



Brachers

law



Match Report



London Division 2 (South East)

Lewes RFC 7 v Maidstone FC 59

Played at The Stanley Turner Ground, Lewes,

Saturday 5th April, 2014

County Town Club Secure Playoff Berth



This 59-7 victory over struggling Lewes, confirmed Maidstone's play-off place but it came at a price as three players left the field with knocks. The most serious was the ankle injury to Jack Davidson, falling awkwardly after a line out, but there are hopes for recovery before the play-off game in three weeks, most likely against Gosport and Fareham.



Lewes mounted a vigorous offence all afternoon, in what was their last real chance of avoiding relegation, but, apart from a couple of occasions, lacked the firepower to penetrate the Maidstone defence. Maidstone, in contrast, probed incessantly to find the weak spots and ran in nine tries. In truth, with a little more structure to the second half game plan, it could have been more but, with a six-try half-time haul, there was little to play for by that time.



With both Ben Williams and Gareth Ellis restored to the pack and the back line unchanged, the team had a familiar look. And this was obvious in the opening exchanges as Maidstone started at a high tempo, looking to extend the Lewes defence. They also carried forward the mix of forward and back line interplay, so evident last week, and this strategy laid the base for the first try on five minutes.

From the base laid by their forward play, taking Maidstone deep into Lewes territory, the ball was shipped left for Sam Brill to take the scoring pass and touch down half way out, allowing Van de Westerlo to add the conversion for a 7-0 lead. The second, five minutes later, had the same scorer, but the build-up was much different. This time it came from a line out on the Maidstone 22, with No 8, Ben Brill, making the break out to find Neil Graves and Josh Jensen on hand to re-release Sam Brill for the second score, under the post, for a simple conversion.



A repeat of the relieving kick from the Maidstone half, by Willie Brown, a tactic used to great effect last week, laid the foundation for try number three. Regaining the ball after the resultant line out, followed by a quick feed down the line, saw Neil Graves get the touchdown in the corner this time, to post a 19-0 margin with fifteen minutes on the clock.



The fourth try, and bonus point, came just past the end of the first quarter. A catch and drive opportunity in the Lewes 22 was halted, but with a quick heel from the resultant ruck, the ball was fed to right wing Jason Smith, to score out wide.

Overenthusiasm by Smith, for barging scrum half, Terry, into touch, saw him off the field for ten minutes, immediately following his score. But although Lewes pressed Maidstone's defence, it was only at the end of the period with

fourteen men, that Lewes took advantage, with full back, Smith, slipping through the defensive cover, following a break out from the Lewes half, to score under the posts, making the conversion a formality for winger Lloyd.

With numbers restored, Maidstone got back to business, with Neil Graves adding his second try, just before the forty minute mark and Van de Westerlo adding another, after an intercept on the half way, in injury time. With two conversions by Van de Westerlo, the 38-7 half time lead effectively sewed up the game for the visitors.

The major question for the second half was the size of the victory as, apart from the attacking spark from Lewes's scrum half and full back, there was little cutting edge to their play to worry Maidstone's multi-layered defence. And Maidstone started this half as they had the first with tries on five and ten minutes. Ben Brill got the first, rounding off the combination play of forwards and backs to break through from the 22, while Josh Jensen secured the second, following a further period of Maidstone pressure. Van de Westerlo added both conversions to take the score to 52-7.



Thoughts of a season, record score were raised but quickly dashed as the structure went from the play and mistakes crept in. Indeed, it was left to the death for Maidstone to add try number nine, and a hat-trick for Sam Brill, along with conversion number seven for Van de Westerlo, to complete the scoring. In fairness, the injuries picked up and the changes to pack and backs to accommodate them, also played their part in the modest return in the second half, as evidenced by the parity Lewes gained in the set scrum in this period after total dominance of the Maidstone eight in the first half.



Recognition of this early dominance saw prop, Luke Debnam, walk off with the man-of-the-match award this week, following his restoration to the starting line up a few weeks ago. This in turn was reward for his consistent performances in the Mustangs this season, proving that selection on form is keeping everyone on their toes. The same can be said for



James Iles and Matt Vickers, who have also come into the starting line-up, late in the season and retained their positions on merit.

The last league game of the season is against Warlingham, at home, next week. With a few doubts as to fitness of some players, after this match, it should give those other players knocking on the first team door, an opportunity to show their paces.

Maidstone:

Ben Williams; Sam Bailey; Luke Debnam; James Iles; Gareth Ellis; Jack Davidson; Matt Vickers; Ben Brill; Lucian Morosan; Caleb Van de Westerlo; Sam Brill; Willie Brown; Neil Graves; Jason Smith; Josh Jensen

Replacements: (All used) Olly Smith; Matt Iles; Sam McPherson

