

# **NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Senior Men make it a perfect seven**

#### **VCARS Men's Division Four Midlands Conference**

**Northants "Thunder"      110 - 50      Derby "Trailblazers III"**

The Northants senior men duly completed a win over a very young "Trailblazers" team to make it seven wins out of seven starts in the VCARS Division Four Midlands Conference.

The young Derby team made a perfect start to the game and thanks to their skipper Jonny Jessop jumped out to an 11-8 lead with just four minutes of the game gone. This was the only time "Trailblazers" were to hold the lead, as "Thunder" took total control of the game. Spurred into action "Thunder" went on a 22-6 run to finish the quarter, with Matt Yates and Jason Tucker combining for 18 points.

In the second period of play the Northants team increased their defensive pressure and caused a number of Derby turnovers, resulting in a 14-4 run. "Trailblazers" resorted to a zone defence and this had the effect of slowing the game down with "Thunder" patiently running their half court offence and looking for open shots. They took the period 21-12 to lead 51-29 at half time, leaving "Trailblazers" with the proverbial 'mountain to climb'.

Any thoughts of a Derby comeback were quickly dispelled at the start of the third quarter as Leome Francis began to dominate in the defensive rebounding department which enabled "Thunder" to run in a number of fast break attacks. "Thunder" outscored their opponents by 20 points to three in the first seven minutes of the quarter and to all intents and purposes it was game over with the score at 78-36

During the fourth quarter the "Thunder" coaching staff was able to rotate their players with the notable action coming from Nick Stannard taking his team's score over the hundred mark and Dave Nutall fittingly scoring the game's final points on his last game for the club before his move to Bournemouth.

In the overwhelming win all twelve "Thunder" players scored led by debutant Matt Yates with 21 points a total matched by Leon Henry. Other notable contributions came from Leome Francis and Jason Tucker who both recorded double-doubles.

As the Northants Basketball Club reflects on the achievements of their newest team it is a case of '**job done**'. Top of their Conference and a place in the National Shield quarter finals is very pleasing but only to be expected considering the ability and experience of their players. The aim now will be to push on the New Year to reach the Play Offs and gain promotion to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division.

### **Important win for Junior Men in the Second City**

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

**City of Birmingham      72 - 75      Northants "Thunder"**

A seriously below strength Northants junior men's team travelled to City of Birmingham with two players unavailable through work commitments and the cadet players involved with their own fixture. In the first period of play all the "Thunder" players took responsibility on offence as the two teams exchanged scores and "Thunder" took a narrow 22-21 lead.

The first quarter hadn't been auspicious for the defensive efforts of either team but at the start of the second quarter "Thunder" managed to edge further ahead thanks to some good perimeter shooting from Jack Thomas and Kyle Mayes. Leading by eight points "Thunder" became guilty of some poor decision making on offence which led to a number of breakaway baskets for COB, as the lead was cut to just 4 points with two minutes of the period remaining. It was almost as though "Thunder" thought the quarter was only eight minutes long, as they disappeared for the final 90 seconds, allowing COB to go on a 12-2 run & open up a 44-38 half time lead.

Coach Rob Eddon shared some pretty stern word with his players during the half time break and whether it was those, or the leadership of captain Mat Yates is only for conjecture, but it was a different "Thunder" that emerged from the changing room and blew C.O.B. out of the water for six minutes. The Northants boys went

on a 16-2 run with Yates attacking the C.O.B. zone from the inside, whilst Luke Lewis and Mayes continued the scoring threat from beyond the arc. However, it was the defensive efforts of all players, in particular Jason Moore that kept C.O.B. at bay. Kamesi Fawehinmi became a beast on the boards, whilst the “Thunder” guards stepped up the defensive intensity and decided not to be pushed around by C.O.B’s screening offences.

“Thunder” took the third quarter 22-14 to open up a narrow 60-58 lead but it was apparent that the game was going to be a close run thing and so it proved. Yates made two steals leading to scores to put his team up by four points but C.O.B. weren’t done for and two scores, one of them a huge three –pointer gave them a one point advantage with 54 seconds of the game remaining. Fawehinmi hunted down a big offensive rebound and got fouled on the ‘put back’ but could only convert one of the resulting free throws to level the game at 72 all. The C.O.B. coach took a time out and his team ran a controlled offence, but missed the resulting shot. Fawehinmi came up with the rebound and his quick outlet to Yates was going to result in only one thing. The game’s leading scorer attacked in the broken floor and was fouled as he converted the lay up. He made the bonus shot but with 24 seconds of the game remaining C.O.B. once again had the chance to respond. Again they got off a shot under intense defensive pressure but the shot rimmed out and once again Fawehinmi came up with the rebound as “Thunder” were able to ride out the game and gain their fourth Conference win of the season.

In the exciting victory “Thunder’s” scoring was led by Yates with 27 points but important contributions came from Lewis and Mayes with 13 and 12 points respectively. Fawehinmi came up with nine points and as many rebounds while Linas Bajorunas’s seven points all came at key times.

### Mixed fortunes for Junior Women

<b>Junior Women’s Midlands South-West Conference</b>		
<b>Sporting Club “Albion”</b>	<b>71 - 59</b>	<b>Northants “Lightning”</b>
<b>Northants “Lightning”</b>	<b>65 - 58</b>	<b>Reading “Rockets”</b>
	<b>(51 - 51)</b>	

A win and a loss over last weekend means that the Northants “Lightning” junior women will go into 2013 in 2<sup>nd</sup> spot in the Midlands South-West Conference

On Saturday “Lightning” went down by 12 points to Sporting Club “Albion” a team they had comfortably defeated earlier in the season. From the off the game was a close run thing and at half time “Lightning” held a one point lead. The key moment of the third period of play was an ankle injury to “Lightning’s” Lois Bain which saw her sidelined for the rest of the game. SCA hit two big three-pointers as they went on a 10-2 run and open up a gap that “Lightning” was unable to close despite a strong finish.

In the 12 points defeat Lois Bain topped her team’s scoring with 14 points before picking up her injury. Izzy Johns and Steph Ogden both contributed with 13 points apiece while Lauren Brookes supported well with 11 points.

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Less than 24 hours after their loss to “Albion” the “Lightning” girls were back on court to face a Reading “Rockets” who proved to be far better than their won four lost three record suggested. With Reading suffering a couple of injuries in the first period of play “Lightning” were able to establish a 23-11 lead but “Rockets” recovered well in the second quarter thanks to some excellent perimeter shooting. They took the quarter 14-7 so at half time “Lightning’s” lead had been cut to 30-25.

Reading’s offence was strongly based on penetrating the “Lightning” defence and kicking the ball to perimeter shooters so “Lightning’s” defensive efforts at the start of the third quarter were to try and stop the initial penetration. In the event both teams found scoring difficult and the period was tied at 11 all with everything to pay for in the final stanza.

After a good start to the last period the “Lightning” players became guilty of watching the scoreboard as “Rockets” began to make inroads into the home side’s narrow lead. Despite this “Lightning” still led by three going into the dying seconds of the game but they were stunned as Reading’s guard Molar connected with a long range three-pointer to tie the scores at 51 all.

At the start of overtime it was a very different “Lightning” team that took to the floor and early scores from Steph Ogden and Izzy Johns followed by a lay up and three-pointer from Amy Boot took them into an eight point lead and despite a couple of scares ran out winners by 65 points to 58.

In the overtime win Johns top scored with 17 points. Ogden scored 9 points six of them in overtime, a total matched by Hannah Nolan while in the absence of the injured Lois Bain, Rio Blessyn rebounded superbly while Coach Stacey Shakespeare made special mention of the defensive efforts of Amber Leiba against the bigger Reading players.

### Cadet Men finish the year on a low and a high

#### Cadet Men’s Premier Division North

**City of Birmingham            68 – 88            Northants “Thunder”**

The Northants cadet men closed 2012 with a win and a loss against middle of the table opposition last weekend. Saturday’s loss to an athletic and well organised City of Birmingham team was almost totally down to an appalling start. In the absence of a recognised ball-handler Coach John Collins started with two guards but under intense pressure they gave the ball away on a number of occasions. Replacements could do no better and “Thunder” found themselves trailing 24-7 after seven minutes of play and 27-12 down after the first period of play.

The drastic situation called for drastic measures as forward Josh Round was given ball-handling responsibilities while the team switched to a zone defence. The Northants ‘big’ man didn’t disappoint and for the first time in the game “Thunder” were able to advance the ball through the C.O.B. pressure and into their offence while at the defensive end the home side seemed confused by “Thunder’s” match-up zone defence. “Thunder” edged the period 23-20 to reduce the deficit to 35-47 at half time.

“Thunder” had managed to reduce that margin by another two points as the third quarter drew to a close with Pauli Laurinolli breaking from the top of the zone. The last two minutes of the period were a total disaster for “Thunder” as they totally lost their discipline and C.O.B. went on an 8-zero run to extend their lead to 67-49.

“Thunder” were getting a tremendous rebounding performance from Karan Virdee but they lost his services when he became involved in an altercation with a Birmingham player which saw both players ejected from the game. The two team’s exchanged baskets as C.O.B. ran out comfortable and deserved winners by 20 points but there were also a lot of positives for “Thunder” not least of all the 40 point haul from Laurinolli, the ball handling skills of Round, the perimeter shooting of George Paul, the rebounding of Virdee and the committed hustle of the four other “Thunder” players.

**Northants “Thunder”            69 – 61            Sheffield Junior “Sharks”**

The next day “Thunder” entertained Sheffield Junior “Sharks” a team that had only lost to the three leading teams in the North Premier Division. Coach John Collins was able to field a better balanced team thanks to the inclusion of specialist guards Ollie Thomas and Jacob Round from younger teams. Even so he started with the line up that had done him proud the previous day and they eked out a 17-14 lead after the first period of play 12 of “Thunder’s” points coming from George Paul three-pointers.

Both teams were employing zone defences with the attacking approaches of the two teams being very different. “Thunder” were relying on fast breaks orchestrated by his rookie ball handlers, allied to fast ball movement and perimeter shooting while “Sharks” preferred to power the ball inside to their big man Marco Backovic. The second quarter was a close run thing with “Sharks” just edging it 14-10 to take a 28-27 half time lead.

Coach John Collins was concerned that his team had been out-rebounded in the first half so adopted a man-to-man defence at the start of the third quarter but this was to prove to be disastrous. His team was ripped apart as “Sharks” went on a 7-zero run and another defeat looked to be on the cards but for once “Thunder” refused to ‘lie down and die’. Inspired by the efforts of the younger Round in the back court and four more three-pointers from Paul, “Thunder” went on an 18-3 charge to take a 52-42 lead going into the final ten minutes of play.

“Thunder” had resorted back to their zone defence and once again they had problems containing the Sheffield rebounders and the period became punctuated by a succession of free throws for the visitors. Thankfully for “Thunder” the “Sharks” players found the pressure too much as they proceeded to miss nine shots from the charity stripe and “Thunder” held on for a 69-61 win.

In the eight point win George Paul led “Thunder’s” scoring with 30 points including eight three-pointers with excellent support coming from Pauli Laurinoli with 18 points. Other notable performances came from Josh Round who had 8 points, 10 rebounds and 5 block and Karan Virdee who once again rebounded superbly but Coach Collins attributed his team’s win to the better balance provided by Thomas and Jacob.

**Cadette Women’s Midlands South-West Conference**  
**Northants “Lightning Too”      20 - 0      Reading “Rockets”**

The Northants cadette women’s side were left without a game last weekend with Reading unable to raise a team for this Midlands South-West Conference fixture

**Northants “Lightning”      98 – 29      Wiltshire “Demons”**

The Northants under 15 girls duly picked up win number seven of the season against a spirited but short handed Wiltshire “Demons” team at the Basketball Centre last Sunday. The win takes them up to an unexpected 2nd place in the Midlands South-West Conference table going into 2013.

The game was as good as over as a contest at the end of the quarter by which time “Lightning” had opened up a 26-zero lead. At this stage Coach Karen Goodrich ‘called off the hounds’ and gave all her players ample playing time and they responded well by all contributing to the scoring.

To their credit the “Demons” players never gave up despite being totally outclassed as “Lightning” comfortably won the following three periods to record a 69 points win in which Lauren Milne and Hari Owens scored 23 and 21 points respectively. These two players also had double figure rebounds and Ruchae Walton was another “Lightning” player to record a double-double with 10 points and as many rebounds while Charlotte Berridge chipped in with 13 personal points.

**Nieva injury costs Under 15 Boys dear**

**Under 15 Boys Midlands Conference**  
**Northants “Thunder”      54 - 70      Leicester “Dynamite”**

Earlier in the season the Northants under 15 boys lost by over 40 points to Leicester “Dynamite” so on the face of it this 16 point set back could be seen as a very positive result. In fact had it not been for an injury to influential guard Carlo Nieva, “Thunder” might have edged a win against a team currently in second place in the Midlands Conference.

“Dynamite” initially gained the upper hand taking an 8-2 lead, but “Thunder” responded well through Jacob Killeya and Josh Arimoro and the deficit was quickly reduced to 8-9. The Leicester team were employing an aggressive full court man to man defence but Thunder were able to break their press with ease and thanks to scores from Carlo Nieva , and Ed Hall they closed the first quarter leading 23-14.

The second quarter saw “Dynamite” employing a 2-3 zone which had the effect of slowing down the Thunder offence, although the Northants boys were able to pick up useful scores close to basket. With the scores all tied up Nieva picked up his game finishing injury and “Dynamite” went on a 12-2 charge to take a 34-31 half time lead

Inspired by some half time words from Coach Rob Crump, “Thunder” came out for the third quarter with all guns blazing storming into a 37-34 lead thanks to a 6-zero charge. The “Thunder” forwards Jacob Killeya, Josh Arimoro and Ed Hall were doing a great job defending Leicester’s 6 feet 4 inch big man and this disturbed “Dynamite’s” offence. “Thunder” edged the period 15-12 to tie the scores up at 42 all with everything to play for in the last ten minutes.

By now the “Dynamite” coach had recognised that “Thunder” were restricted to just one ball handler and he instructed his players to deny the ball to Ollie Thomas. With other players forced into unaccustomed ball handling duties “Thunder” were guilty of turning the ball over as the Leicester team took the period 24-8 to record a 70-54 win.

Despite losing the game, Coach Crump was very happy with the result and performance displayed by his team which had 24 points from Killeya and 12 apiece from Josh Arimoro and Ed Hall and he was full of praise for the mercurial efforts of Ollie Thomas.

## **Nieva and Round see Under 14 Boys home against “Warriors”**

**Under 14 Boys Midlands Conference**  
**Shropshire “Warriors”      85 - 100      Northants “Thunder”**

With Coach Mickey Paul unavailable, Thunder travelled to Telford seeking their first away win of the season under the direction of stand in coach Mike Round. They eventually gained this win despite struggling to contain the “Warriors” big men who scored a number of put back points.

In the first quarter the scene was set with the “Warriors” big men scoring 19 of their team’s points despite the best efforts of Ayo Oluyede and Rob Clarke. At the offensive end the home side were struggling to contain David Nieva and Jacob Round and by the end of the period “Thunder” had opened up a narrow 26-23 lead.

The pattern of the game continued in the second quarter but some determined “Thunder” defence saw them extend their lead to 53-40 at half time

“Warriors” had the better of the third quarter which they took 23-17 to reduce the deficit to just seven points and cause some nervousness in the “Thunder” camp. The Northants boys responded in the best possible way going on an 11-4 run to re-establish their superiority and forcing “Warriors” to employ a desperate full court pressure defence. The “Thunder” guards David Nieva and Jacob Round comfortably coped with this pressure as Oluyede, Hayden Sayers and Phil Kempston ran in lay ups. “Thunder” took the period 30-22 to record a satisfying 100-85 victory, but it was clear that “Thunder” need do some work on boxing out and defensive rebounding.

Not for the first time this season the “Thunder” scoring was dominated by Jacob Round and David Nieva who scored 44 and 31 points respectively although Ayo Oluyede’s 10 point haul was pleasing

## **Under 14 Girls unable to cause an upset**

**Under 14 Girls Midlands South Conference**  
**Haringey “Angels”      73 – 45      Northants “Lightning”**

The Northants under 14 girls travelled to north London in the hope of inflicting a second Midlands South Conference defeat on a talented Haringey “Angels” team. In the event they had to settle for a good performance but a substantial defeat. Haringey’s victory was down to an excellent personal performance from their England international Savannah Wilkinson who scored 25 points for her team, and their overall superior standing height.

“Lightning” lost all four quarters but they were competitive in all four and Coach Karen Goodrich was able to take a number of positives from the game not least of all 19 points and nine rebounds from the hard working Caitlin Stewart. Ruchae Walton battled hard for her 12 points and an outstanding 15 rebounds while Abi Hobbs and Sarah Round also made important contributions.

## **First win for Under 13 Girls**

**Under 13 Girls East of England League**  
**Northants “Lightning”      63 – 51      Bury St Edmund’s**

The Northants under 13 girls picked up their first win of the season with a 12 point victory over Bury St Edmund’s who are basically the County Upper School team. In fact the margin of victory might well have been larger had “Lightning” coach Darius Malutis not taken off his team’s full court pressure defence once they had establish a 20 point lead. In the ensuing three minutes Bury outscored the Northants girls 12-4 to make the final score line a little more respectable.

The Bury team arrived with a small squad but fielding some considerable standing height and initially this caused “Lightning” some problems as the visitors took the first quarter 18-17. In the second period of play “Lightning’s” pressure defence began to pay dividends as they were able to force turn overs leading to easy scores.

This continued to be the pattern of the game until those final three minutes as a delighted “Lightning” team got their first taste of victory led by 21 points from Ellie Soloman and 17 points from Holly Winterburn who also battled hard against the Bury ‘bigs’”

## **COLLEGE BASKETBALL**

### **East Midlands Colleges Basketball Tournaments**

#### **Gateway sees of Moulton again**

##### **Men's Tournament**

Loughborough College	15 – 43	Moulton College
Gateway College	31 – 19	Moulton College
Linclon College	6 – 21	Moulton College

A 12 point loss to their nemesis Gateway College from Leicester who went on to win the tournament, meant that Moulton would not be representing the East Midlands in the National Championships at Bath in March. After comfortably beating Loughborough College in their Pool, Moulton knew they would need to defeat Gateway in order to reach the Final because there were no cross-overs.

In the event they failed to do this going down by 12 points in the ten minute game and despite the best efforts of skipper Matt Yates. Moulton initially employed a combination defence in an attempt to curtail the scoring of two of Gateway’s key players. This tactic was successful but other Gateway players rose to the occasion and shot superbly from the perimeter to clinch the game for their team.

In a meaningless third game Moulton easily defeated Lincoln College but were left ruing the fact that with no cross-overs they would not have another bite at the cherry.

#### **Loss to Derby Costs Moulton dear**

##### **Girl's Tournament**

Gateway College	2 - 15	Moulton College
Derby College	9 - 6	Moulton College
Moulton College	13 - 11	New College Nottingham
Moulton College	20 -12	South Nottingham College

The Moulton Collage girl’s team failed to retain their East Midlands title and so will not represent the East Midlands in the National Championships. The Eats Midlands Tournament was organised on a ‘round robin’ basis and after comfortably beating an inecperiented Gateway team they faced unbeaten Derby College.

Derby employed an obdurate zone defence which caused Moulton problems with their usually reliable perimeter shooters Shanique Alexander, Amelia Hindle and Livvie Lambe failing to connect with open shots. Meanwhile at the other end Derby scored with two speculative efforts and in the shortened game, that was that.

Moulton went on to defeat New College and South Nottingham College to claim 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the tournament.

## **SEASON GREETINGS**



***The players, Coaches and Management Committee of the Northants Basketball Club wish all their fans, parents and their friends in the media a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year.***

***See you all in 2013***

