

NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB

PRESS RELEASE

2017 gets off to the worst possible start for Junior men

Junior Men's Midlands Conference

Birmingham "Mets" 74 – 41 Northants "Thunder"

After a disappointing end to 2016 the Northants Junior men travelled to Birmingham to take on Metropolitan College hoping to start 2017 with a win. In the event they suffered a heavy defeat which will do nothing to raise their already low levels of confidence.

"Thunder" were competitive during the first period of play which "Mets" edged by 15 points to 13 but the home team totally dominated the second quarter which they took 32-8 to take a 47-21 half time lead. The Northants boys were much more competitive during the second half which they lost 27-20 but the damage had been done as "Mets" held on for the 74-41 win which leaves "Thunder" rooted to the foot of the Midlands Conference table.

Cadets far too strong for Notts Nova

Under 16 Boys Midlands Conference

Northants "Thunder" 109 – 21 Notts Nova

The Northants Under 16 boys got 2017 underway with an overwhelming win over Notts Nova. The visitors arrived with just five players and their coach appeared just minutes before the game was due to start, and under strength and under prepared Nova were 'put to the sword' by a hungry "Thunder" outfit. The visitors managed just two points in the first quarter while "Thunder" poured in 27 and the carnage continued in the second period of play with "Thunder" scoring a further 30 points while restricting Nova to eight.

During the first half Coach John Collins had rotated his players and removed his team's pressing defence and he continued with this policy during the final two quarters. During the half time interval five more players arrived from Nottingham but the reinforcements made little difference and Collins's main task was to keep his players focussed on doing things correctly rather than just pouring in points. "Thunder" won the second half 52-11 to close out an overwhelming victory with all ten players contributing to the total. "Thunder" were led in scoring by Chris Amankonah and Josh Lloyd and this pair were well supported by Ed Wallhead and Adam Lewandowski.

This weekend "Thunder" entertains undefeated Nottingham Junior "Hoods" and they would have preferred a more tasking workout.

Brave performance by "Thunder" second string

Northants "Thunder II" 56 - 69 Shropshire "Warriors"

Northants "Thunder's" U16 reserves enhanced their reputation despite going down to a defeat at the hands of a Shropshire "Warriors" team which included several current national league players. Billed as a friendly between largely U15 teams, the strength of the opposition meant that the match was closer to a cup tie, with "Thunder" very much the underdogs.

The early exchanges were somewhat nervous, with both sides guilty of missing gilt-edged chances and of turning the ball over far too often. Gradually, the experience of the "Warriors" showed and the visitors were able to open up an 11-point advantage at the end of the first quarter.

However, Warriors aggression had got them into foul trouble very quickly, and the resulting changes of personnel allowed Thunder to develop a better rhythm, without ever outscoring their opponents.

With Warriors 18 points in front at the end of the third quarter, team manager Andrew Gough challenged his tiring players to win the fourth. Thunder responded with a spirited fight back, taking the fourth quarter 14-9 to close the gap to just 13 points.

In a very encouraging performance, Roman O'Hara top-scored for "Thunder" with 15 points, and he was well supported by James Reid with 12, Tom Heron with 10 while Marley Rowbotham scored 9.

With these two games plus the Under 14 Boys game it meant that 22 boys from the squad had played competitive basketball during the course of the day.

Great win for Under 14 Boys over Birmingham "Elite"

Under 14 Boys East Midlands II Conference

Northants "Thunder" 66 - 49 Team "Elite" Birmingham

Northants Thunder Under 14 boys returned from the Christmas break with a tough fixture against Team Elite Birmingham. When these two teams met earlier in the season, it was Team Birmingham that won by just three points so the Northants boys knew the importance of winning this game in order to make a push for the Play Offs.

The first quarter was a low scoring affair, with the visitors the more assertive of the two teams hitting back to back 3 pointers to take a 4-7 lead. Despite a slow start, both teams showed a really determined attitude to win the game scrapping for rebounds and diving for loose balls. Thunder were made to work offensively with Team Birmingham containing Jonathan Ntumba and this disrupted the Northants offense. Team Birmingham led 15-10 at the end of the quarter.

Despite a score from Cameron Leighton and a successful free throw from Kalonji Campbell to open the quarter. Team Birmingham made a 7-0 run at the start of the second quarter to move into a comfortable lead 13-22. "Thunder" had been guilty of being static on offense forcing poor shots and execution resulting in turnovers which the visitors capitalised upon. Scores from Campbell and Adedeji tried to spark "Thunder's" offense but poor execution could not reduce the deficit and the home team trailed by nine points at the half.

Coach Rob Crump reinforced a strong message to his team at half time about the importance of the game if they wanted to contest for a Play-Off spot. "Thunder" returned to floor with a rejuvenated performance, inspired by Patrick Adejeji and Jonathan Ntumba who combined to spark a 13-3 "Thunder" run which took them into a 4 point lead. "Thunder" also displayed some excellent defence denying Birmingham's influential guard Saa from initiating their offense whilst they showed a strong appetite on the defensive glass. This saw "Thunder" extend their lead by 10 to concluding the period with a 9-0 run to win the quarter 25-8.

Despite "Thunder" producing a huge turn around Crump warned his players that the game was not over and it would require a strong team effort in the final quarter to close the game out. "Thunder" displayed some excellent execution on offense with strong penetration which the opposition could not contain, whilst some well executed 'give and go's' help them to extend their lead to 57-41 with five minutes remaining. "Thunder" were able to close out the game for a convincing 66-49 win.

"Thunder" were led in scoring by Ntumba with 30 points and he was well supported by Patrick Adedeji with 20 points.

Coach Crump commented “Returning back from the Christmas break to play a strong Birmingham team was always going to be a difficult challenge. The boys had not forgotten losing the previous fixture and really wanted to win this game. Despite a sluggish first half, the character and attitude shown by the team in the second half showed how much they are developing on the floor. I thought our performance in that second half was our best team performance of the season both offensive and defensively. The team should be very proud of themselves.”

THIS WEEKENDS ACTION

Saturday 14th January

9.30 am until 11am

Junior “Ballers”

11-30am

Under 16 Boys versus Nottingham “Hoods”

1-30am

Junior Men versus Derby “Trailblazers II”

These games will be played at the Basketball Centre which is situated at Northampton School for Girls in Spinney Hill Road, Northampton

Under 14 Boys travel to Worcester “Wolves”

Sunday 15th January

Senior Men travel to Middlesex LTBC

Junior Men travel to Team “Elite” Birmingham

Under 14 Girls travel to Bucks “Hornets”

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