

NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB

PRESS RELEASE

Back to back wins for Senior Men

Men's National League (South Conference)

Oxford City "Hoops" 69 – 116 Northants "Thunder"

Two weeks ago "Thunder" lost to an Oxford side who had the 7 feet 4 inch Priest Lauderdale in their line up, in the National Shield. The feeling amongst the players and coaches was that nothing short of an excellent performance would suffice when the two teams met again in the league last Saturday. What actually occurred was the best basketball, the Northants players had managed all season.

It took "Thunder" fully seven minutes to get into their running game, however it was obvious that Oxford were likely to tire quickly, and so it proved. "Thunder" edged the quarter 25-20 after finishing the period with an 11- 4 run with six Northants players getting on the scoresheet. This meant that Oxford were kept guessing as to where the "Thunder" scoring threat was coming from. Many of these threats came thanks to the creativity of the experienced Northants guard Devon Adams who was able to find gaps for his team mates in addition his excellent defence disrupted the Oxford offence.

Northants were now starting to get into their rhythm, whilst Oxford were doing their level best to slow the game down. With Benji Henry and Jacob Holt dominating inside, and Curtis Hadley finding his shooting range from the perimeter "Thunder" went on a 10-2 run half way through the quarter, and then after back -to-back three pointers from captain Johnny Yates, closed the half on a 12-0 charge. "Thunder" had pushed out to a 61-41 lead when the half time buzzer sounded.

Oxford had gone to the locker room looking very dejected, and "Thunder" knew that the home team would throw everything at them in the second half. The Northants coaching staff warned their team of complacency, but three minutes into the third quarter had to call a time-out as their team had allowed "Hoops" just a glimmer of hope. After the 'time-out', "Thunder" went on another run to all but put the game to bed. Yates was once again connecting from beyond the arc, whilst the Northants forward Dan Turiccki's threw down a thunderous dunk, which even the home crowd applauded. "Thunder" had also started to hit their free throws, and area which had been cause for concern in recent weeks as they took the period 19-14 to open up a seemingly unassailable 25 point lead.

The only message from the Coaching staff as the game entered the final quarter was, "Go for it and make a statement." and their players did just that. Linas Bajorunas managed to throw down his first dunk of the campaign for the men's team, as he gathered seven points in the quarter and he was well supported by Barrett and Hadley who hit nice jump shots for five quarter points each. The period turned into one way traffic as "Thunder" hit 31 points, whilst keeping their opponents to single figures. With Oxford trying to get their heads around the whirlwind they had just experienced, Northants dribbled out the game to claim a win and send themselves up to second position in the 3rd Division South table with a 3 and 1 record.

In the 47 point win the eight "Thunder" players contributed to the final total led by Turiccki and Yates with 20 points apiece while Adams, Bajorunas, Barret, and Hadley all scored in double figures.

Coach Rob Eddon was delighted with the win and commented, "Every week we improve. Every week, we look a little better gelled. We are acknowledging our responsibilities on court, and playing to our strengths. When mistakes are made, the team gets together and fixes it in a positive manner. Now it's a question of keeping this level as our minimum standard."

Junior Men get back to winning ways

Junior Men's Midland Conference

Sheffield "Saints" 78 – 80 Northants "Thunder"

The Northants junior men travelled to Sheffield "Saints", having been beaten by them by ten points on the opening day of the season. "Thunder" were only able to kit up eight players, but they took control of the game led by some dominant inside play from George Calvey who scored six consecutive points, to help his team establish a 10-2 lead.

“Saints” reduced the deficit immediately thanks to some impressive free throw shooting as “Thunder” found themselves in early foul trouble with Josh Round and George Calvey both picking up a couple of fouls each. “Thunder” dug deep and were able to see out the quarter with a well earned 19-14 lead.

The second quarter saw the Northants boys displaying some effective offence as they were able to extend their lead to ten points thanks to some excellent transition basketball and backed up by some good perimeter shooting from Josh Round and Carlo Nieva. Once again, “Thunder” were experiencing some foul trouble with Calvey, Round and Elliott Strausa all picking up their third fouls. Coach Rob Crump was forced to field a very smaller line up and employ a zone defence in an attempt to avoid further foul trouble and limit inside scoring through the “Saints” taller post players. Despite Sheffield winning the quarter thanks to a three pointer on the buzzer, “Thunder” still boasted a three point lead at 35-32 at the half.

To begin the third quarter, Coach Crump decided to stick with his smaller line up but this couldn’t stop the home team opening the quarter with 7-0 run to take the lead 39-32. In previous weeks the team had been criticised for lacklustre efforts when forfeiting their lead but this did not happen in this game. Some good hustle by the team and three pointers from Ollie Thomas and Carlo Nieva helped to reinstall confidence in “Thunder’s” offence and they were able to regain the lead at 47-42. “Saints” were employing a full court pressing defence but “Thunder” displayed good execution of their ‘press breaker’, securing a number of lay ups as they pushed out to a 54-45 lead at the end of the quarter.

With Ollie Thomas and Josh Round to the fore, “Thunder” were playing some good team basketball, but “Saints” would not give up and chipped away at the Northants’ lead. With five seconds of the game remaining that lead was reduced to just one point at 79-78 when from a quick inbound pass George Calvey was fouled. Calvey was sent to the line and successfully hit his first free throw, but air-balled the second when instructed to miss. This gave “Saints” one last possession with 0.4 seconds remaining, a lob pass was thrown but was intercepted by Northants to secure the 80-78 win.

In the narrow win the “Thunder” scoring was led in scoring by Ollie Thomas with 22 points, 18 points of them coming in the 2nd half. He was well supported by Josh Round and George Calvey who scored 19 and 12 points respectively.

Coach Crump was full of praise for his team "The performance displayed today was a massive turn around from the lacklustre effort against Notts Nova last weekend. This was a confident team performance, with the team showing great composure especially when we were in foul trouble and “Saints” made a dominant run in the final minutes. I am hoping this is a step forward and something the guys can build on."

Cadet Men too ferocious for “Wolves”

Cadet Men’s Midland Conference

Northants “Thunder”	100 – 32	Worcester “Wolves”
----------------------------	-----------------	---------------------------

The Worcester “Wolves” cadet men arrived at the Basketball Centre boasting a good record so Coach John Collins’ message to the “Thunder” players was simple. “Make life uncomfortable for the “Wolves”. Play at a speed which will take them out of their comfort zone.” He couldn’t have expected what happened next as his team outscored their opponents by 39 points to 11. “Thunder” were employing a zone press which forced numerous turn-overs and easy scores most of them for Jacob Round who stacked up a stunning 22 points in the quarter.

For the rest of the game Collins freely rotated his players on a five on, five off basis employing just half court defences. Even so “Thunder” were able to restrict their opponents to single figures in each of the three remaining quarters as they ran out comfortable winners by 100 points to 32 with Round leading the scoring with 40 points. All ten “Thunder” players scored with double figure totals coming from Ayomide Oluyede and David Nieva who drew gasps from the watching spectators with some spectacular lay ups.

Sarah helps below strength “Lightning” beat Birmingham

Under 16 Women’s Midlands South –West Conference

Northants “Lightning”	69 – 56	Team Birmingham
------------------------------	----------------	------------------------

The Northants under 16 girls recorded a 13 point win over Team Birmingham in a game which saw the West Midlands mount a spirited fourth quarter revival. Going into that last period of play “Lightning” were holding a comfortable 56-29 but were guilty of relaxing their efforts during the final quarter.

Earlier “Lightning” playing without the services of the influential Ruchae Walton, had established a six point half time lead at 29-26. They were further handicapped by a foot injury to Caitlin Stewart which forced Coach Karen Goodrich to resort to a zone defence. “Lightning” had found scoring difficult and they needed someone to ‘step up to the plate’ and that player proved to be Sarah Round. Round is still suffering from a long standing injury which as limited her playing time this season but her 15 third quarter points plus some excellent “Lightning” defence saw the home side outscore Birmingham 27-6 in the period.

Whether it was complacency or tiredness that got to the “Lightning” players is open to conjecture but the ability of Birmingham’s, Smith and Harton will serve as a warning for them when they play them in the Cup this Sunday.

In the battling win Round top scored for her team with 33 points with good support coming from rookie Holly Winterburn with 13 while Stewart contributed 10 points before picking up her injury.

Under 15 Boys still unbeaten

Under 15 Boys Midland Conference

North Herts “Knights” 42 - 100 Northants “Thunder”

Despite the best efforts of both the M.1 and North Herts the Northants under 15 boys remain unbeaten after a routine win over “Knights”. The team was stuck in traffic on the M.1 for over an hour and had very little preparation and warm-up time. Not surprisingly the game got off to a shaky start but “Thunder” settled quickly and with Jacob Round dominating play and Ed Wallhead looking impressive they jumped out to a 39-10 lead after the first period of play.

The second quarter saw the team working on their plays and ensuring good ball movement. The highlight of the period was a pass to Zinzan Oosthuizen which was caught in midair and converted into a score.. At the end of the period eight “Thunder” players had scored as the Northants boys took the quarter 26-14 to extend their lead to an unassailable 65-24.

With the game as good as won the intensity went from the “Thunder” play in the third and fourth quarters. As the game progressed the team began to look a little jaded and the players and coaching staff became a little frustrated by the referees’ failure to penalise some rather physical “Knights” play. “Thunder” took the second half 35-18 to run out winners by 58 points with all ten players getting onto the score sheet led by Round with 46 personal points while Wallhead contributed 22 points.

As the season progresses it is obvious that Jacob Round plays a major role in the team but all the other players are working hard and making significant contributions other than just scoring points.

“Warriors” no match for rampant Under 14 Girls

Under 14 Girls Midlands South-West Conference

Northants “Lightning” 94 - 46 Leicester “Warriors”

“Warriors” arrived at the game venue at 11-40am in readiness for an 11-30am tip off. With a 21-5 score line after the first period of play they possibly wished they hadn’t bothered to come at all and the carnage continued in the second quarter as “Lightning” racked up another 34 points while conceding 14.

Trailing 19-55 at half time “Warriors” put in a much improved performance in the second half with “Lightning” coach Stacey Shakespeare giving all her players plenty of playing time. Having said that the final result was never in doubt, as “Lightning” won the third and fourth quarters 23-12 and 16-15 respectively, to take the game by almost 50 points at 94-46.

For “Lightning”, Holly Winterburn piled in 36 points while Lucy Amena, Bahira Barakat and Odera Onwunehilli all made significant contributions.

Another heavy defeat for gutsy Under 13

Under 13 Boys Midland Conference

Northants "Thunder" 40 – 114 Mansfield "Giants"

The Northants under 13 boys suffered another heavy defeat last Saturday but once again showed their resilience by continuing to battle to the end and were delighted to achieve one of the goals set for them by their coaches.

"Giants" arrived at the Basketball Centre with talented guards Halstead and Ashante Richards plus the massive Skelton in their line up and these three played significant roles at the start of the first and third quarters of the game. These two periods proved to be the undoing of the young "Thunder" team as they were hammered 18-zero and 22-3. At other times the Northants boys did stay reasonably competitive thanks to the efforts of Connor White and Ashley Kitchen who scored 14 and 12 points respectively for their team.

It was interesting to note it wasn't until the seventh minute of the game that Mansfield scored in any other way than from put-backs. Indeed "Giants" advantage in standing height proved to be a significant factor in the game although Halsted and Richards did show their class with a contribution of 44 points between them.

Trailing 18-50 at half time the "Thunder" coaching staff set their team the challenge of scoring 40 points and when Oliver Dominique converted a put back they had achieved just that.

THIS WEEKEND'S ACTIVITIES

Saturday 8th November

9.30 am until 11am	Under 10 and Under 12 "Ballers" Academy
10.00 am until 11am	Junior "Ballers"
11.30am	Junior Women versus Reading "Rockets"
1.30pm	Junior Men versus Notts Nova II
3.30pm	Senior Men versus Barking Abbey

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**

Senior Women travel to Bury "Blue Devils"
Cadet Boys travel to Leicester "Dynamite"
Under 14 Boys travel to Leicester "Dynamite"
Under 14 Girls travel to Northamptonshire "Titans"

Sunday 9th November

There are three Trophy and Cup games scheduled. Tip off times to be confirmed.

Senior Women versus Mansfield "Giants"	(National Trophy)
Cadet Men versus City of Birmingham	(National Cup)
Junior Men versus Northamptonshire "Titans"	(National Cup)

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