

NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB

PRESS RELEASE

Play Off News

Four teams from the Northants Club were involved in Play Off games last weekend; both boys teams were eliminated but both the Under 14 and Under 16 girls teams advanced to the next round

Cummings and Wilson too much for Cadet Men

Under 16 Boys Play Off 2nd Round
Cheshire “Wire” 86 – 63 Northants “Thunder”

The Northants under 16 boys made the long journey to Liverpool to take on a talented and well coached Cheshire Wire outfit and ended up on the wrong side of an 86-63 score line.

After the long journey north it wasn’t altogether surprising that a nervous looking Thunder made a slow start to the game. With Wire working hard to shackle David Nieva and Jacob Round the rest of the Northants boys looked a little overwhelmed and the home side jumped out to a comfortable 27-13 lead after the first quarter with eight of Thunder’s points coming from captain Ayo Oluyede.

There was a major danger that the Premier Division North champions would run away with the game but to their credit Thunder dug deep and thanks to 12 points from Round actually won the second quarter 20-19 to trail 33-46 at half time.

During the first two periods of play Thunder had problems with restricting the penetrating drives of England guard Cummings and when they switched to their preferred zone defence they were blitzed by the perimeter shooting of Wilson. Coach John Collins made some defensive adjustments and match ups for the third quarter but Wire were able to extend their lead to 68-50 going into the final period and this lead was extended by a further five points during the final ten minutes.

There was no doubt that Wire were the better team on the day but they relied heavily on a 56 point contribution from Cummings and Wilson. The performance of the Thunder team earned a warm round of applause from the home crowd and the Northants boys could be proud of their efforts. Round top scored for Thunder with 22 points while Oluyede and Nieva contributed 14 and 12 points respectively

Hot and Cold Cadette Girls see off the “Hawks” of Hounslow

Under 16 Girls Play Off 1st Round
Northants “Lightning” 61 – 51 Hounslow “Hawks”

With a half time score 40 points to 19 in favour of Lightning a routine win looked to be on the cards but after a close third quarter Hawks mounted a spirited rally in the final period of play to give the final score line a respectability that didn’t truly reflect the game.

Lightning went into the game without the services of their leading scorer Ruchae Walton who had picked up a knee injury at an England camp, but were boosted by the return of Sarah Round playing her first game after major foot surgery. The game started with a flurry of three pointers from both sides but when leading 14-11 Lightning went on a 6-zero rush to take a 20-11 lead at the end of the first quarter.

During the first period of play Lightning had been employing a zone defence but the Hawks guard Mann had caused them problems by penetrating into their defence. Coach Karen Goodrich switched her team to a man-to-man for the second quarter and the effect was immediate. With Mann closely shackled by Round and Caitlin Stewart the Hawks offence struggled and Lightning took the quarter by 20 points to 8 to establish what proved to be a game winning lead.

The two teams exchanged scores during the third quarter with a Round triple giving her team a 15-14 advantage over the ten minute period.

With the game as good as won at 55-33 Lightning seem to give up on their running game relying too much on perimeter shooting. When these shots missed Hawks began to gain in confidence and with Mann scoring with a mixture of three-pointers and hook shots went on an 11-zero run to add respectability to the score line.

In the 10 point win rookie Holly Winterburn and Stewart led the Lightning scoring with 16 points apiece while Round had three, three-pointers in her 15 point haul; while for the visitors Mann amassed 27 points.

Lightning's reward for their win will be a re-match against Peckham Pride the team that dumped them out of the Play Offs last season.

Brave Under 14 Boys go down to rampant “Dragaons”

Under 14 Boys Play Off 1st Round
Bradford “Dragons” 82 – 62 Northants “Thunder”

The Northants Under 14 Boys' season came to an end when they lost their first round Play Off game against Bradford Dragons last Sunday. After the long journey north, Thunder had the better start, racing to a 9-3 lead, but three 3-pointers from Bradford's sharp-shooters resulted in the lead changing hands and it was Bradford who were 22-18 ahead at the end of the first quarter.

Despite his wardrobe malfunction, a snapped shoelace just before the game, Ed Wallhead was the star player in the opening period scoring an impressive 13 points. Tom Berry also experienced some bad luck taking a knock to the nose which forced him out of the game for a short while.

Whilst the early exchanges had suggested that it was going to be a close game, Bradford dominated the second quarter. Tom Berry returned to the court and, together with Max Evans, worked hard to contain England Under 15 Development Squad member, Okros, and the other talented guard, Cavanagh. However, Thunder struggled to contain Bradford's two bigs, one of whom was 6'7". It was clear that the home team had a number of scoring threats and they deserved their 17 point half time lead.

After the mid-game break, Thunder dug deep and mounted a comeback. Full court pressure from Josh Lloyd and Tom Berry forced a number of turnovers, which unsettled the home team. Two scores from Lloyd closed the gap to just 7 points and confidence was high. The end of the third period gave Bradford the opportunity to re-group and they started the final quarter in sparkling form whilst Thunder's scoring dried up. A 22-4 Dragons run proved to be the killer punch and, although Thunder continued to try their best, it was Bradford who finished on the right side of the 82-62 score line.

Wallhead ended the game with 22 points and earned praise from the Bradford coaches. He was well supported by Lloyd and Berry who both scored 12 points. For Bradford, five players reached double figures, which highlighted how many scoring threats they had.

After the game, Coach Mike Round said, “Bradford reached the Final Fours last year, so losing to one of the best teams in the country is no disgrace, especially given the way our team played.” He added, “Overall, it was a wonderful display of high quality junior basketball which I’m sure all of the spectators enjoyed. I’m particularly grateful to the Northants supporters who made the long trip up the M1 to cheer on the team.”

“Falcons” no match for Holly &Co

Under 14 Girls 1st Round
Northants “Lightning” 110 - 41 Stockport “Falcons”

After three weeks of inactivity and limited practice time the Northants under 14 girls went into their Play Off game against Stockport Falcons in apprehensive mood. In the event they had absolutely nothing to worry about as they jumped out to 17-5 lead which was extended to 21-7 by the end of the first quarter.

During the first quarter it was obvious that Falcons were having major problems containing the more athletic Lightning girls and in particular to power of Holly Winterburn. Winterburn cut loose in the second period of play scoring 19 personal points as Lightning outscored their opponents 31-12 to take an unassailable 52-19 lead into the half time break.

With such a comfortable lead coach Stacey Shakespeare was able to give all her players court time and this included two young ladies who are still attending primary school. Lightning took the third quarter 24-15 then with the Stockport girls visibly tiring blitzed the final quarter 24-7 to run out winners by 100 points to 41 a victory that earns the team a quarter final tie against Sheffield Hatters who narrowly beat local rivals Titans.

In Sunday's comprehensive win Winterburn scored 46 points with excellent support coming from Odera Onwumechili who scored 20 points while Lucy Amena and Akilah Chambers made significant contributions with 12 and 11 points respectively

THIS WEEKEND'S ACTION

Saturday 18th April

11-45am	Under 14 Girls versus Sheffield "Hatters"	Play Off Quarter Final
1-45pm	Junior Women versus Peckham "Pride"	Play Off Quarter Final

Sunday 12th April

11-45pm	Under 16 Girls versus Peckham "Pride"	Play Off Quarter Final
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Both these games will be played at the Northants Basketball Centre which is based at
Northampton School for Girls, Spinney Hill Road, Northampton.

Spectators are welcome and admission is **FREE**

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