

NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB

MEDIA RELEASE

Following the previous weekend's record of a perfect eight played, eight won; nine teams from the Northants Basketball Club played last weekend and eight of them recorded victories. This gives a record over two weekends of 17 games played and sixteen won. Again, a massive amount of credit is due to the hard work of the players and coaches involved.

“Thunder” stay top after long journey north

Men's Division Three North Conference

Tees Valley “Mohawks” II

85 – 96

Northants “Thunder”

After a tortuous 200 plus miles journey to the north-east it was no surprise that initially the Northants senior men looked a little lethargic against the “Mohawks” second string. Throughout the quarter it was obvious that the home side were definitely 'up for the challenge', with “Mohawks” out-battling the “Thunder” on the ‘boards’ to the tune of 20 to 8. In ten minutes of scrappy basketball, neither team showed any real shooting rhythm, and the honours were shared at 17 points each with all 17 of the “Mohawks” points coming from their guards Donaldson and Moore.

Following the break, the “Thunder” players got together and showed a phenomenal shooting display to score five three pointers to open up a 36-25 lead with four minutes remaining. Jason Tucker was scoring at will from the perimeter for “Thunder”, and this allowed the team's 'biggs' Holt, Higgins and Francis space to dominate the paint. The score was kept respectable, however, as Donaldson and Moore continued to dominate the “Mohawks” scoring combining for 32 of their team's 36 half time points at which time “Thunder” held a slim 48-36 lead.

With four minutes to go in the third quarter, Jonny Yates and Tucker had hit another four shots from behind the arc to open up an impressive 22 point lead at 68-46. To their credit the home team refused to give in, and “Mohawks” streak shooter, Thompson started to find his range off ‘pick-and-pop’ moves, connecting with 12 points. “Thunder” went scoreless for the final two minutes of the period with fatigue leading to turnovers, and Tees Valley pulled the score back to 61-72.

The emphasis for the final period of play was simple; contain the threat of “Mohawks” three best players. With this in mind “Thunder” guard Asher Kirby came into his own, locking up and frustrating the “Mohawks” offence on a number of occasions. Whilst Kirby completed his assignment with authority, the Northants side made the ball do the work, and five of the “Thunder” team contributed to the scoring. “Mohawks” responded with a press defence in an attempt to force “Thunder” into making mistakes, but the Northants players made some great decisions in the front court to get either high percentage lay-ups, or shots and offensive rebounds on the shot clock buzzer. With just 12 seconds to go, “Thunder” inbounded the ball and dribbled out the game to take the all important win with over 200 miles to think about it on the way back to Northampton.

In the 11 point win Tucker led the “Thunder” scoring with 36 points which included eight three-pointers, he also pulled down 8 rebounds. Excellent support came from Leome Francis, and Leon Henry who scored 19 and 14 points respectively while Jonny Yates and Jacob Holt both contributed 10 points. Coaches Rob Eddon and Grahame Yates were quick to emphasize that this was a true team win and paid tribute to the rebounding of Francis, Holt and Richard Higgins who hauled down 30 rebounds between them; and the defensive effort of Kirby.

“Thunder”'s joy was increased when they discovered that Birmingham “Mets” one of their main rivals in the North Conference, had been beaten. Thunder” have been beaten on just three occasions the same as Rossendale “Raptors” but they have beaten the northern team on two occasions

Junior Men win without breaking sweat

Junior Men's Premier Division North

Northants "Thunder" 20 – 0 Leeds "Carnegie"

After their 'road' win against Cheshire "Panthers" the previous weekend the Northants junior men were looking forward to picking up back-to-back wins when they faced Leeds "Carnegie". They duly picked up the win but it became by default with the Leeds team having transport problem.

Junior Women top the ton in beating Sporting Albion

Junior Women's Midlands Conference

Northants "Lightning" 102 – 23 Sporting "Albion"

The Northants junior women picked up a win against Sporting Albion in a game which became totally one sided. Trailing 19-44 at half time the West Midlands team seemed to lose interest in the third and fourth quarters during which time they managed just 4 points. "Albion" also finished the game with the dubious statistic of having committed more fouls than they scored points and some of their fouls were indeed over physical.

As far as "Lightning" were concerned it was a matter of seeing how many ways they could find to score and they did just this from fast breaks, close to the basket moves and perimeter shots. In fact the only area where "Albion" were slightly competitive was in the rebounding department. Coach Stacey Shakespeare was able to give all her players ample court time and run a number of different defences, the team also welcomed back to their ranks Hannah Nolan after injury.

In the scoring bonanza, Stephanie Ogden and Sarah Round led the "Lightning" scoring with 22 and 20 points respectively. Lauren Brookes contributed 19 points and Rio Blessyn 12 as all nine "Lightning" players contributed to the 102 point total

Cadet Boys tame "Wolves"

Under 16 Boys Midlands Conference

Northants "Thunder" 78 – 42 Worcester "Wolves"

The Northants Cadet Men faced Worcester "Wolves" at the Basketball Centre last Saturday looking to maintain their undefeated record in the Midlands Conference and take another decisive step towards the Conference title.

The first quarter got off to a slow start as "Thunder" took an 8-3 lead. "Wolves" found a lot of confidence and with "Thunder" relaxing their efforts, the visitors were able to take a 10-8 lead. Despite a number of turn-overs "Thunder" were able to regain the lead but were then guilty of missing numerous lay ups but thanks to eight points from Ollie Thomas led 19-16 at the end of the first period of play.

The second quarter continued in similar pattern to the first as "Thunder" missed uncontested lay ups but then a three pointer from Carlo Nieva and eight consecutive points from Jacob Round helped the team to break away from "Wolves" and by half time they had extended their lead to 40-27.

Coach Rob Crump asked his players to concentrate on boxing out in order to win the 'battle of the boards' against the big Worcester team. After a hesitant start which saw "Wolves" score from successive put backs "Thunder" were suddenly sparked into life by their point guard Thomas who scored another eight personal points. Additional scores from Rhys Hill and Round saw "Thunder" mount a 16-zero run and win the quarter 21-7 to extend their lead to 61-34.

With "Thunder" holding a comfortable lead, Coach Crump was able to rotate his bench and with Jacob Killeya neutralising the threat of Worcester's 6 feet 8 inch centre the Northants boys were able to see the game out to a comfortable 36 point win. The highlight of the quarter, saw a break away lay up for TJ Nymatore despite being fouled in the process.

“Thunder’s” scoring was led by Jacob Round with 23 points, with excellent support coming from Ollie Thomas who scored 20 points.

Cadette Women ‘down’ “Eagles”

Under 16 Girls Midlands South – West Conference **Exeter “Eagles” 48 – 101 Northants “Lightning”**

Like the senior men the Northants under 16 girls also faced a long journey for their Saturday game but they travelled south-west to Exeter to take on “Eagles”. After the long journey Coach Karen Goodrich was quick to emphasise to her players the need for a good start to the contest. Her players had obviously listened and a massive defensive effort limited “Eagles” to just four first quarter points while pouring in 23 themselves.

“Lightning” went slightly off the boil in the second period which they edged 22-15 to open up a 45-19 half time lead. The third quarter was like a shoot out in a ‘Western’, with the home side scoring 25 points which was topped by “Lightning’s” 30. Goodrich had had enough of this nonsense and she demanded more defensive discipline to end the game. Her players responded superbly with “Eagles” restricted to just eight points while at the offensive end Harri Owens and Ruchae Walton were dominant through the middle of the court and Charlotte Berridge was her usual consistent self from the perimeter.

In the 53 points win Berridge and Walton top scored for “Lightning” with 27 and 24 points respectively while Walton completed a double-double with 13 rebounds. Owens was another “Lightning” player to record double figures in two categories with 14 points and 10 rebounds. Caitlin Stewart put in a major shift with 16 points, and 8 rebounds, she also dished out 7 assists and stole the ball on five occasions.

Coach Goodrich was delighted about the win after such a long journey and was delighted that eight of her nine players had contributed to the final points total, all this a week before the crucial top of the table clash against Nottingham “Wildcats” this Saturday.

Defensive effort sees Under 15 Boys home against “Warriors”

Under 15 Boys Midlands Conference **Shropshire “Warriors” 36 - 53 Northants “Thunder”**

Despite being without a number of key players the Northants under 15 boys picked up their second successive away win with an impressive victory over Shropshire Warriors”. The win was very firmly based on a supreme defensive effort which restricted “Warriors” to single figure scoring in all four periods of play. Coach John Collins had identified the scoring threat of two Shropshire players so employed man-to-man, match up zone and combination defences to counter their threat.

At the start of the game “Thunder’s” defensive intensity shocked “Warriors” and David Nieva was able to make three consecutive steals to feed Julain Abeam for lay up scores and a 17-9 lead at the end of the first quarter. “Thunder” were being frustrated by the “Warriors” zone defence and well selected perimeter shots just failed to drop. Despite this the Northants boys were able to extend their lead to 23-13 but were then hit by a 6-2 “Warriors” run which reduced their lead to 25-19 at half time.

The half time message was simple, keep taking good shots and they will eventually drop and a long ‘two’ from Hayden Sayers and a short range jumper from Abeam saw “Thunder” start the third quarter with an 8-zero run. “Warriors” responded as a fatigued David Nieva began to make uncharacteristic mistakes but some inspired play from Ayo Oluyede got “Thunder” back on track. The highlight of the quarter was a huge ‘block’ by Rob Clarke and by the end of the period their lead had been extended to 41-27.

The expected press defence came from “Warriors” in the final stanza but Nieva, Sayers and Jaz Campbell negotiated the pressure without difficulty launching Oluyede on numerous ‘rim running’ breaks. Six missed free throws prevented “Thunder” from closing the game out earlier but the final result was never in doubt as they ran out winners by 53 points to 36.

In the 17 point win Ayo Oluyede and Julian Abeam top scored for “Thunder” with 21 and 20 points respectively. No other players reached double figures but Coach Collins was full of praise for the ball carrying skills of Nieva and the defensive hustle of Sayers and Campbell while Clarke and Solomon Day-Adley rebounded solidly.

Under 14 Boys see off “Trailblazers”

Under 14 Boys Midlands Conference

Derby “Trailblazers” 59 - 102 Northants “Thunder”

The hope of an end of season place is still alive for the Northants under 14 boys after this win over “Trailblazers” but their final destiny is in the hands of Leicester “Warriors” with “Thunder” keeping fingers and toes crossed that the East Midlands team beats Sheffield “Saints this coming weekend.

“Thunder” made a very lethargic start to the game against Derby last Sunday and by the end of the first quarter were trailing 15-16. The Northants boys raised their efforts in the second period of play which they took 37-20 to open up a 52-36 half tie lead.

Coaches Jonny and Grahame Yates urged their charges to seize the opportunity in the third quarter and the team responded superbly restricting “Trailblazers” to just 9 points while pouring in 30 themselves. At 82-45 the game was as good as over and there was no way back for the home team as “Thunder” topped the ton to close out the 102-59 win.

Not for the first time this season, Jacob Round was the star of the points scoring show with 56 points while the Eds Wallhead and Taylan, and Laurence Williams all made useful contributions but the win had been based on an excellent all-round team performance.

“Swifts” too strong for Under 14 Girls

Under 14 Girls Midlands South Conference

Northants “Lightning” 36 – 83 Southend “Swifts”

The talented Southend “Swifts” team arrived at the Basketball Centre last Saturday boasting an undefeated 13 game record and they duly picked up win number 14 against a game “Lightning” team. The Northants girls had picked up a couple of wins in recent games, but “Swifts” posed a totally different challenge. Point guard Holly Winterburn was put under constant and intense pressure and too often her team mates isolated her giving her no option but to dribble.

Despite these problems “Lightning” were competitive but found themselves trailing 12-22 at the end of the first quarter. “Swifts” continued to dominate proceedings in the second period of play which they took 19-12 to extend their lead to 41-24 but there had been plenty for the “Lightning” players to be proud of.

In the final two periods of play “Swifts” showed their class by restricting the Northants girls to just 12 points while pouring in 29 themselves to cruise to a comfortable 47 point win. “Lightning” are now capable of beating the lower teams in the Conference but will need to work hard to get the better of the top four teams.

Against “Swifts”, captain Lucy Amena battled hard for her 10 points while Holly Winterburn scored 9 points. These two players plus Precious Ogaji rebounded well while Bahira Barakat showed herself able to handle to defensive pressure.

Brace of wins for Under 13 Boys

The Northants “Thunder” Under 13 boys had a busy weekend with a home game on Saturday against Leicester Sparks followed by a game on Sunday against local rivals Northamptonshire Titans. Wins on both days saw the team rise to 6th in the Midlands Conference with a game against Mansfield “Giants” who are one place above “Thunder” in the league table coming up this weekend.

Under 13 Boys Midlands Conference

Northants “Thunder” 58 – 42 Leicester “Sparks”

The last time the two teams met, it was a reasonably close affair, but not so on this occasion. “Thunder” made a confident start with Ed Wallhead leading the charge and Tom Berry keeping Leicester’s talented guard Ethan Morrell, in check. After the first five minutes, Thunder had an 11-2 lead, but a 9-2 run in Leicester’s favour meant the score stood at 13-11 at the end of the quarter.

As the second period progressed, “Thunder” began to take control of the game. With Wallhead, Amankonah, Prati and Edwards dominating the defensive boards, the Northants boys were able to initiate a number of fast breaks. When this wasn’t an option, good ball and player movement resulted in easy scores.

At half-time, Thunder led 32-21 but during his team time talk Coach Round stressed that there was still work to do. His team responded by limiting Leicester to just 9 points in the third quarter whilst adding 14 to their own total. Although “Thunder” couldn’t add to their lead in the final period, the result was never in doubt and the Northants team recorded a satisfying 58-42 victory. The majority of the Northants players made it on to the scoresheet, but Ed Wallhead was the only player to reach double figures leading all-scorers with 31 points.

N.E.B.C. “Titans”

63 – 48

Northants “Thunder”

Despite a poor shooting performance and allowing Ed Wallhead to leave the game at the start of the fourth quarter to head up to Derby for the important U14’s game, “Thunder’s” 84-63 win against local rivals Northamptonshire “Titans” was a reasonably comfortable one. “Thunder” had established a 16-6 lead halfway through the first quarter, but to “Titans” credit they tried their hardest to fight back. A well-executed special play at the end of the period gave Thunder a 24-19 lead, but Coach Round message was ‘stay focused’.

Increasing the defensive intensity in the second quarter limited “Titans” to just 9 points and even though “Thunder’s” shooting percentage was relatively low (as it remained for the whole game), they added another 19 to their total and ended the half 41-28 ahead.

Lucy Amena netted three times at the beginning of the third quarter and by halfway through the period, Thunder had extended their lead to 20 points. This and the fact that Gio Prati was in foul trouble gave Coach Round an opportunity to give minutes to nine year old Isaac Round who had originally turned up to be the team’s mascot for the match, but was able to take the place of a late drop-out. “Titans” managed to win the third quarter, but by just a point.

To see the game out, “Thunder” turned on the defensive pressure once again and with Holly Winterburn in good form, the game ended 84-63 in Thunder’s favour. Despite leaving early, Ed Wallhead led the scoring with 32 points and he was very well supported by the two girls, Holly Winterburn and Lucy Amena who scored 15 and 10 respectively.

Coach Round was pleased that the team had managed to achieve its objective and win both games this weekend, but having missed far too many easy shots against “Titans”, shooting practice will be high on the agenda at the next training session.

THIS WEEKEND'S ACTION

Saturday 15^h February

9-30am to 11am

10am to 11am

11.30am

1.30pm

Under 12 Practice

Junior "Ballers"

Under 13 Boys versus Mansfield "Giants"

Under 14 Boys versus Notts Nova

Under 15 Boys versus Notts Nova

Under 16 Girls versus Nottingham "Wildcats"

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

The Senior Men's and Cadet Men's games against Birmingham "A's" have been postponed because "A's" Junior men are playing in the National Cup Final

Junior Women travel to Gloster "Jets"

Girls and Under 11 Central Venue League at Northampton School for Boys

Sunday 16th February

Junior Men travel to Manchester "Magic"