

# Maidstone Barbarians 0 - 44 Sheppey II

Trys:	Trys: No. 12 (2) No.6 No. 8 No. 1
Cons:	Cons: No.10 (5)
Pens:	Pens: No. 10 (3)

*R&MK* Early Bird 6: Stipple Field. Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> November. Kick-off 14:30

The MMB arrived 'abroad' in murky conditions and were greeted by the Development XV going through some drills which look about right for a 2nd team. There were some that had played for the 1<sup>st</sup> Team only the week previous however, when you are a little island with only enough players to comfortably cover two teams each week, it is fair enough. Although it must be strange playing LSE3 one week and then the Early Bird 6 the next. Kind of like playing Championship football then the next week having a run out in the Conference!

The Barbarians were in the truest sense of the word this week, fielding an Australian, some Kiwi descendants as well as a certain guest appearance from a short, bearded German. Where were the mouthy Ulsterman and the sidestepping Welshman to bolster up the foreign contingent?!

In slippery conditions it was very difficult for anyone to really get to grips with the game...or anyone's shirt for that matter. Maidstone kicked off and Sheppey showed why they were a Development XV. With pace and quick hands, after several bruising tackles, the hosts were over for their first converted score.

Maidstone applied some excellent forward & back direct running and got back into Sheppey territory. Unfortunately, in the wet conditions it was difficult to keep hold of the ball. Credit must go to Sheppey for the way they broke the Maidstone V lines & it is something that will need some work on in training. By sucking in the forwards and leaving the backs exposed, they were able to spread it quickly wide. After doing so, the gaps appeared down the left channel as the forwards & backs were out of position and not at home due to the tracking tackling duties.

This was a tactic that brought about three of Sheppey's Trys and they had a comfortable 24 – 0 lead at half time with converted Trys and a penalty to boot.

The second half brought a little more MMB cohesion. The line out was excellent all game and the scrums were equally as impressive. The only problem with the scrums was that as MMB pushed the hosts back, somehow, somehow, Sheppey took the ball with them!

Finally a highlight for the visitors happened midway through the second half. An anonymous forward, for reasons that will be explained later, took the drive to the Sheppey defence with results of a clash that would be worthy of any professional encounter. As the 'Stones had a penalty just 10 metres out, the ball was passed to the unnamed forward. The Sheppey skipper cried out "Here comes the big lad, let's 'ave him!" As both charged at each other like two Bulls seeing the red rag, an almighty crunch was heard as both men collided, chest and head first. As the move eventually broke down and the ball cleared down the opposite flank, a cursory glance back saw a broken Sheppey skipper receiving treatment.

Sheppey took two further penalties to take the game away from Maidstone & with 8 minutes to go scored their fourth Try. With Sheppey on the hunt for the 'bonus' fifth Try, all Maidstone V's could salvage now was the pride in stopping them from getting over the line just one more time. With almost the last play, MMB was on their goal line, defending vehemently. On his own 5 metre line, an attempted pass by the aforementioned forward was intercepted cruelly & Sheppey were in for their fifth Try.

As the full time whistle blew and with the impending one week break from league action, the MMB can regroup and focus on those basics. Communication at rucks seemed crucial this week as well as not over committing. It was interesting to see on that last point that New Zealand comfortably beat Wales at the weekend by only committing one – three men to a ruck. Reason being, that if you know you can't win the ball, at least make sure when the opposition put their heads up to attack, they are met by a line of superior numbers. Food for thought perhaps

gentlemen?

**Next up:** December 8<sup>th</sup>: (H) Gravesend IV. *Early Bird 6West League*

- Gravesend IV would have had two weeks break from the league by the time they visit Maidstone. They sit high in the league and gave NAG a good run for their money recently. Maidstone will need to play like they can and do the basics well to overturn them.