

## Tottonians 7 Medway 17 (London South 1) - 27th January 2018

Medway travelled to fifth placed Hampshire side Tottonians on Saturday looking to maintain their challenge for top honours in the league. The match was played in what can only be described as atrocious conditions . The home side ground staff had worked hard to make the pitch playable and with the rain coming down throughout the match and the pitch very, very soft it was a credit to both teams that such a competitive match was provided for the supporters of each side. The game opened with both teams looking to impose themselves on the other. With 6 minutes on the clock the first scoring chance went to the home side but the penalty from just inside the Medway half sailed wide. On 15 minutes the home side had won good field position following another penalty which they kicked deep into Medway's 22m. A series of pick and drives and short attacks were defended well by the visitors but Tottonians were on top and looking to extract points for all their pressure. An attacking scrum 10 metres out from the Medway line saw the Medway forwards drive them back but the home No 8 managed to extract the ball and release it for their backs. A fine run from the centre saw him break the Medway line from short range and score a converted try under the posts for a 7- 0 lead.

Medway hit back shortly after the restart regaining possession and going through several phases of attack with Debeer and Gardner particularly prominent. A penalty was won for handling in the ruck by the home side. Dan Harvey made no mistake to bring the score back to 7-3. The next 15 minutes saw Medway pinned back inside their own 22m as the conceded a couple of needless penalties for offside and the home fly half Searle was accurate with his line kicking. Medway were forced to defend on their own line for several phases and eventually the good defence forced a knock on 2 metres out allowing the visitors to exit and clear their lines. The last score of the half came when Orris, Sharpe, and Stubbington combined to drive Medway into a rare visit to the home 22. A penalty was won and Harvey kicked the points to make the half time score 7-6 in favour of the home side who on the balance of play deserved to be ahead.

Medway began the second half well. The visitor's pack were now starting to get on top of the home side and the pressure saw the home side concede penalties at regular intervals. Kicking opportunities were missed as a result of the treacherous underfoot conditions. However following a series of scrums on the home line with consecutive penalties awarded Medway spurned the kicks and reset the scrummage for Jordan Stubbington to eventually drive over from short range. This put the visitors in front for the first time. The try was unconverted. 11-7 to Medway. Medway were now dominating field position and keeping Tottonians pinned back. Clement, Garofalo and Chalmers were hounding the defenders as they tried to clear their lines. The home side defended their line well but in doing so were conceding too many penalties. This came to a head on 66 minutes with a home player sin binned for 10 minutes for an offence under the posts. Harvey kicked the penalty to increase the lead to 14-7. In conditions such as these that was a significant lead.

Medway continued to apply the pressure. Sandison and Easton were working the line out well. Stubbington and stand-in flanker Ben Dance were lively in the loose. O'Leary and the rest of the front row were now dominating their home counterparts. Dance and Harvey at half back were controlling the game in extremely difficult ball handling conditions. With the half wearing on Medway had further opportunities to close the game out but the Tottonians defence was resolute. Henry Hall replaced Sam Sharpe and Hall together with the hard working Clement continued to attack the home midfield. The match winning score was not secured until the 79th minute when another home penalty at the breakdown in front of the posts was kicked by Harvey to secure a 17-7 victory. This was a hard fought victory against a robust Tottonians side who had their chances particularly in the first half. Medway coach Taff Gwilliam said " this is a very pleasing win in atrocious conditions against a good side", he added " ...we are all really proud of the application and effort put in by the boys, this Tottonians side were a stern test of our character...it was rugby for the purist but we managed to prevail. Delighted!"