



Match Report



London & SE Division 1 (South)

Maidstone FC 89 v Gosport & Fareham RFC 10

Played at The Mote, Saturday 8th April, 2017

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After last week's narrow, disappointing defeat, away to Brighton, this thirteen-try romp in the sun was a spring tonic for jaded pallets. Maidstone's 89-10 win against spirited, but limited, opposition rounded off their home campaign for the season, demonstrating in the process what can be achieved on a firm pitch with unlimited space to operate.

Once again, the pack were outstanding but this time the three-quarters also delivered, scoring seven of the tries, with a Matt Moore hat trick and two from Sean Woolford making up the bulk. But it was the pace of man-of-the-match, Ross Cooke, returning to the centre after an injury lay-off that caught the eye and repeatedly carved open the visitor's defence.

With Matt Iles restored to the back row, the only forced change in the pack was in the second row, where Tom Chandler took over Ben Massey's slot. Lewis Stimpson started on the bench with Ben Brill moving to openside, after his efforts at No. 8 the previous week. And with this familiar team make-up, Maidstone delivered from the off.

A quick tap penalty in the Gosport 22, after a couple of minutes, was the starter that got the scoreboard moving, with Ross Cooke feeding Matt Moore to score in the left corner. And with Euan Caborn converting from the touchline, it was clear that Gosport were in for a long afternoon.

With ten minutes gone, Ben Brill broke from his own 22, powering through the first line of defence to take play deep to the visitor's 22. A combination of last ditch defence and a poor final



pass from the Maidstone back line relieved Gosport on this occasion but just before the quarter hour, they demonstrated how it should be done when a kick out of defence by Gosport was claimed by Moore and moved across field to the opposite wing, with Woolford featuring twice before scoring in the right corner.



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This was the only kick that Caborn missed all afternoon but with Maidstone running the ball at every opportunity, the tries continued to flow, giving him plenty of practice from all over the pitch.

The third try followed, ten minutes later, following another quick tap penalty. Once again the whole of the back

line featured, with Ross Cooke making the vital break and Matt More finishing off in the left corner. And before the half hour, the fourth, bonus point, try duly arrived. This time it was Adam Knight that received the scoring pass, finishing half way out, to extend Maidstone's lead to 26 points.

But having been on the receiving end for half an hour, Gosport showed what they could do given the opportunity. From a scrum on the Maidstone 22, scrum half, Dugan, dummied the defence and shot through a gap to score, reducing the deficit to 26-5.



Maidstone rounded off the half with a classic catch and drive move from a line out in the Gosport 22. Pankhurst was on hand to finish, allowing Maidstone to go to the break with a 33-5 cushion.

With Adam Knight taking a knock, Lewis Stimpson came into the back row, with Matt Iles moving forward, into the second row, and this provided even more pace for Maidstone in open play, which dictated matters in the second half.



Maidstone were quickly on the scoreboard again, with Ben Brill finishing off a move from half way. Then with Matt Moore completing his hat-trick and Ross Cooke out-stepping two potential tacklers to weave his way over the line from the re-start, Maidstone added three tries before

ten minutes had passed.

From this point it was a procession as Matt Iles, twice, Shaun Woolford, Lewis Stimpson and Lucian Morosan all added to the points total with tries of their own. The only relief for the weary visitors was a well taken try of their own, when a smart break in the centre was finished off by scrum Half, Dugan, to complete his own brace.

With the referee allowing little added time for stoppages, perhaps considering the boxing metaphor appropriate and saving the opposi-



tion from further damage, the final score was 89-10. Gosport will soon have time to nurse their wounds in a lower league and return, in the future, reinvigorated.

Compared to many of the games this season, Maidstone were able to dominate proceedings throughout. They were given time and space to show their skills, something that most teams in this league don't permit.

With only one more game, in two weeks' time, against local rivals, Tunbridge Wells, and Maidstone safe in a solid mid-table position, thoughts can be turned to end of season deliberations. Where do we need to strengthen the side, for next season, is now firmly on the agenda but also who were the stars of this.



The pack, in total, deserves a big pat on the back and contenders for player of the season must, surely come from the there, with Matt Iles, Josh Pankhurst and the Knight brothers in the mix. But with Lucian Morosan an ever-present and allowed to perform in his preferred position of scrum half, throughout, at least one of the injury-ravaged back division should come into consideration.

Teams seldom stand still, so the emphasis needs to be on improving this one with some judicious additions to its attacking capability, to complement the strong defence and high fitness levels shown throughout the season.

Maidstone Ben Williams; Josh Pankhurst; Nathan Simpson: Adam Knight; Tom Chandler: Ben Knight; Ben Brill; Matt Iles: Lucian Morosan; Rory Beech: Matt Moore; Ross Cooke; Filip Perica; Shaun Woolford: Euan Caborn

Replacements: Alex Clarke; Will Fox; Lewis Stimpson (All used)

