**NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB**

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**PREE RELEASE**

**Another very busy weekend for the Northants Basketball Club with pride of place going to the Under 13 Boys who secured the YBL Conference title.**

**Stunning fourth quarter gets Junior Men home against “Saxons”**

**Under 18 Boys Midlands 2 Conference**

**Gloucester “Saxons” 74 – 77 Northants “Thunder”**

Going into the fourth quarter of this Midlands 2 Conference game “Thunder” were trailing lowly “Saxons by 50 points to 57 and defeat was staring them in the face. The “Thunder” players and coaching staff had been upset by the physicality of the “Saxons” play while fouls had been called when there had been minimum contact.

The key plays of the final quarter were a three pointer from Emanuel Kalumba and a steal by Jack Lemon who cooly converted the two free throws resulting from the ensuing foul. Unfortunately the “Thunder” celebrations were spoiled by some unsavory incidents involving players and spectators.

Away from this unpleasantness this win and a shock loss for Northamptonshire “Titans” against Oxford “Hoops” makes “Thunder” favourites to take the Conference title.

After the long journey to Gloucester “Thunder” seemed shocked by the commitment of the “Saxons” players at the start of the game. They were also shocked by the aggressive “Saxons” press defence wand were guilty of turning the ball over on a number of occasions leading to easy scores for the home side. “Thunder” were rather lucky that they were only trailing 22-20 after the first quarter and they continued to struggle in the second quarter which “Saxons” won 18-12 to establish a well deserved 40-32 half time lead.

Coach Darjius Maldutis’s message to the team at half time was very simple, “Keep your composure, be patient and move the ball.”

“Thunder” heeded his advice in the third quarter and were able to advance the ball through the “Saxon” press and score but they were hit by a barrage of four three pointers from the home side who held on to their lead and go into the final stanza with the seven point advantage and the dramatic final ten minutes.

In the three point win the “Thunder” scoring was led by team captain Dylan Dominici with 21 points good support coming from Ellis Phillips and Benas Maldutis with 16 and 14 points respectively but players like Jack Lemon and Fareed Issifu put in a tremendous ‘shift’ and the Kalumba three-pointer should not be forgotten.

“Thunder” have two games remaining starting with a home games against Coventry “Elite” this Saturday and they will be hoping to avoid a slip up that might rob them of the Conference title

**Under 16 Girls brought down to earth with loss against “Scorpions”**

**Under 16 Girls East Conference**

**Southend “Scorpions” 66 – 37 Northants “Lightning”**

After their stunning win over Conference topping Brentwood “Leopards” the weekend before the Northants Under 16 Girls made the long journey to Southend in optimistic mood but they were quickly brought down to earth when they could manage just two baskets in the first quarter, the home side pouring in 23 points.

Things improved a little For “Lightning” in the second quarter which “Scorpions” won 19-10 but with a 42-14 half time score the game was over as a contest.

To their credit the “Lightning” players battled hard in the remaining two quarters which they only just lost but the damage had already been done as “Scorpions” cruised to victory.

**Winless weekend for Under 16 Boys**

**Under 16 Boys suffer a heavy hand at the hands of “Hawks”**

**Under 16 Boys Midlands 1 Conference**

**Northants “Thunder” 39 – 81 Warwickshire “Hawks”**

After their heavy defeat at the hands of Milton Keynes the previous weekend the Northants Under 16 Boys faced another tough challenge in the shape of high-flying Warwickshire “Hawks”.

“Thunder” struggled from the outset and went almost seven minutes before scoring from the field. They were hit by a 15-zero “Hawks run to trail 10-23 at the end of the first quarter. Thanks to eight points from Danielus Jokulis, “Thunder” were far more competitive in the second quarter but trailed 25-39 at half time.

“Thunder” needed a strong third quarter but they succumbed to “Hawks” and managed only another 14 points in the game to go down by 39 points to 81with Jokulis with 14 the only “Thunder” player to score in double figures.

**Much improved Under 16 Boys still lose to “Breakers II”**

**Milton Keynes “Breakers II” 78 - 62 Northants “Thunder”**

Less than 24 hours after their heavy defeat against Warwickshire “Hawks” the Northants “Thunder” Under 16 Boys were back on court against the Milton Keynes “Breakers” second string and Coach Brad Hughes young team produced a fare more competitive performance.

They were initially troubled by some aggressive “Breakers” rebounding but the introduction of Ted Osborne to the “Thunder” line up solved this problem to a certain extend but the home side were able to establish a 16-13 lead after the first quarter. An 8-zero run helped the home side to winning the second quarter 20-13 leaving “Thunder” trailing by ten points at 26-36 by half time.

Ten second half points from Logan Ormshaw kept “Thunder” competitive in the third and fourth quarters but they never threatened to close the gap

and eventually slipped to a 16 points defeat Ormshaw and Danielus Jokulis leading their scoring with 14 points apiece.

**Under 13 Girls well beaten by City of Birmingham**

**Under 13 Girls Challenge game**

**Northants “Lightning” 28 – 66 City of Birmingham “Rockets”**

When this friendly game was arranged the City of Birmingham officials agreed to field an inexperienced team and Coach Karen Goodrich duly followed suit. In the event C.O.B. arrived with three players with national league experience and these three players proceeded to score almost 50 of the “Rockets” points.

For “Lightning” Urte Makdutyte and Freya Tauber-Anderson performed well against the bigger C.O.B. team and overall the game wa a good learning experience for the “Lightning” girls.

**Under 14 Girls’ game ends in confusion**

**Under 14 Girls North 2 Conference**

**Northants “Lightning” versus Leicester “Riders”**

Having battled their way to a 46-37 lead towards the end of the third quarter “Lightning” players and supporters alike were shocked when “Lightning” coach Mark Spatcher picked up his second technical foul for dissent and was sent from the sports hall and the game was abandoned because “Lightning” didn’t have a qualified coach on the bench. Karen Goodrich a qualified coach offered to deputise, but this wasn’t allowed because her name wasn’t on the scoresheet.

*The guidelines from Basketball England state that everything should be done to complete games and any dispute sorted out later, but the referees signed the scoresheet to end the game.*

The game was played to a finish with the “Riders” coach not really taking the proceedings particularly seriously “Lightning” going on to win by **67 points to 55.**

Earlier in the game “Lightning” had struggled to score against “Riders” sagging man-to-man defence which on occasions looked very much like a zone defence. They fell behind 14-5 but recovered 12-19 by the end of the quarter.

The second quarter saw “Lightning” put more pressure on the “Riders” ball carriers with Eman Abbas. adding a great deal of energy to the “Lightning” defence. Led by ten points from Jennifer Oaman “Lightning” took the quarter 20-14 and trailing by just a single point 32-33 at half time could sense a win against the high-flying “Riders”.

Maintaining their pressure defence “Lightning” dominated the third quarter outscoring their opponents 14-4 to take a 47-37 lead before the unfortunate ‘abandonment’. At the termination of the ‘official’ game Oaman had scored 16 points well supported by Campbell Spatcher and Grace Eighteen with 14 and 10 points respectively.

After the game Coach Spatcher said, “I am super proud of the team’s level of concentration today. They were incredibly disciplined in what they were asked to do. The journey this group is on is definitely going in the right direction.

The team have a busy few days with a trip to Mansfield on Wednesday and Sheffield on Saturday.

**Under 15 Boys move into the YBL Primis Play Offs despite a below par performance**

**Under 15 Boys Primis**

**Northants “Thunder” 55 -42 Abingdon “Eagles”**

Just three weeks ago “Thunder” ago “Thunder” comfortably beat “Eagles” by 34 points so possibly complacency was responsible for a slightly lacklustre performance when the two teams met on Saturday. “thunder” won the game by 13 points thanks in the main to them winning the second quarter by 18 points to three but Coach Whitney Bain will no doubt reflect that her team lost the second half 25 – 31.

The win means that “Thunder” will definitely make the end of season Play Offs and they are still in the hunt for the Conference title.

On Saturday Kamil Jazwinski top scored for “Thunder” with 13 points good support coming from Harry Dutton and James Kennett-Maughan with 12 and 10 points respectively

**Super Under 13 Boys take YBL Conference title**

**YBL Under 13 Boys East Conference**

**Northants “Thunder” 71 – 43 Leicester “Riders”**

An impressive second half performance which saw them outscore their opponents by 42 points to 22 helped the “Thunder” Under13 Boys to a convincing 28 point win over Leicester “Riders”. That win their eighth plus two default wins against Daventry clinches the YBL East Conference title and a place in the Play Offs.

Without a game for several weeks “Thunder” looked a little ring rusty in the first half and were very conscious of dealing with the threat of the “Riders” ‘giant’ centre Omoresie. “Thunder” coach, Pete Dewsnap matched Jewell Skiete-French and Luca Garrett with Omoresie and despite a distinct height disadvantage kept the “Riders” player to 20 points.

“Thunder” won the first quarter 18-10 and were then held to 11 all in the second quarter but finished the quarter with an impressive 9-zero charge. “Thunder” continued their good form at the start of the third quarter with a 13-zero surged which meant that over an eight minute period they had outscored their opponents by 22 points to zero. Playing excellent team basketball orchestrated by impressive guard Jerome Maroodza, “Thunder” continued to dominate the game and closed the contest with a 14 – zero run to win by

71 points to 43.

Eight “Thunder” players contributed to the 71 point final total led by Luca Garrett with a 22 point haul well supported by Oliver Casey with 12 points and Maroodza with 10 and a hatful of assists.

**“Storm” second best to “Tornadoes” despite last quarter charge**

**Under 12 Mixed Region 1 League**

**Coventry “Tornadoes” 61 – 51 Northants “Storm”**

Already fielding a small team “Storm” suffered a major setback within the first five minutes of the game when Kaiyin Dada their tallest player suffered and ankle injury. Dada was forced to sit out the second quarter of the game but bravely returned to the fray in the second half pulling down some vital rebounds.

Led by the talented Baskoudis and benefitting from a distinct height advantage “Tornadoes” had established a 32-26 led by half time and this was extended to 55-38 by the end of the third quarter. For the final quarter the “Tornadoes” coach sat down Baskoudis and his tallest player and immediately “Thunder” seized the advantage and playing some attractive fast break basketball closed the gap to single figures forcing “Tornadoes” to bring Baskoudis back into the action.

“Storm” won the fourth quarter 13-6 but “Tornadoes” were able to hold out for the ten-point win.

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Coach John Collins was pleased that nine of his players scored led by Samuel Dominici with 11 points

**Successful weekend for Lucy**

Last Saturday former Northants “Lightning” star and Northampton School for Girls pupil Lucy Needham picked up her second ‘half blue’ when she played for Oxford University in the annual Varsity match.

Oxford won the game by **69 points to 50** but the modest Needham declined to tell us how many points she had scored.

**THIS WEEK’S ACTIVITIES**

**Wednesday 15th March**

Under 14 Girls travel to Mansfield “Giants”

**Saturday 18th March**

**9-15am to 10-15am “Budding Ballers”**

**10-15am to 11-30am “Junior Ballers”**

12.00pm Under 14 Boys versus Walsall “Wizards”

2-15pm Under 16 Boys versus Coventry “Tornadoes”

4-30pm Under 18 Boys versus Coventry “Elite”

Under 13 Girls travel to Arden “Griffins”

Under 14 Girls travel to Sheffield “Hatters II”

Under 11 “Storm” and “Storm II” travel to Coventry “Tornadoes”

**Sunday 19th March**

11-00am Under 12 Boys versus Leicester “Riders”

1-00pm Under 16 Boys versus Milton Keynes “Breakers”

3-00pm Under 14 Boys versus Tamworth “Tigers”

All the home games will be played at the **Northants Basketball Centre** which is based at

Northampton School for Girls, Spinney Hill Road, Northampton NN3 6DG

Spectators are welcome, admission is **FREE** and refreshments are available.

For further information on this Press Release contact: **John Collins** on 07801 533 151