



Match Report



London & SE Division 1 (South)

Maidstone FC 17 v Chobham RFC 14

Played at The Mote, Saturday 19 November, 2016

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Maidstone overcame a pedestrian Chobham side at the Mote on Saturday by a small margin, 17-14, and for this they should thank their pack, once again. With skipper Ben Williams bagging both tries and No 8, Matt Iles, leading in the loose, the lack of penetration outside the scrum ended up as an irritation rather than a full blown handicap.

Craig Webb returned to the centre after missing last Sunday's cup game and with Matt Moore and Ollie Newton both unavailable, Copter Brunt and Felip Perica stepped up to fill the wing roles. But with Rory Beech's hamstring taking longer to heal than anticipated, Alex Clarke retained the full back role.

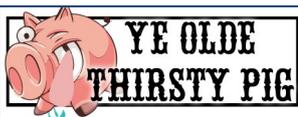
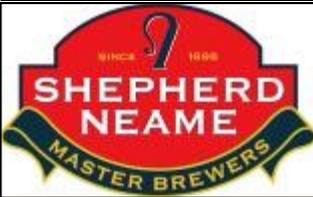
The return of Josh Pankhurst to the front row, after injury, increased the pack's cutting edge while the return of Euan Caborn, from his sojourn at Canterbury, ultimately provided a more secure kicking option in the loose and from the tee. But, in reality, against stronger outfits, Maidstone will have to up their game if they are to reprise the mid-winter run of victories they produced last season.

While the overhead conditions were benign for the start of the game, underfoot the pitch was beginning to show signs of the recent rain and, playing up the slope in the first half, Maidstone looked for territory before launching attacks. And, with ten minutes on the clock, the first chance came their way from a penalty in the Chobham 22.

With the chance drifting just wide of the posts, it was the visitors that came back hard with an individualist try from fly half, Glover. From a position on his own 22, he ran wide across the field to outpace the immediate cover and proved unstoppable thereafter, touching down under the Maidstone posts to make the conversion, by full back Thompson, a formality.

Maidstone, stung into action, came back at the visitors, immediately. From the restart,





they established themselves in the Chobham 22 and, while the first thrust at the line was held, Ben Williams was on hand to take the recycled ball and crash over. Trudgen's conversion levelled the scores.

While the pack was showing its dominance in the scrum and loose, the line outs were far from secure. This proved

a major setback, especially after the award of penalties, when a number of opportunities to use the catch and drive were thwarted by inaccuracy and pressure on the opposition was relieved.

Maidstone spurned further opportunities to move ahead when, on the twenty minute mark, a forward pass prevented a try in the corner by Perica and Trudgen's penalty kick drifted wide of the posts again. With Chobham riding their luck, it was almost inevitable they would add to Maidstone's woes. And so it turned out.



A long kick to corner by fly half, Glover, saw the ball taken into touch by Maidstone and while the catch and drive was held, quick hands by the Chobham backs saw the right wing, Edwards, given enough space to touch down half way out. The conversion by Thompson restored the visitor's seven point lead.

Just before the interval, a long range penalty attempt by Chobham's Thompson fell

short and as a consequence, Maidstone went into the break only seven points adrift. And with Morosan sidelined with a dead leg, Caborn took to the field. This was to prove decisive in the second half.



With just over five minutes on the clock, a penalty to Maidstone on the left touchline was converted by Caborn, after bouncing off the bar, to reduce the deficit to four

points. And as the rain began to fall, Caborn's influence with the boot began to increase as he sought sanctuary along the left touchline to give Maidstone field position to mount attacks.

But the coup-de-grace had to wait until past the half hour. As Maidstone upped the speed of play, a break by Craig Webb took play into the Chobham 22. A penalty to Maidstone on the visitor's five metre line was taken as a scrum and, while the pushover was halted, quick recycling saw Ben Williams on hand,



once again, to get the touch down by the posts. Caborn's conversion was a formality and gave Maidstone a three point margin.

With the end of regulation time approaching, Chobham put in a last concerted effort on the Maidstone line. A penalty attempt by Thompson drifted to the left of the posts and proved the last chance for the visitors as from the resultant drop out, Maidstone regained the ball and kept things tight until the final whistle.

A win is a win and will take Maidstone up the table. But the quality of play in this game was way below that demonstrated in the re-



cent past and will need to improve, especially against the top sides in the league, who will take greater advantage of the weaknesses on display.

Maidstone Ben Williams; Josh Pankhurst; Nathan Simpson: Adam Knight; Ben Massey: Ben Knight; Lewis Stimpson; Matt Iles: Lucian Morosan; Brendan Trudgen: Filip Perica; Craig Webb; Ross Cooke; Copter Brunt: Alex Clarke

Replacements: Danny Baker; Jack O'Connell; Euan Caborn (All used)

