



# Match Report



## London Division 2 (South East)

### Maidstone FC 38 v Charlton Park RFC 20

Played at The Mote, Saturday 5th October, 2013

# Brachers

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Everyone knew this was going to be a season defining encounter, and so it proved. If Maidstone had lost this game, their promotion chances would have significantly diminished, while for Charlton Park, a win to add to their 100% record, would have provided the best platform for their own promotion plans, after missing out narrowly for the last two years.



With Maidstone coming out on top, 38-20, a handsome margin, all options remain open. But this was no walk in the park, with one score separating the sides with ten minutes left on the clock. It was the superior running skills of the home team, allied to fitness that eventually put this game to bed. This was in marked contrast to the previous home game against Medway, where Maidstone buckled under similar pressure. But this time, with Caleb van de Westerlo in the fly half spot, they were able to play the game in the opponents half, much more, with some well-directed kicking.



With only one change from the starting team that generated the handsome victory against Colfes the previous week, namely Neil Graves replacing Mark Dorman, who picked up a knock, the style of play projected by Coach, Andy Foley, was for more of the same. And with Sam Brill on the bench after his own injury problems, alongside debutant prop, Joel Byford, and Nick Bunyan, it was difficult to see

why the game plan should change. The big unknown was the impact the imposing visitors pack would have: to play Maidstone's game requires plenty of possession and, without the ball, the momentum can change, markedly.

But it was only in the scrum that Charlton Park caused any measure of discomfort for the home side. Maidstone dominated the line out all afternoon, winning more than their fair share of ball, while the loose forwards made sure of their own possession and contested mightily anything loose.



The pattern of play was set in the first five minutes. Charlton Park swooped on a Maidstone mistake from the kick off and quickly got on the scoreboard with a Tom Amzaleg penalty. Maidstone hit back from the restart and, from their own penalty, established field position in the visitors 22,

for skipper, Ben Williams, to batter his way over the line in the right hand corner.



The next score, on the quarter hour went to the visitors. Amzaleg found a gaping hole in the Maidstone line and set up centre, English, to score by the posts for an easy conversion, to open a five point margin.



Another break, this time by full back, Tom Coad, took the visitors deep into Maidstone's 22 and from a resulting five metre scrum, No. 8, Rob Saunderson, got the touch down. The conversion was unsuccessful, but with the score at 5-15, it was clear the game was at a pivotal point. Another score from the visitors would have made it difficult for Maidstone to come back. But the measure of a good side is how they deal with adversity, and in this case, two timely substitutions underpinned the teams fighting spirit.

With Nick Bunyan on for James Iles, followed by a pack reshuffle that saw debutant prop, Joel Byford, in the front row, the visitor's main weapon of attack was blunted and, following a classic catch and drive, Willie Brown received the final pass on the right to score with ease. A conversion by Van de Westerlo, from the touchline, brought the scores back to 12-15 and this is how it stayed until half time.

With all to play for, it was Maidstone that started the second half the fastest. Quickly establishing themselves in the visitors 22, the ball was spread right after a line out, for Willie Brown to cut back through the broken defence, to score once more. A further fine conversion from Van de Westerlo gave Maidstone a four point cushion, re-establishing their lead.

A spot of fisticuffs between Bunyan and flanker, Baker, saw both cooling their heels for ten minutes. But with Sam Brill on for McNamara, on the right wing, he immediately showed his pace, breaking just outside the Maidstone 22, to take play into the visitors half. With the ball linked back inside by scrum half, Hogben, Ben Williams was on hand to complete the move. With another Van de Westerlo conversion, Maidstone stretched their lead to 26-15.



But Charlton Park refused to lie down and a catch and drive, from the Maidstone 22, saw them reduce the margin with another Saunderson touchdown, with the clock moving toward the 40 minute mark. Another yellow card, incurred by full back, Jensen, for an alleged high tackle, had seen the odds stacked against Maidstone in this period, but with his return, firstly, left wing Morosan, finished off a move in the left corner and finally, Sam Brill, did the same down the right. With Van de Westerlo completing the conversion on the latter, the 38-20 scoreline was complete.

So the question posed last week by the conundrum of a big pack, has been emphatically answered. Will the answer be the same on a heavy, wet pitch later in the season? We'll have to find out; but in fine running conditions, it will take a good side to beat Maidstone, on this form.



## **Maidstone**

Ben Williams; Sam Bailey; Ollie Smith: Ben Brill; James Iles: Jack Davidson; Josh Pankhurst; Matt Iles: Adrian Hogben; Caleb Van de Westerlo: Lucien Morosan; Willie Brown; Neil Graves; Steve McNamara: Josh Jensen

Replacements (all used): Joel Byford; Nick Bunyan; Sam Brill