

Medway 32 Charlton Park 12 (London SE2) 26th November 2016

On a very busy day at Priestfields, caused by the unusual occurrence of four home games, the first XV entertained Charlton Park who sat fourth in the league prior to the game. A win was critical to both sides to maintain their respective challenges for promotion, back to London South 1, from where they were both relegated last season.

Medway's preparations prior to kick-off were disrupted by late withdrawals and niggling injuries during the warm up. The side then made the worst possible start conceding two tries inside the first seven minutes to quickly find themselves 12 points behind. Having dug themselves a big hole and jumped into it, they then set about systematically climbing out. Slowly but surely the home side got a foot hold in the game and began their fight back. By half time, they had recovered to lead by 14 points to 12, and then went on to dominate the second half and with more clinical finishing, could have won the game by a more convincing margin.

Charlton kicked off to start the game and Medway made a mess of the receipt. Following the ensuing scrum, Charlton's backs sliced through some weak home defence to score a try wide on the right and the excellent conversion kick gave them a 7 – 0 lead inside one minute of play! Straight from the restart, Charlton ran again and looked almost certain to score but Alfie Orris just managed to get back to make the tackle. With Medway still not firing and Charlton with their tails up, the visitors did score their second try after seven minutes via good approach play and close driving.

Having weathered the early storm, Medway got onto the score board after 12 minutes via a Dan Harvey penalty. For the remainder of the first half, Medway enjoyed good territorial advantage and kept the visitors under constant pressure. This pressure resulted in Charlton's penalty count increasing, Harvey knocking over two more penalties and the visitor's left winger spending 10 minutes in the sin bin. Medway's try came from a pin point accurate Harvey cross field kick and great catch and finish by Tom Beaumont lurking out wide on the left wing.

Having recovered a narrow lead by the interval, Medway controlled the game in the second period and rarely let Charlton into their own half of the field. More indiscipline from the visitors allowed Harvey to kick two further penalties to increase the home side's lead to 20 -12 and Medway effectively killed the game with their second try after 25 minutes scored by Alfie Orris . Medway's third try came late in the game and was scored by Luke Burns following good team approach play.

Coaches Gwilliam and Longstaff were relieved at the result and performance given such a poor start. The team showed good resolve to come back from such a major early set back and eventually control large parts of the game. Medway squandered many good scoring opportunities but credit goes to Charlton for their ability to disrupt and break up the flow of the home side's play. Dan Harvey had a good game, Antony Clement ran good lines in the centre, Tom Beaumont was his usual industrious self, but Medway's man of the match went to second row Max Easton.

Medway enjoy a week off next Saturday before making the short journey to face Dartfordians on the 10th December, a game that marks the mid-way point of the league programme.

Medway's team;

Petch, Sandison, Cooley, Easton, Fernyhough, Beaumont, Stubbington, Huntley, J Dance, Harvey, Burns, Clement, Walsh, Orris, Wardzynski, Subs; B Dance, Waterman (both used), Sharpe