



Brachers
law



Match Report



London Division 2 (South East)

Maidstone FC 38 v Warlingham RFC 16

Played at The Mote, Saturday 12th April, 2014



With the play-off position secured, this last league game of the season provided a mental hurdle for Maidstone to overcome and it took all of the first half to decide, in their collective minds, that some hard graft and resolute tackling was required. The final score, 38-16, provided a comfortable margin in the end and reflected Maidstone's superiority, but the win was ultimately down to an improved second half.

With Ben Williams and Gareth Ellis not available this week, Jason Smith and Jack Davidson nursing knocks from last week's game, the side had a fresh feeling to it, compared to recent weeks. But with Willie Brown taking over the captaincy and James Douglas slotting into the right wing position, the three-quarter line had a familiar look. Alex Hadi was given a starting position in the second row, reflecting his improved performances for the Mustangs, and Jamie Sims slotted comfortably into the blind-side, back row position, ultimately claiming the Man-of-the-match award for his performance.



With Warlingham having lost to league champions, Charlton Park last week, to a last minute penalty, added to which relegation was theoretically possible, there was plenty of incentive for the visitors to fight for a win to end their season on a high. And for forty minutes, they demonstrated they could match Maidstone.



Indeed, it was Warlingham that dominated early possession, and, with a 40 metre penalty, slotted by scrum half, McEvoy, after two minutes, this should have provided the wakeup call Maidstone required. Slowly they managed to build pressure and a penalty kick to the Warlingham 22 provided the platform

for a catch and drive, with Sam Bailey getting the touch down to get points on the board. Caleb Van de Westerlo added the conversion to give Maidstone a 7-3 lead but, somehow, the cohesion seemed to be missing from the home-side's play.

With the half hour approaching, a sudden spark from the Maidstone back line resulted in a second try. From a routine line out on the half way, a break by Jamie Sims through the centre of the opposition line provided the opportunity to spread the ball left across the field for Sam Brill to finish the move in the left corner.



But with Maidstone failing to convert an easy penalty and Warlingham taking advantage of some slack, first-up tackling, it was the visitors that pared back the Maidstone lead, with winger, Downie-Keen finishing off a break started on half way by McEvoy, who also added the conversion, to reduce Maidstone's lead to two points.



If the message to generate more urgency was conveyed to Maidstone at half time, it did not immediately have an effect. On the contrary, it was Warlingham that provided the early pressure, resulting in a penalty on the Maidstone 22, which McEvoy converted to give them a single point lead.

With Brad Ford coming on to lead the line and a general awareness beginning to dawn that Warlingham could provide an upset, Maidstone slowly ground through the gears. A try in the left corner by Jamie Sim, on ten minutes, started the revival but with McEvoy cutting the deficit to 17-16, with another penalty, it took another try, just before the end of the quarter for Maidstone to begin to build momentum

James Douglas got the touchdown, having been stopped just before the line in his first attempt and Ford added the conversion from the right touchline. A long kick to the Warlingham 22, following the restart, with a good follow up to pressurise the defence, gave Nick Bunyan the opening he needed to claim try number four and a bonus point. With Ford adding the conversion, from the left hand touch, this time, a point's cushion began to build, just as Warlingham started to run out of steam.



A further try on the half hour, by No 8, Matt Iles, with Ford adding another conversion, completed the afternoons scoring to generate a 38-16 scoreline, although James Douglas couldn't quite finish off a further opportunity, following a chip to the corner by scrum half, Morosan.

So the focus now turns to the play-off game against Gosport and Fareham in two weeks' time. Maidstone secured a



comfortable victory over this same side in a pre-season warm up game but this should not provide any level of comfort as a lot of rugby has been played since then and Gosport have a significantly better record over the season.

While there are still some injury doubts, the strength in depth that Maidstone possess should allow a strong selection to take the field and from there, it will be about how they play on the day, managing nerves and delivering the game plan. With all



grounds now providing a firm playing surface, the conditions should suit the style of play that Maidstone favour – just go for it!

Maidstone:

Luke Debnam; Sam Bailey; Ollie Smith; James Iles; Alex Hadi; Jamie Sims; Matt Vickers; Matt Iles; Lucian Morosan; Caleb Van de Westerlo; Sam Brill; Willie Brown; Neil Graves; James Douglas; Josh Jensen

Replacements: (All used) Ben Brill; Nick Bunyan; Brad Ford

