

# **NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Hot and cold “Thunder” lose to Oxford Brookes**

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

#### **South Conference**

**Northants “Thunder”                      79 – 83                      Oxford Brookes University**

When Matt Yates converted a lay up in the sixth minute of the third quarter, “Thunder” found themselves 13 points up against local rivals Oxford Brookes. This represented an impressive comeback after they had trailed 15-23 after the first period of play. Northants supporters sat back in anticipation of their favourites cruising to a win that would re-establish their Play Off credentials. Regrettably this anticipation was ill-founded as Oxford proceeded to outscore “Thunder” 44-27 over the next 14 minutes to secure an unlikely victory.

Both teams were without key players and both teams were confused by many of the decisions of the match officials. The game became a roller coaster affair with the visitors closing the first quarter with a 9-zero burst only for “Thunder” to respond with an 8-zero run of their own at the start of the second quarter. Leading 37-33 at half time “Thunder” made that positive start to the third period of play only for the wheels to come off their play for most of the remainder of the game.

Oxford stayed in touch throughout the third quarter then seized the initiative in the fourth with a 14-3 charge and as they played catch up “Thunder’s” efforts were too often based on individual rather than team effort. Oxford held their nerve from the free throw line hitting six of eight shots from the charity stripe, to take a four point win.

For “Thunder”, Matt Yates top scored with 28 points and he received good support from Richard Higgins, Jacob Holt, and Adam Thomas who all scored in double figures.

This is the game “Thunder” could and probably should have won and the loss drops them to fifth in the South Conference. This weekend they travel to Brunel University “Ducks” who lie just one place below them in the South Conference table.

### **Another loss for Junior Men**

#### **Junior Men’s Midlands Conference**

**Leicester “Warriors”                      96 – 62                      Northants “Thunder”**

The Northants junior men took on Conference leaders Leicester “Warriors at Gateway College last Sunday and came out of the contest a poor second losing by over thirty points.

The first quarter displayed an even display and trade of baskets from both teams, drives from Jazz Campbell and David Nieva kept “Thunder” on level terms with “Warriors”. All this changed on the sixth minute mark, when the home side went on a 10-2 run, to open up a 27-15 lead by the end of the quarter

The second quarter saw a rampant charge by “Warriors” which saw them score 29 points while “Thunder” could manage just 17. Many of the “Warriors” points came from the free throw line following silly fouls and from close to the basket ‘put backs’ because of poor ‘boxing out’. The confidence of the home team had increased throughout the period and was boosted following a vicious crossover from their big man, Wardle which left a “Thunder” defender on the floor.

By half time “Warriors” had established a 55-32 leaving the Northants boys with the proverbial mountain to climb. There was to be no comeback for “Thunder” in the second half as “Warriors” ran rings round “Thunder's” static defence. When they did miss shots they were invariably able to grab offensive rebounds and score with put backs. Tireless offensive efforts by David Nieva and Ayo Oluyede, and great defensive blocks and steals by Matt Major and Adam Lewandowski were not enough to blockade the downpour of scores from the efficient 'Warriors' attack; the game ended 96 - 62 in favour of the Leicester side.

In the heavy defeat, David Nieva posted an impressive 21 points, supported by Ayo Oluyede's 17 while Jazz Campbell and Matt Major chipped in with 9 and 7 points respectively.

## **Classy Cadets record win over unbeaten “Warriors”**

### **Under 16 National League**

#### **Midlands Conference**

**Northants “Thunder”**

**68 – 47**

**Leicester “Warriors”**

The Play Off hopes of the Northants under 16 boys had been seriously dented the previous week after their loss to Leicester “Dynamite”. This put increased pressure on the team when they entertained undefeated Leicester “Warriors” last Saturday. Their 21 point win means they are back in contention and will be looking to avenge their two Conference defeats in the New Year.

Saturday’s win came on the back of quality performances from Chris Amankonah, Josh Lloyd and Ed Wallhead but team coach John Collins was quick to point to the tireless defensive work of the seven other players in the team which included Conference debutants Mark Grey and Luke Halls.

“Warriors” knew they were in for a real game from the very start of the game as “Thunder” jumped out to a 12-4 lead with Wallhead giving a clinic of close to the basket play. When the Leicester team closed down Wallhead’s options, Lloyd and Noah Wilborn exploited the space on the perimeter with three, triples.

Leading 20-11 after the first period of play “Thunder” got into their running game in the second quarter with Amankonah looking impressive on the break. “Thunder” poured in 23 points but “Warriors” stayed in touch thanks to a quality display from Yusif and they were still in contention at 29-43 at half time.

During the half time break, Coach Collins impressed on his team the importance of keeping focussed and keeping up their intensity on defence. “Thunder” were able to extend their lead to 17 points midway through third period before they suffered a four minute scoring drought. Fortunately their defence remained sound but “Warriors” were still able to close the gap to 10 points. Scores from Lloyd and Wallhead eased the “Thunder” nerves but the Leicester team were still in contention at 56-44 going into the final ten minutes of play.

“Thunder” have been working on alternating defences and in the final period their hard work paid off as they limited “Warriors” scoring to just three free throws in the final ten minutes of play. To keep a previously unbeaten team to 3 points in a quarter is no mean feat and “Thunder” could be well pleased with their 68-47 win.

The “Thunder” scoring was led by Wallhead with 25 points with Amankonah and Lloyd adding excellent support with 17 and 19 points respectively

## **Battling Under 14 Boys lose to table-topping “Bears”**

**Under 14 Boys**  
**East Midlands II Conference**  
**Worcester “Bears”                      83 – 67                      Northants “Thunder”**

The Northants “Thunder” under 14 boys faced conference leaders Worcester Bears who were yet to lose in the Midlands II Conference last Saturday.

The first quarter saw the “Bears” storm into a 9-2 lead thanks to some impressive fast breaks. “Thunder” weren’t helped by some lacklustre defence forcing Coach Rob Crump to call a time out. “Thunder” returned to the floor in a more upbeat mood and looked united as a team, displayed a more determined performance against the league leaders. They were able to respond with an 8-2 run of their own to reduce the deficit to one point at 10-11. Jonathan Ntumba had turned in a strong scoring quarter with 12 personal points and the “Bears” had become unsettled with the long-bodied Ntumba matching up defensively with their point guard. Despite their best efforts “Thunder” found themselves trailing 20-24 after the first period of play

“Thunder” had displayed their best team performance of the season in the first half; and this generated a self of belief in the team who looked to fast break at every opportunity at the start of the second quarter. These breaks were complimented by good execution in the half court which saw Ntumba find Henri Berry combine for a ‘give and go’ resulting in an ‘and one’. “Bears” showed some confident shooting from the perimeter nailing four 3 pointers but “Thunder’s” efforts were rewarded by winning the period 23-22 with the home side leading 46-43 at the half.

The message for the “Thunder” players going into the second half was clear; the pressure was clearly on the unbeaten “Bears”. If the West Midlanders were to maintain their undefeated record they would have to beat Thunder from the perimeter. Despite Bears opening the quarter with another three pointer, “Thunder” managed to reduce the deficit to 51-53 midway through the quarter thanks to scores from Kalonji Campbell, Jonathan Ntumba and Patrick Adedeji. However, with the “Bears” focussing their defensive efforts on stopping Ntumba, the rest of the “Thunder” players began to panic and committed turnovers, and this poor offensive execution helped the home side mount a 10-1 run to conclude the quarter taking them into a 67-54 lead.

Coach Crump encouraged his players to remain upbeat and mount a strong fourth quarter in an attempt to defeat the “Bears”. “Thunder” looked to implement a 4 out 1 in motion offence to exploit the mismatch with Ntumba, but poor passes inside saw “Bears” capitalise and force turn-overs leading to easy scores which saw them extend their lead to 82-60 putting the game out of reach for “Thunder” Despite a three pointer from Ashley Kitchen to add to his seven points in the quarter points it was too late to spark a comeback for Thunder who had to be content in the knowledge they had put on a respectable performance against the Conference leaders.

Jonathan Ntumba led Thunder scoring with an impressive 34 points, 26 of those points coming in the first half. He was well supported by Ashley Kitchen and Patrick Adedeji with 9 and 8 points respectively.

Coach Crump commented “This was a brave performance by the boys against a very good Worcester “Bears” side. The first half saw us play some of our best team basketball of the season offensive and defensively which really unsettled the “Bears”. A slight lapse late in the third quarter saw the game slip away from us. However, some excellent perimeter shooting from the “Bears” was the key difference between the two teams”.

## **Under 14 girls just fail to record back-to-back win**

### **Under 14 Girls National League** **(East Conference)**

**Brentwood “Fire”**

**42 – 33**

**Northants “Lightning”**

After their confidence boosting win over Ipswich the previous week, the Northants under 14 girls travelled to Essex last Saturday, to take on mid-table Brentwood “Fire”. They returned having suffered a nine point defeat following a physical, low scoring encounter.

Despite having a significant height advantage “Lightning” found scoring difficult in the first quarter of the game Lucy Needham scoring all six of their points. Excellent defence kept the game tight with “Fire” only managing 12 points themselves.

The second quarter was also a low scoring affair with the home side shading it 8-5 to take a 20-11 half time lead. The game had become increasingly physical with the match officials seeming to be quite happy to let all kinds of physical contact go unpunished. “Lightning” coach Janis Kosnikovska was also becoming increasingly frustrated with the “Fire” defensive tactics which were giving a very good impression of being a zone defence which is not allowed at this age group.

The third and fourth periods of play did produce more points with both teams scoring 22 points as “Fire” held on for the 42 to 33 win.

Coach Kosnikovska felt his team could have won this game but were guilty of committing too many basic errors and these mistakes will have to be addressed before the team takes on local rivals “Titans” this weekend.

In the nine point loss Lucy Needham top scored with 19 points; Dina Kosnikovska battled through a lot of very physical defence to score 10 points while Sade Chambers and Niamh Saysell rebounded well.

### **THIS WEEKEND’S ACTIVITIES**

#### **Saturday 10th December**

9-30am until 11am

11-30am

2pm

Junior Ballers Session

Under 14 Boys versus Ilkeston “Outlaws”

Under 14 Girls versus N.E.B.C. “Titans”

Junior Men versus Leicester “Dynamite”

**These games will be played at the Basketball Centre which is situated at  
Northampton School for Girls | Spinney Hill Road, Northampton**

Senior Men travel to Brunel University “Ducks”

Under 16 Boys travel to Rutland “Thunders”

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