

‘STARTLING SECOND HALF PERFORMANCE NOT QUITE ENOUGH’

28th September 2002:

London South East 4: Guys Hospital RFC 20 - 23 Hove RFC

The lack of a regular place kicker lost the match for Guys on this afternoon which witnessed a remarkable fight back by the oldest rugby club in the world. On a beautifully clear, spritely September afternoon, Guys played host to Hove Rugby Club, who had previously proved great competition in two very close matches. This year was no different.

Guys had some welcome returnees too from their summer breaks. Morgan was back leaping like a salmon in the lineout and Whyte returned to resume his powerful pillaging runs. The first half show, however, did not provide the start that Guys desired, going down three points almost instantaneously after a penalty for offside around the fringes. Guys struggled in the first half giving away silly penalties and mistakes, and eventually let in Hove for a bundled over try to go 10-0 up. By the end of the first half Guys were down further, 17-0, when the Hove scrum half took a quick tap penalty to jink over the line with consummate ease. It seemed almost far too easy for Hove as Guys failed to get into and up for the game. Only some stout defence and strong tackling prevented further tries.

The second half though saw a complete reversal of fortune and play. Good kicking from Price and Pynn kept Bognor in their own half for much of the forty minutes. But for the first time this season, Guys could show their opponents what they could do when they win their own ball. With Wheeler finding Morgan in the line out for Guys’ bread and butter, and Smith picking and going from the base of the scrum, Guys took the game to Hove and put them on the back foot. Indeed the pack was outstanding with Smith and Whyte making the yards and Berry, Jackson and later Rowland flying around the park to secure the ball and take it on further. Mendonca, too was solid in the loose getting hands on the ball like the burrowing ferret he is, and securing the ball for Rigg to spread wide.

This was when Guys were best when quick ball was allowed to go wide, and through this format first Turner, Price then Lambert all made good breaks. Chinye to made some barnstorming runs sidestepping his opposite center as if he wasn’t there. Yet it wasn’t until halfway through the second half when quick ball allowed Price to release Turner to go over for his fourth try of the season. Berry missed the subsequent conversion. Now Guys could feel the game swinging their way. Almost immediately Guys were back on the Hove line, desperate to get over. After successive pick and goes, Guys were held up over the line resulting in a 5 meter scrum, which Whyte used to bundle himself over. Again the extra two points were squandered.

Guys closed the gap further still after a sweeping move between Whyte and Pynn gave Berry the ‘money ball’ and the yard of space he needed to capitalize on to allow Guys to trail 17-15. It was one way traffic. Hove’s only response was a penalty in a rare excursion into Guys territory. It failed to stop Guys momentum and in the last minute of the game Rob Whyte trampled over the Hove Fly Half, drew the full back and put Chinye through to score a break away try. With the conversion once again duly missed the scores leveled off at 20-20. It had been a great fightback, and a great second half performance. And so it was with a cruel twist of fate that a penalty in front of the post should be conceded in the last play of the match, which their unnerving kicker slotted home. It should have been all two points to Guys, they had simply blown Hove off the pitch in the second half with hard fast and powerful Rugby, that they are capable of playing against any team in this division. The result was cruel, but Guys had done enough to win the match. Continued performances like the second half in this fixture will not only ensure a decent finish in this league but a sure

challenge to all the teams who play Guys this year. It's been a difficult start to the season, but there is a long way to go. Guys may have zero points after two games, but if juggernaut performances like this second half can be repeated someone, somewhere will get a large hammering. Let us hope this comes soon.

TEAM: R. Clinton, B. Wheeler, J. Mendonca, J. Jackson (K. Rowland), M.Morgan, R. Whyte, C. Smith, D. Berry, S. Rigg, T. Price (c), R. Turner, N. Chinye, A. Lambert, J. Bo, H. Pynn (Subs not used: D. Nurse)

TRIES: Turner, Whyte, Berry, Chanye

JUNIPER: Berry, Morgan