**NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB**

 

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Last weekend four teams played in YBL Play Off semi-finals and three of them**

**made it to the Final**

**Blistering second half sees Under 15 Boys into the Final after stern words from Coach Bain**

**YBL Under 15 Boys Play Off Semi-Final**

**Northants “Thunder” 77 – 35 Abingdon “Eagles”**

With “Thunder” holding a narrow 27-22 lead at half time this Play Off semi-final was well and truly in the balance with “Thunder” struggling to score against the “Eagles” zone defence. They had been guilty of resorting to early shots from the deep perimeter while their defence lacked the usual intensity and defeat against a team, they had beaten twice in regular season play seemed a distinct possibility.

During the half time break “Thunder” coach Whitney Bain demanded that her players be less selfish, looked to get the ball to their ‘big’ players close to basket and generally raise the level of their game.

To their credit her team responded magnificently with their trapping zone defence and full court press restricting Abingdon to just 13 points while offensively the “Thunder” fast break often led by Fran Guel was just too much for “Eagles” to handle. With the game won the end of the contest was highlighted by a cameo performance from Gurshan “G” Singh with 10 points and four steals.

In the comfortable win George Clipson, Guel, Kamil Zakwinski and James Kennet-Maughan all made significant points scoring contribution but the win was very much based on the second half team work and Coach Bain’s inspirational words at half time.

The win earns “Thunder” a spot in the Final where they will play Birmingham “Bears” a team they split games with during the regular season. The final will be played at the University of Worcester on Saturday

13th May

**Below par Under 13 Boys storm into the Final**

**YBL Under 13 Boys Play Off Semi-Final Final**

**Northants “Thunder” 74 – 51 Worcester “Wolves”**

Despite never reaching the dazzling heights of their quarter final game against Redditch, the Northants “Thunder” Under 13 Boys strode into the YBL Final after a 23 point victory over an obdurate Worcester “Wolves” team who arrived at The Basketball Centre with an unbeaten record. On paper the win looks comfortable, but with five minutes of the game remaining “Thunder” were only leading by 61 points the 51, but they proceeded to close out the contest with a 13-zero charge to make the winning margin more comfortable than had seemed likely.

Both teams struggled to score in the opening quarter with “Wolves” playing some uncompromisingly physical defence resulting in a number of fouls and no less than thirteen free throws for “Thunder” but they missed nine shots from the ‘charity stripe’ and the teams were tied at 16 points apiece after the first ten minutes of play.

“Thunder’s” determined defence continued in the second quarter restricting their opponents to just 14 points while scoring 19 themselves to take a 35 to 30 half time lead and everything to play for.

Whatever Coach Peter Dewsnap said to his team during the half time break certainly worked as “Thunder” opened the third quarter with a stunning 12-2 charge to take control of the game with Luca Garrett and Jowell Stiete-French looking impressive in their close to basket work. Trailing 34-47 “Wolves” responded well with the two teams trading baskets for the remainder of the quarter they only trailed 41-55 going into the final stanza.

The gap was closed to just nine points as “Wolves” went on a 7-2 run at the start of the quarter against a nervous looking “Thunder” forcing Coach Dewsnap to call a time out. His words ‘steadied the ship’ but with five minutes of the game remaining “Thunder’s” lead was only ten points before they cut loose with the

13-zero closing charge led by Stiete-French.

Stiete-French closed the game with 18 points well supported by Garrett with 14 points while M.V.P. Anton Kelly was his usual steady self with 17 points and Jerome Maroodza chipped in with ten points.

Coach Dewsnap commented, “Pressure defense and fast break came to our rescue on Saturday. Our half-court offence gifted possession to Worcester through poor shot selection and sloppy fundamentals. It was only when we realized “Wolves” were weak defensively that we were able to take advantage.”

 He added, “We have a lot to work on before the Final! We will need better free throw shooting than today but once again we fought hard on the boards against bigger opponents and kept Worcester’s guard Zamora to

13 pts and their talented forward Tom White to 14. We also stayed calm throughout the difficult periods of the game.”

The hard-fought win earns the team a place in the Final where they will face West Bromwich on 13th May.

**“Storm” too strong for West Brom**

**YBL Under 11 Mixed Play Off Semi-Final**

**Northants “Storm” 62 – 24 West Bromwich**

Going into this semi-final game Coach John Collins was worried that his team might not quite be up to the task of competing against West Bromwich having breezed through the regular season against poor opposition with the exception of their own second team. Collins needn’t have worried because against an athletic West Brom team “Storm” dominated the game thanks to some ‘Scrooge-like’ defence which limited their opponents to just six points in each quarter while their fast break was too much for the West Midlanders.

Collins was delighted that his teams 62 point total was evenly spread amongst the team with only Arlo Dominici scoring in double figures and he was full of praise for the defensive efforts of Kyjah Adams against a much taller opponent.

“Storm” will join four other teams from the Club at the YBL Finals Day at the University of Worcester when their opponents will be Nuneaton “Predators”

**Heartbreak for “Storm Too”**

**Under 11 Mixed Plate Play Off Semi-Final**

**Northants “Storm Too” 52 – 55 Worcester “Wolves”**

A stunning first quarter which saw “Storm Too” jump out to an 18-9 lead gave the Northants players and their supporters every hope of making it to the Plate Final.

“Wolves” took the second quarter 16**-**14 but with a 32-25 half time lead “Storm Too” were full of hope and this hope increased in the third quarter they won 11-8 to extend their lead to ten points going into the last seven minutes of play.

“Wolves” had arrived with just seven players, and this allowed their coach to play his strongest players for extra minutes and this was to be decisive in the final quarter as the Northants players found it difficult to contain “Wolves”, Rose and Le Page. This pair proceeded to score 20 of their team’s 22 final quarter points as “Wolves” took the contest by 55 points to 52 to the heartbreak of “Storm Too” players and fans alike.

Coach Emma Salisbury was full of praise for the efforts of her players and made special mention of Jude Constable who scored an impressive 19 points, Ernie Harris and Alex Rodriguez.

**“Titans” too big and strong for “Lightning”**

**Under 13 Girls Challenge game**

**Northants “Lightning” 46 - 53 Northamptonshire “Titans”**

The Northants “Lightning” Under 13 Girls were due to play Shropshire “Warriors” in a YBL Play Off semi-final but having lost to “Lightning” in a regular season game the north Midlanders declined to travel forfeiting the game to “Lightning”. In search of a game before the Final Coach Karen Goodrich agreed to play “Titans” who would field some over aged players

Despite the best efforts of Amelia May Wesley-Maryan the “Lightning” Under 13 Girls slipped to defeat against their local rivals finding their size disadvantage just too much to overcome. They were competitive in all four quarters actually edging the third 13-11 and the game is likely to prove invaluable when they meet Leicester “Riders” in the Final on 13th May.

**THIS WEEKEND’S ACTIVITIES**

With all League and Conference games and Play Offs now completed the Northants Club have a blank weekend before four teams travel to the University of Worcester for the YBL Finals on Saturday 13th May.

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