**NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB**



**PRESS RELEASE**

**Poor final period sees Junior Women slip to defeat against Hounslow Hawks**

**Under 18 Girls National Conference**

**Northants Lightning 57 – 65 Hounslow Hawks**

The Northants junior women slipped to their second defeat of 2020 going down to a narrow loss against top of the Conference, Hounslow Hawks and will be reflecting that they could easily have won the game. Going into the fourth period of play “Lightning” held a narrow 42-40 lead and looked well set to record a win but some sloppy defending saw Hawks go on two surges to take a 58- 47 lead and try as they might the Northants girls couldn’t make up the deficit finally slipping to an eight point defeat.

Earlier Lightning had narrowly lost the first and second periods of play despite the best efforts of Dina Kosnikovska but edged the third period to take that narrow lead.

In the disappointing loss Kosnikovska led the Lightning scoring with good support coming from Lucy Needham and Grace Cosford.

**Impressive defensive display sees Under 16 Girls beat Bracknell**

**Under 16 Girls Central Conference**

**Northants Lightning 56 – 42 Bracknell Cobras**

A superb defensive display saw the Northants Lightning under 16 girls to victory over a well-organised Bracknell Cobras team. The margin of victory would have been far bigger had Lightning scored from just half of the ‘put back’ opportunities they had and not missed an alarming 27 free throws.

Lightning edged all four periods of play but it wasn’t until midway through the fourth period that they were able open up a double figure lead. Throughout the second half the intensity of Lightning’s defence restricted Cobras to perimeter shots most of which failed to connect allowing Hosannah Ajayi, Oti Baffour-Ata and Elouise Gregory to display their defensive rebounding skills which launched numerous fast breaks. Many of these fast breaks didn’t lead to scores and this kept Cobras in the game before the final Lightning charge sealed victory.

In a good all-round team performance Kosnikovska, along with Lucie Wilson-Grey led the Lightning scoring and this pair did a great job of controlling play when Cobras attempted to put pressure on Lightning.

**Short handed Cadet Boys beat Dynamite**

**Under 16 Boys East Midlands Conference**

**Leicester Dynamite 70 – 83 Northants Thunder**

The Northants Cadet boys made the short journey to Leicester Dynamite and returned after recording a battling 13 point victory despite picking up two further injuries and losing the services of Tom Greenfield with five fouls.

Thunder made an impressive start to the game disturbing Dynamite with some well-organized fast break basketball. Dynamite regrouped and their physicality caused Thunder some problems but thanks to 10 points from Greenfield led 21-18 after the first period.

In the second period Dynamite concentrated on stopping the Thunder fast break but they were hurt by the visitors secondary offence which saw Ashley Kitchen score 12 points including a brace of three pointers with rookie guard Benas Maldutis chipping in with two three-pointers of his own.. Thunder took the period 23-16 to lead 44-34 at half time.

Thunder opened the third period in a zone defence causing a lot of confusion in the Dynamite ranks as the lead was extended to 16 points at 65-49 with Maldutis turning provider as Thunder returned to their running game.

Leading 65-49 going into the final stanza clock management was the order of the day for the Thunder players but their efforts were handicapped with injuries to Adam Shannon-Banks and their leading rebounder Luke Desborough. They were further handicapped when Greenfield picked up his fourth foul and the ‘table’ failed to signal for a substitution before he picked up his fifth foul and had to leave the game. Clock management was still important, but Thunder were guilty of rushing shots and forcing passes which led to turn-overs but despite these lapses they were able to hold out for the 83 points to 70 win.

In the 13 point victory Kitchen led the Thunder scoring with excellent support coming from Greenfield, Maldutis and Kris Dambrauskas

**Stunning first half sees Under 14 Boys beat second placed Trailblazers**

**East Midlands Conference**

**Derby Trailblazers 46 – 75 Northants Thunder**

Earlier in the season Thunder recorded a six point win over the talented Trailblazers team which came in part to three key Derby players getting into foul trouble so they travelled to the Clarence Wiggins Centre at Noel Baker School expecting a tough contest.

Thunder took the court in determined mood and when Fiifi Boakye caught all string with a 15 foot jump shot and Rapolas Radivicius connected with a low post move their confidence was sky high. After exchanging scores Thunder embarked on a stunning 16-zero charge to blow the game wide open. Trailblazers were having major problems coping with the intensity of Thunder’s pressure defence but when Thunder moved ahead by 36 points to 13 after another 10-zero surge they had to withdraw to half court under the rules of the competition.

Despite this restrictions Thunder were able to extend their lead to 51-17 at half time thanks to some excellent close to the basket play from Jordan Gbanja. During those two periods Thunder had produced and excellent display of running basketball allied to some hard-nosed defence.

The Thunder coaching staff warned their payers to expect a big Trailblazer effort in the second half and so it proved and the home side were able to mount an 11-3 run but with Benas Maldutis controlling the play Thunder were able to cruise to a 29 point win which moves them up to 3rd In the East Midlands Conference table with tough games against Leicester Dynamite and Nottingham Hoods on the horizon.

In the impressive display all ten Thunder players contributed to their final points total led by Gbanja while Bradley Yeomans put in another impressive display.

**Productive weekend for Under 14 Girls**

A brace of wins last weekend has seen the Lightning Under 14 girls rise to second place in the Southern Conference only trailing leaders Harris Foundation Knights because the Croydan team has played more games.

**Under 14 Girls Southern Conference**

**Northants Lightning 70 – 62 Bracknell Cobras**

Against Bracknell Cobras a team Lightning had lost to in the first game of the season, they blew the game open with an impressive 21-6 second period with the speed of their offensive play allied to the intensity of their defence shocking Cobras.

Leading 37-23 at half time Lightning went to completely to sleep in the third period managing just five baskets and a 10-zero run saw Cobras get the scores back to 49-43 going into the last ten minutes of play. In the third period Lightning had been guilty of some poor defence while their offence totally lacked team work. They were also faced with another problem with three of their players in foul trouble.

In the fourth period Lightning lost the services of those three players with five fouls and an 8-zero surge saw Bracknell close to 58-61 and the possibility of Lightning snatching defeat from the jaws of vistory became a very real possibility. In the event scores from Brooke Leo, Ashia King and Mia Gajaga saw Lightning home by eight points but they had been given one hell of a scare.

King and Keris Jegede led the Lightning scoring with five other players making significant contributions.

**Bristol Flyers 37 – 65 Northants Lightning**

The next day Lightning were ‘on the road’ to Bristol to take on fourth placed Flyers knowing that a lack lustre performance like the one they had produced in the second half against Bracknell would cause serious problems. In the event they recorded their ninth consecutive win with a conclusive 28 points victory.

The win came thanks to an impressive 26-4 third period after they had established a 27-17 half time lead. In that third period Lightning were able to combine excellent defence with some good ball movement which produced numerous scoring opportunities. Lightning’s defensive effort was led by Katie Gunnett and Karly Osgood while Latesha Betsy’s ball handling skills saw her take control of Lightning’s offensive effort.

Lightning’s scoring was led by Keris Ndubisi with Deyarna Singh-Hurditt and Mia Gajaga giving excellent support as the team goes into this weekend’s game against County Upper Wolves looking for their tenth consecutive win.

**No joy for Under 14 Girls second string in London**

**Under 14 Girls Regional League**

**Sussex Storm 69 – 38 Northants Lightning II**

**London Thunder 91 - 23 Northants Lightning II**

After a months inactivity, Northants Lightning under 13 girls made the long journey to South London to meet hosts London Thunder and Sussex Storm in the under 14 regional competition, in a tournament which could easily have been sponsored by the Weather Channel.  Once again the Northants team found themselves up against older and more physically developed opponents, with half of their players in school year 7 or below, and with the loss of Jess Jesu after just four minutes, this was going to be a tough day.

Once again, the young ladies showed remarkable resilience.  Ella Smith and Lucie Caulfield led the scoring across the day but year 7s Molly Spencer and Alannah Major and year 6 Ruby Pinney all showed their promise for the future.

Neither two heavy defeats nor the 3 hour journey home damaged their spirits and the team lives to fight another day.

**THIS WEEKEND’S ACTION**

**Saturday 25th 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 County Upper Wolves

 Under 14 Girls versus County Upper Wolves

 **3-00pm** Under 16 Girls versus County Upper Wolves

Thunder Under 12 Boys versus Thunder under 13 Boys

  **5-00pm** Under 16 Boys versus Mansfield Giants

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 14 Boys travel to Leicester Warriors II

**Sunday 26th January**

 **11.30pm** Under 16 Boys II versus Kent Crusaders II

 **12.45pm** Kent Crusaders II versus Maidstone Warriors

 **2.00pm** Under 16 Boys II versus Maidstone Warriors

These games will take place at the Northants Basketball Centre

 **12.00pm** Under 12 Girls versus Ipswich Bobcats

 1.**15pm** Ipswich Bobcats versus Oakland Wolves

  **2.30pm** Under 12 Girls versus Oakland Wolves

These games will be played at Parker Academy in Daventry

 Under 18 Girls travel to Barking & Dagenham

**For further information contact John Collins on 07801 533 151**