



Match Report

League - London 3 South East

Folkestone 0 v Maidstone 80

Played at Folkestone, Saturday 5 January, 2013

Playing the same side, back-to-back, can generate unusual results, particularly over the Christmas-New Year period. And this was the message ringing in the ears of the Maidstone team playing the return fixture at Folkestone after their solid win over the same opposition in late December. It was clear from the 80 point victory that the message was taken to heart.



Maidstone have been improving as a team from the start of the season and this game saw them move up another notch, playing at a high tempo throughout the match, never allowing a persistent, committed Folkestone unit the time or space to impose their game. But this was not a perfect performance: better handling and timing of passes could have generated a handful of extra tries, particularly in the first half. So, there is still room for improvement. Indeed, the second half showed that the lesson of letting the ball do the work was already learned as seven tries were run in to complement the five bagged in the first half.

The last score marked the specific milestone of a century of tries scored in the season: another indicator of the maturing nature of this squad of players.

The team that took the field showed only a handful of changes from the one that started in the previous encounter. James Davies returned on the left wing and Lee Evans and Matt Vickers got the nod for the second row and hooker positions respectively. But with the availability of rolling replacements, the concept of a starting fifteen has been replaced by a squad of eighteen. And this game demonstrated the benefit of such a concept.





Alex Sterzu, Ivan Walkling and Sam Bailey all came on to play significant roles in the game and all demonstrated that the difference between them and the starters was insignificant. A squad of high quality is developing and growing by the week.

The benefit of such a powerful squad can be seen in the development of the younger players. Man of the Match, this week, was second row, James Iles. His early games showed promise but his inexperience also showed through, on occasions. From such callow beginnings this emerging talent is learning fast from his more experienced peers.

From the kick off, Maidstone looked in a hurry to make their mark. The fact it took them six minutes to get on the scoreboard was a mark of the Folkestone defence and some inferior passing at key points in moves. But a quick tap penalty on six minutes allowed No 8, Matt Iles to release Ollie Newton, to outpace the cover and score by the posts. Sam Brill added the first of his ten conversions for the afternoon, to claim the seven points.



The game was being played almost exclusively in the Folkestone half and it was no surprise when Maidstone added to their lead on thirteen minutes. This time Matt Iles finished proceedings after a pass from his brother, James.



Although the pitch was heavy, it allowed purchase for the forwards and Maidstone's pack piled on the pressure in the tight. But for the good hands of the Folkestone No 8, Johnson, picking up a number of balls from the back of a retreating scrum, the home side would have been under greater pressure.

But the Maidstone juggernaut was not to be denied as tries by Matt Vickers and Willie Brown secured the bonus point before the half hour and a fifth try, just on half-time, by Neil Graves, saw the visitors post a 33 point lead.

After a strong start to the second half by Folkestone was repulsed by Maidstone, the try scoring began again. The first by Ollie Newton saw Maidstone counter attack from their own half to release the flying winger, to run in from the 22.

The best of the six other tries was the third, which saw the ball move virtually the length of the field with Maidstone's forwards featuring prominently, making the ball available time and again to wear down the Folkestone defence until Paul Hyland was presented with the final pass to cross the line.





With a Ben Williams try, one from James Davies and another Mark Dorman hat trick, all the usual suspects made their mark on the score sheet. But it was the developing team interplay that caught the eye. On this form, other teams in the league will find it difficult to challenge Maidstone's promotion pretensions.

Maidstone

Ben Williams; Matt Vickers; Danny Baker: James Iles; Lee Evans: Richard Parker; Paul Hyland; Matt Iles: Lucian Morosan; Willie Brown: James Davies; Neil Graves; Mark Dorman; Ollie Newton: Sam Brill. Replacements (All used): Sam Bailey; Alex Sterzu; Ivan Walkling

