

# Latest Match Report

## Honours Even at the Muddy Mote

### Maidstone 17 – 17 Sutton & Epsom

Maidstone had been forced to postpone their home game versus Sidcup on the previous Saturday due to a waterlogged pitch so it was not surprising that Sutton found themselves playing on a muddy, energy sapping surface. The Mote with its awkward slope has been a fortress this season for the newly promoted Kent side who have won five out of six of their home league fixtures. So though it was a great disappointment for the Black & Whites that their winning run ended at 13 victories however it was no disgrace to leave with a most honourable of draws.

The hosts dominated the opening salvos. After ten minutes of possession and pressure encamped in the visitors 22, despite defiant defence, the Kent side slithered over in the corner. A splendid conversion gave Maidstone a thoroughly deserved 7-0 lead. Sutton & Epsom showed their table topping credentials by storming back to monopolise the rest of the half. The men from Rugby Lane pegged their opponents into their 22 forcing a series of 5 metre scrums through turnovers and a fine in goal charge down by Steve Munford. Despite surviving this siege the home side were undone after 25 minutes when Kyren Ghumra came off his wing picking the perfect line to weave untouched to score under the posts. Sam Hurley added the extras to level the score at 7 apiece. Buoyed by this score Sutton continued to control the game. Carrying powerfully through the forwards and with debutant Ollie Clements kicking intelligently to the corners they established attacking platforms. With the experienced Felix Symonds, returning to the side for the injured Mike Blackburn, excelling in the line out S&E had the majority of possession. Maidstone's defence excelled with crunching tackling led by inside centre Alfred Paea. It took a 5 metre line out and a series of short range carries before eventually Raynn Bruce powered over for his first try of the season. Sam Hurley extended the lead to 14-7 with a tricky conversion. Despite their efforts the league leaders could not add to their advantage before the half time break.

The second period started like the first with a reinvigorated home side dominating possession as they attempted to play through the backs and avoid a forward battle. Ten minutes of pounding against the Sutton defences was rewarded with a try following a ruck on the line. The simplest of kicks drew the sides level. In the second half the Surrey side failed to replicate their control of the first period. An increasingly confident Maidstone tried to play through their backs despite the heavy conditions. The Black & White defense was organised, abrasive and hard tackling as has become the familiar norm this season. Only indiscipline at the breakdown led to a costly penalty and a three point deficit.

Trailing 14-17 the S&E side entered the final quarter with their unbeaten record stretching back to 12th September under serious threat. Ten minutes later Sam Hurley was given the opportunity to equalise the score, he did not fail. Reinvigorated by parity on the scoreboard Sutton & Epsom attempted to establish the platform for a final decisive score. They were thwarted by conceding a penalty whilst on the attack.

At the final whistle honours were even at 17-17. The majority of those gathered at the Mote reflected that a draw was a fair result from a fixture where both sides tackled superbly and did their best to attack in very arduous conditions. The two points gained, factored in with Guildford's bonus point win, equated to Sutton & Epsom's lead at the top being cut to 5 points.

The league campaign returns to Rugby Lane next Saturday 23rd January with a 3pm kick off. Sutton will host Havant and those of you who have been fortunate enough to witness recent encounters between these sides have been treated to high scoring spectacles and who is to say that a repeat will not be on the cards next weekend.

#### Sutton Team:

Ollie Clements, Kyren Ghumra, Aaron Phillip, Sam Hurley, Frankie Murray, Steve Munford, Raynn Bruce, Seb Bonizzi, Craig Bellringer, Felix Symonds, Neil Mauger, George London, Joe Ridgley, Matt

Whitaker. **Replacements:** Chris Pointing, Andy King, Luke Mason.

- See more at: <http://www.suttonrugby.co.uk/1st-xv/#sthash.Z0Smdjp9.dpuf>