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Again Sutton and Epsom Find a Way Away

16 November 2026

Old Elthamians 17 – Sutton & Epsom 20 14th November.

Regional 2 South East returned to action after a Saturday of recuperation, international rugby and the usual plethora of social activities. This was the first time Old Elthamians had hosted Sutton & Epsom since November 2011 when they triumphed 27-6. The men from Rugby Lane will always have a place in OE history as the Old Boys' first fixture on 27th January 1912 was against the Sutton & Epsom 'A' XV.

Fortunes have fluctuated since that historic day and this was only the third league meeting of the clubs. S&E arrived trailing the leaders Beckenham by a solitary point with only a singular loss to Medway. In contrast, the hosts, following a meteoric recent rise, had just a singular win over Hammersmith & Fulham on their early season record. If the casual observer of the league table thought that this was going to be one-way traffic, they were in for a shock as the Black & Whites scraped home 20-17.

Sutton & Epsom had three enforced changes, with Messrs Jones, O'Brien and Scott replaced by the triumvirate of Duey, McCormack and debutant Davies on the bench. The sides kicked off the second six-match block of the campaign that will take the league up to the festive break.

It was a dry and sunny afternoon as a sizeable crowd viewed the spectacle either from the well-appointed stand or enjoyed the ambience of the touchline. The opening minute was a microcosm of the first-quarter exchanges. Sutton & Epsom advanced through several phases with excellent continuity only to be terminated by the shrill blast of Mr Oliver Tyson's whistle for an infringement on the deck.

This scenario was repeated several times and without discrimination to whomsoever was attacking. Kudos to the defences and the spoiling back rows, but it was ultimately frustrating for coaches and crowd alike.

In the third minute, from one of these penalties, the hosts failed to find touch in the corner but picked off an interception as S&E attempted to run it from the 22. Sutton & Epsom were saved by excellent defence.

Sutton & Epsom opened the scoring in the eighth minute. Momentum from the catch and drive at the lineout put them on the front foot. Adam Bibby made the critical break and passed the ball to the inside, and Angus Findlay headed straight for the corner, outpacing the cover from 40 metres. Freddy Bunting added the extras with an excellent touchline conversion for a 7-0 lead.

Five minutes later the Sutton & Epsom pack excelled at the lineout. Taking the ball 20 metres out, they trundled remorselessly to what appeared to be an inevitable try for hooker Sam Lennie. However, they were denied at the key moment by staunch defence. From the OE scrum, number eight Reis Norman made one of his many impressive carries and the hosts cleared their lines.

At the end of the first quarter the game altered in complexion as Sutton & Epsom received the first of two yellow cards. Prop Tom Boaden departed after head contact at a ruck. S&E absorbed the initial numerical punishment and added to their account via a penalty from 40 metres from the Bunting boot.

Straight after going 10-0 up, Josh Glanville went down injured and, heaping Pelion onto Ossa, he was also issued a yellow card. For the Rugby Lane travelling cohort it was Medway revisited as their XV was now a XIII. Unsurprisingly Old Elthamians, greatly encouraged by Sutton & Epsom's indiscipline, began to dominate possession and territory. Impressively the Surrey men lasted until Boaden's return.

In the final minute of normal time in the first half, OEs were finally rewarded. Controlling several phases in the 22, they moved towards the uprights and the ball was passed to Reis Norman, who scored. It was a deserved reward for his excellent contribution in the first half. The conversion failed as OEs trailed 5-10.

Though Sutton & Epsom were now restored to their full complement, Old Elthamians monopolised the seven minutes of time added on. The Queen Mary's crowd were rewarded with the equalising score in the dying embers of the half. Matt Chick put the finishing touches on a wonderful passage of play for the hosts' second try.

The conversion was missed but the rampant Kent side went into the break level at 10-10. The Black & Whites had much to mull over during the interval. The momentum was definitely with the 11th-placed side in the table as the team one off the top were threatened with the prospect of the shock result of Round 7.

Second-half battle

Old Elthamians started the second period buoyed by their two tries at the end of the first half and looked odds-on to take the lead in the opening moments. The ball was hacked forward and two Old Boys led the chase, but a cruel bounce deceived the first, who knocked it on, thus nullifying the effort of the second.

The hosts held the upper hand in the third quarter but the stalemate continued despite the bulldozing efforts of Reis

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Norman. Once more penalties hindered the progress of both sides as they slugged it out in the middle third of the paddock.

The game exploded into life in the final quarter. Sutton & Epsom debutant Alex Davies carried the ball into OE territory. Jack Howes burst forward from the breakdown and found the open spaces only to be felled by a tap tackle, but after a theatrical forward roll he continued his run.

The cover defence finally halted him in the 22 but the Sutton & Epsom support brought the ball under the posts. It was shipped wide and Josh Rea timed his arrival to perfection to crash over the whitewash for the try. Freddy Bunting added the conversion for 17-10.

If the Rugby Lane followers thought that this was the moment that turned the tide, they were proved premature a minute later. Replacement Sam Tilley, in the centres, hit the line with power and pace near halfway with devastating effect to run in under the posts untouched. Joe Leigh added the simplest of conversions and it was level, once more, at 17-17.

After two tries in as many minutes the game reverted to the industrious arm wrestle of before as both teams looked for that decisive moment of inspiration.

With five minutes left on the clock, with Sutton & Epsom on the attack, the Kent men conceded a penalty through a deliberate knock-on. It was within the scope of Freddy Bunting and adjacent to the posts. The kick for goal was chosen and no one watching was surprised when he bisected the uprights for 20-17.

The sands of time were running out for Old Elthamians as the match entered time added on. However, experienced watchers of the Black & Whites knew that there would inevitably be one moment of high anxiety.

The referee awarded a penalty but, in contrast to S&E, OEs opted for the kick to the corner as they sought victory from the final play of the game. The ball was arrowed into the corner. However, to the dismay of the home crowd, a scrappy lineout followed. As the ball hit the deck, desperate forwards foraged for possession. Referee Tyson spotted an infringement and ended the contest.

Another narrow victory

The volume of the Sutton & Epsom jubilation was a fair indication of the relief they felt in their narrow 20-17 win.

After the final whistle those with a Sutton & Epsom connection could reflect on Isaiah Berlin’s theory of ‘hedgehogs and foxes’, inspired by the writing of Grecian satirist Archilochos. The Black & Whites had found another different route to victory, indicating membership of the vulpine category rather than a one-dimensional prickly clan.

The fact that they had not reached the dizzying heights of the Horsham win was credit to Old Elthamians, who belied their lowly status in the table.

Reis Norman excelled in a fine performance from their back row alongside Hans Laud-Anderson and Matt Chick. The front row trio of Widdowson, Noah and Trew provided the platform for Messrs Leigh and Robertson to excel in the backs.

For S&E it was a truly collective effort led by skipper Hegarty, with a timely reminder of the value of the Bunting boot.

League leaders next at Rugby Lane

S&E return to Rugby Lane next Saturday for the Clash of the Titans as the visitors are league leaders Beckenham.

Since Sutton & Epsom’s arrival in 2024-25 in Regional 2 South East, this fixture has had the most dramatic of conclusions, with all three meetings culminating in the last kick of the game.

First there was a minuscule miss from a touchline penalty from halfway, that was followed by a charged-down drop goal, and last season Tom Lennard’s penalty gave Sutton & Epsom a 20-17 win.

One would hope that current form and recent history translate into a bumper crowd at Rugby Lane.

John Croysdill

Team line-ups

Sutton & Epsom: Lennard, McCormack, Bibby, Maxwell, Findlay A, Bunting, Findlay E, Johnson, Lennie, Boaden, Duey, Glanville, Tame, Rea and Hegarty (captain).

Replacements: Howes, Davies A and Munford.

Old Elthamians: Leigh, Neicho, Coppard, Robertson (captain), Beadle, Day, Davies, Widdowson, Noah, Trew, Ryan, Ranson, Chick, Laud-Anderson and Norman.

Replacements: Sanger, Reed and Tilley.

Horsham spooked by Sutton & Epsom hat-trick

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Sutton and Epsom RFC 43 Horsham 26. Saturday 31st October. Rugby Lane

Spookily, in the annals of Sutton and Epsom RFC league history, there have only been two previous occasions when the club have played on Halloween. In the inaugural season of 1987–88 they won at home 14–3 against Old Gaytonians, and in 2009–10 they lost 14–9 at Haywards Heath. This campaign had seen four wins from five outings, but a points difference of plus two indicated that their matches had been extremely hard-fought affairs. The visitors, Horsham, had done the double over the Black and Whites last season and arrived full of confidence. For the home supporters, it was a delight to see their team at Rugby Lane for only the second time in 2026–27. The match did not disappoint, with the Black and Whites recording a 43–26 victory.

The only change in the Sutton and Epsom squad was the absence of the Lurch-like lock Ewan McTaggart, which enabled Steve Munford to add to his considerable aggregate of appearances. Horsham's Archie Fox initiated proceedings in conditions that were ideal for rugby and a delightful contrast to the previous Saturday. The hosts were immediately on the attack, but white line fever overcame Tipene Maxwell with Adam Bibby free. The visitors switched from determined defence to potent attack as centre Tom Saunders marauded into the 22, but this initial sortie came to nought. The early indicators hinted that a thoroughly thrilling afternoon was on the menu.

The frenetic pace continued as Sutton and Epsom were indebted to a superb Angus Findlay tackle. Equally, Horsham were grateful that the hovering Bibby received a pass on his laces and the subsequent kick ahead rolled safe a split second after he touched down. Finally, on the quarter-hour, the deadlock was broken. A sweeping attack by the Sutton and Epsom backs culminated with Gareth O'Brien sending over Adam Bibby for a try in the corner. Freddy Bunting converted from the flank for 7–0. A minute later, the home supporters were applauding a second score. Following a jinking break by Angus Findlay, the ball found its way to Adam Bibby, who sauntered in for his second. Freddy Bunting's kick made it 14–0.

Horsham joined the party a couple of minutes later with their opening score. Wonderful control from their pack saw them remorselessly advance to the line for flanker Tyrese Makasi to take the glory. The visitors would have been on the scoreboard, but ghosts in the machine meant that the board remained blank whilst spectators totted up the score to 14–5, with the kick drifting wide. Sutton and Epsom replied in an instant as the brilliant Bibby transformed from finisher to provider when he broke free, passing to Josh Rea and on to Euan Findlay for try number three. The Bunting boot erred, but Sutton and Epsom led 19–5. A minute later, Tipene Maxwell was touching down for his first try for the Black and Whites after a 40-metre charge on the half-hour. The hosts led 26–5 following four tries in a breathless 15 minutes to secure a bonus point.

Not to be outdone, the Green and Whites scored again in the blink of an eye. The formidable Tom Saunders accelerated through a gap and scored untouched from halfway. Joe Wilde added the extras as the Sussex men trailed 12–26. There were still ten minutes until the break. After six tries in under 20 minutes, the game seemed to be quietly meandering to the interval. However, Gareth O'Brien had other ideas as he changed direction to break the line. Tipene Maxwell quickly carried on the attack from the breakdown, and Euan Findlay burst into the 22 with only one man between him and the line. For the second Saturday on the spin, a delightful kick did not produce a favourable bounce for the number nine, but Adam Bibby was on hand to fall on the ball to complete his first hat trick for Sutton and Epsom. Freddy Bunting bisected the uprights and Mr Clinton Mill, soon after, ended the half with Sutton and Epsom leading 33–12.

At the interval, Horsham appeared to be in hot water. This was a rather ironic state of affairs as earlier in the week the Rugby Lane boiler had expired, but through the efforts of the committee in general and Jeff Parsons in particular, normality was restored. The players would enjoy 21st-century comforts rather than endure the Victorian public school charms of the physically and spiritually reviving benefits of cold water. Sutton and Epsom's euphoria at the stunning display by their backs was tempered by the knowledge that the Horsham pack had shown itself to be a formidable unit when in possession. The Black and Whites resumed attacking the clubhouse end with a 21-point cushion, with the Green and Whites eager for an early score to revive their fortunes.

Horsham dominated possession from the start of the second period and were good value for the opening score of the second half after ten minutes. Again, they were indebted to their forwards. Powerfully, the juggernaut pack advanced and, after multiple phases, captain Jacob Denhart forced his way over from close range. Joe Wilde's conversion made it 33–19. The visitors had commendably turned the tide in the third quarter, and their fourth, bonus-point try arrived on the hour mark. Sutton and Epsom captain Rob Hegarty appeared to have lifted the siege with a familiar muscular carry towards halfway. The Coolhurst men turned over the ball, Tom Saunders made the initial break and then the forwards took over, with prop Freddy Kilfeather the beneficiary with the try. As Joe Wilde's kick sailed over, the game was now in the balance, with Horsham only nine points adrift as they trailed 24–33 with twenty minutes on the clock.

In the final quarter, the mood of the crowd changed as cheers for tries from their scintillating back play were replaced by appreciative roars greeting every thunderous tackle from Sutton and Epsom's defence as concern grew over the outcome. There was considerable relief when the hosts were awarded a penalty and Freddy Bunting stepped up for a kick at goal from 40 metres, with the ball soaring over the posts. In recent times, the Rugby Lane team had opted for the kick to the corner, but the pragmatic approach was not only popular but also successful as they now led 36–24.

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Slowly but surely, Sutton and Epsom regained control by monopolising possession as the game condensed in the middle third. This impressive game management and discipline was strikingly undone. The Black and Whites conceded a penalty and, after an injudicious aside to Mr Mill, they were marched back a further ten metres. Perhaps sportsmen should adhere to the cautionary advice of Baruch Spinoza: “The world would be happier if men had the same capacity to be silent that they have to speak.” The visitors were threatening another score that would have potentially secured an additional bonus point and guaranteed another dramatic finish for Sutton and Epsom. However, the kick to the winger landed safely in the grateful hands of the home defence, who called for the mark.

It was Sutton and Epsom who were to enjoy the final score in time added on as they recalled memories of their first-period panache. A wonderful move with forwards and backs linking swept down the pitch. Perhaps it was appropriate that Angus Findlay scored, as he had enjoyed a splendid afternoon in attack and defence in arguably his best performance for the first XV. Freddy Bunting took his tally to 13 points. There was just time for the restart to be secured and the ball booted to touch to conclude a very entertaining game, with Sutton and Epsom impressive 43–26 winners.

Sutton and Epsom’s success advanced them to second in the league, a solitary point behind Beckenham. The fluency and potency of the backs was a joy to behold. Adam Bibby was transformed from perennial provider to try-scoring tormentor. In the second half, Horsham threatened a spectacular comeback, but Sutton and Epsom showed steely resolve in the final quarter to secure a thoroughly deserved victory. Horsham were hampered by notable absentees but showed great character in the second half. Their forwards were superb, and in Tyrese Makasi they have the archetypal number seven who combines all the attributes of that key position. He was tireless in his work, tackling and carrying with power and pace all afternoon. In their backs, Tom Saunders added to his reputation as one of the most potent attackers in the league.

After an exhausting six games on the bounce, the league goes into abeyance before hostilities resume on 14 November. Time for teams to lick their wounds, exorcise the ghosts from round six and return reinvigorated for the run of games up to Christmas. The Black and Whites will be visiting Old Elthamians for the first time since the 2011–12 campaign, which was the source of horrific nightmares for Sutton and Epsom as they entered Dante’s Inferno and experienced all nine circles of Hell in a season of a full haunted house of 26 defeats from 26 outings.

Sutton and Epsom

O’Brien, Bibby, Maxwell, Bunting, Findlay A, Lennard, Findlay E, Johnson, Lennie, Boaden, Tame, Glanville, Rea, Jones and Hegarty (captain). Replacements: Howes, Scott and Munford.

Horsham

Fox, Wadley, Sanders, May-Miller, Grogan, Wilde, Sakakini, Earle, White, Kilfeather, Denhart (captain), Anderton, Lovett, Makasi and Howard. Replacements: Murphy, Brock and Thompson.

John Croysdill

Sutton & Epsom triumph over the elements

16 November 2026



Gravesend 12 – Sutton & Epsom 17 | Venue: Rectory Field 24th October

After the drought and the heat came the rain and the wind, adding to the belief that, but for the weather, the British would have nothing to talk about. The elements played a considerable part as conditions deteriorated during the match, impairing handling but maximising the physical contribution made by all concerned in an enthralling encounter.

Sutton & Epsom held firm to gain an impressive 17-12 away win as the hosts secured a bonus point with their final play.

Sutton & Epsom made two changes from their victorious Bromley squad. Gareth O’Brien returned from injury and club stalwart Jack Howes was a late call-up for “Father Eric”, who appropriately had paternal duties. Gravesend also had eleventh-hour disruption, so the versatile Ben Kite was left flying high at 10 rather than 9 when George Bruce withdrew.

Under leaden skies and a blustery wind, with a dire forecast, the game began. In the early exchanges S&E struggled with their lineout but had the edge in the set scrum, whilst number 8 Les Falefatu impressed with his carrying for Gravesend.

After ten minutes Gravesend failed to execute a move and the ball splashed down to the sodden turf. A Sutton & Epsom player reacted instantaneously and completed the hardest part by kicking the ball with commendable precision over the try line before being flummoxed by the bounce when first to arrive. It was a case of Wittgenstein’s axiom “whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must remain silent” in terms of the name of the enterprising but unsuccessful soul. No try, and back for a scrum from the initial knock-on.

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The Rugby Lane men did not have too much time to wallow in self-pity as they opened their account a minute later. A powerful initial carry brought them to within five metres. Multiple phases later the stubborn home defence was breached as hooker Sam Lennie emerged from a mass of steaming humanity with the glory. Freddy Bunting was grateful for a conversion at the easier end of the scale of difficulty for a 7-0 lead.

At Rectory Field S&E have learned in the past that it is the Hope that kills. It took only a couple of minutes before Gravesend replied as Ben Hope secured his traditional stunning solo score with a run from near halfway. Unsurprisingly, in the conditions, the conversion from the flank faltered as the hosts trailed 5-7.

The home team were now enjoying a period of ascendancy. One assault was thwarted when a speculative kick resulted in a mark. Such exotic delights were shelved as they adopted route one and carried to the Sutton & Epsom line. Carry after carry and the Surrey men stood firm, with the ball adjudged to have been held up over the line.

Then it was Sutton & Epsom's time in the limelight. They advanced the ball with the boot and impressive catch and drives to encamp deep in the opposition 22. In addition, their scrum dominance began to bear fruit in terms of penalties. The visitors were soon to discover that the home XV were equally cussed and adamantine in defence as they forced a penalty when a stray S&E hand erred on the deck near the line.

As the interval approached, both teams searched for that telling moment. Gravesend had made light of the conditions, enterprisingly running back kicks from their 22. However, in time added on, Tipene Maxwell's chase was rewarded with a fine tackle that led to a Sutton & Epsom penalty.

The three-point option from 15 metres in front of the posts was declined. There was logic in opting for a scrum. When their attack floundered and they returned for another penalty, the senior supporters chuntered in unison as not only the kick at goal was declined but also the scrum. It was as incongruous as witnessing Johnny Rotten performing at an eisteddfod. The tap and go led to more rousing home defence and the half concluded with Sutton & Epsom 7-5 up.

Second-half surge

With the infallible value of hindsight, the opening 15 minutes of the second period were the key to the match. During this phase Sutton & Epsom played their best rugby and, with two tries, created a 12-point lead.

The Surrey men started the second half with renewed relish and it took only a couple of minutes for their pack to be rewarded with a try from towering lock Ewan McTaggart to put S&E 12-5 up. On this occasion there was to be no instant reply from the hosts.

The Rugby Lane eight increased the pressure at the scrummage. From one penalty the ball was drilled into the corner and, though the first lineout was disrupted, from the next the Sutton & Epsom catch and drive culminated in a Dan Jones try. The conversion failed but Sutton & Epsom extended their advantage to 17-5.

The playing conditions had deteriorated markedly, with heavier rain and the wind now blowing with increasing vigour in the hosts' favour. Gravesend rallied in search of a try to get within a score. It was no surprise that, when offered a kickable penalty with 15 minutes left on the clock, they opted for the tap penalty. It felt a bit like Groundhog Day as again the referee indicated the ball had been held up over the line.

To add to the drama, the game became one with uncontested scrums. This decision resulted in the traditional confusion, consternation and conniptions.

The game became an increasingly truncated affair, with many stoppages the result of Sutton & Epsom infringements, and it was no shock when the referee issued yellow cards. The first to go was replacement Gareth O'Brien for being offside and he was soon followed by Tom Lennard. Despite Sutton & Epsom being reduced to 13, the game was already in time added on.

Sutton & Epsom had the chance to relieve the siege but their clearance failed to make touch. A fine arcing run from the 22 looked destined for a score but fell just short. After penalties and multiple carries, the hosts were belatedly rewarded when Brad Money added his five cents' worth to score. The successful conversion ended the game with Sutton & Epsom 17-12 victors.

A performance of character

Sam Lennie, rather like Matt Whitaker of yesteryear, was awarded Man of the Match by the hosts for the umpteenth time. In his current form he reminds one of William Hazlitt's comment on Cavanagh, the great fives player of his day: "there was not only nobody equal, but nobody second to him."

However, this Saturday, in truth, it was a performance of character, determination and defiance by the whole squad that was the source of the victory, and it was almost invidious to single out the likes of Josh Glanville.

For Gravesend, their back-row triumvirate of Money, Chahal and Falefatu revelled in the conditions and were only subdued by exceptional Sutton & Epsom defence on their line. As for the back divisions, they will be praying for more favourable conditions for the return fixture at Rugby Lane but, then again, the game is scheduled for 6 February.

Rectory Field, as ever, was a most convivial location after the game as juniors and infants rubbed shoulders or shins with players from as far back as the 1960s. This season there is an additional bonus, thoroughly appreciated by this correspondent: the game is shown on a big screen in the clubhouse, meaning that the less intrepid can avoid exposure, trench foot and desquamation and watch in luxurious comfort.

Next Saturday Sutton & Epsom return to the home comforts of Rugby Lane to play Horsham. In the rest of the league, Beckenham lost their unbeaten status but remain in pole position, although only five points separate the top eight clubs.

Sutton & Epsom: Lennard, Scott, Bibby, Maxwell, Findlay A, Bunting, Findlay E, Johnson, Lennie, Boaden, McTaggart,

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Glanville, Rea, Jones and Hegarty (captain). Replacements: Howes, Tame and O'Brien.

Gravesend: Betts, Barnes, Hope, Sims, Cooke, Kite, Brady M, Brooker, Dadson, Steel, Mackenzie, Brett, Money, Chahal and Falefatu. Replacements: Laqeretabua, Sims and Brady C.

Bob Haimes

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Photo from a previous fixture – credit Robin Kennedy

Hat-trick hero Lennie inspires Sutton and Epsom success

16 November 2026



Bromley 31 Sutton & Epsom 40. Saturday 17th October.

Sutton & Epsom survived a remarkable second-half Bromley fightback before hooker Sam Lennie completed a hat-trick to inspire the Black & Whites to a thrilling 40-31 victory on the road.

Last season Sutton & Epsom opened their campaign at Bromley on a gloriously sunny afternoon more suited to cricket than rugby, with Hayes CC 2nd XI versus Chislehurst CC 2nd XI providing the genteel backdrop to the physical combat.

Sutton and Epsom won that encounter 49-19, although the result was skewed by the absence of several Bromley first-team players lured away by a golf weekend. At the end of the season Bromley gained revenge with a thrilling 34-30 win at Rugby Lane, a result more reflective of two sides who ultimately finished only four points apart in the league table.

This time Bromley entered the match unbeaten following victories over Battersea Ironsides, Dartfordians and Hammersmith & Fulham. Sutton had also beaten the Ironsides and Hammersmith & Fulham, so a close encounter was anticipated.

Those at the Warman Sports Club were not disappointed.

Tom Lennard and Ben Tame returned to the Sutton and Epsom squad after the previous weekend's delayed start to the season had disrupted their plans. Lennard moved to full-back in the continuing absence of Gareth O'Brien.

Joe Lovatt, despite breaking his nose in the previous round, was named among the replacements, with his fiancée presumably hoping he would not resemble a Picasso portrait by the final whistle.

Bromley's squad contained plenty of experience, including first-team centurions Robbie Brown, George Hawkins, Jonathon Griffiths, James Powell and the Scott brothers.

The Bromley pitch has a significant slope and Sutton played downhill during the opening half, while the hosts had the breeze in their favour.

It took only a minute for the visitors to open the scoring.

Lennard impressively caught a clearance before kicking into open space. The full-back then gathered his own kick and, three passes later, Adam Bibby was sauntering beneath the posts.

Freddy Bunting converted for an early 7-0 lead.

Helped by a flurry of penalties, Bromley applied pressure but twice failed to make the most of five-metre lineouts. Their frustration increased on the quarter-hour when Sutton scored from a lineout inside the 22.

Excellent control by the pack advanced the ball before Sam Lennie burst from the melee to score. Bunting again added the extras to make it 14-0.

Bromley then opted for a penalty attempt but the kick slid past the upright.

Sutton and Epsom immediately travelled back down the slope and scored again. Another attacking lineout supplied the platform before scrum-half Euan Findlay darted over.

Bunting landed an excellent touchline conversion and suddenly Sutton led 21-0.

Considering their share of possession and territory, Bromley were overdue a response. It came through an impressive move initiated by Harvey Young and finished in style by George Hawkins.

Jonathon Griffiths converted to reduce the deficit to 21-7.

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From the restart Sutton and Epsom looked certain to score again when Bunting burst through and charged deep into the 22, only for his pass to be intercepted.

The visitors did not have long to wait for their bonus-point try.

A Bromley counterattack ended in a penalty near halfway. Sutton and Epsom kicked to the corner and, after one lineout was pulled down, kicked another penalty to within five metres.

For the third time the catch-and-drive produced a score and once again Lennie was the beneficiary.

Bunting missed the conversion but Sutton held an imposing 26-7 lead at the interval.

The question whenever rugby is played on such a distinctive slope is how many points the downhill advantage is worth.

Sutton and Epsom were complete novices on the Warman Sports Club's main pitch and, if the visitors believed a 19-point half-time lead represented a winning position, they were about to be corrected.

Bromley levelled the scores in 12 chaotic minutes.

An early home try came after excellent continuity between forwards and backs, with James Powell eventually applying the finishing touch. Griffiths converted and it was 26-14.

Only a few minutes later Bromley struck again.

The dangerous Hawkins initially fumbled the ball backwards but recovered to create the opportunity. Hooker Harry Milne gathered possession with plenty still to do and powered over with defenders hanging from him.

The touchline conversion failed but suddenly the deficit was only five points at 26-19.

Then came the equalising score — and one that Sutton supporters will not remember fondly.

Bromley opted for a kick at goal. It missed, bounced loose and flanker Tom Scott reacted quickest, catching the ball and falling across the line.

Whether viewed as opportunism, superb awareness, comedy or calamity depended largely on one's allegiance.

Griffiths converted and, astonishingly, it was 26-26.

The sizeable Warman crowd was now in full voice, anticipating a continuation of the Bromley onslaught.

Sutton steadied themselves, with prop Dan Johnson leading the way through a couple of powerful carries. His second ended with blood pouring from his nose and Eric Duey entering the action.

Once more Sutton and Epsom punished a Bromley penalty by kicking into the corner.

The resulting drive was disrupted and Bromley hacked clear, apparently denying Lennie the opportunity of completing his hat-trick.

Perhaps the hooker took that personally.

Following Tipene Maxwell's initial break, Lennie carried on the attack and simply refused to be stopped, powering over near the posts for his third try.

Bunting converted and Sutton and Epsom were back in front at 33-26.

Soon afterwards Bromley were reduced to 14 men and, with 15 minutes remaining, the heavens opened.

Momentum had swung back towards the visitors and the inspired Lennie again swept all before him as he rampaged towards the line in search of a fourth try.

He was denied, but Sutton earned a penalty and turned down the kick at goal in favour of exploiting their lineout superiority.

Bromley resisted the first attempt but conceded another penalty. Sutton opted for the scrum and, a couple of phases later, Josh Rea selected a devastating line to cross from close range.

Bunting added the simple conversion and the Black & Whites had restored a substantial 40-26 advantage.

Those accustomed to supporting Sutton & Epsom, however, were not counting their chickens with ten minutes still to play.

Their caution was justified when Bromley scored a fifth try shortly after returning to 15 men.

A sweeping move ended with centre Griffiths crossing in the corner. His conversion attempt into the blustery breeze fell short, leaving Sutton 40-31 ahead.

There was still time for further drama.

Tom Boaden departed with cramp and the bloodied but unbowed Johnson returned to the pitch. Sutton replacement Ben Tame was then shown a yellow card as the visitors dug in to defend their advantage.

For all Bromley's late endeavour, however, the hosts could not fashion another scoring opportunity and Sutton & Epsom held on for an absorbing 40-31 victory.

For spectators there are few greater thrills than watching sweeping attacks and backs finishing flowing moves.

The aficionado, however, can revel equally in rugby's more physical contest — the route-one attack confronted by a defiant "they shall not pass" defence.

For a period early in the second half Sutton appeared to have run up the white flag as Bromley erased their 19-point

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advantage.

Nobody, however, had told Sam Lennie.

The hooker grabbed the contest by the scruff of the neck and took the battle back to Bromley, dragging his teammates with him.

It was a stunning performance encapsulating some of rugby's oldest qualities.

Next Saturday Sutton's tour of Kent continues when they travel to Rectory Field to face Gravesend, who sit second in the table with three wins from four matches.

Sutton & Epsom are fourth, one point behind, also with three victories.

Beckenham are now the division's only unbeaten club after defeating Medway and top the table with the maximum 20 points.

John Croysdill

Sutton & Epsom: Lennard, Scott, Bibby, Maxwell, A Findlay, Bunting, E Findlay, Johnson, Lennie, Boaden, McTaggart, Glanville, Rea, Jones, Hegarty (c).

Replacements: Duey, Tame, Lovatt.

Bromley: Hawkins, Powell, Weekes, Griffiths, Lovell, Young, Friday, McFarland, Milne, Hosie, Brown, Elliott, T Scott, Gray, Child-May.

Replacements: Carroll, Harding, G Scott.

Photo credit Iain Frazer

Sutton and Epsom Dig Deep for Thrilling Win

16 November 2026



Sutton and Epsom 34 Battersea Ironsides 31 Saturday 3rd October

One of the quirks of the various delays in the season's opening is that the Rugby Lane supporters will be severely undernourished in terms of their 1st XV league diet. The campaign was always intended to break with recent tradition and open on the second, rather than first, Saturday in September. Then the weather intervened to see the curtain raised belatedly last Saturday. In addition, there is a moment when clubs have back-to-back road trips in the fixture list. All of the above conspired to make Saturday's game against the Ironsides the only home fixture before Halloween. Fortuitously, for those who attended, the crowd revelled in a ten-try thriller of fluctuating fortunes with the hosts emerging triumphant in a tense conclusion by 34-31.

Sutton and Epsom made two changes from Week 1 with Eric Duey and debutant Tipene Maxwell appearing on the bench. Before the kick-off there was a minute's silence to commemorate one of the most respected men in Sutton and Epsom's rugby history. Bryan Chapple was a former player, President and committeeman par excellence who was also one of the instigators of the Seven Counties Merit Table. Ominous black clouds loomed over Rugby Lane as Alex Lambe's whistle and Cameron Baker's boot initiated proceedings. Both teams pressed hard for the opening score as attacking verve rather than caution was the order of the day. After a dozen minutes, much to the delight of the Boaden Fan Club, the new centurion Thomas scored following an impressive catch and drive from the lineout by the Sutton and Epsom pack. Freddy Bunting lost his footing attempting the conversion as Sutton and Epsom led 5-0.

The brevity of the lead was as heartening for Ironsides supporters as it was depressing for the Rugby Lane faithful. S&E fluffed their lines at the restart, Battersea regained the ball and centre Ben Lyons celebrated his 100th cap in style with a dazzling solo run. Cameron Baker added the extras to put Ironsides 7-5 up. Sutton and Epsom were marginally slower by a minute with their riposte with a sweeping move by the backs that was expertly concluded by winger Angus Findlay. The conversion drifted wide but the hosts had regained the initiative and led 10-7. The score was synonymous with a much-improved performance from the back division compared with the stuttering style of the opening Saturday. The passing was crisper as players ran onto the ball at pace. Equally, the Green & Whites threequarters had power and pace that promised this would be another high-scoring encounter.

Approaching the half-hour the Black & Whites extended their lead as forwards and backs combined with devastating effect. Securing the lineout flanker Dan Jones made a break. Quick ball came to Freddy Bunting who delayed his pass to perfection to put fellow centre Adam Bibby into a gap. The fast-stepping New Zealander with instant acceleration and

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meandering menace was unstoppable as he scored near the posts. Freddy Bunting opened his account for 17-7. Five minutes later the lead was increased with a Bunting penalty as the scoreboard read 20-7.

Battersea's progress was being severely hindered by a lineout that was not functioning. However, the visitors finished the first period with some of their best play. Number 9 Ed Carr, alert to what was unfolding before him, took a quick penalty and headed for the uprights. Desperate defence finally hauled him down. The try soon followed as the ball was transferred wide and, with Ironsides in abundance, Ben Lyons dummied and strolled home for his second try. Cameron Baker converted to see his side trail 14-20. Despite the best endeavours of all concerned there was no further scoring as the whistle blew for the interval. Players and spectators took a breather from the entertainment. With a history of nail-biting finishes and two teams already demonstrating their attacking prowess there were great expectations for more tries to come.

There was nearly a quick Battersea encore at the start of the second half as Ed Carr took another quick tap penalty. Sutton and Epsom were saved by a splendid tackle on Amir Sultan in the corner by Gareth O'Brien. Five minutes later the Ironsides were celebrating another try. Turning over the ball at the breakdown they countered at pace and fullback Tom Maher scythed through the defence. The 15 was halted on the line but blindside Dan McCleary scored when the ball went wide. The conversion from the flank hit the upright to deny Cameron Baker as Battersea trailed by a solitary point at 19-20. S&E replaced winger Finlay Scott with the fourth member of their Kiwi commune as Tipene Maxwell made his debut.

The Green & Whites had gained the upper hand to such an extent in the third quarter that the Black & Whites barely had the ball in their hands. The Sutton and Epsom supporters were lifted by a thunderous Maxwell tackle as he introduced himself to the uninitiated. However, it was Ed Carr, who was proving to be a most uncomfortable thorn in the home side, with another quick tap and go that exposed the S&E defences. Dan McCleary was on hand to collect his second try. Baker bisected the uprights for the 26-20 lead and a bonus point for Battersea Ironsides. The transformation of the fixture was to become more profound within five minutes as the visitors crossed the whitewash again. It was a scrappy affair as the hosts struggled to gather a loose ball and in the ensuing confusion prop Evan Jones joyously scored in the corner. The conversion failed but Battersea Ironsides had turned the match around with 24 unanswered points to lead 31-20.

Feast and famine in terms of points scoring had been a rather frustrating theme of Sutton and Epsom's previous campaign. The XV had shown enough in the first period to offer their supporters hope that this match had not disappeared over the horizon. Their first priority was to get a fair share of possession as the game entered the final quarter. An invaluable 50/22 gave the Black & Whites an attacking lineout. The ball was secured and the forwards rumbled on before the ball was spread to the opposite touch. Lock Ewan McTaggart celebrated his birthday with an emphatic score to resuscitate the ailing Sutton and Epsom side. Freddy Bunting reduced the deficit further as S&E trailed 27-31.

For those who like the concept of the 'turning point' in a sporting context perhaps it came moments later. Sutton and Epsom were countering on the halfway when Battersea intercepted and set off for an inevitable try under the posts. But the shrill blast of Mr Lambe's whistle indicated a penalty for offside that was greeted with relief by all those favouring the men in Black & White. S&E kicked to the 22 where their forwards, now resembling an unstoppable force, urged on by the crowd squandered their chance with a knock-on. Amid growing tension and fluctuating fortunes the game entered the final minutes of normal time.

Powered with renewed self-belief the hosts chased down a kick to win a penalty. The ball was propelled to prime position in the corner. Possession was secured, the forwards rumbled forward and the crowd held their breath. Mr Lambe set off arm aloft to stand under the posts to indicate a penalty try. It was greeted with raucous acclaim and an ironic smile from Sam Lennie as he realised that it would not add to his considerable tally of tries. S&E were back ahead 34-31. There were echoes of the Hammersmith & Fulham game the previous Saturday as the hosts were required to survive for a few minutes.

Reduced to 14 the Ironsides rallied for one final assault. The restart went loose but Sutton and Epsom secured it only to see the clearance charged down. Then Battersea were awarded a penalty in front of the posts near the 22. After a lengthy pause in proceedings the visitors decided to go for glory and take a tap penalty. The consequences were disastrous. The ball carrier was isolated and the ball was turned over. Then Adam Bibby launched a tremendous clearance into the opposition 22 and the chasing players forced the lineout. The home team won the ball and were awarded a penalty that was prodded to touch to conclude a wonderful contest with Sutton and Epsom 34-31 victors.

As is normally the case in this fixture either side could have been triumphant. Building on their win in Week 1 S&E were far more threatening with ball in hand. Adam Bibby was outstanding in every facet of the game as the team demonstrated resilience and self-belief to turn the tide in the final quarter. Battersea Ironsides with their disruptive forwards at the breakdown, astute Ed Carr at 9 and a surplus of strong runners in their back division will not struggle to score tries this season and will be tough opponents for every team in the league. For Sutton and Epsom next Saturday is the start of three sojourns to the Garden of England with a visit to Priestfields to renew relations with Medway who have returned to the league after one season in Level 5.

Sutton and Epsom

O'Brien, Scott, Bibby, Bunting, Findlay A, Lennard, Findlay E, Johnson, Lennie, Beck, McTaggart, Glanville, Rea, Jones & Hegarty (captain).

Replacements: Boaden, Tame & Lovatt.

Battersea Ironsides

Maher, Sultan, Bell, Lyons, Craig, Baker, Carr, Jones, Lewis, Chetwynd, Kemp, Coleman, McCleary, Chitan (captain) & Bishop.

Replacements: Batterbury, Mason & Ford.

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John Croysdill

Photo credit: Robin Kennedy

Sutton & Epsom squeeze home in Hurlingham thriller

16 November 2026



Hammersmith & Fulham 33 Sutton & Epsom 35

It was a belated welcome to the 2026/27 Regional 2 South East campaign at Hurlingham Park on Saturday.

The RFU had wisely delayed the start of hostilities as the country recalled the summer of ’76 and the drought had impacted pitches. No doubt RFU committees, puffing on their Montecristo No. 2s, paraphrased Lieutenant Colonel Bill Kilgore’s immortal words with relief: “I love the smell of petrichor in the morning.”

The Black & Whites’ season began with a first-ever league encounter against Hammersmith & Fulham. The honour of winning the inaugural edition of the “Ampersand Cup” went to S&E as they narrowly defeated H&F 35-33, despite being outscored five tries to four.

There was a solitary debutant for S&E, with James Beck, formerly of CS Stags, starting in the front row. In contrast, it was a red-letter day for Sutton prop Thomas Boaden, who made his 100th First XV league appearance off the bench.

Unfortunately H&F president Jason Leonard – a fellow prop who achieved a rather more notable century of caps – was not in attendance to offer his congratulations.

The hosts made a host of changes from their final game of the previous season, with ten alterations, but prospective debutant Jack Coman was unfortunately sidelined with a calf injury in the warm-up.

There was a minute’s silence before the match to remember Bob Lawless, the former Middlesex president who sadly passed away in June.

Referee Cyril Brognard’s whistle initiated proceedings as Sutton’s Frederick Bunting kicked off the campaign.

The Black & Whites were on the board almost instantly. The enveloping frame of Euan McTaggart blocked a box kick and the ball stayed in play. A couple of passes later scrum-half Euan Findlay was on hand to touch down in the corner.

The Bunting boot added the extras for a 7-0 S&E lead.

Maintaining the early momentum, a high tackle a few minutes later offered the visitors a chance to increase their advantage. It was no surprise to regular S&E followers that the easy three points were shunned in favour of a kick to the corner.

H&F stood firm and there was no further addition to the score.

After a dozen minutes came the unfortunate sight of debutant James Beck leaving the field with an Achilles injury that has ended his season.

Play resumed with another Sutton penalty, converted by Frederick Bunting – much to the relief of the travelling onlookers – to extend Sutton’s advantage to ten points. Thomas Boaden entered the fray for his 100th cap far earlier than he had expected.

Hammersmith now showed they had plenty to offer with a devastating attack that left the Sutton defence in tatters. However, they were thwarted a yard from glory as S&E secured not only a turnover but also a relieving penalty.

That disappointment was soon replaced by joy as H&F opened their account. A clearance kick bounced back towards the hosts and two timely prods saw the ball roll over the try line, where Ben Morris won the race to score.

Geoff Mahon’s excellent strike from the flank made it 10-7 to Sutton.

The visitors returned to attacking mode with the dazzling feet of Adam Bibby and a powerful arcing run by captain Hegarty bringing them to the line.

This time it was Sutton’s turn to be frustrated by conceding a penalty when so close to success, but like the hosts they soon had another chance.

Flanker Joshua Rea made the initial break before a sidestep and dummy from Gareth O’Brien cut through the backs,

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enabling him to pass to hooker Samuel Lennie, who cantered home.

The conversion narrowly missed as the Black & Whites led 15-7 on the half-hour.

Hammersmith & Fulham bounced back instantly to send the Hurlingham Park supporters into raptures.

The score was a fraternal affair as full-back Douglas Russell cleared and brother Tim skilfully claimed the bouncing ball before speeding upfield and passing back to Douglas, who ran it home.

Geoff Mahon bisected the uprights to reduce the deficit to 15-14.

The remainder of the half offered no further scoring opportunities, but on the evidence of the opening 40 minutes the crowd could look forward to plenty more entertainment.

Sutton took shelter in the shade to ponder their strategy for the remainder of the contest.

Sutton made another rapid start with a sensational score soon after the restart.

Daniel Jones carried the ball out of defence before being enveloped by H&F players, but he managed to pass to fellow flanker Joshua Rea.

To say the Kiwi had plenty to do would have been an understatement, but he covered more than 60 metres to score despite tacklers being in hot pursuit for virtually every stride.

Bunting converted as nonchalantly as a smoker flicking ash from a cigarette and S&E led 22-14.

Five minutes later the Rugby Lane followers were cheering the bonus-point try.

Daniel Jones made another telling break and found the ideal man in support, Euan McTaggart, who used every inch of his considerable reach to place the ball over the line.

The metronomic Bunting made it 29-14.

Those two scores were not, however, the precursor to a relaxing romp for the Black & Whites, as H&F replied instantly.

It was a score that will have had defensive coaches muttering profanities when reviewing the match afterwards.

S&E were awarded a penalty but failed to find touch. At least the ball remained deep inside the Hammersmith 22.

The hosts' adventure was then aided by poor tackling. A speculative kick ahead, recalling the fortunate bounce for H&F's first try, led to a diving attempt to catch the ball.

It was spilled forward and hacked on to within five metres. Quickly recycled, it went to fly-half Ed Shand, whose stylish dummy enabled him to stroll in for the try.

Geoff Mahon made the score 29-21 and put his side firmly back into the contest.

With Benjamin Tame and Joseph Lovatt coming off the bench, Sutton hoped fresh legs on a sweltering afternoon would provide the necessary vitality to extend their advantage.

With a keen eye on the scoreboard, they sensibly took advantage of Frederick Bunting's kicking talent. He added a penalty at the start of the final quarter to make it 32-21.

A minute later the Middlesex men were offered a kickable penalty but sought premium points by kicking to the corner.

Their bravery was rewarded as they secured the lineout ball and advanced relentlessly.

It was left to scrum-half Geoff Mahon to score. The number nine then made it four conversions from four as H&F closed to within a score at 32-28.

The game continued with mounting tension as both sides tenaciously scrapped over every ball, each seeking the decisive blow.

As the match entered added time Sutton fly-half Thomas Lennard made the significant intervention. His arcing break saw him scuttling into the opposition 22 and the scrambling defence conceded a penalty directly in front of the uprights.

There was no hesitation in choosing to kick and, as expected, Frederick Bunting did the necessary for 35-28 as referee Brognard announced that three minutes remained.

For experienced watchers of the Black & Whites, extreme anxiety immediately set in as they watched the restart descend.

Their fears were realised when the hosts were awarded a penalty.

With a sense of inevitability Sutton found themselves defending a lineout ten metres from their own line.

H&F won the ball and their forwards did superbly to patiently advance towards the line before the final surge.

Referee Brognard, perfectly positioned on one knee, raised his arm aloft to signal the try.

The exultant home crowd soon fell silent as Geoff Mahon stepped up to take the final kick of the game from the extremities.

It fell short.

Sutton had survived to win 35-33.

Sutton & Epsom were good value for their victory, with the lineout and set scrum impressing throughout. Joshua Rea produced perhaps his finest performance in a Sutton shirt and S&E wisely exploited the Bunting boot to secure a winning start.

Hammersmith & Fulham showed themselves to be an excellent addition to the league, both on and off the field, as all

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concerned retired to The Temperance to enjoy the traditional rugby fellowship after the game.

Next Saturday Rugby Lane hosts Battersea Ironsides for Sutton & Epsom's first home league fixture of the season.

Sutton & Epsom

O'Brien, Scott, Bibby, Bunting, Findlay A, Lennard, Findlay E, Johnson, Lennie, Beck, McTaggart, Glanville, Rea, Jones, Hegarty (capt).

Replacements: Boaden, Tame, Lovatt.

Hammersmith & Fulham

Russell D, Russell T, MacLeod, Louis, Scott, Shand, Mahon, Rogan, McCarthy, Poulton, Lang, Rivett, Morris, Perry, Proctor.

Replacements: Cowls, Chamberlain, Thompson.

John Croysdill

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Image: non-specific S&E in rugby action

Horsham hold a win against Sutton & Epsom RFC

16 November 2026



Horsham 26 Sutton and Epsom 20. 7th March.

In November Horsham travelled to Rugby Lane and were victorious. The Black & Whites scored a late Kyren Ghumra try to add to a Sam Lennie hat-trick and were indebted to a Freddy Bunting conversion to earn two bonus points in a 36-29 defeat.

On Saturday the Sussex club maintained their promotion push but were taken to the limit by a spirited Sutton and Epsom side. After a game of intense commitment from all parties, Horsham secured a 26-20 win that included a vital four-try bonus point.

Tom Lennard kicked off for Sutton and Epsom on a chilly afternoon at the splendid Coolhurst Ground as Ben Tame celebrated his 50th league appearance for the Black & Whites.

Horsham looked to spread the ball wide from the outset. However, Declan Nwachukwu spilled the ball under pressure from Jordan Huie to provide Sutton and Epsom with the first scrum in a most advantageous position near the 22.

Firstly Finlay Scott went close, then Josh Glanville was denied by a superb tackle from Archie Fox and, under intense pressure, Horsham number eight George Howard was issued a yellow card. From the ensuing penalty hooker Sam Lennie forced his way over for the opening try. Freddy Bunting split the uprights for a 7-0 lead for Sutton and Epsom.

Five minutes later Horsham were level. The hosts went on the attack and only determined defence prevented an instant reply. Sutton and Epsom survived a line-out in the corner when the Sussex pack were penalised for crossing.

The next Horsham attack proved more constructive. Taking advantage of defensive miscommunication near halfway, Tom Johnson made the decisive break and passed to supporting scrum-half Aaron Linfield, who scored. Caleb Raubenheimer added the extras to make it 7-7 after a thrilling opening ten minutes.

Despite the best intentions of both teams, it took another twenty minutes before the next score. Sutton and Epsom tackled relentlessly against opponents determined to move the ball wide, while Horsham thwarted the visitors' best efforts with excellent jackling.

Sterling Sutton and Epsom defence had already seen the hosts held up over the line. Eventually, similar to Sutton and Epsom's opening score, Horsham crossed from close range following a penalty when their pack would not be denied. Raubenheimer converted to give the hosts a 14-7 lead.

There was an anxious moment for Sutton and Epsom when Horsham threatened to extend their lead but a promising attack ended in the 22 with poor execution. Sutton and Epsom countered when Gareth O'Brien burst into the 22 and passed to Joe Lovatt, who was wrapped up by the cover defence.

Sutton and Epsom were brought back for a penalty as the tackle on O'Brien was judged too high. Freddy Bunting calmly took the three points to reduce the deficit to 14-10.

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However, the intensity of the contest claimed its first Sutton and Epsom casualty as Finlay Scott was forced off with a hamstring injury. Sutton and Epsom reshuffled their lineup, with Josh Rea moving into the backs as Josh Glanville returned after earlier being replaced by Ben Tame.

The half ended with no further scoring but Sutton and Epsom's revamped XV were pressing hard to regain the lead. It had been a highly entertaining opening period played at a frenetic pace, with both defences showing a strong appetite for the physical contest.

In such a demanding encounter, fatigue on the fast surface looked likely to become a factor in the second half. Sutton and Epsom suffered another setback at the interval when hooker Dan Jones was forced off after aggravating a shoulder injury. Tom Boaden came on to start the second half.

Sutton and Epsom fight back

Sutton and Epsom began the second half with real purpose. Sam Lennie went agonisingly close to a second try but the referee, unsighted, awarded Horsham a drop-out after ruling the hooker had been held up over the line.

Undeterred, Sutton and Epsom stormed back through a weaving run from Jordan Huie. Their pressure resulted in a penalty directly in front of the posts, and captain Freddy Bunting reduced the deficit to a single point at 13-14.

Perhaps stung by their shrinking lead, Horsham increased the pressure but squandered an excellent opportunity with an uncharacteristically poor pass.

A solid Sutton and Epsom scrum then provided the platform for a familiar Rob Hegarty surge from number eight to relieve pressure. However, Horsham earned a turnover penalty through another excellent jackal.

Declining the shot at goal, Horsham kicked to the corner and were rewarded when Caleb Raubenheimer scored their third try. The fly-half showed both composure and strength to cross despite defenders hanging off him. The conversion from the touchline missed but Horsham led 19-13 with half an hour remaining.

Sutton and Epsom responded with determination. Another Sam Lennie run earned a scrum deep in Horsham territory and a penalty forced the hosts back to their line.

Horsham produced their best defensive set of the afternoon. The Sutton and Epsom forwards were initially repelled and when the backs joined the attack they too were stopped, with Sutton and Epsom again held up over the line.

The Sussex side countered immediately but Sutton and Epsom's pack won a relieving penalty after wheeling a scrum five metres from their own line.

The relentless nature of the contest was beginning to show as medical teams were increasingly required and several players on both sides carried knocks.

Late drama

The heroic defensive efforts were finally broken in the closing five minutes. Sutton and Epsom had repelled another Horsham attack before the hosts mistakenly kicked a penalty dead rather than securing a five-metre line-out.

From the restart the dangerous Declan Nwachukwu gathered the ball with space and ran it back superbly. The winger reached the 22 before passing to Tom Sanders, who ran in under the posts. Raubenheimer converted to give Horsham a 26-13 lead and secure their bonus point.

If anyone thought that try had finished Sutton and Epsom, they were quickly proven wrong.

With time added on and several Horsham players struggling with injuries, Sutton and Epsom launched a final assault. From a five-metre line-out they earned a penalty and this time powered over, with Rob Hegarty emerging as the scorer.

Freddy Bunting produced a superb touchline conversion to secure a bonus point for Sutton and Epsom, closing the gap to 26-20.

Sutton and Epsom were not finished and launched one last attack, with Adam Bibby running dangerously through the Horsham defence. The Black & Whites earned a line-out inside the Horsham 22 with the final play of the game.

Seconds later the Sussex side forced a knock-on and the referee's whistle ended a compelling contest.

Promotion race tightens

Round 19 confirmed Regional 2 South East as effectively a two-horse race between Sidcup and Brighton, although Horsham are now just one win away from the play-offs and a chance to return to Level 5 at the first attempt.

The hosts combined attacking flair with thunderous tackling and crucial turnovers. It was a credit to Sutton and Epsom that the final whistle was greeted by the home side with both joy and relief.

The physical nature of the match took a heavy toll on both squads, who will welcome a rest weekend before the league resumes on 21 March.

Sutton and Epsom will host Canterbury Pilgrims while Horsham travel to Balmoral Avenue to face Beckenham.

Sutton and Epsom

O'Brien, Scott, Bibby, Bunting (capt), Huie, Lennard, Lovatt, Lennie, Jones, Howes, McTaggart, Glanville, Pulvirenti, Rea and Hegarty.
Replacements: Boaden, Tame, Gerhard.

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Horsham

Fox, Grogan, Sanders (capt), Johnson, Nwachukwu, Raubenheimer, Linfield, Osgood, Tredgett, Kilfeather, Denhart, Endacott, Smith, McLoughlin and Howard.
Replacements: Powell, Thompson and Knowles.

John Croysdill

Photo credit Robin Kennedy

Next fixture: Saturday 21st March: Sutton & Epsom v Canterbury II

Sutton & Epsom Fall Short in Entertaining 10-Try Battle at Rugby Lane

16 November 2026



Sutton & Epsom RFC 27 Battersea Ironsides 38. Saturday 28th February.

With hindsight being, as ever, twenty-twenty vision, the defeat of the Black & Whites at Garratt Green has been viewed by some as the turning point of the season for Sutton & Epsom. A 15-point lead with seven minutes to go, depending on your loyalties, was either thrown away through incompetence or overturned by spirited brilliance as the Ironsides triumphed 24-22. Since that November afternoon the fortunes of the Rugby Lane team have headed in a southerly direction. Saturday's fixture saw Sutton & Epsom, in seventh, take on Battersea, in sixth, with a solitary point separating them. The visitors took the spoils in an entertaining 38-27 win to gain a bonus point victory that saw them rise into the play-off positions.

For the Black & Whites there was minimal disruption to the squad but welcome returns for Ewan McTaggart after his international adventures and Kyren Ghumra on the wing. There was an inauspicious start to the game for the hosts, with echoes of the match in November, as the kick-off went out on the full to initiate a scrum. Battersea immediately showed their attacking intent with a delightful chip and gather by Cameron Baker but he was met by a perfectly timed tackle from Gareth O'Brien. It started an opening quarter full of attacking intent by both teams that was met by sterling defence that thwarted fleeting moments of try-scoring potential for both XVs. On the quarter hour there was an unfortunate incident as Amir Sultan rose skywards to take a clearance kick. Kyren Ghumra slipped as he approached and the collision ended with a heavy fall. Amir Sultan, after a lengthy delay, had to be helped from the field to sympathetic and universal applause from the sizeable crowd. He was replaced by Lewis Waters and the accidental nature of the incident meant that Monsieur Brognard did not issue a card.

At the start of the second quarter Sutton & Epsom enjoyed their best period of play. In rapid succession they had opportunities. The first saw Ewan McTaggart and Jack Howes combine and the second was initiated by a Gareth O'Brien counter. Both ended in turnovers that were the result of insufficient support and swarming Battersea defence. The Rugby Lane supporters had the consolation of a Tom Lennard penalty after 25 minutes that put Sutton & Epsom into a 3-0 lead. The Ironsides responded in the perfect manner but in an unexpected way. A multi-phase attack was brought back for a penalty that was kicked to the corner. Sutton & Epsom stole the 5-metre line and cleared superbly to halfway. The visitors took a quick ball but with only two men available to counter it should not have been a problem. However, a surging run tore Sutton & Epsom apart and replacement Lewis Waters was in support for the try. Cameron Baker's conversion drifted wide but Battersea led 5-3.

The game continued to demonstrate the scoring potential of both teams as well as the defensive prowess of players frustrating opponents with timely turnovers. Sutton & Epsom hopes were raised, as so often is the case, with a robust run from hooker Sam Lennie. A man who relishes physical contact and has a deceptive turn of speed he broke free to advance to 10 metres out. Credit to the scrambling defence of the Battersea team that they reorganised and halted the hosts a couple of phases later. Unfortunately for Sutton & Epsom there was no silver lining to this cloud, as the subsequent penalty failed to add the three points.

As the first period entered time added on the visitors added another try from a stunning break. This time it was scrum-half Dan Thomas with a scintillating surge that beat the initial tacklers and found the wide-open spaces. His half-back partner Cameron Baker was on hand to provide the coup de grâce much to the delight of not only his charming parents but also the many travelling Ironsides fans who added much to a wonderful atmosphere at Rugby Lane. Baker added the simple conversion for a 12-3 lead. The half ended in frustration for Sutton & Epsom. Adam Bibby sensationally took the restart and Sutton & Epsom camped in the 22. A penalty was kicked to the corner, the lineout secured and replacement Dan

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Jones went close. The ball was recycled and Tom Lennard was enveloped and kept vertical for the turnover that concluded the first period. Battersea led 12-3 but no one doubted the potential for more scores in the second half.

Sutton & Epsom began the second half with relish spreading it wide with Kyren Ghumra making yards. The first scrum of the half saw a powerful drive and a penalty to the hosts. The expected kick to the corner and attacking lineout followed. Though they secured the ball Battersea stood strong and got a relieving scrum. Flanker Arboine, as he did all afternoon, carried to great effect and the Ironsides cleared. However, it was Sutton & Epsom's turn to counter for success. An arcing run by Lennie fed Ghumra and the winger, with plenty to do, sped down the line to score. The Black & Whites trailed 8-12. The visitors were stung into action. Awarded a penalty, they took the quick tap and moments later were agonisingly close to a try as wonderful Sutton & Epsom defence held them up over the line. Five minutes later the next Battersea sortie to the Sutton & Epsom 22 saw the visitors secure their third try. A catch and drive was controlled by the pack and Raph Arboine was on hand to score from close range. The Baker boot added the extras for a 19-8 lead.

Ten minutes later the whole nature of the fixture changed as Sutton & Epsom scored twice in five magnificent minutes of rugby. The first came from a Joe Lovatt kick on halfway as a favourable bounce ended in home hands. Dan Jones accelerated into the open spaces and passed to the fleet-footed Captain Bunting who ran in the try. Tom Lennard added the simple conversion. Rejuvenated by this try Sutton & Epsom were on the attack once more. Their vastly improved lineout secured the ball to initiate a formidable drive that resulted in a try for Sam Lennie. Despite the Lennard conversion from touch rebounding back off the upright the Black & Whites led 20-19.

The men in green replied as if insulted by the hosts' effrontery at taking the lead. They stepped up a gear and immediately put Sutton & Epsom under the cosh. Despite heroic defence near their line Sutton & Epsom succumbed as Charlie Craig took the glory and Battersea regained the lead at 24-20. Earlier it had been a relief to see Amir Sultan return to the game after his injury. However, his return now took on Lazarus-like dimensions. Tom Lennard hoisted a cross-field bomb with the intention of exposing the opposition on halfway. This time the result for the soaring Sultan was much happier. A wonderful airborne take was followed by a sprint from halfway that left the cover a very distant second. Cameron Baker calmly converted for 31-20. Five minutes later the 'Sultan of Swerve' had the ball again and finished with aplomb from 20 out. With the conversion added and the scoreboard reading 38-20 the contest was over.

Sutton & Epsom still had bonus points to chase and to their credit hit back with gusto to score in time added on. Once again they were indebted to their clinical lineout and the tireless endeavour of their pack. This time it was Dan Jones who popped in under the posts. Tom Lennard converted to conclude the scoring as Sutton & Epsom lost 38-27 but gained a vital bonus point. No doubt the coaches will have been frustrated by the errors but it was a thrilling spectacle for the crowd who enjoyed 10 tries. Battersea punished Sutton & Epsom errors with ruthless efficiency and seemed to have that extra gear when required. For the hosts the lineout was transformed, the forwards were formidable in the set-piece and, encouragingly, the supporters enjoyed players running onto the ball from depth with pace. Finally, credit to Cyril Brognard whose officiating enhanced the game with excellent communication, a desire to create a flowing game and superb positioning for those tries from close range.

Next Saturday Sutton & Epsom venture to the Coolhurst Ground to play Horsham RFC for the first time in a league encounter. The Sussex club, having been relegated with Brighton last season, are keen to bounce back to Regional 1 South East at the first opportunity and will be out to secure their place in the play-offs. Meanwhile Battersea host Beckenham with both clubs still in contention for extending their season.

Sutton & Epsom: O'Brien, Scott, Bibby, Bunting ©, Ghumra, Lennard, Lovatt, Boaden, Howes, Lennie, McTaggart, Glanville, Pulvirenti, Rea & Hegarty. Reps: Jones, Duey & Tame.

Battersea Ironsides: Diamond, Sultan, Bourke, Campbell, Craig, Baker, Thomas, Borup, Chetwynd-Milo, Chetwynd, Kemp, Wharton, Arboine, Chitan © & Charles. Reps: Jones, McCleary & Waters.

John Croysdill

Photo credit: Robin Kennedy

Sweet success for Sutton and Epsom Rugby

16 November 2026



Beckenham 14 Sutton & Epsom 22. Saturday 14th February.

Last October a Tom Lennard penalty with the last kick of the game secured a Sutton and Epsom 22-19 win. A Beckenham side hit by injuries, with a George Bunton brace and the traditional Rimarni Richards try, had taken the game to the wire. Not quite as rare as the sighting of a fluffy-backed tit-babbler at Rugby Lane but the Black & Whites crucially won a second half. With the season meandering intermittently to a conclusion both clubs might be considering whether they will be involved in the inaugural play-offs. For the upwardly mobile fourth-placed hosts there is the possibility of embarking on

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four outings. Pessimists from the off-colour visitors might be fearing the 25th April match to decide who remains in Regional 2 South East. On Saturday, lightning struck twice as, once again, S&E won a second half and secured a vital 22-14 win to steady their nerves.

The Black & Whites were without their German international lock, Ewan McTaggart, as 'Die Schwarzen Adler' ('The Black Eagles') were in Portugal for the next round of the European Rugby Championship. Such inconveniences are most familiar to Beckenham with their Caribbean connections. For followers of rugby at this level it is a familiar tale of woe that injuries are never spread evenly from 1 to 15. This season for Sutton and Epsom the Number 9 shirt has been a hexed item of clothing and this week Sam Lovatt became the sixth player to don the cursed shroud. However, there was happier news with the return of Josh Pulvirenti to the colours. The Balmoral Avenue Brigade are no stranger to injuries and have done remarkably well this campaign despite regular absences of key personnel and once more they took the field minus stalwart players.

A year ago Beckenham lost their 2nd XV captain Graham Murray in a tragic traffic accident and there was a minute's applause in his honour before the kick off. Considering the recent weather, that might make a modern Darwin predict webbed feet for humans in the future, Balmoral Avenue was blessed with not only sunshine but a playing surface that was a credit to the hardworking ground staff. Freddy Bunting kicked off for Sutton and Epsom but it was Beckenham who seized the initiative. The home team dominated the opening 15 minutes playing at a high tempo they threatened to run away with the game. An ominous first scrum saw Sutton and Epsom shunted back on their own ball. The combination of desperate defence and inopportune handling near the line saw S&E survive until scrum half Jack Gurney opened the scoring from close range following mounting pressure. Josh Burke added the conversion for a worthy 7-0 lead.

This was not a case of the floodgates opening but, to the contrary, the visitors replied at once. A surging burst from Gareth O'Brien hitting the line at pace from fullback carried him from his own half to near the Beckenham 22. Adam Bibby running the perfect supporting line took the pass and coasted home. Freddy Bunting added the extras for a 7-7 score. Sutton and Epsom had weathered the storm and now began to dominate possession. What was to become the theme of the afternoon was errors undoing invention for both sides. A dropped pass, a penalty kicked dead and turnovers conceded all blighted the Rugby Lane men's progress. Approaching the 40-minute mark Jack Howes won a terrific turnover penalty and Captain Bunting decided on the 3-point option to put his team ahead 10-7. Despite a lengthy period of time added on the scoring for the first period had concluded and the Surrey men turned around 10-7 up.

With the alarming statistics for the 2025-6 season in terms of second half performances by the Black & Whites no one from Rugby Lane was counting numbers in the hen house. For the travelling supporters there was the satisfaction that the tide had turned. For the Balmoral Avenue faithful there had been more than enough evidence that they could take the honours as the fascinatingly poised match resumed. It was a fast start from all concerned as both teams sensed the importance of the first score of the second half. Reversing the policy of the season, much to the delight of ageing alickadoos, Freddy Bunting decided on taking a pot at goal after five minutes. Unfortunately for those with Black & White tinged glasses it narrowly missed.

The game became a stop-and-start affair as errors mounted. Though credit must go to the back row brethren on both sides whose industrious efforts thwarted promising openings, won turnovers and were a ubiquitous source of frustration. It was Beckenham, regaining the pomp of their earlier play, who seized the momentum and were rewarded with the next score. Winger Juai Charles carved through the defence to score and Josh Burke added the conversion to put the hosts 14-10 up. A perfectly struck restart from Freddy Bunting forced a restart drop out from the Beckenham line. Sutton and Epsom took advantage of the territorial position and won a penalty. The 3-point option was shunned for the kick to the corner with a dozen minutes of regular time on the clock. Fortune did not favour the brave but S&E only had themselves to blame as they lost the lineout.

Possibly the turning point of the match came with ten minutes left on the clock as Juai Charles saw yellow and Beckenham were reduced to 14 men. A simple three points were declined as Sutton and Epsom took a tap penalty. Lennie went close as the home forwards stood strong. However, as soon it went wide Gareth O'Brien took advantage of the visitors' numerical superiority to score out wide. The conversion failed but Sutton & Epsom had their noses in front by 15-14. It was a reinvigorated Black & Whites rather than the tiring version of recent times who now took the game by the scruff of the neck. The swerving, stepping and deceptively powerful Adam Bibby broke into the 22 to be felled by an excellent cover tackle. S&E maintained possession and replacement Dan Jones carried towards the line. Once more it was released to the backs and Tom Lennard dummied the cover and scored under the posts. Freddy Bunting chipped over the easy conversion for a 22-14 lead.

Two tries in a few minutes had altered the complexion of the contest. With the game within their grasp Sutton and Epsom tackled tenaciously and kicked sensibly to keep Beckenham at arm's length. The match concluded with two moments that were synonymous of the game. Firstly, Beckenham had an attacking lineout that gave them a great opportunity to get back into the match. It was inexplicably overthrown and lost… it was certainly not the first lost lineout during an afternoon punctuated by costly errors by both teams. Secondly, in the dying moments Sutton and Epsom were in a prime position to go for the bonus point try. The ball was secured and Tom Lennard floated the perfect kick to the corner where not one but two colleagues were waiting unguarded to score. Neither laid a hand on the ball and it hit a knee. The Benny Hill theme tune would have fitted perfectly for the ensuing fiasco as the ball went to halfway. Sanity was resumed and the ball was kicked off the field to secure the 22-14 win for Sutton and Epsom.

Once again this fixture provided excitement and tension until the final whistle. Sutton and Epsom prevailed for a win that was much needed after recent disappointments. Beckenham remained in fourth and have the prospect of promotional play-offs in their own hands. At the other end of the table Old Reigatian's 19-14 loss to Canterbury Pilgrims confirmed their relegation but who joins them is a matter for a very congested lower half of the table. As always the hospitality at Balmoral Avenue was exemplary. Amongst the throng of spectators was Dave Weller who had represented both 1st XVs. The erstwhile flanker, motor cycle racer and expert pumpkin carver diplomatically wore his Beckenham tie to the lunch but secreted his Sutton and Epsom version upon his person in case it would be appropriate. For those Beckenham

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members of a malicious disposition they may be praying for a heat wave in September because Mr Weller has entered the Welsh Iron Man in Tenby.

Another week off and the season resumes on the 28th February when Sutton and Epsom host Battersea Ironsides whilst Beckenham are at home to Gravesend who are snapping at their heels in fifth place.

Sutton & Epsom
O'Brien, Symonds, Bibby, Bunting, Scott, Lennard, Lovatt, Boaden, Howes, Lennie, Duey, Glanville, Pulvirenti, Rea & Hegarty. Reps: Jones & Tame. Unused: Payne.

Beckenham: Bosch, Bennett, Pennacchia, Jebb, Charles, Burke, Gurney, Baker, Aoke-Tiamu, Brown, Prince, Keefe, Moran, Ward & Knowles.
Reps: Richards, Ryan-Coker & L. Caddy.

Epsom scoring a try against Beckenham from a previous fixture. Credit Robin Kennedy.

John Croysdill

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Sutton & Epsom beaten by Gravesend as yellow card proves decisive

16 November 2026



Sutton and Epsom RFC v Gravesend Saturday 31st January. On an autumnal October afternoon Sutton & Epsom defeated Gravesend 29–12 at the Rectory Field. That victory in Round 6 sent them to the summit of Regional 2 South East. However, the current form of S&E has challenged the Podsnapian assumption of reaching the promotion play-offs. A season that started with great expectations has fallen on hard times.

In Round 16 Sutton slipped to another defeat, 37–26, as Gravesend leapfrogged them in the table to seventh place.

Saturday's fixture gave a debut to Tom Williams in the Number 9 shirt and he became the fifth starting scrum-half of the campaign. The returning Huie joined Duey on the bench but sadly a Louis could not be found. Recently gales, galoshes and gamps have been in vogue but the weather was blessedly more benign. Having been denied league action the previous weekend, the crowd were abuzz with anticipation as Gravesend kicked off the match.

It was an inauspicious start for the hosts as they immediately conceded a penalty and faced a Gravesend line-out five metres from their line with barely a minute on the clock. The initial drive was halted but another penalty followed. Despite stoic defence, the Kent team scored through the forwards with a sense of inevitability. The challenging conversion drifted wide as the visitors led 5–0.

From the restart indecision from Gravesend almost allowed Adam Bibby to gain possession. It was the set scrum that raised the spirits of the Rugby Lane crowd. From the opposition put-in, the home pack sent the Rectory Field forwards into disarray. A quick tap penalty and a kick ahead by Tom Lennard nestled a yard from the line and Adam Bibby dragged the defender over for a five-metre scrum.

Sutton won the ball but fine defence halted Bunting and then Lennie. The visitors had relief of sorts with their put-in under their posts, but the Black & White pack turned them over again. A snipe by Tom Williams was followed by Ewan McTaggart stretching out to score. Freddy Bunting added the easy conversion as S&E took a 7–5 lead after a dozen minutes.

If the Sutton scrum was excellence personified, the line-out was at the other end of the spectrum as the match entered a déjà vu phase. S&E line-out lost, Gravesend kick, and Kyren Ghumra ran it back to great effect. After two episodes of this entertaining drama, conveniently aired on either side of the paddock near halfway, Sutton scored their second try.

Adam Bibby made a stunning break from the middle of the park and entered the opposition 22. With his centre partner Freddy Bunting in support, he supplied a timely pass for his captain to score. Freddy Bunting added the extras to extend the lead to 14–5 at the end of the first quarter.

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At last S&E won a line-out and it was worth the wait as the forwards drove at least 20 metres towards the line and were unlucky to concede a penalty. A moment of butterfingers from an unnamed source thwarted the hosts' next promising attack as Sutton dominated the territorial battle.

Gravesend exited their half in sensational fashion. Ben Hope, playing on the wing, collected the ball near touch by his 22 and set off. Breaking tackles, brushing aside defenders and gathering speed, he scored an outstanding try in the corner. The touchline conversion failed as the visitors narrowed the gap to 14–10.

The next significant moment was unfortunately a lengthy delay as the sawbones attended to the injured Samraj Chahal. Gravesend lost their totemic forward, replaced by Chris Brady, the sole representative of the Brady bunch on the afternoon as his brother had just returned from Dubai.

The Kent team responded to adversity by breaking free and going on the rampage into the Sutton half, with hooker Stan Dadson leading the charge. The visitors ended the first half in the ascendancy as they searched for the lead. They had to be content with a penalty, winger Josh Barnes obliging with the three points as the referee concluded the half with Sutton narrowly ahead, 14–13.

An entertaining first period promised a second half rich in tries and tension. Freddy Bunting resumed the action with Gravesend attacking the clubhouse end. S&E made a promising start with Adam Bibby making another superb break but on this occasion there was no support on hand to take the glory.

Referee Hampshire had already ominously called Captain Bunting over for a chat late in the first half, foreshadowing Sutton's walk along the disciplinary tightrope. With nearly ten minutes of the second period played and Gravesend on the Sutton line, the visitors were awarded a penalty. Lock Josh Glanville received a yellow card and the hosts were reduced to 14 men.

The Rectory Field men opted for the three points, Josh Barnes edging Gravesend into a 16–14 lead. The ten-minute yellow-card period proved the turning point. Gravesend exploited their numerical advantage with admirable skill and ruthless pragmatism.

From a scrum 30 metres from the Sutton line, Ben Kite kicked perfectly to Josh Barnes on the wing, who gathered and sauntered in for the try. He added the conversion to stretch the lead to 23–14. A couple of minutes later fellow wing Ben Hope added his second and Gravesend's bonus-point try. Barnes again converted, extending the lead to 30–14. The yellow card had cost Sutton 17 points by the time Glanville returned.

To their credit, the Black & Whites responded swiftly. The improving line-out secured possession and initiated another relentless catch-and-drive. This time there was no intervention as hooker Sam Lennie forced his way over. Freddy Bunting bisected the uprights to pull it back to 21–30.

Shortly after, the Rugby Lane faithful were left flummoxed by suicidal Sutton play. Nine points adrift with a quarter of an hour to go, a long miss-pass was sent out from their own 22. Fortunately the interception was not run in under the posts, and S&E gained relief through a penalty a few phases later. Sanity restored, the contest returned to an arm-wrestle around halfway.

Gravesend's fifth and final try was initiated by a superb clear-out at the ruck by prop Harry Brooker. A speculative kick ahead found space in the S&E 22 and visiting full-back Ben Stelfox took advantage of inadequate cover to score. Barnes' conversion made it 37–21 and took his personal tally to 17 points.

With six minutes left the contest was over and Sutton hunted the consolation of a bonus point. The Black & Whites struggled to penetrate a robust Gravesend defence, but benefitted from the punitive side of Mr Hampshire's nature as yellow cards were issued in quick succession to Stan Dadson and Les Falefatu in time added on.

Playing against 13 men, Sutton accepted the invitation. From a tap penalty Eric Duey powered over for the bonus-point try. At the final whistle, contrasting emotions were clear as Gravesend's players, fuelled by victory, recovered quickly, while Sutton's men laboured under the lactic acid of defeat. Gravesend had deservedly won 37–26.

In retrospect, the yellow card that Gravesend exploited so ruthlessly put paid to Sutton's hopes. The balance between devil-may-care ambition and league pragmatism remains elusive. Sutton's scrum was magnificent, the line-out frustratingly sporadic and the defence too porous. Gravesend's organisation and physicality blunted Sutton's width, while Ben Hope stood at the forefront of an impressive attacking display.

Supporters and players mingled in traditional fashion in the clubhouse, certainly not a bleak house, as the Kent side were buoyed by a sizeable travelling support rewarded with a fine victory.

With a deferential tug to Boz from a formerly tousled forelock, one might exclaim "what the Dickens" on noting yet another gap in the league calendar next Saturday. The season resumes on Valentine's Day as Sutton venture to Balmoral Avenue to face Beckenham, whom they narrowly defeated 22–19 earlier in the season at Rugby Lane.

Sutton & Epsom:
Ghumra, Symonds, Bibby, Bunting ©, Scott, Lennard, Williams, Johnson, Lennie, Boaden, McTaggart, Glanville, Tame, Jones & Hegarty.
Reps: Howes, Duey & Huie.

Gravesend:
Stelfox, Barnes, Filmer, Sims, Hope, Kite, Warren, Brooker, Dadson, Shorter, Bird, Falefatu, Bailey, Chahal © & Money.
Reps: Alderson, Brady & Harris.

John Croysdill

Rugby action Epsom against Gravesend credit Robin Kennedy -from a previous fixture

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Sutton & Epsom v Sidcup – Rugby match report

16 November 2026



Sutton and Epsom 12 Sidcup 28. Saturday 17th January.

Sidcup arrived at Rugby Lane buoyed by the wheels wobbling on the Brighton bandwagon. Back-to-back defeats either side of the festive break by their south-coast rivals had left the Crescent Farm side just one point off the top. For Sutton and Epsom, their top-five position – equating to entry into the play-off rounds – was under threat.

Before kick-off, the Black and Whites had to digest the unpalatable news that Old Colfeians had won 22-19 at Beckenham under the lights on Friday night, pushing Sutton and Epsom down to sixth place. In a keenly contested encounter at Rugby Lane, Sidcup came from behind to win 28-12 and, crucially, scored their fourth try on the final play to secure a bonus point that lifted them into pole position by virtue of a vastly superior points difference.

The recent number-nine hiatus for Sutton and Epsom was resolved with Euan Findlay making his league debut. There was also a welcome return for “the prodigal son” Josh Glanville, pulling on the colours for his first outing of the campaign. On the bench, crowd favourite Richard Madadangoma made his first appearance of the season. All Sutton and Epsom’s comings and goings paled into insignificance, however, alongside Sidcup prop Sam Carmen, who was making his 300th league appearance.

Before kick-off there was a tribute to Ben Searle, a member of the Sutton and Epsom physio team who tragically passed away following a battle with cancer. After the applause, Freddy Bunting set the game in motion with Sutton and Epsom attacking the clubhouse end.

Sutton and Epsom were hoping to reprise the outstanding performance that defeated Sidcup at Crescent Farm last season. The secret then was a fast start built on high-tempo rugby, rapid recycling and effective use of width. To their credit, the hosts put that plan into effect, dominating territory and possession in the opening exchanges.

Never has the old chestnut of taking penalty points reverberated louder around the stand. Four kickable penalties in front of the posts were declined in the first half. This was particularly notable given Sidcup possess the league’s best defensive record, conceding only 16 points per game. Yet this approach has been consistent all season, with Sutton and Epsom having converted only three penalty kicks despite amassing 460 points.

After a scoreless first quarter in which the Sidcup defence repeatedly repelled attacks that came agonisingly close, Sutton and Epsom finally broke through in the 25th minute. A sweeping move from halfway saw Tom Lennard break free on an inside line, Josh Rea time his support perfectly, and debutant Findlay finish with aplomb. Freddy Bunting’s conversion struck the upright, but the hosts led 5-0.

Ten minutes later Sidcup entered the Sutton and Epsom 22 for the first time and immediately made it count. A penalty kicked to the corner set up an attacking line-out and, after initial resistance, hooker Harry Large forced his way over. Josh Twyford converted impressively from the touchline to give the visitors a 7-5 lead.

Sutton and Epsom responded superbly and regained the lead before the interval. Sam Lennie made a trademark bulldozing break through midfield, Josh Rea again played a pivotal role, and Michael Bennion arrived at pace to sprint in from outside the 22 and score under the posts. Bunting added the extras to make it 12-7.

As first-half stoppage time approached, Sidcup produced their best passage of play, pressing hard for a second score. After excellent continuity, it appeared a try had been scored in the corner, but the ball was lost just short of the line. The half ended with the visitors in the ascendancy, though Sutton and Epsom had played some of their best rugby for a long while. Only time would tell whether they would rue not turning that dominance into more points.

Alex Lambe’s whistle began a finely balanced second half. Sidcup opened with a couple of uncharacteristic errors, but these proved brief. Five minutes in, Ben Stokes cut through the Sutton and Epsom defence, only to be denied by a timely intervention from Findlay. Shortly afterwards the visitors struck again. A perfectly timed pass on halfway released winger Seb Ellison, who kicked ahead, chased and gathered just ahead of the cover. Twyford converted from wide to put Sidcup 14-12 ahead.

Momentum now belonged to the men from Crescent Farm. Sidcup dominated possession, and Sutton and Epsom’s defensive resolve was tested relentlessly. That resistance held until the final quarter, when sustained pressure told. Captain Louis Keeley exploited the blindside, burst down the touchline and cut inside to score. Twyford’s conversion stretched the lead to 21-12.

As Sidcup turned the screw, Sutton and Epsom were further hampered by the injury-enforced departure of Josh Rea, who had produced an outstanding performance. The visitors hunted the bonus point, but the Rugby Lane men stood firm, holding Sidcup up over the line with ten minutes remaining.

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With five minutes to play, Sutton and Epsom survived a stunning break, scrambling heroically before winning a relieving penalty. The match seemed set to conclude without bonus points. In the dying moments, however, an arm interfered with a Sutton and Epsom line-out jumper and a penalty was awarded. The Black and Whites opted for a long-range kick from near the touchline. Success would have earned a deserved bonus point. The kick drifted wide.

Sidcup counter-attacked from deep, moving the ball fluently before a long kick and eager chase forced a turnover. Hooker Harry Large, again in excellent support, gathered and ran in under the posts. Twyford added the conversion to complete a 28-12 victory and send Sidcup top of the league.

Sidcup's second-half defence proved rather more durable than the Maginot Line, and Sutton and Epsom were unable to find a way through. Yet the hosts made their opponents work until the final seconds, and the first-half performance in particular should be the benchmark for the remainder of the season.

The league programme now pauses, with hostilities resuming on 31 January when Sutton and Epsom welcome Gravesend to Rugby Lane, having beaten them 29-12 away in October. High-flying Sidcup host local rivals Beckenham as they continue their push for promotion.

John Croysdill

Sutton and Epsom:
Bennion, Scott, Bibby, Bunting ©, Symonds, Lennard, O'Brien, Johnson, Lennie, Boaden, McTaggart, Duey, Rea, Jones, Hegarty.
Replacements: Howes, Glanville, Madadangoma.

Sidcup:
Twyford, Ellison, Stokes, Smith, Keeley ©, Ubee, Ibrahim, Conlon, Large, Carmen, Stock, Romp, Koung, Healey, Caple.
Replacements: Watson, Knock, McMahon.

Photo – from previous fixture. Robin Kennedy

Seven-try storm sinks Epsom and Sutton

16 November 2026



Old Colfeians 44 Sutton & Epsom RFC 22. Saturday 10th January.

The fourth-placed Black & Whites opened their 2026 account at Horn Park against Old Colfeians, who sat one place below them in the league table. Sutton's season has been one of feast or famine — the ecstasy of winning their first four fixtures giving way to the agony of a five-match losing streak — although bonus points in defeat have kept them competitive. Whatever New Year resolutions were made, they did not translate into success on the pitch as Old Colfeians ran in seven tries in a 44–22 victory.

After a week of wild weather, conditions were benign, despite a temporary water cut in the area which thankfully was resolved in time for the teams to shower. There was an early sign of trouble when Sutton were pushed back at the first scrum, although this proved to be a rare moment of dominance by the home pack. Old Colfeians opened the scoring with a penalty from Ollie Burkett. Sutton responded five minutes later when Freddy Bunting kicked to the corner, Ewan McTaggart secured possession and after multiple phases Tom Lennard found winger Kyren Ghumra, who crossed for the opening try. The conversion struck the upright, but Sutton led 5–3.

The hosts soon hit back as centre Louis Baker broke through from 25 metres for the first of his two tries, regaining the lead at 8–5. Sutton replied immediately with what many present judged their try of the season — slick passing down the right wing released Ghumra for his second, nudging the visitors back in front at 10–8. The lead did not last long. A flowing counter-attack, started by full-back Chris Harris, ended with Mylo Mutongwizo finishing in the corner. Another missed conversion left Old Colfeians ahead 13–10.

Sutton pressed again but a sharp interception from Burkett turned defence into attack, leading to a try finished by prop Tom Rameaux. Burkett added the conversion for a 20–10 half-time lead in a fast-paced and entertaining contest.

Sutton were dealt a blow when scrum-half Gareth O'Brien was forced off with concussion, with Tom Lennard taking over his duties. The visitors made a strong start to the second half and were rewarded when McTaggart forced his way over from close range after another line-out move. Once again the conversion was missed, leaving Sutton trailing 20–15 with half an hour to play.

Although Sutton enjoyed spells of possession, Old Colfeians' defence was resolute. When the hosts regained territory, Harris kicked to the corner and the resulting catch-and-drive saw hooker Freddie Holland-Oliver score the bonus-point

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try. Burkett converted for 27–15 and the home forwards, led by captain Andy O'Malley, began to dominate. O'Malley powered over soon after, stretching the lead to 34–15.

Adam Bibby briefly reignited Sutton hopes with a strong run, but Baker then ran in from 40 metres for his second try to make it 39–15. Sutton did at least secure a valuable bonus point when Tom Lennard took a quick tap from a penalty near the line and Eric Duey emerged from the pile to score. Bunting converted to bring the score to 39–22.

Old Colfeians had the final word when O'Malley crossed again following another forward surge. Burkett missed the conversion but the hosts completed a convincing 44–22 win.

Sutton were very much in contention in the first half, but as the game wore on they were increasingly overpowered by a dominant Colfeians pack that laid the platform for victory. Both sides then enjoyed generous hospitality in the clubhouse, where Horn Park remains a favourite destination for travelling supporters.

Next Saturday Sutton return to Rugby Lane to face Sidcup, who won the reverse fixture 22–12 earlier in the season.

Sutton & Epsom
Bennion, Scott, Bibby, Bunting ©, Ghumra, Lennard, O'Brien, Johnson, Lennie, Boaden, McTaggart, Finney, Rea, Jones & Hegarty.
Reps: Howes, Duey & Symonds.

Old Colfeians
Harris, Mutongwizo, Baker, Napper, Spaczil, Burkett, Wylie, Rameaux, Holland-Oliver, Agorioge, O'Malley ©, Collins-Oberman, Enskat, Walker & Amor.
Reps: Correa, Ramdhan & Storey.

John Croysdill

Image courtesy Robin Kennedy from a previous fixture.

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