

Medway (Dev Extra) 19 Thanet II 12 -20th February 2016

Yet another wet and windy afternoon saw the Extra's welcome Thanet II to Priestfield for what turned out to be a close and exciting game. Both teams had a good mix of youth and experience and so were evenly matched for the entire 80 minutes.

Neither side seemed to want to take control as for the first 20 minutes the game was played exclusively between the twenty-two's. The weather conditions were making handling and passing difficult with knock-ons and forward passes from both teams ruining any chance of any continuity. Medway were the first to threaten a score as some good work from the forwards saw them maul their way up field before the excellent Adam Barnett broke free and crashed his way through the Thanet defence to set up a ruck ten metres out. Quick ball saw winger Ollie Woodward cross the line but some excellent Thanet defence saw him held up and when Medway knocked the ball on from the scrum Thanet, with the wind behind them, sent the clearing kick back into the Medway half. The lineout was messy to say the least and when Medway hacked the ball on instead of falling on it and securing it, the Thanet centre picked it up and ran straight back at them bursting through three tackles and reaching the try line before he was finally stopped. Thanet appealed for the try but somehow a Medway body had got under the ball and held it up. Thanet won the scrum but a poor pass fell short of the intended receiver and was pounced on by Woodward who picked it up and set off for the line some 90 metres away being chased by the Thanet full back who had been up in attack. As Woodward began to tire the gap closed but he just managed to get to the line before collapsing over it for the opening score and whilst Mark Shepherd slotted the conversion, Ollie called for a sick bag and had a jolly good lay down ! Thanet restarted 7 - 0 down but were soon back on level terms as they steadily made their way back into the Medway twenty-two thanks to a series of penalties one of which was taken quickly by the scrum-half and passed to the centre who, seeing that Medway were disorganised in defence, chipped it into space and chased after it. The bounce was kind and he collected it and touched down under the posts for a converted try. Medway were guilty of not learning from their mistakes despite the shouts of 'Keep your discipline' from the touchline and they were punished again when another penalty on the five metre line saw Thanet take it quickly and crash over for a 7 - 12 lead at half time.

Medway started the second half with the wind behind them and clear instructions to play the game in the Thanet half by kicking sensibly to the corners and chasing hard. Thanet kicked off straight to Mike Davies who took the ball and set off at pace crashing through the defence and making 40 metres before offloading to the supporting Ben Edgar who also made ground until a desperate tackle dislodged the ball which went forward. Medway put in a huge shove at the scrum and as the ball came out it was knocked on by the Thanet 8 and rolled into open field. No one seemed to react until Joe 'Evergreen' Egan ran forward, picked it up and dotted down for probably the easiest try that he will score all season - although it was obviously a thing of beauty. Shepherd added to extras by way of the right hand post and Medway secured a slender 14 - 12 lead. Medway now enjoyed a decent period of possession where they should have scored at least two more tries but, with the wind picking up even more, a number of chances went begging as passes went forward. Thanet, sensing that that the game was not yet over as Medway could not finish them off, carried on fighting with their forwards making ground through Medway's centre field asking questions of Medway's defence that only just held on a number of occasions. However, when Thanet knocked on Medway cleared down the field and a good kick chase saw the pressure put back on them. It was now Thanet that were giving away penalties and Medway took advantage when a quick tap and go from Shepherd and an offload to Barnett saw him crash over the line to cap his Man-of-the-Match performance. Thanet tried to get back into the game but with five minutes left Medway held secure to register a much needed 19 - 12 win.

This was a really exciting game that could have gone either way and both teams are to be congratulated for their hard work and commitment. We must say thank you to Thanet who never gave up and whose scrum-half (and their Man-of-the-Match) showed the youngsters how to manage

a game in difficult conditions. We wish them well for the rest of the season. Thanks also to referee Mr Aldridge who, recognising that the conditions were difficult, helped the game to flow and ensured that it was played in the right spirit.

SB

Squad: Matt Petch, Howard Thompson, Mark Krasij, Mike Davies, George Cooke, Danny Williams, Dan O'Brien, Adam Barnett, Rob O'Brien, Mark Shepherd, Alec Conway, Ben Edgar, Joe Egan, Ollie Wodward, Stan Orris, Andrew Hoggan, Jimmy Wheighell, Ted Grant

Tries: Woodward, Egan, Barnett