

NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB

MEDIA RELEASE

“Thunder” Men storm into 3rd Round of the National Cup

Men’s National Cup 2nd Round

Killamarsh “Arrows” 88 – 91 Northants “Thunder”

The Northants senior men travelled up the M1 to just short of the city of Sheffield to do Cup battle with a well-established Killamarsh team, who have been settled in Division Two for a number of years. “Thunder” had been warned that this was going to be a tough fixture as ‘Arrows’ had the reputation of being able to 'run with the best of them'. Unfortunately, the words of the Northants coaches fell on deaf ears, and in a first quarter which saw a mixture of complacency and tiredness Arrows jumped out to a ten point lead, winning the quarter 27-17. “Thunder” were shooting the ball reasonably well, but it was Arrows’, Best who was giving a clinic at the other end, scoring ten points from a variety of spots, with guard Kelly directing play at will. ‘Arrows’ athletic guards Chiguri and Lisk-Carew combined for another 13 points to show signs of what might be a very long afternoon for the visiting Northants team.

The second period was an even affair, mainly due to the determination of “Thunder's” Jason Tucker who refused to give in, and scored 12 of his teams 20 points, including two big threes off the dribble. Leome Francis was playing through the pain barrier to make his presence felt inside, but ‘Arrows’ matched “Thunder” step for step, with Best and Chiguri combining for a further 14 points.

Somehow at the half-time interval “Thunder” were down by only ten points, despite a self-confessed poor performance for those first twenty minutes. Thunder may look a 'young' team, with their average age being further reduced with the presence of Junior guards Sam Round and Luke Lewis in this game. Looks however can be deceiving and “Thunder” showed class, poise and heart, with a fantastic defensive display. Round, Jonny Yates and Leon Henry all found their range from the beyond the arc. Richard Higgins, another injured “Thunder” forward, was giving all he had battling in the paint, whilst guard Asher Kirby was clinical from the free throw line



“Thunder’s” influential guard Jason Tucker

“Thunder” went into the final quarter all square at 66-66, but the best was still to come. Arrow's Best and Chiguri again combined for another 14 points, but Thunder found an extra gear and put Arrows to the sword with some excellent fast break running of their own. “Thunder's” pressure defence was now making a difference as ‘Arrows’ rotated players and “Thunder” found weaknesses to exploit. The effort Tucker had given throughout the game was now maintained by Henry in the final quarter, as he contributed 13 of the teams 25 final points showing composure both close to the rim, and from behind the arc.

When Under 18 guard Round hit a three from downtown late in the shot clock to take “Thunder” up by nine points with three minutes to go, it could've been described as the knock-out punch. ‘Arrows’ weren't prepared to go down without a fight though, and they clawed the score back with some pressure shots, and good tactical play. Thankfully, Thunder played it cool at the line and pushed over the finish for a three point win at 91-88.

The “Thunder” scoring was led by Leon Henry and Jason Tucker with 23 and 21 points respectively while Leome Francis supported superbly with 19 points but this was a true team performance which “Thunder” will be hoping to take into the next round, a home tie against Derby “Trailblazers” on **Sunday 27th October**; a definite date for the diaries.

“Thunder” goes 2 and 0 in Division 3

Men's National League Division 3 (North Conference)

Northants “Thunder” 97 – 56 Sheffield “Sabres”

Less than 24 hours before their epic Cup triumph “Thunder” had played their first home league fixture of the campaign with a game against a Sheffield team that had recruited well during the summer, and arrived with a number of experienced and intelligent players coached by England legend Peter Scantlebury.

“Thunder” started the game with a tempo that totally ‘shell shocked’ the visitors, jumping out to a 12-0 lead within three minutes, forcing Scantlebury into a quick time-out. ‘Sabre's’ Hodson responded positively and brought his team back into the contest, although it was “Thunder” who led at the end of the first period 26-18.

The second quarter continued in similar fashion with “Thunder's” Tomas Vladicka scoring seven of his game total 13 points in close succession. ‘Sabres’ were never going to lie down though, as their forward Colwill battled to score 9 of his teams 13 quarter tally. Even so “Thunder” held a comfortable lead going into the half time break, at 46-31.

It looked as though the rest of the game was going to be a closer affair when ‘Sabres’ burst out to score a break away basket. However, “Thunder” responded in typical fashion by going on a 22-4 run to open up a 68-37 gap with 3 minutes to go in the third. By the end of the quarter “Thunder” had dropped 32 points, but it was the fact that no less than eight players had contributed to that total, that had Coaches Eddon and Yates smiling. The highlight of the quarter was when new recruit Tom Higgins scored his first points for the club, with back-to-back buckets at the end of the period.

With the win 'all but in the bag', Thunder's offensive pressure had eased, but not before they had extended their lead once more to finish the game 97-56 winners. In the 41point win, all nine “Thunder” players had scored, with five of them getting into double figures. Guards Jason Tucker and Leon Henry shared the honours with 19 points apiece, backed up well by Jonny Yates, Leome Francis and Vladicka with 16, 14 & 13 respectively.

It's “Warriors” 3, “Thunder” nil

On the weekend that the rugby teams of Northampton and Leicester clashed in the Aviva Premiership the theme was continued in basketball with no less than three teams from the two towns clashing in national league fixtures and it was the Leicester boys who won all three games.

Under 13 Boys Midlands Conference

Northants "Thunder" 55 – 61 Leicester "Warriors"

Thunder's U13s home game against Leicester Warriors was dominated by the very talented Kareem Queeley, who ended up scoring 41 of Leicester's 61 points. The Warriors second highest scorer managed just 7 points and only five of their 12 players contributed to their total. However, the bottom line was, despite the defensive efforts of Holly Winterburn, Lucy Amena and Ed Wallhead, Queeley proved almost impossible to stop.

"Thunder" did themselves no favours at all in the first quarter by missing numerous scoring attempts and finishing the period with just 2 points compared to Leicester's 16. The visitors continued to pull away in the second quarter and by half-time had opened up a 19 point lead at 35-16. The second half became a game of cat and mouse between the two coaches as the "Warrior's" coach was keen to conserve Queeley's energy for the U14 game that followed. Every time Queeley left the court, "Thunder" 'upped' the tempo and showed that they had much more strength in depth than their guests.

A 14-2 run in favour of the hosts forced the Leicester coach to bring back his superstar. Exactly the same happened in the final quarter and having been as much as 21 points down, "Thunder" reduced the "Warriors' lead to just 6 points thanks to the efforts of Gio Prati. However, with Queeley back on the floor, Leicester was able to run the game out and secure a 61-55 win. "Thunder" had won the final quarter 25-10, but had paid a heavy price for too many missed baskets earlier in the game.

For "Thunder" Ed Wallhead was in good form again scoring 12 points, a total matched by Holly Winterburn. Coach Round was encouraged by the performances of debutants Prati and Austen Evans who scored 9 and 6 points respectively, and was pleased with the team play at both ends of the floor. However, shooting practice will be top of his 'to do' list at the next training session.

Under 14 Boys Midlands Conference

Northants "Thunder" 70 – 89 Leicester "Warriors"

Immediately after dominating the Under 13 game Queeley was back in action for "Warriors" under 14 outfit and once again he was the dominant force in the game closing with 36 points.

The first half of the game was a close run thing "Thunder" edging the first quarter 22-21 but "Warriors" gained the ascendancy in the second 19-16 to take a 40-38 half time lead with Queeley and Chudasuma scoring freely.

For "Thunder", Jacob Round had been a dominant force and he opened the third quarter in fine form slotting home three consecutive baskets. He then fell very heavily on his hip and played no further part in the contest. In Round's absence, Laurence Williams stepped up his game but "Thunder" went into the last ten minutes of play trailing 55-62.

The two teams exchanged baskets at the start of the final period of play but then "Warriors" were able to raise the level of their game and embarked on a 17-4 run to take an unassailable 89-64 lead although "Thunder" did finish with a flurry of their own.

For "Thunder", Round scored 20 points before his injury while Williams contributed 17 points.

Junior Men's Premier Division North

Leicester "Warriors" 54 – 53 Northants "Thunder"

After an extended warm up because of the late arrival of the match officials these East Midlands rivals began the first quarter matching each other basket for basket, with neither side managing to edge away. "Thunder" took an enormous blow early in the period, when starting centre George Calvey suffered a cut to the forehead after battling for a rebound. This hospitalised him and excluded him for the remainder of the contest. For "Thunder", Karan Virdee stepped up in place of the injured Calvey, whilst Sam Round and Linas Bajarunas posted some key scores leaving the score line at 14-13 in favour of the Northants team at the end of the period.

After the break, “Warriors” came out strong with a number of uncontested lay ups as “Thunder” struggled to stop guard penetration from Leicester’s Umar Siddique, and Jehosha Lawal. The “Warriors” then made life even more difficult for “Thunder” by a zone defence, which saw the Thunder struggle to adjust offensively. Thanks to some dominant offensive rebounding from Bajarunas, and a key three point basket in transition from George Paul, Northants managed to keep the “Warriors” just within their sights as halftime approached with the score line standing at 30-23 to the home team.

With time to compose themselves during the half time break, the Northants side looked a lot sharper offensively coming in to the third quarter. A change in tactics enabled Luke Lewis to find Sam Round for a number of open looks, as the Northants shooters began to be exploited Leicester’s porous zone defence. Round and Lewis contributed 15 points between them to keep their side within reach at 38-46 as the action entered the final period of play.

To open the fourth quarter, Josh Round found himself alone on the right baseline for a much needed three point score as “Thunder” began to claw back the eight point deficit. Energising the squad, Lewis then, forced an eight second call as the Leicester ball handlers seemed rattled by the Thunder’s full court zone press. Thanks to further pressure in the front court, “Thunder” managed to force consecutive turnovers, leading to easy scores from the Round brothers and two crucial baskets from Lewis, as the score line showed 52-53.

With eight seconds remaining “Thunder” fouled one of the Leicester guards to send him to the free throw line, from which he made one of the pair. Recovering the ball from the missed shot, Josh Round found Lewis on the outlet who much to the dismay of the Leicester coach was then fouled, giving him the opportunity to tie the game. Lewis split the pair from the foul line, and in a last ditch effort Josh Round superbly deflected the loose ball off a Leicester player to give “Thunder” one more possession. With less than four seconds on the clock, and needing two points to win the game, Lewis found Sam Round on the wing, and he managed to penetrate into the heart of the Leicester defence and pull up from 10 feet. The ball rattled in and out, leaving the “Warriors” triumphant in this match up.

For “Thunder”, Sam Round lead all scorers pouring in 20 points personal, with good support coming from point guard Luke Lewis with 13, while Linas Bajarunas battled tirelessly inside, adding 12 rebounds to his 11 point haul.

Classy “Titans” too strong for Under 15’s

Under 15 Boys Midlands Conference

NEBC “Titans” 84 – 43 Northants “Thunder”

The Northants under 15 boys made the short trip to Wellingborough for the first game of their Midland Conference season and returned contemplating a heavy defeat at the hands of a talented NEBC “Titans” team.

From the outset “Thunder” had difficulty containing “Titans” guard Keenan Salmon and the close to basket skills of Hayden Alcindor. “Titans” comfortably won the first three periods of play establishing a 68-28 lead but “Thunder” refused to give up only losing the fourth stanza 15-16 finally going down 43-84.

For “Thunder”, David Nieva top scored with 15 points while Hayden Sayers had three, three-pointers in his 12 point haul. Coach John Collins was full of praise for “Titans but pleased with the effort of his own players especially Jaz Campbell and Robert Clarke. “This is a team with some ability but many of the players lack confidence. It’s down to me to make them more confident and believe in themselves.

Albion” no match for Junior Women

Under 18 Women’s South West Conference

Northants “Lightning” 80 – 21 Sporting Club Albion

The Northants junior women completed a routine win over a game but inexperienced Sporting Club Albion team. “Lightning” totally dominated for three of the four periods of play but were guilty of some poor decisions in the second quarter when after outscoring their opponents 17-2 in the first period of play allowed them to score 11 points. It was business as usual in the third and fourth quarters with the Midlands restricted to just seven points while “Lightning” poured in 49 to complete a comfortable win.

For “Lightning” Lauren Brookes and Stephanie Ogden top scored with 26 and 24 points respectively with good support coming from Tara Hings with 14 points and Lois Bain who scored ten.

Cadette Women ‘blow away’ City of Birmingham

Under 16 Girls Midlands Conference

City of Birmingham 5 – 90 Northants “Lightning”

The parlous state of girl’s basketball in England was no better illustrated than this game which saw the Northants girls totally overwhelm a team from the country’s second largest city. During the summer it had been muted that their might be an elite league for under 16 girls but some clubs objected to the amount of travelling this would involve so the idea was shelved. This means that strong teams will be play against girls who are little more than beginners with neither team gaining anything.

The Birmingham girls never gave in but the fact that they failed to score in two of the four periods of play clearly illustrated just how much they were outclassed despite the fact that Coach Karen Goodrich took off her pressure defence early in the first quarter.

For “Lightning” all twelve payers scored led by Ruchae Walton with 20 points good support coming from Hari Owens and skipper Lauren Milne with 15 and 14 points respectively

Cadet Men Continue with their winning ways

Cadet Men’s Midland Conference

Derby “Trailblazers” 53 – 64 Northants Thunder

The Northants Cadet Men travelled to Derby last Sunday to face an improved “Trailblazers” team and returned after recording an 11 point win after an entertaining contest.

Both teams made a slow and sloppy start to the game with neither outfit able to take control of proceedings and it was the home side that took a small lead 8-4 halfway through the quarter. “Thunder” failed to execute their zone offense adequately forcing them to shoot from long range but some good transition basketball at the end of the quarter helped the Northants boys to establish a one point lead at 13-14.

“Trailblazers” regained the lead 19-18 early in the second quarter with “Thunder” struggling to win the battle of the rebounds. This forced Coach Crump to call time out and change his defensive tactics to a 3-2 match up zone, along with fielding a big line up. This proved to be effective forcing “Trailblazers” to shoot from outside which inspired a 13-0 “Thunder” run to conclude the quarter. The highlight of the quarter saw Ollie Thomas fouled whilst shooting a 3 point shot, which he successfully made.

Despite leading at the half, “Thunder” had been guilty of lacking defensive energy and during the half time break they were urged to be more productive by Coach Crump. The team responded positively, causing Derby to turnover the ball against a trapping defence. This sparked an 11-4 run giving “Thunder” their biggest lead of the game at 42-23 with 4 minutes to go of the period. A timeout by the Derby coach saw them implement a trapping man to man defence themselves and this resulted with “Thunder” being guilty of being careless with the ball. This allowed ”Trailblazers” to gain the initiative and reduce the deficit to 31-46 going into the last stanza.

Derby's aggressive defence was proving to be a challenge for "Thunder" as both sides exchanged baskets with Rhys Hill and Jacob Round scoring for the county team. "Thunder" were having problems containing the Trailblazers talented Bulgarian forward Manchev and when he scored back-to-back baskets and three-pointer Derby were well and truly back in the game. Coach Crump called a time out and he reminded his charges of the importance of taking care of the ball against the press and to box out on defence. Derby was able to reduce the Northants lead to 57-51 with less than two minutes of the game remaining but "Thunder" responded positively with lay up scores from Hill and Nieva clinching the win for their team.

Despite his team losing a healthy lead, Coach Crump felt it had been a good team effort by all his players with everyone making contributions on the floor. "Thunder's" scoring was led by Carlo Nieva with 16 points and he was well supported by Jacob Round and Jacob Killeya who both contributed with 12 points.

THIS WEEKEND'S ACTION

Saturday 12th October

11.30am	Under 15 Boys versus Leicester "Warriors"
	Under 14 Girls versus City of Birmingham
1.30am	Cadet Men versus Notts Nova II
3.30pm	Junior Men versus Newcastle "Eagles"

All these games will be staged at the **Northampton Basketball Centre** which is based at Northampton School for Girls in Spinney Hill Road, Northampton

Spectators are most welcome for the games and admission is **FREE**

Senior Men travel to Birmingham "Mets"
Under 14 Boys travel to City of Birmingham

For further information contact:

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