

## **BARKING PRE SEASON FESTIVAL 29<sup>th</sup> August 2015**

Maidstone traveled to Barking for the second pre season game in preparation for their first league game against Charlton park next week. The format was due to be a tournament involving Barking, Maidstone, Westcliffe and Saffron Waldron. On arrival the coaching team were informed that both Westcliffe and Saffron Waldron had withdrawn, however they had managed to get a replacement in the form National 3 team Gravesend. The re structured format meant that each team would play two 40 sessions.

Maidstone started the day against Gravesend producing some effective phases of rugby only to halted by their in ability to maintain their discipline at the breakdown which resulted in a number of penalties . Maidstone had an early opportunity from a lineout in the Gravesend 22m, a clean catch and a well set up drive was thwarted just short of the line when a penalty was awarded to Gravesend for a Maidstone player coming off his feet when the maul was collapsed . This allowed Gravesend to stay in the game in the early stages.

Despite some positive aspects of Maidstone play again a lack of discipline allowed Gravesend to apply pressure in the Maidstone half from a series of penalties and free kicks which resulted in the first score to Gravesend.

The second session saw a more disciplined performance from Maidstone playing Rugby in the right areas of the pitch and reacting quicker to the game situations. The focus was on doing the simple things well in the right areas of the park. Again Maidstone put together some positive phases of play and following a lineout Maidstone set up an effective catch and drive for a Josh Pankhurst score, putting the sides on equal footing. A second try from a similar phase of controlled play, this time from Rich Bowen saw Maidstone win the first encounter of the day.

Maidstone then took to the field for their 2<sup>nd</sup> and final match of the day, against Barking, who themselves beat Charlton Park (our first League opponents) in a pre-season friendly the preceding week.

In truth, there was only ever one team in the match and apart from one short period late in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half when the home team tried unsuccessfully to breach the Maidstone defence on the try line, most of the game was played in the Barking half.

Tries came from Tom Waring, Lewis Stimpson, Harry Miller and Rory Beach, all of whom are new to the club this season and were characterized by strong running and creative handling.

At times, the line-out faltered, surrendering some good field positions and when it came to the scrum, it certainly became much more dominant in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half after the addition of Luke Debnam.

The sight of Skipper Ben Williams being helped from the field of play midway through the 2<sup>nd</sup> half caused ripples of concern for the Maidstone faithful, but he seemed to have recovered by the time he was called upon to collect the silver-ware in the bar afterwards.

All in all, a pretty satisfying day out that bodes well for the season ahead and a glimpse perhaps at the kind of ground, clubhouse and facilities that could be coming Maidstone's way in the foreseeable future.