



Match Report

London & SE Division 1 (South)

Cobham 26 - Maidstone FC 0



Played at Cobham, Saturday 5 November, 2016



What a difference a week, and a few team changes, makes. After last week's emphatic victory over CS Rugby, Maidstone were brought back down to earth at Cobham, losing 26-0, the first time they have failed to get on the scoreboard for a number of seasons.

The loss of Lucian Morosan and Rory Beech to illness and injury, respectively, in the week highlighted, in their absence, the dimension that each of these members brings to the side. The reshuffle that required Matt Moore moving to scrum half and new boy, Filip Perica, coming in on the wing, with Olly Newton taking over at full back, could not disguise the comparison these changes invoked.

But in terms of opportunities, Maidstone could, and should, have pressed Cobham much harder. In the second half, the majority of the play was in the home team's half and with a little more patience and application, the pressure should have been turned into points. The failure to take kickable penalty options, just to get the scoreboard moving, as opposed to seeking tries every time, compounded the feeling of failure at the end.

One further complication both teams had to confront was the use of a referee from Japan, Kuniyoshi Maski.

While his style was first rate and his application of the law equal for both sides, his communication skills were limited by his faltering English, leading to a high penalty count, which didn't help the continuity of the game.

It's a number of years since Maidstone played at the Old Surbitonian Memorial ground, and a lot has changed in the interim. A new clubhouse and refurbished pitches of the highest quality, with white post surrounds, highlighted the economic strength of this part of the London conurbation. But it was the first twenty minutes of play on the pitch that caught Maidstone unawares and left them nineteen points in arrears and staring at a major defeat.



From the kick off, a relieving kick to touch was charged down on the Maidstone



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**VIVID
ASSOCIATES**



22. Cobham were quicker to the loose ball and with a combined move that swept to the right touch-line and then back to the left saw winger, MacDonald, touch down in the corner.

Maidstone tried to steady the ship as Cobham continued to show the pace and penetration in their back line, which stretched the Maidstone

defence on a number of occasions. Just as it seemed that a measure of equilibrium was restored and their attack began to make inroads, an inside pass that missed its target allowed Cobham to break away from their own 22, to set up centre Goddard to finish off the move under Maidstone's posts, allowing a simple conversion for fly half, Wier.

Goddard showed his silky running skills again, five minutes later, when he received the ball in his own half and glided past the Maidstone defence to once again score under the posts, to pile another seven points on the total.

But with the creative juices belatedly beginning to flow, Maidstone should have cut the deficit five minutes later.

A move down the line provided some space for Alex Clarke on the right wing and his pass back inside should have resulted in a try, but the pass was dropped and with it went the first real opportunity of the half to get on the scoreboard.



A rejig of the back line added more steel to the defence and as the half wore on, so more of the play took place in Cobham territory. The first penalty chance to put points on the board was spurned in favour of the catch and drive option, but with the Cobham jumpers proving a handful for the Maidstone line out, the catch was missed and with it the chance to threaten the host's line.

The second half started for Maidstone with the slight wind at their backs, in the knowledge that the game was still winnable with a good start and by concentrating on playing through the pack, which was beginning to show dominance in the tight. With only ten minutes played, the strategy appeared to be working as Cobham made changes to bolster the weight in their back row to counter the disruptive push that was being generated by the Maidstone eight.

But the strength in the tight was offset by the malfunctioning lineout and the mis-



takes in ball handling that served up too much turnover ball for the Cobham defence. With two more kickable penalties in the Cobham 22 spurned in favour of the kick to touch followed by the catch and drive, there was no scoreboard pressure on the home side, either.

Maidstone just couldn't find the right combination to pierce the Cobham shield and, with the game moving into injury time, another charged down kick from a Maidstone attacking move allowed Cobham to add the bonus point with a second breakaway try, this time by MacDonald.



On another day, the result of this match could have been different. Indeed, with a little more rub of the green, Maidstone could at least have frayed the nerves of the home supporters. But a poor start and the failure to retain the ball to build sufficient pressure in the Cobham 22 in the second half, ultimately determined the course of this match.

The corrections needed are clear. Getting back a full complement of players for the starting fifteen will also help.

Maidstone Ben Williams; Josh Pankhurst; Nathan Simpson: Adam Knight; Ben Massey; Ben Knight; Jack Lamb; Matt Iles; Matt Moore; Brendan Trudgen; Filip Perica; Craig

Webb; Ross Cooke; Alex Clarke; Olly Newton

Replacements: Lewis Stimpson; Jack O'Connell; Charlie Williams (All used)

