

## Tunbridge Wells II 0 v Medway Extra 1st XV 52 - 01st October 2016

The Extra's made the trip to Tunbridge Wells keen to make amends for their poor performance in last week's loss to Sevenoaks. They were buoyed by the returns of Sam Sharpe (following his day trip to Cardiff University), Tom Coleman (following injury) and the evergreen Huw Collings (on his 3rd return from retirement).

The first ten minutes were a scrappy affair with neither team finding any rhythm but there were early encouraging signs that the Medway scrum, led by Andy Connell, was going to gain some dominance. With knock-on's and turnovers aplenty Medway needed to get their hands on the ball and settle into their style of play but T/Wells were competing well and making life very difficult at the breakdown helped by the fact that Medway seemed intent on going into contact at every opportunity rather than using their pace and width. If they needed a clue as to how they were going to win it came after twelve minutes when quick hands through the backs set winger Matt Brightman off making good ground before finally being stopped on the T/Wells twenty-two. Medway now had some possession and they slowly began to make use of it as they made their way towards the T/Wells line and the first try came when Mark Coveney picked up at the back of a ruck on the five metre line and was driven over for a 0 - 5 lead. T/Wells restarted but Medway secured it and came straight back at them with centres Rusty Clement and Sam Sharpe looking to punch through the T/Wells defensive line with some direct running. The forwards were working much harder this week and ball was regularly secured allowing scrum half Steve Davolls and fly half Si Rumsey to finally get the ball moving quickly. The pressure finally told as quick hands along the backs saw winger Rhys Burns take the final pass and touch down. With a successful conversion Medway led 0 - 12 and now realised that keeping the ball out of contact might be what was called for. Their third try was further evidence of this as a kick clearance from T/Wells was secured by Davolls who saw the mismatch in numbers to his right and immediately set Clement off. He made some ground before passing to full back Steve Stuart who executed the two on one perfectly sending Burns over for his second try and a half time lead of 0 - 17.

T/Wells restarted and a series of Medway handling errors and a penalty saw them move into the Medway twenty-two looking for their first points of the game. They were working hard and recycling the ball well until a pass fell short of its intended receiver on the five metre line. Stuart was quick to react hacking the ball downfield and chasing after it neck to neck with the T/Wells full back who had been up in attack. With another hack on the ball was now on the T/Wells five metre line and as both players fell on it a supporting T/Wells player knocked it on giving Medway the scrum. The forwards once again secured the ball and when the ball was sent out wide it was fitting that Stuart was the final receiver touching down to give Medway a 0 - 24 lead following a Rumsey conversion. Medway were now looking more dangerous in attack with their centres continuing to punch holes through the T/Wells defence and it was from a Sharpe break that the next try came as quick ball from a ruck saw flanker Paul Morant take the final pass and finish well with some real pace. Another successful conversion saw T/Wells restart at 0 - 31 down but a few minutes later this became 0 - 38 as another clearing kick from them was run straight back by Medway who again crashed through a disorganised defence with the ball going first to Sharpe and then Brightman who finished the move off under the posts. By now the game was only going to go one way but in fairness to T/Wells they stuck at it and had some good possession of their own that they just couldn't capitalise on. As coach Essenhigh made some changes Ben Wellard came off the bench to replace the hobbling Clement and it was he, much to Rusty's disgust, who scored the final two tries of the game. The first came when T/Wells lost their line out, the ball was quickly recovered by Davolls who fed Sharpe who once again broke a number of tackles before offloading to Wellard who scored for a 0 - 45 lead. The final try came when T/Wells again lost the ball forward and hooker Mark Coveney (later named Medway's Man of the Match by the T/Wells players) showed that he is more than just a beard as he crashed through tackles at pace before offloading to Wellard for his second try, Medway's eighth and a final score of 0 - 52.

This was a better performance by this Extra's side who, if we can keep them injury free, could develop into a very good team - there is still plenty to work on but the signs are there. Our thanks go to Tunbridge Wells for giving us a hard game, never giving up and playing with a lot of pride. Whilst the scoreboard may make it look as if this was a stroll in the park it was anything but. Thanks also to the ref Mr Price who had a good afternoon and allowed the lads to play the game.

**Medway Squad:** Andy Connell, Mark Coveney, Al Waterman, Dan Goodall, Tom Coleman, Paul Morant, Toby Gerdes-Hansen, Huw Collings, Steve Davolls, Matt Brightman, Rusty Clement, Sam Sharpe, Rhys Burns, Steve Stuart, Ben Wellard, Ben Edgar

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