

## **Medway 27 Maidstone 23 (London South 1) – 7<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

Medway lined up to face local rivals Maidstone on Saturday at Priestfields in wet and windy weather conditions not conducive for entertaining rugby. However, these two teams, who both gained promotion last season, produced a good game for the spectators, with the score remaining close throughout, and the lead changing hands regularly. Medway deserved their win, but were made to fight every inch of the way by a determined and spirited Maidstone team.

Medway chose to play into the strong wind during the first half and given they turned round at the interval trailing only 13 – 12, the majority of the spectators expected the home team to dominate the second half and win the game comfortably. Maidstone however, improved in the second period, and their forwards scored two good rolling maul tries to keep them in the game. Medway won the game via five second half penalties kicked by Dan Harvey as they enjoyed territorial advantage for much of the half.

Maidstone opened the game the better of the two teams and kicked a penalty to the corner. The threat of their driving maul was immediately evident, as they went very close to scoring an early try from a short range line out. Medway soaked up the pressure and after 10 minutes broke out of defence. They steadily worked their way up field and were awarded a free kick close to the Maidstone line. Taking the scrum option the pack drove the visitors back over the line and the referee awarded a penalty try as Maidstone dived in to kill the ball.

With a dominant scrum, Medway prevented Maidstone the possession they craved to make the most of the windy conditions. Medway played well, but were guilty of trying to force the play at times and capitalising off Medway errors, looked to be the most likely way Maidstone would score.

Maidstone opened their account on 20 minutes via a penalty and soon afterwards took the lead when their backs expertly exploited the blind side to create an overlap and score an excellent try in the corner. A great touch line conversion put them 10 – 7 up.

Undeterred, Medway attacked again and following another close range scrum on 33 minutes, skipper James Dance darted up the blind side to score Medway's second try, 12 – 10 to the home team. Medway's adventurous game plan back fired just before half time as an error presented Maidstone a simple penalty kick, 13 – 12 to Maidstone at the break.

Maidstone again started the second half the better of the two teams and enjoyed their best phase on the game. Their short range driving play won a line out close to the Medway line and their forwards converted the driving maul into a try to extend the lead to 18 – 12 after 5 minutes. Three quick fire penalties on 8, 12 and 14 minutes gave Medway back the lead 21 – 18. Maidstone lost a player to a red card for a dangerous tackle and despite this, hit back to score another try through good driving play from their forwards, regaining the lead 21 – 23.

With 20 minutes remaining Medway needed to win the game and they put Maidstone under the cosh again. The pressure told and cool Dan Harvey kicked a further two penalties for Medway to retake the lead and then extend the advantage to 27 – 23 at the final whistle.

A good resilient team performance from Medway. The pack worked hard, Fred Tila carried well in the centre and fly half Dan Harvey was awarded man of the match for a fine kicking display.

Medway are away at Tottonians next Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> November in a league game.

Medway's team;

Mataapa, Humphrey, O'Leary, Johnson, Rutherford, Huntley, Beaumont, Gardner, J Dance, Harvey, Ebanks, Tila, B Dance, Liua'ana, Wardzynski, Subs; Petch, Morant, Garofalo (all used).