



## Match Report

**Maidstone 36 v President's XV 12**

by Trevor Langley

A pre-season game in aid of the Injured Players Foundation

Home at The Mote, Saturday 25 August, 2012 Kick Off – 3.00 pm



Pre-season games can sometimes lack purpose but by making this a fund raising event in aid of the RFU Injured Players Foundation, and inviting a President's XV from local clubs, this game immediately generated purpose and desire. And from some of the feisty moments it produced, particularly in the first half, when a surplus of enthusiasm was possible, it was clear the players bought into the concept.

The guest of honour at the game was Tom Hughes, a Maidstone player since his primary school days, who incurred a spinal injury playing for the Mustangs last year when on leave from the Army. The support he has received from the target charity, IPF, was extolled in the programme notes he contributed. Needless to say, this was invaluable at a time when his life had been turned on its head from an accident incurred playing the game he loved.

The two sides constituted squads of 25 players but the first half was played without replacements in order to fulfil the concept of a competitive fixture, giving the players a chance to build their match fitness and some semblance of team play. Early season games are invariably lacking in cohesion, when basic skills need re-honing at a time when the adrenalin is flowing and the opposition tacklers mean business. And this was the case here.

But as the half proceeded, Maidstone, in particular, began to show signs of an emerging strategy that should suit them well in the coming season. New recruit, Willie Brown at fly half, amply demonstrated his willingness to spread the ball wide to give those outside him room to work and the side, as a whole, looked for support to keep plays moving and stretch the opposition.



With an early penalty from Dan Foley, on the board, to settle nerves, the first score from open play came on ten minutes, after a good break in the centre from Matt Iles. The follow up from the forwards allowed Maidstone's new skipper, Ben Williams, the chance to score the first try.



He also scored the second, five minutes later, when a break out from their own 22, instigated by Brown and taken up by left wing, Morosan, was fed back to the right wing, Foley, before Williams completed the score. With a second conversion, Foley extended the lead for Maidstone to seventeen points.

But it was not one-way traffic. As the President's XV, led by Maidstone veteran, Dave Charlton, began to find their feet, they began to pose problems of their own with the Canterbury centre pairing and right wing, Marcus Neil from Oxford University, looking particularly dangerous with the ball in their hands. And it was centre Robbie Grieve, who cut the deficit surging down the left wing to finish off a move starting on the half way line from a President's XV scrum.



After a good spell by the President's XV, Maidstone had the last say in the scoring, just before the break. From a line out in the President's XV 22, the ball was moved along the line before being recycled back to the left hand corner where, openside flanker, Matt Vickers, got the touchdown. A superb conversion by Foley, from the touchline, took the score to 24-5 at the break.



With a host of changes to begin the second half, there was some loss of cohesion in both teams. But a number of players stood out in this half. Morosan moved in to scrum half and looked sharp in a lot of what he did; Mickael Majcker, caught the eye from prop, both for his strength and for incurring a yellow card for a late tackle



after ten minutes, and Jack Anthony, playing for the President's XV at flanker, showed drive and determination scoring a late try after good approach work by his side.

It was, however, left to the Maidstone skipper, Ben Williams, to crown the occasion with a third try, on the half hour, to earn the man-of-the-match award before picking up the President's Cup from former RFU president, Robert Horner.

In summary, the day achieved all its objectives. Almost fifty players had a competitive run out; over £2,500 was raised for a worthwhile charity and the season was kicked off in style.

