

Medway 59 Maidstone 0 (London South 1) 14th April 2018

Medway entertained local rivals Maidstone at Priestfields on Sunday seeking the win they needed to keep on track for the promotion play offs. Playing into the breeze Medway received the opening kick off and went straight onto the attack. Going through multiple phases with Jordan Stubbington prominent they eventually stretched the visitors for Sam Sharpe to break the defensive line and go round under posts. Dan Harvey converted and Medway led 7-0. Medway continued to attack but a couple of handling errors saw Maidstone have the put in at the scrums. Maidstone knew they were in for a tough day as the Medway pack led by Mike Gardner, Billy Sandison and Alex O' Leary drove the visitors off their own ball in successive scrums. On 12 minutes the pressure told. Medway secured a line out deep in the Maidstone 22m. Max Easton won the ball from the excellent throwing of Sandison, who was 100% on the day. The forwards then and executed a set piece move for Tom Beaumont to score in the corner. Dan Harvey adding an excellent conversion to extend the lead out to 14-0. The next 10 minutes of play saw Maidstone enjoy their best period of play in the game as camped on the Medway's line. Medway were forced to defend short attack after short attack with Ben Massey and Lewis Stimpson particularly dangerous for Maidstone. Great defence from all including young Dan O'Brien meant that Maidstone were unable to breach the Medway line but in conceding successive team penalties in the red zone Medway's fly half Dan Harvey was sent to the sin bin for 10 minutes.

On 26 minutes and with only 14 men, Medway broke the Maidstone stranglehold when Doug Ebanks broke out of defence. The subsequent ruck on Medway's 10m line saw Captain James Dance attack down the narrow side then interplay between him and his brother Ben saw Ben finish the length of the field try to break Maidstone's hearts. Alfie Orris added the conversion for a 21-0 lead. The final score of the half came as a result of Medway's scrum dominance. A ball won against the head was moved quickly to put Sam Sharpe over out wide for his second try. Harvey having returned to play added another excellent conversion to make the half time score 28-0 and secure the vital bonus point.

The second half kicked off and Medway were soon on the attack. They continually stretched the visitors defence with good handling and full back Sam Garofalo entering the line as often as possible to keep the width in attack. In defending an attack close to the line the Maidstone scrum half, Lucien, was adjudged to have deliberately knocked on and he was sent to the sin bin. Medway opted to scrum and following a number resets eventually scored when the Dance brothers combined to put Dan Harvey over in the corner for an unconverted try. On 53 minutes the ever dangerous Alfie Orris fielded a poor clearance kick from Maidstone and with good footwork evaded some lack lustre defence to score under the posts. Harvey converted and the lead was now 40-0. Medway rung the changes with Ross Cooley replacing Mike Gardner and Billy Humphrey on for Ben Dance. Medway were now totally dominant and this was reflected when from the kick off James Dance and Tom Beaumont combined very well to put Dan Harvey over for his second try in the corner. Another excellent kick from the touchline and Medway led 47-0. With the game an hour old Medway won a penalty and kicked for the corner. A set piece move from the backs saw Luke Burns strong running break the first line of defence and off load to the supporting Doug Ebanks who went over under the posts. Another Harvey conversion extended the lead out to 54-0. Conor Chalmers replaced Luke Burns for Medway's final change. Medway continued to play good attacking rugby but to give credit to Maidstone they never gave him. They were always competitive at the breakdown and Medway were forced to work hard for their possession. The final score of the game came on 65 minutes when having gone through a number of phases Orris broke his markers tackle and his pace carried him away from the cover defence for him to score his second try. The conversion was missed to make the final score 59-0. Medway had further chances to score in the final 10 minutes but let these slip with some uncharacteristic handling errors. Despite this it was an excellent win and a good comeback from the previous weeks' defeat. Coach Taff Gwilliam said " The coaches asked for a response from last weeks error strewn performance and we got it". He added "We are delighted to win and stay ahead of Havant in the race for the promotion play off place"Next week Medway have another local derby when they take on the improving Gravesend team in their final league game of the season. Any win will see them secure a play off place.