

NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB

MEDIA RELEASE

Senior men slip to defeat against “Carnegie II”

Men’s National League Division 3

(North Conference)

Leeds Carnegie II 102 – 89 Northants “Thunder”

The Northants senior men slipped to their fourth North Conference defeat of the season going down to a Leeds Carnegie second string who are looking for a Play Off place themselves. The disappointment of the defeat was slightly softened by the news that close rivals Birmingham “Mets” had also slipped to defeat. The traffic jam at the top of the table is growing, with Rossendale “Raptors” leading the way with three losses while “Mets” and “Thunder” have four and five losses respectively. The plot is increasingly interesting because “Raptors” have to play Leeds on two occasions before the end of the regular season.

Against Leeds, “Thunder” were able to shake off the effects of the three hour journey north to take a 16-15 lead after the first period of play. The game was decided in the second and third quarters with the home side outscoring “Thunder” by an alarming 62 points to 40. Their scoring was dominated by veteran guard Jason Swain and mobile big man Hyland who proceeded to put on a Pick and Roll clinic. As far as “Thunder” were concerned their usual intensity on defence disappeared; they were also guilty of missing easy lay ups and put backs while open perimeter shots just didn’t drop.

Trailing 56-77 going into the final stanza “Thunder” might have easily ‘thrown in the towel’ but to their credit they mounted a massive effort and two 6-zero runs got the Carnegie lead down to single figures. Swaine was then able to show his experience with some excellent clock management forcing “Thunder” to foul and send Carnegie to the line but the Leeds players held their nerve to convert from the charity stripe.

For “Thunder”, Jason Tucker top scored with 25 points with good support coming from Jacob Holt and Leome Francis who both scored 20 points while Jonny Yates contributed 15 points. For Carnegie, Hyland and Swaine scored 76 of their team’s points.

The “Thunder” coaching staff were philosophical in defeat reflecting that 89 points is usually enough to win again but, “What do you expect when your defence goes missing?”

This Saturday the team will be hoping to get back to winning ways when they take on Derby “Trailblazers II” at the Basketball Centre.

Junior Men snatch defeat from the jaws of possible victory

Junior Men’s Premier Division North

Northants “Thunder” 57 – 68 Sheffield “Sharks”

When Linas Bajurunas scored with a coast-to-coast lay up to tie the scores up at 53 all with four minutes of the game remaining it looked as if the Northants junior men had staged a very creditable comeback from a ten point deficit. During the next four minutes “Thunder” returned to all the bad habits they had displayed earlier in the season. Out went any semblance of team work to be replaced by individual players looking to win the game single handed, rushed low percentage shots, and showboat dribbling resulting in turn-overs. As a result “Sharks” went on a 15-2 game winning charge. This was without doubt a game lost by the Northants boys rather than won by the Sheffield team.

“Thunder” made the worst possible start to the game falling 12-2 behind after just four minutes of play. A time out from stand in coach John Collins and a change of defensive tactics got things back on track but “Thunder” were still troubled by the perimeter shooting of Murriero and the close to basket threat of Backovic and after the first quarter the visitors led 19-16. The “Thunder” offence continued to struggle in the second period of play with Bajurunas and Sam Round scoring all 14 of their points as “Thunder” trailed 30-39 at half time.

The half time message was one of maintaining defensive intensity and playing with more confidence on offence.

The first objective was achieved thanks to combination defences which restricted “Sharks” to just ten points in the quarter but “Thunder” were still struggled to score points six scorers managing just 14 between them but the gap had been closed to 44-49 going into the final ten minutes of play. A 9-2 surge at the start of the final stanza got the scores level at 53 all before “Thunder’s” collapse of discipline and the disappointing conclusion.

In the 11 point defeat Round and Bajurunas top scored with 23 and 14 points respectively but Coach Collins was full of praise for the efforts of Karan Virdee who scored eight points and pulled down as many rebounds.

Junior Women’s Play Off chances fade after loss to “Rockets”

Junior Women’s Midlands Conference

Northants “Lightning” 56 – 65 Reading “Rockets”

The chances of the Northants junior women making it to the end of season Play Offs suffered a major setback when the team lost to Reading “Rockets” last Saturday. The girls will probably have to win all three of their remaining Conference games starting with table-topping Herts “Warriors” this Saturday.

Against Reading, “Lightning” were playing catch up from the start of the game slipping 11-20 behind after the first period of play, this after jumping out to an 8-2 lead. “Lightning” made a good start to the second quarter reducing the deficit to just six points before allowing “Rockets” to go on an 11-2 run which saw the visitors leading 35-25 at half time.

A big effort was needed in the third quarter but “Lightning” could only manage 12 points in the ten minutes of play eight of them coming from rookie Sarah Round. In a low scoring game Reading’s 15 point lead going into the last quarter looked enough to see them to victory and so it proved. “Lightning” won the final stanza 19-13 but it was a case of too little too late as “Rockets” held on for the 65-56 victory.

In the nine point defeat Round top scored with 14 points while Rio Blessyn, Lauren Brookes, and Stephanie Ogden all scored in double figures.

Another “Gimme” for Cadette Women

Under 16 Girls Midlands South – West Conference

Birmingham “A’s” 20 – 0 Northants “Lightning”

For the third time this season the Northants cadette women were given a win without even stepping on court. The latest defaulters were Birmingham “A’s” who were unable to raise a team from the 1.1 million population of the city many of them in the 14 to 16 female age category.

Another big win for Cadet Men

Cadet Men’s Midlands Conference

Northants “Thunder” 102 - 33 Bromsgrove “Bears”

Last Saturday’s top versus bottom game against a spirited but limited Bromsgrove “Bears” team proved to be a very one-sided affair with the Northants “Thunder” cadet men dominating in all aspects of the game. From the outset it was clearly evident that the home side was too strong for the West Midlands outfit as they stormed out with a 10-zero run thanks to scores from Will Grosvenor, Elliott Strausa and Carlo Nieva. “Bears” grew a little in confidence, reducing the lead to 7 points at 20-13 but in the final 2 minutes “Thunder” mounted an 11-zero charge concluding with an Ollie Thomas three pointer as they opened up a 31-13 lead.

“Thunder” changed their defences continuously throughout the second quarter to unsettle the opposition and this allowed them to mount two more dominant runs with Thomas, Jacob Killee and Brendan Ross looking impressive. “Thunder” took the period 27-1 to open up what appeared to be an unassailable 58-24 half time lead.

Things didn’t get any easier for “Bears” in the third period of play. After scoring the first basket of the quarter they went scoreless for the remaining nine minutes while “Thunder” poured in 23 points which included seven from Carlo Nieva. With “Thunder” leading 81-26, Coach Rob Crump set his team some defensive targets for the fourth quarter and they responded well restricting “Bears” to seven points in the period. When T.J. Nyamatore made a lay up it took “Thunder” beyond one hundred points for the third time this season.

Despite the one-sided nature of the game, Coach Crump was very happy that seven of his eight players had scored in double figures.

That win makes it 16 straight for the team with four games of the regular season still remaining. Crump is keen to complete an unbeaten Conference campaign with the last game of the season against Birmingham "A's" looking likely to be their severest challenge.

Gutsy Under 15 Boys see off "Blaze"

Under 15 Boys Midlands Conference

Leicester "Blaze" 62 – 73 Northants "Thunder"

An excellent team performance saw the Northants Under 15 boys end their season with a well deserved win over Leicester "Blaze" last Saturday. The team looks likely to finish in fifth place in the final Conference table just one win off a Play Off place. The team has improved a great deal over the past six months and this is testament to the hard work of all the players in the squad.

Against "Blaze", "Thunder" were initially troubled by the driving play of Leicester's left-handed Callender which saw the influential Ayo Oluyede pick up two quick fouls. Despite making defensive adjustments "Thunder" found themselves trailing 23-20 after the first period of play.

For the second quarter Coach John Collins switched his team to a match-up and trapping zone and this had the immediate effect of controlling "Blaze's" scoring close to basket. For their part the Leicester team were working hard to stop Jacob Round carrying the ball for "Thunder". This meant that David Nieva had to take over ball handling duties and with Robert Clarke and Emmanuel Arimoro dominating in the rebounding department Nieva was able to feed Round on a number of fast break offences. The young guard scored 11 personal points in the quarter which "Thunder" won 20-14 to take a 40-37 half time lead.

For the third quarter "Blaze" also switched to a zone defence and this opened up perimeter shooting opportunities for Jaz Cambell, Hayden Sayers and Round. The two teams exchange baskets for eight minutes of the period before "Thunder" were able to mount a 14-6 charge to lead 61-52 going into the last ten minutes of play.

"Blaze" employed a press defence in the last period of play but Nieva and Round never looked troubled and thanks to some intelligent clock management "Thunder" were able to close out a game which had seen a number of different defensive strategies, by 73 points to 62. Their scoring was led by Round with 29 points but Collins was delighted that seven of the other eight players he had employed had contributed to the scoring

Shock loss for Under 14 Girls

Under 14 Girls Midlands South West Conference

Northants "Lightning" 51 – 75 County Upper "Coyotes"

Earlier in the season the Northants Under 14 girls travelled to Bury St Edmonds and beat County Upper by over 30 points. Maybe the memory of that win was on the team's minds last Saturday when the "Coyotes" arrived with just five players. If "Lightning" thought they were in for another easy game they were immediately shocked out of their comfort zone as the visitors charged out to a 12-4 lead. "Coyotes" were now full of confidence and held onto their advantage to lead 20-10 at the end of the first period of play.

Any hopes of a "Lightning" revival in the second quarter were quickly put to rest as "Coyotes" went on a 16-6 run to take what looked to be an unassailable 36-16 lead. This lead was extended to 47-22 by half time leaving the Northants girls a proverbial mountain to climb.

As "Coyotes" tired in the third and fourth quarters "Lightning" were able to mount some kind of challenge led by the efforts of Lucy Amena.. "Lightning" outscored their opponents 29-28 in the second half but never looked likely to claw back the half time deficit.

In the disappointing 24 point defeat Amena led "Lightning's" scoring with 16 points while Bahira Bakarat, Georgia Collins and Martina Horvathova all scored ten points.

