**NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB**



**PRESS RELEASE**

**Disappointing Junior Women lose heavily to Trailblazers**

**Under 18 Girls National Conference**

**Northants Lightning 52 – 91 Derby Trailblazers**

The Northants junior women slipped to a disappointing defeat against a talented Trailblazers team in their first game of the new year. The loss was all the more disappointing because at times Lightning showed they were capable of being competitive against their East Midlands rivals. This was particularly true of the first six minutes of the third period of play saw them outscore Trailblazers

13-5 with their opponents troubled to penetratet Lightning’s zone defence.

Earlier, Trailblazers had established a 38-20 half time lead with Lightning managing just five baskets, the rest of their total coming from the free throw line. During these two periods the home team were guilty of missing numerous easy scoring opportunities.

Trailing 33-43 midway through the third period Lightning were still in the game but over the next fourteen minutes they were inexplicably outscored 19-48 to slip to their third defeat of the season. The girls are back in action on Saturday when entertain Hounslow Hawks.

**Cadet Boys go one and one over the weekend**

**Under 16 Boys East Midlands Conference**

**Northants Thunder 65 – 87 Derbyshire Spartans**

Earlier in the season Thunder had narrowly lost to Spartans so they went into Saturday’s reverse fixture in optimistic mood. That optimism was justified after the first period of the game as they managed to establish a narrow 19-18 lead which would have been larger had they not missed five free throws.

As the second period developed Thunder began to struggle more and more against Spartan’s pressure defence. Thunder seemed unsure whether to attack the pressure defence or advance the ball through the pressure and set up their half court offence and this indecision saw them outscored 17-26 to trail 36-44 at half time.

The half time message to the Thunder players was to play with confidence and make good decisions in the broken floor. Back to back scores from Ashley Kitchen kept Thunder in touch with their opponents but then Spartans went on 14-zero charge over a three minute period. Scores from Kitchen and two free throws from Adam Shannon-Brooks stopped the rot but Thunder still found themselves trailing 48-68 going into the last stanza.

Thunder battled hard in the final period of play with Tom Greenfield converting a number of determined drives to basket, but they couldn’t make any inroads into the deficit as they slipped to a 22 point defeat. Thunder’s scoring was led by Kitchen with good support coming from Greenfield and Benas Maldutis while the defeat was made all the worse with Shannon-Brookes picking up an ankle injury late in the game.

**Leicester Warriors II 78 – 83 Northants Thunder**

Less than 24 hours after the disappointing defeat at the hands of Spartans, Thunder made the short trip to Gateway College to take on the Leicester Warriors second team. Earlier in the season Thunder had beaten Warriors by over 50 points but from the outset it was clear that walkover wasn’t going to be repeated. Thunder seemed to be suffering a major hangover from the previous evening’s loss as they found it difficult to contain an aggressive Warriors team who were able to establish a 24-16 lead after the first period of play.

The second period saw a more determined Thunder performance and inspired by the efforts of Kris Dambrauskas and Tom Greenfield backed up by some impressive perimeter shooting from Ashley Kitchen they managed to peg back the Warrior lead. Thunder took the second period 31-21 in a free flowing period to establish a narrow 47-45 half time lead.

Thunder opened the third period with a zone defence which caused Warriors a great deal of problems. Thunder were able to open up a ten point lead but were then guilty of turning the ball over on a number of occasions so that lead was cut to 69-64 going into the last ten minutes of play.

For six minutes Thunder played with great discipline despite losing the services of Tom Cole and Dylan Dominici with ankle injuries, and the lead was extended to double figures. All Thunder needed to do was manage the clock and close out the game but they failed to do this taking early shots on a number of occasions. Warriors responded with three breakaway scores but Thunder were able to hold on for a battling five point win.

Once again the Thunder scoring was led by Kitchen who connected with five three point shots, and Greenfield with good support coming from Dambrauskas and Luke Desborough who also rebounded superbly late in the game.

With three injuries Thunder may have to go into this weekend’s fixture against Leicester Dynmaite seriously undermanned.

**Impressive Under 14 Boys see off gutsy Riders second string**

**East Midlands Conference**

**Northants Thunder 78 - 42 Leicester Riders II**

The Northants Under 14 boys opened 2020 with a convincing 36 points win over a much-improved Leicester Riders second string.

Thunder opened the game in impressive style with their pressure defence forcing a number of Riders turn-overs and easy scores. Nine Thunder players scored helping their team to establish a 28-7 lead after the first period of play.

Under the rules of the competition Thunder had to take off their press and Riders were far more comfortable playing in the half court but couldn’t prevent Thunder taking the period 21-16 to establish a 49-23 half time lead.

At half time the Thunder coaching staff urged their charges to work hard on their half court defence and the players responded superbly restricting their opponents to just one basket as they extended their lead to 67-27. To their credit Riders came out battling the four period which they edged 15-11 to reduce the final deficit to 36 points at 78-42.

Thunder’s scoring was led by Jordan Gbanja with excellent support coming from Rapolas Radivicius while Hugo Dutton and Brad Yeomans produced their best performances of the season.

This weekend the team travel to Derby Trailblazers a team Thunder narrowly defeated just before Christmas.

**Under 14 Girls extend their unbeaten run after great overtime win over Royals**

**Under 14 Girls Southern Conference**

**Winchester Royals 69 - 75 Northants Lightning**

**(68 – 68)**

The Northants under 14 girls travelled to Winchester for their first game of 2020 boasting an unbeaten run of six wins. They managed to extend that lead to seven after a battling overtime win over Royals.

Lightning edged the first period 16-14 with Ashia King and Keris Ndubisi leading their team’s offensive effort. The second period saw Lightning losing their confidence against a spirited Royals’ defensive effort. The home side took the period 19-17 to tie the scores up at 33 all at half time.

Lightning struggled to keep their offensive structure in the third period and this allied to some poor defence saw Royals take the initiative and edge out to a 49-48 lead going into the final stanza.

The Lightning players were encouraged to attack the basket in the final period of play and this tactic was successfully accomplished by Letisha Betsy who also contributed with a ‘three-pointer’. The advantage switched between the two teams with Lightning edging the period 20-19 to tie the scores up at 68 all at the end of the game.

It was determined Lightning group that took the court for the five minute period of overtime and thanks to three scores from Mia Gajaga they won the overtime period 7-1 to complete a gutsy

75-69 win.

For Lightning Gajaga led their scoring with good support coming from King and Betsy while Ndubisi, Athena Thompson and Deyarna Singh-Hurditt all made significant contributions; but this was truly a victory for the TEAM.

**THIS WEEKEND’S ACTION**

**Saturday 18th January**

**9.30am until 10.30am** Budding Ballers

**9.30am until 11.00am** Junior Ballers

**11.00 until 12-30pm** Ballers Academy and Girls session)

**1.00pm** Under 18 Girls versus Houslow Hawks

Under 14 Girls versus Bracknell Cobras

**3-00pm** Under 16 Girls versus Bracknell Cobras

These activities and the game will take place at the Northants Basketball Centre

which is based at Northampton School for Girls in Spinney Hill Road, Northampton

Under 13 Girls travel to London to play London Thunder and Sussex Storm Blue

Under 16 Boys travel to Leicester Dynamite

Under 15 play in CVL Tournament at Northampton School For Boys

**Sunday 19th January**

Under 14 Boys travel to Derby Trailblazers

Under 14 Girls travel to Bristol Flyers