

# **NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **No Cup Final for Cadette Women**

#### **Under 16 Girls Sure Shot National Cup** **(Semi Final)**

**Northants “Lightning”                      44 – 52                      Haringey “Angels”**

A superb defensive effort which restricted which restricted an athletic and talented Haringey “Angels” team, to just 52 points wasn’t enough to earn the Northants Cadette Women a place in the Sure Shot National Cup Final. Throughout wonderfully competitive “Lightning” struggled against an obdurate 1-3-1 Haringey zone.

“Angels” took the early initiative thanks to the superb shooting of Jenelle Grant who had 10 personal points as “Angels” won the first period of play 16-10. “Lightning” were relying on fast breaks and perimeter shooting for their scores and Charlotte Berridge was connecting from the deep despite suffering from a back injury. Haringey took the second quarter 13-8 to extend their lead to 29-18 at half time and a heavy defeat looked to be on the cards for “Lightning”.

Throughout the first two periods of play “Lightning had got virtually nothing close to basket whereas “Angels” had picked up a number of rebound points. At the start of the third quarter “Lightning” coach, Karen Goodrich concentrated on overloading the back of the Haringey zone whilst asking her players to increase their defensive intensity. The girls responded excellently but were guilty of missing some easy scoring opportunities and “Angels” were able to increase their lead by a further four points to 44-29.

A huge effort would be need by the Northants girls if they were to pull the tie ‘out of the fire’ and inspired by an enthusiastic crowd they turned in a superb final quarter effort. With Sarah Round pushing the ball up court “Lightning were able to score with fast break baskets and this was matched by some intense man-to-man defence. With three minutes of the game remaining and their team leading by 14 points, the Haringey coaching staff took the team’s leading players out of the game. This was a signal for “Lightning” to mount a 6-zero charge which would have been more had they not missed four free throws but brought the final margin down to single figures.

For “Lightning” Berridge top scored with 20 points and she was well supported by Round with 14 while Caitlin Stewart and Ruchae Walton pulled down 15 rebounds between them. The “Angels” scoring was also dominated by two players led by Grant with 20 points while the classy Savannah Wilkinson scored 16. Coach Karen was pleased with the physical effort given by the whole team but realised that some of her players just don’t have the necessary skills set to compete against players who are taller and more athletic than they are. “Lightning” will now concentrate on getting to the end of season Play Offs with their Conference season resuming this weekend against Bristol “Storm”.

### **Men maintain their title challenge**

#### **Men’s Division Three North Conference**

**Sheffield “Saints”                      72 – 86                      Northants “Thunder”**

The Northants senior men recorded their second win of 2014 with a 14 points ‘road’ victory against Sheffield “Saints”. “Thunder” are currently in third place in the Division Three North league table on three losses the same as Birmingham “Mets” while Rossendale “Raptors” who have to visit “Thunder”, have been beaten just twice.

After their journey north “Thunder” were quickly shown that their opponents meant business as “Saints” opened the scoring with two breakaway baskets. Skipper Jonny Yates made sure his team didn’t fall too far behind scoring five of “Thunder’s” first seven points. This inspired the team to raise the intensity of their defence and this was responsible for a number of steals and easy scores leading to a 23-6 run and a 27-16 first quarter lead.

“Saints” responded to the challenge in the second quarter hitting consistently from the perimeter including four from beyond the arc. “Thunder” were visibly rocked and the intensity of their defence faded while their offences were often rushed. Matters weren’t helped when Yates was sidelined because of a ‘blood injury’ and the awarding of a technical foul against the Northants bench after the ‘non-call’ following the incident. The home side took the period 21-13 which meant that “Thunder’s” lead had been cut to just three points to 40-37 at half time.

During the half time break, Coaches Rob Eddon and Grahame Yates emphasised the need to move the ball quicker and get the defensive intensity back to its first quarter level. The result was some of the best basketball “Thunder” have played all season with Leome Francis and Leon Henry combining for 16 points while not to be outdone Jason Tucker also contributed seven points. “Thunder” took the period 27-16 to set up an excellent platform for victory at 67-53.

Knowing that the home side would make a big push “Thunder” were determined to play tough defence and protect their boards. Their efforts were so effective that the hustle of Asher Kirby and Yates produced a number of steals leading to easy scores which extended their team’s lead to 20 at 81-61. By now “Saints” were just playing for pride and their efforts plus some poor “Thunder” decision making saw the home side drag the final score back to 86-72 in favour of “Thunder”.

In the impressive win Tucker led the “Thunder” scoring with 23 points while excellent support came from Francis and Henry with 20 and 18 points respectively while Yates contributed 15.

### **Junior Men go down against “Eagles in stormy encounter**

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

**Newcastle “Eagles”                      108 - 65                      Northants “Thunder”**

The Northants junior men made the long trip to Newcastle last Saturday and in a game punctuated by unsportsmanlike fouls, plus coach and player disqualifications lost by 43 points.

After the four and a half hour and a change of venue which had been notified to the Northants club a slow start was expected for “Thunder” and so it proved as “Eagles” took a 32-17 first quarter lead. Stand in coach Darijus Maljudtius tried his best to instil some confidence into the team but there was no improvement in the second period of play which “Eagles” won 28-15 to establish a 60-32 half time lead.

Despite some inconsistent refereeing “Thunder” showed a great deal more composure and passion in the third quarter which Newcastle just edged 22-20 but things went totally ‘pear shaped’ in the final period of play. First Karan Virdee was disqualified from the game after retaliating to the punch then George Paul was felled whilst advancing the ball up court and with no call made the “Thunder” bench and Maljudtius were all given technical fouls for protesting with the Northants coach finally being sent out of the gym. Amongst all this mayhem “Eagles” took the quarter 26-13 to run out winners by 108 points to 65.

### **No joy for Junior Women against “Rockets”**

#### **Junior Women’s Midlands South-West Conference**

**Reading “Rockets”                      56 – 50                      Northants “Lightning”**

The Northants junior women travelled to Reading knowing that they needed a win against “Rockets” if they were to have any chance of reaching the end of season Play Offs. “Lightning” made an excellent start to the game taking the first period 18-13 but then unaccountably completely ‘went off the boil’ in the second quarter which “Rockets” bossed 15-2 to take a 28-20 half time lead.

Stern words from Coach Stacey Shakespeare saw an improvement in the third quarter which “Lightning” edged 19-11 to tie the scores up at 39 all going into the final ten minutes of play. The Northants girls had made a tremendous effort in that third quarter and their energy levels dropped for the final stanza. Despite their best efforts Reading took the period 17-11 to win the game by 56 points to 50.

For “Lightning”, Stephanie Ogden top scored with 14 points with good support coming from Riona Blessyn with 12 points and rookie guard Sarah Round with 10.

## **Cadet Men still undefeated**

### **Cadet Men's Midlands Conference**

**Notts Nova II                      50 – 80                      Northants "Thunder"**

The Northants cadet men maintained their unbeaten record with a conclusive 30 point win over the Notts Nova second string despite only being able to field seven players.

The first quarter started slowly with the two teams exchanging baskets, but "Thunder" took control midway through the period thanks to some good full court pressing defence. This defence forced a number of Nova turn-overs with "Thunder" capitalizing with breakaway scores which gave them an 18-9 lead. The Notts boys were playing some good defence themselves denying "Thunder" scoring opportunities close to basket but thanks to some good perimeter shooting from Rhys Hill "Thunder" were able to open up a 25-13 lead after the first period of play.

"Thunder" took complete control of the second quarter to extend their lead further storming into 14-2 run to lead 15-39. Once again, Rhys Hill proved to have a hot hand scoring nine points in the period to increase his personal tally to 18. To finish the quarter Nova was able to produce a small run of their own; predominantly through Thunder's error of failing to defend the pick and roll, but despite this "Thunder" had built a healthy 44-22 point lead by half time.

The third quarter was slow and signs of fatigue were evident. Coach Rob Crump needed to rotate his line up frequently and he also employed a zone defence to give his players a little breather. "Thunder" were able to break off their zone to score in transition and they were able to win the period 14-9 to extend their lead to 58-31.

For the final period of play "Thunder" shocked their opponents by employing a full court match up zone defense to put pressure on Nova's ball handlers. This tactic proved to be very effective forcing a number of turnovers and low percentage shots from Nova. This enabled "Thunder" to score at will to take the biggest lead of the game at 74-40 with rookie point guard David Nieva chipping in with nine points. Nova battled to the end of the game but "Thunder" had no problems in closing out the game at 80-50.

The "Thunder" scoring was by Hill with 22 points while brothers Carlo and David Nieva scored 15 points each. Coach Crump was very happy with his team's performance showing a strong team display when signs of fatigue and tiredness were evident. The Cadet Men now have two weeks off before facing a tough road trip to Coventry "Trojans" who will be looking for revenge after losing to "Thunder" by eight points, earlier in the season.

### **The Northants versus Birmingham battle ends at 'two apiece'.**

The vagaries of the England Basketball computer meant that teams from four age groups from the Northants and City of Birmingham clubs met last Saturday. When the dust settled honours were equal with both clubs winning two games.

### **Under 15 Boys go down to C.O.B.**

#### **Under 15 Boys Midlands Conference**

**Northants "Thunder"                      47 – 78                      City of Birmingham**

The Northants under 15 boys took on City of Birmingham at the Basketball Centre last Saturday and ended up on the wrong end of a 47-78 scoreline but unlike the previous week could take some pride from their performance against one of the leading teams in the Midland Conference.

C.O.B. employed a 3-2 match up zone for the majority of the game and this meant that the threat of the "Thunder" big players was virtually nullified and in the whole game these four players were able to score just 16 points between them. This mean that the Northants boys were forced to resort to shooting from the deep perimeter and their shooting just wasn't good enough. When shots missed the big C.O.B. team were

able to 'gobble up' rebounds and launch numerous fast breaks. This allied to some excellent shooting from Coles and Rice gave the visitors threats which "Thunder" just couldn't contain.

Birmingham took the first period 19-10 and the "Thunder" cause wasn't helped when Jacob Round was floored by a dead leg. The game official adjudged that there had been contact but no foul had been committed but the injury kept Round out of the remainder of the game.

Trailing 41-21 at half time "Thunder" continued to struggle against the Birmingham zone in the third quarter but thanks to some tenacious defence they only lost the period 14-12. In the final period of play "Thunder" were rocked by 13-zero and 8-zero C.O.B. runs but when the visitors switched to a man-to-man defence "Thunder" outscored them 8-zero to restore a little pride.

In the 31 point defeat no "Thunder" player was able to score in double figures but Coach John Collins was pleased that eight of his players contributed to the team's 47 point total.

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

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

<b>Northants "Thunder"</b>	<b>72 – 55</b>	<b>City of Birmingham</b>
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A 41 point haul from Jacob Round helped the Northants Under 14 boys to victory over an athletic City of Birmingham team in a game of fluctuating fortunes and runs. The first quarter saw the two teams exchange scores before a "Thunder" run midway through the period gave them the edge which they held onto until the end of the quarter.

The "Thunder" lead was extended to 16 points early in the second quarter but then "Thunder" allowed C.O.B. to embark on a 12-zero run which closed the scores to 37-33 in favour of "Thunder" at half time. Any thoughts that the Birmingham revival would continue in the third quarter were quickly dispelled as the Northants boys mounted a 14-4 Round-led charge at the start of the period.

Holding a 72-55 lead going into the last ten minutes of play "Thunder" once again 'went to sleep' managing just six points in the period while their opponents scored 10. In addition to Round, Ed Taylin scored 11 points and Tyler Mutemasango 8.

### **Under 14 Girls to strong for C.O.B.**

#### **Under 14 Girls Midlands South Conference**

<b>City of Birmingham</b>	<b>22 – 64</b>	<b>Northants "Lightning"</b>
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When these two teams met in the first game of the season "Lightning" triumphed by 30 points. On Saturday they extended this margin to 40 plus points showing they had moved forward further than their Birmingham opponents. Stand in Coach Karen Goodrich insisted that her team opened the game with aggressive defence and this proved to be successful as "Lightning" jumped out to a 10-zero lead. This was followed by an 11-zero run to give the Northants girls a 22-6 lead at the end of the first quarter.

The danger of relaxing was shown in the second period of play which "Lightning" just edged 9-6 but it was business as usual after the half time break. "Lightning" dominated the second half to the tune of 33-10 the highlight being a Georgia Collins three-pointer at the end of the game.

In the comfortable win Lucy Amena had an outstanding game recording a double-double of 19 points and 12 rebounds. Excellent support came from Holly Winterburn with 19 points Georgia Collins with 12 and Bahira Barakat with 8.

## **Under 13 Boys just edged out by C.O.B.**

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

**City of Birmingham**

**53 - 50**

**Northants "Thunder"**

When these teams met earlier in the season, it was a very close, exiting game and so it proved again last Saturday. Birmingham had pipped "Thunder" at the Northants Basketball Centre at the start of the season so the plan was to turn the result around when making the short trip to Birmingham. "Thunder" however, paid a heavy price for not focusing properly during the warm up. Both teams struggled to get the ball through the hoop in the early minutes, but Birmingham then lit up and went on a 16-2 run, to finish the first quarter 22-8 ahead.

As the game progressed, "Thunder's" intensity and confidence grew, but they had left themselves a mountain to climb. With Ed Wallhead leading the charge in the second quarter, Thunder went on a run of their own putting 13 points on the board whilst at the other end of the floor, good help defence limited Birmingham to just 2 points. By the time the buzzer went for half-time, "Thunder" had reduced the gap to just six points and only trailed 28-34.

In the third quarter, the teams traded baskets and the strength in depth of both teams was demonstrated as five players contributed to Birmingham's 14 points while six players added 13 points to Thunder's total. With the score standing at 48-41 in Birmingham's favour going into the last period and "Thunder" needed to 'up' their game once again. They tightened up their defence and cleaned up on their boards which restricted the hosts to just five more points. In theory, this should have been enough, but "Thunder" were guilty of over-dribbling, as they had been throughout the game, and this resulted in some unwanted turnovers. Up court defence did lead to a couple of crucial scores in "Thunder's" favour, and with 24 seconds left, they finally drew level. An upset was on the cards and the large crowd that had gathered was treated to a very exciting finish.

The coaches traded tactical timeouts and, having progressed the ball down court using one of the timeouts, a planned play from Birmingham gave them the lead again. With time running out and a couple of calls going against them, "Thunder" were forced to commit fouls to stop the clock. Unfortunately, it was Birmingham's star player who was sent to the line, but he only managed one of his two free throws. However, the remaining two seconds didn't give Thunder enough time to get the ball down court for a 3-point attempt and Birmingham held on for a 53-50 win.

Once again, Ed Wallhead was Thunder's top scorer with 24 points while Gio Prati battled hard for his 8 points. Coach Round was disappointed with the team's slow start, but encouraged by the improving level of intensity and offensive movement.

## **Northants win County CVL**

### **Northants Central Venue League**

A mixed team from the Northants Basketball Club played in the County Central Venue League last Saturday and came out on top of the pile. Northants opened up with a win against NEBC "Titans" thanks to the rebounding power of Solomon Day-Adley. This was followed up by a close loss to Wellingborough "Phoenix" down to a failure of the team to convert at the end of fast breaks.

In the second game against "Titans", Northants found themselves trailing once again but an increase in defensive intensity led by Esther Alake, Demola Yussuf and Ellie McHarg, saw the team home. In the final game against "Phoenix" the Northants team were able to avenge their earlier defeat with an 19-10 win which gave them the best record on the day.

## THIS WEEKEND'S ACTION

### Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> January

**9-30am to 11am**

**10am to 11am**

**11-30am**

**1-30pm**

Under 12 Practice

Junior "Ballers"

Junior Women versus Buck "Hornets"

Under 14 Girls versus Herts "Warriors"

Under 15 Boys versus Derby "Trailblazers"

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

Spectators are welcome and admission is FREE

Under 13 Boys travel to Coventry "Tornadoes"

Cadette Women travel to Bristol "

Junior Men travel to Sheffield "Saints"

Senior Men travel to Nottingham "Hoods"

### Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> January

Under 14 Boys travel to Leicester "Heat"

Under 15 Boys travel to City of Birmingham

Junior Women travel to Gloster "Jets"