



Match Report



London & SE Division 1 (South)

Maidstone FC 43 v Chiswick RFC 26

Played at The Mote, Saturday 11th February, 2017



On a cold, bleak day, with snow in the air and a cutting east wind, both Maidstone and the visitors, Chiswick, served up an eleven-try treat to warm the hearts of the spectators. The first ten minutes saw four of them, two to each side, while Maidstone generated their four-try bonus point within the first quarter.

With the elements indicating multiple layers were needed to keep warm, it was, perhaps, unsurprising that Maidstone started slowly. But Chiswick, hovering just above the drop zone, realised that they would have to make an impact early if they were to exert any control over this encounter. And this they did: but it was, ultimately, to no avail as they succumbed 43-26 to an increasingly dominant Maidstone side.

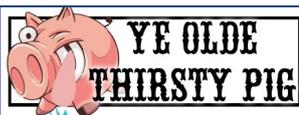
Chiswick have shown over recent years that they like to play the game through a strong pack and this encounter conformed to the stereotype. But with Maidstone more than matching them in this department, it was the difference in the backs that settled this game.

With Sam Pearson on the right wing claiming two tries and the man-of-the-match award, and recent recruit, Shaun Woolford, on the left, showing power and pace, the threat from the Maidstone three-quarter line matched the forwards in determining the outcome of this game.

Lewis Stimpson returned to the back row, after missing last week's game, and with Jason Smith picking up a knock, Matt Moore moved to full back, with Sam Pearson filling the right wing



slot. Ben Williams returned to duty, on the bench, after his enforced three week lay-off, part of his concussion rehabilitation plan, and with experienced recruit, hooker, Gary Beck, also on the bench, it was clear that there were multiple options available in the front row. Wisely, these were used to keep up the pressure on the visiting pack,



throughout.

For those spectators who were late to leave the pre-match lunch, the score quickly had a bloated look about it. With their first attack of the game, Chiswick engineered a line out on the Maidstone 22. The predictable catch and drive was held but by moving the ball wide, centre, Godfrey, cut a line to

score by the posts, allowing fly half, Hallett an easy conversion.

Maidstone's reply was instantaneous. From the restart, Chiswick incurred a penalty which was punted to touch in the visitor's 22. The subsequent catch and drive was executed efficiently and Josh Pankhurst duly scored in the corner. A fine conversion by Caborn levelled the scores.

The next score went to the visitors. A poor clearance gave Chiswick a line out on the Maidstone 22 and this time the ball was quickly moved wide. Good defence stopped the first two thrusts but a third saw wing-forward, Darroch, cross the line. With Hallett making the conversion, the visitors restored their seven point lead.



Once again, the Maidstone reply was immediate. This time Ben Brill caught the kick off and powered through a number of tackles to run to the line. With Caborn's conversion drifting wide, the deficit was reduced to two points.



But with Maidstone now into the game, they were not to be denied and the restart was used to force their way down into the Chiswick 22 with Matt Iles, registering his century of starts for the club, finishing off a series of passing moves, by the posts. This time Caborn had no difficulties with the conversion and Maidstone posted a five point lead, 19-14.

An interception by Sam Pearson on Maidstone's 22 saw him sprint the length of the pitch to score in the right corner, just before the end of the quarter, to post the four-try bonus point. Euan Caborn's conversion from the touchline extended the lead to 26-14, which was added to, shortly thereafter, by a second try for Josh Pankhurst, finishing off some slick inter-passing.

If it hadn't been for slack defending just before the half ended, Maidstone could have entered the second period well in control of the game. But a charged down clearance kick,



from their own in goal, gave Hallett the chance to add seven points to the Chiswick scoreline, bringing it to 31-21 as the whistle blew for the half.

Once again, Chiswick were the sharper outfit after the restart with Maidstone losing their first line out. But as they wound themselves back into the game and showed their strong defensive qualities, Maidstone were the first to score. It was not until the end of the quarter but, once again, a long run by Sam Pearson, from the half way line, saw him touch down for his second try. With Caborn adding the conversion, Maidstone stretched their lead to 38-21.



A consolidating try, five minutes later, this time with Lewis Stimpson getting the score, took Maidstone's lead to 43-21. For all intents, the game was over but Chiswick kept battering away and they were rewarded with a try by replacement scrum half, Vannini, to give them a four-try bonus point of their own and close the final score-line to 43-26.

With the maximum five points gained from this game, Maidstone moved up a place in the league and consolidated their status in mid-table. With a number of encounters with teams just above them in the league coming up, the opportunity to climb further up the table presents itself. If the added punch from the back line, ably demonstrated this week, can be sustained, further movement up the table can be contemplated.

Maidstone Danny Baker; Josh Pankhurst; Nathan Simpson: Adam Knight; Ben Massey: Lewis Stimpson; Ben Brill; Matt Iles: Lucian Morosan; Euan Caborn: Shaun Woolford; Craig Webb; Ross Cooke; Sam Pearson: Matt Moore

Replacements: Ben Williams; Gary Beck; Filip Perica (All used)

MAIDSTONE		F.C.			
					
HOME	4	3	AWAY	2	6

