

NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB

PRESS RELEASE

“Thunder” go down again

Men’s Division Three North

Southwark “Pride” 98 - 90 Northants “Thunder”

When “Thunder” edged the second and third periods of play to take a 63-60 lead it looked as if they might be on course for a win against a team just above them in the Conference table. Then, not for the first time this season the game officials allowed the game to become overly physical and “Pride” strolled the fourth quarter 38–27 to record a 98-90 win on the back of a 41 point haul from Juozapaitis and 25 from Mitchell.

After a nightmare journey through north London “Thunder” not surprisingly made a poor start to the game and found themselves 24-14 down after the first quarter. It was testament to their fighting qualities that they were able to battle back but missing the services of Richard Higgins and with Jacob Holt suffering from a ‘dead leg’ they just couldn’t cope with the final quarter charge from “Pride”.

In the eight point defeat Adam Thomas enjoyed his best game of the season in scoring 21 points, good support coming from the Yates brothers Johnny and Matt with 13 and 12 points respectively.

This Saturday, “Thunder face another tough challenge when they entertain high flying Solent “Kestrels” who have lost just four games this campaign

Junior Men hold on to beat “Hoods”

Junior Men’s East Midlands Conference

Northants “Thunder” 59 – 54 Nottingham “Hoods”

The Northants junior men got back to winning ways with a 5 point triumph over Nottingham “Hoods” but they almost succeeded in snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. At half time they lead 39-19 with the visitors in disarray and debating almost every ‘call’ that went against them.

“Hoods” returned for the third quarter with a ‘soft’ 2-2-1 pres and “Thunder” obliged by trying to dribble their way through the defence. This resulted in a number of “Thunder” turn-overs. Had “Hoods” succeeded in converting from the steals they made “Thunder” would have been in big trouble but the Nottingham boys contrived to miss a number of easy scoring opportunities. Boosted by back to back scores from Ainsley Reynolds, “Thunder” were able to hold on to their lead going into the final period of play but their advantage had been reduced to 10 points.

In the third quarter “Thunder’s” zone defence had been pierced by three, three-pointers from “Hoods” so for the fourth quarter “Thunder” coach Darijus Maldutis switched his team to a man to man defence and this was to prove decisive. Despite only scoring 9 points themselves “Thunder” restricted “Hoods” to 14 to hold out for a 59 points to 54 win led by 20 points from Shaq Ntumba 16 of them scored in the first two periods of play. David Nieva supported well with 18 points, Jaz Campbell chipping in with 8 points.

Cadet Play Off hopes blown away by “Dynamite” but bounce back to beat Nova

Under 16 Boys East Midlands Conference

Northants “Thunder”

66 – 77

Leicester “Dynamite”

It looks as if the slim chances of the Northants under 16 boys reaching the end of season Play Offs have disappeared after they lost to a talented Leicester “Dynamite” team last Saturday. It is likely that they will be edged out by Nottingham “Hoods” who have lost just two games compared to “Thunder’s” three. The irony is that the Nottingham team claimed a win over “Dynamite” when the Leicester side were unable to raise a team because of injuries and illnesses.

On Saturday “Thunder” opened with a combination defence and a zone press and this proved to be catastrophic as “Dynamite’s” talented guard Ethan Morrell destroyed the press with some excellent passes to team mates for easy lay up scores. “Thunder” stayed competitive thanks to some excellent close to the basket work from Chris Amankonah and the perimeter shooting of Josh Lloyd but by the end of the first period of play “Dynamite” had opened up a 33-19 lead.

“Thunder” coach John Collins switched his team to a man to man defence in the second quarter and the dividends were immediate with “Dynamite” limited to just 9 points while “Thunder” managed 19 thanks to the efforts of Amankonah and Ed Wallhead.

Trailing 38-42 at half time “Thunder” were well in the game but needed a solid start to the second half but their offensive efforts were well restricted and a 13-6 run by the visitors allowed them to extend their lead to 11 points and advantage they were able to take into the final period of play.

For the final quarter Collins moved point guard Lloyd into a forward position with Amankonah taking over ball handling responsibilities. The effect was immediate with Lloyd scoring six rapid points from isolation plays and at 59-64 “Thunder” were back in the game. As the home side ‘upped’ their defensive intensity they were called for three critical fouls “Dynamite” converting four of the resulting five free throws. Try as they might “Thunder” couldn’t make up the deficit as “Dynamite” held on for a well deserved win in a game of high quality.

“Thunder” were left to contemplate on the fact that over the last three periods of play they had outscored their opponents 47-44 but that disastrous first quarter had cost them dear. They were also well aware that 64 of their 66 points had been scored by Amankonah a magnificent 30 point effort, Lloyd and Wallhead.

Notts Nova

34 – 97

Northants “Thunder”

After the disappointment of the previous days defeat fresh in their minds “Thunder” didn’t have very long to wait to put things right with a game against a struggling Notts Nova team the very next day.

Initially “Thunder” struggled against an unorthodox Nova team who used their tallest players to ball handle and after the first quarter “Thunder” only led 26-17. Defensive adjustments were made which restricted the home side to just 17 further points while “Thunder” poured in 61 to record a comfortable win with all eleven “Thunder” players enjoying ample court time.

In the 63 point victory, Ed Wallhead scored 35 points Chris Amankonah and Josh Lloyd supporting well with 20 and 15 points respectively. Coach John Collins was pleased with the contributions of Adam Lewandowski and Roman O’Hara who both recorded double figure scoring.

With just one game remaining “Thunder” can do little but win that game and then hope that Leicester “Warriors” defeat Nottingham “Hoods”

Northants Hoopsterz Central Venue League

An impressive 16 boys turned out for the latest Central Venue League tournament at Northampton School for Boys, the squad being divided into two teams.

**Northants “Thunder I” beat Duston ‘Hawks’
 beat Kettering “Phoenix I” and Kettering “Phoenix I
 lost to Market Harborough**

“Thunder I” benefitted from the experience of National League players Roman O’Hara and Marley Robotham in the wins over Duston “Hawks” and the two Kettering “Phoenix” teams while Tom Heron rebounded well beyond his size. Against Market Harborough the team was guilty of dribbling too much and forcing up shots eventually losing a close game.

**Northants “Thunder II” drew with Market Harborough
 beat Kettering “Phoenix I” and Kettering “Phoenix II”
 lost to Duston “Hawks”**

"Thunder II" opened with a tough game against Market Harborough. Despite Austin Evans being a perimeter threat the team were guilty of forcing drives to basket resulting in numerous turn-overs and easy scores for Harborough. Trailing at half time “Thunder II” improved their team play in the second half and combined with some tough defence managed to tie the scores up at 16 all at full time.

The team proceeded to beat both Kettering “Phoenix” teams with improved team play. James Reid was able to set up fast break scores for Luke Halls and Max Kerry in the final game but in between those two games, “Thunder II” had a nightmare 8 minute half against Duston “Hawks” caused again, by not passing the ball around enough and lazy rebounding. Despite improved rebounding and a big effort in the second half, it wasn't enough to win the game.

(Reports from Tom Heron and James Reid)

Under 14 Boys see off much improved C.O.B. II

Under 14 Boys East Midlands II Conference

Northants “Thunder” 74 – 55 City of Birmingham II

Northants “Thunder” under 14 boys played their final home game of the season against City of Birmingham II missing guards Henri Berry and Patrick Adedeji leaving them a light in the backcourt.

The game proved to be a scrappy encounter right from the start, with “Thunder” starting very lethargically scoring just on basket in the opening 4 minutes of play. A three pointer from Ashley Kitchen helped to install some life into “Thunder’s” offence sparking an 11-2 run to open up a 16-8 lead. “Thunder” then extended their lead by a further eight points thanks to an aggressive full court press to lead 24-10 at the end of the quarter.

The second quarter saw Jonathan Ntumba score 8 consecutive points displaying some strong drives to the basket and finishes on the fast break, but “Thunder’s” efforts were hindered when Alli Solazzo picked up his third foul leaving “Thunder” really short-handed in the back court. They found it very difficult to overcome C.O.B.’s press but scores from Kalonji Campbell and Ntumba helped them win the quarter 20-15 to extend their lead to 44-25.

Despite trailing by almost 20 points the visitors returned to the floor for the third quarter in a more energised mood and reduced the deficit to 13 points. Eight consecutive points from Cameron Leighton with some strong finishes around the basket help to install some confidence in “Thunder’s” offence and they were able to maintain their 19 point advantage going into the final quarter.

Needing a big performance in the final quarter to overturn the deficit C.O.B. continued to apply their press which had the appearance of an illegal zone press. The pressure did disrupt “Thunder” on offence forcing turnovers and denying them any momentum but despite an 8-zero run from the visitor’s midway through the fourth quarter they never looked as if they would seriously threaten Thunder’s lead and the Northants boys held on for a 19 point win.

“Thunder” were led in scoring by Jonathan Ntumba with 26 points well supported by Kalonji Campbell and Ashley Kitchen who scored 16 and 15 points respectively; nine of Kitchen’s points come from beyond the arc.

Coach Rob Crump commented “Today was a very scrappy game with C.O.B.’s press disrupting us offensively. It was pleasing to secure a win, however it would have been nice finish our final game at home with a strong performance. Next week we have an important fixture away to Team Birmingham Elite and I am sure the boys will be ‘up’ for it”.

(Report written by Rob Crump)

Under 14 Girls well beaten by “Bobcats”

Under 14 Girls East Conference

Ipswich ‘Bobcats’ 78 - 38 Northants “Lightning”

After the long journey along the A14 to Ipswich the Northants under 14 girls were guilty of ‘leaving their game on the bus’ and it took them fully five minutes to score their first basket. By the end of the first quarter they were trailing 23-8 with the proverbial mountain to climb.

On numerous occasions during that first period of play the “Lightning” players repeatedly had the ball ripped out of their hands as they failed to protect it while defensively they were finding it difficult to contain Ipswich’s three tall players.

Things were a lot better in the second quarter with “Lightning” tightening up their defence and restricting Ipswich to 15 points. On offence the Northants girls showed good spacing and ball movement accumulating 14 points to trail 22-38 at half time.

In the third quarter “Lightning” continued to show good discipline on offence but missed a number of reasonable scoring opportunities. Having missed they failed to contest rebounds allowing Ipswich to mount a number of fast breaks outscoring “Lightning” 21-6 to take an unassailable 59-28 lead.

With the final result out of the question “Lightning” battled to the end of the game again, demonstrating their ability to play their pass and cut offence, one of these offences resulting in a three point buzzer beater for Lucy Needham. Meanwhile at the defensive end Grace Cosford and Esther Agento demonstrated a great deal of determination.

In the heavy defeat the only two “Lightning” players to make significant scoring contributions were Dina Kosmikovskis and Lucy Needham with 13 and 10 points respectively.

(Report prepared by Janis Kosnikovska)

THIS WEEKEND'S ACTION

Saturday 4th March

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| 9-30am to 11.00am | Junior "Ballers" |
| 11.30am | Under 14 Girls versus Brentwood "Fire" |
| 1.30pm | Junior Men versus Leicester "Warriors" |
| 3.30pm | Senior Men versus Solent "Kestrels" |

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

Spectators are welcome and admission is FREE

Sunday 5th March

Under 14 Boys travel to Birmingham "Elite"

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