

## **Kent 1 League Fixture at Honor Oak Park 10<sup>th</sup> October 2004**

### **Guy's Hospital RFC 14 - 23 Sittingbourne RFC**

After visiting the Isle of Sheppey, it was with renewed pleasure that the 1<sup>st</sup> XV took to the field against a strong Sittingbourne side. The visitors had enjoyed a good victory at home the previous week and their spirits were obviously high. These two teams have always had fierce encounters and this match was to be no different. Guy's knew that after having had such a good start to the season, it was imperative that we should maintain this momentum. However, as the game progressed it was increasingly obvious that this was not going to our day. A number of factors contributed to our defeat, not least a disappointing lack of discipline and backchat to the referee.

The game began with Guy's enjoying some early possession, with Rob Whyte and Billy Challacombe redonning their blue and gold shirts. In the backs, Tim Price was able to become reaccustomed to his favourite(!) fly half position. With 1<sup>st</sup> regular Sam Rigg unavailable James Kennedy stepped in hi shoes at scrum half. On the bench, occasional player Namdi was always ready. Unfortunately, first blood fell to Sittingbourne who after gaining a penalty in a kickable position opened the game with three points. Their kicker was to become a thorn in our side all after, his reliable and successful place kicking constantly putting us on the back foot and eventually sealing our defeat. Indeed, only a few moments later, he added 3 more points from a penalty to put us 6-0 down after only 10 minutes.

Following stern words from Davies under the posts, the home side immediately replied with a converted try. Solid lineout work in the opposition 22, gave a good platform from which Guy's could attack the opposition line. After several phases, Price made use of his trademark side step to break a tackle to score an excellent try. Those months in Scotland and America seemed to have no effect! With Eggleston adding two points, Guy's seemed to be back on track. Buoyed by this good play, the oldest rugby club in the world went on to score another. Good set piece play combined with clever angles of running allowed Price to score his second of the day. What a good comeback indeed. Eggleston, not to be outdone duly kicked the conversion to give Guy's a 14-6 advantage at half time.

During the interval, the team assured each other that the hard work yet had to be done. Sittingbourne were not a team to give up. Their good forwards combined with metronomic kicker posed a constant threat. Sterling effort was required.

Soon after the whistle, Guy's found themselves under the cosh. The away side had obviously regrouped following half time and knew that they still were well in the game. Their pack used the ball well and were efficient in moving our lighter pack around the park. It was inevitable that their increased pie-rating would pay-off. Indeed, in did on 47 minutes. A five-metre scrum was the setting for their push over try. Once the shove was on, no amount of wheeling could prevent the unavoidable. The resulting try went unconverted but Sittingbourne were now within one score of the lead. At this point, a severely disappointed period of play ensued. Frustrated by some poor referring decisions the home side resorted to backchat and dissent. The

referee was only too happy to penalise us, indeed award the away side a further 10 metres. Their number 10 regained his kicking accuracy and three quick penalty kicks saw Sittingbourne lead by 20-14. Not all was lost however, since a converted try would see Guy's retake the lead. Despite us having plenty of first phase possession, and thundering runs by Davies and Turner GHRFC never seemed to be able to dominate. Poor pieces of play combined with lack of efficiency and menace in the ruck allowed Sittingbourne to rest on their 6-point advantage. The final coup de grace came in the final seconds when the opposition number 10 slotted a drop goal to end the game with a score of 23-14.

This game was there for the taking. Unfortunately, a combination of bad luck, dissent and for want of a better phrase, "lack of hardness" in the loose saw Sittingbourne take the points. Guy's players would hope that in the return fixture these errors can be set aside enabling us to have a reverse the result.

Team – B Wheeler, O Laird, G Josan, R Davies, B Challacombe, L Brunton, M White-Peart, R Whyte, J Kennedy, R Hone, R Turner, T Kennedy, B Tiffin, C Eggleston.

Subs – A (Namdi) Adejuwon