

NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB

PRESS RELEASE

Triple good news for Northants “Thunder” Senior Men

Like the number 2 bus in London, good news came in bunches for the Northants senior men’s team last week. First the Club heard that based on their performances this season, “Thunder” had been promoted to the VCARS.co.uk Division 3. They will play in the North Conference so will be facing teams from basketball hotbeds like Birmingham, Leeds and Sheffield. They will also face Tees Valley Mohawks II who lost to Bracknell “Cobras” in the Division 4 Play Off Final.

Team coach Grahame Yates commented that promotion had been the aim of the team from the outset of the season but it was pleasing anyway. He also acknowledged that the competition in Division 3 would be much tougher but a challenge he and the players are relishing. Yates was also the subject of the club’s second piece of good news with the announcement that the Northants play-caller had been named as Division 4 Midlands Conference Coach of the Year.

The third piece of good news came in the form of a Division 4 Midlands Conference ‘Player of the Year’ award to forward Leon Henry for his scoring heroics last season. This is a fitting reward for a young man who started his playing career with the Club as an 11 year old, continued with massive success at Northampton School for Boys and Moulton College, then played for Wellingborough “Phoenix” before moving back to his alma mater.

Old Boys sneak a win over “Thunder”

Past versus Present Exhibition Game

Northants “Thunder”

69 – 71

Northants Past team

A large crowd assembled at the Basketball Centre last Saturday to watch an exhibition game between the club’s current senior men’s team and players who have been associated with the Club as players in the past. No less than 27 players hit the court in what became a very competitive encounter.

The ‘Past’ team took the early initiative with Rudi Perrin showing that despite a slight excess of weight, he could still pose a problem close to basket while a ‘banked’ three-pointer in the second period of play had John Collins exclaiming that this was a new skill in the player’s repertoire. With Steven Archer looking sharp in the backcourt the “Past” took a 22-14 lead after the first quarter.

This lead was extended to 26-14 early in the third quarter and “Thunder” decided it was time to start playing and three-pointers from Josh Dixon and Jason Tucker hauled the score back to 26-31. The “Past” responded with three-pointers from Gary Burton, Tom Care and Jack Thomas to help their team to a 44-32 half time lead.

“Thunder” came out with all guns blazing at the start of the third period of play and a 12-1 charge took them to within one point of the “Past” at 44-45. “Past” coach Brian Johnson responded by fielding a small mobile team and immediately the energy of their defence increased and two breakaway scores from Jermaine Laing restored a 10 point lead from the “Past”.

Trailing 45-55 going into the last ten minutes of play “Thunder” took the court with their game face on and three close to the basket scores from Leome Francis took them to within four points of their opponents early in the quarter. The “Past” responded through Archer and the two teams exchanged baskets for the next five minutes so with two minutes to go the “Past” still led 71-63. “Thunder” mounted one last charge but could only convert one of four free throws before a Francis put back and a three pointer from Nick Kitchen got the score to 71-69 and that is how the game closed.

For “Thunder”, Leome Francis led his team’s scoring with 18 points while Asher Kirby and Jason Tucker both contributed 12 points while for the “Past”, Rudi Perrin and Steven Archer scored 16 and 15 points respectively while Jermaine Laing contributed 10

Presentation Evening

There was a big turn out for the Club's Presentation last Saturday evening. Seats were at a premium at the Cripps Recreation at the Northampton Hospital as players from all the teams from Under 12's to the Senior Men assembled to hear which players had been chosen by the team coaches as their Most Valuable Player. As a new innovation this year there was a Players' Player of the Year Award; there were also presentations to players leaving the Club and the 'Fair Play Award'.

Player Awards:	<u>Coaches Selection</u>	<u>Players' Player of the Year</u>
Under 12's	Ed Wallhead	Elliott Atherton
Under 13 Girls	Precious Ogaji	Bahira Barakat
Under 13 Boys	Zak Kitchen	Ed Wallhead
Under 14 Girls	Ruchae Walton	Millie Madzavarda
Under 14 Boys	David Nieva	David Nieva
Under 15 Girls	Lauren Milne	Sarah Round
Under 15 Boys	Jacob Killeya	Carlo Nieva
Cadette Women	Amy Boot	Riona-Lee Blessyn
Cadet Men	David Radford (Commitment Award)	George Paul
Junior Women	Stephanie Ogden	Karla Pinney
Junior Men	Jack Thomas (6 th Man Award)	Matt Yates
Senior Men	Jonny Yates	Jason Tucker

Long Service Awards:

These were given to players who have spent the whole of their playing careers with the club and are now leaving the programme. This year's recipients were: Isobel Johns, Kyle Mayes, Jason Moore, Karla Pinney, Jack Thomas and Matt Yates.

Penny Westwood 'Fair Play' Play Award.

This award is given in recognition of the support the former head teacher of Northampton School for Girls gave to the Northants Basketball Club in the building of the Basketball Centre at N.S.G.

This year the award went to **Sam Round** who sustained a serious knee injury 12 months ago. Despite being side-lined after surgery Sam has paid a full and active part in the life of the club. He has regularly acted as a table official, as well as coaching young players in the 'Ballers Academy' programme. On a number of occasions he has sat on the bench of the junior and senior men's team encouraging and advising as necessary.

The NSG legacy continues to grow, and grow.

Three weeks ago the Northampton School for Girls under 17 team won the English Schools National Championships and the school's success continued over the last seven days. A week ago the N.S.G. under 15 team beat under 14 national champions Greensward School from Essex 58-53 to reach the Final Four Tournament which will be played in Nottingham on 19th May. In the semi-final N.S.G will face Holy Trinity School.

Earlier this week the school's under 16 girls made it a triple of Final Four appearances with a convincing win over Framlingham Earl High School from Norwich. Their Final will also be played at Nottingham on 11th May and in the semi final they will face Ellesmere Port Catholic High School.

SUMMER PROGRAMME

The Summer Coaching Programme of the Northants Basketball Club will get underway on Monday 13th May.

Members of current squads will be informed about the exact time of their session but this is a time when budding Kobe's, Le Bron's and Pau's might wish to try out for one of the Club's twelve teams.

Any boy or girl interested in playing basketball should contact **Karen Goodrich** on 07702 263 813 or **John Collins** on 07801 533 151 for further details