

'GUYS ABYSMAL AWAY RECORD CONTINUES'

London 4 South East: Folkestone 24 – 10 Guys Hospital RFC

What is now becoming the annual coach trip down to Folkestone always provides a lot of fun. This year, along with Brigstocke's barmy 2nd XV was no different. Indeed amid the cries of "50p for coachey to take us on Le Shuttle", white russians, beer and port were drunk, songs sung, and games were played. It was a legendary trip, and in years gone by when we look back with a fond eye at a bygone age, it is a tale that a good man shall tell his son; no- one quite goes forth and makes like the boys from Guys'.

Yet before the revelries could start there was the all too important matter of a big game to play. For this fixture, Aaron Smedley made the transition from Wednesday rugby to Saturday rugby at loosehead prop, and Max Henderson made a welcome return to 1st XV rugby, and having a strong game. Our pocket sized fresher Pete Gretton also made a very promising debut at scrum half.

Yet neither the long coach journey, the terrible conditions, the hostile crowd nor even the fear of Folkestone's freakishly built in bred second row discouraged Guys from making a strong start to the game. Within five minutes guys had taken the lead when the pack overwhelmed their opposition to allow Rob Whyte to score from close range. Guys put some encouraging phases of play together despite the obvious weight difference up front, but the disparity between the two packs heightened greatly when Christian Smith received his customary ten minutes in the Sin bin for a slightly overzealous tackle. Guys tackled valiantly and well, making some big hits in the midfield but a 6ft 4 20 stone ogre is going to break a few tackles here and there. Two of Folkestone's three tries though in the first half came out wide when the Guys back line was unusually exposed to the chip through. By half time Folkestone led 17-5.

For the majority of the second half, despite a number of unforced errors, Guys played well. Folkestone scored a silly breakaway try midway through the half, but failed to break the Guys defence otherwise. Indeed for much of the half Guys dominance was clear. A period of sustained pressure from the lineout somehow didn't result in a push over try and Guys were constantly held up just short of the line. The Folkestone defence was solid too. Guys did make some great breaks. Brunton linked well with Pynn and Henderson on one great moment, and Pynn looked likely to score in the corner before the Folkestone winger tripped our elder statesman five yards short of the line. It was one of those moments that can change a game completely and a wave of excitement shot through the team as Guys simply assumed it would be a penalty try and ten minutes in the sin bin at the very least. However, in what can only be described quite simply as one of the worst refereeing decisions many of us have ever seen (and Guys are never ones to blame the man in the middle), only a penalty was awarded. From the resulting pressure Guys still failed to cross the line. Only in the last minute of the game did Berry put Brunton into a gap to feed Henderson and then Turner to score in the corner. The score allowed Turner to keep up his remarkable scoring record this season, and saved us from watching a big tough man cry, if he had failed to do so. Ultimately, it was in patches, a decent performance.

Guys are at home to League leaders Chichester on Saturday and a more consistent performance is needed of the same quality if Chichester are to be turned over. Guys have already beaten former league leaders Bromley at home, and HOP is ripe for another big scalp.

TEAM: Ben Wheeler, John Mendonca, Aaron Smedley, Matt Morgan, Ben Thorpe, Christian Smith, Rob Whyte, Jamie Jackson, Pete Gretton, Dave Berry, Harvey Pynn, Roy Maxwell Turner, Max Henderson, Ade Adejewon, Luke Brunton

TRIES: Whyte, Turner

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