

# NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Great 'road' win in for senior men

#### Men's National League Division 3 North

Rossendale "Raptors"                      93 – 97                      Northants "Thunder"

The Northants senior men made the long journey to north Manchester for this 3<sup>rd</sup> Division game against Rossendale "Raptors" and were able to savour a hard won victory on the return journey.

After their long journey "Thunder" started the game brightly opening up an 11-3 lead in the first 5 minutes, with some good pressure defence resulting in Leon Henry executing a number of times on the fast break. However, "Raptors" did not panic and, although star player Steven Gayle was having trouble finding his range, Rossendale slowly dragged their way back into the game, with Thunder's Tucker keeping the advantage slightly in Northants' favour. Unfortunately, a lapse in concentration in the final two minutes of the period allowed Raptors to go on a 12-3 run, to open up their own 24-20 lead.

The second quarter started with Asher Kirby putting the "Raptors" defence in a spin, with a clinic of footwork in the low-post. Kirby's energy and movement at both ends of the floor, motivated Thunder to their own 20-6 run over a five minute period to re-open their ten point lead. Again, "Thunder's" athletic backcourt of Henry and Tucker were draining from long-range, whilst forwards Holt and Higgins were taking advantage of space being created under both buckets. "Thunder" went into the break on the back of a coast-to-coast score from, Captain Yates to lead 52-39.

With an extended half time being filled with cheerleaders and entertainment, "Thunder" could have been excused of taking their foot off the gas, however the Northants' coaching staff did their best to keep minds on the 'job in hand', making sure concentration levels did not drop. All went to plan, and "Thunder's" lead actually grew to 17 points however, with less than 60 seconds to go to the end of the quarter but the energy the "Thunder" players had expended took its toll on their back court rotations. The home side were allowed to run in numerous unopposed lay ups and drag the score back to 58-67 and keep "Thunder" looking back over their shoulders.

The final quarter was a nervous affair with neither team wanting to give an inch, and both teams totalled up team fouls quickly. A close game looked to be blown out of the water when "Thunder's", Tucker hit back-to-back threes late in the shot clock, to give his team an 11 point advantage with less than three minutes of the game remaining. The final two and a half minutes can only be described as surreal. First, the officials missed a request from the Thunder coaching staff for a 'time-out'. Then the "Thunder" players went on a wild 90 second ride, taking bad shots at the wrong time. "Raptors" took full advantage of these lapses dragging the "Thunder" back lead to just three points then inexplicably, with 10 seconds to go, "Raptors" captain Estrada was fouled shooting a three-point attempt. He went to the free throw line and calmly hit all three free throws which appeared would take the game into over-time. Just when the home crowd (and both teams) thought the game was set for another period of play, "Raptors" shooting guard Gayle fouled Thunder's Henry 90 feet from the basket. With "Raptors" in the penalty the "Thunder" guard went to the charity stripe with the chance to seal the win. Henry hit both shots with six seconds left, and when Kirby was fouled after rebounding a 'wing and a prayer' from "Raptors", the energetic guard was able to seal victory from the free throw line.

The "Thunder" scoring was dominated by Tucker and Henry who combined for a total of 58 of their team's points. A Great deal of credit must go to forwards, Higgins and Holt who despite being out-sized by the "Raptors" 'big-men', battled for 18 boards and a total of 21 points combined. Coaches Eddon and Yates highlighted the team's defensive rotations on Rossendale's sharp shooting Gayle who was never allowed to get into any kind of shooting rhythm.

## **Bajorunas leads Junior Men to win number two**

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

**Leeds Carnegie                      59 – 88                      Northants "Thunder"**

A 35 point haul from Linas Bajorunas and some commanding point guard play from Sam Round helped the Northants junior men to their second win of the season over a rather one dimensional Leeds Carnegie outfit.

Stand in coach John Collins added Cadet player Carlo Nieva to his line up in the absence of Declan Burke who was suffering from a chronic back condition, for the trip to Yorkshire and he pronounced himself delighted with the efforts of his whole team. For the second week running Bajorunas and Round dominated the scoring with a combined total of 53 points but George Paul and Josh Round contributed 11 and 8 points respectively while George Calvey and Karan Virdee rebounded superbly.

The Northants party were surprised to find that their opponents were in Men's Division 4 action immediately before the junior game and as the game wore on the Carnegie boys had increasing problems keeping pace with "Thunder's" up-tempo style of play.

After the two teams had exchanged scores "Thunder" went on a 17-2 charge to take a lead they were to hold for the rest of the game. Carnegie relied heavily on pick and roll plays which caused the Northants boys some problems especially when the screen moved several meters to 'take out' "Thunder" defenders and later when the Leeds guard Saipe hit a trio of three pointers.

By half time "Thunder" had built up a 74-51 lead and a 24-6 run in the third put the result beyond doubt and the county boys did become guilty of relaxing their defensive efforts allowing Carnegie to mount an 8-zero run of their own. During the final quarter Collins switched his team from a man-to-man defence to a half court trapping zone which restricted the Leeds team to just eight points but there was frustration for "Thunder" as their big men Calvey and Virdee missed a number of easy put backs.

After their back-to-back victories the team faces a much sterner challenge this coming weekend when they take on table topping Manchester "Magic"

## **"Wolves" zone defence fails to halt Cadet Men**

### **Cadet Men's Midland Conference**

**Worcester "Wolves"                      49 - 58                      Northants "Thunder"**

The Northants "Thunder" Cadet Men maintained their unbeaten record with a nine point win over a big Worcester "Wolves" side boasting a significant height advantage. "Thunder" were only able to suit up eight players for the encounter which became increasingly tedious with "Wolves" electing to employ against a 2-3 zone for the full forty minutes.

The first quarter saw a lacklustre scoring display from both teams, but it was "Thunder" who established the lead thanks to a 9-zero run with two minutes to go with scores coming from Elliot Strausa, Carlo Nieva and Jacob Killeya. Despite the size of the "Wolves" players, the Northants boys were rebounding extremely well and were able to prevent any second chance shots. "Wolves" responded with 6-zero run of their own to reduce the deficit to three points forcing "Thunder" coach Rob Crump to take a time and four consecutive points from Elliot Strausa at the end of the quarter helped "Thunder's to a 13-6 lead.

"Thunder" were encouraged to look to score in transition at every opportunity to avoid the having to attack the Worcester zone defence. The two teams exchanged scores to begin the second quarter and good ball movement on Thunders zone offence found TJ Nyamatore and Ollie Thomas open to nail their jump shots. The "Thunder" coaching staff had recognised that "Wolves" had become dependent on one player to initiate their offence so they 'doubled up' to encourage a weaker and less confident ball handler. The proved to be very successful with a number of turnovers being forced allowing Thunder to produce a 10-2 run and open up a 29-17 lead. "Thunder's" approach of looking to fast break at every opportunity was proving to be effective, as "Wolves" were forced to substitute all their players on court due to fatigue. "Thunder" maintained the advantage at half time to lead 31-18.

"Thunder" extended their lead at the start of the third quarter with good contributions coming from Carlo Nieva and Brendan Ross. "Thunder" were being made to work hard to find open players but a lay up from Will Grosvenor gave the team their biggest lead of the game at 48-30.

By now the short-handed "Thunder" were suffering from fatigue themselves and resorted to a 3-2 zone. This worked to the "Wolves" advantage and they were able score from close to the basket and a 10-2 run by the home side reduced the "Thunder" lead to 50-40 with five minutes of the game to go. The "Thunder" nerves were calmed a little when Carlo Nieva hit three point shot to extend his team's lead to 13 points and the home team's momentum was disturbed when a "Wolves" player bizarrely deflected a pass into his own basket. For the last two 2 minutes of the game "Thunder" were able to manage the shot efficiently eventually winning by 58 points to 49.

Coach Crump was full of praise for his team's efforts which saw eight players score. He was particularly pleased by team's efforts to score in transition which saw them score 13 points to the "Wolves" two. Carlo Nieva led the "Thunder" scoring with 20 points but Jacob Killeya put in a manful shift securing 21 rebounds to go with his 11 points and securing 21 rebounds while Elliot Strausa contributed 12 points.

This weekend "Thunder" face their biggest test of the season so far when they take on Birmingham A's who boast an identical 4 and 0 record.

### **"Trailblazers" complete double over "Thunder"**

#### **Under 15 Boys Midlands Conference**

**Derby "Trailblazers"                      81 – 71                      Northants "Thunder"**

The Northants under 15 boys slipped to defeat against Derby last Saturday and returned home realising that it was a game they could have won. "Trailblazers" played an aggressive pressing defence with a great deal of ball pressure but once that pressure was broken there was very little protection and easy scores became regularly available. Unfortunately these opportunities were either missed or ignored and once again the "Thunder" scoring was dominated by David Nieva and Jacob Round. If the team is to be successful a number of other players will have to 'step up' and make significant scoring contributions.

"Trailblazers" made the better start to the game jumping out to a 20-11 lead after the first period of play. Having recovered from the initial shock of Derby's pressure defence the Northants boys won the second period 27-22 thanks to 18 points from Nieva and Round, two nice perimeter shots from Jaz Campbell and a couple of put backs from Emanuel Arimoro.

Trailing 38-42 at half time, "Thunder" needed a good start to the third quarter but they were hit by a 13-4 blitz leaving them with the proverbial mountain to climb. They stayed in contact with their opponents but with three minutes of the game remaining found themselves 60-77 adrift. To their credit they finished well reducing the final deficit to ten points but even to the end it was still too much of the Nieva / Round show.

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

**Northants "Thunder"                      45 – 49                      Derby "Trailblazers"**

Whereas the under 15 boys might have won their game against "Trailblazers", the general opinion around the Basketball Centre last Saturday was the under 14 should have won their game against the same opponents.

As it was "Thunder" found themselves trailing 34-45 going into the last period of play. They took that quarter 11-4 but it was too little too late as "Trailblazers" held on for the win.

Coaches Jonny and Grahame Yates were pleased that nine of their players contributed to the team's scoring but only Zac Kitchen with 12 could register a double figure total

### **Heavy defeat for Under 14 Girls**

#### **Under 14 Girls Midlands South West Conference**

**Southend "Swifts"                      90- 44                      Northants Lightning**

Southend has never been a happy hunting ground for teams from the county and so it proved again last Saturday with the Northants under 14 girls slipping to a heavy defeat. "Lightning" started brightly enough but were soon overwhelmed by "Swifts" pressure defence and found themselves trailing 34-9 after the first quarter. The situation wasn't helped by some strange travelling decisions by the referees.

As "Swifts" reduced their defensive pressure the "Lightning" became more competitive with Lucy Amena, Bahira Amr Barakat and Holly Winterburn showing up well. Even though the team lost by over 40 points coach Darius Maljudtius was pleased that his team kept playing to the end and kept their heads up. The team needs more games against top opposition if they are to improve.

## Girls Challenge Game

Northants "Lightning" Cadettes

48 – 51

Northants "Lightning" Juniors"

The parlous state of girl's basketball in England was once again illustrated when the opponents of both the Cadette and Junior Women called off late in the week. In order to keep the girls active coaches Goodrich and Shakespeare agreed to play a practice game. The game proved to be very competitive with the older team taking the win by three points.

### THIS WEEKEND'S ACTION

#### Saturday 9th November

11.30am Under 14 Girls versus NEBC "Titans"  
Under 15 Boys versus Ilkeston "Outlaws"  
1.30pm Junior Men versus Manchester "Magic"  
3.30pm Senior Men versus Tees Valley  
5.30pm Cadet Men versus Birmingham "A's"

\* The time of some of these games is subject to possible change \*

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

Spectators are welcome and admission is FREE

Junior Women travel to Bucks "Hornets"  
Under 13 Boys travel to Leicester "Sparks"  
Girls Central Venue League at Northampton School for Boys

#### Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> December

Junior Men travel to Derby "Trailblazers" (National Cup)  
Cadette Women travel to Bromsgrove "Bears" (National Cup)  
Under 15 Boys travel to Leicester "Warriors"  
Under 14 Boys travel to Notts Nova