

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.

