

# **NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Senior Men make it four ‘on the bounce.’**

### **National League Division 3 (South Conference)**

**Barking & Dagenham “Thunder”      74 - 86      Northants “Thunder”**

The Northants senior men picked up their four consecutive win with a hard fought 12 point triumph over fellow Thunder outfit Barking and Dagenham. The win lifts the team up to eighth in the South Conference with a tough looking clash against Brunel University Ducks this weekend which will really test the team’s improvement.

Saturday’s game at Barking and Dagenham was for many reasons, a potential ‘banana skin’ and Thunder made a nervous start. The team played some excellent defence but consistently turned the ball over on offence. Consequently, their efforts were rewarded with only a narrow lead at 22-16 after the first period of play.

Barking were fielding a big and athletic team and in the second quarter they used this to good advantage outscoring Thunder 26-21 to narrow the gap to 42-43 at half time with the game still well and truly ‘in the mixer’.

Both teams found scoring difficult in the third quarter which was edged 16-15 by the Northants team there was still everything to play for in the final ten minutes. Thunder needed a little bit of magic and it came from skipper Johnny Yates who coolly drained three, three-pointers to ease his team’s anxiety. They duly won the final period 27-17 to record an important ‘road’ win.

For Thunder Bneji Henry top scored for the second week running with 24 points, Devon Adams, Jacob Holt and Yates all scored in double figures while Richard Higgins, Viv Lee and Adam Thomas all made important contributions.

### **Second successive defeat for Junior Men**

**Junior Men’s East Midlands Development League**  
**Northants “Thunder”      63 – 73      Leicester “Dynamite”**

After marching through the closing months of 2015 undefeated the Northants Junior men have now suffered consecutive defeats after going down to Leicester Dynamite a team they had beaten by one point earlier in the season, last Saturday. Coach Rob Crump is mystified about his team’s loss in confidence but has identified poor perimeter shooting as a major problem

Against Dynamite Thunder opened the scoring through an Ollie Thomas lay up, but it was the visitors who were the most assertive responding with a 14-0 run fuelled by some aggressive half court defence limiting Thunders inside scoring. Thunder was therefore dependent on their outside shooting which for once was lacking in accuracy. Thunder’s backcourt duo of David Nieva and Ollie Thomas did inspire Thunder to reduce the deficit combining for seven points but their team still trailed 10-18 at the end of the first period of play.

Thunder switched to a 3-2 zone in the second quarter in an attempt to limit Dynamite’s close to the basket threat. This tactic resulted in an 18-2 surge, with Carlo and David Nieva nailing perimeter shots complimented with some excellent offensive rebounding by James Barden who punished Dynamite defence by converting shots inside. Despite trailing 20-28, Dynamite showed their character and a spirited run saw them reduce Thunder’s lead to a single point at 34-33 at half time.

Coach Crump’s half time message was simple, “Take care of the ball and execute on offence.” His team’s efforts to get the ball close to basket were thwarted by some aggressive and physical defence which saw them picking up a number of fouls. It did however, have the effect of making Thunder shy away from penetrating to the basket. Dynamite restored the lead with a 10-2 run with a jump shot on the buzzer to take a 51-43 lead.

The momentum of the game remained with Dynamite in the fourth quarter and they extended their lead to 43-62 leaving the Thunder players shell-shocked. In desperation Thunder employed a zone press which helped reduce the deficit to 58-67 lead with 10 consecutive points from Carlo Nieva. Unfortunately for the Northants boys the surge came too late, as Thunder slipped to their second defeat of the season.

In the ten point loss Carlo Nieva scored 21 points well supported by Ollie Thomas with 17 points.

Coach Crump commented "It is disappointing to lose two consecutive games in a row particularly to rival teams who will be challenging to win the Conference. It is important we compose ourselves for the tough trip away to Mansfield this weekend."

### **“Phoenix” too big and strong for brave “Thunder”**

**“Hoopsterz” Under 19 Central Venue League**  
**Kettering “Phoenix”                      50 – 26                      Northants “Thunder”**

Against a much bigger Kettering Phoenix team containing three players with Under 18 National League experience Thunder were always going to find this a difficult fixture and so it proved.

After a good start with Zinzan Oosthuizen driving well to basket some poor passing cost Thunder dear and Phoenix were able to take control of the game. As usual Ainsley Reynolds was proving to be a talisman for Thunder both on offence and defence while Matt Major’s hard work was rewarded with 10 personal points until he picked up an injury midway through the second half of the game. Major’s injury meant that Thunder were seriously struggling for height but the team continued to battle manfully no more so than Austin Evans who showed massive bravery in marking a players several inches taller than him and several years older.

This coming Friday the team will match up against Northampton Academy.

### **Table topping “Trailblazers” too strong for gutsy Cadet Men.**

**Under 16 Boys Midlands Development League**  
**Northants “Thunder”                      43 – 71                      Derby “Trailblazers”**

With a Play Off place now virtually impossible for the Northants cadet boys team coach Grahame Yates made the decision to give all his squad players ample court time for the remaining fixtures in the season.

Against top of the table Derby Trailblazers, Thunder started well and put the first points on the scoreboard however a number of missed lay-ups cost them dear and by the end of the first quarter they found themselves trailing 8-16. The second quarter saw Thunder tighten up their play and good ball movement was exposing the Derby big men. Zinzan Oosthuizen provided assists which saw Shekina Ntumba, Josh Lloyd and Chris Amankonah all scoring freely. Thunder took the quarter 18-12 so at half time Trailblazers’ lead had been cut to 28-26.

Sensing a loss the Derby coach decided to go with a big five in an attempt to prevent close to the basket scores. The undersized Thunder team did their best but for the most part were restricted to perimeter shots. When these missed Derby were able to rebound and mount fast break attacks which saw them outscore Thunder 43-17 in the second half to record a 28 point victory which rather flattered the visitors. For Thunder Ntumba and Lloyd led the scoring with 14 and 10 points respectively

Coach Yates was full of praise for his team who had shown determination and stuck to his game plan.

### **Under 14 Boys keep up the winning habit**

**Under 14 Boys Midlands Development League**  
**Ilkeston “Outlaws”                      58 - 87                      Northants “Thunder”**

The Northants Under 14 Boys picked up their sixth win of the season with a comfortable win over bottom of the table Ilkeston Outlaws. The team now has a 5-5 record but Saturday’s win saw the team blow ‘hot and cold’ with some excellent play spoiled by basic errors.

Thunder made an excellent start to the contest jumping out to a 19-4 lead with Jude Carmichael proving almost unstoppable. Thunder then became guilty of some sloppy play and by the end of the first quarter Outlaws had closed the gap to 14-25.

Thunder continued to show the best and worst of their character in the second quarter which they won 20-13 to lead 45-27 at half time. With the game as good as won Thunder should have just gone out on court and displayed their skills but most of the combinations that coach Darijus Maldutis put on court seemed unable to gel. Thunder won the final two period of play by single figures to run out winners by 87 points to 58 but they hadn't played to anything like their full potential.

In the comfortable win five Thunder players scored in double figures led by Carmichael with a 23 point haul. Henri Berry and Matteo Baja scored 17 and 16 points respectively while Ashley Kitchen added 15 points to his hatful of steals and Oliver Dominique chipped in with a dozen points.

### **“Lightning” lose out in physical battle**

#### **Under 14 Girls East Midlands Development League**

**Brentwood “Leopards”                      89 – 50                      Northants “Lightning”**

The Northants under 14 girls travelled to Brentwood last Saturday in search of their fourth win of the season. They returned after suffering a heavy defeat after a very physical game in which their opponents were ‘called’ for a massive 36 fouls. This resulted in Lightning making a number of visits to the free throw line but they were able to connect with only 17 of the 47 free throws they were awarded.

The physical approach taken by the Brentwood girls had the effect of intimidating Lightning and they were guilty of missing easy shots and turning the ball over on a large number of occasions.

After making a poor start Lightning were competitive in the first period of play but by half time had fallen 29-47 behind. Needing a good third quarter to get back into the game Lightning were outscored 22-9 and to all intents and purposes it was ‘game over’.

In the 39 point defeat Ony Onwumechilli top scored with 26 points with Dina Kosnikovska supporting with 13 points. Coach Stacey Shakespeare was full of praise for the efforts and attitude of Topia Bruce and Ruby Mabbutt.

### **Success for two former Northants players**

Last weekend two former players from the Club enjoyed success of very differing kinds.

Former Lightning and Moulton College player Stephanie Ogden, was in the Sheffield Hatters team that beat Barking Abbey in the Final of the WBBL National Trophy. Steph is pictured below (far right on the front row) with the triumphant Hatters team.



Success of a very different kind of was achieved by another former Moulton College student who appeared on The Voice on Saturday evening. The kick-boxing singer was selected by Boy George for his ‘team’.

The Northants Basketball Club offers sincere congratulations to both Stephanie and Chase.

## THIS WEEKEND'S ACTIVITIES

### Friday 22nd January

8-15pm

Northants "Thunder" versus Northampton Academy  
(Hoopsterz Under 19 Central Venue League at Northampton Academy)

### Saturday 23rd January

9-30am to 11am

"Ballers" Session

11-45am

Under 14 Girls versus Oaklands "Wolves"

Under 14 Boys versus City of Birmingham II

1-45pm

Senior Men versus Brunel University "Ducks"

Both these games will be played at the **Northants Basketball Centre** which is situated at Northampton School for Girls in Spinney Hill Road, Northampton

Spectators are welcome and admission is FREE

Junior Men travel to Mansfield "Giants"

Under 16 Boys travel to Derbyshire "Arrows"

Under 12's play in a tournament at Northampton School for Boys

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