**NORTHANTS BASKETBALL CLUB**

**PRESS RELEASE**

***Another busy weekend for the Northants Basketball Club, the highlight being a win for the Under 16 Boys over Leicester “Dynamite”***

**Benas leads Under 16 Boys to first ever win over Leicester “Dynamite”**

**Under 16 Boys Midlands Conference**

**Northants “Thunder” 66 – 50 Leicester “Dynamite”**

The Northants Under 16 boys took over leadership of the Midlands Conference and are now favourites to become Conference champions after this conclusive win over Leicester “Dynamite”. Earlier in the season “Dynamite” had beaten “Thunder” by ten points so this sixteen point win gives the Northants boys the advantage providing they win their remaining two games.

Northants coach Brad Hughes was aware of the danger presented to his team by “Dynamite’s” big man, Onyia so for parts of the game he employed a combination defence to combat his threat. Onyia was restricted to 17 personal points while for “Thunder”, guard Benas Maldutis came to life in the second half netting a total of 27 points to see his team home to their first ever win over “Dynamite”.

“Thunder”, put down a marker early in the first quarter with a 14-2 run giving them a 21-15 lead after the first ten minutes of play with Jack Lemon looking particularly impressive on offence. “Thunder” found problems scoring in the second quarter and after establishing a nine point lead succumbed to a 13-7 “Dynamite” surge but held on to lead 32-26 half time.

The third quarter saw both teams go on scoring surges but 11 points from Benas Maldutis helped “Thunder” extend their lead by two points but going into the final ten minutes of play “Dynamite” were still very much in the game despite trailing by 39 points to 47. The Leicester team made a good start to the final quarter and closed the gap to six points and the nerves of the “Thunder” supporters were very much on edge. Their nerves were calmed as “Thunder” went on a 11-zero run led by Maldutis and Thomas Bates and this proved to be decisive as “Thunder” cruised to a 16-point victory.

In the convincing win Maldutis led the “Thunder” scoring with 27 points while Bates’s 12 haul was vital and Coach Hughes made particular mention of Brad Yeomans who had done a sterling job marking the dangerous Onyia.

**Below par “Thunder” lose to Sheffield**

**Under 18 Boys North 2 Conference**

**Northants “Thunder” 64 – 67 Sheffield “Elite II”**

The Jekyll and Hyde season of the Northants junior men continued at the Basketball Centre and last Saturday despite looking the better team for most of the game finally lost by a tantalising three points. They might well look back at the last three minutes of the game when trailing 61-64 they could manage just one field goal despite Sheffield having lost the services of two influential players with five fouls.

“Thunder” looked a disjointed outfit at the start of the game and found themselves trailing 3-13 midway through the quarter. A time out by Coach Maldutis seem to stir his players and a 14-zero charge gave his team a 17-13 lead at the end of the quarter. The two teams exchanged baskets at the start of the second quarter before Sheffield seized the initiative with 10-6 run which closed the “Thunder” lead to a single point at 34-33 at half time.

Sheffield looked the better team at the start of the third quarter with “Thunder” struggling to find any kind of rhythm and a 16-6 charge gave the northerners the initiative at 49-40. “Thunder” then increased the intensity of their defence keeping their opponents scoreless for three minutes while scoring eight points themselves. So going into the final ten minutes of play it was a one-point game with everything to play for.

Seven points from Rapolas Radavicius and two free throws from Bobby Openshaw seemed to have swung the game “Thunder’s” way but needing some composure on offence they were guilty of some poor decisions and all they could manage over the last four minutes of the game was a three pointer from Ellis Phillips and a couple of free throws as they lost a game they could easily have won by three points.

For “Thunder” Radavicius and Phillips led their scoring with 14 and 12 points respectively.

**Under 14 Boys snatch defeat from the jaws of victory**

**Under 14 Boys East Conference**

**Northants “Thunder” 66 – 72 East Herts “Royals”**

When Logan Ormshaw converted one of two free throws to give “Thunder” a 65-64 lead a revenge win looked to be on the cards especially as “Royals” influential Flowerday had fouled out of the game in trying to stop Ormshaw. The “Royals” forward had put “Thunder” to the sword in the third quarter scoring 14 personal points and his exit looked likely to be decisive. In the event “Thunder” found every possible way to lose the game by giving the ball away, missing easy shots close to basket and scoring just two of ten free throws in the fourth quarter.

Earlier in the game the two teams had looked evenly matched and at half time it was the East Herts team that held a narrow advantage at 30-29. In the third quarter “Thunder” struggle to contain Flowerday and a 13-6 run gave “Royals” a 58-52 lead going into the last ten minutes of play. Then came that “Thunder” fightback followed by the basket drought and hugely disappointing six point loss.

Ormshaw top scored for “Thunder” with a 19 personal points Kane Young and Kamil Jazwinski supporting well with 10 and nine points respectively.

**Revenge is sweet for Under 14 Boys ‘B’ team**

**Under 14 Boys Regional League**

**Braintree “Blue Devils” 37 – 65 Northants Too**

Earlier in the season “Thunder Too” had lost in overtime to Braintree so they were well ‘up’ for last Saturday’s return game in Essex.

“Thunder Too” made an excellent start to the game and a Brody Garrad buzzer beater gave his team a 20-10 lead after the first ten minutes of play. The second quarter was a much tighter affair but some excellent “Thunder Too” defence led by the efforts of Jack Cole restricted “Blue Devils” to just 11 points; “Thunder Too” managing 17 to extend their lead to 37-21 at half time.

The quality of play deteriorated considerably in the third quarter with both teams giving the ball away and missing easy scoring opportunities. “Thunder Too” edged the quarter 13-10 and went into the last ten minutes play sensing victory. They extended their lead early in the fourth quarter and efforts was turned to getting a score for Tobi da Costa and this was achieved to a rapturous reception from the Northants travelling fans.

The 28 point victory was duly achieved with all the “Thunder Too” players contributing to the final total led by Garrad with 22 personal points, good support coming from Seth Wilborn with 10 points while Aleon Chirwa and Andre Chirila. both contributed 10 points. Coach David Young was delighted with an excellent team effort with Adas Janusevicius making an encouraging debut.

**Battling Under 14 Girls get the better of Mansfield**

**Under 14 Girls (Midlands Conference)**

**Northants “Lightning” 55 – 44 Mansfield “Giants”**

After a couple of heavy defeats the Northants “Lightning” under 14 girls battled to an 11 point win over Mansfield “Giants” last Sunday.

In a scrappy, error strewn contest Kelis Foster scored 20 points and Jennifer Oamen 19 for “Lightning” while Alannah Major’s 13 points most of them from breakaway lay ups were decisive. “Lightning” were also well served by the defensive efforts and rebounding of Lauren Eighteen.

“Lightning” made a good start to the game and thanks to the efforts of Oamen and at the end of the first quarter lad 16-6. Their confidence completely disappeared in the second quarter, and they were outscored 22-5 as “Giants” established a 28-21 half time lead.

“Giants” had been employing an interesting defensive ploy using one of their big players almost as a American football style ‘defensive safety’ when they lost possession. This tactic was not to the liking of the referees and when they were forced to play a more honest man to man defence “Lightning” found scoring a lot easier. They took the third quarter 15-6 to establish a 36-34 lead going into the final ten minutes of play and a win began to look a real possibility for the Northants girls.

“Giants” re-took the lead early in the fourth quarter but a putback from Oamen and a layup from Major gave the initiative back to “Lightning” and 10 points from Foster over the final four minutes saw “Lightning” home to a well-deserved win.

**THIS WEEKEND’S ACTION**

 **Saturday 5th February**

 **9-30 am to 10-30am** “Budding “Ballers”

 **9-30am to 11-00am** “Junior Ballers”

 **11-30am** Under 12 Mixed versus North Herts “Knights”

  **2-00pm** Under 18 Boys versus Derby “Trailblazers II”

 **4-30pm** Under 14 Girls versus Derby “Trailblazers”

 Under 14 Boys ‘A’ team versus Northamptonshire “Titans”

 (This game will be played at Northampton Boys School 1pm tip off)

 Under 13 Boys travel to Warwickshire “Hawks”

 **Sunday 6th February**

 **10-00am** Under 18 Girls versus Northamptonshire “Titans””

 **12-30pm** Under 15 Boys versus Bournville

 **2-45pm** Under 18 Boys versusLeicester “Warriors”

All the home games will be played at the Northants Basketball Centre at Northampton School for Girls

in Spinney Hill Road, Northampton NN3 6DG

Spectators are welcome and admission is FREE

Covid restrictions have now been eased but spectators are respectfully requested to respect other people’s health by abiding to social spacing and sanitising whenever possible

For further information about this Press Release contact ***John Collins*** on **+44 7801 533151**