

## Medway Extra 1st XV 19 Sidcup II 36 - 15th October 2016

Sidcup were the visitors to a blustery Priestfields to face a Medway Extra's team that had not played for two weeks. As if this lack of match practice wasn't bad enough, they faced an unbeaten Sidcup side that included a number of 1st XV players. Add to this a high level of unavailability throughout Medways' senior pod and this was always going to be a tough game for a much changed Extra's side.

Sidcup started strongly pinning Medway back in their twenty-two and going through the phases calmly. As the play came over to Medway's left the Sidcup scrum half reacted quickly when the ball came loose at the back of ruck, diving over the line and claiming a try. However, winger Matt Brightman somehow managed to get an arm under the ball to prevent the grounding which was well spotted by the ref. The relief was short lived however as from the resulting scrum Sidcup sent the ball out to their centre who slipped two tackles before touching down under the posts. Medway restarted 0 - 7 down and were now beginning to exert some pressure of their own as centre Mitch Dent, back from injury, made ground though the Sidcup defence. But once again, as has often been the case this season, Medway could not secure possession at the ruck and turnover ball allowed Sidcup to ease the pressure and mount an attack of their own down their left wing. A scrambling Medway defence conceded a penalty just inside their twenty-two which Sidcup kicked to touch. They secured the lineout and drove a disorganised Medway defence over the line for their second try and a 0 - 14 lead. A knock on from the restart gave Medway possession and they now began to settle and apply some real pressure with Sidcup conceding a high number of penalties to keep them out. Medway mixed it up going for quick tap and goes as well as lineouts and their perseverance was rewarded as Dent finally broke free and darted through the Sidcup defence to score. With a successful Rumsey conversion Medway had cut the deficit to 7 - 14 but were then immediately guilty of not reacting to the restart as the Sidcup winger took it and made ten yards before being brought to ground. The ball was quickly recycled and deft hands saw it moved out to their left winger who eluded two attempted tackles before touching down for a 7 - 19 lead. Medway fell further behind when yet again they were turned over after flanker Ben Edgar had worked hard to gain ground with a good break. Sidcup were again clinical in possession as they sent the ball quickly out to their right winger who skipped two tackles for an easy run in and a 7 - 16 lead. Medway fought back and narrowed the lead as some hard work from the forwards got them deep into the Sidcup twenty-two before Burnsy took a crash ball and smashed through two tackles before touching down for a half time score of 12 - 26.

In terms of possession and territory the second half was a one sided affair in Medway's favour as they camped in the Sidcup half for thirty of the forty minutes. It was therefore totally against the run of play when Sidcup increased their lead from the now all too familiar story of Medway failing to look after the ball in contact. And so just as Medway were beginning to get a foothold in the game they found themselves 12 - 33 down and the game was effectively taken away from them. To their credit however they continued to work hard and with the forwards being dominant in the scrum they were able to mount a series of attacks which finally led to a try as Alfie Orris was set free to run in from twenty yards for a 19 - 33 score. With ten minutes left, Sidcup made their second visit to the Medway half and when they were awarded a penalty they decided to take the three points making the final score 19 - 33.

Whilst the loss was disappointing it would be fair to say that Sidcup deserved their win as they were more organised in defence and clinical in attack. We look forward to the return game when hopefully Medway will have had a settled side for some weeks. That said there were still plenty of positives for Medway with some encouraging individual performances and yet another eighty minutes where the entire squad gave it everything. We must say thank you to referee Mr Khanna who explained his decision making clearly, missed very little and allowed the lads to play.

SB

**Medway Squad:** Andy Connell, Mark Coveney, Al Waterman, Dan Goodall, Luke Osborne, Tom Coleman, Ben Edgar, PG Smith, Ben Wellard, Si Rumsey, Matt Brightman, Mitch Dent, Bobby Ellis, Rhys Burns, Brad Ford, Luke Burns, Alfie Orris