

# **NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Loss against “Kestrels II” brings relegation fears for “Thunder”**

#### **Men’s Division Three North**

**Northants “Thunder”                      58 – 90                      Solent “Kestrels II”**

A few weeks ago the talk was all about the possibility of the Northants senior men’s’ chances of reaching the end of season Play Offs. Now, following a series of poor result the spectre of possible relegation hangs over the team. They are currently one win ahead of Oxford Brookes with the two teams meeting in Oxford on Saturday and the Oxford team holding head to head advantage should they win.

Against high flying Solent “Kestrels II” last Saturday, “Thunder” were well in contention at 31-37 as the second quarter drew to a close. “Kestrels” inbounded the ball and Mann coolly drained a three point ‘buzzer beater’ to give the visitors a nine point half time advantage.

That scores seemed to adversely affect the “Thunder” players and a 12-2 run early in the third period of play gave “Kestrels” a 17 point lead and that lead was extended to 19 points by the end of quarter despite the best efforts of Matt Yates.

Needing to work as a team on offence “Thunder” were guilty of relying too much on individual efforts leading to rushed and forced shots. Solent responded with a number of fast break scores as they cruised to a 32 point win which seemed very unlikely through the first two periods of play.

In the heavy loss Richard Higgins battled hard for “Thunder” top scoring with 16 points, Matt Yates contributed 13 points and Jacob Holt 10 but no other “Thunder” player could get into double figures

### **No joy for Junior Men against “Warriors”**

#### **Junior Men’s East Midlands Conference**

**Northants “Thunder”                      61 – 67                      Leicester “Warriors”**

After their recent wins the Northants junior men went into their fixture against top of the table Leicester “Warriors” in optimistic mood despite the absence of the influential Ayo Oluyede. When they opened the game with an 8-zero charge there seemed good reason for that optimism but the visitors had other ideas and by the end of the period had tied the scores up at 14 all.

The second quarter saw “Warriors” open with an 8-zero run but by half time “Thunder” had got back onto level terms at 28 all thanks to 9 points from David Nieva.

The outcome of the game was as good as decided at the end of the third quarter with “Warriors” mounting a 9-zero rush to open up a 48-40 lead. This was consolidated with a 7-zero opening to the final period leaving “thunder” with the proverbial mountain to climb as they found themselves trailing 40-55. They did superbly to close the gap to 58-63 going into the final minute of play but back to back scores from “Warriors” Mawumo saw the Leicester boys hold on for victory.

In the six points win the “Thunder” scoring was led by Nieva with 21 points while Shekina Ntumba put in an excellent shift scoring 16 points and rebounding superbly

## **Under 14 Boys second best against Birmingham Elite**

### **Under 14 Boys Midlands II Conference**

**Team Birmingham Elite                      81 – 48                      Northants Thunder**

A personal haul of 30 points by forward Jonathan Ntumba couldn't prevent the Northants "Thunder" under 14 boys from slipping to defeat against Team Birmingham Elite. Both teams had won one of the two preceding games so this game settled the 'head to head'

A very physical game saw initial aggressive defensive pressure from Team Elite and it took several minutes for the "Thunder" players to settle. Luckily for "Thunder", the home side failed to capitalise on offense providing a tight score line throughout the first period of play with the two teams trading baskets neither team able to secure a dominant run. A basket from Jonathan Ntumba gave the visitors a narrow 11-10 lead at the end of the quarter.

"Thunder" were reminded about the importance of limiting Team Birmingham second chance chance shots and both Kalonji Campbell and Ntumba combined to display a strong rebounding performance. Unfortunately poor decisions and unforced turnovers early in the second quarter saw Team Elite Birmingham lead by as many as 10 points forcing a Thunder time-out. "Thunder" responded excellently, producing a run of their own reducing the deficit to just two points at 32-30 going at half time. During the first two periods Ntumba had scored 23 of "Thunder's" 30 points but the forward had also picked up his third personal foul in the final possession of the quarter.

Coach Rob Crump was forced to protect Ntumba from further foul trouble at the start of the second half by sitting him on the bench. This had a significant impact on Thunder's performance, and they proceeded to lose the quarter by 22 points with poor execution on offense resulting in consecutive turnovers. The situation was not helped when Kalonji Campbell picked up his fourth foul with three minutes of the quarter to go forcing "Thunder" to field a really small line up. Birmingham took full advantage of several mismatches to boast a 61-37 lead entering the final quarter.

With Team Elite fielding a weaker line up, Coach Crump gambled putting Ntumba and Campbell back onto the floor in order to attempt to spark a run to put pressure on the home sides lead. Team Elite efficiently contained Ntumba by denying him possession of the ball and denying him any dribble penetrations when going to basket. This put pressure on other "Thunder" players to take responsibility to score but they did not look comfortable shooting and were often forced to shoot rush shots. "Thunder" lost the quarter by 9 resulting a 33 point blowout.

"Thunder" were led in scoring by Jonathan Ntumba with 30 points with 23 coming in the first half. He was supported by Kalonji Campbell scoring 7 points.

Coach Crump commented "The boys were challenged physically and mentally today. I was impressed how we overcame the deficit in the first half and did not affect our confidence. Unfortunately, we had a complete meltdown in the third quarter when we were outscored by 22 points which is always very difficult to recover from especially so late in the game. Despite being in foul trouble, offensively we did not execute becoming too dependent on one person to do the scoring"

(Report written by Rob Crump)

## **Gutsy Under 14 Girls beat Brentwood “Fire”**

### **Under 14 Girls East Conference**

**Northants “Lightning”                      61 – 60                      Brentwood “Fire”**

Trailing 23-35 at half time the Northants under 14 girls needed a major effort in the final two periods of play if they were to beat a well drilled Brentwood “Fire” team. During the first two quarters the visitors had been employing a sagging ‘man-to-man’ defence which on occasion saw players leaving their player to ‘Help’ out. At the start of the third quarter the referees became insistent that the Brentwood girls marked their players a little more honestly and initially this had the effect of putting the “Lightning” players under pressure and forcing turn-overs. It also had another effect with key “Fire” players picking up fouls.

Urged to maintain their defensive effort by Coach Kosnikovskis “Lightning” were able to tie the third quarter at 17 all so were still in chance of sneaking a win. Led by a Lucy Needham inspired 13-4 charge, “Lightning” got the score to 53-56 but more significantly “Fire” had lost the services of two key players on five fouls.

A Needham ‘and one’ got the scores level at 56 all but the visitors responded with back-to-back scores before Needham hit a floater and a shot from the deep corner to tie the scores up once more. Both teams had further scoring opportunities before Kim Dube was fouled close to basket and she converted one of the resulting free throws to give “Lightning” the lead at 61-60. Despite losing possession with a few seconds remaining the Northants girls were able to hold on for their fifth win of the season.

“Lightning’s” scoring was led by Lucy Needham with 29 points, 17 of them coming in that crucial fourth quarter; good support coming from Dina Kosnikovska with 14 points and Poppy Barnet with 8, but Coach Kosnikovskis was quick to praise the tremendous defensive effort of the other seven players.

### **THIS WEEKEND'S ACTION**

#### **Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> March**

9-30am to 11.00am      Junior “Ballers”  
11.30am                      Under 16 Boys versus Rutland “Thunders”

This games will be played at the Northamptonshire Basketball Centre  
which is situated at Northampton School for Girls, Spinney Hill Road, Northampton

Spectators are welcome and admission is FREE

Senior Men travel to Oxford Brookes  
Junior Men travel to Leicester “Dynamite”  
Under 14 Boys travel to Worcester “Wolves”  
Under 14 Girls travel to Oaklands “Wolves”

Under 9 and Under 11 Central Venue League @ Northampton School for Boys

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