

Medway Extra 1st 45 Old Alleynians (II) 5 - 25th March 2017

The Extras welcomed Old Alleynians to a very blustery Priestfields keen to go out with a win in their last home game of the season.

Medway kicked off with the strong wind behind them and were soon encamped in the O.A's half as the forwards looked to exert some early dominance. They had plenty of opportunities to do so as the blustery conditions forced a series of knock-ons and not straight line-out throws that kept the scrum count high. It was from one such set piece that saw the pack win the ball against the head before it was sent to centre Sam Sharpe who crashed through the OA's defence before sensibly popping the ball up in the tackle to No.8 Toby Gerdes-Hansen who finished off under the posts from five yards. With a successful Si Rumsey conversion Medway had a 7 - 0 lead but they had to wait for fifteen minutes to increase it as yet more handling errors and line-out problems put paid to any composure and rhythm that the coaching team were looking for. When the score finally came it was further evidence of the forwards power as a five metre scrum saw them push OA's back over the line for a simple touch down for flanker Pete Ward who had controlled well at the back. Another Rumsey conversion saw the score move to 14 - 0 and Medway now settled down as they secured the restart well and went through the phases moving deep into the OA's twenty-two. A penalty at a ruck gave Medway possession and with line-outs having been disastrous for both sides all afternoon and with Medway having just scored from a pushover you could perhaps understand Coach Essenhigh's screamed instruction of 'Take the scrum' followed by his screamed expletives as Rumsey kicked for touch. On this occasion however all went well as Medway secured the ball and set up a rolling maul that ended with flanker Dave French diving over the line to increase the lead to 19 - 0. OA's restarted with some real determination and enjoyed their best period of possession of the half as they exerted pressure on the Medway defence helped by a number of needless penalties. Medway managed to keep them out however and following good work on the ground by props John Dugan and Andy Connell they managed to turn the ball over. The backs brought the ball out of defence before Rumsey chipped over the OA's defensive line with Sharpe reaching it first. He made ground before passing to full back Steve Stewart who in turn found winger Matt Brightman who continued the run before executing the two-on-one perfectly with an inside ball back to Stewart who ran in under the posts for a well executed try and a half time lead of 24 - 0.

Medway started the second half in style as flanker Dan O'Brien secured the restart and ran straight through the OA's defence before passing to Pete Ward who made another twenty yards before being tackled. He offloaded to Sharpe who was in close support and he beat the final defender with some ease to touch down under the posts for a 31 - 0 lead. OA's now had the wind behind them and set about trying to keep Medway pinned back in their half with some tactical kicking but every time they missed touch they found Steve Stewart ready to run straight back at them. It was one such occasion that led to Medway's sixth try as Stewart collected a loose ball and set off at pace beating three defenders with great footwork before passing to O'Brien who ran in under the posts from the halfway line to secure a 38 - 0 lead. In fairness to OA's they refused to give up and now spent the next ten minutes in the Medway twenty-two forcing penalties that they refused to kick to touch. Instead they looked to take them quickly with tap and goes which kept Medway on the backfoot until they finally succeeded in driving over the line for their solitary score of the afternoon. Medway restarted and came straight back on the attack sealing their win as the forwards again pushed OA's off the ball at a scrum allowing Gerdes-Hansen to pick up and make ground before offloading to Sharpe who ran in his second try for a final score of 45 - 5.

Whilst this was not the best Medway performance of the season they certainly did enough to finish their home league programme with a win that keeps them second in the table. We must say a big thank you to Old Alleynians who never gave up and made things very difficult for the Extras. We wish them well for their last games and look forward to locking horns with them again next season. A big thank you also to ref Mr Willis who was consistent in his decision making and ran things sensibly and in a calm and measured fashion that allowed the lads to play.

Medway Squad: John Dugan, Mark Coveney, Andy Connell, Tom Sandison, Dan Goodall, Dave French, Dan O'Brien, Toby Gerdes-Hansen, Ben Wellard, Si Rumsey, Rhys Burns, Mitch Dent, Sam Sharpe, Matt Brightman, Steve Stewart, Pete Ward, Sean Crittenden