

Thurrock 15 Medway 20 (London 1 South) - 16th September 2017

Medway travelled to Essex side Thurrock on Saturday looking to maintain their winning start to the season. The home side had the first advantage of a strong wind at their backs and soon had Medway on the back foot defending their line. Only a good tackle by Harvey prevented the opening score. However Medway continually failed to find touch with their clearance kicks and the dangerous Thurrock back 3 counter attacked and pinned Medway back.

They were rewarded with very kickable penalties but turned these down and although winning the resultant line outs were repulsed by strong Medway defence. On 19 mins Medway had a rare foray into Thurrock territory and following good work by Wardzynski were awarded a penalty. Sadly this struck the post.

Another short range penalty miss meant the game remained scoreless until when on 26 minutes Medway were awarded yet another penalty. This time they went for the corner. A well executed catch and drive by the forwards pack saw the hard working Michael Gardner secure the score. Harvey landed the touchline conversion and the visitors led 7-0.

Thurrock came back strongly and in their best period of the match scored two excellent tries one of which was converted. Both tries were on the back of the visitors failing to clear their lines. Thurrock's backs were counter attacking very well.

Despite losing both Humphrey and Whitnell to injury from the front row their replacements O' Leary and Cooley were prominent in stabilising the the scrummage.

Medway were still taking the game to the home team. Runs from Hall and Chalmers and half breaks from Dance and the centres Greyvenstein and Clement stretched the home defence. With just a minute of the half remaining Medway went through a series of phases between both backs and forwards. Easton, Debeer, Huntley and Beaumont were all prominent in winning a penalty in front of Thurrock's posts. Harvey was on target and Medway went into the second half trailing by just 12-10

With the wind at their backs Medway kicked deep. Thurrock looked to run out but good pressure from Medway saw them force the error. From the subsequent solid Medway scrum Stubbington broke blind to score a fine individual try under the posts. Harvey converted and Medway were now ahead 17-12.

With the conditions as they were one would have expected the visitors to build on this early score but too many individual errors and poor decisions gave the home side hope. Having already lost two players to injury Medway then lost influential full back Charlie Wardzynski to a fractured shoulder that is expected to keep him out for some considerable time. He was replaced at fullback by scrum half Sam Garofalo a most versatile player.

Thurrock are a strong team and needed no second invitation. They pressed the Medway line hard and once again defence kept Medway in the game.

However the home side were in the ascendency and when they were awarded a penalty under the posts they took the points to trail by just 2 at 17-15.

From the restart Thurrock knocked on and were then penalised for offside. Although a long range attempt Harvey was accurate and Medway led 20-15.

With just 7 minutes to go Medway found themselves defending their line from wave after wave of pick and go's and short range attacks. They conceded penalties and defended the subsequent catch and drives. Thurrock then looked to tap and run but this too was thwarted. Eventually Medway forced the error and cleared their lines deep into the home 22m.

The home sides efforts to break out in the closing minutes saw them turn the ball over. A Harvey drop goal hit the posts then as the home side tried to break out again with time up they conceded another penalty and this was kicked out to seal an extremely hard fought victory.

Coach Taff Gwilliam said 'this was a severe examination of our squad's character, depth and ability to perform under pressure. I am pleased we came through it' he added 'Thurrock are a tough resilient team and will be disappointed not to have got more from the game but we did defend very well'

Medway next take on inform Sevenoaks at Priestfields next Saturday.