



Battersea stun Sutton & Epsom rugby

9 November 2025



Battersea Ironsides 24 Sutton & Epsom 22. Saturday 8th November.

This fixture has produced last-minute drama since the sides first met in league action two seasons ago. It is certainly not a contest to leave with ten minutes to go in the hope of a swifter journey home or to purchase a pint before the rush. Once again it lived up to its reputation as Battersea Ironsides overhauled a 15-point deficit to secure the win with a long-range penalty with barely a minute left on the clock. The hosts have twice been on the wrong end of denouement drama and on Saturday it was a case of third time lucky as they won 24-22.

Captain Bunting returned to the helm of the good ship Sutton to relieve First Mate McTaggart, who had navigated the parlous seas several leagues under the Premiership with five wins from five, to return below decks to the engine room of the pack. S&E were minus two stalwarts with Messrs Bibby and Jones nursing injuries. The latter had played the last 34 consecutive league matches, a rarity these days.

As for the hosts, they were an unrecognisable team from the corresponding fixture last season. No longer guided by the regal splendour of Charles Stuart at 10, there were only three survivors from the thrilling 19-19 draw. For that matter the Black & Whites only had eight from that match - *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*.

Cameron Baker initiated proceedings on Garratt Green, a surface with deceptive declivities, on a day blessed with glorious sunshine and thankfully with no hint of rain at a venue offering no shelter for the loyal patrons. The first quarter implied that it might be one of those unfortunate afternoons for the Black & Whites. It included balls dropped by usually safe hands, promising openings that came to nought and penalties conceded for unwarranted verbosity with Mr Harry Hopkins that questioned his interpretation of the laws rather than any family connection to FDR's New Deal stalwart.

After ten minutes the hosts took the lead, capitalising on a penalty to establish themselves in the 22, and following admirable control Matt Bell was on hand to cross the whitewash for his first try of the afternoon. Cameron Baker started his perfect kicking afternoon with an impressive conversion from the flank to give



the Ironsides a 7-0 lead.

There was a significant area of consolation for the visitors as their forwards were enjoying one of their most impressive scrummaging performances for many a long day. The efficiency of the lineout was not far behind the set scrum in impressing the travelling support. However, it continued to be a frustrating afternoon in terms of points on the board for S&E.

Clinical efficiency in the 22 was sadly lacking but just as the crowd were anticipating the teams turning around with Sutton trailing, the game was transformed. The Rugby Lane men produced their try of the season. Wonderful surges from locks Duey and McTaggart were aided by sumptuous offloads. Prop Dan Johnson maintained continuity to release Josh Rea who sidestepped past the cover and strode home. Bunting levelled the scores with his conversion for 7-7.

Battersea Ironsides, robust and organised in attack and defence, had frustrated Sutton at the breakdown. The hosts were coping admirably with a scrummage that was regularly in reverse and much credit must go to Raphael Arboine who not only gathered the challenging ball back-peddalling but also frequently made yards with his powerful running. S&E, liberated by their opening score, pressed on for further first-half glory.

As the first period entered time added on they went into the lead. The Ironsides conceded a penalty on their 22 which Bunting drilled into the corner. McTaggart soared skywards to secure the lineout possession and the formidable Sam Lennie scored after an impressive catch and drive. The conversion drifted wide but the Black & Whites led 12-7.

There was still five minutes of additional time with a revitalised Sutton eager to add to their account. With the last action of the half the visitors were given an opportunity to extend their advantage. Sutton & Epsom were awarded a penalty a couple of paces within the Battersea half but very central. Freddy Bunting opted to go for goal but his effort fell short and the sides went into the interval with Sutton leading 12-7.

Sutton started the second half brightly, though the flow of the game was interrupted by numerous penalties. After ten minutes they had a most promising position deep in the 22. Once again the lineout was followed by a dominant drive that Battersea bested with determined defence. The ball was transferred from the pack to the backs and Tom Lennard kicked with precision to winger Kyren Ghumra who scored in the corner. For those with a statistical disposition it was a red-letter moment as the winger now had 74 tries in 148 appearances. The challenging kick failed to add to the 17-7 lead.

If Sutton thought it would be one-way traffic for the remainder of the contest they had a stark reminder that Battersea Ironsides were a very dangerous outfit. A sweeping attack appeared to have created a wonderful try. A man, who shall remain nameless, not only finished with power and pace but also intelligently arced around endeavouring to make the conversion simpler. Unfortunately, Garratt Green is not the Parc de Princes and the in-goal area is miserly rather than magnificent, and he went beyond the parameters of play. There was to be no addition to the score.

Five minutes later the visitors were imposing themselves once more on the game. A driving maul in excess of 20 metres from halfway did not bring immediate results but it placed S&E in the right area. Sutton went through their phases and the ball arrived in the hands of Sam Lennie. The Kiwi hooker is a force of nature and with 20 yards to go and multiple defenders he found a most direct route to the line for his second try of



the afternoon. Despite the encouraging roars from the Rugby Lane supporters the Bunting conversion high over the pigmy posts was adjudged to have not done the necessary. Sutton & Epsom led 22-7, having secured a bonus point, and were 15 points up with 15 minutes of normal time remaining.

As the game began to meander towards the inevitable, the Ironsides initiated a remarkable recovery in a magnificent seven minutes. Hope and inspiration was provided by winger Will Ford whose fine finish to a sweeping move was improved by a clinical conversion from the extremities by Cameron Baker. The fly-half ran back towards his team declaring the deficit was only eight points as S&E led 22-14.

A couple of minutes later the reinvigorated hosts were celebrating another try. A defensive lapse on halfway was punished as Battersea flooded into the Sutton half. Scrambling defence halted the advance in the 22 but the ball was quickly released for Matt Bell to secure his second score of the afternoon. The reliable Baker boot meant the hosts trailed 21-22 with three minutes to go.

The inevitable occurred as the sands of time were drifting away. Battersea were awarded a penalty. Though it was only just in the Sutton half, Cameron Baker, without hesitation, opted for the posts. His powerful kick was perfectly straight and Battersea Ironsides led 24-22. There was just time for the re-start that failed to travel the allotted distance, and the subsequent scrum to the hosts. Despite going back at a rate of knots and the harrying of Steve Munford, the ball was kicked dead to spark Battersea celebrations of an epic 24-22 win.

Many salutary lessons will hopefully be learned by Sutton but great credit must be given to the spirit of Battersea embodied by Raphael Arboine's performance and the nerveless kicking of Cameron Baker. For Sutton the scrummaging was superb, Sam Lennie was, as usual, immense, and Josh Rea had his best performance to date for the Black & Whites.

Next Saturday is free from league action and Sutton will endeavour to return to winning ways at Rugby Lane on Saturday 22nd November when they host Horsham for the first time in a league encounter.

Sutton & Epsom:

O'Brien, Benson, Scott, Bunting (c), Ghumra, Lennard, Wise, Johnson, Lennie, Mount, McTaggart, Duey, Rea, Tame & Hegarty.

Reps: Boaden, Finney & Munford.

Battersea Ironsides:

Diamond, Ford, Campbell, Bell, McGwire, Baker, Thomas, Chetwynd, Jones, Gomm, Bishop, Wharton, Pender, McCleary & Arboine.

Reps: Chetwynd-Talbot, Singh & Bourke.

John Croysdill

Image: Action of the two sides from an previous fixture. Credit: Robin Kennedy