

Medway (Extra 1st) 3 Tonbridge Juddians II 44 - 16th April 2016

After the last few weeks of battling against all the odds to secure 3 close fought wins this was a game too far for Medway. Their threadbare resources were even more stretched this week and were never going to be enough to overcome a Juddians team that was full of talented players, who were physically bigger, well drilled and clearly been playing together for most of the season.

Medway's problems were best demonstrated by their front row. This consisted of skipper Al Waterman (who gave his much heavier South Sea island opposition prop a horrid afternoon at the scrum), the father of one of the Dev Squad lads - Ayob Pangarker and young Dylan Travel, who was making his debut in the 2nd's and out of position at hooker. So it was interesting that it was the Medway scrum that caused Juddians the most problems throughout the game - even pushing off their much heavier opponents of their own ball on occasion. That aside the Juddians forwards gave a demonstration of how to win line outs, both theirs and Medway's.

From the kick off Judds looked to move the ball and some "touch rugby" tackling saw them break the Medway line and their fine Kiwi flanker race clear for a converted score. 0-7. Having woken up Medway then got stuck in and young fly half Orris played his best rugby for many a month during the next 15 minutes as he kicked beautifully for position and repetitively pinned back Judds in their 22. Now it was a real arm wrestle with Medway playing a limited game with intelligence. Indeed Judds showed them respect by taking kickeable penalty opportunities and stretching their lead to 0-13. Shortly afterwards Medway won a penalty after pressing the Judds line and made the score 3-13. With 5 minutes to go to half time it was proving to be a competitive game and then Medway's intensity dropped - not helped by losing last week's man of the match - Tom Sandison - to a season ending injury. This saw centre Sam Sharpe move into the back row of the scrum. So it was that Medway then conceded two converted tries, the manner of which was disappointing and they found themselves turning round at half time 3-27.

With the objective of winning the second half given to them by coach Essenhigh, Medway once again got stuck in and showed some enterprise moving the ball effectively around the field. They were managing to disrupt the Judds play with Glen Stapleton absolutely outstanding at the break down. However they just could not break the well organised Judds defence and it was inevitable that two 5 minute spells in the 2nd half saw the game go away for them. And if that was not bad enough when the Judds kiwi flanker broke through and chipped ahead, not only did he fall over but the two Medway defenders saw the ball bounce back over their heads and as they tried to reach it they fell over, only to see the Judds player pick himself up and find the ball in his hands to run through for the score.

Judds were very worthy winners and it is a puzzle to the Medway coaches that they have not run away with this league. The Medway lads gave it their all but were "busted" before they started and grit and commitment was never going to be enough. The referee gave the final score as 3 v 44, although Medway think the margin was much wider.

E.I. Addio - your man running touch on a bright spring day and wondering how it was he found himself agreeing with Des Morant about most everything to do with the game. Thank goodness the end of the season is nigh.

Squad: Ayob Pangarker, Dylan Travel, Al Waterman, Luke Osborne, Tom Sandison, Bear Stapleton, Dave French, Mike Davies, George Simpson, Alfie Orris, Sam Pearson, Sam Sharpe, Conor Chalmers, Matt Brightman, Rhys Burns, Bobby Ellis