

## Cranbrook (II) 20 Medway (Extra Dev) 25 - 09th January 2016

The Dev Extras supported by the usual Crusaders made their way to Cranbrook still refusing to believe that after all the heavy rain over the previous days the game would actually be played. They were pleasantly surprised to find that the show pitch was theirs for the day and that it was in excellent condition - and both teams took advantage of it to play some excellent rugby.

Medway opened the scoring as early as the second minute as they won a scrum against the head allowing scrum half Matt Munday to get the backs quickly into the game. Excellent distribution from centres Tom Bourne and Matt Callow released winger Des Dickson on the Medway twenty-two who pinned back his dreadlocks and set off at pace. The Cranbrook backs were taken by surprise as Des raced up the left wing avoiding the only defender who stood in his way to score for the perfect start. 'Did I miss something ?' said Coach Kempt who had chosen that moment to bend down to tie his boots. Cranbrook restarted 0 - 5 down and equalised ten minutes later when a Medway line out throw was called not straight and Cranbrook elected the scrum. Their bigger and heavier forwards drove the Medway pack back and a simple pick up from the base released their centre who crashed through from five yards out to level at 5 - 5. Early Cranbrook forward dominance was slowly being eroded as the Medway pack began to exert some pressure of their own at scrum time and it was from one such set piece that Medway took the lead again. Munday and fly-half Mark Shepherd combined well and, adhering to Coach Kempt's instructions, went on the blind side releasing winger Matt Brightman who made a great break from the Medway twenty-two before finally being brought down in the Cranbrook twenty-two. Forwards Josh Courtney, Joe Earl and Jack Nickalls arrived in support and secured the ball before it was sent quickly out to the left wing where Dickson again took the final pass and ran in his second try for a Medway lead of 5 - 10. Cranbrook came straight back and with Medway finding it hard to clear their lines they spent the next ten minutes in the Medway twenty-two. This pressure was bound to tell and when Medway were penalised for being offside at a ruck, a quick tap and go saw Cranbrook crash over the line to make the score 10 - 10. Medway restarted but found themselves under pressure again as Cranbrook took advantage of a couple of knock-on's but some well organised and dogged defending led by the front row of Mark Krasij, 'Sideshow' Whiting and Andrew Hoggan ensured that the halftime whistle went with the scores all square at 10 - 10.

Medway started the second half well and seized the initiative with full back Stan Orris, secure under the high balls that Cranbrook were using to clear their lines, making ground every time and working well with wingers Dickson and Brightman to mount a series of attacks. He also showed that his kicking game has improved as he sent a long punt down field forcing the Cranbrook full back to turn

and race after it. As he secured it and got up he was faced by Shepherd and Callow who had put in an excellent chase and bundled him into touch. Medway secured the line out with Mike Davies catching, turning and breaking through the Cranbrook forwards to make twenty yards before setting up the ruck. For the first time in the game, the Medway pass from the base was wayward and bounced loose but quick reactions from flanker Ben Edgar saw him recover it and drive to the line touching down to give Medway a 10 - 15 lead. This was extended ten minutes later when the ball went loose and Cranbrook hacked it on only for Callow to pick it up on the halfway line and run it straight back through the huge gap left by the Cranbrook defence to score under the posts. With a successful Shepherd conversion Medway now held a 10 - 22 lead. But Cranbrook were not finished and they narrowed the score when a scrappy line out went their way allowing them to send the ball along the backline to their winger who managed to score in the corner courtesy of a couple of missed tackles. At 15 - 22 Medway needed to play the next five minutes in the Cranbrook half but missed tackles and dropped passes added to their nervousness as momentum now seemed to be with Cranbrook and Medway were unable to get out of their half. A Cranbrook attack down their right wing saw yet more missed tackles allow them into the Medway twenty-two and when two Cranbrook knock-ons from rucks went undetected they finally managed to send their winger over to bring the score to 20 - 22 with ten minutes left. From the restart flanker Earl came off worse in a collision with a Cranbrook second row which saw him being replaced by Coach Kempt who spent the remainder of the game telling everyone that he wasn't a forward - as if we couldn't tell that for ourselves. Medway were working really hard and slowly made their way back into the Cranbrook twenty-two and as the clock began to count down Cranbrook's frustration saw them going offside at a ruck right in front of the posts. Shepherd stepped up and slotted the penalty to make it 20 - 25 and with four minutes left Medway held their nerve and their discipline to seal an excellent win.

This was a really good game played in the right spirit with both teams giving it their all. Medway are to be congratulated on their win as Cranbrook hasn't always been a happy hunting ground for them but a good skill level combined with the usual Development Squad refusal to take a backward step saw them through. A big thank you to Cranbrook for a hard fought game and their excellent hospitality and also to referee Mr Norton who missed very little and allowed a good game of rugby to be enjoyed by all.

SB

**Medway Squad:** Andrew Hoggan, Sean Whiting, Mark Krasij, Mike Davies, Josh Courtney, Joe Earl, Ben Edgar, Jack Nickalls, Matt Munday, Mark Shepherd, Des Dickson, Tom Bourne, Matt Callow, Matt Brightman, Stan Orris, Geoff Kempt

**Tries:** Dickson (2), Edgar, Callow,