



## Match Report

RFU Senior Vase

London & South East Regional Final

Maidstone 57 v Cantabrigians 7

Played at The Mote, Saturday 16 March, 2013

It was clear from the prowling intent of the Maidstone players, early on the morning of this game, that they were focused on winning, in style, from the outset. But with the pitch sprouting as many seagulls as blades of grass, two hours before kick-off, it was clear the intensely wet conditions would have a say in the outcome. With Maidstone running out 57-7 victors, the scoreline indicates the playing margin between these sides.



The match can be summed up in two superb tries, the first coming with less than a minute on the clock, the second deep into the second half. On both occasions, Cantabrigians had no answer to the speed of handling of the Maidstone backs, the first yielding a try for left wing, James Davies, the second for right wing, Ollie Newton.

But in reality, it was the power play of the forwards that established the platform from which these gems were realised. From the outset, man-of-the-match, Richard Parker was looking to punch holes through the middle to suck in the visitors' defence, with Lee Evans also prominent, seemingly breaking the gain line with every carry.



This was rugby of the highest class, played in appalling conditions, against a team that never gave up. But the constant battering took its toll on the visitors and, by the end, the whole of their bench had been used to plug the gaps resulting from the bruising they had received.

The only surprise in the Maidstone starting line-up was the inclusion of Jack Lamb at openside but after his outstanding display the previous week, in the defeat of Sheppney, coach Andy Foley thought he would provide increased options in the lineout and at the breakdown. And, on the right wing, Olly Newton, came in for Jason Smith who went to the bench.

The start of the game was explosive, and, within five minutes, Maidstone had two tries on the board. The first came from the kick off, run back into the heart of the Cantabrian defence to then be spread left for Mark Dorman to perform the perfect show-and-go, to his opposite number and set up James Davies for the try in the corner. The second came from Ben Williams with a piece of opportunism after being brought to ground but



not held in the tackle, allowing him to regain his feet and sprint to the line from the 22. With Sam Brill converting the second try from in front, a twelve point margin was established.

And this was stretched further just before the quarter. This time the forwards battered away before Ivan Walkling stretched over the line with Brill again adding the conversion.



Maidstone were firmly on top with only the scrum under pressure, where the visitors' front five caused considerable problems in the tight. But with the home side electing to run the ball, despite the wet conditions, this minor discomfort was brushed aside.



A further three tries in the second quarter sealed this game for Maidstone. The first was a typical Neil Graves effort from close range after a catch and drive from a line out. The second came from Willie Brown and the third from another catch and drive, with Sam Bailey on the end of the score this time. With two more conversions by Sam Brill, a half time score of 38 points looked comfortable until a floated pass was intercepted by

Cantabrigian winger, Eve, to outpace the Maidstone defence to score under the post. With full back, McCormick, adding the conversion, Cantabrigians' had a slim lifeline to take into the second half.

And it took a further 25 minutes before Maidstone added to their score. But this was a case of good Cantabrigian defence rather than a change of playing fortunes, as the game was played almost exclusively in the visitors' half. The log jam was broken by a Pankhurst try, straight from the back of a line out, converted by Brill, backed up by an Olly Newton special, in the corner, following speedy hands by the whole back line to outpace the tiring visitors' defence.



A second converted try by Pankhurst completed the scoring and, while Cantabrigians enjoyed a late flurry, the game was truly up by this stage.



This was a superb performance by all of the Maidstone match day squad. The whole game was played at high intensity; the focus of the players didn't waver, even with four replacements on the pitch; the intent was to move the ball with purpose to stretch the visitors' defence and this was achieved, spectacularly on occasions.

With the regional pennant now in the locker, the focus moves to the National semi-final against the Gloucester team, Drybrook, in two weeks' time. Will this be the case of another West Country team spoiling the Maidstone party, as last year, or a triumphal march to Twickenham? Watch this space!



### Maidstone

Ben Williams; Sam Bailey; Danny Baker; James Iles; Lee Evans; Richard Parker; Jack Lamb; Matt Iles; Ivan Walkling; Willie Brown; James Davies; Neil Graves; Mark Dorman; Olly Newton; Sam Brill

Replacements (All used): Michal Majcher; Matt Vickers; Josh Pankhurst; Jason Smith