

Cranbrook 20 - 23 Guy's Hospital 22nd September

Last year saw the return of the much sought after UH Cup and all its glory to the trophy cabinet of GHRFC. Indeed, it was a season of great success for Guy's rugby with victory also in two sevens tournaments under the 'inspirational' leadership of 7s captain, Andrew Vaughton. 2001-02 should henceforth prove to be the dawn of a new beginning for Guy's Hospital RFC. Promotion last year from the Kent 1st Division, after winning that title too, has positioned Guy's into the London and South-East leagues. The new season therefore offers the new captain, Tim Price, and his team of merry revelers a difficult, if not exciting new challenge. Even coaches Steve Farr and Dave Collen are relishing the prospect of working in the "Big Time".

For the first game of the season, away to a robust and solid Cranbrook outfit, this challenge was faced up to in the true Guy's fashion. With half the team in the bar the night before, the journey down was a welcomed opportunity to sleep off hangovers, talk about each others conquests and prepare for the tough match ahead. Unfortunately, this rather indolent attitude was taken onto the pitch when it was better off left behind. The result was two tries in the first twenty minutes for Cranbrook, gifted to them after a period of play characterized by sloppiness and poor communication. Guy's had little to offer in return during this first half. A young and lightweight pack was kept together at the fringes by Nick Cocks and Christian Smith whose full-bodied commitment to the cause brought him a yellow card and ten minutes in the sin bin. On the back foot for the majority of the half and playing against the slope, half breaks by Turner and then by the captain Price were unable to be capitalized upon. Guys were finding it hard to get the ball wide and the exciting back three of Vaughton, Lambert and Namdi Chanye could not be brought into the game. Only the boot of Berry, who slotted two penalties during this period kept Guy's within touching distance.

The half time break gave Guy's the chance to regroup, gather their thoughts and prepare to turn things around. With the slope in the second half, the momentum swung towards Guy's immediately with a slice of good fortune. A clearance by Price managed to get behind the Cranbrook full-back who under pressure from the chasing pack kicked straight into to the grateful arms of Alex Lambert who ran through to score a breakaway try and give guys the lead for the first time 11-10. With confidence now restored, a cheeky kick through by scrum-half Rigg, gave Guy's a solid position from which to attack. A series of forward exchanges were won by the pack who were now intent on merciless marauding and destruction, and when the ball found its way eventually to the three quarters the ball was able to reach Chanye on the wing for the first time. With only five yards of space to work in, Chanye not only sidestepped his opposite number, but also beat the full back to the corner to score a try on debut. In terms of the sheer class of the finish it was a try that will surely not be surpassed all season. This period of dominance was then followed up by a Berry try, who taking advantage of a disorganised Cranbrook defence, went over from a quick tap penalty. 23-10. With Guy's thus seemingly in control of the game, it should be typical that all that hard work be undone by complacency and tiredness. With Cranbrook now throwing the ball around in a last desperate attempt to get the game back, it was inevitable that gaps would be found and open to exploitation. Cranbrook did not fail in this when they scored a converted try and a penalty to set up a nervous last ten

minutes. Andy Vaughton was then shown the yellow card for a professional foul when he slowed the ball down on our own line. Although clearly illegal, this gamesmanship undeniably saved the game for us. The last ten minutes then deteriorated into a desperate rearguard action, with Guy's surviving two penalty kicks and a number of near tries. In the end though the final whistle came too early for Cranbrook as Guys held on for an auspicious and fortunate win, and gain their first points of the season.

Team

J.Agunwe, M.Edmonson, T.Jackson, R.White, K.Rowland, R. Andom, C. Smith, N.Cox, S. Rigg, T.Woodville-Price (c), R. Turnstyle, D.Berry, A. Lambert, N. Chanye, A.Vaughton, (R Etok)

Tries

Chanye, Lambert, Berry

Conversions

Berry

Penalties

Berry (2)

Gin

Price, Chayne