

Horsham hold a win against Sutton & Epsom RFC

9 March 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.

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.

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