

NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB



PRESS RELEASE

Battling win in Birmingham keeps “Thunder” Play Off hopes alive

Men’s National League Division 4 **(Midlands Conference)**

City of Birmingham “Rockets” 87 – 90 Northants “Thunder”

Last Saturday, “Thunder” travelled to Birmingham to take on “Rockets” another team still vying for an end of season Play Off place, without four key players. The fact that they were able to record a three point victory says a lot about the effort the team has put in during recent practices and testament to the ability of stand-in coach Grahame Yates.

Both teams made a nervous start to the contest “Thunder” just edging the first period of play by 25 points to 22.

Against an athletic team like “Rockets” there was always the chance that “Thunder” would try unsuccessfully to ‘run’ with them. This is exactly what happened in the second quarter which “Rockets” convincingly took 26-15 to lead 48-40 at half time and leaving the Northants team with a lot to think about.

The “Thunder” squad has worked hard at their perimeter shooting over the past few weeks and this proved to be decisive in the third quarter with “Thunder” converting no less than six, ‘three-pointers’, five of them back-to-back. The game was becoming increasingly physical with “Thunder’s”, Johnny Yates picking up a nasty head injury. Despite this “Thunder” were able to keep their composure to win the period 32-13 to move ahead 72-61 going into the last ten minutes of play.

“Thunder” expected a big “Rockets” push in the final quarter but despite a few lapses of concentration including committing an unsportsmanlike foul when just six ahead, they held on for the three point win leaving the Birmingham outfit to contemplate three missed break-away dunks.

In the narrow win Jacob Holt tops scored for “Thunder” with 18 points excellent support coming from a Johnny and Matt Yates, Richard Higgins and Sam Mennell all of whom scored in double figures while Coach Yates was full of praise for the efforts of rookie Ayo Oluyede.

The race for the two Pay Off places remains very close with Derby “Trailblazers II” losing another game last weekend and this coming weekend “Thunder” travel to Team Derby who like them have lost three games. To say this is a big game is a massive understatement.

“Eagles” too big and too strong for “Thunder”

Under 14 Boys National League (Midlands West Conference)

Abingdon “Eagles” 93 – 55 Northants “Thunder”

The Northants Under 14 boys went into the fixture against the Abingdon “Eagles” searching for their first win of 2018. “Thunder” went into the game without the services of Kris Dambrauskas due to illness leaving them seriously undersized.

A significant problem in recent games has been on “Thunder’s” team defence and despite a competitive start to Saturday’s game; a 12-2 run midway through the quarter saw the “Eagles” open up a 24-7 lead. Despite back to back scores from Ashley Kitchen and a three pointer from Benas Maldutis, “Thunder” trailed 30-14 end of the first quarter.

Coach Crump demanded a stronger effort defensively from his players in the second quarter denying the opposition second chance points and restrict “Eagles” penetrating to the middle of the floor. This sparked a positive response from “Thunder” producing a more competitive performance. Alongside some good execution by “Thunder” within their half court offence saw Tom Greenfield convert from a backdoor cut. Thunder edged the quarter 19-21, however they still trailed 49-35 at the half.

Despite the positive the quarter, Coach Crump urged to his players the importance of being consistent in their performance. “Eagles” started the third quarter with a strong line up and “Thunder” began to struggle. “Eagles” produce a 12-2 surge extending their lead to 61-37 forcing a “Thunder” time out but the Northants boys still struggled to score from the floor, but did show a persistence to get to the free throw line against the bigger opposition.

With the score 71-42 entering the fourth, another lapse by “Thunder” saw “Eagles” extend their lead further. A three-pointer by Kitchen helped to settle Thunder and with the game out of reach, the final five minutes saw Thunder field a younger line up of Maldutis, Bates, Dylan Dominic along with brothers Jeff and Adam Haider and they displayed a spirited performance against older opposition.

In the 38 point defeat the “Thunder” scoring was led by Ashley Kitchen with 20 points, supported by Benas Maldutis and Tom Greenfield scoring 17 and 12 points respectively.

Coach Crump commented “The team have faced a lot of criticism recently regards to their defensive efforts. Whilst it was disappointing that we were unable to field our strongest line up, I was happy with the progression the boys showed from last week. We recognised the mistakes in the opening quarter which we rectified and we won the 2nd quarter. However, consistency is the key and learning to display this effort for all four quarters.”

Under 16 Girls lose to local rivals

Under 16 Girls National League (North Conference)

N.E.B.C. “Titans” 88 – 44 Northants “Lightning”

The Northants Under 16 girls made the short trip to undefeated N.E.B.C. “Titans” and despite losing by 44 points turned in a spirited performance which pleased Coach Janis Kosnikovskis.

“Titans” made an excellent start to the game forcing a number of errors from the “Lightning” players leading to easy scores. Trailing 9-24 after that first period of play “Lightning” were far more competitive in the second quarter as “Titans” substitutes saw action only losing it 18-20.

“Titans” were back to their best in the third quarter winning it 25-7 with their pressure defence once more forcing “Lightning” errors. With the final result no longer in doubt the “Lightning” players were able to relax a little in the final period of play which “Titans” won 19-10 to take a well deserved 88 to 44 win.

In the 44 point loss Dina Kosnikovska top scored with 15 points Poppy Barnett and Lucy Needham both scoring eight.

THIS WEEKEND'S ACTIVITIES

Saturday 17th February

There are no sessions or games at the Basketball Centre

Senior Men travel to Team Derby

Under 16 Girls travel to Stockport “Lapwings”

Sunday 18th February

Under 16 Boys travel to Team Birmingham “Elite”

For more information contact: John Collins on 07801 533 151