

NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB

PRESS RELEASE

Blank weekend for the senior men in the South West

The Northants "Thunder" senior men travelled to the south and south-west of England last weekend knowing that they needing at least one win from their double-header weekend, to maintain their challenge for an end of season play off place. In the event they returned empty handed and now they will need to beat some high rated teams if they are to make it to end of season play.

Men's Division Three (South Conference)

Team Solent 88 – 79 Northants "Thunder"

The fact that Thunder visited the free throw line on 15 occasions in the first quarter was testament to how physical the game was to be played. Unfortunately, Thunder connected with only 14 of the 23 free throws they were awarded in the first two periods, and although they led 25-20 after the first period of play, Solent did well to battle the score line back to 48-43 in their favour by the half time buzzer.

The physicality of the first half continued in the third quarter but in the opinion of the Northants coaching staff the referees seemed to have left their whistles in the locker-room at half-time as the physicality got out of hand. Solent had been 'called' for sixteen fouls in the first half but this was reduced to just four in the next two periods of play. Thunder tried their best not to let this affect them, and with their forwards Benji Henry and Jacob Holt hitting big buckets both inside, and from the perimeter were able to stay in contention. A 13-zero Solent run in the final three minutes of the third seemed to undo all of Northants hard work.

Thunder did their very best to claw back the score line, and even dragged it back to single figures in the final minutes, but Solent hit their shots at crucial times to give Northants their first loss of the weekend. In the nine point defeat Henry top scored with 22 points; good support coming from Holt and the Danny's Barrett and Turiccki all of whom scored in double figures

Plymouth "Raiders II" 76 – 60 Northants "Thunder"

Although both teams had had a fixture the previous day, it was Northants who had faced a three hour drive from Southampton to Plymouth late the previous night, and staying overnight in a nearby hotel. Unfortunately, Northants seemed to have missed their morning wake up call as Plymouth shot out to a 15-zero lead in the first six minutes of the game.

With Thunder turning the ball over at will, and Raiders getting easy fast break scores, it was always going to be an uphill struggle to get back in the game. With Northants guard Devon Adams leading from the front, the visitors picked themselves up and dragged the score line back to at least a realistic 23-12 deficit by the end of the first quarter.

The second period was a much closer affair with Northants edging it 20-18. It seemed as if Plymouth were struggling to match up with the mobility and athleticism of Northants forwards Turiccki and Holt. As Plymouth's foul trouble continued to rise, it was the Thunder that were starting the win the 'battle of the boards'. The visitors also improved on their previous night's free throw accuracy as they went in at half time trailing 32-41 but with a renewed hope that the game was well within their reach.

Northants played their best basketball of the game at both ends of the floor in the first six minutes of the second half, limiting Plymouth to tough shots, and getting open looks with good 'team offences'. Thunder closed the gap to just three points, but that was as close as they were going to get as Plymouth guards Carr and Gillbard came off multiple physical screens to fire the gap to double figures once more. Northants tried to respond, but the effort it had taken them to get back from that opening six minutes was just too much, and Plymouth finished with a 16 point win, 76-60 in which Turiccki scored 25 points and Holt 12 for Thunder.

The visiting team had given their all, but were left to regret the opening six minutes of one way traffic.

Fourth quarter surge ‘downs’ “Giants”

Women’s Division Two (North Conference

Mansfield “Giants” 73 – 47 Northants “Lightning”

Going into the final quarter of this North Conference game Lightning led the Giants of Mansfield by just three points at 45-42. Coach Karen Goodrich’s instructions to her team were simple, “Keep running, they are very tired.” How true this was as the Northants girls outscored their opponents by 28 points to five in the final ten minutes of play to record a decisive 73-47 win.

All this came following a determined Mansfield come back after Lightning had made an excellent start to the game, putting their opponents under pressure with full their full court zone press. The team took good shooting options and combined with some excellent moves close to basket by Manal Cali led 22-10 after the first period of play.

During the second quarter the Mansfield players coped with Lightning’s press with much more composure and thanks to their superior standing height were able to claim a number of offensive rebounds. The home side won the quarter 19-8 thanks to a 15-2 run to reduce Lightning’s lead to 30-29 at half time.

The third quarter was a tight run affair just edged 15-13 by Lightning. Then, with Erin Clarke pushing the ball up court Lightning went on that dramatic final quarter surge in which Stephanie Ogden scored 18 of her 22 point haul. She was well supported by Cali who scored 18 points and pulled down as many rebounds but Goodrich was quick to point out that this was a win based on team pressure and was full of praise for Esme Kinghorn and the seven under-aged players in the team.

“Demons” hold no fear for Cadette Women

Under 16 Girls Midlands South-West Conference

Wiltshire “Demons” 76 – 29 Northants “Lightning”

The Northants Under 16 Girls travelled to Marlborough to take on bottom of the table team Wiltshire Demons and returned having recorded the expected win against inexperienced opposition who to their credit never gave up. Coach Karen Goodrich gave all eleven of her players ample playing time and all eleven contributed to the 76 point final total.

Games like this are always difficult and from the start it was apparent that England squad members Caitlin Stewart, Ruchae Walton and Holly Winterburn were a class above the other players on view but Goodrich was pleased with the confidence shown by the other players when these three players weren’t on court.

Lightning played man to man for the whole game and despite having some tall athletic players, Wiltshire just could not cope with the pressure and turned the ball over on a number of occasions leading to easy scores for the Northants girls. Goodrich pronounced it, “A good game to get back into the swing of things and to give everyone court time”

In the 47 point win Walton scored 23 points while Winterburn had an impressive 10 steals to go with her 18 points.

“Trojans” no match for Under 15 Boys

Under 15 Boys Midlands & East Conference

Milton Keynes “Trojans” 42 - 83 Northants “Thunder”

The Christmas break is always a difficult time for age group teams and so in proved for the Northants “Thunder” under 15 boys when they visited Milton Keynes Trojans last Saturday. The team made a lethargic start to the game and their defence was almost non-existent drawing some stern words from Coach Grahame Yates Thank goodness for “Thunder” their leading scorers Jacob Round, was showing no side effects from his time off as he scored 17 points as “Thunder” took the first quarter 23-13.

Round continued in the same positive vein in the second quarter which saw Zak Kitchen and Zinzan Oostenhuizen doing some sterling work on defence. This helped Thunder restrict Trojans to just eight points whilst scoring 24 themselves, 18 of those points coming from Round.

Leading 47-21 at half time it was going to take a remarkable Trojans comeback if they were to win the game and that comeback didn't come in the third period of play. Time and time again Thunder were able to mount decisive fast breaks from missed Trojans shots with Oostenhuizen looking prominent and Laurence Williams making some nice passes. Thunder took the period 20-12 and at 67-33 the final result was beyond doubt.

The final quarter was a routine affair which Thunder took 16-9 to close out the 83-42 win in which round scored 48 points but the key to the game was the collective pressure Thunder were able to mount forcing numerous Trojan turn overs.

Under 14 Boys 'back in the winning groove'

Under 14 Boys Midlands Conference

Northants Thunder 75 – 34 Mansfield Giants

Thunder were in good form in their first game back after the Christmas break and recorded a straight-forward 76-35 home win against Mansfield Giants. Although Mansfield turned up with just seven players, their line-up included a member of the England U15 Development squad, 6'4" Harry Brewin; however on this occasion, Thunder's own big man, Ed Wallhead got the better of Brewin. Wallhead's defence limited Brewin to just eight points, whilst at the other end of the floor Brewin struggled to stop Wallhead, who finished with a game-high 26 points.

Full court pressure gave the Northants boys a 16-9 first quarter lead and by half-time, with the score standing at 35-15, the result was already looking like a foregone conclusion. Thunder removed any remaining doubt with a 25-6 third quarter during which the impressive team play was highlighted by the fact that seven players made a contribution to the points total including debutant Marley Robotham. The final period was much closer, but Thunder made sure they won all four periods and took another step closer to achieving a spot in the play-offs.

In addition to Wallhead's points haul, Tom Berry, Chris Amankonah and Josh Lloyd all reached double figures scoring 12, 11 and 10 respectively. Other highlights included good shooting from Tom Myers and Noah Wilborn's 'never say die' attitude. Also, Josh Lloyd turned in another all-round performance scoring points, pulling down rebounds, getting steals and providing assists.

Coach Round was pleased with the progress the team is making, but will be looking for the players to finish around the basket more effectively in future matches. With no game next weekend, Thunder have time to work on making the necessary improvements before their next fixture which is at home against Shropshire Warriors on Saturday 24th January.

Winterburn and Amaena too much for "Hornets"

Under 14 Girls Midlands Conference

Bucks "Hornets" 23 – 48 Northants "Lightning"

The Northants under 14 girls retained their unbeaten record with this win over Buck Hornets. The game was a low scoring affair but the final outcome was never really in doubt. "Lightning" created a number of scoring opportunities but their failure to convert these chances and their general lack of sharpness was probably down to a month of inactivity over Christmas.

Lightning outscored Hornets in all four periods of play although the two quarters on either side of half time were close run affairs. In desperation to stop Lightning's main scoring threat, Holly Weatherburn the Bucks coach decided to double team her. There is a debate as to whether or not this violated the man-to-man age group rules; but it didn't have any real effect on the final result as the Northants girls cruised to a 25 point win. Winterburn scored 28 points and was well supported by Lucy Amena who scored 12 points.

First win for jubilant Under 13 Boys

Under 13 Boys Midlands Conference

Northants "Thunder" 72 – 49 Leicester "Warriors"

It's been a tough season for the Northants under 13 boys with the young team suffering a number of very heavy defeats. The team has continued to commit to practice in an attempt to improve and their hard work was rewarded last Saturday when they picked up their first win of the season beating an equally young Leicester Warriors team.

The first quarter was a close run affair with both teams scoring 15 points, 10 of the Warriors haul coming from their the talented Sandhu. Thunder edged the second quarter 24-17 thanks to 10 points from Oliver Dominique who scored freely from a number of put backs.

It was obvious that Warrior's main threat would come from Sandhu so Thunder coach Darjius Maldutis allocated Connor White and Ben Nailer to curb his threat. Their efforts were rewarded in the third period of play with the Warriors player limited to 6 points and this helped Thunder win the period 16-11 to extend their lead to 55-43.

To their credit Warriors made a massive effort during the final quarter but Thunder's strength in depth was shown as no less than seven players scored in the final ten minutes. Thunder took the final period 17-6 to the increasing excitement of the players' parents, to run out winners by 72 points to 49; so claiming revenge for the 48 point defeat they suffered at the hands of Warriors earlier in the season.

In the dramatic win Dominique top scored with 25 points with good support coming from Jude Carmichael and Isaac Round who both contributed 12 points. Nailer and White also made good scoring contributions in addition to their excellent defensive work.

ACTIVITIES THIS WEEKEND

Saturday 17th January

9.30am-11am	Ballers Academy Session
10am-11am	Junior Ballers Session
11.30am	Cadette Women v N.E.B.C. "Titans" Cadet Men v Birmingham "Met"
1.30pm	Junior Men v Leicester "Dynamite"

*These games will take place at the Northants Centre for Basketball which is based at Northampton School for Girls in Spinney Hill Road
Spectators are welcome and admission is FREE*

Senior Women travel to Leicester "Riders II"
U14 Girls travel to Leicester "Warriors"
U15 Boys travel to N.E.B.C "Titans"
U13 Boys travel to Leicester "Riders"

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