

Medway 46 Brighton 10 (London 1 South) - 31st March 2018

After two postponements due to snow covered pitches, this game finally took place on Easter Saturday and in good conditions for open rugby. Although the weather was overcast, the wind was light and the pitch was in good condition despite the deluge of rain over the previous two days. Medway's line up included Luke Burns and Richard Petch making their first appearances of the season, Dan O'Brien enjoying his first full start to a 1st XV game, and Billy Humphrey and Billy Sandison both returning from injury.

Brighton arrived at Priestfields in good form on the back of a comprehensive win last week against Maidstone and having won five of their last six league games, so Medway knew they would be a tough nut to crack. Unfortunately for Brighton, the locals produced one of their best performances since Christmas and at times looked back to their excellent early season form. Medway scored six tries in all, two of which came from long passages of controlled expansive rugby where the ball was retained for many draining phases for the visitors. When Brighton had the ball, they also played good, attacking fast rugby that stretched and tested the resolute Medway defence to the full.

Medway, playing into the slight breeze in the first half, made a bright start to the game but their initial attacks were met by a solid blue wall of Brighton defence. The locals remained patient however, and after 8 minutes took the lead when an excellent, long passage of play created the opportunity for Mike Gardner to crash over from short range. Harvey knocked over a good conversion and Medway were 7 – 0 up. The visitors levelled the scores mid-way through the first half when one of their speedsters won the foot race following a long speculative kick down field from their outside half.

Medway regained the lead very quickly when great hands from Ben Dance and Billy Humphrey created the overlap for Dan O'Brien to score his first ever try wide out on the right. This lead was further extended just before half time when another long passage of excellent play created an overlap for Sam Sharpe to score his teams' third try. Harvey's conversion gave Medway a 19 – 7 advantage at the interval.

Brighton enjoyed their best period of the game after the restart and only a huge defensive effort by the whole Medway team prevented them from scoring. Having weathered the storm and only conceded one kicked penalty, Medway broke out of defence and quickly took control of the remainder of the game. Harvey extended the lead with a penalty, and then immediately from the restart, Jordan Stubbington and Ben Dance created space for Alfie Orris to show his pace and strength to score the first of his two tries. Luke Burns came off the bench and scored a try with his first touch of the ball. Orris's late second try confirmed his performance as "man of the match" and Harvey completed the scoring kicking a further penalty and three second half conversions.

Overall, it was a very pleasing performance and great to see so many youngsters like Dan O'Brien, Sam Sharpe, Jordan Stubbington, Alfie Orris all featuring so prominently and scoring tries.

Medway travel to Cobham next week, kick off 1500.