

Sidcup 20 Medway 18 (London South 1) – 24th October 2015

With only two points separating the top five sides in this competitive league, when fifth placed Medway travelled to fourth place Sidcup, one would have expected a tight and close game. True to form, the game was hard fought and the end result could have gone either way. Medway led for most of the first seventy five minutes of the game but Sidcup's second try proved decisive securing an important home win and continuing their good start to the season. Medway left Sidcup with the consolation of a losing bonus point, but disappointed to have lost a game that they could have won.

Medway played with the gentle breeze on their backs in the first half and steadily built a 9 – 0 lead after 17 minutes through three penalties from the reliable boot of Dan Harvey. During this period they enjoyed good field position and plenty of possession being able to disrupt the Sidcup lineout on several occasions.

Sidcup got their account moving with a simple penalty after 20 minutes when Medway were penalised at the breakdown. They went on to enjoy a period of sustained pressure and eventually Medway conceded another kickable penalty and received a yellow card for the off side offence, score 9 – 6 to Medway after 27 minutes. With fourteen men, Medway attacked again, and this time Sidcup were penalised with a yellow card and Harvey's kick extended the lead to 12 – 6.

On the half hour mark, there was a big swing in the game. Ben Dance intercepted a slow Sidcup pass and raced half the length of the pitch, however just as he was touching down, the ref pulled Medway back for an earlier off side offence. Sidcup kicked the penalty to within five metres of Medway's line and set up great field position for the home side. With their lineout now functioning well, Sidcup initially went for the drive and then released the backs for their winger to cut a good line and score under the posts. The simple conversion gave Sidcup the lead for the first time in the game, but this was short lived as Medway retook the lead three minutes before half time with their fifth penalty, 15 – 13 at the half time break.

Sidcup pinned Medway back during the opening exchanges of the second period as Medway failed to find a way to exit and move up field. Despite this, their defence remained firm as they soaked up huge Sidcup pressure. Having weathered the storm, Medway moved down field and began to test the Sidcup defence again, playing patient, intelligent rugby. Medway went close to scoring several times but Sidcup's defence was superb, although they did suffer another man sin binned for repeated penalties. Medway kicked the points to lead 18 – 13, but importantly were unable to make their numerical advantage count further over the next ten minutes.

With five minutes remaining and Sidcup restored to a full complement, they moved into the Medway half for the first time in a while. Medway missed the opportunity to clear and Sidcup attacked down the blind side to score a well taken try to level the scores. The Sidcup kicker held his nerve and struck the conversion well to take the game.

Overall, Sidcup deserved the win as they possessed a little more cutting edge than Medway and scored two tries to none. It was disappointing for the visitors to lead for so long during the game and lose it in the dying minutes. However, even in defeat, Medway's performance was pretty good and showed they can compete at this level.

New back row forward, Matt Gardner had a good debut with a workman like performance. The whole team battled well, nearly stealing a victory at a challenging venue.

Medway play Gravesend at home in the Kent Cup on Thursday 29th October kick off 19.30. The next league game is at home on the 7th November kick off 14.30 against Maidstone.

Medway's team;

Mataapa, Sandison, O'Leary, Easton, Rutherford, Huntley, Beaumont, Gardner, J Dance, Harvey, Garofalo, Tila, B Dance, Liua'ana, Wardzynski, Subs; L Johnson, Morant, Burns.