



Match Report

London & SE Division 1 (South)

Havant 37 v Maidstone 21



Played at Hooks Lane Havant, Saturday 1st October, 2016

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Having won both fixtures against Havant in the last campaign Maidstone were confident that despite changes to the side, they would be able to take the points in this encounter at Hooks Lane. In the end a big and adventurous Havant outfit proved to have too much firepower in attack and a well organised and solid defence, taking victory by 37-21.

Maidstone featured several changes from the side that had taken the pitch the week before: with influential skipper Ben Williams still absent a rejigged front row saw Jack O'Connell and Nathan Simpson either side of Josh Pankhurst, in at hooker for the injured Will Massey. The 2nd row remained the reliable partnership of Ben Massey and Adam Knight, with Jack Lamb back on the flank in the back row. The back division saw Matt Moore move to scrum-half for the unavailable Lucien Morosan, whilst the back three saw the returning Jason Smith and debutant Ross Cooke feature. The bench consisted of Danny Baker providing the front row cover alongside Charlie Williams and Sam Pearson.

On firm ground in bright sunshine Maidstone started brightly enough, receiving the kick off and making inroads into Havant territory and their early dominance was rewarded on 5 minutes when from a second lineout deep in the Havant 22m the drive was repelled but the ball fed out with Craig Webb cutting a good line from close range able to stretch in the tackle to touch-down to the right of the posts, with Ross Cooke adding the extras for an early 0-7 lead.



Maidstone's problems started from the restart which was lost in the low afternoon sun and scrambled into touch in their own 22m. The resultant lineout saw concerted pressure through several phases before the Maidstone defence was penalised under the posts, alert to the opportunity a quick tap saw the ball moved wide on the right for Hav-

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ant to cross in the corner and reduce the deficit on 10 minutes. Maidstone then struggled to get out of their half and a penalty on 15 minutes led to a lineout, and although the drive was repelled, quick recycling saw the Havant forwards scurry over from the base of the subsequent ruck. The conversion was unsuccessful but at 10-7 Havant had a lead that they never looked likely

to relinquish. The end of the quarter saw the home side extend their lead further when a series of missed tackles saw them deep in Maidstone territory and good offloading in the tackle saw them cross midway out on the right which with the successful conversion extended their lead to 17-7; a penalty on the half hour saw that extended by a further 3-points to 20-7.

In many cases it was errors from the visitors when looking to attack that gifted possession to the opposition and this was the case for the next score, having been penalised when building an attacking platform on the Havant 22m, the resultant penalty handed field position to the home side and after several attempts



from the catch & drive it was a quick drive off the base of a ruck that gave them the bonus point try to extend the lead to 25-7. It looked like that would be the last meaningful action of the half until Maidstone pressure on the Havant 22m as they looked to run out of defence saw Rory Beech pounce on an over ambitious pass and canter in

unopposed from 35m out, with Cooke adding the extras the 25-14 half-time score looked a far more surmountable target than might have been the case 2 minutes earlier.



Having hauled themselves back into the match just before half-time, Havant effectively took control again within two minutes of the second half when Maidstone failed to claim the kick off. With Havant regaining possession the ball was swept to the right and whilst the visitors repulsed several attempts at their line this sucked in the defence allowing the hosts to move the ball left to cross in the corner to take the

score to 30-14. This was extended 10 minutes later when after a good break by Trudgen saw him unlucky to reclaim a chip over the Havant defence. With the bounce favouring the home side they were able to build their attack to cross midway out on the left with the extras added to take the score out to 37-14.



To their credit Maidstone continued to look to salvage something from the match as they began to come more into the match and the end of the third quarter saw them exert some good pressure following a poor clearance which penned Havant in their own 22m. Whilst the Havant defence looked solid, the continuous drives at the heart of their defence eventually created the extra man with Webb providing the final pass to Adam Knight down the right flank to touchdown midway out from the post and Cooke adding the extras.



Maidstone then dominated much of the final quarter of the game but their only real opportunity to get the bonus point try was spurned when a good break down the left flank saw a wayward pass to Sam Pearson wide on the left with the line at his mercy. The visitors continued to press during the closing stages, but lacked the penetration and ingenuity to unlock what was a well organised and uncompromising Havant defence

Maidstone now need to take stock after what is a second consecutive defeat to sides that will no doubt be in the mix in the second half of the campaign. As their injury list reduces there is no doubt that they have the talent available to compete. The coaching staff will need to restore confidence as Maidstone look to host recently relegated Gravesend to The Mote next week.

Maidstone: Nathan Simpson; Josh Pankhurst; Jack O'Connell; Adam Knight; Ben Massey; Ben Knight; Jack Lamb; Ben Brill; Matt Moore; Brendan Trudgen; Leon Olson; Rory Beech; Craig Webb; Jason Smith; Ross Cooke.

Replacements: Danny Baker; Charlie Williams; Sam Pearson (all used)

