

NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB

PRESS RELEASE

Third period slump is fatal for “Thunder”

Senior Men’s Division Three (South Conference)

Middlesex L.T.B.C. 90 – 100 Northants “Thunder”

The Northants senior men slipped to a seventh consecutive defeat after losing to LTBC in a high scoring game last Sunday. The losing streak stretches back to before Christmas and has seen Thunder slip to 8th in the Division 3 South Conference table. The team faces bottom of the table Oxford City Hoops on Saturday with a win an absolute priority if they are to get back into contention for an end of season Play Off place.

Thunder made the very best of starts against LTBC leading 24-16 after the first period of play. The home side rallied in the second quarter which they won 27-24 but Thunder still held a 48-43 advantage at half time.

The third quarter was a nightmare for the visitors with LTBC scoring a match winning 26 points whilst restricting Thunder to just nine. The Northants team’s defence just fell apart during this ten minute spell with little ‘Help’ defence while on offence they were guilty of poor shot selection.

At 57-69 down going into the last period Thunder had the proverbial mountain to climb. They did edge the quarter 33-31 but never really looked like closing the gap as they slipped to a ten point defeat.

In the disappointing loss Danny Barrett and Dan Turiccki both scored over twenty points netting 29 and 27 respectively while Jonny Yates contributed 17.

Lightning beaten by ‘buzzer beater’

Women’s Division Two (North Conference)

Northants “Lightning” 53 – 54 Mansfield “Giants”

When Esme Kinghorn converted two free throws to give her team a 53-51 lead with 17 seconds of the game remaining it looked as if the Northants senior women had eked out a win after a distinctly lack-lustre performance. Following Kinghorn’s free throws Lightning successfully used their zone press to delay Giants as they progressed the ball up court then they dropped into their 3-2 zone. Under pressure Giants passed the ball to the deep corner where their number 11 Bridge launched a three-pointer. Previously Bridge had failed to score except for three free throws but to Lightning’s horror this shot caught nothing but net and left Lightning with no time to mount another attack.

The Northants team had recovered from a poor start to the game which saw them trail 11-13 after the first period of play. They took the second quarter 20-13 to lead 31-26 at half time and were confident of extending that lead in the third quarter. To their credit Giants had prepared well and were able to advance the ball successfully through the Lightning press so the home team switched to a man to man defence. This successfully restricted Mansfield to just 13 third quarter points but they could manage just 9 themselves as the visitors reduced the deficit to one point at 40-39 going into the final stanza.

Giants had sat in a zone defence for the whole game and they continued to adopt this tactic as Lightning struggled to find any kind of shooting form. What was more disappointing was Lightning’s failure to get into their running game which had been so successful when the two teams had met a couple of weeks ago. In the last four minutes of the game Lightning failed to score a single field goal relying on five points from the charity stripe allowing Giants to win the game with the buzzer beater.

Analysis of the defeat was pretty easy with Lightning scoring 20 times from 72 attempts a success rate of less than 28% with many of the misses coming from very close range. The Lightning scoring was led by Nael Cali with 20 points, Stephanie Ogden scored 14 points before fouling out and eight other Lightning players scored but not one of them could reach double figures.

Blank weekend for Junior Men

The Northants junior men faced two games over the weekend against teams at the top of Midland Conference table. For various reasons they had to travel short-handed to both fixtures and ended up suffering a brace of heavy defeats.

Junior Men's Midland Conference

Loughborough "Riders" 107 - 46 Northants "Thunder"

Thunder had lost heavily to Riders earlier in the season and they knew they were going to be in for another difficult challenge with only six players available for the fixture.

Thunder started the game in high spirits with some impressive scoring from George Paul and Carlo Nieva. Midway through the quarter a strong run by the Riders gave them the lead and by the end of the period they had moved ahead 29-17. Thunder were seriously challenged by Riders big man Henri Langton who dominated the offensive rebounds and displayed some strong insider scoring. Thunder lost the quarter by four points to trail 37-54 at the half.

Coach Rob Crump encouraged his team to execute their press break efficiently in order to advance the ball safely up the floor but on a number of occasions they failed to do this. Riders dominated the third quarter as Thunder's fatigue began to show. Their shooting deteriorated and with it their confidence and they could manage only five points in the quarter. In contrast Riders executed fast break after fast break, scoring numerous lay ups and nailing consecutive three-pointers as they extended their lead to 77-42 by the end of the quarter.

With the game out of reach, Thunder only had pride to play for in fourth quarter, but again they were guilty of shooting poorly. Riders again scored 30 points in the quarter in comparison to Thunder's four as the home side ran out winners by 107 points to 46 to retain their undefeated record.

In the heavy defeat Thunder's scoring was led by Carlo Nieva and George Paul who both scored 14 points.

Notts Nova 89 - 39 Northants "Thunder"

Twenty-four hours after their heavy defeat at the hands of Loughborough Riders, Thunder were back in action with an away game against Notts Nova. Thunder were boosted by the addition of Brendan Ross to add to their still incomplete roster.

From the opening tip, Thunder were on the back foot and could not cope with the strong defensive pressure and hustle from Nova. Notts Nova surged into 18-3 run during which time Thunder totally failed to execute their offences. They were also guilty of repeatedly turning the ball over as they found themselves trailing 28-8 at the end of the first quarter.

In that first period Thunder had been guilty of trying to dribble through Nova's press, leading to turn overs and this pattern continued during the second quarter. Despite their best efforts and a small scoring surge from Carlo Nieva towards the end of the quarter Thunder lost the quarter 23-10 to find themselves trailing 51-18 at half time.

Thunder needed to respond in order to try to make a game of the second half, and a combination of scores from Josh Round, Ollie Thomas and Carlo Nieva did reduce the lead to 56-26 early in the quarter. With fatigue setting in Thunder made a number of poor decisions and this combined with poor defensive rebounding allowed Nova to seize the initiative with a 13-zero run to extend their lead to 70-28.

The Thunder players never gave up but despite their best efforts they would never recover; Nova running out conclusive winners by 89 points to 39. For Thunder Ollie Thomas scored 10 points with support coming from Josh Round and Carlo Nieva who scored 9 points a piece.

Coach Crump commented *"This has been a frustrating weekend. Having to play the top two teams in the conference back to back away from home along with less than a full roster was not what I had planned. I can't fault the players' efforts; however we were simply out hustled, out rebounded and out worked, whilst also failing to take care of the ball."*

"The players and myself must learn from this experience and understand good teams will punish you if you fail to meet their intensity. This is something we must look to develop if the players wish to progress."

Superb win for Junior Women ‘early birds’.

Junior Women’s Midlands South-West Conference Reading “Rockets” 61 – 64 Northants “Lightning”

Every coach is looking for the magic formula that makes their team play to their full potential. As far as the junior women are concerned it may be an early start to the day because this is the second time the team has left early in the morning and then come up with a win against good opposition.

Lightning started the game full of confidence with almost every shot dropping for the team. More importantly they played some fantastic defence which enabled them to take a 17-10 lead after the first period of play.

It was all change in the second quarter with the Reading girls showing a great deal of determination and resolution. Lightning seemed to have lost the killer instinct and on many occasions over-elaborated and made an extra pass rather than just converting on the fast break. Rockets took the quarter 19-16 to trail 29-33 at half time and the Lightning players knew they had a game on their hands.

Coach Stacey Shakespeare recognised that hard-nosed defence was going to be the key factor in the second half and in the third quarter they restricted their opponents to just 17 points but were only able to score 12 themselves. This meant that Reading would go into the final ten minutes of play with a single point lead at 46-45.

Lightning knew they would need to get back to their best offensive form if they were to win the game and this was done through Caitlin Stewart, Ruchae Walton along with Stephanie Ogden. Despite the best efforts of the Rockets’ players they were restricted to 15 points while Lightning managed 19 to take a hard fought 64 points to 61 win.

This was a tremendous team performance led by 31 points from Stephanie Ogden a total that included four three pointers. Good support came from Ruchae Walton and Lauren Brookes who hit 11 and 10 points respectively while Lauren Milne had 12 rebounds to go with her seven points.

Lightning stay in 3rd place in the Conference table. They have only lost one game but have played less games than other teams.

Cadet’s win in overtime against unbeaten “Trailblazers”

Under 16 Boys Midland Conference Derby “Trailblazers” (67 – 67) Northants “Thunder” 71 –74

A detailed account of the dramatic closing stages of this cadet men’s game would literally take pages. In brief the Thunder ‘biggs’ were guilty on two occasions, of donating the ball to Trailblazers’ players after pulling down defensive rebounds. Despite this they were still leading 67-65 after a successful David Nieva free throw. Derby closed the gap to a single point from the free throw line then Thunder took an unnecessary shot which missed. In the ensuing mayhem Thunder swing man Jaz Campbell was called for his second ‘unsportsmanlike’ foul and had to leave the floor. Derby hit one of the ensuing free throws to tie up the score and still had possession of the basketball but a crucial block from Rob Clarke prevented a score and the game went into overtime.

The extra five minutes was totally dominated by Thunder guard Jacob Round who had already contributed 37 points to his team’s total. During overtime Round scored six crucial points and pulled off a monster block to prevent a Derby fast break score.

In front of a raucous sometimes quite abusive crowd, Derby made the very best of starts jumping out to a 13-zero lead thanks to some excellent shooting from Trimmer. Derby had obviously done their homework and were cruising through Thunder’s usually successful zone press defence. Thanks to the efforts of Round and a change of defence Thunder battled back to close the gap to 11-16 at the end of the period.

The second quarter saw Thunder successfully get into their running game with Ayo Oluyede and Round scoring freely. Thunder took the quarter 23-12 thanks to two 9-zero surges and they went to the locker room feeling pleased to hold a 34-28 lead.

The two teams exchanged baskets throughout the third quarter with Thunder once again relying heavily on Round while for Derby their centre Singleton was causing the Northants boys all sorts of problems close to basket. Derby edged that third period 16-15 to narrow the gap to 44-45, and as the crowd got more and more excited a close finish was clearly on the cards.

Derby made an excellent start to the final quarter with a 10-3 charge to take the lead at 54-52. The two teams exchanged basket before clutch three pointers from Hayden Sayers and David Nieva handed the initiative back to Thunder. The visitors were boosted when Singleton fouled out of the game trying to stop Thunder's exchange offence and so came that dramatic final minute and overtime.

Despite the loss Derby stay top of the Conference table on the basis of beating Thunder by more than three in the early season game which also went to overtime. Nevertheless the Thunder players could be delighted with their performance which saw Jacob Round pour in 43 personal points. Good support came from Nieva and Oluyede with 13 and 8 points respectively while the rebounding of Julian Abeam and Rob Clarke was crucial.

During the warm up Thunder's centre, Solomon Day-Adley picked up what appeared to be a serious knee injury and was rushed home to hospital. Everyone associated with the cadet boy's team wishes Sol a speedy recovery.

Big win for rampant Under 14 Boys

Under 14 Boys Midlands Conference

Northants "Thunder" 114 - 39 Shropshire "Warriors"

Thunder were in impressive form when they played host to Shropshire Warriors last Saturday. The pre-game talk focused on the need to tighten up the defence and fast break at every opportunity, and the players responded in exactly the right way by jumping out to a 20-3 lead, which became 32-9 by the end of the first quarter. By half-time, Thunder had almost doubled their points and, although Warriors had a slightly better quarter, the 63-25 mid-game score-line highlighted the gulf between the two teams.

In the second half, Josh Lloyd was at his free-flowing best and was regularly feeding the ball up court at the start of a break, or driving strong for the score himself off a slick steal. As the game progressed, he proved himself to be unstoppable as he powered his way to a season-high 42 points. It wasn't just Lloyd who impressed as Noah Wilborn was often first up the floor and his decision making was impeccable as he either finished himself on his was to his 15 points, or fed the ball to the trailing Ed Wallhead or Chris Amankonah who scored 30 and 14 respectively. When not finishing off the breaks, Wallhead and Amankonah were cleaning up under the defensive boards or scoring from 'fake and go'.

Thunder's defence remained tight throughout the second half and limited Warriors to just 7 points in each quarter and the combination of fast-breaks and well executed set plays added 51 points to Thunder's total. To Warriors credit, they continued to battle right to the end of the game and their supporters never stopped offering encouragement. The 114-39 final score was good news in terms of Thunder's point's difference, which has now become relevant following Basketball England's decision to use this as one of the factors to determine play-off places.

Next week, the Northants boys will face a much tougher test as they travel away to take on the league leaders, Leicester Warriors, but they can go into that game with considerable confidence after the performance against Shropshire.

Under 14 Girls see off local rivals

Under 14 Girls Midlands Conference

Northants "Lightning" 56 - 26 NEBC "Titans"

Another clash between teams from the county's two national league clubs drew a good crowd to the Northants Basketball Centre last Saturday. Titans had lost by 20 points in the per-Christmas fixture so were full of optimism of reversing the result. Their optimism was well founded when they took an 8-7 lead after the first period of play.

During that first ten minutes both teams had found scoring difficult but it was a different Lightning team that took to the floor for the second quarter. Led by Holly Winterburn they poured in 17 points while some excellent defence limited Titans to just a single free throw.

Leading 24-9 at half time Coach Stacey Shakespeare stressed to her team, the need to maintain their efforts in the third quarter. Shakespeare's players responded superbly winning the third quarter 21-5 to take an unassailable 45-14 lead.

Titans kept playing to the end showing admirable enthusiasm and they were rewarded by winning the final period of play 12-11 but it was a lot too little a lot too late as Lightning cruised to a 56-26 win so maintaining their unbeaten record.

In the 30 point win, Winterburn top scored with 25 points with good support coming from Lucy Amena and Hannah Davy who both scored nine points.

No hat trick of wins for Under 13 Boys

Under 13 Boys Midlands Conference

Northants "Thunder" 39 - 110 Derby "Trailblazers"

After picking up back to back wins since Christmas the Northants under 13 boys were very much brought back down to earth by a tall and talented Derby Trailblazers team. Without their tallest player Oliver Dominique, Thunder had a serious standing height disadvantage while the Trailblazer's guards caused them problems throughout the game.

Thunder gave of their very best but they were heavily outscored in all four periods of play. One of their biggest problems was the number of times they gave the ball away which gave Derby easy scores. They also struggled to reclaim the ball from missed Derby shots the visitors scoring no less than 30 of their points from 'put backs'.

In the heavy defeat Jude Carmichael showed some nice skills in scoring 13 points; Ben Nailer matched a gutsy defensive performance which saw him matched up against Derby's six feet plus centre, with 12 points while Connor White scored eight points

THIS WEEKEND'S ACTIVITIES

Saturday 24th January

9.30am-11am

Ballers Academy Session

10am-11am

Junior Ballers Session

11.30am

Under 15 Boys versus North Herts "Knights"
Cadet Boys versus Notts Nova II.

1.30pm

Cadette Girls versus Exeter

3.30pm

Senior Men versus Oxford

These games will take place at the Northants Centre for Basketball which is based at Northampton School for Girls in Spinney Hill Road

Spectators are welcome and admission is FREE

Under 13 Boys travel to Mansfield "Giants"

Under 14 Boys travel to Leicester "Warriors"

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