

Gravesend II 5 Medway Extra 1st 80 (Invicta 1) - 16th September 2017

The Extras made the short trip to Gravesend keen to build on their winning start to the season but even they can't have thought that they would score eighty points evenly spread across both halves.

Medway scored straight from the kick off as the ball was tipped back into the hands of the evergreen John Dugan who, with fellow prop Al Waterman latched on to him, made fifteen yards into the Gravesend half before quick ball from the ruck set the backs free. Winger Alfie Orris nearly made it to the line but as he was tackled he popped the ball up for No.8 Ben Dance to touch down in the corner. At 0 - 5 Medway were up and running and they increased their lead barely five minutes later as they won the restart and quickly made their way up to the Gravesend five metre line. After Medway knocked on Gravesend were awarded the scrum but they were unable to deal with the power from the Medway forwards and after three penalties for taking it down they conceded a penalty try gifting Medway a 0 - 12 lead. Medway won the restart and again quickly became encamped on the Gravesend five metre line where a number of Gravesend penalties saw Medway mixing it up with both scrums and line-outs until Dance took one quickly, off loading to hooker Andy Connell who crashed over. Brad Ford converted for 0 - 19 and was then instrumental in the next try as the forwards stole a Gravesend line-out and Ford sent a huge kick upfield. The backs chased well and when the ball bounced kindly for Orris he ran in almost unopposed for a 0 - 26 lead. The restart was won by flanker Josh Hawkins and he made ground through the heart of the Gravesend defence where yet more quick ball from the ruck set the backs free. Centres Rhys Townsend and Sam Sharpe were breaking the line every time they had the ball and when Sharpe again broke through he released Orris who beat his opposing winger and then the full back to score his second and Medway's 5th, increasing the lead to 0 - 33. Medway's sixth try came as yet another clearance from Ford bounced kindly to full back Rhys Burns who found Sharpe in space. He made ground before releasing Orris who ran in for a 0 - 40 lead. As the score mounted the game became very ill-tempered with a number of late tackles and off the ball incidents that referee Mr Hollins did well to manage but this unfortunately set the tone for the rest of the game. Gravesend also lost a prop to injury which resulted in Medway having to accept uncontested scrums for the second week running. As half time approached Orris scored his fourth and Medway's seventh for a half time lead of 0 - 47.

Medway continued to press throughout the second half and with scrum half Ben Wellard now steering the team around well, their eighth try came as prop Connell found himself in the backs as the ball came out wide. He took it and charged forward with winger Matt Brightman outside him screaming for the ball. Connell however took the hard route going in to contact and offloading over his shoulder to Toby Gerdes-Hansen who managed to crash over the line. Another successful Ford conversion saw Medway extend their lead to 0 - 54. Gravesend were next to score which was just reward for their efforts as they took a quick tap and go penalty allowing their prop to crash over but Medway came back almost immediately with a second Connell try as he burrowed in at the back of a ruck before diving over for a 5 - 61 lead. Medway's tenth came as they again comfortably won the restart allowing Ford to put in yet another 'bomb' which saw Dance collect and make ground before giving it to winger Brightman. He beat the full back with some deft footwork to score in the corner and another great kick from Ford saw Medway extend the lead to 5 - 68. The next score came from Dance as he spotted a gap in the Gravesend defence which he exploited well for a 5 - 73 lead and the last score was added by second row Dan Goodall who crashed over following a period of extensive forwards pressure in the Gravesend twenty-two. The final whistle went with Medway running out 5 - 80 winners.

This was an ill-tempered game which was a shame as both teams were capable of playing some very good rugby. Gravesend were competitive and were a much tougher outfit than last season despite the scoreline. If they continue with their philosophy of playing their talented youngsters they will be a force to be reckoned with in a few years time. Thanks must go to referee Mr Hollins who remained calm and focussed throughout this feisty game and controlled things well.

Squad: John Dugan, Andy Connell, Al Waterman, Dan Goodall, Richie Desmond, Josh Hawkins, Ben Shove, Dan O'Brien, Ben Dance, Ben Wellard, Brad Ford, Alfie Orris, Rhys Townsend, Sam Sharpe, Matt Brightman, Rhys Burns, Dave French, Bobby Ellis, Toby Gerdes-Hansen