

## Medway 29 Chichester 15 (London 1 South) - 24th March 2018

Medway entertained Sussex rivals Chichester on Saturday at Priestfields looking to avenge the defeat in their previous meeting back in November. Medway having been beaten in their last two matches away to promotion rivals CS Rugby and Havant were looking to maintain their unbeaten home record and get back to winning ways to maintain their challenge for promotion. The game started well for Medway with a penalty awarded within 90 seconds of the kick off. Dan Harvey was on target and Medway led 3-0.

On 7 minutes Chichester knocked the ball on and Medway capitalised with some great possession rugby. Going through 10 phases with the continuity supplied by James Dance and Dan Harvey they eventually created the overlap for winger Conor Chalmers to score out wide. Harvey narrowly missed the conversion. 8-0 Medway. Chichester started to come more and more into the game as the half progressed. When Medway were penalised at the breakdown Chichester kicked into the home 22m. A well executed shift catch and drive saw the visitors score out wide for an unconverted try to make the score 8-5. Chichester led by their strong No 8 were taking the game to the young Medway side. Medway were defending well but eventually the pressure told and the visitors scrum half took advantage of a slow defensive reset to scamper over for a well taken unconverted try and take the lead 10-8.

The match was a bruising encounter with both sides showing tremendous physicality in the contact area. Chichester with just a few minutes of the half remaining were forced to replace their hooker through injury. Medway seeing the change attacked the visitors line out and won three consecutive turnovers through Easton and Hawkins to take the sting out of the visitors attacking platform. On the stroke of half time Medway won a penalty just inside the visitors half and Harvey stepped up and landed the penalty to give the home side a great boost and the lead 11-10 going into half time.

The second half kicked off with Medway making one change. Tom Whitnell replacing the evergreen Ross Cooley. Medway soon stretched their lead when Chichester killed the ball at the breakdown and Harvey made no mistake 14-10 Medway. A couple of minutes later Chichester kicked loosely to stand in full back Sam Garofalo. Garofalo counter attacked and broke the Chichester defensive line good support from Ben Dance saw the ball moved quickly down the Medway back line for Henry Hall to go over out wide. Harvey landed another excellent kick to suddenly stretch the Medway lead to 21-10. On 53 minutes centre Henry Hall was yellow carded for an offence at the breakdown but despite being a man down Medway won a penalty in front of Chichester posts and Harvey made no mistake to put the home side 24-10 up.

Being a man down Medway were then forced to defend. Whitnell, Beaumont and Gardner working really hard to contain the visitors strong running forwards. Eventually with just a minute remaining on the sin bin Chichester scored a well taken try through their left winger out wide. The conversion was missed to leave the score at 24-15. Medway then lost hard working lock Josh Hawkins with concussion from an accidental collision. The pack was reshuffled and Dan O'Brien came on. Chichester took the game to Medway but great defensive work from everyone especially Gardner and Alfie Orris kept the visitors at bay. Medway were soon forced to make another change when try scorer Conor Chalmers was forced from the field with a shoulder injury. Hall moved to the wing with Sam Sharpe at centre.

Chichester are a good strong side and Medway had to put in one of their best defensive performances to keep the visitors at bay. The back row of Dance, Stubbington and Beaumont defended well all game to ensure the visitors were kept at bay, Clement too was very prominent in the midfield defence. With a few minutes of play left exhausted stalwart Mike Gardner was replaced by Ross Cooley. Soon after Chichester were penalised at the breakdown after good work from Sam Sharpe. Medway kicked for the corner and drove for the line. Chichester illegally took the maul down and another penalty was awarded. Medway again went to the catch and drive this time there was no stopping the home side. A well executed drive saw Tom Beaumont secure the touchdown and the last act of the game was an uncharacteristic miss from Harvey to leave the final score 29-15.

Coach Taff Gwilliam said 'Chichester are a tough quality team and we worked really hard for this win'. He added 'We are delighted as despite a number of injuries and players playing out of position we showed tremendous character and resilience to achieve this notable victory'. Medway next entertain Brighton in a re-arranged fixture on Saturday at Priestfields.