

NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB

MEDIA RELEASE

Slow start costs Junior Men dear

Junior Men's Midlands Conference

Derby "Trailblazers" 75 – 55 Northants "Thunder"

The first game back after the long Christmas break is always difficult and so it proved for the junior men of Derby and Northants at Noel Baker School last Saturday. Despite a great deal of huffing and puffing by both teams after three minutes of play "Trailblazers" led 2-zero. In fact it was almost four minutes before "Thunder" recorded their first points with a two free throw from George Calvey.

The home side were playing with more energy utilising an aggressive zone press which "Thunder" coped with competently but then contrived to miss easy scores after breaking the press. When Linas Bajournas picked up his second foul midway through the period their attacking options were even further limited but Karan Virdee made some good contributions and thanks to their efficient 3-2 zone defence "Thunder" only trailed 13-20 at the end of the quarter.

In the second period of play "Thunder" continued to struggle at the offensive end of the court. Time and time again they advanced the ball through the Derby press but were then unable to capitalise and were guilty of taking shots under pressure. Towards the end of the quarter the "Trailblazers" press forced a number of "Thunder" turn-overs and at half time the home side had built up a healthy 43-24 lead.

During the half time break stand in coach John Collins tried to instil more confidence in his players and in the third quarter they showed this to a certain extent with Bajournas and Sam Round scoring at the end of breaks while George Paul and Luke Joines converting perimeter shots. Derby took the period 21-18 to extend their lead to 64-42 but at least "Thunder" had shown they could be competitive.

In the final period of play the Derby coach gave a number of his bench players court time and they struggled to score against the Northants zone. For their part "Thunder" also found it difficult to find the net but they did edge the quarter 13-12 to finish the game on a positive note.

In the 21 point defeat all eight "Thunder" players score led by Virdee with 12 personal points while Bajournas and Round both contributed 11 points.

Cadet Men top the ton in beating "Warriors"

Cadet Men's Midlands Conference

Shropshire "Warriors" 56 - 100 Northants "Thunder"

The Northants "Thunder" Cadet Men began the New Year with a win and remain undefeated in the Midlands Conference however, they made it very difficult for themselves in first half.

"Thunder" began the first quarter sluggishly, and were guilty of committing a number of unforced turnovers, mainly due to lack of ball movement against "Warriors" zone defence. "Thunder" were able to establish a 9-4 lead thanks to a brace of three pointers from Jacob Round; but the home side did not back down and were able reduce the deficit to three at 14-11. "Thunder" closed the period with a free throw from Elliott Strausa and a layup from Will Grosvenor to extend their lead to 17-11.

Coach Rob Crump encouraged his team to increase their effort levels on defence and deny the Warriors easy opportunities around the basket. Despite Crump's request, "Thunder" still showed a lack of concentration when pressing and the "Warriors' " ball handler was able to initiate his team's offence without difficulty. "Thunder" did gain some momentum midway through the quarter when they switched to a 3-2 zone defence, resulting in numerous turn-overs and easy scores on the break. During this spell Rhys Hill and Jacob Round both scored six points as "Thunder" extended their lead into double figures at 37-24 but, the highlight of the quarter came when Kaan Uyduran sprinted the length of the court to receive a full court pass to score a layup. At half time "Thunder" led 39-26 but the home side were still in the game.

For the third quarter “Thunder” switched back to man to man defence and in contrast to the start of the game the “Thunder” players displayed a steely and aggressive determination. “Warriors” were totally shell-shocked as “Thunder” embarked on a charge on the back of scores from Jacob Killeya, Carlo Nieva and Rhys Hill. This extended the “Thunder” lead to 50-28 which forced the Shropshire coach to call a time out. His words had no effect as the Northants boys responded with a 20-2 run with Round and Hill once again combining for the majority of the points. By now “Thunder” had stretched their lead to 72-38 and the game was as good as over as a contest but during the period Carlo Nieva their point guard picked up a thigh injury after a hard collision which kept him out of action for the remainder of the game. It had been a tough period for the home team and their plight was illustrated when, with five seconds remaining a full court pass from Brendan Ross was successfully met by Rhys Hill who, despite missing his layup was able to tip back his own rebound which bounced very slowly round the ring before dropping in as the buzzer sounded. “Thunder” had dominated the quarter to the tune of 39 points to 14 to lead 78-41.

“Thunder” weren’t quite as dominant in the final stanza but with their ‘big’ men Jacob Killeya and Elliott Strausa dominating close to basket they were able to rack up a century of points after Kaan Uyduran scored a layup on the break to close out the 100-56 win.

In the 44 point win “Thunder” were led by a dominant scoring performances of 33 and 23 points respectively from Jacob Round and Rhys Hill.

Coach Crump was pleased to get this game out the way to get rid of the post Christmas cobwebs and was very happy with team’s second half performance after the lacklustre efforts in the first half. His team need to be aware that they will have to be at their best when they host second in the table Derby “Trailblazers” this coming weekend. Earlier in the season “Thunder” narrowly beat Derby who will surely be looking for revenge.

Cadette’s top of the pile in Sheffield

Sheffield Under 16 Girls Invitational Tournament

The Northants Under 16 girls travelled to Sheffield for this Invitational Tournament with the intention of getting ready for the resumption of the National league season. Their expectations were limited to this but in the event they won all three of their games to claim possession of the huge mythical trophy.

Northants “Lightning” 51 -44 Sheffield “Hatters Blue”

With a number of teams declining the invitation to the tournament the hosts, Sheffield “Hatters” divided their under 16 squad into two teams adding some under-aged players as well. Against the ‘Blue’ team “Lightning” struggled during the first half and found themselves trailing 23-26 at half time. They edged the third period 12-10 then an 11-zero start to the final quarter set them up for the 51-44 victory.

Northants “Lightning” 67 - 20 Sheffield “Hatters white”

After their tough opening game “Lightning” expected another difficult encounter against the second Sheffield team but in the event they ‘blew away’ their opponents. The Northants girls opened the game with an 18-zero blitz and continued their domination with a 12-1 start to the second quarter. With Karen Goodrich resting her starters “Hatters” were more competitive in the third period of play which they edged 6-4 but it was business as usual in the final chapter as “Lightning” ran out comfortable winners.

Liffey “Celtics 51 – 61 Northants “Lightning”

With the Irish team Liffey “Celtics” from Dublin also beating both the Sheffield teams this game was to all intents and purposes a final. It turned out to be an astonishing contest of ‘runs’ and counter ‘runs’. “Lightning” started well with a 10-2 rush only for “Celtics” to respond with a 10-2 charge of their own. Both teams found scoring difficult in the second quarter which was just edged 8-7 by “Lightning” who led 20-19 at half time.

The third quarter was a repeat of the first with “Lightning” outscoring their opponents 13-4 only to be outscored 14-zero themselves “Celtics” going into the last period leading 37-33. Led by point guard Sarah Round, “Lightning” raised their game superbly in the last quarter which they took 28-14 to win by 61 points to 51 Round scoring 16 personal points.

