

Sidcup II 33 Medway Extra 30 - 08th September 2018

Medway made the trip to last season's champions for their opening game of this campaign. Whenever these two meet it is always a close fought affair and this encounter was no different.

Medway started well and made the first real attacking break when centre Sam Sharpe broke through two tackles to set up a ruck on the twenty-two at which Sidcup strayed offside. Fly half Brad Ford stepped up and took the three points which was the start of an exemplary kicking performance. Sidcup restarted 0- 3 down and went further behind five minutes later when they lost the ball in contact allowing Ford to recover it and set the backs free. Good hands saw the final pass reach winger Doug Ebanks who showed real pace to score the first try of the game and extend Medway's lead to 0 - 10. Sidcup rallied well and spent the next ten minutes in the Medway half probing along the line but Medway's defence held and when they bullied the Sidcup winger in to touch it looked as if they had weathered the storm. The subsequent line out didn't go according to plan however and when the ball went loose the Sidcup scrum half was first to react scooping it up and diving over the line to reduce Medway's lead to 7 - 10. The rest of the half saw both teams making ground but never creating clear scoring opportunities but Medway edged it with two more penalties which saw the half end with Medway holding a 7 - 16 lead.

Sidcup started the second half brightly and again Medway defended well until another unforced error saw them lose the ball in contact allowing Sidcup to recover and get the backs away in an almost carbon copy of Medway's earlier try. A couple of missed tackles helped the Sidcup centre who scored under the posts to narrow Medway's lead to 14 - 16. With an injury to prop Andy Connell scrums went uncontested which didn't help either side but Medway began to build up some pressure and slowly beginning to get a foothold in the Sidcup half. When good work at a ruck saw them turn the ball over a good break from No.8 Adam Dady got them moving forward at pace and quick hands along the backs saw full back Rhys Burns take the ball on the wing and score under the posts to give Medway a 14 - 23 lead. Medway dealt with the restart well clearing their lines and pushing Sidcup back into their half but they retained possession well from the line out and made their way back into Medway territory. At half time the talk had all been about increasing the defensive line speed and this certainly paid off as Medway rushed up putting pressure on the Sidcup backs and forcing a mis-pass that was intercepted by winger Bobby Ellis. He set off up the middle of the pitch with the Sidcup full back giving chase but just as he caught him Ellis showed great skill to offload to Ebanks who ran in from the ten metre line to score his second and increase Medway's lead to 14 - 30. At this point the game should have been won but Sidcup never give up and Medway seemed to lose their concentration for a few minutes allowing them back into the game with a try from a simple catch and drive from a line out on the five metre line. Medway restarted at 21 - 30 but Sidcup's tails were now up and they came straight back on the attack securing a loose ball and setting their winger free down the right wing. Again some missed tackles saw him get to the line for an unconverted try and Medway were now only four points clear at 26 - 30. Medway's cause wasn't helped when a yellow card saw them reduced to fourteen for the last eight minutes and Sidcup capitalised when a knock on in defence saw them with the scrum five metres out. With uncontested scrums they were assured possession and a simple crash ball using their centre saw them score under the posts to take the lead for the first time at 33 - 30. Medway came straight back and spent the last five minutes camped in the Sidcup half where their determination and control gave them a penalty in the final minute. They kicked for touch and won the line out but were unable to capitalise as they infringed at a ruck allowing Sidcup to kick the ball off the pitch for the win.

This was a good, competitive game which Medway didn't really deserve to lose but they need to learn how to close games out. Everyone played their part and this performance shows plenty of promise for the rest of the season. Congratulations to Sidcup and thank you for the hospitality - we look forward to the return fixture. Thanks also to referee Mr Williams who had a good game and was consistent throughout.

Medway Squad: Andy Connell, Gary Beck, Zeki Yesilmen, Dan Goodall, Johnny Smith, Tad Bileisis, Dan O'Brien, Adam Dady, Sam Garofalo, Brad Ford, Bobby Ellis, Pete Walsh, Sam Sharpe, Doug Ebanks, Rhys Burns, Richard Desmond, Rob O'Brien, Lewis Hollidge, Rhys Gue