

NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB

PRESS RELEASE

Senior Men clinch Conference title

VACARS Division 4 Midlands Conference

Northants “Thunder”

103 - 57

Birmingham “Mets II”

The Northants senior men clinched the Midlands Conference title with three games of the regular season remaining. They went into last Saturday’s game against the Birmingham “Mets” second team aware that the visitors had won some recent games and were anxious to stay in contention for the Play Offs. Initially it looked as if “Thunder” might be in for a tough game but then the home side’s pressure defence and up tempo offensive play proved too much for the West Midlanders. “Thunder” went on a 19-4 charge to take a 29-12 lead after the first period of play and it was obvious that “Mets” would not be able to play at the pace set by “Thunder”

If the Birmingham team had any chance of getting back into the game they would need to start the second quarter positively but “Thunder” had other ideas as they went on a 13-1 run and at 42-13 it was virtually game over. By now “Thunder” were almost scoring at will with Asher Kirby enjoying his best game of the season with some good perimeter shooting an even a low post score. To their credit “Mets” stuck to their task but at half time “Thunder” had opened up what looked to be an unassailable 57-26 half time lead.

From the very start of the third quarter it obvious to everyone in the large crowd at the Northants Basketball Centre that “Mets” had expended so much energy trying to cope with the high pace of the game that they were incapable to mounting any real challenge as “Thunder” just went looking for different ways of scoring as they took the period 24-11 and the only question was, “Would “Thunder” hit the ton?”

They did so with a Leome Francis put back but in all honesty the last ten minutes of play were not of a very high quality and was most notable for “Met’s” guard Jones scoring 16 of his game total of 28 points.

In the 46 points win ten “Thunder” players scored led by Leome Francis, Leon Henry, and Asher Kirby who all scored 16 points with good support coming from Jason Tucker with 14 points Jacob Holt with 12 points and Jonny Yates with ten.

Some comments have been made about the recruitment policy of the Northants club in forming their men’s team. It is interesting to note that 12 of the 16 strong squad came from the club’s under age programme or the Moulton College Basketball Academy. Coaches Yates and Eddon will now be trying to keep their players sharp as the end of season Play Offs approach in the hope the team will be able to secure promotion to Division 3.

Junior Men complete double over Stockport

Junior Men’s Premier Division North

Northants “Thunder”

91 – 66

Stockport “Spartans”

The Northants junior men picked up their eighth win of the season to consolidate their mid-table position after a completing a double over Stockport “Spartans”. “Spartans” opened the game with two break away lay-ups to go up 4-zero which forced “Thunder” coach, Rob Eddon to call an early timeout and a declaration that we needed to 'wake up on defence and calm down on offence'. “Thunder” went on a 29-10 push with Matt Yates proving to be unstoppable as he scored 16 of his team’s 33 points first quarter points.

“Spartans” showed glimpses of a revival at the start of the second quarter as they mounted a 12-5 run, with Northants looking very sloppy at both ends of the floor. Yates and Jack Thomas continued their scoring spree by combining for 13 points, backed up by Kyle Mayes hitting from the outside, and Kamesi Fawehinmi scoring at the rim. Thanks to 14-4 run “Thunder” managed to edge the quarter 18-16 to take a 51-34 half time lead.

“Spartans” opened the scoring from the charity stripe in the first minute of the third period of play but then the flood gates opened as “Thunder” went on a 23-0 run in eight minutes to realistically kill the game. Luke Lewis scored 12 of teams 23 points in that third quarter, and only a late 'three' by “Spartans” guard Walton, gave them any cause for celebration.

Coach Eddon had rotated his bench throughout the game, but tiredness still kicked in for some “Thunder” players, and thanks to a combination of this and some experimental tactics, meant that “Spartans” were able to take the quarter 17-25, to make the final 91-66 score line just a little more respectable.

In the 25 points win Matt Yates was almost unstoppable totaling 35 points including ten of ten free throws. Good support came from Jack Thomas with an impressive 20 point total while Luke Lewis scored 14 points and as usual, contributed some excellent defence.

Junior Women are second best to Sporting Albion

Junior Women’s Midlands South-West Conference

Northants “Lightning” 69 – 73 Sporting Club Albion

No less than eight of the “Lightning” players who stepped out on court for this Midlands South-West Conference game had just played for the club’s under 16 team against Herts “Warriors”. “Lightning” were also without leading scorer Izzy Johns who was in action for “Titans” in the Women’s Trophy Final.

After a tight first period of play which “Albion” just edged 19-18, the visitors went on a 15-3 rush at the start of the second quarter and it looked as if “Lightning” might be in for a torrid time but to their credit they rallied and only trailed 32-36 at half time. “Lightning” remained resolute in defence but were finding scoring difficult in the third quarter which saw “Albion” extending their lead by four points to 55-47 going into the last ten minutes of play.

Coach Stacey Shakespeare called for one last massive effort and with eight of her players contributing to the scoring a comeback win looked to be a possibility but “Albion” held on for the four point victory with the “Lightning” players covering themselves in glory for the massive effort they had made.

In the 69-73 defeat Steph Ogden top scored for “Lightning” with an impressive 23 points haul while excellent support came from Rio Blessyn and Amy Boot who scored 13 and 10 points respectively.

The loss sees the team hold on to third place in the Conference table but an away game in the first round of the Play Offs now seems to be a distinct possibility.

“Titans” Cadets are too good for “Thunder”

Cadet Men’s Premier Division North

NEBC “Titans” 76 – 63 Northants “Thunder”

For the second week running NEBC “Titans” claimed local bragging rights with this 13 points win in the Premier Division derby game. In all honesty the final score didn’t really reflect the home side’s dominance with “Thunder” mounting a 22-11 last quarter revival.

A misunderstanding with one of the game referees meant that the game was officiated by just one referee but in fairness it made little difference to the final score with “Titans” winning the first three periods of play to go into the fourth quarter leading 65-41. The game was a contrast in styles with the more athletic “Titans” employing pressing defences and up tempo offences while “Thunder” relied on a zone defence and more organised offences. “Titans” also had a distinct advantage in the rebounding department scoring from a number of offensive put backs.

In the 13 point defeat Pauli Laurinolli top scored for “Thunder” with 22 points but he wont be pleased with his record of missing nine of the 15 free throws he was awarded. The other main scorers for “Thunder” were Josh Round and George Paul who scored 12 and 10 points respectively while George Calvey chipped in with 8 points

Brave Cadette Women go down to “Warriors”

Cadette Women’s Midland, South-West Conference

Northants “Lightning Too” 54 - 66 Herts “Warriors”

The Northants Cadette women lost a little ground in the battle for supremacy in the Midland South-West Conference. A win against “Warriors” last Saturday would have seen the team move into top place but they still look set for a Play Off place despite the 12 point defeat.

“Lightning Too” made a dream start to the game thanks to two three-pointers from Amy Boot but they were then guilty of missing some easy shots and their lead was just one point at 15-14 at the end of the first quarter. The second period of play saw “Lightning Too” struggling against some determined and aggressive “Warriors” defence which restricted them to just six points in the quarter. Fortunately their own defence was sound with the visitors only scoring 16 points themselves but this meant that “Warriors” held a nine point half time lead at 30-21.

Coach Stacey Shakespeare’s half time team talk was all about confidence and belief and a switch to a full court trapping zone defence certainly helped her charges to do this. The pressure on the “Warriors” guards forced a number of turn overs with Steph Ogden on hand on four occasions to turn them into scores. “Lightning Too” convincingly took the period 20-13 to narrow the deficit to 41- 43 and it was ‘game on’.

“Lightning Too” started the final quarter in the way they had finished the third with Ogden making two steals converting the first for a score then dishing off the second for Lauren Brookes to hit a three point shot. This gave the Northants girls the lead for the first time since the first quarter and forced “Warriors” to take a time out They re-entered the court in determined mood and far more intensity on defence which restricted the “Lightning Too” scoring and saw the visitors getting home by a rather flattering 12 points.

For the Northants team Steph Ogden top scored with 16 points while Amy Boot contributed 13 points. No other “Lightning Too” player was able to score in double figures but Lauren Brookes and Hannah Nolan battled hard for their eight point hauls and Rio Blessyn was a preverbal rock on defence.

Huge weekend for Under 15 Girls

Northants “Lightning” 60 – 50 Nottingham “Wildcats”

After considerable negotiation between officials of the Northants and Nottingham clubs it was finally agreed to play this much postponed fixture last Friday evening. The arrangement seemed to suit the Northants girls because they avenged a heavy early season defeat to the delight of a large contingent of parents. “Wildcats” were handicapped by playing without their injured leading point scorer but for the under aged “Lightning” team the win was a notable achievement.

The two teams exchanged scores through a period and a half of play but midway through the second quarter with “Wildcats” leading 18-12, “Lightning” were able to ‘up’ their game. Suddenly their 3-2 match up zone became more aggressive forcing a number of turn overs and scores for Charlotte Berridge and when shots were missed Lauren Milne was frequently on hand to pull down the offensive rebounds. “Lightning” went on a 10-2 charge to take the lead before Sarah Round put the icing on the cake with two scores just before half time.

Trailing 26-20, “Wildcats” came out for the third quarter in determined mood and reduced the deficit to just two points at 28-26 but once again “Lightning” cut loose with a spectacular 12-3 surge with Berridge and Milne once more to the fore. Going into the final stanza “Lightning” fans were concerned that the team would lose its nerve and capitulate to the “Wildcats” defensive pressure but in the event Round, Eden Brown and Caitlin Stewart handled the pressure with aplomb and although “Wildcats” won the final quarter 22-20 the final result was never really in doubt as “Lightning” prevailed by 60 points to 50.

In the ten point win Charlotte Berridge top scored with 16 points well supported by Sarah Round who scored 12 points. Special mention should be made of the “Lightning” ‘biggs’ Lauren Milne and Ruchae ‘DD’ Walton who scored 12 and 13 points respectively and both pulled down double figure rebounds

Northants “Lightning” 48 – 31 Bristol “Storm”

A day after their wonderful win over Nottingham, the “Lightning” girls showed the fickleness of sport when they stepped out on court against lowly Bristol “Storm” a team they had comfortably beaten on two occasions already this season. “Storm” came with a game plan and executed it perfectly for the first three quarters of the game. Defensively they set up in a zone defence and with their superior standing height were guaranteed a lot of rebounding success. As far as “Lightning” were concerned they needed to get the ball up court quickly, show patience on offence with lots of ball reversal and shoot the ball well from the perimeter. In the event they did none of these things, showing lethargy on their break, shooting the ball too quickly and rarely reversing the ball.

As the game went on “Storm” became more and more confident as shot after shot from “Lightning” missed the target and they were able to gobble up the rebounds. Although never much of an offensive threat themselves they were able to stay in touch in low scoring, dull encounter and going into the last quarter the scores were all tied up at a paltry 24 points each.

Drastic situations called for drastic remedies and “Lightning” coach Karen Goodrich changed her team’s defence to a full court man to man press in the hope of forcing turn overs and so generate easy scores. The effect was instant with “Storm” forced out of their comfort zone and when Sarah Round drained two huge three-pointers the “Lightning” confidence came flooding back. The Northants girls took the period 24-7 to record what on paper looked to be a comfortable 17 point win but the “Lightning” players knew differently and their shooting statistics made ugly viewing

For “Lightning” Sarah Round led the scoring with 14 points while Ruchae Walton and Lauren Milne recorded double-doubles with 13 and 12 points respectively.

The two wins over the weekend move “Lightning” into third place in the Conference table and the Play Offs becoming more and more a realistic possibility.

No problems for Under 15 Boys against “Bears”

Under 15 Boys Midlands Conference

Bromsgrove “Bears”	26 – 84	Northants “Thunder”
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The Northants under 15 boys kept their Play Off hopes alive with a comfortable win over bottom of the table Bromsgrove “Bears”.

From the start of the game it became apparent that “Bears” would be no match for “Thunder” who charged out to 19-5 lead after the first quarter despite missing a number of easy scoring opportunities. “Bears” started the second quarter in bright mood and with “Thunder” looking rather complacent the home side put in a 6-zero run. Stern words from Coach Rob Crump and a switch to a pressing defence saw “Thunder” respond with a 14-zero run of their own, ten of those points coming from Will Grosvenor.

“Thunder” continued to dominate the play and by half time had established what looked to be a match winning 48-14 lead. There was no let up for “Bears” in the third and fourth periods of play as “Thunder” outscored them 22-6 and 19-6 to record an emphatic 84-26 against an inexperienced team who played with determination and never gave up.

In the overwhelming win Will Grosvenor top scored for “Thunder” with 18 points while Jacob Killeya, and Dan Thacker both scored in double figures. Coach Crump was pleased with his team’s performance and expressed a hope that they would be able to reproduce the same form when they face a stiffer challenge in the form of Notts Nova this weekend

Under 14 Boys lose again

Under 14 Boys Midlands Conference

Northants “Thunder”	65 – 88	Milton Keynes “Lions”
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The Northants under 15 boys slipped to another defeat last Saturday losing by 23 points to Milton Keynes “Lions” in a strange game which saw a change of fortunes in all four quarters. “Thunder” actually won two of the four periods of play but were heavily outscored 28-11 and 34-11 in the first and third quarters and this proved to be decisive.

After losing the first quarter Coach Mickey Paul was able to inspire his team to take the second quarter 15-11 but this meant they were still trailing 39-26 at half time. If “Thunder” were to get back into the game they would need a solid third quarter but they lost it 34-11 with “Lions” scoring almost at will. To their credit the “Thunder” boys refused to give in and with “Lions” relaxing their efforts a little, were able to close the game on a high by winning the final stanza 28-15.

Coach Paul was pleased with his team’s efforts which saw the mercurial David Nieva top score with 38 points with Ayo Oluyede, Hayden Sayers and Reece Zubal all making important contributions.

Under 14 Girls cruise to victory

Under 14 Girls Midland South West Conference

Brentwood "Fire" 68 - 40 Northants "Lightning"

Coach Karen Goodrich took her under 14 girls team to the wilds of Essex to take on Brentwood "Fire" and returned having seen her charges record a routine 28 points win. The game plan was simple, try and establish a lead by using the more experienced players then give all the other players ample playing time for the rest of the game. The game plan worked perfectly with "Lightning" establishing a 41-15 half time lead with "Fire" restricted to just four points in the second period of play.

Goodrich's bench payers responded superbly to the challenge with nine of her eleven players figuring in the scoring which was led by Ruchae Walton with 18 points, the power forward also pulling down 14 rebounds. Caitlin Stewart score 10 points and Becky Easton, Abbi Hobbs, and Charlotte Price also made useful contributions in what was a very pleasing team performance.

The team currently lie in 3rd place in the Conference table but they will face a much sterner test this Saturday when they take on second place Southend "Swifts".

Under 13 Boys lose to Bracknell but meet an Olympian

Under 13 Boys Midlands Conference

Bracknell "Cobras" 84 - 68 Northants "Thunder"

With some key players unavailable, "Thunder" travelled to Bracknell to take on fellow Play Off hopefuls "Cobras" expecting a tough challenge and they certainly got it with the Northants boys ending up on the wrong end of an 84-68 score line.

It was "Cobras" who had the better of the early exchanges and their pressure defence resulted in a 30-13 lead at the end of the first quarter. "Cobras" respected basketball etiquette and stopped pressing once they achieved a 20 point lead and this, combined with "Thunder's" tight defence on the "Cobras" star player, meant that there was little between the two teams for the remainder of the game.

After trailing by 17 points after the opening period "Thunder" finally lost by 16 points actually winning the second and third periods of play. Coaches, referees and table officials all commented on the quality of the play and the positive attitude of the Northants team and there was a pleasing spread of scoring amongst the "Thunder" players with five of them recording double figures. Zak Kitchen and Laurence Williams both hit 15 points, Jared Ryan hit 14, and Ainsley Reynolds and Ed Wallhead both contributed 10 points.

Other than the team's excellent work ethic for all forty minutes of the game, the main highlight was meeting the great Sir Steve Redgrave who turned up to watch his son play in the "Cobras" Under 15 team. "Thunder's" next game will be the return fixture against Bracknell.



The Northants "Thunder" Under 13 Boys with Olympic legend Sir Steve Redgrave

THIS WEEKEND'S ACTION

Saturday 2nd March

9-45am	Under 14 Girls versus Southend "Swifts"
11-30am	Junior Men versus Manchester "Magic"
1-30pm	Under 15 Boys versus Notts Nova
	Under 14 Boys versus Leicester "Blaze"
3-30pm	Cadet Men versus Trafford
	Under 13 Boys versus Bracknell "Cobras"
5-30pm	Senior Men versus Leicester "Warriors II"

These seven 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**

Other games on Saturday:

Junior Women and Under 15 Girls travel to Bucks "Hornets"

Sunday 3rd March

Junior Men travel to Sheffield "All Saints"
Cadette Women travel to Bristol "Storm"
Under 14 Girls travel to Norfolk "Incini"