

Brighton 15 Medway 22 (London South 1) – 5th September 2015

Following promotion last season, Medway went into this opening fixture of the new campaign wondering if they would be able to compete at the higher level. The fixture at Brighton looked tough on paper, and thus to come away with a narrow away victory, was a very pleasing result. Given that Medway went 12 – 0 down after ten minutes, they showed great character to fight back and eventually win the hard fought match. The game itself started brightly, but quickly degenerated into a rather poor spectacle with far too many long stoppages. The players found it difficult to get any tempo or rhythm in their play and frustration grew in the second half.

Medway started brightly but unfortunate errors presented Brighton with turn over ball, which they used well to take the lead. Their first try came after seven minutes as the scrum half dived under the Medway's defensive tackles. Straight from the kick off, Brighton went through their phases and exploited space wide out. Their winger was hauled down on the Medway 22, but they quickly switched play to the other wing, to score an excellent second try and take a 12 – 0 lead. Things looked ominous for the visitors, and one wondered if the flood gates were about to open for Brighton.

Things didn't get much better after fifteen minutes when Medway knocked the ball on after a huge effort by the forwards to drive the Brighton pack over their try line. They didn't panic however, and managed to slowly play themselves back into the game with some good passages of controlled possession and direct running. Their efforts were rewarded on twenty four minutes when Max Easton got the touch down following a good catch and drive from the forwards, 12 – 5. The rest of the first half was forgettable as the stop start pattern of the game started to dominate proceedings. Half time 12 – 5.

Dan Harvey kicked an impressive long range penalty early in the second half to reduce the arrears, but further individual errors and indiscipline immediately handed Brighton a simple kick to maintain the seven point lead, 15 - 8. To make matters worse, the referee branded his first yellow card of the afternoon to reduce Medway to 14 for the next ten minutes. Needing to raise their game, Medway worked their way down field, and the Dance brothers combined to feed the ball to Tom Beaumont to score a good try. Harvey's accurate conversion levelled the scores.

Despite the many long stoppages, Medway began to enjoy good territory and possession. The defensive strain took its toll and Brighton suffered a yellow card for a deliberate penalty. With numerical advantage now in their favour, Medway refused the simple looking penalty and punted the ball into the corner for the attacking lineout.

The forwards drive was halted but the ball was moved wide to Luke Burns who cleverly popped it to Charlie Wardzynski to score the decisive try. Harvey slotted a fantastic touch line conversion to give complete the scoring and secure the result for Medway.

Overall, a poor game but pleasing result. Medway's team spirit and determination was excellent as they fought back from 12 – 0 down and being reduced to 14 men at a critical time of the game. The set piece went well, and the front five worked tirelessly all afternoon. Medway face Havant at home next week, 3pm kick off.

Medway's team;

Mataapa, Sandison, O'Leary, Easton, Rutherford, Huntley, Beaumont, B Dance, J Dance, Harvey, Burns, Liua'ana, Tila, Catlin, Wardzynski, Subs; Petch, Humphrey, Fernyhough.