

Medway Extra 26 Westcombe Park II 22 - 06th January 2018

The Extra's welcomed Westcombe Park to Priestfields for the first game of the New Year. This was the first time in a number of years that the teams had met as Park have been playing in the national Zoo league until withdrawing earlier this season.

Medway started really well spending the first five minutes in the Park half playing with patience and control and slowly building the pressure in the twenty-two until a Park penalty saw Medway kick to touch and win the resulting line out. The ball was sent quickly along the backs to the left wing where a grubber kick through put the Park full back under pressure. He knocked on and the first scrum of the game saw Medway push their opponents back with some ease over the line before scrum half Rob O'Brien fell on the ball to open the scoring. Fly half Brad Ford slotted a difficult kick into the wind and Medway were up and running with a 7 - 0 lead. The lead didn't last long however as some sloppy defending in the middle of the pitch saw Park pick up from the back of a retreating scrum before setting their big centre free to cruise through a number of missed tackles touching down under the posts for a converted try to level the scores. Park now settled down and had more of the ball thanks mainly to Medway gifting them possession with too many unsuccessful offloads and a rising penalty count and it was Park who scored next with an almost carbon copy try of their first with the only difference being that the centre gained possession from a line out rather than a scrum. Medway restarted 7 - 14 down but still couldn't get enough possession to pose a threat and with yet another string of needless penalties Park were soon threatening with a line out on the Medway five metre line. Medway managed to win the ball and looked set for a routine exit until they went one phase too many and knocked on allowing the Park centre to pick the ball up and run in unopposed for a 7 - 19 lead. Medway needed to score next and thanks to the complete dominance of the forwards at the scrum they were able to secure the ball on a Park put in which allowed quick ball to centre Luke Burns. He showed good pace and footwork to beat two defenders before touching down in the corner and another Ford conversion brought the score to 14 - 19 as half time approached. Park however took advantage of yet another penalty, this time in front of the posts to end the half with a 14 - 22 lead.

The second half was less flowing than the first with a number of stoppages for injuries and both sides found it hard to get into any real rhythm. However Medway continued with total scrum dominance which proved to be an important and, ultimately, deciding factor as they forced Park back at every opportunity often winning the ball against the head and turning defence into attack. Medway's next try came from exactly that situation pushing Park off their own scrum and allowing Sean Marriott, on at scrum half, to pick up and dive over to score. Ford again converted and Medway closed to within a point at 21 - 22. For the last ten minutes the game hung in the balance but Medway managed to work their way into the Park twenty two with some much needed and overdue composure in possession with a number of pick and goes edging them onwards. As they neared the try line Burns again picked up and dived over for his second try. Ford for once missed the target with the conversion and Park restarted 26 - 22 down throwing everything they had at Medway who stood firm. Forward dominance told again as, with the clock in the red, Medway won a penalty at a scrum which allowed Ford to kick the ball off for a 26 - 22 win.

This was a much needed run out for the Extras who have suffered from a lack of games recently and our thanks go to Westcombe Park for making the trip to Priestfields. They were well organised and well disciplined and we hope that they decide to join the Invicta league next season - their presence will certainly strengthen it and add some much needed depth. Our thanks also to referee Mr Michaels without whom there would have been no game.

Squad: Richard Petch, Andy Connell, Lyam Johnson, Dan Goodall, Johnny Smith, Dave French, Dan O'Brien, Toby Gerdes-Hansen, Rob O'Brien, Brad Ford, Stan Orris, Rhys Townsend, Luke Burns, Matt Brightman, Rhys Burns, Bobby Ellis, Sean Marriott, Luke Osborne