

NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB



PRESS RELEASE

“Thunder” return to the top with win over “Warriors”

Men’s National League Division 4

(Midlands Conference)

Northants “Thunder” 82 – 62 Shropshire “Warriors”

Before the start of this game the Northants Club was made aware of the details of the end of season Play Offs. With just two teams advancing from each of the four Conferences it became apparent that “Thunder” could not afford any slip ups if they were to qualify for post season play. The Midlands Conference contains some good teams and “Thunder” will face some tough games over the coming weeks.

Earlier in the season “Thunder” had lost by ten points to “Warriors” so this fixture was a potential ‘banana skin’ for the Northants team. They were made well aware of the ability of “Warriors” as the visitors jumped out to an early 8-zero lead. Coach John Collins made some defensive adjustments and by the end of the first quarter “Thunder” had edged ahead 14-10.

That lead was extended to 36-25 by half time thanks to some excellent close to the basket work by Richard Higgins but “Thunder” had been guilty of turning over the ball on no fewer than 15 occasions during the first two periods. This earned some stern words from Collins during the half time interval and his players responded well with a 20-4 run at the start of the third period of play.

Going into the final quarter “Thunder” had opened up a 65-37 lead and Collins was able to look to look at some alternative playing combinations and work on a rarely used defence. He can’t have been happy to see his charges lose the final quarter 17-25 with “Warriors” closing with a spirited 10-2 run, but the final result was never in doubt and with other teams inactive “Thunder” moved back to the top of the Midlands Conference table.

In the 20 point win all eleven “Thunder” players scored led Jacob Holt and Higgins with 19 and 18 points respectively while Johnny Yates recovered from the previous week’s disappointment with 10 points and a number of assists. Collins was also pleased with the rebounding of James Barden and Jake Wyatt which allowed “Thunder” to get into their running game.

Junior Men well beaten in battle of the leaders

Junior Men’s National League

(Midlands West Conference)

Northants “Thunder” 65 - 93 West Bromwich Albion

Games between the top two teams in the Conference would normally be expected to be close run things but at the Basketball Centre last Saturday unbeaten West Bromwich Albion saw off the challenge of “Thunder” with ease. The loss came as a major disappointment because after the first

period of play “Thunder” held a 20-14 lead thanks to some good transition offence and accurate perimeter shooting.

“Thunder” extended their lead at the start of the second quarter then the preverbal ‘wheels came off’, and Albion embarked on a 19-4 blitz to take a 35-29 half time lead. During that spell “Thunder” had been guilty of coughing up the ball against the visitor’s zone press defence giving them numerous easy scores.

“Thunder’s” watching supporters were confident that the team could overcome the six point deficit and things looked bright at the start of the third period as the home side closed to 40-43 with Chris Amankonah and Ed Wallhead looking impressive.

What happened next is a complete mystery. Albion didn’t seem to increase their defensive intensity but “Thunder” began to rely on dribbling rather than passing to beat the West Brom press. Most of this dribbling went up blind alleys resulting double teams and turn-overs allowing Albion to go on a 20 to 5 scoring charge to take a 63-45 lead which was to prove unassailable.

In the final Period “Thunder” tried to close the gap with three point shooting and were successful four of these attempts a brace coming from Noah Winterburn but Albion won the quarter 30-20 to run out comfortable winners by 93 points to 65.

In the disappointing 28 point defeat Wallhead top scored for “Thunder” with 17 points, Amankonah and Zac Kitchen both contributing 11 points.

“Thunder” stay top of the Conference by merit of having played more game than Albion but if they are to make the Play Offs they will need to win the crucial games coming up over the next few weeks,

Under 16 Girls do down to “Lapwings”

Under 16 Girls National League

(North Conference)

Northants “Lightning”

50 – 64

Stockport “Lapwings”

Hopefully, the Northants Under 16 girls will look back on this game as a contest they could possibly won had one or two of their players performed with a little more confidence. When Grace Cosford hit a short range jumper “Lightning” had closed the deficit to just 8 points at 42-50 thanks to a 16-8 run on either side of the third and fourth periods.

“Lapwings” were looking tired but to their credit they rallied strong to outscore the Northants girls 14-8 over the closing five minutes of the game to secure a 64-50 victory.

“Lightning” looked lifeless during the first two periods of play and found themselves trailing 17-33 at half time. “Lapwings” extended that lead to 40-21 early in the third but led by Dina Kosnikovska and Lucy Needham “Lightning” mounted the spirited comeback which eventually failed to bring about the win that at one stage seemed possible.

In the 14 point loss Needham had 17 points, Kosnikovska 12 and Poppy Barnett 8 which meant the other six “Lightning” players could only manage 13 points between them. With more confidence this could change and give the team an outside chance of making the end of season Play Offs.

Heavy loss for Under 14 Boys against local rivals

Under 14 Boys National League (Midlands West Conference)

NEBC “Titans”

93 – 35

Northants “Thunder

Northants Thunder Under 14 began the new year facing local rivals NEBC Titans who still remained undefeated in the Midlands West conference.

Titans displayed their dominance straight from the opening tip storming in a 11-0 run forcing a Thunder time out. Thunder nerves were eased with Benas Maldutis nailing a 3 pointer to break the Titans run. Despite eight quarter points from Ashley Kitchen, Thunder could not contain the size and physicality of the Titans side, which saw the home side lead 30-9 end of the 1st quarter.

Coach Crump enforced to his team they had to improve their defensive efforts, and urged to raise the intensity in their performance. The Titans continued to extend their lead to 48-11, but Thunder did display a strong promising with performance which saw Ashley Kitchen, Kris Dambrauskas and Benas Madutis spark 8-0 run installing confidence in Thunder’s performance.

Thunder trailed 54-19 at the half, with the game out of reach Thunder were playing for pride in the 2nd half. Thunder showed a more composed performance in the 2nd half, displaying more confidence on offense despite finding it difficult to finish around the basket overcoming the size of the Titans players

Thunder were led in scoring by Ashley Kitchen scoring 19 points, whilst Benas Maldutis contributed with 10 points including two 3 pointers.

Coach Crump commented “This fixture was always going to be a tough game facing a team consisting bigger and older players. Despite the score line, I did feel the team demonstrated an improvement from our early encounter in the season. Whilst there were stages within the game we displayed some good intensity, but we must learn to do this more consistently if we are going to put the top teams in our conference under pressure”

Huge ‘comeback’ win for Under 14 Girls

Under 14 Girls National League (Midlands Conference)

Northants Lightning”

63 - 53

Bucks “Hornets”

With a half time score of 41-23 in favour of “Hornets” another loss looked to be on the cards for the Northants under 14 Girls. In the third period of play however, there were two significant changes. Firstly the referees stopped “Hornets” playing their double and sometimes triple teaming defence which was protected covered by an obvious illegal zone defence. This defence had forced numerous “Lightning” turn-overs but once forced to play a more conventional man-to-man defence the visitors were no longer ‘gifted scores.

The other significant event occurred when “Hornets” talented ball handler Cook fouled out of the game with the score standing at 32-45 to the visitors. “Lightning” then went on a 13-2 charge to close the deficit to just two points going into the final quarter and suddenly confidence surged through the team.

Without Cook “Hornets” struggled to advance the ball up court and led by nine points from Dina Kosnikovska “Lightning” eventually took the lead midway through the period. There was no looking back and the Northants closed out the game which had seen an amazing 28 point turnaround. The win gives the team an outside chance of making the Play Offs with some crucial games coming up in the next few weeks.

In the morale boosting win Kosnikovska scored 28 points. No other “Lightning” player scored in double figures but Coach Karen Goodrich was delighted that 10 of her players contributed to the final total. She also made special mention of the contribution of her youngest players, Keris Ndubisi and Athena Thompson and the rebounding of Hosanna Ajayi.

Northants Hoopsterz Under 11 Boys Central Venue League

THIS WEEKEND'S ACTIVITIES

Saturday 13th January

9-30 am to 11-00 am

Junior “Ballers”

11-30am

Under 14 Girls versus Derby “Trailblazers”

Under 14 Boys versus Shropshire “Warriors”

1.30pm

Under 16 Girls versus Derby “Trailblazers”

These games will be played at the Basketball Centre which is situated at Northampton School for Girls in Spinney Hill Road, Northampton

Spectators are welcome and admission is FREE

Under 16 Boys travel to Stoke “Knights”

Senior Men travel to Nottingham Trent “Hoods”

Sunday 21st January

Junior Men travel to Birmingham Elite II

For more information contact: John Collins on 07801 533 151