



Cheshire Hornets 2 (54) vs Manchester Heat (76)

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Hornets 2nd team had their 1st competitive game in the MABL and what a debut it was against one of the top teams in the division and title winning contenders, Manchester Heat.

Hornets took the strange decision to play a 3-2 sagging zone against the huge Manchester front court and they took advantage of their superior height at will. Hornets stuck with the zone and pressed the ball stopping the open shot and forcing the Heat big men to rebound and run the court. It seems as though they had a plan but no one seemed to know what it was and whatever it was, it wasn't working.... or was it?

On offence, the nervous Hornets and threw away possession at will and took poor shots and rushed their and tried tested offence. The only shining light of the 1st quarter was the performance of PG Jack Reddock who scored the only points the Hornets could muster in the 1st quarter and looked to be enjoying his new found position at the head of the attack.

End of the 1st quarter and Manchester had the lead 10-20 and all the signs looked very bad for the young inexperienced Hornets.

The start of the 2nd quarter was a mirror of the 1st with the nervous Hornets giving away possession and Manchester using their superior height, weight and experience to control the game. Worryingly, the Hornets coach urged his players to drive to basket against the Manchester big men and not shoot the ball. After a few minutes, the Hornets started to drive and picked up a few fouls and went to the line, but it was still not enough to stop the juggernaut called Manchester Heat.

At half time with the score at 31-42 and Manchester strolling through the game it, the Hornets players held their heads high as they walked off the court and after a "motivational speech" came out for the 3rd quarter with a renewed sense of purpose.

Now the Hornets game plan became evident and appeared to be working.

The Hornets started the 3rd quarter with a bang. The Hornets guards ran their planned attack with Reddock, Japhet Kabyemela and Michael Pearson unleashing a storm of steals, forcing turnovers and harassing the Manchester guards so much that they resorted to deliberate fouls and unscheduled time outs. Such was the onslaught that Manchester were forced to rotate their bench every 2-3 minutes and even when they changed their inbound plays, the Hornets adapted, changed and carried on their attack.

Reddock opened the scoring from the foul line, Kabyemela stole and chipped in with rebounds and points and then when Manchester sagged and closed the driving lane, up popped Pearson with long range 3's that rained from all angles. Manchester visibly wilted as they saw their 19 point lead reducing at a rapid rate and just when they thought the storm had slowed, Hornets brought on 5'8" Niall Murphy to play as a centre against the Manchester centres who stood over a foot taller. Murphy rebounded, blocked and ran them ragged and buzzed around them like any good



Hornet would. George Southern found his composure and he too became a huge thorn in the Manchester guard line. He read the game well and stole the ball, seemingly, at will.

Jack Tomlinson and Jonathan Nadin were rock solid in the back court and drew their opponent out so that the Hornets guards could have an open lane and score. However, Manchester rallied but it still wasn't enough to stop the onslaught and the 3rd quarter ended 48-56.

If Manchester thought the Hornets had blown themselves out they were mistaken. They started the 4th quarter in the same manner harassing, stealing and annoying Manchester to the point that they were reduced to throwing the ball down court and out of bounds.

New Hornets signing Byron Morris can jump and he out leaped the Manchester centres, collecting vital defensive rebounds and freeing the Hornets guards to attack.

Eventually, Manchester rallied and their experience came through, just. They used their superior weight to push the younger smaller Hornets off the ball and took advantage of their experience playing premier MABL and National League.

Despite Manchester winning 54-76 the real winners were Hornets who were applauded by the opposition and given the respect usually reserved for team and players with a lot more experience.

One comment passed by a watching Hornets fan tells the whole story:

"I expected Manchester to absolutely blow you guys away but they didn't and if you can do that to a premier league team what can you guys do to the lesser teams?"

We would like to thank Manchester Heat for their support and we're sure they will go on to win the division.

Scorers:

- Pearson - 17
- Reddock - 16
- Southern - 7