

Gravesend (II) 17 Medway Extra 1st XV 58 - 04th March 2017

The Extras made the short trip to Gravesend with a number of enforced changes to the side that had put Dartfordians to the sword the week before but still confident in the fact that the support called in from the 4th XV wouldn't weaken the squad.

Gravesend started brightly and settled quickly as Medway once again took their time to get going. The first five minutes were spent exclusively in the Medway twenty-two as they struggled to clear their lines, fell off tackles and generally gifted Gravesend possession. It was therefore no surprise when Gravesend took an early and deserved 7 - 0 lead as their centre found space and ran through Medway's poorly organised defence. Medway quickly levelled the score however as Dan O'Brien chased well to secure the restart setting up a ruck from which Max Easton, back playing after a five week lay off, picked up and made for the line leaving Gravesend defenders in his wake as he scored under the posts making for an easy conversion for Si Rumsey and a 7 - 7 scoreline. Once again however Medway were slow to organise from the restart giving Gravesend possession and territory and they took the lead again as a speculative kick through from their fly half headed towards the Medway in goal area where full back Steve Stewart had it covered - until the ball did what rugby balls often do and bounced high and backwards straight in to the hands of the chasing Gravesend winger who touched down for a 12 - 7 lead. This seemed to wake Medway up as the forwards turned the ball over from the restart before sending it out right to winger Matt Brightman who made an excellent break deep into Gravesend territory before finally being tackled. From the ruck the ball was sent to the centres where firstly Sam Sharpe took it on before offloading perfectly to his partner Conor Chalmers who beat two defenders to score and level at 12 - 12. Medway secured the restart and with the forwards now settling into the game they made their way back into Gravesend territory helped by an increasing number of penalties. A line-out ten yards out saw Medway secure the ball and No.8 Pete Ward, making the first of a number of decisive runs which earned him the Man of the Match award, crashed through the Gravesend defence setting up the ruck. Quick ball found prop Al Waterman in some space and he had little difficulty in trundling over with his trademark lope to give Medway a 12 - 17 lead. A Rumsey penalty ten minutes later made it 12 - 20 before Chalmers reacted quickly as the ball rolled loose from a ruck and set off with real pace to beat two defenders and score under the posts for a converted try that meant at half time Medway had a 12 - 27 lead.

Medway increased their lead to 12 - 32 soon after the restart as advantage from a knock-on saw Easton pick up and make ground before two quick passes released winger Rhys Burns who ran in from the twenty-two to score. If they thought that this had put their hosts to bed they were mistaken being pushed back in defence as Gravesend put together some phases of simple rugby which resulted in them putting their winger in for a good try that their effort had thoroughly deserved. Medway restarted at 17 - 32 and now finally stepped it up a notch increasing the tempo and with the forwards now dominating at the scrum it was only a matter of time before the gaps began to appear in a tiring Gravesend defence. Their next try came from yet another turn over from the forwards with quick ball along the backs setting Brightman free again. He made ground before cutting back inside and setting up the ruck from which a well worked move saw Sharpe take the inside ball and run through for another converted try and a 17 - 39 score. Medway now began to play with some genuine pace and desire as the game became more broken giving the spectators a rare treat with sights such as second row Dan Goodall making a thirty yard break and actually throwing a decent pass, prop Andy Connell taking the ball and executing a perfect 'Strictly' pirouette to beat a defender and Paul Essenhigh being reminded by the ref that he was the coach not the ref. Medway scored again as a good break from scrum half Ben Wellard took them on to the five metre line before offloading to O'Brien to score for 17 - 54. Ward then underlined why he was MOTM as he went on yet another fantastic sixty yard run to take Medway deep into Gravesend territory from where Sharpe again found the defence open up for him allowing him to score his second increasing the lead to 17 - 51. The final score came again from Sharpe who capped off a good all round display with his jug try and a final scoreline of 17 - 58.

This was the third win against Gravesend this season but, as with the other two, Medway were made to work exceptionally hard for it. Credit must go to Gravesend who played with determination and commitment and with their policy of mixing some of their young academy players with the more experienced heads their future looks bright. Thanks also to ref Mr Jolley who had a good game, keeping up with the quick pace of the game and refereeing fairly and decisively to allow a good game to be enjoyed by all.

Medway Squad: John Dugan, Andy Connell, Al Waterman, Max Easton, Dan Goodall, Dave French, Dan O'Brien, Pete (PJ) Ward, Ben Wellard, Si Rumsey, Rhys Burns, Sam Sharpe, Conor Chalmers, Matt Brightman, Steve Stewart, Ben Edgar