

NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB

MEDIA RELEASE

Men get back to winning ways

Men's Division Three North Conference

Northants "Thunder" 82 – 72 Birmingham "Mets"

The Northants senior men got back to winning ways with a ten point win over top of the table Birmingham "Mets". The win leaves "Thunder" in second place in the Division Three North table because "Mets" have played one more game. The situation at the top is getting very interesting after Sefton lost to bottom of the table Tees Valley, Rossendale continued in their winning ways and Stockport's withdrawal from the league.

Saturday's game started well for "Thunder" as they jumped out to an early league but a 13-4 "Mets" charge at the end of the quarter saw the West Midlands team leading 24-20 at the end of the period. "Mets" had shown their physical strength in the first ten minutes of the game but in the second quarter they were overwhelmed by "Thunder's" speed on the break. During this period Leon Henry scored 12 personal points including two three point shots. The home side took the period 25-12 to lead 45-36 at half time.

A resurgence was expected from the league leaders and they came out for the third period of play in determined mood. For their part "Thunder" were unable to get their running game going but some hard nosed defence prevented "Mets" fully capitalising on their dominance. They did win the quarter 17-12 to close the gap to just four points and set up a grandstand finish for the enthusiastic crowd.

"Thunder" were looking for some inspiration and it came from guard Jonny Yates who coolly converted three, three-point shots early in the quarter and was also fouled attempting another long range shot. Yates' efforts prompted a 19-5 "Thunder" charge to take the game away from "Mets" but carelessness and fatigue saw some sloppy "Thunder" play which made the final score closer than it really should have been.

So a good win for "Thunder" with Henry leading the scoring with 22 points. Good support came from Leome Francis and Yates who contributed 19 and 17 points respectively while Jason Tucker led the team well from the back court and scored 12 points. The "Thunder" coaching staff made special mention of the battling play of the undersized Richard Higgins and Jacob Holt who battles superbly against the "Mets" 'biggs'. This weekend the team travel to Sheffield "Saints".

Battling win for Junior Men

Junior Men's Premier Division North

Northants "Thunder" 65 – 51 Leicester "Warriors"

It's been a tough season so far for the Northants junior men but they recorded a morale boosting win against Leicester "Warriors" last Saturday a win that takes them above their local rivals in the Premier Division North.

Against an athletically superior team stand in coach John Collins elected to use a zone defence in the hope that his would force "Warriors" to shoot from the deep perimeter. This tactic proved successful in the first period of play with George Calvey and Karan Virdee eating up rebounds from missed shots and launching fast breaks for their team. "Thunder" took the quarter 20-11 and the increase in confidence in the team was visible.

A Leicester revival was expected and in the second quarter "Warriors" increased their defensive intensity and earned a number of easy scores thanks to turn-overs. They took the period 15-11 to reduce the "Thunder" lead to just five points at 31-26 at half time. This lead was further reduced to 47-44 in the third period with Igberaese and Mistry connecting from the perimeter for the visitors while for "Thunder" only George Paul and Sam Round represented any consistent threat.

Collins' message to his team during the break between periods was simple, "Match up to the Warriors shooters." His team did this superbly and two 10-zero runs gave "Thunder" the advantage and despite some poor late 'clock management' they ran out comfortable winners by 65 points to 51.

In the 14 point victory Round top scored with 22 points while the ever energetic Linas Bajournas completed a double-double with 12 points and 15 rebounds. George Paul scored 10 points and rookie Jacob Killeya contributed 9 important points. Calvey and Virdee pulled down a total 17 rebounds between them while Josh Round worked tirelessly on defence. Collins also paid tribute to Luke Joines and David Radford who gave key players important rest time.

Junior Women's Midlands South-West Conference
Herts "Warriors" 81 – 57 Northants "Lightning"

Having been beaten by Herts "Warriors" on two occasions already this season it wasn't surprising that the Northants junior women went into their first game of 2014 with a certain amount of fear and trepidation. In the event however, they started the game full of confidence and jumped out to a 10-1 lead. This unexpected start meant that Coach Stacey Shakespeare had to change her game plan with thoughts of a shock win in the back of her mind. These positive thoughts were soon dispelled as "Warriors" went on a strong run of their own to take a 28-21 lead by the end of the period.

The game was being played at an unremitting pace which was to the liking of the "Lightning" perimeter players who scored at will with strong drives to basket. This forced the "Warriors" coach to switch to a zone defence but the Northants girls adjusted well by driving through the seams and then kicking the ball to perimeter shooters. "Warriors" eventually gained ascendancy by employing a full court pressing defence allowing them to win the quarter 18-14 so extending their lead to 46-35 at half time.

With Lois Bain, Tara Hings and Tiana Gordon dominating the boards "Lightning" were able to stay competitive throughout the second half but "Warriors" increased their lead by three points in the third quarter then against the tiring "Lightning" players they closed the game out with a 20-10 final quarter.

"Lightning" had been far more competitive against "Warriors" than they had been in the previous two games and this gives rise for optimism going into this weekend's vital clash against Reading "Rockets". This is a game the Northants girls must win if they are to have any hope of competing in the end of season Play Offs.

In 24 point defeat Stephanie Ogden was in prime scoring form recording 25 points with good support coming from Lauren Brookes and Sarah Round with 12 with 10 points respectively.

Cadet men and Women stay unbeaten

The Northants Under 16 boys and girls teams sit proudly atop their Conferences with unbeaten records after picking up two more wins at the Basketball Centre last Saturday.

Cadet Men's Midlands Conference
Northants "Thunder" 81 – 59 Derby "Trailblazers"

The Derby "Trailblazers" Under 16 boys arrived at the Basketball Centre last Saturday lying in second place in the Midland Conference table and with a keen intent of knocking "Thunder" off their perch. In the event they failed "Thunder" recording a rather flattering 22 point victory almost totally down to a final period demolition job.

Northants took control of the opening quarter blasting out with a 13-5 run which forced a Derby timeout. "Trailblazers" returned to court employing a 2-3 zone defense which initially caused "Thunder" some problems. The zone negated their inside threat and Derby were also able to control the boards. Derby were able to establish a two point lead at 18-16 and with the "Thunder" 'big' men in foul trouble "Trailblazers" were in the ascendancy. At this stage "Thunder" showed their true character and thanks to scores from Brendan Ross and Will Grosvenor were able to establish a 22-20 lead at the end of the quarter.

The second quarter proved to be a very close encounter with neither team being able to take control of the game, as the lead changed hands on a number of occasions. "Thunder" continued to struggle with foul trouble, and were struggling to match up with the superior size Derby were able to put on court. Coach Rob Crump changed his team's defence to a 3-2 zone and this enabled his team to edge the period 20-17 to increase their lead to 42-37 at half time thanks to 13 points from Jacob Killeya.

With both teams sensing victory scoring was at a premium in the third quarter and no easy scores were allowed often at the cost of a foul. By now “Thunder” were in serious foul trouble but they showed admirable composure, discipline and determination as they battled for every rebound. They also launched fast breaks at every opportunity and this led to them winning the period 11-10 but at 53-47 Derby were still very much in the game.

With a large crowd expecting another close period of play they were shocked as, led by the dynamic Ollie Thomas, “Thunder” totally dominated affairs with a 10-zero surge. “Trailblazers” responded with an aggressive full court defence but Thomas advanced the ball through it with aplomb scoring himself and dishing out a number of assists. Derby were left totally stunned as “Thunder” closed out an 81-59 win to remain undefeated.

The “Thunder” scoring was led by 24 points from Jacob Killea and he was well supported by Carlo Nieva and Rhys Hill with 16 and 12 points respectively while Thomas’ 9 points all came in the final quarter..

Under 16 Girls Midlands Conference
Northants “Lightning” 80 – 44 Bromsgrove “Bears”

The Northants Cadette Women recorded what appeared to be a routine win over Bromsgrove “Bears” but it was only in the final quarter that the Northants girls really dominated their opponents. “Lightning” won the first two periods of play 20-12 and 23-10 to lead 43-22 at half time but “Bears” had shown a great deal of determination and in the third period matched their opponents basket for basket. “Lightning” only won that third period 13-12 but really cut loose in the final stanza outscoring their opponents 24-10 to secure the 80-44 win.

In the 36 point win the “Lightning” scoring was led by Charlotte Berridge and Ruchae Walton with 21 and 20 points respectively. Walton was just one rebound away from recording a double-double as was Caitlin Stewart who scored 11 points and also hauled down 9 rebounds. The other major scorer for “Lightning” was Lauren Milne who scored 16 personal points while Hari Owens had a good all-round game scoring 8 points and pulling down 7 rebounds.

Top of the table “Lightning” face a massive challenge this weekend when they take on Haringey “Angels” in the semi final of the Sure Shot National Cup. “Angels” have lost just one game in the highly competitive Southern Conference.

Below par Under 15 Boys hammered by “Slam”

Under 15 Boys Midlands Conference
Northants “Thunder” 39 – 65 Wolverhampton “Slam”

After their encouraging performance against Conference leaders N.E.B.C. “Titans just before Christmas, the Northants Under 15 boys went into this contest against Wolverhampton “Slam” in the hope of picking up a much needed win. Earlier in the season “Thunder” lost narrowly to the West Midlands but last Saturday they managed to turn in their worst performance of the season. The Northants boys were heavily outscored in the first three periods of play and went into the fourth quarter trailing by 26 points to 56. They did win the final quarter 13-9 but this only when the “Slam” coach was running his bench.

In the 26 point setback not too many “Thunder” players came out of the game with any credit. David Nieva top scored with 15 points, Julian Abeam scored 9 and Jaz Campbell worked hard for his 7 points.

Under 14 Boys go down against “Warriors”

Under 14 Boys Midlands Conference
Leicester “Warriors” 64 - 59 Northants “Thunder”

The Northants Under 14 boys failed to reverse the early season defeat at the hands of Leicester “Warriors” although they did reduce the final deficit from 19 points to just five.

“Thunder” made an appalling start to the game falling behind by 24 points to 6 after the first quarter. They proceeded to win the next two periods of play and going into the final ten minutes of play had closed the gap to 9 points at 43-52. They won the last period 16-12 but weren’t able to make up for their shocking start to the game. For “Thunder” Jacob Round top scored with Ed Taylan and Zac Kitchen both making valuable contributions.

No joy for Under 14 Girls at Brentwood

Under 14 Girls Midlands South Conference

Brentwood "Fire" 87 - 65 Northants "Lightning"

Fresh from their win against Norfolk the previous week the Northants Under 14 Girls travelled to third placed Brentwood "Fire" full of optimism. This optimism was fully justified in the first quarter which was tied at 16 all. "Lightning" were playing some aggressive defence and had they not missed a number of easy shots they could easily have found themselves in the lead.

The second quarter saw a total change in fortunes as "Fire" played with a great deal more intensity. They forced an number of "Lightning" turn overs leading to a number of easy scores. For their part the "Lightning" players resorted to individual efforts rather than team play and this resulted in them losing the period 17-35 to find themselves trailing 33-51 at half time.

The Northants girls put in a much better shift in the third quarter playing much better as a team and they outscored "Fire" 18-15. The home side took the final stanza 21-14 to win the game by 87 points to 65 but the Northants girls were left to contemplate what might have been had it not been for that disastrous second quarter.

In the 22 point defeat Holly Winterburn top scored with 25 points. Bahira Barakat scored 12 points and Lucy Amena 11 while Georgia Collins contributed 9 points and Precious Ogaji rebounded well.

Under 13 Boys edged out by Queeley

Under 13 Boys Midlands Conference

Leicester "Warriors" 76 - 71 Northants "Thunder"

"Thunder" U13 Boys made the short trip up to Leicester knowing that the only way they could come away with the win was if they could contain "Warrior's" very talented scoring machine, Kareem Queeley. In the previous encounter, Queeley had scored 41 of Leicester's 55 total. Despite the incredible efforts of Tom Berry and the emphasis on good help defence, Queeley proved unstoppable again. Even though he had to leave the game on three occasions to receive treatment for cramp, he still contributed the majority of Leicester's 76 points finishing with a personal total of 50. However, "Thunder" had their own scoring machine, the ever-improving Ed Wallhead. His 39 points didn't quite match Queeley's, but it was an equally impressive display. Wallhead demonstrated that he's a scoring threat in so many ways with strong drives to the basket, inside moves, good rebounding, outside shots and reliable free throws.

In a high-scoring first quarter, the tone for the game was set with the period finishing 28-22 in the Warrior's favour. Queeley and Wallhead had hit 15 and 14 respectively however, it became clear that "Thunder" had more strength in depth. When Queeley was forced to leave the game in the second quarter, "Thunder" restricted the hosts to just 6 points whereas five of the Northants boys contributed to the teams 16 points. This gave "Thunder" a 38-34 half-time lead.

The objective for the second half was simple – stop Queeley! Unfortunately, this proved a difficult task. "Thunder" tried to 'up' their defensive intensity, but with this being the first game after the Christmas break and having had only one training session, Northants couldn't find their top gear. In the third quarter, all of Leicester's points came from two players, but this was enough for them to regain the lead with the period finishing 53-50.

In the fourth quarter, Berry continued to pay close attention to Queeley and Wallhead played himself to exhaustion, but the result was ultimately determined by Queeley who scored Leicester's last 17 points. In Coach Round's view, Gio Prati took three charges in the last period, but none of them caught the eye of the referees. Arguably, these could have affected the outcome of the game, but it was probably "Thunder's" lack of movement of offense that was more of a factor.

In what was another great display of junior basketball, Leicester secured the win with a score of 76-71. Interestingly, only five of the Warrior's players made it on to the scoresheet and 69 of their 76 points came from just two players. By comparison, seven of Thunder's ten players scored. In addition to Wallhead's 39,

Gio Prati, Elliot Atherton and Tom Berry all scored 8 points. At this age category, "Thunder" have shown that they can compete with the best teams in the league. There is good chemistry between the players, multiple scoring threats and a good understanding of team defence. The main aim for the next game away to City of Birmingham will be to up the level of intensity.

THIS WEEKEND'S ACTION

Saturday 18th January

9-30am to 11am	Under 12 Practice
10am to 11am	Junior "Ballers"
11-30am	Under 14 Boys versus City of Birmingham
1-30pm	Under 15 Boys versus City of Birmingham

These games 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

Under 13 Boys travel to City of Birmingham
Under 14 Girls travel to City of Birmingham
Junior Women travel to Reading "Rocket"
Junior Men travel to Newcastle "Eagles"
Senior Men travel to Sheffield "Saints"
Girls Central Venue League at Northampton School for Boys

Sunday 19th January

1-30pm Under 16 Girls versus Haringey "Angels" (Sure Shot National Cup Semi Final)

At the **Basketball Centre**