

Maidstone Barbarians 7 Weaving Warriors 37

Despite this being another defeat for the Barbarians, playing an away fixture on the familiar turf of Mote Park, the positives in a much-improved performance outweighed the negatives. Weaving brought a squad of 27 players and were a much much stronger opposition than last week's; nevertheless Maidstone battled to keep the score down to a similar level. Weaving's back division combined strength and speed and were matched by strong, heavy forwards. At times the Maidstone line was under seemingly constant attack and determined tackling and rucking was all that prevented an even higher deficit to chase. On a number of occasions, the Weaving forward thrust was stopped on the line and driven back, but their superiority had to tell in the end and Maidstone were left again with a mountain to climb.

The Barbarians only had an eighteen man squad, with a welcome (but increasingly rare) appearance from battling pensioner, Steve Pooley, and guest appearances from Richard O'Mahoney, making an excellent showing in his first game since university, and Jake Palmer, who has played a great deal for both teams in the past and who gave his usual uncompromising and powerful performance in the pack. In fact, Jake might well have claimed the man of the match award, if it had not been for an outstanding performance from Ben Foskett at flanker, who beat him to it: Ben was quick off the scrums to floor the opposition, fast to the breakdown to secure position and strong in his running throughout.

Maidstone's solitary try came from a combination of quick-thinking and dancing feet from fly half Simon Seal. Seal took a quick tap penalty well outside the opposition 22, spotting a gap in the usually impenetrable Weaving line; having got up to full speed, no one was going to stop him and he zig-zagged through the remainder of the Weaving defence to score under the posts. This was by no means Maidstone's only attack, though: spearheaded by the afore-mentioned Foskett and Palmer, ably assisted by runs from prop Will Fox, terrifying the opposition to make more than 20 metres and the subtler approach of winger Pete Bulford, cutting inside at an excellent angle to gain similar ground, the Barbarians came close on a number of other occasions.

Realistically, against such a strong team, who had already put a far larger winning score on previous opponents, Maidstone were unlikely to win this fixture; however, after last week's tackling catastrophe, the team should be proud of their vastly improved performance.