

Guy's Hospital v Park House

13/1/07

39-26

GHRFC 1st XV were in high spirits going into this game against the 2nd placed side in the league despite suffering a crushing defeat the week previously. A full strength side was fielded for the first time in several weeks and the buzz from the night before was more than uplifting.

Once again some amazing work and a lot of help from the wind meant that we were playing on a firm pitch which meant we were able to play the sort of rugby that has been giving us such success throughout the season.

Guy's won the toss and elected to play with the conditions. A significant wind was blowing down from the pavilion into the far left corner and it proved to be more useful than first thought. Guy's received the kick and collected the ball, recycling well through several phases. Some superb back play was initiated earlier than PH anticipated and Guy's gained some vital territory. Early indiscipline from the Park House forwards gave Guy's the chance to kick deep into their 22 for a line out. A superb kick from Kendall meant Guy's were only 10m from the try line. The catch and drive was impeccably organised and through confident communication the ball was directed around the Park House pack. The ball was stopped only a meter from the line but Rob Hone playing in his first start at no 8 picked up from the base and squeezed himself over the line. A successful conversion attempt from outside the 15m line completed the perfect start to the game. (7-0)

Straight after the kick off guys continued their fast and furious style of rugby which pushed them deep into the PH half. Again the Park House defence could not help themselves but cheat to try and stop the rampaging combined units of the GHRFC backs and forwards. Again Guy's kicked for the corner from the resulting penalty. With clean ball off the top of the line, Gretton spun a wild pass over his half back team mate which fortunately was picked up by the outside centre. Some quick thinking saw the inside centre looping his centre partner to then put Roy past his winger out wide who again off loaded to Forsythe to step in off his right beating his opposite man and stumble over the line. (-con, 12-0)

Again, immediately after the kick off, Guy's stamped more authority on the game to widen the gap. Guy's collected the ball and rucked towards the centre of the pitch to set a platform to release the menacing backline which was having a lot of success over its counterparts. Kendall, the no 10, dummied and broke through the line from deep inside the Guy's half. Seemingly isolated Kendall stepped inside the full back to head towards the post only to be caught 5m short by the covering winger. However, Kendall managed to offload off the floor to the inside centre to score under the posts. (+con, 19-0)

The Park House players did not know what had hit them and needless to say Guys just kept coming back harder and harder. Again a clean restart enabled the Guy's fly half to punch the ball deep into the oppo's 22 for a lineout. A fantastic steal by the leaping lanky lock Davies enabled the pack to rally round him to drive him close to the PH try line. Only 10m out guys looked to go wide again only to have the inside centre cut in on a switch to burst through the desperate defence to crash over for another try. Again Gretton was able to convert from wide to put the home side over 5 scores ahead.

An impeccably disciplined first half saw Guys only conceding 1 penalty illustrating their superior tactics and clinical finishing. However Guy's were beginning to find life a little more difficult as their no 8 started to disrupt more and more play. The half was finished off with Guy's being awarded a penalty 30m out but straight in front of the posts which Gretton happily slotted to put his side 29 points clear heading into the break.

It was not until we started the second half that we appreciated the strength of the head wind and how influential it would be. Much emphasis in the half time chat had been put on the ability to keep the opposition out of the game for the next ten minutes and to score first. But unfortunately for Guy's this did not happen. From the kick off PH received the ball and retained possession through their no8 carrying up the midfield enabling their 10 to clear to the Guy's 22. With the wind making life difficult for the kickers Forsythe decided to run it back to gain territory on the counter attack. Unfortunately he found himself isolated and an early penalty for holding on was awarded to PH. The full back put them only 10m out from the Guy's line applying immediate pressure. A good set piece saw a peel come round the front of the line to drive for the line. The initial defence was superb but the Park House pack rearranged themselves quickly to push over to score in the corner. (-con, 29-5)

Things did not seem to improve too much for Guy's over the next few minutes and they appeared to struggle with the conditions trying to play at a frantic rate putting even more pressure on themselves. Handling errors began to creep in and a few miss tackles enabled Park House to gain vital territory. It was a handling error in the Guy's 22 that gave PH a scrum which they used to unleash a barrage of attacks. The Guy's defence seemed to be holding strong but several phases later a good line was run by the PH no8 to cut through the line and dive over the line for a try just outside the left upright. (+con, 29-12)

For the next 10 minutes or so the Guy's team were unable to clear their lines with any real conviction and found themselves deep in their own half again. A high standard of rugby was being played by both sides as would be expected from sides at the top of the league table. Good recycling by PH and strong defence by Guy's kept the game harboured on the Guy's 5m line but eventually the deadlock was broken by the PH scrum half. With the help of one his team mates in front of him to block the Guy's fringe defence the scrum half was able to squeeze through a small gap and touch down on the line. This try was also well converted (29-19)

With a calm but stern talk under the posts Guy's knew they had to turn the possession and territory statistics on their heads and start influencing this second half of the game. They used the strong defence that had almost held out the opposition on their line to force errors in the Park House half and create turnovers to gain crucial field position. A deep restart meant that the turn over occurred well inside the PH half. Gretton punched a deep cross-field kick into the PH 22. The chase of the kick was spot on and forced the centre to run a suicidal path in front of his posts. While trying to off load he was scragged and swung round only to loop the ball up to Rob Hone who only too willingly walked in under the posts. (+con, 36-19)

There was a further Park House try with only a couple of minutes to go but I think that some of the knocks during the game and beers well after altered my memory somewhat so how this try was scored is a mystery for me. They also converted it. (36-26). The final chapter in the story was for Guy's who was able to slot a penalty from 40m in front of the

posts. (39-26). With only 2 minutes left Guy's knew they had the win under their belts and were the well deserved victors. The defence throughout the game but in particular the last 5 minutes was water tight with some absolutely ferocious hits being put in all over the park. If Guy's continue in this vein of form who knows what can happen with several games to be played in this league.

Many thanks to those who came along to watch on Saturday. Although there were not a huge number the few who did were heard and it always gives the team the extra hit to keep them going to the final whistle. Long may this continue and lets keep training hard.