

Ashford Toucans 2nd XV 80 vs. Maidstone 3rd XV 5

League: Invicta 3, Match 5

Canterbury Road, Ashford, Saturday 27th October. Kick-off 15:00

Firstly a correction to last week's match report as Maidstone started the day one point behind Ashford in Invicta 3. Even though Ashford lost last week to TJ IV's, losing teams are still awarded a single point, so prior to the match, Ashford were top on 17 points, with Maidstone in 2nd place on 16.

With a 100% record so far this season, Maidstone had the opportunity to take the League lead from Ashford if victory could be achieved. It's unfortunate that following the strongest performance of the season last week against Aylesford, this week was to bring the most difficult and disappointing performance of the current campaign.

Maidstone headed down to Ashford with just sixteen players. Selection was always going to prove difficult as a whole host of regular players were unavailable. Rather frustratingly, this was compounded further with seven further players having to pull out during the week. This meant that there were a number of call ups from the 4th and 5th teams so that the match could go ahead. With that, special thanks should go to Will Rush, Mike Oakley and Richard Ewence for coming up, as well as Lewis Fagg and Chris Tomlin for filling in from the Mustangs.

Maidstone's strength and success this season has developed from the continuity of the team, with a core group of players playing together every week. The enforced changes were always going to have an effect and it was clear from the off that Maidstone had an unsettled side. Ashford on the other hand, showed in ruthless fashion, how a side that is well-drilled and play together each week can put together some excellent free flowing rugby.

The first quarter of the game brought wave after wave of Ashford attacks, and Maidstone's defence were not up to the task. Missed tackles, players caught out of position and basic errors meant Maidstone could not get a foot in the game. This period brought five Ashford tries as well as the loss of Lewis Fagg to a pulled groin.

During second quarter Maidstone did manage to put more offensive play together and for a much of this quarter Maidstone had Ashford pinned back into their own 22. This forced Ashford to re-think slightly as Maidstone asked their own questions. Maidstone were unable to post a score however, and before half time Ashford did touch down twice more to leave the mid-point score at 49-0.

Maidstone started the second half in a similar vain to the way they finished the first, pushing Ashford back into their own 22. Winning a scrum about 8 metres out, the Maidstone pack pushed Ashford over their goal line for Captain Tugwell to touch down. A really good score for the away side.

Unfortunately for Maidstone that was going to be the only score that they would post. However, Ashford were never able to put together long periods of possession, even though Ashford went on to score a further four tries before the end of the game. The final score, Ashford 80, Maidstone 5.

Despite the score-line Maidstone can take heart in a number of things. There were some strong displays of tackling and when Maidstone had the chance to run the ball, Ashford were often caught

scrambling. Everyone that made the journey gave everything for the badge when it would have been really easy to let the heads drop. Indeed, every player stepped up to the mark and that in itself means that the team can stand proud.

This week's MOTM performance goes to Captain Dave Tugwell. The mark of a good captain is how to inspire in the face of difficulty. Dave's motivation, drive and never say die attitude always kept Maidstone's heads up in the most challenging of situations. An inspiration to the team – a true leader, a true captain.

Captains note – Firstly thank you to Dave for another excellent match report and his very generous comments for MOTM.

The number of players letting the side and the club down on a regular basis is really not acceptable, selection is 9pm on a Tuesday; it is the individual's responsibility to make their captain know they are available and stay available. Pulling out as late as Saturday morning is making captaincy a massive burden not the honour and privilege it should be. The bottom line is it is impacting results and your teams mates. If it is you sort it out.

Equally turning up late stops the team being ready and prepared for kick off Tom Challis (Club Secretary) and Mike Lawrenson (former Captain and membership secretary) you should know better!!

To end on a lighter note the best excuse I think I have ever heard for being unavailable came from Tom Challis this week.....'I am going on a Fungus Foraging Course'!!!!

Squad:

Toby Young: Chris Morton: Ross Laing: Will Rush: Tom Challis: Simon Wright: Shane Davis: Mike Oakley: Dave Tugwell: Mike Laurenson: David Ruaux: Justin Evans: Chris Tomlin: David Baker: Lewis Fagg: Richard Ewence