

## **Sutton and Epsom 21 Medway 0 (London South 1) – 5<sup>th</sup> December 2015**

Medway's five match unbeaten run came to an end on Saturday when they visited league leaders Sutton and Epsom. Whilst the score line looks like a comfortable win for the home team, Medway battled hard against a strong side, and kept the result in doubt for two thirds of the game.

With resources already stretched, preparations for the game were further disrupted Saturday morning by two late team changes due to an injury and family illness. Storm Desmond meant playing conditions would again be difficult, with a very strong wind blowing down the pitch.

Sutton and Epsom kicked off with the wind at their backs, attacked immediately, and after a few strong runs, their lively No 8 burst through some iffy Medway defence to score a converted try under the posts. Medway found themselves 7 – 0 down inside a minute, and given the strength of the wind, facing a long first half.

Sutton had chances in the first quarter to extend their lead, but a couple of handling errors or last ditch tackling prevented them extending their lead. Medway suffered a further set back after 24 minutes when they lost skipper James Dance to injury. However, in adversity the team rallied and played the better rugby for the remainder of the first half and put their hosts under pressure. A couple of scoring opportunities were missed, but importantly they did manage to close out the first half with only a 7 point deficit.

With the wind at their backs, most spectators would have expected Medway to dominate the second half and possibly go on to win the game. Although they started the second half well and put S & E under early pressure, the home team soaked up the visitors attacks, and slowly but surely started to dominate proceedings. Their forwards improved, winning a steady supply of possession and their backs ran with greater purpose and much of the play was in the Medway half.

The decisive second home try came after 17 minutes of the half. Medway attacked but lost control of the ball. Sutton's speedy wide players swooped on the loose ball, combined well, created the overlap and raced away to score a converted try to give them the all-important two score lead.

Sutton continued to dominate and Medway were forced to try launching attacks from inside their own half. Suttons forwards seemed to get stronger with second half substitutions and on 37 minutes an impressive driving maul resulted in their third and final converted try of the game.

Medway coach Taff Gwilliam said after the game "Whilst disappointing to lose the game, I am extremely pleased and proud of the whole squad for the way they battled today. We have suffered many off-field distractions lately, but the attitude and resolve of the boys has been outstanding. Today we lost two key players just before the game and then the skipper went off after only 20 minutes. Despite this, they played with spirit and character and put up a good fight against a strong side. Congratulations to Sutton and Epsom who were worthy winners and great hosts".

Medway face Twickenham at home next week, kick-off 1415.

Medway's team;

Petch, Morant, O'Leary, Easton, Weobley, Huntley, Beaumont, Ebanks, J Dance, Harvey, Chalmers, Burns, Liua'ana, Garofalo, Wardzynski, Subs; Cooley, Catlin (both used).