

# **NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Senior Men retain their unbeaten record.....just!!**

**VCARS National League Division Four Midlands Conference**

**Northants “Thunder”                      67 – 66                      Bromsgrove “Bears”**

The Northants senior men retained their unbeaten record and top place in the VCARS Division Four Midland Conference table but not without some very serious scares. Third placed Bromsgrove “Bears” were actually leading 66-65 with just over a minute to play when Jacob Holt hit one of two free throws to tie the scores. “Bears” veteran guard Robin Hall was then fouled but missed both of his efforts from the charity stripe before Jonny Yates made the same trip for “Thunder” with just seconds remaining. Yates converted the second of his two free throws to put his team one point up an advantage and they were able to hold on to until the end of the game.

The strange composition of the Midlands Conference means that “Thunder” have been inactive since 15<sup>th</sup> December and it certainly showed in their performance in this game. Defensively they were sound but offensively they struggled throughout and shot poorly. They led 14-10 after the first quarter and extended their lead to 40-30 by half time. The third quarter was an absolute nightmare for the home side with “Thunder” scoring just nine points while a resurgent Bromsgrove team led by the sharp shooting Bett poured in 19 to tie the scores up at 49 all.

The final stanza saw five lead changes and the dramatic finish which came as a massive relief to Coach Grahame Yates who confessed that his team had been well below their best.

In the one point win Leon Henry and Leome Francis led the “Thunder” scoring with 20 and 19 points respectively with good support coming from Jonny Yates with 13 points.

**“Jets” complete double over gutsy Junior Men**

**Junior Men’s Premier Division North**

**Cheshire “Jets”                      75 - 70                      Northants “Thunder”**

After a highly competitive game played in excellent spirit the Northants junior men were left to face the long journey home from the north-west contemplating a narrow five point defeat which sees them slip down the Premier Division North table.

Both teams appeared a little tentative during the early exchanges but with Kamisi Fawehinmi dominating on the defensive boards “Thunder” kept well in contention. Jason Moore hit a crucial three-pointer which inspired Jack Thomas, Luke Lewis and Matt Yates to follow suit helping their team to a 34-32 half time lead with eight “Thunder” players contributing to the points total and the whole team hustling their hearts out on defence.

During the half time interval the “Jets” coach was making his feelings known to his players so “Thunder” went out on court expecting a Cheshire revival. Thanks to the efforts of skipper Matt Yates the Northants boys were able to keep pace with their opponents until the last three minutes of the quarter. At this stage “Thunder” were guilty of losing possession in a number of ways giving “Jets” numerous fast break scoring opportunities. The home side opened up a ten point lead but “Thunder” were able to claw it back to 57-54 by the end of the period and it was still game on going into the final quarter.

The “Thunder” cause was helped by the fact that “Jets” had a number of players in foul trouble and a brace of three-pointers from Jack Thomas and another from Luke Lewis kept “Thunder” well and truly in contention. The two teams traded baskets and “Thunder” were forced to foul Cheshire players in the hope that they would miss from the free throw line. Unfortunately for “Thunder” the referees declined to call the fouls saying they wanted to keep the game going and “Jets” were able to retain possession and complete the five point win after a well fought battle.

In the 75-70 defeat Yates top scored with 22 points before fouling out of the game while Luke Lewis and Jack Thomas had seven three-pointers between them in their 16 and 15 point hauls. Coach Rob Eddon was naturally disappointed about the loss but paid tribute to the efforts of all his players making special mention of Fawehinmi for his outstanding rebounding.

### **Junior Women well beaten in Cup semi-final**

#### **Junior Women's Sure Shot National Cup Semi Final**

**Sevenoaks "Suns"                      91 -37                      Northants "Lightning"**

The Northants junior women's progress to the Sure Shot National Cup semi-final has been rather too easy but all that came to an end last Sunday when they took on Sevenoaks "Suns". Lightning travelled to Kent without a number of senior players and were forced to draft in several players from the club's under 15 team and they found the going very tough.

"Lightning" were just about in contact after the first quarter which "Suns" took 30-14 but after that it was virtually one way traffic but the county girls kept going to the end and actually won the final period of play. The Northants girls had a clear illustration of what is needed to play at the 'next level' and Steph Ogden and Rio Blessyn showed they could cope with 14 and 11 points respectively .

### **"Jets" too physical for Cadet Men**

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

**Cheshire "Jets"                      70- 50                      Northants "Thunder"**

The Northants cadet men travelled to Warrington for this Premier Division North game without their leading scorer Pauli Laurinolli and with several players far from 100% fit. They made the return journey contemplating a 20 point defeat which virtually rules out any chance of a Play Off place.

On the outskirts of Warrington is a sign saying "Warrington, home of rugby league" and there were times during this game when it resembled that northern version of the oval ball game. The "Thunder" ball carriers were constantly harried by "Jets" defenders often with considerable contact and this resulted in a massive 28 turn-overs. To their credit the "Thunder" players didn't complain and just got on with the game but the scratches on their arms were testament to the kind of treatment they had been subjected to.

After a lethargic start "Thunder" recovered well and only trailed 12-16 after the quarter. Some outstanding play from George Paul and Josh Round took their team into a 31-30 lead as half time approached then as the hooter sounded for the end of the second quarter a "Jets" player launched up a shot which caught all net. The shot was clearly made after the end of the period and from well inside the arc but to the horror of the "Thunder" players the referee awarded three points.

The third period saw "Jets" increasing their defensive pressure and with their physicality going unpunished and several "Thunder" players playing with injuries the home side dominated proceedings. They took the half 37-19 to deservedly win the game by 70 points to 50.

In the 20 point defeat the "Thunder" scoring was dominated by Paul and Round who scored 19 and 16 points respectively

### **Cadette and Under 15 Girls keep alive their Play Off hopes**

#### **Cadette Women's Midland, South-West Conference**

**Northants "Lightning Too"      62 – 39                      Nottingham "Wildcats"**

Nottingham "Wildcats" arrived at the Basketball Centre last Saturday boasting an unbeaten record but without two England squad members sidelined because of injuries and "Lightning Too" proceeded to comprehensively beat the depleted "Wildcats" and throw the Conference into confusion.

The first period of play was a dour affair with both teams struggling to find the basket and it closed with "Wildcats" holding an 11-7 advantage. Northants coach Stacey Shakespeare decided to employ a more aggressive defence in the second quarter and her decision made all the difference. Her team suddenly had more momentum and when she wasn't 'draining' three-pointers Amy Boot was dishing out assists to Steph Ogden who scored 12 points in the quarter. "Lightning Too" took the period 23-10 to lead 30-21 at half time and their defensive efforts were maintained in the third period when they restricted their opponents to just one basket.

Leading 48-23 going into the last quarter “Lightning Too” were guilty of relaxing their efforts which allowed their opponents to go on a 12-zero run but it was too little too late and the home side closed with a 14-4 charge to record a 32 points victory. For “Lightning Too” Steph Ogden scored 25 points while Amy Boot scored 21 points including four three-pointers.

**Northants “Lightning”                      83 – 44                      Solent “Suns”**

The Northants Under 15 girls kept their Play Off chances well and truly alive with a comfortable win over Solent “Suns” last Saturday. They moved into second place in the Midland South West Conference table but games against Nottingham “Wildcats” and their sister team “Lightning Too” are likely to be crucial.

Against Solent “Lightning” started like an express train charging out to a 34-7 first quarter lead thanks to a combination of excellent defence and clinical finishing. Coach Karen Goodrich employed a zone defence in the second period of play which gave “Suns” some respite but the Northants girls still took quarter 20-10 to set up what looked to be an unassailable 54-17 half time lead.

Goodrich decided to run her bench in the final two periods of play mixing experienced players with younger ones but the team had lost their intensity and only won the second half 29-27 to run out winners by 83 points to 44 with Ruchae Walton once again having a dominating game scoring 20 points and hauling down 14 rebounds. Lauren Milne 13 points and Caitlin Stewart 12 points also recorded double-doubles while Charlotte Berridge and Abbi Hobs scored 14 and 8 points respectively.

**Comfortable win for short-handed Under 15 Boys**

**Under 15 Boys Midland Conference**

**Derby “Trailblazers”                      61 – 92                      Northants “Thunder”**

The Northants Under 15 boys travelled to Derby to take on the “Trailblazers” with just eight players and without head coach Rob Crump. Despite being having limited options with his rotations Coach Uyduran steered his team to a convincing victory.

“Thunder” made a hesitant start against an enthusiastic “Trailblazers” team but eventually found their feet and edged the first period of play 19-15. The second quarter saw “Thunder” employing their zone press defence and with Jacob Killeya and Brendan Ross dominating the offensive and defensive boards, the team was able to extend their lead to 40-29 by half time.

The third quarter saw “Thunder” revert to their man to man press and the aggression of Will Grosvenor allowed him to make a number of interceptions leading to breakaway lay ups. David Nieva also provided some valuable rigour to the offence by driving to the basket which saw him score six points during the period and with Rhys Hill and Kaan Uyduran making good contributions “Thunder” were able to extend their lead to 67-46

With the game as good as won “Thunder” were able to relax their efforts a little but they were still able to increase their lead by a further ten points eventually running out winners by 92 points to 61. For “Thunder”, Carlo Nieva led the team’s scoring with 30 points and he received good support from Jacob Killeya with 14 and Oliver Thomas and Will Grosvenor with 11 points each but Coach Uyduran was delighted by the efforts of all eight of his players all of whom scored.

**Tough weekend for Under 13 Boys**

**Under 13 Boys Midlands Conference**

**Northants “Thunder”                      39 – 86                      Bucks “Hornets”**

The Northants under 13 boys went into their game against a well-organised Bucks “Hornets” team without the services of influential guards Laurence Williams and Jacob Round. With Bucks doing well in the league, “Thunder” knew they were in for a tough game and so it proved. The first half was dominated by controversy as there was a dispute about the interpretation of the illegal defence rule and after numerous protests Coach Mike Round was eventually given a technical foul. On court, Thunder fought hard, but couldn’t stop Bucks from building a commanding 43-22 lead by half-time.

Clarification about the illegal defence rule was sought from England Basketball at half-time, which resulted in a well-contested second half. For “Thunder” Jared Ryan led the charge offensively and he was the only Thunder player to reach double figures with 12 points. Defensively, Zak Kitchen, Josh Hannay and Ed Wallhead had their best rebounding performance of the season so far but there was no doubting that Bucks deserved their win and the game highlighted the work Thunder need to do on their teamwork

**Reading “Rockets”                      62 - 60                      Northants “Thunder”**

After the previous day’s loss, “Thunder” were hoping for a better result against bottom of the table Reading “Rockets” however, with eight of his 14 man squad unavailable, Coach Mike Round was forced to draft in one of the club’s under 12 players and even one of the Under 11s.

In the first quarter, it looked as though, despite fielding a weakened team, “Thunder” might still be able to win the game as they led 15-5. Reading had different ideas and they took the second quarter by a point 13-12 but “Thunder” still led 27-18 at half time. In the third quarter, Reading took advantage of their superior height and dominated the boards at both ends of the court, giving them a 50-46 lead going into the final period. The final quarter saw the two teams trading baskets and, with Ed Wallhead tying the game at 60-60 in the dying seconds, it looked as though the game was going to overtime. “Rockets” raced down the floor and threw up a buzzer-beater to secure their first win of the season. Coach Round was disappointed with some of the refereeing decisions and knows that the team will have to work very hard if it’s to secure a Play-Off spot.

For “Thunder” Ed Taylan was the leading scorer with 22 points and good support came from Zak Kitchen who scored 12 points while, Ed Wallhead and W Charter who both contributed 10 points.

**Second win of the season for Under 13 Girls**

**Under 13 Girls East Anglian League**

**Northants “Lightning”                      65 – 26                      Norfolk “Incini”**

The Northants under 13 girls picked up their second win of the season with a convincing victory over Norfolk “Incini” thanks to a superb second half performance which saw them outscore their opponents by 40 points to five.

It was a different story in the first quarter which was taken by the Norfolk girls 13-9 and not for the first time during the day there was a dispute over illegal defence with the “Lightning” coaching staff unhappy that one of the “Incini” players was not marking an opponent but just waiting underneath the basket to block shots. With the dispute settled although not to the satisfaction of the Norfolk coach, “Lightning” were able to edge the second quarter 16-8 to take a narrow 25-21 half time lead.

Whatever the “Lightning” players took with their half time oranges certainly did the trick as they proceeded to overwhelm their opponents 22-3 and 18-2 in the third and fourth quarters with some outstanding team defence and effective finishing from Bahira Barakat, Ellie Solomon and Holly Winterburn who all scored in double figures. Coach Darius Maldutis was delighted with his team’s performance which include Year 6 pupil Megan McArdle

**COLLEGE BASKETBALL**

**‘A’ Team well beaten by Charnwood**

**British Colleges Men’s Midlands Elite League**

**Charnwood College    100 - 40                      Moulton College ‘A’**

The Moulton College Men’s ‘A’ team made the short journey to Loughborough to take on a talented Charnwood team who formerly competed as Burleigh College. They made the return journey contemplating a 60 point defeat and a very clear feeling that they hadn’t played to anything near their full potential. Despite struggling on offence Moulton did have several open shooting opportunities but their conversion rate of just over 20% was very disappointing.

Moulton were without the services of starting centre Byron Wing and their cause wasn't helped when their other starting centre Kyle Hobbs re-injured an ankle in the third minute of the game and was forced to sit out the rest of the contest. To make things even worse Moulton's next tallest player Linas Bajorunas quickly got himself into foul trouble forcing Coach John Collins to remove him from the game.

Charnwood who are linked to the Leicester "Riders" BBL programme, have recruited widely from all over the country and their talent and ability was on display early in the game as they scored freely from close to the basket and from perimeter shots. For their part Moulton struggled to execute their offences and too often depended on the individual efforts of Matt Yates.

Charnwood won all four periods of play even when they were using their bench players and it was disappointing to see one or two Moulton heads 'go down' as the going got increasingly tough. This wasn't something that can be said of Cameron Gregory-Ring from Moulton's Rugby Academy who was helping the team out because of a number of injuries to players. He kept trying to the end and was responsible for seriously 'getting under the skin' of one of the Charnwood players.

In the heavy defeat only Yates and Bajorunas scored in double figures netting 17 and 11 points respectively while Gregory-Ring and Kyle Mayes both scored six points.

### **THIS WEEKEND'S ACTION**

#### Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> February

6-45pm Cadette Women's game, "Lightning Too" versus "Lightning"

#### Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> February

10-00am Junior Women versus Chiltern "Pumas"  
11-30am Under 13 Boys versus Milton Keynes "Lions"  
11-45am Cadette Women versus Solent "Suns"  
1-30pm Under 14 Boys versus City of Birmingham  
Cadet Men versus Leeds "Carnegie"  
3-30pm Junior Men versus Leeds "Carnegie"

These five games will be played at the **Northants Basketball Centre** at Northampton School for Girls in Spinney Hill Road, Northampton

Spectators are welcome and admission is **FREE**

Under 13 and Under 14 Girls travel to Herts "Warriors"

#### Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> February

Senior Men travel to Derby "Trailbalzers III"  
Junior Men travel to Newcastle Eagles"  
Cadette Women travel to Reading "Rockets"