

Match Report

Newmarket 15 v Maidstone 18

by Andy Golding

RFU Senior Vase – London & SE Regional Final

Away at Newmarket, Saturday 17 March, 2012 Kick Off – 2.00 pm

In a game where the margin of victory or the amount of tries scored were not a significant factor, Maidstone did the job required.

With a full squad to pick from an enforced late change in the back-row, (due to illness), meant that the utilitarian talents of Iles moved to 6, which made way for Newton, to move from the bench to wing. Far from weakening the side, both had a major impact on the outcome of the game.

Playing away from home, and irrespective of their league position, this game was never going to be a formality. In this close and tense encounter, Newmarket, proved themselves to be worthy opponents and it was them that started brighter. With confusion at the kick-off, Newmarket won possession and following a catch and drive at the line-out registered the first try through back row Holland after just 2 minutes.



Newmarket, however, failed to capitalise on this early score, which proved to be the catalyst for a period of dominance by Maidstone, whose ability to move the ball wide continually stretched the Newmarket defence, only for the last pass (on a number of occasions), denying them a scoring opportunity. Playing the territory game, and relying on the boot, Newmarket made some inroads in the

Maidstone 22, culminating in penalty, which they converted to give them an 8 point lead.

However, Maidstone responded well and on the half-hour mark, slick interplay down the right flank, resulted in Jamie Smith following through on a grubber kick to reduce the margin to 3 points.



Maidstone then started to get the upper hand, and bullocking runs by Thomson at 8 and Graves at 12 started to make in-roads into the Newmarket 22. However, resolute defence by Newmarket, denied Maidstone further scores and the half ended at 8-5 to the hosts.



Maidstone started the second-half with real intent against a Newmarket pack that was visibly beginning to tire. Quick re-cycled ball and exploitation of space on the right wing, allowed Lock, Mitchell to take the final pass and run in to score from possession secured outside of the Newmarket 22.

This was quickly followed by a try down the same flank, following a probing run by Newton, who ran in to score having outpaced the defence to give Maidstone a 15-8 lead. With the tactic of moving the ball wide clearly working, one would have expected Maidstone to have cut-loose but to their credit, Newmarket, who were now chasing the game rallied and continuing their kicking game putting the ball deep into the Maidstone 22, to exert pressure. This paid off and the hour mark and after a number of adjudged infringements, whilst repelling the Newmarket forays, prop Debnam was yellow-carded. This meant a re-shuffling that allowed replacement prop Maytum to take the field at the expense of Newton on the wing.



Despite increased pressure and with 14 men, Maidstone defended well and the 10 minute 'sin-bin' time made no impact on the score. The final period saw Newmarket throw everything at Maidstone and continual infringements, on the Maidstone 10m line resulted in a penalty try and a yellow card for Lock, Mitchell to bring the scores level.

Full-back Rogers steadied the ship and with good use of the boot, put the ball deep into the Newmarket 22. Increased pressure led to a penalty, which Maidstone decided to run rather than kick and the attack was held up short. With all thinking that the game may go into extra time, a further infringement by Newmarket gave Maidstone a penalty with 3 minutes



remaining. Up stepped the unflappable Ferdorcio, who made good the kick from a difficult field position to give Maidstone a 3 point lead. With 2 minutes left, possession was key and Maidstone kept cool heads to regain the ball from the re-start and ran the clock down, through close quarter work.

This certainly wasn't the prettiest of victories but on balance of possession and creativity, Maidstone deserved to win this hard fought encounter against a dogged and determined Newmarket side.

Full credit is due to the whole squad, the coaches and management and our army of loyal supporters for making this such a memorable win. Thoughts are now firmly on the semi-final stage of the main competition, with a home draw against Wells and being just 1 game away from Twickenham.

Team

Ben Williams; Sam Bailey; Luke Debnam; Hayden Mitchell; Steve Matthews, Matt Iles; Luke Day (Andy Bacon 70 mins); Lee Thomson; Ben Hollingsworth; Steve McNamara; Neil Graves; Jamie Smith; Leo Fedorcio, Ollie Newton; Ollie Rogers; Martin Maytum; Josh McKenzie; Dan Eastwood; Hale Cezar.