



## Match Report

League - London 3 South East

Maidstone 29 v Tunbridge Wells 6

Played at The Mote, Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2013



The game played against local rivals, Tunbridge Wells, earlier in the season proved the most taxing examination of Maidstone's promotion credentials, so far. As a consequence, the return, at The Mote, needed no artificial hyping by Coach, Andy Foley, to give Maidstone the incentive to start this game at high intensity, with the aim of dominating the visitors from the start.



An early score set the Stones on their way to another victory, by 29-6, but this was no routine event and Tunbridge Wells showed their pedigree throughout.

After the recent bad weather, an early, midweek inspection by referee, Johann Delport, ensured the pitch was playable in the snow, with the addition of blue line markings. But this was the only piece of charity he exhibited throughout the afternoon: a blizzard of penalties and three concurrent yellow cards at the end of the first half, made Maidstone's life more complicated than it should have been.

But the seeming austerity measures imposed by the official brought out the best in the team who dug deep into their defence manual and prevented Tunbridge Wells taking any advantage of the disparity in numbers. From the touchline, it appeared an unsympathetic approach to the breakdown was the cause of the problem, bearing in mind the conditions under which the match was played. But playing to the referee is a basic tenet of the game: another lesson for Maidstone to bear in mind, for the future.

The starting line up showed only two changes from the game against Uckfield, with Matthew Iles moving into the outside centre slot to cover for Mark Dorman, suffering from a whiplash injury, while Josh Pankhurst got a start at openside flanker after his return from Westcombe Park, with Alex Sterzu dropping to the bench.





Tunbridge Wells had the first opportunity to get on the scoreboard, after two minutes, but fly half, Montgomery, spurned a straightforward penalty chance. The wakeup call was headed by Maidstone and they drove back down to the visitors try line, only to be held up on the line. But from the resultant 5-metre scrum, the ball was moved left across the field for winger, James Davies to get the touchdown in the corner.

The challenge of a side, like Tunbridge Wells, is their ability to build pressure and this they did from the restart. And pressure builds penalty opportunities, as Maidstone defended their line in a manner that wasn't to the referee's liking, allowing the visitors to reduce the arrears on the quarter hour, as Montgomery found his range this time.

The reply from Maidstone was equally emphatic. This time it was Lee Evans who provided the break and although he was hauled down just before the line, the damage had been done and swift movement from the breakdown saw Sam Brill provide the overlap to score in the corner. Once again his conversion did not quite have the direction but the score provided a cushion against further Tunbridge Wells pressure.



Maidstone's self inflicted problems started on the half hour with a yellow card for Richard Parker, having been adjudged to be killing the ball at the breakdown, once too often. A second yellow, for Danny Baker came after a short bout of fisticuffs, five minutes later, and a third, for Paul Hyland, two minutes after that.



At this point, Maidstone stopped undermining the foundation they had put in place, to secure the win, and a combined defensive effort prevented the visitors taking advantage of their player deficiency. But it was a close run thing.

The second half saw Maidstone start with purpose and an early break from replacement hooker, Matt Vickers, provided the model for straight running that was to prove the key to victory. A break from the base of the scrum by No 8, Parker, provided the initial thrust, carried on by skipper, Ben Williams, to feed Neil Graves, who outstripped the defence to score under the posts. With Sam Brill on target, a handy cushion was generated after only three minutes of the half.

A poorly timed defensive tackle by Wells second row, Harrison, saw him taken from the field, clearly dazed, but this didn't stop the visitors trying to get back into the match. And a second penalty by Montgomery, on fifteen minutes, could have provided the springboard for a comeback. But

Maidstone's defence once again proved its worth and once the Wells effort had blown itself out, Maidstone again began to dominate.

In a five minute period, just before the half hour, two tries by Sam Brill sealed the win. The first was set up by left wing, James Davies, who collected a kick out of defence, avoided two tacklers and provided the scoring pass for Brill. The second was a team try from a line out in the visitors 22 that saw the ball move across the line for Brill to go over in the corner. This time, his conversion made the distance and rounded out the scoring.



In summary, while Maidstone made life difficult for themselves in the first half, once they settled into an effective style of play, suitable for the conditions, they demonstrated their superiority. Tunbridge Wells were no push over but, on the day, they struggled to match the power of the home side and were second best.

The next challenge for unbeaten Maidstone is the cup encounter with O Priorians. A repeat of the three card trick could prove fatal against a side with an equivalent record in the north-west section of the London 3 league. Perhaps more head and less heart required next time?

### Maidstone

Ben Williams; Sam Bailey; Danny Baker: James Iles; Lee Evans: Paul Hyland; Josh Pankhurst; Richard Parker: Ivan Walkling; Willie Brown: James Davies; Neil Graves; Matthew Iles ; Lucian Morosan: Sam Brill

Replacements (All used): Matt Vickers; Alex Sterzu; Jack Naismith