

1st Round Powergen Vase Fixture at Honor Oak Park 18th September 2004

Guy's Hospital RFC 7 - 35 Bromley RFC

The omens did not seem to be with Guy's on Saturday. With greasy conditions, 14 players available an hour before kick-off, and the prospect of no bar it was always going to be a tough day at the office. Fortunately, with hasty phone calls on the 172, we were able to recruit David Manson-Bahr, the 4th XV captain. With worries temporarily assuaged, Guy's were soon presented with another problem, no Martin W-P. Luckily, Rob Whyte saved the day, when he donned his makeshift boots to take his place on the wing. As a result, GKTRFC were able to take to the field with an even 15 players, with many of those playing in unfamiliar positions.

The game began with a brisk pace; there were plenty of quick passages of play and solid tackling from the Guy's backline. The match soon settled into a rhythm. Enlightened kicking by Rigg and Gretton kept the visitors pinned back deep in their own half. The lineout was again working well, Wheeler's throwing was particularly accurate considering the slippery conditions. With clean ball, this allowed our backs to run penetrating lines at the Bromley defences. However, Guy's were unable to cross the whitewash to score a try.

Our scrum held up well, despite being severely "outpied" by the oppo. It was at this time that the home side realised that this game was for the taking. Bromley despite being in the league above were struggling to put pressure on the home side. Guy's have always had close games against Bromley so there was a sense that we could replicate famous victories of previous years. Fortress HOP indeed!

Unfortunately, Guy's suffered a blow, which played a significant part in the outcome of the game. Resulting from a ruck 2 metres from the Bromley line, scrum half Rigg spotted a bag in their defences. However, the gap was quickly closed and left Rigg clutching his knee. He had to go off, leaving Guy's with 14 men with over 50 minutes of the game remaining. However, to the eternal credit of the home team they played out of their skins, working hard not letting our man deficit play on their minds. We went into half time 0-0, with a surprise victory still in the offing.

After half time Bromley began to make use of their one-man overlap in the backs. Clever play by the visitors sucked in the home defences, to then spin the ball wide for a well-worked score, which was duly converted. A penalty soon after saw Guy's down 10-0. An immediate reply was what was necessary, and an immediate score is what happened. Receiving a penalty in the away teams 22, Guy's elected to kick for touch and attack to line via the ever-consistent lineout. With Rob Whyte at scrumhalf, Pod had a greater chance of success. A good catch and quick drive saw Whyte cross the line for what was a converted try. The fixture now had a new impetus, Guy's 10-7 down with 20 minutes remaining. The dream was certainly on!

Disappointingly, the oldest rugby club in the world could not maintain their position in the game, especially with 14 men. Some handling errors and poor tackling allowed

Bromley to score freely. To their credit, they utilised their extra man to great effect, but it was compounded by sloppy defensive discipline. The final score was 35-7.

The score line does not reflect the superb way that Guy's carried themselves for the majority of the game. Rowland and Austin to name but two continued despite being in great pain, certainly making their impact in the game. The weakened side, which saw a number of players playing their first 1st XV game of the season played with immense pride, a credit to the Guy's spirit. They highlighted their enjoyment for the game when others did not even make it to HOP. Despite the loss, it was a fixture which I greatly enjoyed playing in, and I am sure that sentiment is common throughout the team.

Looking forward to next week, with 3 fixtures and a fun day at HOP, GKT RFC will be able to learn from defeat and go forth into the rest of the season with pride.

Team: B Wheeler, I Wilson, E Sheppard, R Davies, D Austin, J Nettleton, D Manson-Bahr, K Rowland, S Rigg, P Gretton, R Whyte, R Turner, T Kennedy, J Callahan, C Eggleston.

Tries: R Whyte

Conversions: P Gretton