

## Guy's 35-27 Brunel

In keeping with all the best former Guy's captains, I'm ignoring the first two matches of the 07/08 BUSA season, and am writing up the third- solely because we didn't lose this one.

All that needs to be said is that the 1<sup>st</sup> XV arrived at HOP on the back of 2 straight loses, albeit narrow defeats at that. The team had shown glimpses of excellence and potential throughout, but had thus far failed to engineer a performance for the whole 80 minutes of a game. Things didn't look like they were going to be getting any easier however, with the visit of Brunel, relegated to our league last season, bound to offer a stern test to our defences.

However, a strong forward pack despite the loss of talisman and (ex) captain fantastic Rhys Davies, and a young and exciting back line offered hope, and captain Mike Forsythe and pack leader Mark Halls instilled into the team the importance of playing with passion on the field.

From the kick off Guy's exerted this passion immediately, with a quick turnover resulting in space out wide. A clever chip through from Staten lead to a lineout from 5 metres out, and a solid take from lock Rob Ferry enabled the pack to power over the line, Mark Halls coming up with the ball. Seasoned pro Gretton added the extras with a sweetly struck conversion, and it appeared Brunel were shocked, as they were heard to say 'ok guys, these boys *can* play a little bit'. And play we could, as Brunel came back hard, throwing everything at our defence. Not even their tight tops could fashion an opening however as our defence stood strong, but a moment of over enthusiasm in the back line lead to a penalty, and the opposition hit back and came within 4 points.

Unlike some many times in the past however, where a good start from Guy's has been undone by complacency or lack of belief, the pack hit back after James Cuthbertson threaded the ball deep into Brunel's 22, with another push over try, Mark Halls the man in the right place at the right time once again.

Our defence held strong for another 10 minutes, the back row of Sam Trowbridge, Chris Abbott and Mark Halls' replacement fresher Marco everywhere around the pitch and tackling like men possessed. Two moments of lapsed concentration changed the game however, as a missed tackle and an unfortunate bounce from a chip and chase let Brunel for a brace of tries.

But a minute later, the turning point in the game. With fresher Alex succumbing to a head injury, there was no other option than to turn to the one and only Robert Hone. Mont at inside centre I hear you say? Don't worry, I felt the same. But somehow, before you could say 'it's gone', Hone turned the game. A beautifully timed inside ball from fresher Theo at 13 put Forsythe into a gap and having made ground up to the opposition's 22, Hone was on hand to stumble through 2 men and fall over the line. Gretton added the extras via the post and Guy's went into half time with a slender lead.

As the second half progressed, Guy's dug deep to protect their lead but Brunel struck back with a sniping run from their scrum half leading to a try, despite the ball being grounded considerably short of the try line. Again however there was no panic and the team went about playing their own game. Rich Townsend started stealing ball at the back of the lineout with athletic jumping, and Sheppard, Elias and Laird started finding their

feet in the scrum, and backed this up with great work in open play. Gretton and Cuthbertson bossed the game, and Hone and fresher Theo punched hole after hole in the centre field. Rehnberg and Staten came off their wings in search of ball and made yards, and the Abbott, Trowbridge and fresher Marco dominated the back row with turnovers and breaks. Finally the good work was paying off, and a blind ball from Forsythe inside to Abbott led to the latter running almost the length of the pitch before finally being halted. It was from the resulting attempt at a clearance from Brunel that Townsend was quick off the mark and threw his body in the way of the ball. He was up quickly and dived on the ball to bring us back in front.

Brunel started taking some risks, and a turnover from Hone deep in the opposition's half gave Abbott the opportunity to hack the ball on over the line. Rehnberg was there, and sent the crowd and the team into raptures. Gretton added a penalty minutes later and Guy's were over two scores ahead, and despite a late charge from Brunel, a couple of well timed substitutions, with fresh legged Wilson providing a vital impact, Guy's held on for a famous victory.

The performance made everyone proud and will hopefully be a springboard for a great season on both Wednesdays and Saturdays. Long may it continue.

Tries: Halls (x2)

Hone

Townsend

Rehnberg

Conversions: Gretton (x2)

Penalties: Gretton (x2)