

Coach Karen Goodrich confessed she was mystified by her team's poor shooting, "We shoot very well under pressure in practice but just don't seem able to transfer that to game situations. On the positive side I was really please with the team's defensive effort especially when we switched to man-to-man."

Another first half blitz does it for Cadet Boys

Under 16 Boys Midland Conference

Northants "Thunder" 91 – 34 Worcester "Wolves"

For the second week running the Northants Cadet Boys turned in a breath-taking first half performance to win the game by half time. Despite missing two of their taller players Thunder tore into the Wolves of Worcester pouring in 26 points before their opponents opened their account. Led by Jacob Round, Thunder scored from close to the basket and from the perimeter and by the end of the first period of play had established a 34-2 lead.

The carnage continued during the second quarter which Thunder took 23-6 to set up a 57-8 half time lead with eight of the team contributing to the total.

Play Off places may well be determined by points difference but Coach John Collins decided to take off his side's aggressive zone press defence and work on a defence only introduced to the team in the previous practice. He also asked Round to fill in as a 'big' man to give the team a more balanced look. With the pressure off Wolves showed that they could play scoring 15 points in the third quarter while Thunder increased their total by 19.

The pattern continued in the final period of play which Thunder took 15-10 to run out 91-34 winners against a Worcester team that to their credit, refused to give up. For Thunder, Round poured in 39 points; Ayo Oluyede and David Nieva both scored in double figures while nine of the Thunder players got on the score sheet.

Thunder currently lie in 3rd place in the Midland Conference table on the basis of playing less games than some of their rivals. On Saturday they take on second placed Leicester Dynamite a team they beat by 18 points earlier in the season.

Cadette Girls stay top of the pile

Under 16 Girls Midlands South-West Conference

Team Birmingham 54 – 81 Northants "Lightning"

The undefeated Northants Lightning under 16 girls travelled to Birmingham last Sunday to take on Team Birmingham one of their closest rivals in the Midlands South-West Conference. The two teams exchanged baskets at the start of the game with Lightning just edging ahead 12-7 before Coach Karen Goodrich switched her team to a full court zone press. Birmingham were halted in their tracks with their guards frequently 'coughing up' the ball allowing easy Lightning scores. Lightning scored 14 points without reply so by the end of the quarter they had opened up a 26-7 lead.

The second period of play saw 12-2 and 12-4 Thunder surges so by half time they had opened up a 52-23 lead and Team Birmingham faced the proverbial mountain if they were to get back into the game. To their credit the West Midlands continued to play with determination and as Goodrich gave all her players lots of court time the home side actually won the second half 31-29 to reduce the final deficit to 27 points at 54-81.

In the conclusive win Holly Winterburn had an outstanding game scoring 33 points while her wide 'wing span' was extremely effective at the front of the press. Ruchae Walton contributed her usual double-double with 22 points and 11 rebounds while Caitlin Stewart was her usual steady self with 12 points, 8 rebounds and 6 assists. Goodrich was full of praise for the efforts of her whole team especially Abbi Hobbs who rebounded well and played efficiently at the heart of the Lightning press.

Under 14 Boys get back to winning ways

Under 14 Boys Midlands Conference

Northants "Thunder" 88 - 43 Leicester "Dynamite"

After their 'Titanic' but unsuccessful efforts against Warriors the previous week the Northants Under 14 got back to winning ways against another Leicester team, comfortably beating Dynamite by a 45 point margin.

Analysis of the score sheet for the game might suggest that Thunder were a two-man team; Ed Wallhead recorded a double-double scoring 42 points and pulling down numerous rebounds, while Josh Lloyd scored 26 points, which included two 3-pointers and some strong drives to the basket. The score sheet however, didn't tell the true story of the impressive team performance that involved all 12 players. The reality was that the players combined well when running the floor and when breaking wasn't an option, good player and ball movement created high percentage shots.

Having struggled against Dynamite for much of the away fixture, the game plan was to play high intensity defence, look after the boards and run the floor at every opportunity, particularly as Leicester had turned up with just seven players. The plan worked from the opening tip as Thunder powered to a 23-7 lead after the first quarter. Leicester did better in the second period adding 14 to their total, but Thunder were able to double their score giving them a 46-21 half-time lead.

The message at the mid-game break was 'Don't get complacent', but the Northants boys let the visitors get the upper hand at the start of the second half and Dynamite started to close the gap. However, Leicester's athletic Omotosho picked up his fourth foul and was forced to sit out for a while. This gave Thunder the opportunity to reclaim control and extend their lead at the end of the third quarter to 33 points.

In the final quarter, Tom Berry and Max Evans continued to keep a close eye on Leicester's talented Ethan Morrell, as they had done throughout the game and managed to limit the normally high-scoring guard to just six points. Missed shots from the guests were swallowed up by Ed Wallhead or Chris Amankonah and this gave Josh Lloyd the opportunity to initiate numerous fast-breaks while Gio Prati and Noah Wilborn also made significant contributions. As Northants ran the ball out, the scoreboard read 88-43 in Thunder's favour and the team took another step closer to a Play-Off spot.

Under 13 Boys lose local derby

Under 13 Boys Midlands Conference

N.E.B.C. "Titans" 104 – 50 Northants "Thunder"

NEBC Titans under 13 boys earned local bragging rights when they completed a 54 points win over Thunder at Northampton Academy last Sunday. The win completes a double for Titans but Thunder could be pleased that they scored more points than they had in the first encounter a restricted Titans to eight fewer points.

Titans comfortably won all four periods of play but Thunder could be proud of the 22-28 score in the fourth quarter when Titans coach Barry Powell put some of his less experienced players on the court. There was also an interesting statistic that Titans scored 40 points from put backs testament to their superior standing height whereas Thunder scored just four points from offensive rebounds. They will be hoping that this weekend's opponents Worcester Wolves don't field such a big team.

In Sunday's loss the ever improving Ben Nailer top scored for Thunder with 20 points. Jude Carmichael contributed 11 points before fouling out of the game while Oliver Dominique rebounded well despite playing against boys much taller than him and Ashley Kitchen, Isaac Round, and Connor White stuck to the task of advancing the ball up court.

THIS WEEKEND'S ACTIVITIES

Saturday 14th February

9.30am-11am	Ballers Academy Session
10am-11am	<u>NO</u> Junior Ballers Session
11.30am	Under 14 Boys versus Ilkeston "Outlaws" Under 15 Boys versus Herts "Warriors"
1.30pm	Cadet Boys versus Leicester "Dynamite"
3.30pm	Junior Men versus Derby "Trailblazers"

These games will take place at the Northants Centre for Basketball which is based at Northampton School for Girls in Spinney Hill Road

Spectators are welcome and admission is FREE

Under 11's Central Venue League @ N.S.B.
Senior Men travel to Solent "Kestrels"
Senior Women travel versus Bury "Blue Devils"

Sunday 15th February

11.45 am

Under 14 Girls versus to City of Birmingham

Under 13 Boys versus Worcester "Wolves"

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