

# **NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **“Thunder” Men get back to winning way**

#### **Men’s National League Division 3 North**

**Northants “Thunder”                      92 – 87                      City of Sheffield “Saints”**

After their disappointing loss against Birmingham “Mets” the Northants senior men got back to winning ways last Saturday with a battling five points win over City of Sheffield “Saints”.

“Saints were led by former England international Garnet Gayle but injuries had forced them to field several juniors as well. Aware of the danger that Gayle might cause “Thunder” paid a lot of attention to the veteran player and this gave other players room and they were able to exploit some lack-lustre “Thunder” defence. Thanks to 11 personal points from Jason Tucker, “Thunder” had their noses in front 26-25 at the end of the first period of play.

The “Thunder” coaching staff demanded an increase in defensive intensity but “Saints” rookie guard Welch was able to marshal his troops well and the home side relied a lot on Leon Henry to keep the scoreboard ticking over. “Thunder” were also rocked by a number of ‘route one’ fast breaks with the ball launched full court to the breaking Hayles sneaking down court. Even so “Thunder” were able to edge the quarter 23-19 to lead 49-44 at the half time break.

The third quarter saw “Saints” paying particular attention to Henry and Tucker but this opened up options for Asher Kirby who responded with seven points. When Tomas Vladicka hit a couple of shots from the deep perimeter the “Thunder” lead was extended to double figures for the first time in the game. This was maintained to the end of the quarter which saw “Thunder” leading 75-65.

By now fatigue was beginning to take its toll on players from both sides. The game had been played at a frenetic pace and several “Saints” players were guilty of poor decision making resulting in turn-overs. “Thunder” should have capitalised on this but they in turn missed a number of easy shots. Buoyed by the fact that they were still in contention, “Saints” managed one last charge to close the gap to 82-85. A “Thunder” time out was all about ‘putting the game to bed’ but “Saints” responded with some superb team defence before Jacob Holt knocked the stuffing out of them, with a turn around jump shot with the shot clock approaching zero. The Sheffield team attempted a couple of ‘hail Mary’s’ but they came to nothing as “Thunder” held on for the ‘bounce back’ win and second place in the league table.

In the five point win Tucker and Henry led the scoring with 28 and 25 points respectively with double figure support coming from Holt and Kirby.

### **“Mustangs” Spanish connection too much for “Thunder”**

#### **National Shield Round 2**

**Northants “Thunder”                      67 – 70                      Milton Keynes “Mustangs”**

Less than 24 hours after their league clash with Sheffield “Saints” the injury ravaged “Thunder”, were back on court for a National Trophy game against local rivals Division 4 outfit, Milton Keynes “Mustangs”.

From minute one it was obvious that this was going to be no walk-over with “Thunder” looking fatigued and flat after their efforts of the previous evening. For their part “Mustangs” with limited bench strength preserved their energy by sitting in a zone defence whilst on offence they relied heavily for their scoring on three very capable Spanish players. “Thunder” edged the first quarter 16-15 but scoring had proved to be difficult and they had been unable to force any errors from the “Mustangs” ball handlers.

“Mustangs” realised that they had caught “Thunder” on an off day and thanks to some accurate mid-range shooting took the lead. Spurred into action “Thunder” responded with a 10-zero run at the end of the quarter which they took 20-17 to lead 36-32 at half time.

With so many injuries “Thunder” coach Rob Eddon needed some of his bench payers to step up but they were unable to respond and the feeling that “Thunder” would eventually find that extra gear rapidly disappeared. “Mustangs” took the third quarter 16-12 and at 48 all going into the last ten minutes of play it was ‘game on’.

Three more perimeter shots from Milton Keynes gave them the lead early in the final stanza and as the two teams traded baskets it was clear that a massive “Thunder” effort would be needed if they were to progress in the competition. Leon Henry tried his best to spark the revival while Jason Tucker battled hard to find his form of the previous evening but the “Mustang” zone continued to thwart the “Thunder” efforts and the visitors held on for a deserved three point win.

For “Thunder”, Henry scored 28 points but Tucker with 11 was the only other Northants player to record double figures while for “Mustangs” Garcia top scored with 20 points and he was well supported by Mayo and Duro with 16 and 12 points respectively.

This coming weekend is a huge one for “Thunder”. On Saturday afternoon they take on Nottingham “Hoods” in a league game and then on Sunday face Derby “Trailblazers” in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Round of the National Cup.

The team needs all the support they can get so come along to the basketball Centre.

**The tip off is at 12-30pm**

### **Junior Men go down again**

#### **Junior Men’s Premier Division North**

<b>Northants “Thunder”</b>	<b>43 – 67</b>	<b>Sheffield “Saints”</b>
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The Northants junior men’s tough season continued last Saturday with a 20+ points defeat at the hands of a well drilled Sheffield “Saints” team.

By the end of the third quarter “Thunder” were trailing 31-61 but they restored a little pride by taking the final period of play 12-6.

In the heavy loss Luke Lewis and George Paul were the only “Thunder” players to score in double figures with 13 and 11 points respectively.

### **Nova send Cadet Men crashing out of the Cup**

#### **Cadet Men’s Sure National Cup Round 2**

<b>Northants “Thunder”</b>	<b>55 – 77</b>	<b>Notts Nova</b>
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The Northants Cadet Men made an early exit from the National Cup going down by 22 points to Premier Division outfit Notts Nova.

Despite facing opponents from a higher league it was “Thunder” who started brightly with a 7-2 run initiated by scores from Carlo Nieva, Ollie Thomas and Jacob Killeya. Nova responded with a strong 12-2 run of their own as “Thunder” failed to box out the Notts forwards who scored with a number of ‘put backs’ and by the end of the quarter the visitors had established a 22-12 lead.

“Thunder” were missing a couple of players and as fatigue set in the team struggled to match up defensively when guarding man to man. As a result early into the second quarter Coach Crump decided to employ a 3-2 defence which paid off limiting Nova’s rebounding presence inside and forcing shots from long range. Good offensive play from Carlo Nieva, Jacob Round and Ollie Thomas reduced the deficit to 26-28 mid way through the quarter. The “Thunder” effort continued and raised the excitement level of their supporters when Ollie Thomas drained a long range ‘three’ keeping the deficit at one point. The “Thunder” enthusiasm made them a little careless and they were guilty of turning the ball over on consecutive offences and this sparked an 8-0 Nova run. “Thunder” were able to re-establish some discipline late in the quarter and four points from David Nieva saw them trailing 33-38 at half time.

Nova had been utilising an aggressive ‘trapping’ defence so the half time message to the “Thunder” players was all about taking care of the ball. These wise words fell on deaf ears as the Northants boys were guilty of finding all manner of ways of losing the ball and Nova were able to score freely from the turn overs. Despite the best efforts of Elliot Strausa “Thunder” were outscored 26-15 in the quarter and with the score line at 48-64 they were left with the proverbial mountain to climb.

In the fourth quarter it was evident that, a fatigued Thunder were finding it difficult to play their up tempo style of basketball and they were limited to execution of their half court offense. This proved to be difficult against a well drilled Nova team and they were limited to just seven points while Nova scored 13 to run out comfortable 77-55 winners. In the 22 point loss Carlo Nieva top scored with 18 points with Ollie Thomas supporting well with 11 points.

Coach Crump was disappointed to exit the cup so early, but was pleased with his team’s efforts which had seen them stay competitive for over half of the game.

### **“Slam” ease out Under 15 Boys**

#### **Under 15 Boy’s Midlands Conference**

**Team Wolverhampton “Slam”                      54 – 61                      Northants “Thunder”**

After their encouraging win over Leicester “Warriors” the Northants under 15 boys travelled to the Black Country in optimistic mood despite being without the scoring power of Jacob Round. That optimism was soon put to the test as a well drilled “Slam” outfit eased out to a 17-8 lead after the first period of play. Defensively “Thunder” were struggling to combat the left handed threat of Milovsorov and Ruddock while on offence they were rather confused by “Slam’s” zone defence.

The second and their quarters saw “Thunder” take the ascendancy thanks to the driving play of David Nieva and some sharp shooting from Hayden Sayers. Going into the final period of play “Thunder” trailed 43-49 then early in the quarter Justin Trory scored with a put back to reduce the deficit to just three points. “Thunder” then failed to box out allowing a “Slam” score then inbounded the ball to an opponent who scored uncontested. The nine point deficit was too big to make up but the Northants boys battled to the end finally going down by 54 points to 61.

In the seven point loss Nieva led the scoring with 21 points with Sayers contributing 10 the same total as Ayo Oluyede.

### **Round helps Under 14 Boys to victory**

#### **Under 14 Boys Midlands Conference**

**Northants “Thunder”                      99 – 69                      Leicester “Heat”**

A staggering 59 point haul by Jacob Round helped the Northants under 14 boys to a win over Leicester “Heat”.

“Heat were still in contention at half time with “Thunder” holding a 39-32 lead. The home side were able to increase their advantage to by eight points to 69-54 by the end of the third quarter and then proceeded to blow their opponents away during the final period of play to take the game 99 -69.

In addition to Round’s massive haul Kitchen and Mutemasango also scored in double figures.

### **“Storm” no match for Cadette Women**

#### **Under 16 Girls Midlands South Conference**

**Northants “Lightning”                      83 – 10                      Bristol “Storm”**

The futility of girl’s under-aged basketball was illustrated once again last Saturday with the Northants under 16 girls team completely overwhelming a game but outclassed Bristol “Storm” team.

The game was over as a contest as early as the fifth minute with “Lightning” leading 15-zero. From then on players from neither side really got anything out of the game with “Lightning” coasting and “Storm” struggling to cope with even token pressure.

In the end the game became just a list of statistics which saw all twelve of “Lightning’s” players contribute to the final points total. They were led by captain Lauren Milne who recorded a double-double while Sarah Round, Caitlin Stewart and Ruchae Walton also scored in double figures.

### **First quarter nightmare costs “Lightning” under 14’s dear**

#### **Under 14 Girl’s Midlands Conference**

**Herts “Warriors”      76 - 64 Northants “Lightning”**

The Northants under 14 girls made the short trip to Bushey to take on Herts “Warriors” and returned after suffering a 12 points defeat. Considering that the team was trailing by over 30 points going into the last period of play the result could be looked upon as quite positive but Coach Darijuus Maldutis knows that his team will need to play with intensity for the whole game not just in the last ten minutes.

Both teams made a nervous start to the game before “Warriors” took control of the game with an 18-zero run. During this time the “Lightning” players totally lost their confidence and seemed reluctant to shoot the ball. Going into the second period of play “Warriors” were leading by 24 points to 14 but the “Lightning” players pulled themselves together in the second and third quarters which they lost by three and one point respectively. By now the Northants girls were showing more confidence on offence and more aggression on defence and this paid off in the final quarter which “Lightning” won 22-9 reducing the final losing margin to just 12 points.

For “Lightning”, Lucy Amena scored 22 while Bahira Barakat contributed 18 points while Precious Ogaji rebounded well.

### **Under 13’s let down by poor free throws**

#### **Under 13 Boys Midlands Conference**

**Northants “Thunder”      52 – 56      City of Birmingham**

“Thunder” Under13 Boys suffered a disappointing home defeat to City of Birmingham last weekend but might consider missing no less than 28 free throws as one of the reasons for the loss.

Early in the game the visitors were penalised by the referees for defensive errors during the opening period, but the Northants boys failed to take advantage of their numerous visits to the charity stripe hitting just three of the 14 free throws they were awarded. “Thunder’s” lack of defensive intensity allowed Birmingham to establish a 7 point lead at 22-15 at the end of the first quarter.

It was a similar story through the second quarter with “Thunder” hitting just one of the 10 free throws awarded. However, they did manage to stop Birmingham from getting to the basket and only allowed them to add 8 to their total before the mid-game break; even so the home side trailed 22-30.

Although “Thunder’s” defence improved through the second half, they had left themselves too much to do. Thunder won the second half 30-26, but that wasn’t quite enough. As the game neared its conclusion, “Thunder” had closed the gap to just two points, but a long range shot from Birmingham’s high scoring captain Tomlinson sealed a win for the visitors.

In the narrow loss Ed Wallhead contributed 22 points and numerous rebounds while Holly Winterburn also reached double figures. “Thunder” will need to increase their defensive intensity and practice their shooting if they are to turn around the three league losses they’ve had so far this season.

## Northants Under 13 Central Venue League

A Northants team which consisted of three U13s, two U12s and two U11s competed in the U13 Central Venue League held at Northants School or Boys last Saturday. The event involved teams from across the county and was an excellent festival of basketball with lots of talented young players taking part.

Northants first game was against Wellingborough Phoenix which they won reasonably comfortably. The second game was more of a challenge as Duston Blue fielded a couple of tall players. The game was tied after normal time, but it was "Thunder" who scored the 'golden basket' in extra time to secure the win. This set up an exciting final game against local rivals, the "Titans". "Thunder" opened up what should have been a match winning lead, but the "Titans" fought back however, "Thunder" managed to resist the efforts of their opponents and, in front of a large crowd, won the game by one point.

Gio Prati played a central role in the team's tournament-winning performance despite suffering an ankle injury in one of the earlier games.

### THIS WEEKEND'S ACTION

#### Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> October

11-30am

Under 13's versus Coventry "Tornadoes"

Cadet Men versus Coventry "Trojans"

1-45pm

Junior Men versus Cheshire "Panthers"

4.00pm

Senior Men versus Nottingham "Hoods"

Under 14 Boys travel to Shropshire "Warriors"

Cadette Women travel to Wilts "Demons"

Junior Women travel to Herts "Warriors"

#### Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> October

12-30am

Senior Men versus Derby "Trailblazers" (National Cup)

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**