

# Match Report

**Maidstone 13 v Uckfield 18**

**by Andy Golding**

London Division 3 (South East)

Home, Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2012 Kick Off – 3.00 pm

Missing 5 key players from the previous week and with some re-shuffling, Maidstone still looked strong on paper and much was expected of a team, with players vying for a squad place in the forthcoming Senior Vase semi-final.



Basing this game solely on current league position and form, this should have been a regulation win against a side teetering on the edge of relegation. However, with clearly more at stake from a league perspective, every credit should be given to an Uckfield side, which through

sheer effort and determination thoroughly deserved their win.

Uckfield had the best of the earlier encounters, looking after the ball well, although their option to attack through their preferred mid-field channel had little bite and Maidstone were never really troubled defensively. This may have been their rationale to go for a cross field kick to the right of the pitch on the 10 minute mark, which bounced fortuitously for their right wing, who gathered over the line to score and take an early 5 point lead.

However, even with this early score, Maidstone, where the side asking all the questions, through good forward driving and some telling runs by centre, Mark Dorman. However, enforced errors at critical times meant they lacked any real fluidity to their game and couldn't settle into any sort of pattern or rhythm.

It took until the 30th minute for Maidstone to get on the score sheet, when a well-read interception by winger Iles on the opposition 10m line allowed him to touch down to the right of the posts. The try was unconverted. The remainder of the half saw Maidstone continue to make errors





and amass a number of penalties, which did nothing to launch their game and when Dorman, left the pitch, a re-shuffling of the back line was required with the introduction of Fedorcio. Despite some moments of control by Maidstone and periods when they began to counter-attack effectively, their 'staccato' performance meant the half finished on 5-5.

Maidstone made changes at the break, bringing on Bunyan to replace Parker at 6, and Bailey, who replaced prop, Debnam. Maidstone started the second half strongly and quickly they gained territorial position through some good kicking by full-back Bramwell and winger Iles, which put Uckfield under pressure. An adjudged not straight throw at the lineout, gave Maidstone good scrum position on the opposition 10 m line and from here good driving off the base by number 8 Thomson set up an attacking platform. However rather than take the ball wide, Maidstone opted for close quarter driving off the rucks but slow ball meant that Uckfield had time to line up players and their defence remained resolute. The deadlock was ended by the knifing run by Fedorcio, who took the ball away from contact providing winger, Eastwood with the space to receive the ball out wide and outflank the defence. The try was unconverted but for the first time in the game, Maidstone were ahead.

Maidstone were now looking the stronger of the sides but self enforced errors, an ever increasing penalty count and effective spoiling by Uckfield at the break-down continued to stifle their progress. Another adjudged penalty for holding on gave Uckfield a good field position, which they converted to reduce the deficit to 10-8.



Soon after, Maidstone were awarded a penalty for a scrum infringement and Fedorcio converted to extend Maidstone's lead to 13-8. With penalties aplenty, an adjudged off side by Maidstone in their own 22, saw Uckfield move the ball quickly to the left to score in the corner. The try was unconverted but the scores were now tied at 13-13. Maidstone had used all their replacements and an injury to fly-half McNamara around the 70<sup>th</sup> minute meant that Maidstone were now down to 14 players.



In the last few minutes, yet another penalty was awarded against Maidstone, which enabled Uckfield to gain possession and put in another kick behind the Maidstone defence to bounce favourably, leading to a try in the left corner. The try was unconverted but with only minutes after the restart remaining and despite some late pressure by Maidstone, Uckfield held out for a

much needed win, leaving Maidstone to reflect on a below-par performance.

Maidstone are away to Horsham in the league next week, their last game in preparation for the much awaited home semi-final against Wells in the Senior Vase.

### Team

Ben Williams; Josh McKenzie; Luke Debnam (Sam Bailey 40 mins); Hayden Mitchell; Andy Bacon; Richard Parker (Nick Bunyan 40 mins); Luke Day; Lee Thomson; Sam Ellis; Steve McNamara; Mark Dorman (Leo Fedorcio 30 mins); Jamie Smith; Matt Iles; Dan Eastwood; Gareth Bramwell.