

NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB



PRESS RELEASE

Comeback win over young “Giants” team earns “Thunder” third place.

Men’s National League Division 4
(Midlands Conference)

Northants “Thunder” 94 – 79 Mansfield “Giants”

The Northants senior men clinched third place in the Midlands Conference of the National League 4th Division after beating a young but talented Mansfield “Giants” team.

A confident start to game saw “Thunder” jump out to an early 15-6 lead and they maintained their advantage through to half time when they led 25-18. A combination of complacency and an improved performance from “Giants” resulted in the initiative shifting dramatically to the visitors in the second period of play. Giants took the quarter 29-17 to lead 47-42 at half time with “Thunder” failing to score a field goal during the last four minutes of the period. During those four minutes the “Thunder” players were guilty of playing lacklustre defence while relying too much on individuality to score.

At half time the mood in the “Thunder” locker room was one of quiet determination. Coaches Collins and Yates didn’t have to say much because they knew their players were going to respond positively. “Giants” scored the first basket of the third period but were then hit by a 24-3 “Thunder” charge as the home side seized the initiative. “Warriors” were hit with a barrage of three-pointers and excellent close to the basket play allied to some intense full court defence.

Leading 75-59 going into the final ten minutes of play “Thunder” knew the game was theirs unless they slipped back into the habits of the second quarter. Giants” edged the fourth quarter 20-19 but the final result was never in doubt and a happy occasion was capped when rookie Ayo Oluyede, who is off to university in September, scored the final basket of the season.

In the 15 point win Sam Mennell and Matt Yates top scored for “Thunder” with 17 points apiece with excellent support coming from Richard Higgins, Jacob Holt and Johnny Yates.

The third place finish is slightly disappointing for “Thunder” who had harboured hopes of making the Play Offs. On reflection they lost two games to teams who finished below them in the Conference table while losing heavily to the top two teams.

Under 14 Girls hit by the maelstrom of Play Off greed

Under 14 Girls National League
(Midlands Conference)

Oaklands “Wolves” beat Northants “Lightning”

On occasions qualification for Play Off places can depend on overall points difference. With Oaklands “Wolves” lying in second place in the Midlands Conference this points difference came into play in Sunday’s game. “Lightning” were keen to fulfill the fixture but were forced to field a very young team. The way “Wolves” ‘pressed’ for the whole of the game even when they led by over a hundred points did not make the spectacle a very good advert for the sport of basketball.

Nightmare third period costs Junior Men dear

Under 18 Boys National League (Midlands West Conference)

Northants “Thunder” 65 – 77 City of Birmingham “Rockets II”

The Northants Junior men have been involved in a number of close games this season and Sunday’s contest against an athletic City of Birmingham “Rockets” second string, looked to be heading in the same direction with “Thunder” holding a slender 35-30 lead at half time. Twenty of those points had been scored by Chris Amankonah and Ed Wallhead with the rest of the “Thunder” squad struggling to make any serious contributions.

With this pair well shackled in the third period of play “Thunder” could only manage nine points while C.O.B. ran in 26. Many of these points came as a result of turn-overs as the “Thunder” ball carriers attempted to dribble the ball through the “Rockets” pressure defiance when ball movement would have been a much better option.

Trailing 44-56 going into the final quarter “Thunder” had the preverbal mountain to climb. They couldn’t be faulted for their efforts but they never looked to have a realistic chance of closing the gap despite another eight points from Wallhead. “Rockets” continued with their pressure defence which forced “Thunder” to play in the broken floor and they were guilty of taking too many early shots from the deep perimeter as the Birmingham team cruised to a 77-65 win.

In the 12 point loss Wallhead and Amankonah scored 20 and 17 points respectively but no other “Thunder” player got anywhere near double figures.

“Thunder” look likely to hold on to second place in the Midlands West Conference but chances of a Play Off place have disappeared.

Under 16 Boys miss out from the free throw line and lose a thriller to “Warriors”

Under 16 Boys National League (Midlands West Conference)

Northants “Thunder” 78 – 82 Shropshire “Warriors”

The Northants cadet boys closed their 2017 / ‘18 campaign with a narrow loss against Shropshire “Warriors” after an exciting game.

“Thunder” had been well beaten by “Warriors” earlier in the season but made an excellent start to this game rushing out to a 24-14 lead after the first period of play. During that ten minute period no fewer than six “Thunder” players had contributed to the scoring but collectively the team had missed a worrying ten free throws.

“Thunder” had been using a recently introduced zone defence but in the second quarter “Warriors” were able to create scoring opportunities with give-and-go plays and excellent perimeter shooting. For their part “Thunder” struggled to produce anything in the half court and were outscored 12-25 which saw the Shropshire team taking a 39-36 half time lead.

The two teams traded baskets through and exciting third quarter with the visitors holding onto their lead despite the best efforts of the “Thunder” players. “Warriors” were leading 61-53 going into the final minute of the period when “Thunder” exploded with three, three-pointers; two from rookie Ashley Kitchen and one from Grigori Litsai to take a 62-61 lead.

If the third quarter had been exciting then the fourth was positively pulsating with the lead changing hands on no less than six occasions. For “Thunder” skipper Connor White and Adam Lewandowski were constant threats while Emeka Ayuanya was a positive monster on the boards. Regrettably, “Thunder” missed crucial free throws when they were a position to put the game to ‘put the game to bed’. Knowing they had let off the hook “Warriors” hit three big perimeter shots and scored a lay up on the buzzer to take the game by 82 points to 78.

In the four point loss White scored 24 points; well supported by Kitchen and Lewandowski with 15 points apiece while Litsai and Ayuanya scored 11 and 10 points respectively but they will reflect on missing a massive 20 free throws.

Northants “Hoopsterz” Under 15 Boys Central Venue League

“Thunder”	13 – 19	“Titans II”
“Thunder”	15 – 14	“Titans I”
“Phoenix I”	15 - 9	“Thunder”
“Phoenix II”	22 – 21	“Thunder”

After winning all three of their game at the previous CVL Tournament the “Thunder” players were in optimistic mood but they had to settle for 3rd place in the most recent event with a won one, lost three record.

Team Manager, Barend Oosthuizen was pleased with his team’s attitude and commitment but was disappointed that too much of their play was based on individual effort rather than team work.

The Northants Basketball Club is very grateful to Basketball Northants for organizing this season’s tournaments which has allowed players of just below National League standard an opportunity to lay competitive basketball.

Great experience for Under 13 Boys

Under 13 Boys Invitational Tournament

Ilkeston “Outlaws”	43 – 24	“Thunder”	1st	Brentwood “Fire”
Brentwood “Fire”	70 – 26	Northants	2nd	Northants
Brentwood “Fire”	88 – 16	“Thunder”	3rd	Ilkeston “Outlaws”
Ilkeston “Fire”	36 – 45	Northants	4th	“Thunder”
Brentwood “Fire”	92 – 32	Ilkeston “Outlaws”		
Northants	48 – 39	“Thunder”		

Re-arranged National League fixtures because of the recent poor weather saw three late withdrawals from this Under 13 Tournament. Even so the four team tournament proved to be very enjoyable and extremely valuable for the 18 Northants boys who participated.

The Northants boys were divided into two balanced squads and both teams lost their opening games. The Northants team seemed to have learnt a lot from their game against Brentwood “Fire” managing to overcome Ilkeston “Outlaws” but “Thunder” were well beaten by “Fire”. In the final round of games Brentwood cruised to a win over Ilkeston while Northants were able to claim second place in the tournament with a narrow win over “Thunder” in a very competitive game.

Tournament organizer Karen Goodrich commented, “It’s a pity that we had the late withdrawals but the event was a very valuable experience for our younger players many of whom were having their first experience of an organized game.”

END OF SEASON PRESENTATION EVENING

Over 200 players, relatives and friends attended the Northants Basketball Club's End of Season Presentation Evening where coaches of the Club's nine teams were able to make presentations to their Most Valuable Players.

The various winners were:

Under 12 Girls	Keris Thompson
Under 12 Boys	Thomas Bates
Under 14 Girls	Hosana Ajayi
Under 14 Boys	Ashley Kitchen
Under 16 Girls	Dina Kosnikovska
Under 16 Boys (Central Venue League)	Kalen Spatcher
Under 16 Boys (National League)	Connor White
Junior Men	Ed Wallhead

Long Service Awards were presented to: Zac Kitchen and Ed Taylan

Penny Westwood 'Fair Play' Award: Lucy Needham

Presidents Award: The White family for their support for the Under 16 Boys team.

The 'Know your Coaches' Quiz was won by *Quiz Eubank*

"BALLERS" and "JUNIOR BALLERS" AWARDS

The final session of the season was concluded with the presentation of awards to boys and girls who have done really well since September. The award winners were:

"Junior Ballers"	Dakota Chandler, Alex Rados and George Rados
"Ballers" Academy	Noel Gabriel, Jonas Hefford and Seth Wilborn

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