

Medway 49 Old Colfeians 8 (London South 1) - 09th Sept 2017

Medway's first home game of the season saw them pitted against fellow Kent side Old Colfeians who, along with the hosts, were promoted into London 1 last season.

The game started with Medway playing with a stiff breeze at their back and within 3 minutes they were ahead from a Harvey penalty. After pinning the visitors back in their 22 Medway continued to pressure them resulting in a penalty and under the advantage Harvey kicked through for Hall to touch down. The try was unconverted and Medway led 8-0.

Medway were looking the sharper in these early stages but as the half progressed the extremely large and powerful Old Colfeians pack went to work. They drove Medway off their own ball then played short retaining the ball with pick and go and short forward carries. On 27mins Medway cleared their lines from their own 22 only to see the ball go dead with the breeze behind. The resultant scrum back saw the visitors score a well taken try by their No 8. The conversion was missed to leave the score 8-5.

Penalties were exchanged by the sides in the next 5 minutes to take the score to 11-8. On 39 mins Medway were awarded another penalty on the half way line with the wind at his back Harvey pointed at the posts and a great strike saw Medway extend their lead to a very slender 14-8 given the conditions. Old Colefians had done a great first half job in containing Medway initially then as the half went on dominating the forward exchanges and with the wind now at their back looked favourites to take the tie.

Medway need to improve their game and in this they did. Although Harvey missed a kickable penalty early. From the drop out restart Wardzynski managed to get Medway on the front foot then great phase and interplay eventually put Hall over for his second try and a great team effort. Harvey converted and Medway extended their lead to 21-8.

On 53 minutes Medway were reduced to 14 men when lock Debeer was sin binned for a high tackle. Old Colfeians pressured Medway through line out catch and drives and some scrums close to the Medway line but somehow Medway survived the sin binning period without conceding points. A great team effort.

Ironically on 63 mins Old Colfeians were themselves reduced to 14 for an identical infringement. Medway went for the touchline off the penalty and were rewarded when following great approach work by Beaumont, Debeer, Gardner, Chalmers and especially Clement saw quick ball allow Harvey to go over from short range to score an excellent converted try and put the score at 28-8.

This was a real blow to the visitors who had dominated for long periods of the first half and part of the second. Medway were now looking sharper and their tails were up. They had come through a difficult period. A Medway lineout off the restart saw Huntley break through the visitors midfield defence, carries from O'Leary and Debeer saw Medway penetrate further into the visitors territory then with the visitors defensive organisation broken the ball went out wide to Easton who scored near the touchline. Harvey landed a great conversion to make the score 35-8 and a bonus point secured.

With only 3 minutes remaining Medway were flying. From the kick off good work from Debeer and a Stubbington break up the middle saw Medway win the breakdown under the visitors posts and with numbers on the outside the visitors defenders rushed out only to leave a gap on the inside for Harvey to score another converted try leaving the score at 42-8.

Medway were not finished. Excellent phase play with Stubbington carrying twice and Debeer making inroads in the visitors defence created space on the outside for the improving Greyvenstein to score a sharp try. Man of the match Harvey converted to complete a 49 - 8 victory. Medway had produced one of their best second half fight backs for a few seasons. Although ahead at half time Old Colfeians had been much the stronger team with their tight and short play. The front row boys of Cooley, Whitnell, Gardner, O'Leary and pack leader Billy Humphrey deserve credit for hanging in against one of the biggest forward packs seen at Medway in many a year. Coaches, Gwilliam and Longstaff, were delighted with the half time reaction and the character shown by the side after such a tough first half.

A great win for Medway who now travel to play Essex side Thurrock next Saturday.