

Vigo (II) 27 Medway (Extra Dev) 10 - 30th January 2016

After suffering a surprise defeat to Argentina in 2014, the Australian coach said, "Rugby is a simple game which requires three main skill sets - tackling, passing and catching. If you can't execute those skills during the eighty minutes then you're not going to win. They did, we didn't - they won"

And so it was today as the Development Squad Extras travelled to Vigo to take on a side that were sitting just behind them in the league. This was always going to be a difficult game on a pitch that had standing water in places and ankle deep mud everywhere else but the fact is that Vigo adapted to the conditions and Medway didn't. Medway started fairly brightly with forwards Josh Courtney and PG Smith smashing holes in the Vigo defence and putting them on the front foot allowing the backs to squelch their way towards the line but with a simple 2 on 1 beckoning a poor pass was dropped and Vigo cleared from the resulting scrum. This happened on three more occasions before Vigo finally hacked the ball clear and put in a good chase which they recovered and sent along their backs. Medway missed four tackles as their centre ran through to score under the posts and secure a 7 - 0 lead. The lead doubled ten minutes later as Vigo built pressure and Medway panicked, constantly kicking the ball straight down the pitch to the waiting full back who ran it straight back at them. Another four missed tackles allowed Vigo's influential No.8 to get to the 5 metre line where quick ball from a ruck and yet more missed tackles allowed Vigo in for a 14 - 0 lead. Medway just weren't settling and with no communication between the forwards and the backs, potentially dangerous attacking positions were being overlooked and missed. This, coupled with passes falling at players feet and lots of knock-ons, allowed Vigo to take control as they hoovered up every mistake made by Medway and made the most of them. When Medway were caught offside at a ruck in front of their posts, Vigo took the 3 points and ended the first half leading 17 - 10.

The half time talk delivered by Coach Collings and Manager Brighters centred on raising heads, playing with some pride, communicating and concentrating on doing the basics well and this seemed to have some effect as Medway started the second half much better. Sol Cooper, on for his first game in weeks, made an immediate difference taking the restart and smashing through three defenders before setting up a ruck from which quick ball gave Medway some momentum. As it came right without being dropped (at last) it finally found winger Aaron O'Brien who set off at pace through the mud beating two defenders and touching down under the posts. With a missed conversion Medway now trailed 17 - 5 but any thoughts of a fight back were dashed as once again a lack of organisation in defence and an inability to kick to touch allowed Vigo to keep the pressure up. Whenever the ball

fell loose it was a Vigo player who reacted first and two pick and go's saw their No.8 drive over the line for a 22 - 5 lead. Medway came back and scored the next try as some good work on the ground by Dan O'Brien (Medway's Man of the Match) finally secured a loose ball which brother Rob got away quickly and with the forwards finally looking around, the ball found Matt Callow who ran in under the posts. Another missed conversion meant that Vigo restarted 22 - 10 in front and they made sure of their victory with ten minutes to go when a simple driving maul saw them score their fourth try in the corner for a final score of 27 - 10.

This was an uncharacteristically poor performance from a team that can do so much better as they have shown throughout the season. On the plus side our scrummaging in such poor conditions was excellent and dominant throughout the game but it was a shame that more could not have been made from it. The lads were disappointed as they know that they did not give a good account of themselves but we will put this one behind us and move on. A big thank you to Vigo who were excellent hosts and a special thank you to their physio, Sue, who looked after Medway injuries with the same enthusiasm as the Vigo ones !! A mention also to the referee Mr. Norey who took stock of the conditions and referee'd accordingly. He got very little wrong and was instrumental in allowing a game to finally break out.

Squad: Andrew Hoggan, Greg Woodward, Tony Cohen, Josh Courtney, PG Smith, Dan O'Brien, Tom Smith, Mike Davies, Rob O'Brien, Matt Callow, Olli Baker, Viktor Kopylov, Ben Edgar, Aaron O'Brien, Stan Orris, George Cooke, Sol Cooper, Ollie Woodward

Tries: O'Brien (A), Callow