

Medway 45 Chobham 10 (London South 1) - 20th January 2018

Medway entertained Surrey rivals Chobham at a wet and cold Priestfields on Saturday. Having narrowly defeated Chobham away earlier in the year the Medway boys knew they had to be on top form to maintain the pressure on the other sides around them at the top of the league. Chobham kicked off but after just 15 minutes found themselves 21-0 down after a ruthless and clinical start from the home side. After last weeks performance at Sevenoaks the coaching team asked for improvements in aspects of their play and the players responded with the quality of rugby demanded. On 4 minutes a Jordan Stubbington break was supported by Sam Sharpe. With James Dance in the ruck prop Alex O'Leary fed Dan Harvey. He cross kicked for Sam Garofalo to catch and score in the opposite corner. Harvey converted 7-0. On 7 minutes Medway won a scrum against the head, Stubbington drove deep into the Chobham defence, seven phases later excellent ball retention and handling saw Sam Sharpe break then switch with centre partner Antony Clement for him to score under the posts. Harvey again converted 14-0. On 14 minutes Stubbington won good line out ball at the back, Tom Beaumont carried the ball well into Chobham's defence narrowing them, quick ball from James Dance and Dan Harvey saw Ben Dance hit the line and slice through the visitors defence scoring under the posts. Dan Harvey again added the extras to complete a clinical opening 15 minutes from Medway. Chobham had been blitzed but were not going to lie down. Their priority was to get possession and on 20 minutes were rewarded when Medway were penalised in front of their posts. The kick was successful 21-3.

Medway came back straight away. Again man of the match Stubbington was involved. A great high ball take under pressure was fed to Mike Gardner who broke the defensive lines supported by a galloping Max Easton, quick ball from the ruck saw good handling as the ball was fed out wide for Ben Dance only to be high tackled a yard short of the line. The referee deemed it a yellow card offence and a penalty try was awarded. 28-3 and the try bonus point achieved. The final 10 minutes of the half saw Chobham come more into the game and they were rewarded with a well worked try under the posts to bring the half time score back to 28-10. The second half started with both sides looking to add to their tally of points. Chobham pressed hard but their ambition was eventually undone when a Dan Harvey interception was fed out wide to Sam Garofalo who raced in for the unconverted try in the corner and put the lead out to 33-10. Medway made changes as the half progressed. Alfie Orris returned to the side after a 6 week absence replacing Jordan Stubbington. Ross Cooley came on for the impressive Mike Gardner and young Dan O'Brien entered the fray for the hard working Tom Beaumont. Medway continued to pile the pressure on Chobham. A series of scrums on the visitors line saw them commit repeated penalties resulting in the referee awarding a penalty try. With a 40-10 lead Chobham's cause was further disrupted when they were forced to go to uncontested scrums.

The final score of the game came when a poor clearance kick was fielded by Alfie Orris. His pace and power saw him beat several defenders to score a fine individual unconverted try on his comeback game. Medway were the deserved winners on the day but Chobham never gave up and showed character when lesser teams would have crumbled. Medway Forward's coach Graham Longstaff was pleased with the line out improvement and the dominance of the scrum which laid the platform for the victory. Taff Gwilliam said we challenged the boys to improve specific aspects of their game after the Sevenoaks win and they responded emphatically. We are very happy with the performance in what were difficult conditions against a difficult team to beat.