**NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB**



**RELEASE PRESS**

**Under 16 Girls hold on to beat County Upper**

**Under 16 Girls Central Conference**

**Northants Lightning 68 – 64 County Upper Wolves**

Northants Lightning under 16 girls looked to continue their winning run when they welcomed County Upper Wolves to their home court at Northampton School for Girls.  This was the first meeting of the season between the two teams, with both having suffered just two defeats in the current campaign.

Neither side could establish an advantage in the opening quarter, with a late three-point shot from Northants captain Dina Kosnikovska giving her team a 13-12 lead.

The second period would see some of Lightning's most fluent play of the season, and an 11-1 run made it 26-15 as Wolves failed to score a field basket for five minutes and with Fiona Arthur scoring her team's last nine points, it was 39-26 at half time.

County Upper are a renowned centre for basketball with a very strong academy and after conceding the first three points in the third period, they ran off 10 straight to reduce the deficit to 43-36.  During that time Kosnikovska was harshly charged with her fourth foul, meaning the captain was forced to sit out.  However six points from Arthur took the hosts to 49-38 with one stanza to play.

The fourth period belonged to Wolves’ Jemima Kent as time and again she sliced through the Northants defence and despite six points from Lucie Wilson Gray, the margin became single digit.  With three minutes to play, it was 64-56 and the large crowd were on the edge of their seats, but Lightning's outstanding rebounders Ellouise Gregory, Oti Ata and Hosanna Ajayi repeatedly denied their opponents any second chance opportunities and although the margin reduced to 68-64, Lightning's resolve was strong as they recorded an excellent win that keeps them in second place in the Central Conference.

Kent's 41 points in a losing cause will take the plaudits, but Kosnikovska with 20 points, Wilson Gray with 17 and Arthur 16 led a great all-round Lightning performance.

**Blank weekend for Junior Women with a brace of losses**

The Northants Lightning junior women are still looking for their first win of 2020 after suffering two close losses over the weekend

**Under 18 Girls National Conference**

**Northants Lightning 58 – 64 County Upper Wolves**

On Saturday Lightning took on County Upper Wolves who arrived at the Basketball Centre with just five players. They ended the game with just three players on court but despite a 12-4 charge at the end of the game Lightning were unable to overcome a 14 point deficit and slipped to a hugely disappointing six point loss.

Wolves held the advantage in the first three periods of play and went into the last ten minutes of play trailing by 40 points to 56. As Wolves in more and more foul trouble Lightning, led by Sade Chambers, Dina Kosnikovska, and Lucy Needham mounted a charge but they fell just short of winning the game. In the six point loss Chambers, Kosnikovska and Leedham led the Lightning scoring with 11 points apiece.

**Barking & Dagenham Thunder 49 – 40 Northants Lightning**

A day after their disappointing loss at the hands of County Upper, Lightning made the trip to east London and suffered another defeat, this time at the hands of Barking and Dagenham Thunder in low scoring affair.

In the game points and foul calls from the match officials were at a premium, Lightning took the early initiative to lead 17-11 after the first ten minutes of play. They extended this lead to 24-15 at half time after a period during which both teams could manage only 11 points between them.

Thunder came out for the third period in determined mood and their robust defence restricted Lightning to just six quarter points whilst scoring 16 themselves to edge out to a 31-30 lead. The dual effects of the previous days game and the early morning start was obviously having effects on the Lightning players and in the final period Thunder were able to keep their noses in front as the game became more and more physical.

**Under 14 Girls take winning run into double figures**

**Under 14 Girls Southern Conference**

**Northants Lightning 87 – 50 County Upper Wolves**

The Northants Lightning under 14 girls extended their winning run to ten at the Basketball Centre last Saturday with a convincing win over County Upper Wolves.

The win was well and truly based on the first two periods of play with Lightning racing out to a dominant 52-17 lead. During the first 20 minutes Lightning has displayed some impressive ball-movement allied to tenacious defence. They were also able to capitalize on their height advantage with Mia Gajaga, Ashia King and Keris Jegede making sure that any missed shots were converted into scores with numerous ‘put backs’.

Looking to close out the game in grand style Lightning were guilty of some sloppy play in the third and fourth periods of play also losing their defensive intensity. A number of missed lay ups saw them just edge the third period 17-12 and lose the final stanza 18-21. Although the final result was never in doubt Coach Kim Thompson was disappointed that her team hadn’t been able to make a real ‘statement’ to the rest of the Conference but they still boast the best win, loss record in the league and lie second only because Harris Federation Knights have played more game.

In Saturday’s 37 points win King top scored with 22 points with excellent support coming from Gajaga and Jegede.

**Late charge not enough for Cadet Boys against Mansfield**

**Under 16 Boys East Midlands Conference**

**Northants Thunder 68 – 70 Mansfield Giants**

A battling finish just failed to secure a win for the Northants Thunder under 16 boys against second placed Mansfield Giants. Trailing by nine points at 44-53 going into the last period Thunder were guilty of some appalling defence at the start of the last stanza allowing Giants to go on a 10-2 run and establishing a 63-46 lead. Thunder coach, John Collins took a time out and his players re-took the court in determined mood. two three-pointers from Ashley Kitchen and another trey from Kris Dambrauskas narrowed the gap to 64-66 before a lay up from Drambrauskas brought the scores level and the crowd noise to fever pitch.

Thunder had been troubled by the size of Mansfield’s, Burrows and Champman and their defensive efforts were concentrated on containing this pair. In the event two scores from the perimeter by Marcus, his first of the game were to prove conclusive despite a gutsy score from Luke Desborough which had once again levelled the score.

In a keenly fought competitive game the scores were tied at 30 all with two minutes of the second period remaining. Giants had caused Thunder a lot of problems with their height advantage while the home side had relied heavily on the perimeter shooting of Ashley Kitchen. At the end of the second period Giants mounted an 8-zero run to take a 38-30 half time lead. That lead was extended by five points at the start of the third period but then Thunder, showing a zone defence, restricted their opponents to just ten points over the next eight minutes.

That defensive effort set up set up the nail-biting last ten minutes with Thunder just failing to clinch victory.

For Thunder Kitchen had a staggering 33 points, including six three-pointers; Desborough and Drambrauskas supporting well while the Mansfield ‘bigs’ scored 28 and 14 points respectively.

**No joy for Thunder Too against quality opposition**

**Under 16 Boys Regional Pool 4**

**Northants Thunder II 19 – 93 Kent Crusaders II**

Kent Crusaders II 56 – 36 Maidstone Warriors

**Northants Thunder II 50 – 59 Maidstone Warriors**

Faced by opposition that is easily good enough to be playing in one of the Conferences Northants Thunder Too slipped to two defeats in their latest tournament. Having been preverbally ‘blown away’ by Crusaders who despite winning by a large margin still ran in ego boosting coast-to-coast lay ups, Thunder recovered well and were really competitive against a well coached Warriors outfit.

Against Maidstone the Thunder players gradually gained confidence after a shaky start and after trailing 18-32 at half time actually won the second half 32-27. Seven of Thunders nine players scored led by Monty Hendle with good support coming from Denzel Addy and Shawn Shonhiya

**Under 14 Boys untroubled by Warriors second string**

**East Midlands Conference**

**Leicester Warriors II 30 - 96 Northants Thunder**

Following their stunning win over Derby Trailblazers the previous week the Northants Thunder under 14 boys travelled to Leicester to take on the Warriors second team and returned after recording a convincing win.

The game was as good as over early in the second period of play and with Thunder leading by over 20 points they were forced by the rules, to take off their pressure defence. Then, leading by 55-16 at half time Coach John Collins stopped his team fast breaking and scoring from put backs insisting instead on excellent half court defance. Despite his team’s scoring options being limited they still scored 42 second half points whilst restricting Warriors to 14 as they ran out winners by 96 points to 30.

In the big win team rookie Thomas Bates had a prolific scoring game with 32 points while Rapoloas Radivicius was a force at both ends of the court scoring 19 points pulling down 12 rebounds and blocking six shots.

With a blank weekend Thunder have plenty of time to prepare for their next big challenge in the form of Nottingham Hoods who beat them by a single point just before Christmas.

**Age and size the key as Under 13’s triumph**

**Thunder Challenge game**

**Northants Thunder Under 13’s 65 – 48 Northants Thunder Under 12’s**

With no games on the immediate horizon for either of these teams a ‘friendly’ challenge was arranged, and it proved to be very valuable for the coaches of both teams.

The Under 13’s edged all four periods of play but a 10-zero charge at the end of the game put a rather unrealistic look to the final score line in what had been a thoroughly enjoyable and competitive contest.

**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

**12-30pm until 2.00pm** Under 12 & 13 Girls session

These activities will take place at the Northants Basketball Centre

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

Because this weekend will see the staging of the National Cup Finals, no National League

have been scheduled

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