



Match Report

League - London 3 South East

Maidstone 95 v Horsham 12

Played at The Mote, Saturday 2 March, 2013

This was the game that ultimately defined Maidstone's season. Everyone was aware that winning this game, with a bonus point, secured the league title and with a 95-12 victory, the home side gained their objective, with style.



The simple matter of the bonus point was claimed after only twenty three minutes, when the fourth try was posted, but the focus of the whole side was constant throughout and, with nine tries in the first half alone, Maidstone never faltered. Horsham, who had put up a good display on their own ground, had no answer to this onslaught and were simply outplayed and outclassed.

Over the last few weeks, the team has included a number of promising players from within the club to give them experience. But this was no occasion for forward thinking and the team which started the match was the best available. Richard Parker came back into the back row, Sam Bailey and Lee Evans claimed their normal front and second row positions, while Neil Graves and James Davies returned to the three quarter line.



With Sam Brill's hamstring still recovering, Lucian Morosan retained his position at full back and posted another first class game, to match that of the previous week. While his defensive duties were only called upon occasionally, his penchant for attack was demonstrated to the full.

If my comments so far indicate that Maidstone were playing against a team devoid of character and fight, let me squash that thought immediately. Horsham believed that the team they fielded was stronger than the one that had played the equivalent fixture at home. When they had the ball, they had a clear game plan to spread it wide and when they didn't, their defence was enthusiastic. This game was won so emphatically by Maidstone because they did everything at speed, looked for the offload to beat the defence and constantly probed for weaknesses in the opposition. This was rugby of the highest class.





The Man-of-the-Match award was given to skipper Ben Williams. His hat-trick of tries, backed by his leadership, was sufficient to secure this week's accolade, a hat-trick as well from Mark Dorman and the four tries by Willie Brown were themselves sufficiently outstanding to have claimed the prize.

Compared to the extreme cold of the previous week, the arrival of March presented a better set of playing conditions. The pitch was firm and the wind, from the North East, was cold but gentle. Maidstone kicked off with the wind at their backs and went immediately on to the attack. Their early thrusts were repulsed but a penalty in front of the posts, after five minutes, saw Willie Brown get the scoreboard moving.

The first try of the afternoon encapsulated the style of play Maidstone were seeking to play and came six minutes later. From a scrum on their own ten metre line, Maidstone swept the ball right and with Morosan in the line, his pass to Jason Smith gave the winger the impetus to sweep past his opposite number and run round to score under the posts.



The second had similar elements in its make-up. This time Maidstone ran the ball from deep in their own half up the right and when they were held on the Horsham 22, the point of attack was switched to the left and with Sam Bailey playing the linking role, Mark Dorman got the final pass, the ball having been through four pairs of hands.



Horsham then showed what they were capable of with their first real foray to the Maidstone line. Following a penalty to touch in the home side's 22, Horsham's catch and drive was held but the recycled ball was sent left for winger Aitken to get over in the corner. With a conversion from the touchline by Bell, the 17-7 score showed what the visitors were capable of, given the chance.

Maidstone were alive to the dangers and, from this point, ruthlessly took the game out of reach. Tries by Willie Brown, Ben Williams, James Davies and two further tries by Dorman closed out the half and, in reality, the match, and, with six conversions by Brown, Maidstone finished the half with a 55-7 lead.

It was clear that Horsham intended to take the game to Maidstone in the second half and for ten minutes they did just that. But with the Maidstone pack taking over the battering ram role, to take the sting out of the early play, normal service was resumed. This time Lee Evans got the first try, followed by Ben Williams' second and the last came from Josh Pankhurst, just past the half hour. In between was the Willie Brown show, where, not





only did he control the play but scored three tries. With his ten conversions adding to his try count, his forty point contribution to the total score was by far, the largest single contribution to the Maidstone scoreline.

The only disappointment for Maidstone was failing to post the century. But Horsham were still not in the mood to give anything away and

they had the final say, being awarded a penalty try just before the final whistle, to give them something to take home.

With the league now secure, the teams' focus switches to maintaining a 100% record for the season. This is something no Maidstone team has done, in living memory, so if achieved, it would be the crowning glory for this squad.

Maidstone

Ben Williams; Sam Bailey; Danny Baker: James Iles: Lee Evans: Richard Parker; Josh Pankhurst; Matt Iles: Ivan Walkling; Willie Brown: James Davies; Neil Graves; Mark Dorman; Jason Smith: Lucian Morosan

Replacements (All used): Josh McKenzie; Jack Lamb; Dane Smith

