

Medway Extra 45 Westcombe Park II 21 (Invicta 1) 09th February 2019

Westcombe Park were the visitors to a sunny and windy Priestfields for what turned out to be a very enjoyable game with some excellent rugby. Medway kicked off with the strong wind at their backs and were soon camped in the Park half as their opponents struggled to settle. The early pressure told as Medway kicked to touch from a penalty, secured the line out and sent the ball to centre Sam Sharpe who crashed through two defenders to score under the posts for the first converted try of the game and a 7-0 lead. Medway took the restart through Adam Dady who made a great break right through the middle of the Park defence before finally being stopped on their ten metre line. The forwards were quick to the break down securing the ball for the backs who reacted well sending it down the the line before finding winger Kaine Dimech who ran in under the posts for a 14-0 lead. Park restarted deep but Medway again secured it well and took their time getting settled before finding centre Pete Walsh just inside the twenty two. He barrelled through two tacklers and set off up the middle looking for support before finally being brought to ground just outside the Park twenty two. Medway again secured the ball and continued the forward momentum with some pick and drives before another penalty gave them the opportunity to kick for touch to set up another attacking line out ten metres out. The line out was going well and the forwards took it easily before setting up a driving maul that was well controlled at the back by hooker Billy Humphrey. Park were unable to stop it and Humphrey scored a well worked try for a 19-0 lead. Park seemed rattled by Medway's express start and when the restart went straight out they handed the initiative back to the Medway forwards who were now dominating the scrum. They succeeded in pushing Park back ten metres before being awarded the inevitable penalty which Medway took quickly to keep the pressure on. The ball went out to the left wing before coming back inside to fly half Max Bullock who showed good footwork to beat the covering defender scoring under the posts and then converting to take the score to 26-0. Park finally woke up and began to play some decent rugby of their own maintaining possession and control and making their way towards the Medway line. Medway defended well however and managed to recover a loose ball on the ground which Bullock cleared. Medway then stole the Park line out and came back on the attack with Walsh being fed the ball just outside the Park twenty two. He again showed his strength beating two tackles to run in their fifth try for a half time score of 33-0.

The talk at half time talk was about staying calm and not conceding easy points and so it was disappointing when Medway failed to deal with the restart gifting the ball straight to a chasing Park forward who took the loose ball and charged straight through a disorganised defence for a soft converted try under the posts. Medway restarted but were soon under pressure again as Park took it well and began to move through the phases gaining ground before releasing their centre who, helped by some poor tackling, ran through for their second converted try. Medway restarted with their lead reduced to 33-14 and needing to reassert some authority. The experienced hands in the forwards took control happy to keep possession and gain ground slowly. Park became frustrated and a number of penalties allowed Medway to reach the five metre line where another lineout saw the ball worked to Bullock who spotted a gap in the defence and glided through it for a 38-14 lead. With ten minutes left Medway sealed the win when another penalty saw them take the scrum, an area where they had dominated all game, securing quick ball for Sharpe who again crashed through the defence for his second try and a 45-14 lead. To their credit Park came back and scored their third try but it was too little too late as Medway secured the points with a 45-21 win. This was another good Extra's performance with some excellent rugby mixed in with the odd lapse in concentration but overall they were the better team and deserved the win. Our thanks to Westcombe Park for a hard fought game played in an excellent spirit. It has been good to have them back in the Invicta league and we wish them well for the rest of the season. Our thanks also to referee Mr Weller who had a good game and was consistent throughout.

Medway Squad: Al Waterman, Billy Humphrey (Capt), Jack Nickalls, Johnny Smith, Rhys Gue, Dan O'Brien, Malcolm Cameron, Adam Dady, Bobby Ellis, Max Bullock, Kaine Diemch, Tony Walsh, Sam Sharpe, Matt Brightman, Rhys Burns, Tom Huntley, Sean Crittenden, Ruan Schuling, James Bullock