

Match Report

Maidstone 45 v Sheppey 12

by Trevor Langley

League, London 3 SE

Home at The Mote, Saturday 21 April, 2012 Kick Off – 3.00 pm

Maidstone won this end-of-season encounter with local rivals, Sheppey, at a canter but the 45-12 margin in no way explains their mind set for the game. A casual observer might have thought they had a holiday plane to catch, so quick were they to establish a healthy lead, before settling back on their 'mental sun loungers', allowing Sheppey back into the game.

With twenty minutes gone, five converted tries to the good and dominance all over the pitch, this had a health warning notice posted for the sanity of the visitors. But, as has been the case on more than one occasion this year, Maidstone took their collective foot off the gas and allowed the shell-shocked visitors a route back into the game, which they took with alacrity. Indeed, in their own minor competition, Sheppey claimed the second half by twelve points to ten.



But it would be churlish to find more than minor fault with a job well done, turning round the humiliating loss in the away fixture, when a strong wind dictated conditions and Maidstone failed to find a formula to counteract the conditions. This time, the 10/12 axis soon found the measure of the Sheppey defence to set up a healthy cushion, before winger, Fedorcio and a brace from centre, Bramwell, put the

icing on the first half cake.

As this was the last game of the season, Coach, Andy Foley, looked to experiment, with next season in mind, by starting Matt Iles at fly half, retaining Alex Hadi at blind side and putting promising youngster, Lewis Fagg, on the bench, for his debut. Each had a successful afternoon, with Iles claiming the Man-of-the-Match award, for his all-round performance, setting up a number of the tries with astute passes.

The first quarter of the match was all Maidstone. An early penalty allowed them field position within the Sheppey 22 and, with his first touch of the ball, Neil Graves slipped through the visitors defence to touch down by the posts, with 3 minutes on the board.



He repeated the dose on 9 minutes and, with Fedorcio in dead-eye mode, extended the lead to fourteen points. With mounting pressure exerted by the Maidstone pack, a loose relieving kick by fly half, Oliver, was fielded by Fedorcio to run back in the left corner, before making the conversion from the touchline.



Just past the quarter hour, with mistakes already creeping into the Maidstone play and Sheppey gaining some field position, Ollie Rogers intercepted a Sheppey pass deep in the Maidstone 22. Running to the half way, his angled kick sat up nicely for Bramwell to elude the defence and score by the posts for Fedorcio supplying the conversion again.

Bramwell was again the finisher, on twenty minutes, completing a slick move from a line out in the visitors 22, by the posts, for another routine Fedorcio conversion and a 35-0 lead.

Unfortunately, as a spectacle, it was all downhill from here, as Maidstone both lost concentration and inevitably, over complicated their play. On the other hand, Sheppey regained some composure, and prompted by fly half, Olliver, began to stretch the Maidstone defence.



The second half began with another flurry of tries by Maidstone, undoubtedly having received some sage advice in the break. With three minutes on the clock, a spell of pressure by the home side saw right winger, Allie Moss, chip through for left wing, Leo Fedorcio, outside him, to score in the corner.

With ten minutes gone, another interception by Rogers, this time following a Sheppey tap-penalty in the Maidstone 22, saw him run the length of the field, eluding the cover on more than one occasion, to score wide right and establish a 45-0 lead. With the game truly out of sight for the hosts and all replacements on the field, Sheppey came back into the game, with first, scrum half, Kelly, getting a



touchdown in the left corner, followed by a second, by prop, Dewis, under the posts.

Maidstone finally returned their thoughts to scoring again and almost got another try at the death, but the final pass eluded replacement winger, Stockford, with the defence opened.

This has been a successful season for Maidstone with over two-thirds of their games ending in victory. The league campaign almost finished before it had begun with key losses in early games to sides who were later vanquished.

There are lessons for next season in this: league campaigns are won by consistency from the off. But this disappointment has been offset by the run in the RFU Senior Vase, where the team performed at the top of their game, putting together sparkling wins against Harlow and Folkestone, before missing out at the last in the close fought encounter with eventual finalists, Wells.

Finally, a thank you to Hayden Mitchell for his whole-hearted involvement in the club, the team and on the field. We wish you well on your return to the 'Land-of-the-long-white-cloud'. You'll be missed in Maidstone!



Team

Sam Bailey; Josh McKenzie; Ben Williams: Andy Bacon; Hayden Mitchell: Alex Hadi (Harry Stockford 60 mins); Ben Wilson (Lewis Fagg 40 mins); Lee Thomson: Nick Jeary; Matt Iles: Leo Fedorcio: Neil Graves; Gareth Bramwell (Cesar Ionica 50 mins); Allie Moss: Ollie Rogers