**Beverley Cougars 44 – 38 Hull Hornets**

With the league coming to an end for the Beverley Cougars, they could start to concentrate on the Jones Cup, with a preliminary tie against the Hull Hornets being their first match. After meeting the Hornets twice before, and losing on both occasions, the Cougars knew that a tough encounter lay ahead. To add to the Cougars worries, they couldn’t play some of their top players, due to injury.

The Cougars tend to shy away from three-pointers, but not in the first quarter of this game. Rich Haram and Steven Lindsey both scored one each, in a quarter that the Cougars dominated. This was partly due to the brilliant defence that the Cougars put up. They only allowed the Hornets to get to the basket twice, meaning that the Cougars led after the first quarter, 14-5.

The second quarter was a much quieter one, with both teams hesitant to attack. Mark Leason was a class above anyone else on court, rebounding shots at both ends of the court. Some careless turnovers allowed the Hornets to win the second quarter by a slender margin, but they still were behind in the game, 19-14.

The Cougars tried to regain some of the dominance that they had in the first quarter. It started well, with Pat Dooner setting up baskets, and scoring one himself. Leason carried on his authority in rebounding. The Hornets had chances to get back into contention, but they couldn’t convert from the free throw line, no matter how many times they were sent there.

With a nine point lead, the Cougars were high on confidence. However, the Hornets are resilient opponents, and they proved this in the final quarter. They passed the ball around smartly and punished the Cougars with their fast break plays. The Cougars had a quiet quarter offensively, only scoring four points. But they still led, until the final minute of the match, when a Hornets free throw levelled the scores, at 35-35, sending the game into overtime.

The Cougars had never played an overtime period before, but they knew that they would have to be on top of their game if they were to win it. It started well for the Cougars with Haram scoring another basket. Leason gave an incomparable performance, ending up with twelve points and eleven rebounds for the game. It looked like the Cougars were going to cruise to victory, but they gave away some unnecessary fouls. The Hornets however, couldn’t capitalise. The Cougars won the cup tie, 44-38.

Head coach Steven Lindsey was relieved to win the match, despite the Cougars throwing a ten point lead away twice in the game. “The way we performed in the first quarter was fantastic, and if we keep that up in our next few fixtures, I don’t see how any team could stop us. We can’t get too far ahead of ourselves though; there are still a few minor things we need to work on in training”