

Old Alleynians II 22 Medway Extra 1st 21 (Invicta 1) - 28th October 2017

The Extra's braved the South Circular to take on Old Alleynians in what turned out to be a disappointing game with an even more disappointing result.

Once again Medway took their time to settle, a trait that is becoming more and more frustrating for the coaches, with passes not going to hand and loss of possession in contact. These simple errors meant that OA's had little difficulty in releasing any pressure that Medway built up and as Medway's frustration grew they conceded two soft penalties in quick succession which gifted OA's an early 6 - 0 lead. Medway secured the restart but were immediately turned over at a ruck which allowed OA's to break from their ten metre line almost to the try line until some desperate Medway defence finally stopped them and when OA's were then penalised for offside Medway cleared their lines. From the lineout the backs broke free and when another OA's infringement gave Medway the opportunity they again kicked for touch, secured the lineout and drove for the line. Some good work from the forwards kept the momentum on but as he dived over for the line prop Andy Connell collided with an OA's defender causing him to drop the ball and the try had gone. OA's cleared their line from the scrum but failed to make touch allowing full back Rhys Burns to collect the ball and run it straight back making good ground into the OA's twenty-two. Another penalty saw fly half Brad Ford kick Medway's first points to reduce the lead to 6 - 3 but right from the restart Medway gave away another penalty which saw them fall 9 - 3 behind. Medway secured the restart and as the ball found second row Lyam Johnson he made an excellent break crashing through the OA's defence before offloading to Andy Connell who made no mistake this time touching down for Medway's first try and reducing the lead to 9 - 8. Medway's forwards were now finding their feet and were gaining dominance at the scrum and so it was disappointing when, once again (now four games out of five) with fifteen minutes of the first half remaining, this attacking platform was taken from them when the game went to uncontested scrums due to an injury to an OA's prop.

Medway started the second half well with more territory and possession but they were again guilty of coughing the ball up too often in contact or at rucks where the support play was lacking. The pressure told however as OA's conceded a string of penalties allowing Ford to kick Medway into a 9 - 11 lead but once again a string of penalties from both sides saw them trade kicks which eventually saw Medway leading 12 - 14. They then extended their lead as another break from Burns saw him go from the Medway twenty-two to the OA's try line before being held up on. The relief for OA's was short lived however as, from the scrum, they set up a ruck from which quick ball (at last) saw Johnson crash over and with a successful Ford conversion Medway now had a 12 - 21 lead which should have seen them home. But OA's were not to be outdone and another penalty in front of the posts saw them reduce the lead to 15 - 21. Even at this point Medway should have been able to see the game out as they made their way into the OA's twenty-two but yet another poor decision saw them take the ball into contact and get turned over. The OA's backs sensing an opening took it and promptly ran the ball back under the posts for seven points, a 22 - 21 lead and ultimately the game.

This was a game that Medway will feel they could have won but OA's were well organised, determined and, importantly, took their chances when they came. Whilst they were undoubtedly aided by the uncontested scrums and Medway's high error rate, they deserved their win and are to be congratulated. A big thank you to referee Mr Williams who had a very good game, missing little and making it clear to the players what he expected from them. Well done Sir.

Squad: Tom Whitnell, Mark Coveney, Andy Connell, Dan Goodall, Lyam Johnson, Raz DeBeer, Dan O'Brien, Toby Gerdes-Hansen, Ben Wellard, Brad Ford, Bobby Ellis, Rhys Townsend, Mitch Dent, Matt Brightman, Rhys Burns, Luke Osborne, Mudoti Tafadzwa