NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB

PRESS RELEASE

"Thunder" breeze into the Final Fours

VCARS Division 4 Play Off Quarter Final

Northants "Thunder" 102 - 73

Stockport "Spartans"

The Northants senior men's team stormed into the VCARS Division 4 Final Fours with a resounding win over Stockport "Spartans" at a packed Basketball Centre last Saturday. Stockport arrived in Northampton with former England international Jason Swaine plus a number of experienced national league players in their ranks, who on paper seemed able to cope with "Thunder's" up-tempo style of play. In reality they didn't cope as "Thunder" combined aggressive full court man-to-man defence with some swift counter attacking fast breaks led by Jonny Yates and the home team rushed into a 34-19 lead after the first period of play.

Not for the first time this season "Thunder" gave the impression of 'wanting to make a game of it' in the second quarter. The intensity went out of their defence and this allowed Stockport's Collister and Griffiths to score with mid range jump shots. "Spartans" took the period 21-14 to take the half time score to 48-40 and the visitors were well and truly back in the game.

"Thunder" needed to make a good start to the third quarter and with Asher Kirby providing considerable pressure on the Stockport ball handlers they forced a number of turn-overs leading to easy "Thunder" scores. Once again the home side were guilty of relaxing their efforts and Swain was able to connect with a brace of three-pointers. "Thunder" had dominated the quarter and the 29-20 margin was by no ways a true reflection of the quarter but at 77-60 the game was "Thunder's" to lose.

At the start of the fourth quarter it became very clear that there was going to be no way back for the Cheshire team. "Thunder" 'upped' their defensive pressure; Jason Tucker totally 'locked up' Swaine and the "Thunder" side of the scoreboard rattled over at a high rate of knots. It was appropriate that Tucker's defensive efforts were rewarded at the offensive end as he scored his team's one hundredth point with a sweet give and go. "Thunder" took the quarter 25-13 to record a decisive 102-73 win and a place in the Final Fours in Leeds this weekend. Their opponents in the semi-final will be Bracknell "Cobras" who went through the regular season undefeated in the South-West Conference and saw off NASSA in the quarter finals. The winner of that tie will face Tees Valley "Mohawks II" who beat Barking Abbey 87-86 last Saturday.

In "Thunders" win ten players contributed to the scoring lead by Leon Henry with 25 points. Jonny Yates contributed 17 points while Jason Tucker combined his defensive duties with a 12 point haul.

"Lightning" secure Conference runners up spot

Cadette Women's Midlands, South-West Conference

Northants "Lightning"

70 - 29

Bromsgrove "Bears"

The Northants under 15 girls secured a home draw and Conference runners-up spot with a comprehensive win over Bromsgrove "Bears" last Tuesday. The original fixture was 'snowed' off and the club is very grateful to the Bromsgrove club for agreeing to travel midweek because if the game had been declared 'void' the Northants team might well have faced an away draw in the Play Offs.

The game was as good as won and lost in the very first quarter of the game and was down to two main factors. First, "Lightning" were absolutely ruthless in their execution and second the match officials took a dislike to the "Bears" defensive play and called them for no less than eight fouls in the period. This included four fouls on the influential Becky Taylor who was forced to sit out for the rest of the half. From the "Lightning" point of view their defence was the personification of controlled aggression which forced ten "Bears" turn-overs in the first ten minutes of play and gave them a 23-1 lead.

The "Lightning" offence did go off the boil a little in the second quarter but they didn't let up on their defensive efforts restricting "Bears to just three points while scoring 35 themselves to take a 35-4 half time lead.

Coach Karen Goodrich's half time message was very clear, "Don't think the game is over despite the one-sided look to score." Her advice proved to be correct as the "Bears were much more competitive in the final two periods of play employing a zone defence which made it difficult for "Lightning" to get off close to the basket shots. "Lightning" took the third quarter 19-8 to extend their lead to an unassailable 54-12 but with Goodrich experimenting with her defensive formation plus some inspirational play from the "Bears" Shanice Turner the visitors took the final quarter 17-16, "Lightning finally taking the game by 70 points to 29.

In the 41 points win, nine "Lightning" players contributed to the scoring led by Lauren Milne who scored 16 points and also pulled down a massive 17 rebounds. For once Ruhcae Walton didn't record a double-double managing only nine rebounds to go with her 14 points. Charlotte Berridge and Caitlin Stewart also made important contributions to the points tally while Sarah Round was her usual confident self in the back court.

"Swifts" too strong for brave Under 13 Girls

East of England Under 13 Girls League

Southend "Swifts" 69 – 50 Northants "Lightning"

On the face of it this score line would appear to represent a reasonably close game but in fairness the "Swifts" coach Stephen Pearl was particularly magnanimous in using his better players sparingly and also taking off his team's aggressive full court press. Had the home side continued with their pressure defence and played only their more experienced players "Lightning" would have been on the wrong end of a cricket score.

After their long journey to seaside "Lightning" were blitzed 22-2 in the first quarter by a very good "Swifts" outfit. On a number of occasions the Northants girls were able to break through the Southend defence only to miss lay ups but they as the pressure was relaxed they were able to become more competitive in the second quarter which they lost 12-19 to trail 41-14 at half time.

The more game savvy Southend girls won the third period of play 20-16 but against some of the younger "Swifts" players "Lightning" actually took the fourth quarter 16-12 to give the final score line a more respectable but slightly unrealistic look at 69-50.

For "Lightning" Holly Winterburn top scored with 16 points while Odetta Bajorunaite, Behira Barakat and Ellie Solomon all contributed eight points.

THIS WEEK'S ACTION

Saturday 13th April

11-30am Under 13 Girls versus Southend "Swifts"

East of England League Play Off 1st Round

Under 14 Girls versus Ipswich "Bobcats"

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1-30pm

Junior Women versus Southend "swifts"

Play Off 1st Round

Sunday 14^h April

12-00 noon Under 15 (

Under 15 Girls versus Trafford Under 16 Girls versus Cheshire "Panthers" Play Off 1st Round Pay Off 1st Round

All these games will be played at the **Northants Basketball Centre** at Northampton School for Girls in Spinney Hill Road, Northampton

Spectators are welcome and admission is FREE

Also this weekend the Senior Men travel to Leeds to play Bracknell 'Cobras' in the semi-final of the VCARS Division 4 Final Four Tournament