

## **Kent V Sussex U17 Boys 25<sup>th</sup> May 2025**

### **Match Report: Kent Edge Sussex in a Thrilling – 51-50**

In one of the most dramatic and high-scoring encounters in recent memory, Kent narrowly defeated Sussex 51-50 in a pulsating clash that saw the lead change hands multiple times and kept spectators on the edge of their seats until the very last kick. With 13 tries shared between the sides, this was a showcase of attacking rugby, resilience, and relentless determination from both teams.

The opening exchanges were evenly poised as both sides probed for weaknesses. The deadlock was broken in the 8th minute when Jared Van Zijl caught Sussex off guard with a quick tap, sparking a series of pick-and-goes before sniping around the fringe to score. The conversion drifted wide, but Kent had struck first – 5-0.

Kent kept the pressure on, and on 15 minutes, Lutendo pounced on a loose ball and sliced through the defence, only to be hauled down five metres short. Unfortunately, a knock-on ended the promising move.

Sussex responded strongly. Sustained pressure in the Kent 22 was rewarded with a quick-tap try, converted to give the visitors a 7-5 lead at the 20-minute mark.

Kent's answer was swift and clinical. Arthur Wood hit a perfect line to crash over for a try, regaining the lead at 10-7. Shortly after, Kent disrupted a Sussex lineout deep in opposition territory, and after several phases, Ted Jenner dotted down out wide. Van Zijl, influential throughout, was unable to convert, but Kent led 15-7.

Sussex came out firing after the restart, breaking blind from a scrum to score out wide. The conversion went astray, narrowing the gap to 15-12.

Kent hit back quickly. A dazzling midfield break by Brandon Nathan created space for Niall to barrel over. Josh Hacker added the extras to make it 22-12.

Sussex capitalised on a Kent lineout error inside their 22, scoring an opportunistic try. The missed conversion brought the score to 22-17.

Back came Kent. A sharp tap from Harry Demame and an incisive line from Zac Segment set up Hacker out wide. Although the conversion missed, Kent edged further ahead at 27-17.

The momentum shifted again when Sussex intercepted a pass and ran it in under the posts, cutting the deficit to 27-24. Another Kent lineout mistake then proved costly, as Sussex countered clinically, spreading the ball wide for a converted try that gave them a 31-27 lead.

But Kent wasn't done. A failed goal-line dropout from Sussex gifted Kent possession, and Oscar Sands capped off a flowing move from the resulting scrum. The missed conversion left Kent ahead 32-31 heading into the final third.

Kent made 11 substitutions at the final restart and wasted no time asserting themselves. Lutendo stormed through the middle to score, and Van Zijl slotted the conversion – 39-31.

Sussex wouldn't go quietly. An interception deep in Kent's 22 led to a converted try, making it 39-38. Kent responded by making five more changes to steady the ship.

Arthur Wood then powered through the midfield for his second try of the match, converted by Van Zijl to extend the lead to 46-38.

Sussex attacked again and looked sure to score, but a crucial try-saving tackle from Wood five metres out gave Kent the chance to clear. Yet another error in their own 22 allowed Sussex to pounce once more, bringing the score to 46-45 following a successful conversion.

Under pressure, Kent showed composure. They kicked a penalty to the corner and executed a textbook driving maul, with Ted Jenner crashing over for his second. The conversion missed, leaving Kent clinging to a 51-45 advantage.

Sussex had the final word, scoring out wide to bring the score to 51-50 with just seconds remaining. With the match in the balance, the conversion attempt to win it sailed just wide—handing Kent a famous, nail-biting victory.

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### **Final Score: Kent 51 – 50 Sussex**

This was rugby at its exhilarating best. A 13-try thriller filled with flair, heart, and drama, with both teams contributing to a spectacle that will live long in the memory. Kent held their nerve when it mattered most, but Sussex can be proud of a spirited performance that pushed their rivals to the brink.

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