



Warwickshire Basketball League

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FESTIVAL TAKES BASKETBALL TO NEW HEIGHTS

Over two hundred basketball fans are thought to have attended the Warwickshire Basketball Festival at Warwick University which climaxed with a superb exhibition game between stars of Coventry and Warwickshire.

“We were thrilled to have received such tremendous support at our first festival” said Warwickshire Basketball Chairman Mike Maddox, “for we were able to promote our involvement in basketball for all ages, both sexes and the wheelchair game. This gave the spectators the opportunity to see basketball as it develops all in one place at one time, and with the All Star game featuring two of the Crusaders, and being so close, it really put the icing on the cake.”

The day began with a selection of players at Under 12 and Under 14, followed by ladies basketball with players from Tile Hill Trojans – Warwickshire’s only ladies club. Then, after playing in their National League game at Westwood, the city’s Wheelchair basketball Club journeyed over to the main Hall at Warwick University to provide some competitive play prior to the big event.

Sandwiched in between were competitions for young and old, mums and dads to try their luck from the free throw line, and the three point shoot out with some of the league’s top scorers on display was won by Nigel Fischer from Tamworth Tigers, who defeated Trojans’ Daniella Gal-on in the final.

When the All Star game began, the traditional East versus West match was dropped to feature a selection of stars from Coventry taking on those based in the County or on its borders, and they did not disappoint. Regular team spirit between players was put on hold for the game which was frantic from the start with the two sides going hammer and tong.

Coventry took the first quarter 23-16, as coaches Roger Payne and Marcus Garvey played their benches to the full and despite being hustled throughout, they managed to keep their noses in front to the half when they led 45-39. However, Warwickshire came out strongly in the second half with Aylesford’s Alex Birch hitting the target to steer his men into a 58-50 lead to stun Payne’s men into action. Back came his big guns with Dami Fakunle starting to warm up the crowd and three minutes into the final period, the City side were back in front at 70-68. Fakunle brought a gasp as he dunked one with Warwickshire arms flailing behind him and Coventry eased into a seven point advantage.

Not to be outdone, Warwickshire replied yet again with Birch coming good once more to make it 85-83 with two minutes remaining, but the sheer jumping ability of Fakunle and the smooth hands of Hawks’ Erik Zimmerman proved to be too much for Warwickshire, as Coventry took over the game from that point on to close it out at 97-83.

The Festival closed with the presentation of the Most Valuable Player, and Fakunle unanimously took it after a classy display which brought him the Molten Golden Ball for his 38 point haul.

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