

NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB

MEDIA RELEASE

Below strength “Thunder” Men slip to first defeat of the season

Men’s National League Division 3 North

Birmingham “Mets” 80 – 63 Northants “Thunder”

A below strength “Thunder” squad missing the presence of key rebounders Jacob Holt (on holiday) and Leome Francis (injured) travelled to Birmingham for this 3rd Division fixture. Against a large “Mets” team dominance of ‘the paint’ was likely to be crucial and the Northants coaching staff was relying a lot on the efforts of returning forward Richard Higgins.

Both teams made a very slow start to the game with scoring at a premium. As expected “Thunder” were finding it difficult to contain “Mets” on the boards who were relying on put backs and free throws to score their points. “Thunder” meantime were finding it difficult to get into their running game and at the end of the quarter the home side held a narrow 11-10 advantage.

“Thunder” captain Jonny Yates came out firing at the start of the second quarter hitting back-to-back three pointers, and it looked as though the momentum was at last with “Thunder” as they took the lead for the first time. Ball pressure was paying off, with “Mets” turning the ball over under pressure from “Thunder” guards. Unfortunately, Northants were unable to capitalise as their break-aways attempts weren’t converted. The situation was made even worse as “Thunder” proceeded to miss six of eight attempts from the charity stripe in the last two and half minutes of the quarter.

“Mets” headed to the locker at half time holding a 29-23 lead whilst the Northants coaching staff ordered their players to stay out on court to continue shooting during the interval, in a bid to get them to loosen up and relax.

The game which hadn’t been much of a spectacle up until now, became even scrappier in the third quarter as the Birmingham team used their size to ‘clog up the paint’ in an obdurate zone defence. This was combined with a fairly hard-nosed approach to stopping “Thunder” fast breaks with a number of Northants players were left seeing stars as they were aggressively stopped from scoring. During the period Jason Tucker and Yates combined for 16 of Thunders 22 points, but it was at the defensive end that “Mets” were making “Thunder” pay. As the “Thunder” players became more frustrated they were guilty of expending too much energy protesting to the referees, rather than concentrating on their opponent’s offence as “Mets” opened up a 59-45 gap. Despite the 14 point deficit “Thunder” knew that if they improved performance for the last ten minutes, the win was still well within reach.

The Northants players responded well at the start of the final period of play taking the game to Birmingham, and at the last the penny seemed to have dropped. “Thunder” started making “Mets” pay from the free throw line, and clawed the deficit back to single figures with eight minutes still remaining on the clock. The Birmingham coach took a time time-out and this break in proceedings seemed to cause another dip in defensive concentration for the “Thunder” players and “Mets” were allowed a number of easy put-backs and lay-ups. Meanwhile, at the offensive end “Thunder” began to panic and “Mets” ran out deserved winners with a score line of 80-63, as “Thunder” suffered their first loss of the season.

For “Thunder”, Tucker top-scored with 16 points, Yates scored 13, and Henry and Paul got 11 apiece. Nobody from the “Mets” team scored over 12 points, but with four players hitting double figures and 11 of their roster scoring, it was all too much for the depleted “Thunder” team.

The “Thunder” players will have to lick their wounds ready for the arrival of Sheffield “Saints” this Saturday, led by hot shot Gayle, if they want to remain in contention for the league title. The next day the team will face new team Milton Keynes “Mustangs”, for a ‘derby’ affair in the 2nd round of the National Shield.

Joy and despair for Junior men in loss against “Eagles”

Junior Men’s Premier Division North

Northants “Thunder” 53 – 66 Newcastle “Eagles”

After a one point loss to the Leicester “Warriors” the previous weekend, the Northants “Thunder” Junior Men looked to bounce back in a home matchup versus the Newcastle “Eagles”. They turned in a performance which defied logic and left their coach Kurtis Johnson and their fans totally bemused.

“Thunder” made a strong start to the game, as Newcastle found it difficult to match up against the Thunder’s high post led offence. Linus Bajarounas found George Calvey and Karan Virdee for a number of easy scores, as the Newcastle defence offered up plenty of mismatches in favour of the Northants side. At the end of the first period of play the home side held a 17-15 advantage and with Newcastle showing why they had run Manchester so close, a competitive game looked to be on the cards.

For some unknown reason, the Northants players went away from their effective first quarter offence, reverting to a one against five playground pick up game mentality. The positive start was soon forgotten as Newcastle capitalised on a lapse in the Thunder’s transition defence, leaving the home side visibly shaken going in to the mid-game break trailing 23-29. What was most alarming was the fact that “Thunder” had gone scoreless for fully seven minutes of that second quarter.

The Basketball Centre crowd could reasonably expect a change of heart in the third quarter but in reality they were treated to more of the same. Time and again loan efforts from the Northants team resulted in missed shots and a barrage of unanswered open layups for the “Eagles”. Another seven minutes passed without a “Thunder” score making fourteen in all on either side of half time. “Eagles” took the period 27-9 to open up a 56-32 lead, with “Thunder” only scoring from the free throw line.

With all but pride and points difference to play for, some much needed spirited defence from Luke Joines ignited the Thunder’s efforts in the final period. “Thunder” managed to get the gap down to eight points and “Eagles” looked a little nervous but “Thunder” then contrived to miss a number of scoring opportunities close to basket and the visitors held on for the 66 points to 53 win.

In the 13 point loss the “Thunder” scoring was led by Bajarounas, Luke Lewis and Sam Round but the every player needs to look at their own personal performance if the team are to achieve the success their natural ability merits.

Cadet Men too strong for game Nova II

Cadet Men’s Midlands Conference

Northants “Thunder” 87 – 51 Notts Nova II

The Northants “Thunder” Cadet Men took on the Notts Nova second string last Saturday and despite a seemingly comfortable victory had to work hard against tough opponents who displayed a high work rate throughout the game.

Despite the aggressive full court man to man pressure defence applied by Nova, “Thunder” refused to be intimidated and they began the quarter with a 9-3 burst. “Thunder” were able to extend their lead to 27-6, with 11 points coming from a very energetic Jabob Killeya who battled well around the basket but Nova nailed a buzzer beater from the short corner to conclude the quarter at 27-8.

Despite trailing by 19 points Nova refused to give up on their pressure defence in an attempt to reduce the deficit. “Thunder” extended their lead by to 24 points at 38-14, led by strong inside scoring from Elliot Strausa but the Notts outfit responded with a 13-2 run of their own, forcing a Northants timeout. “Thunder” responded with a three pointer from Rhys Hill and another score by Jacob Killeya to break the Nova momentum; even so the visitors took the quarter 19-19 to trail 27-45 at half time.

The third period of play was very competitive with neither team able to put together a dominant run. “Thunder” played a variety of defences in an attempt to outwit their opponents and they edged the quarter 16-15 to lead 61-42 going into the last ten minutes of play.

“Thunder” coach Rob Crump urged his players not to allow Nova back into the game and led by several strong drives to basket by Carlo Nieva on the fast break they went on a 14-4 run. By now Nova were struggling to contain a rampant “Thunder” and to score themselves. Northants took the period 26-9 to run out comfortable winners but the game had been a lot tougher than the 36 point margin suggested. Coach Crump was happy with his team’s performance, and was particularly impressed with the efforts of Killeya and Strausa who both scored 19 points. These two received good support from Carlo Nieva and Jacob Round, and Crump was also delighted that all ten of his players contributed to the final points total

“Thunder” will face a much tougher challenge this Sunday when they face Notts Nova first string in the National Cup.

Rampant Under 15 Boys blow away “Warriors

Under 15 Boy’s Midlands Conference

Northants “Thunder” 96 - 45 Leicester “Warriors”

Smarting from the previous week’s heavy loss against local rivals “Titans”, the Northants under 15 boys bounced back with a big win against Leicester “Warriors”. The previous weekend “Warriors” had recorded three wins over county teams but the under 15’s struggled from the outset as “Thunder”, strengthened by the inclusion of Jacob Round took control from the very first minute. Their aggressive defence forced numerous turn overs but “Thunder” were struggling to contain “Warriors” Abbott who was working well close to basket.

“Thunder” played some impressive fast break basketball in the first quarter as they jumped out to a 23-13 but things got even better in the second period of play as they ran in another 23 points whilst keeping their opponents scoreless. Time and time again the “Thunder” big men were able to rip down rebounds and launch David Nieva and Jacob Round on fast breaks.

With Abbott benched on four fouls “Warriors” were relying heavily on the perimeter shooting of Birchenough but while he helped his team to 14 points “Thunder” ran in a massive 34 to take an unassailable 80-27 lead. Abbott returned to the fray in the fourth quarter but by now Rob Clarke and Ayo Oluyede were prepared to become a little more physical and his threat was contained. Even so the visitors took the final quarter 18-16 but it was too little too late as “Thunder” ran out winners by 51 points.

For “Thunder”, Nieva and Round dominated the scoring but Coach John Collins was pleased with the efforts and contributions of Julian Abeam, Jaz Campbell, Oluyede, and Justin Trory while Clarke rebounded well and blocked five shots.

No luck for Under 14 Boys in Birmingham

Under 14 Boys Midlands Conference

City of Birmingham 77 - 64 Northants “Thunder”

The Northants under 14 boys slipped to their second consecutive defeat of the season when they lost by 13 points to City of Birmingham last Saturday. Coaches Jonny and Grahame Yates expressed frustration at the Jekyll and Hyde nature of their team who combine sublime passages of play with almost total lethargy when they allow their opponents to score at will.

“Thunder” found themselves 12 points in arrears after the first period of play allowing C.O.B. to score a massive 27 points to trail 27-15. That lead was increased to 49-32 by half time and it looked as if there was no way back for the county boys. “Thunder” did raise their game in the third quarter playing their best basketball of the game and taking the period 17-12 to drag the score back to 44-51 and giving themselves just an outside chance of taking the contest.

The final quarter was a close run thing which Birmingham edged 16-15 to take the game by 77 points to 64 leaving "Thunder" to contemplate what might have been if they had been at their best for the whole 40 minutes of the game.

In the disappointing loss the "Thunder" scoring was led by Ed Wallhead with 24 points while Ed Taylan and Laurence William supported with 12 and 11 points respectively

Under 14 Girls open with a convincing win

Under 14 Girl's Midlands Conference Northants "Lightning" 62 – 32 City of Birmingham

The Northants under 14 girls opened their season with a comfortable victory over City of Birmingham at the Basketball Centre last Saturday. The team is very young with most of them will still be eligible for this age group next season.

With Bahira Barakata controlling the back court and Holly Winterburn spearheading numerous fast breaks "Lightning" dominated the first two periods of play taking a 31-11 lead by half time. The team were guilty of relaxing their efforts in the third quarter and some poor passing allowed C.O.B. to edge the quarter 10-9 but it was business of usual in the final stanza which "Thunder" took 22-11 to run out winners by 62 points to 32.

For "Lightning", Winterburn scored 26 points with Barakat contributing 10 points while useful contributions came from Lucy Amena who rebounded well, Georgia Collins and Precious Ogaji

THIS WEEKEND'S ACTION

Saturday 19th October

9-30am to 11am	Under 12 Practice
10am to 11am	Junior "Ballers"
11-30am	Under 13's versus City of Birmingham
	Under 14 Boys versus Leicester "Heat"
1-30pm	Cadette Women versus Bristol
	Junior Men versus Sheffield "Saints"
3-30pm	Senior Men versus Sheffield "Saints"
	Under 14 Girls travel to Herts "Warriors"
	Under 15 Boys travel to Wolverhampton "Slam"
	Under 15 Boys CVL
	Under 13 Boys CVL

Sunday 20th October

11-30am	Cadet Men versus Notts Nova (National Cup)
1-30pm	Senior Men versus Milton Keynes "Mustangs" (National Trophy)

All the home 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**

For further information contact:

John Collins (Coaching Co-ordinator) on **07801 533 151**