

Medway 38 London Cornish 10 (London South 1) - 03rd February 2018

Medway welcomed old rivals London Cornish RFC to Priestfields on a damp Saturday afternoon. Conditions were not ideal with the underfoot conditions very soft following all the recent rain. The opening 5 minutes was a pretty even affair with both sides landing a penalty goal each. However Medway found themselves on the back foot when not only did they lose lock forward Max Easton for the rest of the game but compounded that by making basic unforced errors. London Cornish are too good aside to make simple errors against and on 15 minutes they capitalised with some fine continuity play and deservedly scored a well taken try in the corner. An excellent conversion saw the home side behind 10-3. This was not the start that Medway were looking for and they looked to atone for their scrappy play. On 20 minutes a scrum was won 10 metres out from the visitors line and a fine effort from Jordan Stubbington beating 3 defenders saw him score out wide. Dan Harvey added the conversion and Medway were back level.

Medway secured the re-start and good phases with Debeer and Gardner prominent saw Medway stopped short of the Cornish line. From the resultant scrum Medway executed a training ground strike move for Alfie Orris to score out wide. Harvey again converted and Medway were now in front and playing good rugby. The flowing rugby saw Medway go close to another score but although stopped they went further ahead within a minute. An attempted clearance was charged down by Josh Hawkins and a phase later Raz Debeer drove over for his first try in his final game for the club. Again Harvey converted and Medway were flying away at 24-10. The final play of the first half saw Medway put together their best moves of the game. Several phases of play eventually saw the resilient Cornish defence undone and young Jordan Stubbington went over for his second and importantly Medway's fourth try earning the bonus point. Harvey added the extras and Medway went into half time 31-10 in front.

Everyone expected Medway to push on but London Cornish are a proud team and they do not roll over. Following a series of attacks close to the Medway line Harvey was adjudged by referee Mark Hayward to have transgressed and he was yellow carded. Cornish proceeded to dominate hammering at the Medway line with phase after phase. Only excellent close quarter defence prevented a dominant Cornish from scoring. Medway turned the ball over three times but on each occasion failed to clear their lines making basic errors and Cornish came back hammering at the home line. Eventually the Cornish stranglehold was broken when Alfie Orris was put away inside his own 22m. He raced the length of field outstripping the Cornish cover to score under the posts against the run of play. Harvey again kicked the conversion and Medway led 38 -10. That proved to be the only score of the half as Cornish continued to battle with pride and Medway could not match the play of the final 20 minutes of the first half. Tom Whitnell and Sam Sharpe came on with 15 minutes to go and both acquitted themselves well.

Coach Taff Gwilliam said ' We are really pleased to secure a bonus point win and keep the pressure on at the top but our error count was too high and we will have to address that', he added..... 'credit must go to London Cornish as a lot of teams would have capitulated at 31-10 down at the half but they came back strongly. Forced us to defend for long periods and maybe they should have got a little more out of the game'. Our thanks go to Raz Debeer who leaves the club to return to his native South Africa. He has made a lot of friends and has done a great job for the club. We wish him well for the future.