

Sidcup (II) 26 Medway Extra 13 - 14th January 2017

Medway's Extras made the trip to top of the table and unbeaten Sidcup knowing that only a flawless display would earn them the points.

They started well settling more quickly than their hosts who seemed surprised by the speed and intensity at which Medway were looking to play and for the first ten minutes Sidcup looked unusually disorganised. Medway were competing and tackling well and with their forwards establishing significant dominance in the scrum that continued for the entire game, they had an attacking platform that they looked to use. It was therefore no surprise when the first try came from a scrum on halfway from which quick ball saw centre Sam Sharpe break a tackle and make ground before passing to winger Conor Chalmers. He showed his pace and tore off up the wing before passing back inside to Sharpe to score in the corner for a 0 - 5 lead. Medway had the start that they deserved and they went further ahead soon after as prop John Duggan (playing up from the Crusaders) secured the restart and fly half Si Rumsey kicked deep into Sidcup territory. A good chase from the backs put pressure on the Sidcup full back who was caught and held up giving Medway another scrum. Again their dominance was evident and after a couple of pick and go's centre Bobby Ellis took the crash ball and dived over the line for a 0 - 10 lead. Medway again secured the restart and set about making inroads into Sidcup territory but they missed their chance to extend their lead with a penalty kick that fell short allowing Sidcup to run it out of defence. They retained the ball well and made their way into the Medway half where a penalty saw them kick for touch. With the ball secured they drove for the line but good Medway defence stopped them before the ball was sent to their centre who came back round and scored in the corner. A successful conversion saw Medway restart at 7 - 10 and as half time approached with Medway in the Sidcup twenty-two a successful penalty kick saw them increase the lead to 7 - 13 at the break.

The half time instructions from Coach Essenhigh were more of the same, to get the ball away quickly from rucks and scrums and to play the first ten minutes in the Sidcup half. It seemed however that this fell on deaf ears as within the first five minutes Sidcup took the lead from a simple catch and drive from a line-out and Medway had to restart at 14 - 13 down. Medway's game now became strewn with individual errors as passes either went astray or were dropped allowing Sidcup easy possession and territory. When Medway did get into the Sidcup twenty-two they looked dangerous but all too often they lost the ball forward in contact and failed to make the most of their attacking chances. This gave encouragement to a now settled and organised Sidcup side who extended their lead when yet another Medway knock on saw them release their centre who broke two tackles to score for a 19 - 13 lead. Medway continued to threaten and a number of Sidcup penalties saw Medway take scrums allowing the forwards to make huge gains forward but the attacking threat out wide was never utilised and Sidcup were able to easily defend the constant inside ball. Medway were still in the game but Sidcup sealed the win with ten minutes to go after yet another knock on gifted them possession allowing their centre to pick up the loose ball and make ground before passing to the winger who touched down for a final score of 26 - 13.

This was a disappointing end to a game that Medway had been in for seventy minutes. Sidcup were gracious in victory saying that this was by far the toughest game that they had had all season. They are a good and established outfit benefitting from a number of last years 1st XV in their ranks and they are deserving of their top spot - we wish them well for the rest of the season. However, from the Medway point of view you can't help feeling that, frustratingly, this was yet another one that got away !!

Medway Squad: John Duggan, Andy Connell, Al Waterman, Dan Goodall, Tom Sandison, Dave French, Dan O'Brien, Toby Gerdes-Hansen, Sam Garofalo, Si Rumsey, Connor Chalmers, Bobby Ellis, Sam Sharpe, Matt Brightman, Rhys Burns, Paul Ward, Ben Wellard, Ben Edgar