



Match Report

League - London 3 South East

Vigo 6 v Maidstone 107

Played at Vigo, Saturday 6 April, 2013

Brachers

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After the bitter disappointment of the previous week's loss in the RFU Senior Vase, Maidstone's approach to this game was highly focused, with a streak of retribution involved, confirmed by the 107-6 scoreline that they posted against bottom club Vigo. This was also an opportunity to look at some new combinations in both the threequarters and in the pack, which yielded some intriguing insights.

Defeats like that inflicted last week, especially by small margins, when everyone knows the team did not perform to their full potential, can have a positive or negative effect. The team can sulk or front up, take the loss on the chin and move on. It was clear from the warm up that Maidstone had elected for the latter approach and they translated this focus into an intense eighty minutes that allowed no respite for the opposition.

With Sam Bailey, Mark Dorman and Neil Graves all unavailable, Coach Andy Foley was forced to make some changes to his starting line-up. Matt Vickers, an improving player over the season, came into the front row, at hooker, with Andy Bacon and Nick Bunyan forming a new second row partnership, allowing Lee Evans to move to No 8 and Matt Iles to centre.



With an eye to the future, Sam Brill was moved to complete the centre partnership, with Ivan Walkling moving to full back, where his all-field game could flourish, and Adrian Hogben started at scrum half. With nine personnel and positional changes, altogether, the potential prospect of a slip-up seemed increased. But with the squad developed this



year and playing on a pitch that was firm, well grassed and favoured fast open rugby, this proved fanciful, once the game got underway.

Vigo, already relegated, and with their own selection problems due to late cry-offs, came at Maidstone from the first whistle. But with this early burst well contained, Maidstone's first score came after five minutes. A decisive break by Nick Bunyan, saw the ball moved to Willie Brown for the stand-off to get the first of his touch down's of the afternoon, with Brill adding the conversion.

With Vigo defending well and the referee taking exception to Maidstone's play, a series of penalties took the home team deep into the visitor's 22, where a further penalty to Vigo gave Dave Winstone the opportunity to reduce the arrears. But Maidstone hit back from the restart, where a penalty was taken as a tap and Sam Brill took the scoring pass, running in from the 22 before adding the conversion to extend the Maidstone lead.

After some good work by Hogben and Bunyan, just past the quarter hour, Willie Brown was on hand to set up Jack Lamb for the third try and Brown was the scorer of the fourth, five minutes later. Sam Brill's conversion from the touchline took the score to 28-3, with the prospect of a big score already on the cards.

An incidental target for Maidstone was the 78 points required at the start of the game to reach four figures for the season, in league matches. With 59 points achieved by half time, it was clear this was a target well within their composite grasp, as Lee Evans achieved his own hat-trick of tries in a fifteen minute window, interrupted only by a further penalty by Winstone.



Even so, both Willie Brown and Sam Brill found time, and space, to add to their own try-count before the referee blew for half time.

The second half started much as the first with Vigo putting their all into taking the game to Maidstone. But once this storm had blown itself out, it was business as usual, with the free flowing game of the entire Maidstone team finding holes in the Vigo defence, almost at will.

With Danny Baker showing his renowned silky, running action and some sleight of hand, into the bargain, as he joined open play, Maidstone got back on the score-sheet. Lee Evans added a further try to his total, just past ten minutes, to get the scoreboard moving and then it was a question of how many could be fitted into the time allowed for play.

With tries for Ben Williams, two for Jason Smith, and further scores for Jack Lamb, Willie Brown and Sam Brill, bringing the afternoon's total to seventeen, with eleven conversion to Brill, the total nudged above the century even though the referee called the game with a few minutes on the clock: in boxing parlance, to spare the opposition further punishment.

While the game as a contest told us little that was not known about Maidstone's ability to run the ball and play a fine attacking style, one or two experiments posed some intriguing questions. Would Sam Brill's creativity in the centre have posed additional problems to other oppositions: would Ivan Walkling's all round play have been better used at full back: is Nick Bunyan another option for the front row?



It's clear that this Maidstone team can still improve to meet the new



league challenge next year with much of the playing resource, to deliver this, already in place. The first objective is a 100% league record this season, but planning for next season, with more vigorous games the norm, is already underway, with some answers to the foreseen challenges already forming.

Maidstone

Ben Williams; Matt Vickers; Danny Baker: Andy Bacon; Nick Bunyan:Paul Hyland; Jack Lamb; Lee Evans: Adrian Hogben; Willie Brown: Jack Naismith; Matt Iles; Sam Brill; Jason Smith: Ivan Walkling

Replacements: Alex Hadi; Josh McKenzie; James Iles