

Medway 41 Sevenoaks 17 (London 1 South) - 23rd September 2017

On Saturday, in perfect conditions for rugby, Medway hosted old Kent rivals Sevenoaks at Priestfields. Both clubs had had good starts to the season but had also suffered injuries and this fixture would be a test to both clubs strength in depth. Medway started brightly winning an early penalty which Harvey kicked deep into the visitors 22. The line out won Medway attacked and eventually won another penalty resulting in the visitor's player being sent to the sin bin for killing the ball on his own line. Harvey kicked the penalty for Medway to lead 3-0. Sevenoaks despite being down to 14 men responded quickly. A strong midfield run saw Sevenoaks break and with good support score a converted try under the Medway posts. The line break for the try came as a result of two Medway players accidentally clashing heads in trying to make the tackle. Both Antony Clement and Ed Greyvenstein were knocked unconscious and forced to leave the field. Another Medway player prop Mike Gardner was also forced from the field with a facial injury in the same phase of play.

There was a 30 minute delay in dealing with the injuries before play could resume. Medway were now down to the bare minimum 15 with 3 players now playing in unfamiliar roles. On the re-start Medway stole the visitor's line out ball and attacked Ben Dance ran a great line to break through the defence and stay clear off the defenders to score a fine try. Harvey converted and Medway were back in front at 10-7. On 13 minutes Sevenoaks again breached the re-structured Medway defence and although stopped short of the line could not defend the next phase which saw the visitors prop crash over from short range for the converted try and hand the lead back over to Sevenoaks at 14-10. The match was proving to be a real thrust and counter thrust affair with both teams seeking to play expansive rugby. Sevenoaks were back to their full compliment. It was Medway's turn to apply pressure. Medway went through the phases and good work from Harvey forced the visitors to concede a line out close to their line. Medway won the line out through Easton and drove successfully for the line with Billy Humphrey getting the final touchdown. Harvey converted from out wide to make the score 17-14 Medway. On 23 mins Medway stretched their lead Excellent work between Tom Beaumont and James Dance at the tail of line saw dance score Medway's third try with Harvey again adding the extras. 24-14. Sevenoaks again came back. Harvey and Orris cleared the lines well but the visitors kept coming. James Dance was caught offside and Sevenoaks kicked the penalty to reduce the deficit to 24-17. Medway on the re-start soon found themselves were forced to defend close to their line but strong scrummage denied the visitors the platform they craved to press home the score. That strong scrummaging led by O'Leary, Sandison and Cooley then saw Medway win a kickable penalty and Harvey again made no mistake taking the score out to 27-17.

Sevenoaks kicked off and Harvey, who was having a great day, fielded the ball then threw a wild pass which eventually saw the ball turned over in the visitors favour and they made no mistake scoring their third try which was converted and saw the half time score at 27-24. The beginning of the second half saw Medway squander some good scoring chances close to the Sevenoaks line. Then they too came under pressure on their own and would have conceded but for some great work from Ben Dance. Medway were beginning to gain the ascendancy at the breakdown, Easton and Debeer backed up by Sandison were carrying strong and putting the home side on the front foot. Cooley was dominating whatever prop he scrummaged against as Sevenoaks rotated their front row. Dan Huntley and Henry Hall, playing in unfamiliar positions, worked hard and were uncompromising in both attack and defence.

Medway's scrum dominance saw them awarded a penalty try after Sevenoaks conceded three consecutive penalties while being driven back. The bonus point was secured and Medway led 34-24. On 71 minutes Medway mounted an attack led by Chalmers, good work from Beaumont linking with Jordan Stubbington saw the ball re-cycled and Harvey and Ben Dance combined for Dance to go over for his second try with Harvey adding the extras to make the score 41-24. Sevenoaks worked hard to come back and secure at least a try bonus point but a crossing penalty saw those hopes dashed and Medway were the winners. This was a performance full of character and resolve from the young Medway team. To lose three frontline players after only 7 minutes re-shuffle and then complete a victory over such a well organised and good side like Sevenoaks is a great achievement.

Medway Coach Taff Gwilliam was full of praise for his players saying 'it would have been easy to drop their heads but these boys have a winning mentality and it shone through today in very trying circumstances'. I am grateful to the visitor's physio who assisted both our physio, Dan Horgan and the Doctor, Paul Staker, who was present at the game for their professionalism and expertise in dealing with the incident prior to the ambulance arriving. The players have been released from hospital are now recovering at home. Two of them will all be out for at least three weeks with one of them suffering a facial fracture.

Medway travel to Surrey side Chobham next week.