

**Kent 1 League Fixture at Honor Oak Park
25th September 2004**

Guy's Hospital RFC 30 - 13 Gillingham Anchorians

Ah, to see the stand at HOP contain more than one man and his dog. To have the smell of a BBQ wafting over the pitch. This could only mean one thing... Fun Day! Unfortunately, due to rain the bouncy castle had to be cancelled, but no matter, good fun and drunken antics were had by all.

Normally I would gin severe lateness but on Saturday that would have meant giving eight to half of the team. Somewhat ironically though, the ref had a minor car accident so kick-off was postponed for long enough for us to sort out the team. The game had an inauspicious start for the home side, when they were 0-3 down in quick time. However, we had enough composure to put that behind us and concentrate on our basic skills of tackling and retaining the ball. Set pieces went well early on with our scrum holding up well despite being severely out pied. Sloppy discipline by the away side allowed fly-half Gretton to pin them back, eventually giving us a lineout deep inside their 22. The first pod failed to get over the line but the second attempt saw the Laird and Davies partnership finding success and after a structured peel left, Laird touched the ball down to give Guy's the lead. From here Guy's began to dominate, keeping their own ball, and stealing some of opposition's in the loose. It was also good to see some fresher arrogance with taunts going towards the Gillingham outside centre from Halls. With the home crowd behind them, Guy's surged forward and the next try was not far off. A well executed backs move saw some daring passing and good hands allow Hone to cross for the boy's in Blue and Gold's second try of the afternoon. 10-3! The home team were on a roll, especially after Gretton added 3 more from a penalty. Unfortunately, Guy's could not keep this dominance going for the rest of the half. Our scrum began to suffer under the weighty Gillingham pack, and we soon lost our own put in. A penalty was never far away and indeed the away side managed to claw 3 points back just before half time.

Guy's enjoyed a thoughtful half time team talk, with the captain instilling the need to get off to a good start since this has been an area of weakness in previous fixtures. Thankfully, the home side were up to the task as the Guy's backs ran strong lines into the opposition's defences. A messy period of play saw a Gillingham player kick the ball straight into the midriff of Turner. Seizing the opportunity, the outside centre attacked the wing with menace outpacing much of the defence. Just before he was to be caught, Turner switched the ball inside for debutant winger James Kennedy to touch down, with obvious joy on his face. The try could not be converted so Guy's were 18-6 up. Soon after Guy's again troubled the scorers. An ill-advised pass from the opposition centre was seized upon by Turner who gathered the interception to finish with style under the posts. Gretton converted to make it 27-3. It was important now at this stage of the game that Guy's did not suffer complacency. We needed to put the game right out of reach. Unfortunately, we found it more and more difficult to win our own ball at the scrum and often found ourselves on the back foot. To our credit, we were still able to put on the pressure and prevent Gillingham from getting a foothold in the game. With a penalty under the posts, Guy's charged at the opposition line but were held up. This was no matter as Gretton dropped a goal to take us to 30-6.

Gillingham ended the game on a high despite having one of their players sin binned for a stupid early tackle. For some reason, poor discipline gave the away side a penalty 10 metres out from which they broke tackles and scored under the posts with mere seconds on the clock. They converted to finish the game with 13 points. It is a shame that the home side let in a try, particularly against 14 men, but tiredness had gotten the better of us.

The score line somewhat flatters the home side. There is no doubt that Guy's were the better side, but it is essential that we put game well behind the reach of the opposition when we can. There is much to work on, particularly scrummaging and greater variation in the lineout. However, if you can win and not play your best, that is a good omen for the rest of the season. Next week has everyones favourite fixture, Sheppey away. I wonder what the weather will be like this year.