



Match Report

Invicta League

Thanet Wanderers 2nd XV 10 v Mustangs XV 43

Played at St Peters, Thanet, Saturday 1st March, 2014

On what was a near perfect day for rugby Maidstone's Mustangs XV made the long journey to St Peters for their return to Invicta League action, taking on Thanet's second string.

With the pitch in great condition despite the recent weather the Mustangs started well and setting out their intention and style of play from the outset. With the forwards dominating up front, strong runs from the likes of Alex Hadi, Mark Cashmore and Nick Bunyan were an early feature of the match, putting the hosts on the back foot and forcing infringements. Within the opening five minutes Jason Smith had put the county town club on the scoreboard, slotting a simple penalty to set the scoreboard rolling. Shortly after Smith was on the score sheet again after the forwards had gained ground and sucked in the home defence to allow him a simple run in, the subsequent conversion extended the lead to 10 points.

Poor work by the Mustangs at the restart conceded the ball to Thanet on halfway, but working hard to regain possession skipper Nick East was able to create turnover ball; a quick pass and Jack Hart was able to outspurt the wrongfooted Thanet defence to touchdown under the post and extend the lead even further, the extras were a formality for kicker Smith.

The restart then saw a period of midfield play, but Mustangs pressure on the home sides defence saw an infringement; with the ball kicked to the corner, a training ground move from the resulting lineout saw Nick Bunyan crash over for the third try, Smith again on target with the kick.

The Mustangs looked like closing out the half on the back foot, but good defensive pressure and line speed from the back division saw Dane Smith, playing his first game in over a year intercepted a pass 10metres inside the Mustangs half, a sprint to the Thanet 5m line fixed the last defender and an offload to Jason Smith for his second try completed the scoring for the half.

Thanet came out after the break a different team, halting attacks and generally disrupting the game which briefly took the wind out of the mustangs sails; although they were soon back on the scoreboard, with Bunyan crossing for a second score, benefiting from another training ground move and using his strength to outmuscle the home defence.

The scoring slowed as Thanet probed and running the ball through their young backs to get field position. It was from one of these runs, that Maidstone forced a turnover from an isolated attacker and quick hands moved the ball down the blindside to put in Lewis Fagg to score his first try for the Mustangs.

Thanet always looked dangerous with ball in hand and it was they who completed the scoring in the match, when quick ball was moved wide allowing them to cross in the corner to narrow the deficit. With Tom Holmes was in the cooler for final 10 minutes of the match and the home team took advantage of the extra man and scored again in the corner at final play.

In what was an entertaining fixture the Mustangs ran out comfortable 10-43 winners with the match provided plenty of positives, although Coach Weston will be looking for the side to keep up the pressure in future fixtures, and dominate the game for the full 80 minutes.