

# **NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **No joy for under-strength “Thunder” against high-flying LTBC**

**Men’s Division Three North**  
**Middlesex LTBC            100 – 77            Northants “Thunder”**

As a result of disciplinary action following the unsavoury events in the game against Brunel “Ducks” the Northants senior men travelled to high-flying Middlesex LTBC without a couple of key players. They eventually suffered a 23 points defeat but there were plenty of positives to take from the game for Coach Grahame Yates.

LTBC took the first quarter by 27 points to 22, but the home side knew they were in a game as “Thunder” responded well in the second period of play which they won 23-20 to close the gap to just 2 points at 45-47 by half time.

The physical effort made by the “Thunder” players in that second quarter paid its toll after the interval and led by Kousauskas, the home side outscored “Thunder” 29-16 in the third to open up a 76-61 lead. It would have been easy for “Thunder” to capitulate in the final period but led by Matt Yates they continued to battle and only lost the fourth quarter 24-19 so losing the game by 77 points to 100.

In the 23 point loss, Yates top scored with 20 points with excellent support coming from Devon Adams and Adam Thomas.

### **Super Cadets beat top of the table “Hoods”**

**Under 16 Boys Midlands Conference**  
**Northants “Thunder”            64- 60            Nottingham “Hoods”**

The Northants Cadets boosted their chances of making the end of season Play Offs following a four point win over the previously unbeaten Nottingham “Hoods”.

“Thunder” showed their character at the start of the fourth period of play with “Hoods” leading by 46 points to 44. Up until then they had relied heavily on their fast break offence and the abilities of Chris Amankomah and Josh Lloyd to ‘post up’ opponents, but had suffered by shooting poorly from the free throw line. “Hoods” made a determined effort to stop “Thunder’s” main scorers but up stepped Ed Wallhead with 5 important points which helped his team to a 7-2 run and a 51-48 lead. The visitors edged ahead 52-51 thanks to a three-pointer from the impressive Sporeon and a free throw, but “Thunder” were not to be denied and with Amankonah setting the example they outscored their opponents 13-8 over the closing five minutes to take a well deserved win in a game of high quality and great tension.

The four point win is important because “Thunder” lost by just three at Nottingham earlier in the season. That single point could be decisive if the two teams end the season with the same number of losses and with all the top team still having to play each other the Conference is still wide open.

In the important win Amanakonah and Lloyd led the “Thunder” scoring with 23 and 18 points respectively while Wallhead contributed 11 points. Coach John Collins was quick to point out the contributions of the other six players who played I the game but he was less pleased by the fact that his team had missed no less than 16 free throws.

## **Junior Men break their 2017 'duck'.**

### **Junior Men's Midlands Conference**

**Northants "Thunder" 47 – 68 Derby "Trailblazers II"**

The Northants Junior Men opened a double-header weekend with a home game against Derby "Trailblazers" and suffered a disappointing 20 plus points defeat. Initially the game was a keenly contested affair with the short-handed "Trailblazers" team keeping in the game close thanks to some good perimeter shooting.

Trailing 25-28 at a half time "Thunder" would have been expected to make their numerical advantage tell in the second half but they made a horrendous start to the third period of play with the visitors outscoring them 10-2. Leading 36-25 "Trailblazers" were punished for some over aggressive defence but were 'let off the hook' as "Thunder" could convert just one of the nine free throws they were awarded.

Going into the final quarter "Thunder" trailed 39-46 but after the two teams had exchanged scores they could only manage four points in the final six minutes of play as Derby cruised to a comfortable win.

In the 21 points set back David Nieva battled hard for his 19 points but no other "Thunder" player was able to score in double figures

**Team Birmingham "Elite II" 62 – 65 Northants "Thunder"**

Less than 24 hours after their loss to "Trailblazers", "Thunder", missing several players, travelled to Birmingham to take on the Team Birmingham "Elite" second string. The first quarter saw Northants forcing turnovers leading to transition baskets from David Nieva and Jazz Campbell and they were able to establish a narrow four points lead.

The home side began to press high up the court to regain the lead, and this led to them equalising the game through efficient shooting from around the key. "Thunder" were boosted by scores from beyond the arc from Micolos Klimavicius and Ayo Oluyede which kept them in front 37-33 at half time.

"Thunder" got off to a great start to the second half with a 7-zero run pressuring the home side into taking a time out, and a change of personnel. Birmingham went with a tall line up in order to secure more offensive boards and this change proved to be successful as Team Birmingham converted multiple inside scores, despite some tough defence by "Thunder" which included huge blocks by Oluyede and Shekina Ntumba. Even so the home side edged the quarter 18-13 to take a 51-50 lead into the final stanza

The final 10 minutes proved to be extremely tense for both contingents. "Thunder" were let down by their inability to box out as Team Birmingham were able to pounce on the offensive boards to score easy points inside, but rapid drives from David Nieva, who was the only Thunder player to score in this quarter, was enough to help "Thunder" take the quarter 15-11 and the game by 65 points to 62.

In an exhilarating win, David Nieva led scoring with an impressive 28 points, supported by Ayo Oluyede and Shekina Ntumba with 10 points each. It was a tired team and a relieved Coach Darjius Maldutis that boarded the mini bus for the journey back to Northampton. Maldutis commented, "I hope this win will give the team a little more self confidence."

## **Disappointing overtime loss for Under 14 Boys against “Wolves”.**

### **Under 14 Boys East Midlands II Conference**

<b>Worcester “Wolves”</b>	<b>91 – 89</b>	<b>Northants “Thunder”</b>
	<b>(80 – 80)</b>	

After the important win against Team Elite Birmingham last weekend, Thunder were looking to continue their mission to push for a Play Off spot with an away trip to Worcester “Wolves”.

“Thunder” made the trip to Worcester without the services of leading scorer Jonathan Ntumba who was playing for the Cadet team in their vital game against Nottingham “Hoods”.

“Thunder” displayed a lacklustre performance to open the game and it was the “Wolves” that looked like they were the team pushing for the Play-Offs demonstrating a determined display. “Thunder” were guilty of conceding too many lay ups whilst failing to box out on defensive rebounds. Despite Patrick Adedeji and Kalonji Campbell trying to ignite some energy into “Thunder’s” efforts, the home side sparked a 10-2 run to conclude the quarter with a 21-13 lead.

Coach Rob Crump urged his players to improve their performance and step up defensively and “Thunder” returned to the floor more energised sparking a 22-2 run, with 14 points coming from Kalonji Campbell. This run meant that the 8 point deficit had been overturned for a 33-23 lead, however the “Thunder” effort was hindered when influential guard Patrick Adedeji picked up his 3rd foul forcing Crump to withdraw him from the game. “Wolves” continued to put Thunder under pressure late in the quarter reducing their lead to five points but a three pointer on the buzzer, from Ashley Kitchen helped “Thunder” to a 40-32 half time lead.

During the half time break, it was discussed that “Thunder” needed to step up their performance defensively and each player had to be accountable for defending their player. It was “Thunder” that made the better start to the third quarter extending their lead to 56-43 thanks to some good perimeter shooting from Kitchen. The two teams exchanged scores but “Thunder” boasted a comfortable 63-52 lead entering the final quarter.

The message going into that fourth quarter was, “Win the quarter to secure victory.” Unfortunately for Thunder this message was not clear enough; as a defensive melt down along with numerous turnovers saw the Wolves produce a 17-5 run to take the lead 69-68 midway through the period with the home side determined to take the game to the wire. A Kitchen jump shot seemed to have secured the win for “Thunder”, but a score by “Wolves” tied the game at 80 points apiece with seconds remaining so forcing overtime.

With all momentum in favour of “Wolves”, “Thunder” knew they were in trouble and required a strong response if they were to secure a vital win. “Wolves” took the lead but back baskets from Kitchen regained the lead for “Thunder” at 84-82. “Wolves” respond with surge of their own to take a significant 5 point lead with a minute remaining with the home side thinking they had won but an Ally Solazzo ‘And 1’ rejuvenated hope into Thunder’s comeback to with the score standing at 91-89. Superb defence forced a “Wolves” turn-over with eight seconds remaining and “Thunder” launched a fast break with the hope of sending the game into double overtime. Regrettably for them an error was made and the ball rolled out of bounds with the final buzzer sounding.

In the disappointing loss “Thunder” were led in scoring by Ashley Kitchen who scored 27 points including three 3 pointers. Kalonji Campbell and Cameron Leighton scored 21 points and 16 points respectively to give good support.

Coach Crump commented “Today’s result was very disappointing considering the performance we displayed last week. As a team, we completely underestimated “Wolves” which was evident in the opening the quarter. Despite positive displays in the 2nd and 3rd quarter; the team has to learn to close out the game which we failed to do so giving up 28 points in the final quarter.”

“Unfortunately we were very poor defensively; as a result this loss has seriously jeopardised our Play-Off push!”

### **Top of the table “Hornets” too strong for Under 14 Girls**

#### **Under 14 Girls East Conference**

**Bucks “Hornets”**

**59 -38**

**Northants “Lightning”**

The Under 14 Girls had the hardest possible start to 2017 with a trip to table-topping Bucks “Hornets” and despite a determined defensive display ended up losing by over 20 points which was mainly due to a nightmare fourth quarter.

Both teams struggled to convert good scoring opportunities in the first period of play, which “Hornets” edged” 9-7. The home side extended their lead to 13 points at 27-14 by half time with “Lightning” still struggling to score.

The third quarter saw a much more positive approach from the Northants girls who combined some solid defensive work with well structured fast breaks and disciplined half court offence. “Lightning” took the quarter 18-15 to close the gap to 10 points with the feeling that a big final quarter might get them close to their opponents. Unfortunately, their efforts were handicapped when Chloe Stevens picked up a nasty looking knee injury.

Needing a good start to the final quarter “Lightning” were guilty of over-dibbling and committing basic errors on offence against a “Hornets” defence that began increasingly to look like a zone. These errors were compounded by some poor defence as the home side dominated proceedings and outscored “Lightning” 17-6 to take the game 59-38.

In the 21 points loss “Lightning” were led in scoring by Dina Kosnikovska and Lucy Needham with 13 and 12 points respectively.

#### **THIS WEEKENDS ACTION**

##### **Saturday 21st January**

9.30 am until 11am

11-30am

2-00pm

Junior “Ballers”

Under 14 Girls versus Oaklands “Wolves”

Under 14 Boys versus Shropshire “Warriors”

Junior Men versus Shropshire “Warriros”

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

Under 16 Boys travel to Mansfield “Giants II”

Under 9’s and Under 11’s play in *Hoopsterz* Tournaments at NSB

##### **Sunday 22nd January**

Senior Men travel to Greenwich “Titans”

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