

NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB



PRESS RELEASE

“Thunder” get back to winning ways with comeback victory over “Hawks”

Men’s National League Division 4
(Midlands Conference)

Northants “Thunder” 86 – 79 Warwickshire “Hawks”

Trailing by ten points, 34-44 at half time it looked as if “Thunder’s” three game losing streak was going to be extended against a physical Warwickshire “Hawks” team. That they responded to record a seven point win says a lot about the team’s character and keeps alive their chances of finishing third in the tough Midlands Conference.

After making a good start to the game “Thunder” were allowed themselves to be adversely affected by some decisions that went against them allowing “Hawks” to go on a 17-4 charge and take a 26-17 lead at the end of the first period of play. “Thunder” were able to close the gap to 31-35 in the second quarter but over the closing three minutes of the period were outscored 10-3 as “Hawks” regained the initiative.

There were no harsh words in the “Thunder” locker room during the half time break just a determination to do the simple things properly and not get affected by some eccentric refereeing decisions. Needing a good start to the third quarter, “Thunder” got just that thanks to some good pressure defence and the efforts of Matt Yates. The “Thunder” combi-guard scored nine points leading his team on a 17-6 surge at the start of the period taking his team one point in front. “Hawks” responded with some excellent perimeter shooting to regain the lead and as the contest became more physical “Thunder” looked to be in danger of losing control of the game but a little run at the end of the quarter gave them a 62-61 lead.

“Hawks” started the final period of play in determined mood and they scrambled their way back in front thanks to the efforts of their ‘big’ man Larnar. Midway through the quarter with the visitors leading 69-67, “Thunder” got eight points from the sheer athletic efforts of Jacob Holt and Antonio Darkwa, then “Hawks” leading scorer Dickson fouled out of the game. The initiative was now well and truly with “Thunder” and despite their best efforts to hand the game back to “Hawks” they held on for a much needed win.

In the seven point victory Matt Yates top scored for “Thunder” with a 30 point haul. Richard Higgins contributed 13 points and Jacob Holt and Johnny Yates 12 and 10 points respectively.

West Bromwich Albion complete double with wins over Juniors and Cadets

Junior Men's National League

West Bromwich Albion 82 – 64 Northants "Thunder"

The Northants Junior men came out second best against table topping and undefeated West Bromwich Albion but they put in a massive effort they could be proud of and the score didn't really represent the competitiveness of the game.

Albion held the upper hand throughout the game but the determination of the "Thunder" players on defence meant that the home team could never open up a substantial gap. Even so Albion led by 12 points at 58-47 going into the final period of play and looked to be cruising to a comfortable win. "Thunder" however had other ideas and inspired by the efforts of Cameron Samuels and Ed Wallhead allied to some determined defence they got the deficit down to two points. With the opportunity to record a major upset fatigue set in, the defensive intensity disappeared; a couple of easy shots were missed and Albion were able to close out the game.

Despite the 18 point defeat Coach Darijus Maldutis felt it was his team's best display of the season. For "Thunder", Wallhead and Samuels led the scoring with 29 and 14 points respectively.

Under 16 Boys National League (Midlands Conference)

West Bromwich Albion 93 – 36 Northants "Thunder"

The Northants Under 16 Boys came a distant second to an athletic and well drilled West Bromwich Albion team last Saturday but they could be proud of their efforts against a team that has only lost one game all season. "Thunder" knew that without the services of influential guard Adam Lewandowski things were going to be difficult and so it proved in the first period of play when they were outscored 6-22. The "Thunder" players didn't particularly do anything wrong they were just physically overwhelmed.

The second quarter saw "Thunder" adjust to the physicality and intensity of the game and despite losing it 26-16 they played some attractive basketball. They maintained their efforts for five minutes of the third period with Connor White and Emeka Ayuanya working hard for their team but then fatigue set in and Albion dominated the final 15 minutes of play finally running out winners by 93 points to 36.

Throughout the game scoring was difficult for the "Thunder" boys with only White and Ayuanya making any significant contributions with 11 and 9 points respectively.

Under 14 Boys National League (Midlands West Conference)

Worcester "Wolves" 47 – 72 Northants "Thunder"

The Northants "Thunder" Under 14 boys faced Worcester Wolves at the University of Worcester last Saturday with "Thunder" fancying their chances after narrowly edging the previous encounter.

"Thunder" opened the game in dominating mood storming into an 11-2 run influenced by good full court man to man defense forcing consecutive errors from "Wolves" offence. The home side replied with a 10-0 surge to take the lead forcing the ball inside with "Thunder" struggling to contain the "Wolves" tall post player. Despite this "Thunder" did finish the quarter assertively securing a small 20-14 lead.

The second quarter was a tight encounter with very little between the two teams. "Thunder" struggled to finish close to basket, failing to convert easy lay ups on a number of occasions. Defensively they continued to struggle against the "Wolves'" tall forward and Kris Dambrauskas and Tom Greenfield both found themselves in foul trouble. With the game level, Benas Maldutis hit back to back shots from the perimeter to give Thunder a six point lead at the half, 35-29.

During half time the "Thunder" players were made aware that they had to limit "Wolves" scores from close to the basket and show more patience when executing their offence. "Thunder" turned in an excellent performance throughout the third quarter, limiting "Wolves" to just nine points, and executing well on the fast break. With a number of the "Wolves" players looking fatigued "Thunder" coach Rob Crump was able to give court time to debutants Andrew Lleshi and Fifi Boakye who both contributed to the scoring.

Leading 59-38 entering the final period the "Thunder" were reminded by Coach Crump not to become complacent. During the final period of play eight points from Dambrauskas and scores from Tom Cole and Tom Greenfield saw Thunder secure the 72 to 47 victory.

"Thunder's" scoring was led by Kris Dambrauskas with 20 points supported with 16 points from Ashley Kitchen.

Coach Crump commented "It was pleasing to secure a much needed win. We faced some challenges in the first half, failing to contain "Wolves" inside presence, however, I felt the team responded excellently at the half limiting the Wolves offense to single figures in both quarters and showed more composure on offense. It was a good team performance."

Magnificent overtime win for Under 14 Girls

Under 14 Girls National League **(Midlands Conference)**

Bucks "Hornets"

48 - 58
(47 - 47)

Northants "Lightning"

Having trailed throughout the game the "Lightning" Under 14 Girls battled their way back into contention during the fourth quarter of this Midlands Conference game; however, with six seconds of the contest remaining "Hornets" still held the lead at 47-46. At this juncture "Lightning's" Fiona Arthur was fouled and she went to the charity stripe with the opportunity to win the game for her team. She converted the first free throw to tie the scores but missed the second so taking the game into overtime.

Missing the services of Dina Kosnikovska, "Lightning" were inspired by the efforts of Lucie Wilson-Gray and Hosana Ajayi and they totally dominated the overtime period outscoring their opponents 11-1 to secure a ten point victory which at one time had looked very unlikely.

Missing a number of key players "Lightning" made an appalling start to the game falling behind 11-zero. With a heavy defeat looking to be on the cards Coach Karen Goodrich called a time out and her players responded well and a 12-2 charge at the end of the period got the score back to 19-17 in favour of the home team.

"Hornets" were using a double teaming defence but "Lightning" were able to negotiate this reasonably comfortably. They were however, struggling to contain "Hornets" talented guard Cook and she led her team to a 10-2 surge at the end of the second quarter to give the home team a 36-28 half time lead.

During the third period of play both teams looked nervous and were guilty of missing numerous scoring opportunities. "Lightning" edged the period 7-6 but still trailed by seven points going into the final ten minutes of play. Goodrich urged her team to make a massive effort in the final quarter and they responded magnificently embarking on a 9-zero run to take the lead. "Hornets" responded

and re-took the lead despite missing seven free throws and when Kosnikovska, “Lightning’s” leading scorer left the game with breathing problems things looked bleak for the Northants team. Needing inspiration “Lightning” found it in Ajayi and Wilson-Gray and their efforts saw “Lightning” hang on give Arthur the chance to win the game or as it turned out take the contest into overtime.

In the exciting win the “Lightning” scoring was led by Kosnikovska with 18 points, and she was well supported by Wilson-Gray and Arthur with 12 and 10 points respectively. Ajayi scored just 6 points but she pulled down a massive haul of rebounds which were crucial to “Lightning’s” success and Goodrich was pleased with the contributions of Ashia King and Chloe Stevens.

Northamptonshire dominate East Midlands Under 11 Tournament

The East Midlands Under 11 Tournaments were staged in Nottingham on Sunday and Northamptonshire dominated both the boys and girls events comfortably winning all their games.

The boys’ team beat Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire twice while the girls got the better of Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire on two occasions.

Five boys, Thomas Bates, George Barry, Hugo Dunn, Gabriel Noel, and Ethan Swallow, from the Northants Club played for the boys’ team while: Keris Jegede, Mia Gajaga, Amelia Stirling and Athena Thompson played for the girls’ team. Two coaches from the Club, Kim Thompson and Curtis Noel helped with the coaching of the county teams.

Northamptonshire Under 13 Trials

Trials for the county Under 13 Boys and Girls team will take place on **Friday 16th March** at the **Northants Basketball Centre** at Northampton School for Girls in Spinney Hill Road. The trial will last from 6.00pm until 7-30pm and the cost will be £4 with a second trial planed for **Thursday 22nd March**

Interested players should be born in 2005, 2006 or later, play, live or attend school in Northamptonshire and are of British Nationality (this is because the selected team will play in the East Midlands Inter Counties Tournament on Sunday 22nd April and this is part of selection for the England Development squad.

THIS WEEKEND’S ACTIVITIES

Saturday 17th March

9-30 – 11-00am Junior Ballers Session
11-00am to 6-00pm National Invitational Under 12 Girls Tournament

This event will be staged at the Northants Basketball Centre which is based at Northampton School for Girls in Spinney Hill Road, Northampton

Spectators are welcome and admission is FREE

Senior men travel to Birmingham Mets II”
Under 14 Boys travel to City of Birmingham “Rockets II”

Sunday 18th March

Under 16 Girls travel to Lancashire “Spinners”

For more information contact: John Collins on 07801 533 151