

NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB

MEDIA RELEASE

Tees Valley tease the senior men

Men's National League Division 3 North

Northants "Thunder" 20 – 0 Tees Valley II

Throughout the week preceding this Division 3 fixture the Tees Valley secretary was negotiating for a later tip off time. Early on Saturday morning an email was received notifying the Northants Club that Tees Valley couldn't raise a team and would concede the game. The bitter disappointment of the cancellation was somewhat allayed with the news that with Birmingham "A's" beating table topping Birmingham "Mets", "Thunder" had moved to the top of the Division 3 table without even bouncing a ball.

This Saturday the team travels to Birmingham to take on Birmingham "A's"

Blank weekend for Junior Men

After their mini resurgence which resulted to back-to-back wins the Northants Junior Men slipped back to their losing ways with a brace of defeats last weekend. On Saturday they put up a spirited performance before losing to top of the table Manchester "Magic" then on Sunday they were dumped out of the Sure Shot National Cup by Derby "Trailblazers"

Junior Men's Premier Division North

Northants "Thunder" 68 – 75 Manchester "Magic"

With five minutes of this Premier Division North game remaining "Thunder" were trailing high-flying Manchester "Magic" by just nine points. They then capitulated to the physical and mental pressure that comes at the end of close games. Six free throws were missed and then unaccountably they inbounded the ball straight to an opponent who gratefully scored the lay up. The game ended with a 17-9 "Magic" run but the 68-85 final score was not a true reflection of a game during which the determined "Thunder" players had competed superbly with their more illustrious opponents.

Manchester arrived with a team that had a distinct standing height advantage but inspired by the driving plays of Linas Bajorunas, "Thunder" stayed in contact with the visitors and with a 33-44 half time score were still in the game. Stand in coach John Collins demanded a big effort from his players in the third quarter and they responded superbly. George Calvey and Kamisi Fawehihmi laid their bodies on the line against two Manchester players standing over two meters tall, while Sam Round marshalled his players efficiently from the back court. "Thunder" were able to take the period 20-18 to give themselves a chance of an unlikely win but then came those nightmare errors and their chance had gone.

In the 17 point defeat Bajorunas top scored for "Thunder" with 25 points. He also pulled down nine rebounds. Other good point scoring contributions came from Sam and Josh Round together with George Paul while Calvey and Fawehihmi totalled 15 rebounds between them

Sure Shot National Cup Round 1

Derby "Trailblazers" 81 – 79 Northants "Thunder"

The Northants Junior Men endured a tough afternoon last Sunday when they faced Derby "Trailblazers" in a Sure Shot National Cup 2nd Round game at Noel Baker School. First they lost the services of the influential Linas Bajorunas with an ankle strain, then leading rebounder George Calvey had to sit out for long periods of the game with a severe nose bleed.

Despite this "Thunder" were still well in contention after 20 points to eight blitz at the start of the final period of play which contained four three-pointers from George Paul and Sam Round. This gave "Thunder" a 72-67 lead but Derby rallied to draw level at 78 all with a successful free throw. Hope was restored when a "Thunder" fast break was halted with a foul but both free throws were missed followed by a very innocuous foul. "Trailblazers" made one of the resulting free throws giving them the lead but George Calvey tied the scores up again with one of two free throws.

By now “Thunder” were employing a zone defence and in the next Derby offence it seemed that the defensive switch had done its job as late in the shot clock “Trailblazers” launched a speculative shot from the perimeter. The shot missed but Derby’s Wesselingh was able to secure the rebound and score with the put back to give his team a two point lead. “Thunder” coach John Collins called a time out and drew up an out of bounds play with eight seconds of the game remaining but excellent Derby defence forced a turn over and “Thunder” were out of the Cup.

Earlier in the game “Thunder” had looked impressive mounting a number of fast breaks spearheaded by Bajournas, backed up by some excellent perimeter shooting from Sam Round. The Northants boys led 26-18 after the first period of play but the loss of Bajorunas and Calvey affected then very badly and Derby dominated the second quarter to take a 44-40 half time lead. The two teams traded scores in the third quarter before “Thunder” mounted their fourth quarter charge setting up the exciting finale.

In the disappointing loss Sam Round top scored with 35 points while George Paul had six three pointer sin his 20 point haul while Bajorunas had 11 points before his premature departure.

The team has now played four games since the loss of their coach winning two of those games, losing narrowly in the Cup and competing with Manchester. Stand in coach John Collins was full of praise for the players and the determination they have shown.

Overtime grief for Junior Women

Junior Women’s Midlands South West Conference

Bucks “Hornets”	(51 – 51)	Northants “Lightning”
	63 - 58	

The Northants Junior Women suffered a heart breaking overtime defeat at Bucks “Hornets”, a loss which keeps the Northants girls in the lower half of the Midlands South West Conference table.

From the start of proceedings it was clear that this game was always going to be a close run thing. The first half saw both teams struggle to score and at half time there was just one basket separating the two teams with “Hornets” holding a 21-19 lead

The third quarter opened with the home side going on 9-zero run forcing Coach Stacey Shakespeare to call a time out to refocus her team and switch to a zone defence. This proved to be very effective as “Lightning” went on their own 12-0 run and two big three pointers from Lauren Brookes and Sarah Round saw the Northants girls close the period up by one point at 37-36.

The final period of the game was a tense affair and saw “Lightning” lose the services of two of their bigger players with both Lauren Milne and Riona Blessyn fouling out of the game. The loss of these two players meant that “Lightning” had lost supremacy of the boards and led to “Hornets” gaining the momentum with a 10-2 run. Shakespeare took another timeout to halt the Bucks charge and to switch back into a man-to-man defence. A score from Stephanie Ogden and another ‘trey’ from Milne cut the deficit to six points with a minute to go. Coach Shakespeare used her last time out to run an out of bound play to get Sarah Round open for a three point shot, she was fouled in the act of shooting which sent her to the free throw line and she was able to convert all three throws.

With plenty of time still remaining “Lightning” stepped up to a full court defence and fouled “Hornets”, Buchi Obiamago who went to the line and missed both free throws. Hannah Nolan grabbed the rebound and got the ball Round who hit a long two to bring the score to within one point. “Lightning” hustled up on defence and Ogden got a quick steal and ran in the layup which put “Lightning” up by one with 10 seconds of the game remaining. On regaining possession of the ball all “Lightning” had to do was to retain possession but “Hornets” forced a turn-over and “Lightning” fouled. The Bucks player could only make one of the resulting free throws which took the game into overtime.

By this time the “Lightning” players were exhausted and the home side took the extra period 12-7 to win the game 63-58

In the disappointing defeat Stephanie Ogden top scored with 16 points. Sarah Round and Lauren Brookes supported well with 14 and 11 points respectively while captain Lois Bain rebounded superbly.

Win at Birmingham "A's" takes Cadet Men to top of the table.

Cadet Men's Midlands Conference

Birmingham "A's"

54 – 78

Northants "Thunder"

Northants "Thunder" Cadet Men picked up a decisive road win when they visited Birmingham "A's" in a top of the table clash last Saturday. Both teams went into the game boasting identical 4 and 0 records and the game proved to be an entertaining and eventful encounter. However, the quality of the game wasn't matched by the efficiency of the table officiating as the game venue didn't have a visual scoreboard so both teams had to rely on feedback from the table.

"Thunder" started the game in assertive mood, storming into a 9-0 run with a 3 point shot from Jacob Round supported with scores from Ollie Thomas and Jacob Killeya. Birmingham had been employing a 2-3 zone defence but "Thunder's" accuracy from the perimeter forced them to switch to man-to-man and this resulted in the home side responding with a small run of their own to reduce the lead to three. Northants proved to have the upper hand looking to fast break at every opportunity and the lead was extended to double figures at 23-11 by the end of the quarter.

The start to the second quarter was very sluggish, as "Thunder" were unable to score for the first five minutes of the period but luckily, "A's" couldn't take advantage of this. Coach Crump had recognised that Birmingham's offense was very reliant on one particular player so he instructed his team to deny him possession by doubling up on him and encouraged a weaker ball handler to initiate their offense. "Thunder" were able to finish the quarter with a small run influenced by some strong rebounds from Elliot Strausa and Jacob Killeya and by half time they had extended their lead to 37-22.

The Northants team had looked comfortable throughout the first half, but the third quarter was a complete contrast. Birmingham went back their zone defence forcing "Thunder" to shoot from long range, often too early in their offense. "A's" produced a dominant run nailing four 3 pointers in the quarter and it seemed any shot the Birmingham players threw up was successful. A shell-shocked "Thunder" were guilty, of looking to match Birmingham's shots; but were consistently unsuccessful. With two minutes of the quarter remaining Birmingham took the lead for the first time in the game at 50-47. Some good fortune did go "Thunder's" way when "A's" impressive outside scorer picked up his 4th foul and their point guard sustained an injury. "Thunder" employed a zone press which totally surprised the opposition forcing them into a succession of turn-overs. At the end of the period Jacob Round stole the ball and was fouled and made one of the two resulting free throws. He was able to retrieve his own rebound to score and level the scores at 50 points all going into the last stanza.

Coach Crump was concerned that the momentum of the game had swung in Birmingham's favour so he tried to keep his charges in positive mood. His players responded magnificently, reeling off the first six points of the final quarter to lead 56-50. Birmingham re-introduced their dominant players; but this had little impact on the game because the momentum had swung back in "Thunder's" favour as they blitzed Birmingham with a number of transition scores. Eight of those points were back-to-back scores from Jacob Killeya thanks to the unselfish play of his teammates. "Thunder" scored 28 points in this final quarter whilst limiting their opponents to just 4 thanks to some excellent defensive work from Carlo Nieva and Rhys Hill.

In the 78-54 win which maintains the team's unbeaten start to the season, Jacob Killeya top scored finishing with 27 points, with excellent support coming from Carlo Nieva and Jacob Round with 16 points and 14 points respectively.

Coach Rob Crump was very proud of his team, the attitude and commitment displayed by the group during the fourth quarter was exemplary. The boys could have easily given up after Birmingham made their run in the third quarter, but the response shown to win the quarter 28-4 was an outstanding effort. "Thunder" are now top of the Midlands Conference, with a perfect 5 and 0 record. This weekend the team face an away fixture at Bromsgrove Bears.

Under 14 Boys hold on for road win

Under 14 Boys Midlands Conference

Notts Nova

75 – 63

Northants "Thunder"

The Northants Under 15 Boys got back to winning ways with a battling 12 points win at Notts Nova. The Northants team got back on their mini bus confused and perplexed by a number of refereeing decisions which had seen the influential Jacob Round forced out of the game with five fouls.

“Thunder” looked to be the more accomplished team throughout the first two periods of play and by half time had opened up a 43-37 half time lead. This lead was extended to 62-50 going into the final quarter with Jacob Round repeatedly causing problems for the Nova defence despite some very physical attention.

With Round fouling out of the game Nova saw a possibility of mounting a comeback but with Laurence Williams controlling play well and “Thunder” handling the shot clock intelligently they held out for the 12 point win.

For “Thunder”, Round scored 30 points while Zac Kitchen, Williams and Ed Wallhead all contributed 10 points each.

Second win of the season for Under 15 Boys

Under 15 Boys Midlands Conference

Northants “Thunder” 95 – 43 Ilkeston “Outlaws”

A display of up tempo pressure basketball saw the Northants Under 15 Boys pick up their second win of the season thanks to a 95-43 victory over Ilkeston “Outlaws”. What was very pleasing for Coach John Collins was the fact that five of his players scored in double figures. That scoring was led by the impressive David Nieva who totalled 23 points while Ayo Oluyede supported well with 18 points.

“Thunder” exploded out of the blocks to take a 14-2 lead early in the first period of play. This lead was extended to 23-5 by the end of the period and this would have been a great deal bigger had “Thunder” not missed 12 of the 15 free throws they were awarded.

“Outlaws” resorted to a zone defence in the second quarter and this had the effect of slowing down the “Thunder” offence and the home side only won that second period 14-12. During the half time break Coach Collins insisted that his team raised their efforts once more in the third quarter and the players responded superbly winning the period 22-12 to put the final result beyond doubt.

By now the Ilkeston players were cracking under the defensive pressure and even when “Thunder” switched to a zone defence of their own they were able to make a number of steal leading to easy scores. The Northants boys took the final quarter 36-14 to take the game by 50+ points but they will face a tougher challenge this weekend when they take on Shropshire “Warriors”

Under 14 Girls win local bragging rights

Under 14 Girls Midlands South Conference

Northants “Lightning” 57 -47 NEBC “Titans”

The Northants Under 14 Girls won the local battle against NEBC “Titans” last Saturday at the Basketball Centre to earn local bragging rights. “Lightning” were heavily dependent on three players, Bahira Barakat, Georgia Collins, and Holly Winterburn but Coach Darijus Maljudis was pleased with the contributions made by a number of his players especially Precious Ogaji who rebounded well.

“Lightning” made a great start to the game rushing out to a 23-10 first quarter lead. This lead could have been far greater but the Northants girls were guilty of missing a number of free throws. The second period of play was much more competitive as “Titans” settled down and got into their offensive rhythm and “Lightning” were only able to extend their lead by one point to open up a 33-19 half time lead.

It was a different “Titans” that hit the floor for the third quarter and a 7-zero run in the visitor’s favour brought them well and truly back into the game. Both teams were being called for a lot of fouls and there was concern for the home side with the influential Holly Winterburn picking up her fourth foul. “Titans” took the period 18-9 and looked to be in a position to mount a final period charge.

Despite the efforts of Paig Vyse and Mica Denton for “Titans” this threat came to nothing as Winterburn was re-introduced to the contest and Bahira Barakat controlled the tempo of the game. “Lightning” took the final period 15-10 despite losing the services of Winterburn with five fouls; to run out 57-47 winners

Under 13 Boys pick up a back-to-back win

Under 13 Boys Midlands Conference

Leicester “Sparks” 44 – 51 Northants “Thunder”

The Northants Under 13 Boys recorded their second win of the season with a seven point victory away to Leicester Sparks.

Strong driving to the basket from the “Thunder” boys got Leicester into early foul trouble, but the Northants boys failed to finish the scoring attempts and also missed 10 of the 13 free throws awarded in the first quarter. With Thunder playing good defence at the other end of the floor, “Sparks” were limited in their scoring as well and the opening period finished 9-8 to Northants.

The two teams traded baskets through the second quarter adding just 11 and 10 to their respective totals, which gave Thunder a slender 20-18 half-time lead.

Despite close attention from Tom Berry and Elliot Atherton, Leicester’s talented guard, Ethan Morrell, was having an outstanding game, but it was “Thunder’s” dominance of the boards that made the biggest difference. Ed Wallhead and Gio Prati combined well in the third quarter helping their team to open up a seven point lead going into the final ten minutes of lay.

Morrell continued to cause problems for Thunder through the final period, but rebounds and points from debutant Chris Amankonah extended Thunder’s lead to 11. As the game ran out, Morrell added more to his team-leading total, but with little time left, the result was never in doubt. Wallhead was Thunder’s leading scorer with 22 points and he was well-supported by Chris Amankonah who managed 10 points in his first game for the team. Two wins on the bounce has given “Thunder” confidence for their next game which is against local rivals Northamptonshire Titans, but Coach Mike Round is still slightly concerned about the high percentage of missed lay-ups and free throws.

Six Northants players named in England squads

Last week the ‘long’ lists for the six England age group squads were announced and six Northants boys and girls have been included. George Calvey has been named in the Junior Men’s squad while Harri Owens and Sarah Round have been selected for the Cadette (Under 16 Girls) group. Cat Askham, Holly Winterburn, and Jacob Round have got the nod for the two Under 15 Development squads.

THIS WEEKEND’S ACTION

Saturday 16th November

9-30am to 11am

10am to 11am

1-30 pm

3-30pm

Under 12 Practice

Junior “Ballers”

Cadette Women versus Birmingham “A’s”

Under 15 Boys versus Shropshire “Warriors

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

Senior Men travel to Birmingham “A’s”

Cadet Men travel to Bromsgrove “Bears”

Under 14 Girls travel to County Upper School

Sunday 17th November

Junior Men travel to Sheffield Sharks”