



Match Report

League - London Division 3 (South East)

Maidstone 71v Vigo 14

Played at The Mote, Saturday 15 December, 2012



After last weekend's comfortable victory at Gillingham, the county town side were playing on home territory for only the fourth time in their current league and cup campaigns; and in a match between sides at opposite ends of the league table Maidstone faced a newly promoted Vigo side who were struggling to cope with life in the London leagues. That said, head coach Andy Foley and skipper Ben Williams were acutely aware of the potential 'banana skin' that this fixture provided,

against opposition that had tested both Sheppey and Bromley, and more recently Tunbridge Wells, and home side were not taking the match lightly.

The Maidstone side featured a few changes from the one that took the field against Anchorians, with skipper Ben Williams restored to the starting line-up and with Matt Vickers coming in at hooker and Sam Bailey completing the front row. Richard Parker returned on the blind side flank with Alex Sterzu moving to the bench. There were also changes in the back division with Lucien Morosan moved into the scrum half berth, whilst the wings featured power and pace with Jason Smith and Ollie Newton currently home from Hartpury College. On the bench Sam Weston was making his debut at 1st XV level after a series of solid performances with the Mustangs XV



Wet conditions can often be a great leveller and many would think that given the heavy rain that this would be the typical forward battle of attrition; in fact Maidstone did much the opposite and looked to move the ball through hands at almost every opportunity reaping the



reward for their confident style of play with eleven tries and breaching the half century of points for the first time in the league this season.

Maidstone conceded a kickable penalty after barely a minute and may have thought things weren't going to go their way as Vigo's Dave Winstone coolly took the three points on offer from 40m out. However, from then on it was almost one-way traffic as Maidstone posted five first half tries converted by Sam Brill and looked threatening with the ball in hand whether they were in their own or the opposition 22m and had the four try bonus point secured on the half-hour.



Their response to the penalty was almost immediate and with Vigo unable to clear their 22m, a relieving kick was fielded by winger Jason Smith who led the counter attack with centres Neil Graves and Mark Dorman driving into the heart of the visitors defence, Lee Evans received the recycled ball to cross to the left of the posts with six minutes on the clock. The home side then posted two further converted scores inside the first quarter with first Graves breaking

tackles to score from outside the 22m and then Brill on the end of some good interplay to cross on the left and touchdown under the posts.

Vigo picked up another penalty from just outside the Maidstone 22m to narrow the deficit on 20 minutes but the half hour saw an excellent Maidstone try as from a tap penalty they burst from their own 22m to move the ball first right, then left with Ollie Newton on the end of the final pass to touchdown by the posts for the bonus point score. From the restart and with Vigo unable to gain any forward momentum a clearing kick again failed to make touch and Smith again launched the counter attack; quick recycled ball saw Newton make inroads into Vigo's 22m and a deftly timed offload released Dorman to score under the posts. Despite a further penalty converted by Vigo's Winstone the home side were very much in the ascendency as they went into the interval with a 35-9 lead.



The visitors were again under pressure at the start of the second period and a lineout on the visitors 22m saw Richard Parker drive at the heart of Vigo's defence with Evans and Sam Bailey on hand to support and Bailey taking the final pass to score wide on the left. Vigo were again immediately under pressure from the restart and a poor kick to touch gave the home side the platform for a catch and drive from a lineout with Bailey picking up his

second try in as many minutes.

The home side were able to maintain the pressure and the 54th minute saw them spurn the opportunity of a lineout from a penalty to set up the catch and drive; the resultant quick tap saw the ball moved wide to the right with Brill joining the line to touchdown for his second try which he duly converted.

Vigo then started to get into the game and although the home side's defence looked solid, the referee wasn't happy with the penalty count and Maidstone found themselves reduced to 14 men as skipper Ben Williams received a yellow card. Whilst Vigo were eventually able to capitalise on their period of pressure with lock Darren Cox crossing in the right corner, it was Maidstone that continued to attack, and it was from a midfield scrum that some creative running in the backs released Newton to score wide on the left as the game entered the final quarter. Restored to full complement Maidstone continued to post scores as Bailey and



Sam Weston drove deep into the Vigo 22m with the ever present Paul Hyland taking the scoring pass, Jason Smith added the extras. The home side's final score came with Willie Brown able to pierce the visitors defence when a scrum was taken against the head with Dorman on hand to touchdown for his second score.

In summary, Maidstone won this contest because their style of play is not hindered by the conditions and even with several changes to the side, there is sufficient depth within the squad to cope. Whilst some other opportunities for the home side went begging; Vigo continued to defend staunchly to the final whistle and despite the scoreline, there are sides higher placed in the division that have performed less well but not been punished as severely. The county town side take on Folkestone next week in a fixture postponed from September and will be looking to close out the first half of this campaign with their unbeaten record intact.



Maidstone

Sam Bailey; Matt Vickers; Ben Williams: James Iles; Lee Evans: Richard Parker; Paul Hyland; Matt Iles: Lucian Morosan; Willie Brown: Jason Smith; Neil Graves; Mark Dorman; Ollie Newton: Sam Brill

Replacements: Danny Baker; Alex Sterzu; Sam Weston.