**NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB**



**PRESS RELEASE**

**Great second half defensive display sees Under 16 Boys home against Trailblazers**

**Under 16 Boys East Midlands Conference**

**Derby Trailblazers 39 – 64 Northants Thunder**

The Northants Thunder Under 16 Boys battled through the wind and rain to Noel Baker School in Derby to find a very different Trailblazers team from the one they had comfortably beaten just before Christmas.

Thunder made a breath-taking start to the game with Dylan Dominici and Ashley Kitchen shooting the preverbal lights out as they drained eight perimeter shots between them against Trailblazers static zone defence. Thanks to the efforts of this pair Thunder had taken a 22-10 lead after the first period of play.

In the second period Thunder were guilty of over-dribbling and failing to move on offence while defensively they were guilty of conceding a number of put back scores by the tall Trailblazers players. In that period Thunder were outscored by 15 points to six as Derby were able to close the deficit to 28-25 at half time.

The half time message to Thunder was simple, increase the defensive pressure and move the ball on offence and the team responded superbly as Trailblazers were restricted to just 14 second half points while Thunder poured in 36. Kitchen again looked impressive from the deep perimeter while Kris Dambrauskas controlling the game superbly as Thunder cruised to an emphatic 64-39 victory.

In the 25 points win Kitchen top scored with a 32 point haul including five, three-pointers while Dominici and Dambrauskas had 11 points apiece.

**Junior Women lose to Trailblazers again**

**Junior Women’s National Conference**

**Derby Trailblazers 89 – 47 Northants Lightning**

The Northants Under 18 girls travelled to Derby last Saturday to take on Trailblazers a team they had lost to just before Christmas. The Northants girls were guilty of ‘leaving their game on the bus’ as the home side jumped out to a 47-18 half time leads.

After a lot of soul searching during the half time interval it was a very different Lightning team that took the court for the final two quarters of play. With Chloe Stevens hustling hard on defence and Alicia Delfino-Rice adding offensive support to Dina Kosnikovska and Lucy Needham; Lightning battled hard in the second half despite the fact that the game was as good as over as a contest.

In the disappointing loss which sees the team slip to fourth in the National Conference, Needham and Kosnikovska top scored for Lightning.

**Storm Ciara blows away two girls’ games**

In the interest of safety, it was decided that the Northants Under 16 Girls and Under 14 Girls would not make the long journeys to Bristol Flyers and Brighton Cougars respectively. The Club will seek to re-arrange these two fixtures.

**Under 14 Boys beat Hoods in an overtime cliff-hanger**

**Under 14 Boys East Midlands Conference**

**Northants Thunder 73 -72 Nottingham Hoods**

 **(59-59)**

When Benas Maldutis scored the first of two free throws with seconds of this game remaining of this East Midlands Conference game to give his team a 73-72 lead; the home support at the Basketball Centre went wild. In the remaining time of overtime Hoods were unable to get off a shot and Thunder had revenge for the one point defeat they had suffered in Nottingham just before Christmas.

The seesaw game saw key players fouling out, technical fouls, passion in the crowd and a plethora of missed free throws at key moments by both teams and the win moves Thunder up to third in the Conference table with a critical game against table topping Leicester Dynamite on the horizon.

Thunder made a good start to the contest and thanks to the efforts of Hugo Dutton and Thomas Bates led 17-8 at the end of the first period of play. Hoods responded well at the start of the second period and a 16-4 charge gave them the lead but a drive to basket by Thunder guard Bena Maldutis gave his team a 29-26 half time lead.

The end of the quarter saw a significant event when Hoods’ Meadows fouled out the game so under the rotation rules and with only eight players the visitors were able to play their best player for virtually the whole of the second half. Surely Basketball England must revise this rule. The five foul action continued in the third period when Hoods lost the services of the influential Watt-Powell while Jordan Gbanja, Thunder’s leading scorer of the season so far, also left the game on five fouls. Leading 43-36 thanks to back-to-back scores from Brad Yeomans, Thunder were then guilty of some appalling selfish play which allowed Hoods to go on a 7-zero run to tie the scores up at the end of the period.

In the final period of play teams are allowed to substitute freely and Thunder owed a big debt to the efforts of Hugo Dutton who put in a huge defensive shift against Hoods’ top offensive player, despite struggling with a back injury. A 6-zero run gave Hoods the advantage at 59-55 but a put back from Dutton and a brace of free throws from Bates tied the scores up. Even then the drama wasn’t finished as Maldutis for Thunder and Johnson for Hoods missed free throws and the game went into overtime.

During overtime Dutton continued to battle manfully on defence as the lead changed hands on no fewer than five times with the Thunder effort being driven by Maldutis who scored 10 points in the five minute overtime period. In the final analysis the game was decided from the free throw line with Maldutis converting three of four efforts from the charity stripe while Hoods could manage just two of four to the delight of the Thunder supporters.

In the single point victory Maldutis led the Thunder scoring with 22 points; excellent support coming from Bates, Dutton, Rapolas Radivicius and Gbanja, before he fouled out

**THIS WEEKEND’S ACTION**

**Saturday 15th February**

As it’s Half Term there are no Ballers sessions or home games at the

Basketball Centre this weekend

 Under 12 Girls travel to Reading to play Reading Rockets and Ipswich ??

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