

NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB

MEDIA RELEASE

Senior Men are out of the Play Offs

Men's National League Division 3 (Play Off Quarter Final)

London Greenhouse "Pioneers" 93 – 76 Northants "Thunder"

After finishing third in the North Conference the Northants "Thunder" senior men travelled to London last Sunday to take on Greenhouse "Pioneers" the senior team of the large basketball development outreach programme in the quarter finals of the Play Offs. With Rossendale and Birmingham "Mets" defeated by South Conference teams the previous evening "Thunder" knew they would have a tough task and so it proved.

Playing into the sun in the first half "Thunder" made a good start worrying "Pioneers" with some fast break offences orchestrated by Jason Tucker, while "Pioneers" were relying on well structured half court offences. Leading 27-25 after the first period of play "Thunder" struggled in the second quarter with "Pioneers" disrupting their offences by keeping the ball out of the hands of the influential Tucker. The home side were also coming to terms with "Thunder's" 3-2 zone defence by attacking through the heart of the zone and scoring from hand-offs.

Towards the end of the quarter "Pioneers" also enjoyed success with an aggressive press which generated several turn-overs and easy scores although "Thunder" were boosted by a three point 'buzzer-beater' from Leon Henry. That took the half time score to 51-41 in favour of "Pioneers" and leaving the Northants team facing a difficult task in the third quarter.

In that third quarter "Pioneers" employed a trapping 1-3-1 zone defence and "Thunder" were guilty of rushing their offences and over dribbling. In the ten minutes of play all 16 points of "Thunder's" points came from Tucker and Leome Francis who was battling hard in the low post position. For their part "Pioneers" were executing well out of their 'Horns' offence with Hall and Vidakovic causing all manner of problems for the "Thunder" defence while Isaacs was able to exploit gaps in "Thunder's" 'help' defence from the guard spot. "Pioneers" took the third period of play 26-16 to establish a 77-57 lead and leaving "Thunder" with the proverbial mountain to climb.

To their credit "Thunder" kept battling to the end of the game winning the fourth quarter 19-16 as the "Pioneers" coach introduced his bench players into the game but the home side were good value for their 17 point win. For "Thunder", Francis led their scoring with 23 points good support coming from Tucker and Henry with 16 and 15 points respectively.

Cadet Men complete the perfect Conference season with win over "A's"

Cadet Men's Midlands Conference

Northants "Thunder" 80 - 73 Birmingham "A's"

Just like the senior men's game between the same teams the previous week this was ostensibly a 'dead game' with both teams having secured a Play Off place and "Thunder" already crowned as Conference champions. There was another issue however with the Northants boys anxious to complete a perfect 20 and 0 Conference season.

Despite only having a limited bench "A's" made it clear they weren't there just to make up the numbers with an inside score from the athletic Saa and a three-pointer from the talented Williams. "Thunder" managed to level the score thanks to scores from Jacob Killeya and Jacob Round before the two teams exchanged baskets for five minutes. "Thunder" managed to produce an impressive 11-zero run led by Ollie Thomas with seven personal points and this gave "Thunder" a 24-16 lead at the end of the first period of play.

The second quarter was a very tight affair with neither team being able to produce a significant run. "Thunder" were able to keep their noses in front thanks to a brace of three pointers from David Nieva. "Thunder" eased out to their biggest lead of the game so far at 41-28, but the Birmingham outfit closed the period with two scores from Williams to reduce "Thunder's" lead to 42-33 at the half.

The second half could have not started in a worse possible way for "Thunder" as "A's" surged into a 12-3 run to reduce the "Thunder" advantage to 47-45. Coach Rob Crump was forced to call a time-out with just three minutes of the period played and he sent his team out with a 'Box and One' defence in an attempt to control Birmingham's influential point guard, Williams. This tactic was effective in curbing Williams' but it allowed space close to basket for Saa and by the end of the quarter "Thunder" were only leading 56-55 with everything to play for in the final stanza.

"Thunder's" undefeated record looked to be in imminent danger when early in the quarter "A's" took the lead for the first time since the opening minute but "Thunder" showed their true mettle responding with an 8-1 run thanks to scores from Ollie Thomas, Jacob Round and Brendan Ross. Trailing 58-62 the Birmingham team refused to back down regaining the lead at 65-64 with a 7-zero run with just four minutes of the game remaining. By now "A's" had players in foul trouble and were visibly fatigued. "Thunder" were able to raise the tempo of their game one last time as they produced a 10-zero surge on the back of eight points from Jacob Round including two 3 pointers. With "Thunder" leading 74-65 with just two minutes remaining, Coach Crump instructed his players to run the clock when in possession and to the joy of a large crowd his players did just this closing out the game at 80-73 to complete a perfect 20 and 0 season.

In a game which was a tribute to the players of both teams the "Thunder" scoring was led by Jacob Round with 27 points supported by Ollie Thomas with 19 points while Elliott Strausa scored 10 points. Coach Crump was particularly happy, acknowledging that all players made a significant contribution to the game.

"Thunder" now move into Play Off action and take on Ipswich Basketball Club at the Basketball Centre this Saturday.

Brave Under 14 Girls lose in overtime

Under 14 Girls Midlands South Conference

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| Northants "Lightning" | (75 – 75) | Brentwood "Fire" |
| | 77 – 84 | |

When these two teams met earlier in the season "Fire" triumphed by a convincing 22 points so they arrived at the Northants Basketball Centre in confident hoping to secure the win they needed to qualify for the end of season Play Offs. Interestingly a win for "Lightning" would see their local rivals N.E.B.C. "Titans" see post-season play.

When they jumped out to an 11-5 lead it looked as if "Fire" were going to stroll to a routine win but inspired by scores from Georgia Nolan and Holly Winterburn, "Lightning" mounted a 10-zero charge at the end of the first quarter to take a 17-13 lead.

The visitors responded with a strong opening to the second period of play outscoring "Lightning" 12-1 to take a 25-18 lead. Once again the Northants girls refused to capitulate and responded with 10-zero run of their own to close the gap to 28-33 at half time and had they not missed six free throws late in the period they might well have held the lead.

When "Lightning" opened the third quarter with a stunning 19-4 run with 10 of those points coming from Precious Ogaji, "Lightning" had opened a 47-37 lead and "Titans" might well have had one eye on the Play Offs. "Fire" had other ideas however, and by the end of the period the two teams were locked together with 52 points each.

The Brentwood girls came out in determined mood for the final quarter and took control of the game and thanks to a late 8-zero run established a 75-66 lead with just two minutes of the game remaining. "Lightning" then showed a resolve missing from games earlier in the season and closed the period with nine unanswered points and had they not missed another four free throws they would have won the game. As it was the two teams were tied on 75 points each and the game went into overtime.

In the extra five minutes of play “Fire” were totally dominant outscoring the Northants girls 9-2 to win the game 84-77 and advance to the Play Offs. The “Lightning” scoring was led by Winterburn with 36 points while Ogaji enjoyed her best game of the season with 20 points while Lucy Amena contributed 10 points.

Under 15 Boys see off “Warriors”

Under 15 Boys Challenge game
Northants “Thunder” 76 – 68 Herts “Warriors”

Having not qualified for post season play this challenge game against Herts “Warriors” was set up to keep the Northants under 15 boys competitive and came as a reward for excellent attendance at practices.

“Thunder” made a tentative start to the game and their man to man defence was torn apart by “Warriors” aggressive driving to basket. This often resulted in scores and fouls on “Thunder” players so Coach John Collins’ rotation was being controlled more by the referees than him. At the end of the first period of play “Thunder” trailed 12-20 and the high foul count forced Collins to switch to a zone defence. This had the effect of curbing “Warriors” attacking options but “Thunder” continued to struggle at the offensive end. They lost the quarter 13-16 to trail 25-36 at half time.

The home side came out in aggressive mode for the third quarter and punished the visitors with a number of fast breaks with David Nieva making a number of spectacular drives to basket. By now Jacob Round had joined the team after helping the cadets to victory and his influence in the back court madder all the difference. “Thunder” won the period 29-18 bringing the scores level at 54 all.

The final quarter saw Round come into his own, and the young guard’s 11 point haul helped “Thunder” to take the period 22-14 and record a 76-68 victory. Round led the team’s scoring with 30 points with Nieva supporting well with 18 points and Ayo Oluyede contributing 10.

THIS WEEKEND’S ACTION

Saturday 22nd March

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| 9-30am to 11am | Under 12 Practice | |
| 10am to 11am | Junior “Ballers” Session & Presentations | |
| 11-30am | Under 13 Boys versus Ipswich “Bobcats” | (Challenge Game) |
| | Under 15 Girls versus Sheffield “Hatters” | (Challenge Game) |
| 1-30pm | Cadette Women versus Sheffield “Hatters” | (Challenge Game) |
| 3-30pm | Cadet Men versus Ipswich “Bobcats” | (Play Off Game) |

These games will be played 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**

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| 11am | Under 15 Boys play in the Northants Central venue League at Northampton School for Boys |
| 2pm | Under 15 Boys play in the Northants Central venue League at Northampton School for Boys |