

Sevenoaks 29 Medway 37 (London South 1) - 13th January 2018

Medway travelled to fellow Kent club Sevenoaks on Saturday looking to maintain both their winning start to the New Year and their leading position in the league. In recent years matches between these two sides have been entertaining high scoring affairs and Saturday's game was no different. The match, played in front of a good sized crowd, kicked off with excellent overhead conditions and a pitch which had recovered well from the recent wet weather. Sevenoaks enjoyed the opening exchanges pressuring the visitors defence which held firm. With 5 minutes gone a home knock on gave Medway their first real possession on the half way line. A blindside attack saw an excellent break from scrum half James Dance go deep into Sevenoaks territory. The ball was recycled at two quick rucks then a good handling movement was fed out wide left for brother Ben Dance to secure the quality opening try for Medway. The effort was unconverted. Medway extended their lead 5 minutes later when the Sevenoaks full back failed to deal with a high ball when under pressure from Sam Garofalo. Garofalo re-gathered the loose ball and sped away to score under the posts. The try was converted by Dan Harvey and Medway led 12-0. Sevenoaks looked to get back in the game by using their bigger forwards to catch & drive. Medway defended a number of efforts then on 19 minutes Ross Cooley was sin binned for an offence under the Medway posts. Sevenoaks were positive and rather than kick the points opted for the scrum with the visitors a man down. Excellent defence however thwarted the home sides efforts and Medway cleared their lines. On 23 minutes with Medway, still a man down, thwarted yet another Sevenoaks catch and drive but throw a loose pass off the turnover in midfield which was intercepted by Sevenoaks player and ran in under the posts to score a converted try and bring the score back to 12-7. With Medway re-stored back to full strength they attack the Sevenoaks line and after several phases force the defence to concede a simple penalty under the posts which Harvey duly obliged and put the visitors 15-7 ahead. Medway continued to take the game to the home side who were penalised for a high tackle. The visitors opted for the corner rather than the kick at goal and were rewarded when Max Easton took the line out ball and drove up the middle of line to score a fine try. Dan Harvey kicked the conversion to make the half time score 22-7.

The second half kicked off and Sevenoaks came out fired up after a team 'chat' from their coach Adam Bowman. Medway defended their line desperately but with discipline. Antony Clement was forced from the field with a head injury to be replaced by youngster Sam Sharp. A number of catch drives were again thwarted but following back to back infringements from Medway's Mike Gardner he too was sin binned. Sevenoaks opt to kick the simple penalty and narrow the score to 22-10. With Sevenoaks dominating proceedings and Medway a man down for the second time the home side deservedly scored the next try. Excellent lead up work and good handling skills created an opportunity out wide which they took and with the touchline conversion sailing over Sevenoaks were back in the game at 22-17. With 20 minutes left in the game Medway were restored to a full compliment but suffered the loss of Bill Humphrey with concussion. He was replaced by young Dan O' Brien making his 1st XV debut. Medway needed to re-assert themselves and looked to retain the ball and stretch the home sides defence with their attacking structures. The pressure on the home side told when Mike Gardner, keen to atone, for his earlier yellow card broke the defence and when just short of line looks for the offload which comes off a Sevenoaks defender and goes loose with Sam Garofalo reacting quicker than anyone else to secure the touchdown. Harvey again converts and Medway secure the bonus point they craved. Medway were enjoying their best spell of the second half and within 5 minutes extended their lead. Good line out ball was won on the half way strong carries in midfield from Debeer and Gardner saw the ball recycled wide through Hall and Ben Dance who executed the 2 v 1 for Conor Chalmers to race over in the corner for the unconverted try and a 34-17 Lead. Sevenoaks with 15 minutes of the game remaining showed resilience and character and immediately narrowed the gap when Medway failed to clear their lines. Sevenoaks go through a number of phases and eventually breach the Medway defence with a well taken and deserved converted try. 34-24.

Medway come back and with the bonus point secured opt to kick a penalty as a result of Sevenoaks infringing at the breakdown. 37-24. With 3 minutes of the game remaining Sevenoaks secure their

own bonus point when following a series of rucks and drives they breach the Medway line for their fourth try. The conversion was missed. Medway closed the game out when securing a scrum penalty and kicking the ball out of play to end a pulsating game.

Medway coach Taff Gwilliam said "this was a typical game between the two sides, end to end high scoring stuff. I am sure it was good for the neutral to watch but both the Sevenoaks coach, Adam Bowman, and myself will be looking to eradicate the errors which were made within both our teams". He added "to secure the bonus point win away at an such improved Sevenoaks is still a significant achievement for this young team and we are delighted to have won".