

# **NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

After a three week closure for the replacement of the floor, action returned to the Northants Basketball Centre last Saturday. A little piece of history was created with the Club's senior men's team in home action for the first time this season. It was a successful debut as you can read below with "Thunder" advancing to the quarter finals of the National Shield with an exciting win over Derby "Trailblazers II"

### **Senior Men storm into quarter finals of the National Shield**

#### **National Shield 3<sup>rd</sup> Round**

**Northants "Thunder"                      79 – 70                      Derby "Trailblazers II"**

The Northants senior men advanced to the quarter finals of the National Shield thanks to a nine point win over Derby "Trailblazers II" who ply their trade in a league higher than "Thunder".

A large crowd at the Basketball Centre could have been excused for thinking that "Thunder" were the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division team as they jumped out to a 16-6 lead thanks to the efforts of Leon Henry and Leome Francis. Derby responded with four huge three pointers from their skipper Henderson but "Thunder" still led 22-20 after the first quarter.

The "Thunder" coaching staff responded to Henderson's perimeter threat by assigning Asher Kirby the defensive duties and his limpet qualities restricted the Derby shooter's effectiveness. Derby's team offence became more effective but thanks to a 12-zero charge just before half time "Thunder" extended their lead by two points to 44-40 at the break

There was every indication that this was going to be a close run affair and this was borne out in the third quarter which was tied at 17 all as Derby's guard Owusa-Ansah began to give the "Thunder" defence a lot of problems. Meanwhile the athleticism of Francis and Jacob Holt had kept the score board ticking over for the home side.

"Trailblazers" showed their determination at the start of the fourth quarter and they took a one point lead but with Francis and Holt dominating the defensive boards Jonny Yates was able to launch Henry on a number of fast break offences. Henry scored five baskets on the reel as "Thunder" regained the lead as Derby became over concerned with basket interference calls. Having established superiority "Thunder" were able to control the game over the final minutes to record an excellent nine point win.

For "Thunder", Francis and Henry scored 27 and 26 points respectively while Holt's 20 point haul was also key to the team's efforts.

#### **VCARS.co.uk Men's Division Four Midlands Conference**

**Loughborough "Riders" Students                      89 – 99                      Northants "Thunder"**

Less than 24 hours after their National Shield heroics "Thunder" were back on court for a Division 4 fixture against Loughborough "Riders" Students. Without ever reaching the heights of the previous evening "Thunder" were able to record a 10 point win and retain leadership of the Midlands Conference.

The Northants players were a little lethargic at the start of the game and thanks to some excellent perimeter shooting Loughborough were able to take a 19-17 lead after the first period of play. "Thunder" responded well in the second quarter outscoring their opponents 26-17 to take a 43-36 half time lead.

The third quarter saw defence 'thrown to the wind'. Loughborough poured in 27 points with "Thunder" countering with 34 to extend their lead to 77-63 going into the final quarter. This was edged 26-22 by Loughborough with "Thunder" holding on for the 99-89 win.

For "Thunder" all of their players contributed to the scoring led by Leome Francis who scored 19 points. Jonny Yates had probably his best game of the season in scoring 18 points while good support came from Leon Henry and Asher Kirby with 17 and 10 points respectively

## **First quarter blitz sees Junior Men home**

### **Junior Men's Premier Division North**

**Stockport "Spartans"                      75 - 89                      Northants "Thunder"**

The Northants junior men had plenty of reasons for not defeating lowly Stockport "Spartans"; long journey, cold gym and a long wait while the cadet men played being just three of them. So the game plan was simple, try and catch "Spartans" cold with aggressive man to man defence and it worked superbly. Led by the efforts of Matt Yates and Luke Lewis the Stockport ball carriers were put under intense pressure and they 'coughed' the ball up on a number of occasions leading to easy scores and by the end of the first quarter "Thunder" had raced out to a 29-9 lead.

It was inevitable that Stockport would not be as bad in the second period as they had been in the first and so it proved. They rallied strongly over the next ten minutes and actually won the period 20-19 to reduce "Thunder's" lead to 48-29.

After a brief half time team talk the Northants players were guilty of not preparing for the second half correctly for which stand in coach John Collins took total responsibility. "Thunder" came out in lethargic mood and suddenly the "Spartans" players gained in confidence scoring freely against "Thunder's" porous zone defence. The home side amazingly took the period 30-18 to get the score back to 66-59 and suddenly they sensed the come-back of all time.

A three pointer early in the last quarter got the gap between the two teams to five points at 67-72 and earned the Northants boys a well deserved ear bashing. They reacted positively raising the intensity of their defence to its previous level and outscoring their opponents 17-8 to take the game by 89 points to 75.

In the erratic performance Yates with 26 points top scored on his return to the team with Luke Lewis, Josh Round and Jack Thomas also scoring in double figures.

### **Junior Women's Midlands South-West Conference**

**Northants "Lightning"                      99 - 37                      Solent "Suns"**

With the Northants cadette team in action against Herts "Warriors" Coach Stacey Shakespeare was forced to draft five under 15 players into her team for this junior women's game against Solent "Suns". In the event these five young ladies did her proud contributing 44 of her team's 99 point total and giving excellent support to leading scorer Izzy Johns who totalled 32 personal points including six three-pointers.

After a slow start "Lightning" made sure the game was as good as over by half time by which time they had built up an unassailable 49-14 lead. The carnage continued in the third quarter with the game Solent girls outscored 21-9 which took the score to 70-23. "Suns" were a little more competitive in the final period of play but as the "Lightning" score mounted the Basketball Centre crowd were baying for the ton. With the score on 99, Sarah Round missed two free throws, "Suns" missed their shot but rookie Caitlin Stewart did the decent thing and 'bounced the ball out'.

In addition to John's 32 point haul, Stewart scored 16 points, Round 12 while Lauren Milne and Lois Bain contributed 11 and 10 points respectively

## **Spluttering Cadets see off "Spartans"**

### **Cadet Men's Premier Division North**

**Stockport "Spartans"                      57 - 72                      Northants "Thunder"**

The Northants cadet men picked up their third win of the season with a 15 point victory over bottom of the table Stockport "Spartans". The game was one of contrasting quarters with "Thunder" looking impressive in the first of fourth quarters but struggling in the two middle periods.

With George Paul shooting well from the perimeter and hitting four three pointers, "Thunder" took the first quarter 23-12 and looked set for an easy win. They then proceeded to struggle against Stockport's trapping zone defence and were guilty of over dribbling. Going into the last ten minutes of play "Thunder" held a narrow 53-45 lead but with Paul getting back to his best shooting form

with a brace of three pointers, and Pauli Laurinolli breaking well “Thunder” were able to close out the game at 72-57.

Laurinolli and Paul top scored for “Thunder” with 27 and 24 points respectively but no other Northants player could score in double figures and Coach John Collins was dismayed by his team’s four from twenty one record from the free throw line.

### **Under 16 Girls Midlands South-West Conference**

**Herts “Warriors”                      76 – 52                      Northants “Lightning”**

The Northants cadette women travelled to Bushey for this Midlands South West Conference game against Herts “Warriors” and were left to reflect on a twenty plus points defeat which was almost entirely due to their inability to cope with “Warriors” pressure defence. This was no better illustrated than in the first three minutes of the game when “Lightning” were guilty of committing a number of turnovers and in the blink of an eye they found themselves trailing by 14 points to two.

For the rest of the first period of play and for the next two quarters “Lightning” were able to match their opponents. Christa Maphosa defended with determination; Rio Blessyn and Tara Hinds rebounded well and with Amy Boot finding her composure in the backcourt Lauren Brookes and Steph Ogden were able to score freely. On a number of occasions “Lightning” were able to get the gap down to single figures but then at crucial time committed basic errors that left “Warriors” off the hook.

Going into the final quarter “Lightning” were trailing 36-50 but were still in with an outside chance of winning the game. The Northants girls tried their best to close the gap but without success and as fatigue set in a 12-2 charge by “Warriors” put the final result beyond doubt.

In the 24 point set back the mercurial Ogden scored 23 of her team’s points while Brookes supported well with 10 points but no other “Lightning” player could score in double figures.

### **Super Under 15 Girls blow away “Storm”**

**Bristol “Storm”                      26 – 52                      Northants “Lightning”**

Just a week after defeating Bristol “Storm” in the Sureshot National Cup by just three points the Northants under 15 girls returned to the West Country for a Conference game and recorded a convincing 26 point win.

Both coaches had come up with tactical strategies but it was the experience of Karen Goodrich that came out on top. In an attempt to curtail the offensive efficiency of “Lightning”, Bristol adopted a box and one defence with close man-to-man marking on “Lightning’s” point guard Sarah Round. Goodrich knowing that her opponents would have prepared for her team’s zone defence sent them out in an aggressive man-to-man defence. This was to prove decisive as “Storm” struggled to handle the pressure while other players confidently took over the ball handling duties for “Lightning”.

Such was the dominance of the Northants girls that they restricted their opponents to single figures in all four periods of play. Only the third quarter which “Lightning” edged 9-8 was really competitive as they recorded an emphatic 52 points to 26 victory.

For “Lightning” Ruchae Walton recorded another double, double with 14 points and the same number of rebounds. Excellent support came from Caitlin Stewart and Charlotte Berridge with 12 and 10 points respectively; Sarah Round scored 8 points despite the close attention of a defender while Lauren Milne with 8 points and a dozen rebounds enjoyed one of her best games of the season.

### **Under 15 Boys Midland Conference**

**Notts Nova                      108 – 56                      Northants “Thunder”**

The Northants Under 15 boys three game winning streak came to an end after facing a strong and well organised Notts Nova team last Saturday.

At the start of the game there was little to separate the two teams despite Nova’s aggressive full court trapping defensive. Ed Hall initiated Thunder’s by scoring consecutive baskets which

supported scores from Jacob Round. Trailing 10-7 “Thunder” was hindered when Ed Hall was called for two quick fouls which forced “Thunder” to field an undersized team. Nova took full advantage of this with strong offensive rebounding converting second chance shots then forcing turn-overs with a full court pressure defence. The home side went on a 17-6 charge lead 30-13 after the first quarter

The “Thunder” coaching staff reminded their team about the importance of taking care of the ball against the Nova press but unfortunately, their charges failed to organise themselves, over dribbled allowing Nova to extend their lead to 41-13. Coach Rob Crump called a time out but despite his calming words “Thunder” continued to struggle with the defensive intensity displayed from the Notts boys. Time and time again they failed to execute any form of structured offence and the majority of their second quarter points came from the free throw line. Nova won the quarter 34-13 to lead 64-26 at half time and leaving “Thunder” with a mountain to climb.

After some strong words from Coach Crump during the half term interval “Thunder” responded with more competitiveness and pride and thanks to this change of attitude only lost the third quarter 25-22. This improved approach continued in the final period of play and despite losing Ed Hall with five fouls and Jacob Round through injury “Thunder” remained competitive but still slipped to a 50 points plus defeat. They can take some solace from the fact that they were far more competitive in the second half which they lost 44-30.

For “Thunder” Jacob Round led their scoring with 15 points while Ed Hall and Jacob Killeya both scored 8 points.

### **“Thunder” are chewed up in the “Lions” den**

#### **Under 14 Boys Midlands Conference**

**Milton Keynes “Lions”                      90 – 64                      Northants “Thunder”**

The Northants under 14 boys team made the short trip to Milton Keynes and came up against a determined Lion’s team. An injury to Jacob Round early in the first quarter limited the Thunder offence but they did well to stay in the game and finished the first period six points down at 19-13.

The second quarter followed a similar pattern; with David Nieva and Round keeping the Thunder score ticking over but at the other end the Thunder defence was unable to cope with some powerful penetrative Lion’s play and at half time Thunder were trailing by 15 at 30-45.

The third quarter saw “Thunder” rather lose their way as an unanswered 12-0 run extended the “Lion’s” lead to 29 points and Thunder never recovered. Despite winning the fourth quarter by 23-21 “Thunder” had to accept that on the day, they had been taught a basketball lesson by the well drilled “Lion’s” team.

In the heavy defeat 50 of “Thunder’s” points came from Round 27 points and Nieva 23 points with no other Northants players able to score in double figures.

### **Under 13 Boys keep up their challenge**

#### **Under 13 Boys Midlands Conference**

**Milton Keynes “Lions”                      43 -72                      Northants “Thunder”**

The Northants “Thunder” under 13 boys kept up their challenge for Conference honours with a decisive away win over Milton Keynes “Lions”.

“Thunder” came out with ‘all guns blazing’ and raced out to a 21-3 lead and despite a rally from the home side the county boys still led 26-12 at the end of the first period of play. Possible because of their healthy lead “Thunder” were guilty of missing easy shots in the second quarter and the intensity of their defence faded but luckily “Lions” were unable to capitalise and at half time “Thunder” still led 36-23.

Coach Mike Round's half time message was simple, "Step up the defensive intensity!" His team responded superbly forcing a number of turn-overs leading to easy breakaway scores which saw them take the period 17-10 to open up a 20 point lead at 53-33.

"Thunder" were running a new offensive pattern and this was finding gaps in the "Lions" defence and the Northants boys were able to increase their lead by a further eight points despite some over-physical play by the home side.

In the 29 point win Jacob Round dominated the scoring with a 44 point haul and he received good support from Zak Kitchen despite feeling unwell, and Laurence Williams while Ed Taylan and Ed Wallhead both put in tough defensive shifts.

### **Poor start costs Under 13 Girls dear**

#### **East of England Under 13 Girl's League**

**Northants "Lightning"                      46 -62                      Herts "Warriors"**

The Northants under 13 girls showed they were able to compete with a bigger and more experienced Herts "Warriors" team in the second and third quarters of this East of England League game. In those two periods of play they outscored their opponents 33-32 unfortunately they had fallen behind 14-5 in the first quarter and in the last stanza as fatigue set in "Warriors" took the period 16-8 to take a deserved 16 point win.

Coach Darius Maldutis was pleased with the efforts of his young team with Holly Winterburn scoring 14 points and Georgia Collins and Ellie Soloman contributing 10 and 8 points respectively.

### **THIS WEEKEND'S ACTION**

This weekend has been designated as a National teams training weekend so National League action for all age group teams has been suspended

[Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> November](#)

[Senior Men travel to Birmingham "Mets II"](#)

### **COLLEGE BASKETBALL**

#### **Honour in defeat for Moulton Men's team**

#### **British Colleges Men's Midlands Elite League**

**Moulton College 'A'                      77 – 122                      Milton Keynes College**

It is usually very difficult to find too many positives when a team has been beaten by 45 points but against a very strong Milton Keynes team the Moulton College Men's 'A' team did just that. MK play together in the Premier Division of the National League and have a number of very mature three year players. On the other hand Moulton have several players who have never played at this level and for them it is a very steep learning curve that many of them tried to apply what they practice is to the team's credit.

The Moulton boys were left in no doubt about the task in front of them as the visitors shot out to 12-2 lead after just three minutes of play. Moulton were able to re-group but they were guilty of trying to run with Milton Keynes instead of slowing the tempo down. Initially this tactic proved to be partially successful but as Moulton's more experienced players tired they were hit by 20-2 blitz which put MK 40 to 14 in front after the first period of play.

During the break between periods Coach John Collins tried to impress on his players the importance of ball retention and not playing at a break-neck speed. To their credit they responded and with Matt Yates controlling play and Linas Bajorunas hitting some key shots Moulton became much more competitive. They lost the second period of play 22-19 going into half time trailing 62-33.

In the third quarter Moulton initially had some success with Lewis Mooney connecting from beyond the three point arc. This seemed to make the Moulton players think they could speed up the tempo of their play and once again they were undone. MK went on a 23-5 charge to take an unassailable 102-53 lead.

So far in the whole of the game the Milton Keynes's coach had only played his older more experienced players and when he made extensive substitutions Moulton immediately took control of the game closing the period out with a 19-6 run and playing some attractive basketball in the process.

For Moulton Bajorunas scored 28 points and pulled down 14 rebounds. Byron was another Moulton player with a double-double scoring 14 points and hauling down 13 rebounds while good support came from Yates and Mooney who contributed 17 and 15 points respectively