

NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB

PRESS RELEASE

National Cup games

On Sunday two teams from the Club were in National Cup action but both exited the competition after suffering heavy defeats.

“Thunder” rally comes too late

Junior Men’s National Cup Round 3

Milton Keynes “Cobras” 86 – 63 Northants “Thunder”

Going into the fourth quarter of this National Cup 3rd Round tie Milton Keynes held a comfortable 73-38 lead. For the three periods of play “Thunder” had been troubled by “Cobras” aggressive run and jump defence and had been guilty of turning the ball over on an alarming number of occasions. With the final result of the game already decided “Thunder” seemed to relax and execute what their coach had been asking them to do throughout the game. Yes, Milton Keynes weren’t paying with the same defensive intensity but they could do nothing to stop “Thunder” outscoring them 25-13 in that final period.

Prior to that “Cobras” had outscored “Thunder” by double digits in each of the first three periods. When they hadn’t created easy scoring opportunities from their aggressive defence they were running efficient offences while “Thunder” were relying heavily on the mid-range shooting of Jacob Killeya and Brendan Ross.

In the 23 point defeat Ollie Thomas top scored with 15 of his 19 points coming from 15 of 18 shooting from the ‘charity stripe’. Killeya and Ross had 16 and 12 points respectively while Carlo Nieva contributed 11 points but the spectre hanging over the team was the alarming statistic of 32 turn-overs.

Mystics too physical for “Lightning”

Cadette Girls National Cup Quarter Final

Manchester “Mystics” 64 – 37 Northants “Lightning”

For the second week running Coach Karen Goodrich was less than happy with the quality of officiating in the north west of England. On this occasion she felt that the game officials were far too familiar with the Manchester coach allowing him to comment on most of the decisions that went against his team. Goodrich was quick to acknowledge that “Mystics” were the better team but expected more neutrality when it came to a Cup quarter final and after a round trip of almost three hundred miles.

“Lightning” battled hard in the first period of play but found scoring difficulty against the hard-nosed “Mystics” defence. Their own defence kept them in the contest and after the first quarter they were still in touch at 14-17. Against physical teams that are prepared to send you to the free throw line the key is to hit the resulting free throws. In the second quarter “Lightning” were guilty of missing no less than eight shots from ‘the stripe’; losing the period 4-15 to give themselves a mountain to climb in the second half as they found themselves trailing 18-32.

“Lightning” made an encouraging start to the third period with scores from Abbi Hobbs and Sarah Round but then once again they totally dried up losing the quarter 8-13 to fall even further behind. With the final result virtually beyond doubt things got better for “Lightning” during the final period of play and were matching “Mystics” 11 all before the home side finished the game with an 8-zero surge.

In the disappointing 27 point defeat Ruchae Walton top scored for “Lightning” with 13 points and Sarah Round contributed 10 points while Caitlin Stewart (14), Abbi Hobbs (8) and Holly Winterburn (7) did a manful job on the defensive boards.

Cadet Men return to winning action

Under 16 Boys Midland Conference

Northants “Thunder” 93 - 28 Shropshire “Warriors”

After the shock of seeing their team mate Reece Zubal seriously injured the previous week, the Northants Cadet Boys got back to action with a convincing win over an enthusiastic but light weight Shropshire “Warriors” team.

Switching from their preferred zone press defence to a full court man-to-man press “Thunder” made an impressive start to the game outscoring “Warriors” 19-3 in the first five minutes of the game. Even so Coach John Collins was unhappy with the way some of his players had been beaten on the dribble by “Warriors” players. Indeed, if the Shropshire boys had shot with more accuracy when wide open they would have accrued far more points.

With “Warriors” resorting to a full court press themselves “Thunder” were able to run in a number of unopposed lay ups in the second quarter with Julian Abeam catching the eye with his athleticism. “Warriors” managed eight points in the first seven minutes of the period but then fell apart and were rocked by a 14-zero “Thunder” charge.

With a 49-18 half time score line the result of the game was now beyond doubt but Collins insisted that his team maintained their defensive intensity during the remaining two periods. They failed to do this and only outscored their opponents 15-10 during the third quarter earning them a stern reminder from Collins.

They certainly took his words to heart and a tiring “Warriors” outfit failed to score during the final period of play while “Thunder” poured in 29 to close out a 93-28 win, Abeam closing the game with another six point flurry.

In the big win Jacob Round top scored with 24 points despite having restricted playing minutes. Ayo Aluyede supported well with 21 points while Abeam and Emanuel Aromoro scored 13 and 10 points respectively.

Young “Storm” no match for rampant “Lightning”

Under 16 Girls Midlands South-West Conference

Northants “Lightning” 95 – 31 Bristol “Storm”

The Northants cadette women warmed up for their National Cup quarter final game with a Conference game against a young Bristol “Storm” team. If “Lightning” were looking for tough opposition they certainly didn’t get it with their opponents managing just a single point in the first period of play while they poured in 33.

For the rest of the game Coach Karen Goodrich was able to use her senior players in small burst and was pleased with the contributions made by some of her younger players especially Lucy Amena, Precious Ogaji and Holly Winterburn. “Lightning” comfortably outscored their opponents in the remaining three periods before running out winners by 95 points to 31.

In the big win Ruchae Walton and Sarah Round were the team’s top scorers with 21 and 19 points respectively with the three young players all making significant contributions while Esther Alake (8 points and 5 rebounds) and Abbi Hobbs (11 points and 7 rebounds) had impressive outings. An impressive performance but was it what was needed before the tough Cup game the next day?

Under 15 Boys are ‘top of the pile’

Under 15 Boys Midlands South West Conference

Northants “Thunder” 95 – 53 Thames Valley “Cavaliers”

This game between the top two teams in the Conference table should have been exciting contest but it turned out to be a rather bad tempered one sided affair after “Cavaliers” scorer Banks fouled out of the game early in the second period of play. Thames Valley left the Basketball Centre feeling they had been hard done but in fairness the two game officials were very consistent in they way they blew fouls. Experienced coaches know that referees rarely change the way they ‘call’ a game but the “Cavaliers” refused to adjust their playing style and suffered the consequences.

The game opened with “Thunder” embarking on a 14-5 run but thanks to the efforts of Banks, “Cavaliers” reduced the deficit to 16-20. “Thunder” were guilty of missing several easy scoring opportunities and failing to secure defensive rebounds Tyler Matemasango worked hard for two basket but the game was very much a case of Banks versus Jacob Round. Round had 14 of his teams 23 first quarter points and Banks 19 of Cavaliers 25.

Coach Grahame Yates was rotating players to put pressure on Banks and this seemed to frustrate the Thames Valley player who was ‘called’ for an offensive foul and responded by hanging on the basket and picking up a technical foul. Banks was sat down to save him from further foul trouble and without their ‘superstar’, “Cavaliers” totally lost their way and led by Round, “Lightning” embarked on a 25-zero run to take a 56-33 half time lead.

The half time message to the “Thunder” players was, “Keep your composure” and with so many Thames Valley players in foul trouble the home side found scoring relatively easy but they were also guilty of playing some less than intense defence. They still took the quarter 24-12 to extend their lead to an unassailable 80-45.

With Zac Kitchen and Zinzan Oosthuizen claiming defensive rebounds and Ed Wallhead becoming an increasing threat on offence “Thunder” were well into their ‘running game’. During one of their fast breaks the energetic Ed Taylan was injured and forced to leave the game as Coach Yates freely rotated his players and all twelve of them ended up contributing to the final total of 95 points. The “Thunder” scoring was led by Jacob Round with 46 points while Ed Wallhead contributed 15 points and Tyler Matemasango 10.

“Thunder” top the Midland Conference table and this week they face Bracknell “Cobras” who have lost only one game so far this season.

Under 14 Boys maintain that winning habit

Under 14 Boys Midlands Conference

Team Birmingham	87 – 92	Northants Thunder
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Travel problems on the motorway restricted “Thunder’s” warm-up time to just a few minutes, but this didn’t stop the team from starting well and winning the first quarter 20-18. It became clear that it was going to be a tough game as Team Birmingham’s line-up included two talented tall players.

At the start of the second period, Team Birmingham showed no signs of rolling over on their home court as they regained the lead and went 33-28 ahead. However, with a few minutes to go before the half-time break, the Birmingham coach took one of his star players out of the game. This gave Thunder the chance to apply some full court pressure, and this resulted in Ed Wallhead, Chris Amankonah and Josh Lloyd all contributing to a 15-2 run which saw “Thunder” finishing the half 47-38 ahead.

Mid-way through the third quarter it looked like Thunder had broken the will of their opponents as they led 63-46, but Team Birmingham then went on a run of their own scoring 11 unanswered points and going into the final period, Thunder were still only 12 points ahead. In that fourth quarter Thunder continued to break well, although they lost their composure when forced to play set offences and they failed to stop Team Birmingham’s scoring threats from getting to the basket. When Amankonah fouled out it looked like “Thunder” were going to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory; however, important steals from Wallhead, Berry and Lloyd and nerves of steel on the free throw line from Austin Evans meant that even though Thunder lost the final quarter 26-19, they managed to hang on and win the game 92-87.

In this important and hard-earned result, Wallhead poured in 35 points and three of his team-mates also achieved double figures with Lloyd, Amankonah and Wilborn scoring 22, 12 and 10 respectively. The Northants boys are now second in the Midlands Conference but they will have to be in good form again this weekend if they’re to get the same result against City of Birmingham who like “Thunder” have only lost one game.

Under 14 Girls stay undefeated

Under 14 Girls Midland Conference

City of Birmingham 58 - 42 Northants "Lightning"

Like the Under 14 boys, the Under 14 girls also suffered travel problems to Birmingham and were forced to sit in the mini bus for two and a half hours for a journey that normally takes a little over an hour. The team arrived at the game venue in a rather anxious mood and started the game seriously underprepared but in the event this didn't stop "Lightning" going on a 15-2 run to open up the game and they led after the first period of play by 19 points to 10.

In the second quarter the Northants girls were guilty of 'going a little cold' and COB mounted a serious comeback as they took the second quarter 15-12 to reduced "Lightning's" lead at half time to six points at 31-25.

During the half time interval Coach Stacey Shakespeare emphasised the importance of the whole team playing aggressive defence. Her players responded magnificently especially Katie Dinnell who played some fantastic defence on C.O.B.'s talented point guard. Dinnell's efforts forced a number of steals for Lucy Amena and Bahira Barakat leading to easy scores. "Lightning" won the third quarter 14-4 and despite the best efforts of the home side held on for the 58-42 win.

In the 16 point victory only two "Lightning" players, Lucy Amena with 17 and Bahira Barakat with 15 were able to get in double figures but, Coach Shakespeare was extremely pleased that all 12 players had made important contributions to the final result.

THIS WEEKEND'S ACTIVITIES

Saturday 13th December

9.30am to 11am	"Ballers" Under 10's and Under 12's
10am to 11am	Junior Ballers
11.30 am	Under 13 Boys versus Notts Nova Cadet Boys versus Ilkeston "Outlaws"
1.30pm	Senior Men versus Hackney "White Heat"

Sunday 14th December

11.30am	Under 14 Girls versus Leicester "Riders" Under 14 Boys versus City of Birmingham
1.30pm	Under 15 Boys versus Bracknell Junior Women versus Gloster "Jets"

The games on both days 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

Also on Sunday; Senior Women travel to Loughborough "Riders II"

For further information contact **John Collins on 07801 533 151**