



Match Report

League - London 3 South East

Maidstone 27 v Ashford 13

Played at The Mote, Saturday 27 October 2012

Maidstone came out as victors in this top of the table clash, 27 – 13, gaining a valuable bonus point in the process, for their five try haul. But the outcome was in doubt until well into the last quarter of the match, when a free flowing, inter-passing game, set up on a strong forward platform, came into play.

Ashford, for their part, had not come to the Mote to play second fiddle, and demonstrated why they were unbeaten, so far. Their defence was first class, based on a solid team ethic, and in fly half, JJ Murray, had a player with ability to turn a match, with his mazy runs and astute kicking.

In the end, it was the raw power of the Maidstone pack that determined the outcome, dominating the loose and tight play and providing a surfeit of ball, for the threequarters to turn, eventually, into a winning margin.

With only one change in the squad from the previous week, with scrum half, Lucien Morosan, returning after injury, in place of Alex Hadi, the Maidstone side had a settled look. And so it proved, as, from the off, the Maidstone pack took over from where they had finished at Tunbridge Wells. Within ten minutes, the power of the home pack had forced a penalty in the Ashford half, and from the ensuing kick to touch, the catch and drive saw Richard Parker score out wide, on the right.



While Jason Smith's conversion hit the post, the impact of this early lead, turned the heads of the Maidstone eight, and, instead of refocusing, they allowed their minds to wander to greater glories and proceeded to suffer the consequences.

Ashford upped their game and began to compete up front, while their outsides began to show they had pace to spare. And just before the end of the quarter, a mistake after a line out in the Ashford half, allowed Murray to latch onto a loose ball, firstly hacking through and then picking up the ball to outpace the cover to score in the corner.



Returning to basics, after a fierce word or two from forwards coach, Lee Evans, Maidstone quickly re-established a lead. The process was the same as the first try, only the scorer changed, with hooker, Sam Bailey, getting the touchdown after a catch and drive from a line out.

Another mistake, by Maidstone, this time at a lineout in their own 22, saw the visitors draw level again, with thirty minutes on the clock. Gathering the ball at the back of the line, flanker Knight set up No 8, Stimpson, to go over in the corner, much to the delight of the visiting fans.



As a consequence, Maidstone began to look far less sure of themselves and, conversely, Ashford had their best spell of the game. But the cry of 'back to basics' reasserted itself and by the time of the half time whistle, the Maidstone pack had demonstrated another impressive catch and drive, although this one did not produce a points end-result.

The half time team talk was simple, and effective, and Maidstone went back to their forward platform to establish superiority over the visitors. A concerted attack on the Ashford line, with ten minutes gone was repulsed, with heroic defending, but shortly thereafter, a scrum deep in the Ashford 22 saw Richard Parker pick up from the base of the scrum and power his way over the line. The relatively easy conversion was missed in the windy conditions, but the lead was re-established for the home side.

The Maidstone pack was showing increasing dominance but a penalty to Ashford, just outside the Maidstone 22, allowed the visitors to cut the lead to two points just past the twenty minute mark.

Once again, Maidstone showed signs of doubt in their game, lacking the conviction to spin the ball quickly to their wide men. But with the forwards increasingly dominating the opposition eight, further opportunities began to emerge.

Firstly, from a scrum ten metre from the Ashford line, Maidstone won the ball and a pass back inside by Willie Brown saw Lee Evans cross for a touchdown. In a final flurry, deep into added time, the best move of





the match saw a strong position established by the forwards, which was swiftly switched left, down the line, for Richard Parker to release left wing James Davies to outpace the cover to score under the posts, giving an easy conversion for Willie Brown.

So, with roughly a quarter of the season gone, Maidstone find themselves in a strong position, having won all their games, both in the league and cup competitions. With a strong senior squad based on a powerful pack and forceful threequarters, the omens for the season are good. Perhaps of most importance is that the side have achieved their current position not always playing their best. It seems there is more to come from this team, which is still learning how to play together. And when they do get it 100% right, we could be in for a real treat.

Maidstone

Ben Williams; Sam Bailey; Danny Baker: James Iles; Lee Evans: Paul Hyland; Matt Iles; Richard Parker: Lucien Morosan; Willie Brown: James Davies; Neil Graves; Mark Dorman; Jason Smith: Ivan Walkling: Replacements: Nick Bunyan; Josh McKenzie; Dane Smith