

NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB

PRESS RELEASE

“Thunder’s” season ends in defeat

National League Division 3

(South Conference)

Northants “Thunder” 66 – 73 London United

The Northants Thunder senior men concluded their 2015 / 2016 season with a narrow seven points defeat at the hands of London United. The loss means the team finishes in eighth place in the South Conference of the 3rd Division with eight wins but considering the team picked up just one win before Christmas there is room for optimism for next season. The core of this season’s team will be returning and Coach Grahame Yates will be looking to recruit a couple more players with a genuine big man the main priority.

Thunder were hoping for a win against United, a team with a similar record to themselves going into Saturday’s game. Thunder were rocked by an aggressive United start and slipped 2-8 in arrears but thanks to some aggressive defence were able to force turn overs leading to easy scores. Unfortunately, some wayward perimeter shooting meant they weren’t able to fully capitalise and the first quarter ended with the two teams tied on 21 points each.

Throughout the season Thunder had shown that when they played as a five man unit they were very successful but the second period of play saw the team play disappear to be replaced by too many offences based purely individual efforts. Thunder managed just 13 points in the quarter while United managed 21 to lead 42-34 at half time.

For the rest of the game Thunder were playing ‘catch up’ and in the third quarter they were able to reduce the deficit to just four points thanks to the efforts of Richard Higgins who scored eight points in the period. When Higgins netted again in the seventh minute of the final quarter Thunder were within two points at 63-61, but United responded with a basket and two free throws. Stand in coach Rob Eddon instructed Thunder to foul the Hertfordshire team so sending them to the free throw line. Higgins and skipper Johnny Yates fouled out of the game in doing this and United converted nine of the 12 free throws they were awarded holding out for the win despite a couple of successful long range baskets from Danny Barrett.

In the disappointing defeat Higgins top scored with 16 points, good support coming from Devon Adams and Benji Henry with 13 and 11 points respectively while Danny Barrett chipped in with 10 points.

Super Junior Men secure Play Off place thanks to double win weekend

The Northants Junior Men went into last weekend’s programme knowing that two wins ‘on the road’ would be enough to secure a Play Off place. They achieved this with a battling win against Mansfield “Giants” followed the next day by a dominant performance against Notts Nova

Super trio too much for “Giants”

Junior Men’s East Midlands Development League

Mansfield “Giants” 80 – 91 Northants “Thunder”

Thunder started the game in assertive style storming into a 12-4 unsettling the home side with their full court pressure defence. Three pointers from Jacob Killeya and Jake Nailor extended Thunder’s lead to 11 points mid way through the quarter, but the Giants responded with a 7-2 run reduced the deficit to 17-22 to conclude the first period of Play.

The Northants boys continued to display some good pressure defence in the second quarter and a number of steals fuelled their offense with Giants finding it difficult to contain Thunder’s transition offence. The Thunder players were frequently being fouled forcing them to earn their points from the free throw line but they were able to restore their double figure lead to 22-35 led thanks to 7 points from influential guard Ollie Thomas. Giants responded well with a 13-1 run with Thunder guilty of failing to contain guards Halstead and Burton from the perimeter but the Nieva brothers, David and Carlo Nieva calmed the visitor’s nerves hitting consecutive 3 pointers restoring Thunders lead to 48-44 at the half.

The third quarter saw a tight contest with both teams proving they were both worthy contenders for the Play Off spot on offer. Thunder executed a number of strong drives to the basket resulting in the home team fouling and putting a number of their key players in foul trouble, and once again Thunder successfully converted their foul shots. Giants were really struggling to match up with David Nieva with the diminutive guard proving to be too quick for the Giants defenders. An 8-2 Thunder run saw them take the third period 20-17 to give them a 68-61 lead going into the final ten minutes of play.

With the everything to play for Thunder coach Rob Crump encouraged his team to attack the basket to take advantage of the Giants' foul trouble. Giants successfully reduced the deficit to 74-79 with four minutes remaining, but a big three pointer from David Nieva restored Thunder lead to allow them to see the game out comfortably winning by 93 points to 80.

In the nine points win Thunder were led in scoring by David Nieva scoring 20 points and he was well supported by Ollie Thomas and Jacob Killeya who scored 19 and 18 points respectively.

Coach Crump commented "Today saw an excellent team performance. We showed a very determined attitude to beat the Giants and displayed excellent composure and focus as a team particularly when Giants made their runs."

Barden too much for Nova as "Thunder" secure Play Off place

Notts Nova 55 – 102 Northants "Thunder"

Northants Thunder secured their second win of the weekend with an 'on the road' victory over Notts Nova after a totally dominant performance.

Thunder stormed into a 17-2 lead, with 6 feet 10inch post player James Barden scoring 14 points as Nova struggled to contain his strong inside presence. Both teams exchanged baskets midway through the quarter but Thunders lead was extended with a score inside from Jake Nailor and three pointer from Zak Kitchen on the buzzer to lead by 18 points at 30 points to 12.

The Northants boys were proving to be too quick for Nova and they were able to capitalise at every opportunity with efficient fast breaks. Barden was again looking strong and 10 points in the period took his tally to 24 points at half time. Thunder concluded the quarter with a 9-0 run to win the period 27-14 so extending their lead to 57-26 at half time.

Nova would need a huge performance if they were going to reduce the deficit, but Thunder were in no mood to be charitable. The third quarter saw Jacob Killeya nail nine consecutive points with some good execution at the end of the break as Thunder were able to extend their lead to 41 points at 82-41.

With the final result in no doubt Thunder opened up their biggest lead of the game at 99-45 thanks to some excellent shooting from Carlo and David Nieva. They then eased off a little and to their credit Nova stuck to their task and finished the game with a 10-3 run. The highlight of the quarter and possibly the game was a rare three pointer from Ayo Oluyede who was left wide open at the top of the arch and drained the shot..

In the 102 to 55 win, Thunder were led in scoring by James Barden with a season high 27 points, with good support from the Nieva brothers Carlo and David Nieva with 19 points while Jacob Killeya put in an excellent offensive shift for his 16 points.

Coach Rob Crump commented "Today was a big a win which secured second place in the East Midlands Conference. It's never easy playing back-to-back games over a weekend especially with both games 'on the road'. The players once again displayed a great team performance; and it was pleasing to see James and Jacob produce good scoring performances."

Cadet Men go down to "Giants"

Under 16 Boys Midlands Development League

Mansfield "Giants" 73 – 57 Northants "Thunder"

For the last game of the current season the Northants Thunder Cadet Boys travelled to Mansfield Giants a team one place above them in the Midlands Development League. Coach Grahame Yates was keen to close the season with a win and stressed he needed contributions from all his players. Thunder started the game well jumping ahead 7-3 thanks to good drives to the basket by Shekina Ntumba and Zinzan Oostenhuizen. . Thunder were guilty of not covering their back court on several occasions and this allowed Giants to get back into the game and level the scores at 22 all at the end of the quarter.

The second quarter saw a mixture of bad defence and missed scoring opportunities from Thunder. Despite the best efforts of Matt Major, Giants edged ahead by six points at 42-36 at half time.

Thunder needed a big effort in the third quarter but as the game became more physical they became more and more unsettled. The physicality of the Giants defence kept Thunder to a paltry eight points in the quarter while scoring 16 themselves and opening up a 58-44 lead. The two teams exchanged baskets in the final period of play but never really looked like closing the gap as the home side ran out winners by 73 points to 57.

In the 17 point defeat Josh Lloyd and Shekina Ntumba top scored with 16 and 15 points respectively but although Matt Major and Zinzan Oostenhuizen worked hard for the team, not for the first time this season other players were unable to step up and make significant scoring contributions.

Under 14 Girls no match for “Titans”

Under 14 Girls East Midlands Development League

Northants “Lightning” 29 – 86 Northamptonshire “Titans”

Going into this East Midlands Development League fixture the Northants girls knew they were in for a tough game and so it proved. Lightning were unable to score in double figures in all four periods of play while Titans scored freely in all four.

Lightning did achieve some ‘mini’ goals set for them by Coach Stacey Shakespeare but only Ony Onwunehil with ten points made any significant contribution to the team’s 29 points total. For Titans eight players scored but 60 of their points came from just three players.

Under 14 Boys’ close season with a battling loss to top of the table “Bears”

Under 14 Boys Midlands Development League

Worcester “Bears” 95 – 79 Northants “Thunder”

One of the hardest rules to officiate in Under 14 basketball is the man-to-man defensive rule. In principle it’s easy but smart coaches claim that players standing underneath the basket are in fact ‘helping’ a form of defence more befitting older players or sagging off their player. At Worcester last Saturday, the Northants under 14 boys were confronted by just such a defence with the area around the Bears basket totally filled with defenders. This left the smaller Thunder team with just two options either score from a fast break or shoot from the perimeter.

Against the Conference champions Thunder lost all four periods of play but three of them were by single figures and against a talented team like Bears playing the defence they were allowed to employ the 15 point loss was no disgrace at all. The team scored an impressive eight, three pointers but with too many players concentrating on the ball rather than their player conceding 95 points was not good although they were always trying to play proper man-to-man defence.

In the 15 point loss Jude Carmichel top scored with 22 points with excellent support coming from Oliver Dominique and Jonathan Ntumba with 16 points apiece while Ashley Kitchen had four, three pointer in his 14 point haul.

THIS WEEKEND’S ACTIVITIES

Saturday 12th March

9.30am to 11.00am “Ballers” Session

11-45am Junior Men versus Mansfield “Giants”

This game will be played at the **Northants Basketball Centre** which is situated at Northampton School for Girls in Spinney Hill Road, Northampton NN3 6DG

Spectators are welcome and admission is FREE

Under 15 Boys play in the Northants *Hoopsterz* Central Venue League at Northampton School for Boys

For further information contact John Collins on 07801 533 151