shots to inspire the team in the final period of play.

Junior Men see of “Wolves” to advance in the National Cup

Junior Men’s National Cup Round 1

Northants “Thunder” 68 -42 Worcester “Wolves”

Less than 24 hours after their scruffy win over Leicester “Dynamite” the Northants junior men were back on court to do battle against Worcester “Wolves” in the 1st Round of the National Cup.

It was “Wolves” that opened the scoring, but back to back scores from Brendan Ross gave Thunder the lead and they never looked back. Thunder extended their lead to 15-6 with “Wolves” responding with a 4-zero run to reduce the deficit to 10-15 at the conclusion of the first quarter.

Coach Rob Crump opted for a 3-2 zone match up defence in the second quarter which limited close to the basket scoring opportunities for “Wolves”. This forced the Worcester players to shoot from the perimeter which were invariably unsuccessful. For “Thunder”, Ollie Thomas made a number of interceptions which he converted into points with uncontested lay ups and this gave the home side a 34-24 half time lead.

Despite holding a ten point lead, Coach Crump encouraged his team to increase their intensity levels on defence and continue to limit inside scores for “Wolves”, but the “Thunder” players failed to respond allowing the Wolves to reduce the lead to 6 points. Crump was forced to call a time out and a more energetic “Thunder” returned to the court. They forced a number of turnovers and thanks to some good perimeter shooting from George Paul, “Thunder” managed to re-establish their ten point lead at 47-37 by the end of the quarter.

By now the shorthanded Worcester team were beginning to look fatigued and “Thunder” began to look totally dominant. Once again it was Paul that led the surge with seven points as “Thunder” tightened their defence conceding just two field goals in the fourth quarter as “Wolves” ran out of offensive ideas. The game ended with a surge of energy from Rhys Hill who converted several shots in the fast break but the highlight of the quarter came when Jack Norridge scored a lay up on the break thanks to a behind the back pass from Ollie Thomas, which totally fooled the “Wolves” defence to complete the 68-42 win.

In the 26 point win, George Paul led Thunder in scoring with 19 points and he was well supported by Rhys Hill and Ollie Thomas who scored 13 and 10 points respectively.

Coach Crump commented “To play again less than 24 hours after a tough road game along with missing key players from our roster we knew this fixture would be a challenging encounter. There were parts of our performance that were lacklustre but we displayed a strong performance in the 4th quarter to see out the game.”

“Thunder” will face local rivals Northamptonshire “Titans” in the next round of the Cup on November 9th.

Cadet Men lose to “Trailblazers” in overtime

Cadet Men’s Midland Conference

**Northants “Thunder” 63 – 63 Derby “Trailblazers”
(67 – 76)**

When Derby went on a 10-2 run on the back of two three pointers from Charlie Brown at the start of the fourth quarter so establishing a 63-58 lead this Midland Conference game looked to be as good as over. “Thunder” coach John Collins took a time out and urged his players to increase their efforts and they responded superbly. They scored four unanswered points to draw to within just one point when guard David Nieva was fouled. Presented with the opportunity to give his side the lead he could connect with just one of the resulting free throws.

Now “Trailblazers” had the opportunity of one last offence but this was repelled by some tenacious “Thunder” defence which earned them possession and another opportunity to win the game. Collins took another time out to advance the ball up court and then drew up an out of bounds play. “Thunder” was able to get off a shot but it failed to drop so the game went into overtime.

“Thunder” had used up a lot of physical and mental energy and the overtime period was totally dominated by Derby who eventually ran out winners by 76 points to 67.

The game had seen a number of charges from both teams and “Thunder” had done well to recover from a 13-22 deficit after the first period of play but their zone defence did give the sharp-shooting Brown too many open looks and he responded with seven three-pointers in his 27 point haul. For “Thunder” Jacob Round scored 32 points and Ayo Oluyede with 12 was the only other Northants player to score in double figures.

Super Cadets cause major National Cup upset

Cadet Men’s National Cup Round 1

Notts Nova 62 – 39 Northants “Thunder”

The day after their heartbreaking overtime defeat at the hands of Derby “Trailblazers”, the Northants cadet men were back on court to take on Premier League side Notts Nova in the 1st Round of the National Cup. Last season Nova beat “Thunder” on two occasions so the home side went into the game full of confidence.

Knowing that Nova were an extremely athletic outfit “Thunder” coach John Collins utilised a zone defence with a full court press after a score. His team made the very best of starts jumping out to a 6-zero lead on the back of two stunning drives to basket by Jacob Round. “Thunder” were able to keep their noses in front to the end of the quarter and suddenly a belief grew throughout the team. “Thunder” edged the second period of play 14-13 to lead 29-25 at half time and the chances of a shock defeat for Nova became a very real possibility.

During the half time break Collins warned his players to expect a big effort from the Nottingham team and it came in the form of up-court pressure at the start of the third quarter. Despite the best efforts of the Nova players Round and David Nieva were able to negotiate the pressure without turning the ball over but their team mates were unable to convert possession into scores. Now the defensive efforts came into their own and with Jaz Cambell, Hayden Sayers and Reece Zubal hustling their socks off “Thunder” were able to restrict Nova’s scoring opportunities. Nova seemed reluctant to go to a perimeter game and when did Rob Clarke, Ayo Oluyede and Justin Trory swept up the rebounds from missed shots.

With the chance of a cup upset within their grasp “Thunder” took the game beyond the reach of Nova with a 17-zero charge at the start of the fourth quarter. The Northants boys outscored their opponents 23-4 in that final quarter to take well deserved 62-39 win and a 2nd Round tie against City of Birmingham.

In the 23 point win Round top scored for “Thunder” with 23 points with good support coming from Oluyede and Nieva with 13 and 11 points respectively.

“Lightning” brush aside “Wildcats” in National Cup

Under 16 Women’s National Cup Round 1

Nottingham “Wildcats” 83 – 51 Northants “Lightning”

The Northants under 16 girls travelled to Nottingham to take on “Wildcats” in the 1st Round of the National Cup and returned home with a 30 plus win under their belts.

Last season Northants ‘had the nod’ over their local rivals but with changes of personnel there was some concern in the “Lightning” ranks. Their concern proved to be justified as a confident “Wildcats” team jumped out to a 19-17 first quarter lead.

Concerned about some of the match ups “Lightning” coach Karen Goodrich had employed a zone defence but “Wildcats” had scored from a number of easy put backs after rebounding through the seams of the zone. Goodrich now demanded that her players stepped up the plate and switched to a man-to-man defence and the difference was seen immediately. Under pressure “Wildcats” began to cough up the ball and “Lightning” went on a 23-6 match winning charge. By half time the Northants girls had established a 54-33 lead leaving the home side the preverbal mountain to climb.

“Lightning” took the concluding two periods of play with Goodrich able to give all her players lots of playing time seven of them eventually contributing to the final total. The “Lightning” scoring was led by Ruchae Walton with an impressive 31 point haul combined with 11 rebounds. Caitlin Stewart was another Northants player to record a double-double with a 11 points and 10 rebounds while the contributions of Sarah Round with a 17 points and rookie Holly Winterburn with 16 points were very impressive.

Under 15 Boys see off local rivals

Under 15 Boys Midland South Conference

Northants "Thunder" 80 - 57 N.E.B.C. "Titans"

This game between local rivals attracted a lot of support to the Northants Basketball Centre and the expected rivalry turned out to be fierce but fair.

The first period of play saw a shaky start for "Titans" as Toby Oxford and Zak Kitchen dominated the offensive rebounds scoring 15 points from put backs and helping "Thunder" to establish a 23-11 lead.

Coaches Jonny and Grahame Yates were experimenting with different playing combinations and playing systems and this led to some problems for the home side as they were pressurised into a number of ball-handling errors resulting in turn-overs and easy scores for "Titans" who took the period 19-17

The third quarter was a closely contested affair with scoring at a premium for both teams. "Thunder" were guilty of being static on offence with little ball or player movement. Defensively too, "Thunder" had lost their intensity and "Titans" were able to edge the quarter 15-13 to trail by just ten points at 45-55 going into the last ten minutes of play.

The crucial fourth quarter was totally dominated by "Thunder" with Jacob Round running things from the back court. Oxford once again looked impressive scoring another six points and rebounding strongly. Seven "Thunder" players scored in the final period helping their team to take the period 27-12 and a comfortable 80 to 57 victory.

For "Thunder", Toby Oxford top scored with 20 points with Zak Kitchen, Tyler Mutemasango and Laurence Williams all scoring double figures but the coaching staff would not have been with the statistic of 15 missed free throws.

"Titans" no match for rampant Under 14 Boys

Under 14 Boy Midland Conference

Northants "Thunder" 113 - 23 N.E.B.C. "Titans"

Thunder's home game against local rivals, Northamptonshire "Titans", turned out to be a bit of a one-way contest with the home team dominating in every quarter and cruising to a 113-23 victory.

After a slow start, "Thunder's" up-court pressure defence and fast-breaking offence resulted in the hosts leading 23-6 after the first quarter. An 18-0 run at the start of the second period meant that "Thunder" could switch to half-court defence, but "Titans" still struggled to find a way to the basket and by half-time, "Thunder" had established an impressive 56 points to 13 lead. It was a similar story in the remaining two quarters with "Thunder" scoring freely whilst "Titans" could only manage five points in each period.

The post-match analysis of the score sheet highlighted the difference between the two teams with all of the "Thunder" players contributed to the team's total with Josh Lloyd, Ed Wallhead, Chris Amankonah and Tom Berry all posting double figures scoring 26, 23, 16 and 13 points respectively. In addition, Gio Prati, Elliot Atherton and Austin Evans all scored eight points. By contrast, only six of the "Titans" found their way to the basket with their leading scorer reaching just 7 points with almost half of "Titan's" total coming from the free throws. This mean they had found the basket on only six times in open play.

Coach Mike Round was pleased with his team's performance, but will be looking for a better start to their next match which is away to Shropshire "Warriors".

Much improved Under 13 Boys slip to defeat

Under 13 Boys Midlands Conference

Northants "Thunder" 54 - 58 Leicester "Riders"

It's been a tough season so far for the Northants under 13 boys but on Saturday they battled superbly to set up the possibility of what would have been a moral boosting win. Scores from Shane Wallis, and Matteo Baja gave "Thunder" a 51-46 lead with five minutes of the game against Leicester "Riders" remaining and the dream of a victory became a very real possibility. "Riders" responded with an 8-zero run to take the lead 54-51 but a three pointer from Ashley Kitchen tied up the scores.

Unfortunately “Thunder” couldn’t hold on for the win to the disappointment of eleven hard working players and their enthusiastic parents.

In the four point loss Kitchen top scored for “Thunder” with 13 points with Connor White and Oliver Dominique providing good support with 10 and 8 points respectively. Coach Darjius Maldutis was pleased that seven of his players had scored and the team can be very pleased with the progress they have made since the start of the season.

THIS WEEKEND’S ACTIVITIES

Saturday 25th October

9.30 am until 11am	Under 10 and Under 12 “Ballers” Academy
10.00 am until 11am	Junior “Ballers”
11.30am	Junior Men versus Notts Nova
1.30pm	Senior Men versus Middlesex

All the games will be played at the Northants Basketball Centre which is situated at Northampton School for a in Spinney Hill Road

Spectators are welcome and admission is **FREE**

Under 14 Boys travel to Shropshire “Warriors”
Under 16 Girls travel to Exeter “Eagles”
Cadet Men travel to Notts Nova II
Junior Women travel to Herts “Warriors”

Sunday 26th October

11.45am	Under 14 Girls versus Bucks “Hornets”
	Under 13 Boys travel to Worcester “Wolves”

For further information contact **John Collins** on **07801 533 151**