

## **Hertfordshire Beat Eastern Counties**

12 May 2009

### COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP SHIELD

Southern Group

HERTFORDSHIRE RU 65pts (Tries: M Evans 2, P Gustard, I Crompton, T Newton, J Remfry, S Small, N Burger, G Wallis. Convs: R Gregg 7. Pens: Gregg 2. )

EASTERN COUNTIES RUGBY UNION 21pts (Tries: A Kelsall, M Edison, T Holt. Pens: T Hughes 2)

This was always going to be a tough test for Eastern Counties with Coach Nick Greenhall bringing together players from 9 clubs across three Counties and introducing no fewer than 8 young debutantes into the rigours of the County Championship rugby and pitching them against a hugely experienced side filled with old heads and bags of talent. However despite conceding 9 tries Counties won the respect of the Herts skipper Dave Archer who admitted "They had me worried a few times in the game especially either side of half time when Eastern Counties looked to be making a comeback".

Counties began the game on the offensive and looked to have Hertfordshire rattled as they pressured the home side from anywhere on the field, with Counties looking to move the ball wide and play some open and expansive rugby. Unfortunately seven minutes into the game Herts snapped up a loose offload and then quickly counter attacked with Paul Gustard ending off the move. There then followed a nightmare ten minutes for Counties, two more turnovers resulted in converted tries for Matt Evans and to add insult to injury Richard Gregg also converted two penalties to put Counties twenty-four points down inside twenty minutes.

Undaunted Counties continued to play expansive rugby with young centre Toby Berridge making inroads into the Hertfordshire defence but the visitors were unable to unlock Herts who were being marshalled effectively by fullback Tom Newton, leaving Counties with just two Tom Hughes penalties for all of their efforts. Herts then put in a further killer try minutes before half time when Ian Crompton scored out wide to give Hertfordshire a 32-6 half time lead.

Counties suffered another blow at half time when their only out and out centre had to withdraw due to illness and was replaced by Diss winger Alex Kelsall. However Kelsall was an immediate success when he scored a debut try after Counties split the Herts defence with some expansive rugby and excellent running lines. Two minutes later Cambridge's Matt Edison bravely crashed over in the corner for another debut try following great work by the outstanding and tireless Chris Godwin who robbed Herts of possession to start the move, but unfortunately Edison was injured as he crossed the line and replaced by Chris Kent.

Thoughts of a comeback though were dashed with quick tries from Newton and Jim Remfry stretching the Hertfordshire lead to twenty-eight points leaving Counties now with an impossible task. However they continued to take the game to Herts, still looking to play the expansive game and were justly rewarded when Tom Holt went over in the 60th minute.

Hertfordshire then finished with a purple patch scoring three converted tries in the space of seven minutes and when Shaun Woodhouse was sent to the "sin bin" with nine minutes to go

Counties could easily have let their heads drop. Fortunately, they did not and ended the game as they had begun pressurising Herts preventing the home side from capitalising on their numerical superiority.

ECRU's next opponents are newly relegated Middlesex who lost narrowly (20-19) to the in form Hampshire who were promoted after winning the Plate competition last season. The game will take place at Ipswich YM RUFC Saturday 16th May 2009 (3pm)

Yellow Cards: Shaun Woodhouse 72mins

Referee: Ed Turnill RFU, Touch Judges: Mark Vernon & Chris Challinor

Eastern Counties: 15 Chris Glynn (Shelford), 14 Phil Bullen-Brown (Shelford), 13 Iain Young (Nth Walsham), 12 Toby Berridge (Cambridge), 11 Tom Holt (Nth Walsham), 10 Tom Hughes (Saffron Walden), 9 Shingai Chiwamba (Cambridge), 1 Teddy Saunders (Shelford), 2 Gideon Rossouw Capt. (Nth Walsham), 3 Des Brett (Blackheath), 4 Ed Mills (Shelford), 5 Matt Edison (Cambridge), 6 Declan Hall (Diss), 7 Chris Godwin (Nth Walsham), 8 Andy Horne (Diss). Replacements: 16 Shaun Woodhouse (Lowestoft & Yarmouth), 17 Matt Richards (Diss), 18 Alex Graf-Grote (Nth Walsham), 19 Sam Rhodes (Nth Walsham), 20 Tom Coller (Wymondham), 21 Alex Kelsall (Diss), 22 Chris Kent (Nth Walsham).

Hertfordshire: 15 Tom Newton (Tring), 14 Ian Crompton (Stevenage), 13 Luke Sloan (Southend), 12 Steve Small (Hertford), 11 Nico Burger (Old Asmoleans), 10 Richard Gregg (Old Albanian), 9 Mark Evans (Old Albanian), 1 Jon Patton (Hertford), 2 Matt Cross (Hertford), 3 Jim Remfry (Caldy), 4 Robert Anderson (Saracens Academy), 5 Adam Amos (Stevenage), 6 Paul Gustard (Old Albanian), 7 Chris Rainbow (Hertford), 8 Dave Archer Capt.(Cambridge), Replacements: 16 Ryan Long (Letchworth), 17 Giles Wallis (Tring), 18 Alfie Church (Hertford), 19 Johan van Dyk (Old Asmoleans), 20 Stuart Smart (Hertford), 21 Steve Ellis (Hertford), 22 Tom Colman (Bishops Stortford).