



Match Report



London & SE Division 2 (South East)

Maidstone FC 17 v Haywards Heath RFC 33

Played at The Mote, Saturday 2nd March 2019



Despite the disappointment of last week's defeat at the hands of Dover, Maidstone hosted fifth placed Haywards Heath in the knowledge that with their recent upsurge in both confidence and performance, this was a match that they were certainly capable of winning. In the end, a lacklustre first half performance and lethargic start to the second half saw result beyond them before they really started to play any rugby.

In large part Maidstone had the upper hand in the scrum and whilst the lineout occasionally stuttered, that was no more so than the opposition's. However it was in the back line where the difference lay, certainly for the first three-quarters of the match, with Haywards Heath's experienced fly half and a pair of pacey outside backs able stretch the home defence.

The side saw a few changes from last week's encounter, with Dan Fisher returning on the open flank and Tom Chandler in the 2nd Row with Charlie Williams moving to the blindside flank for the injured but influential Marzetti. The back line was largely unchanged except for the returning James Douglas on the wing for the unavailable Ollie Newton. The bench featured forwards Ryan Murphy and Ian Lee with debutant Dan Kew covering the back division.

From the kick-off Maidstone put themselves under immediate pressure, turning the ball over before then being penalised just outside their 22m. The resultant penalty saw Heath show their intent as they looked to move the ball first to the right and then back across field



where winger Diggle was able to outflank the defence to cross midway out, full-back Calder added the extras and the visitors had a 7-0 advantage in the opening five minutes. Maidstone then looked to play themselves back into the game with a ten minute spell in the Haywards Heath half, but without ever really threatening opposition line. A lack of composure as they looked to make one pass too





many when pressing the opposition tryline almost saw them caught out as they broke the full length of the pitch, and it was only a desperate Josh Smith tackle and subsequent penalty that prevented the score. The end of the quarter then saw Smith yellow carded for a tip tackle, the resultant penalty saw them kick for territory and from the line out they were able to string enough

phases together to breach the home defence as Calder crossed midway out on the right to take the score to 0-12.

The half-hour saw Maidstone on the scoreboard with a Morosan penalty from 30m out but again it was there errors at the restart that put them under pressure. Heath saw a try opportunity go begging through poor handling before the home side again put themselves under pressure. A penalty kicked for the corner saw Heath looking to go into the interval with another score, although Maidstone disrupted the lineout and the half was brought to conclusion with the visitors emphatically shunted backwards

If the home side had looked lethargic in the first half, it was that continued sluggishness that was their undoing in the opening minutes of the second period. Almost from the kick-off a Heath garryowen was well fielded by centre Fotheringham, the recycled ball fed to fly-half Lucas who made a pin point cross field kick to the waiting Calder wide on the left who had a simple run in past the outflanked defence, converting his own try take the score to 3-19. A further try minutes later as from a dominant Maidstone midfield scrum the ball went loose, with the home side slow to recover flanker Salisbury was first onto the ball and able to outstrip the defence from 40m out, a simple conversion gave Heath a 3-26 lead and the bonus point.



The match then settled into a rather dull midfield spectacle, before Weston was yellow carded on the 55 minute mark. Despite this it was Maidstone that whilst not really threatening, appeared to have the upper hand. They then fell foul of another loose ball they were slow to react to, from their own 22m Heath hacked the ball ahead, able to recover the ball just short of the Maidstone line they were initially held at bay before the ball was moved out to the left to 2nd Row McPherson was able to cross, Calder adding the extras to take the score to 3-33.

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It was at this point that Maidstone appeared to come to life, a break down the left flank by Douglas bundled into touch on the Heath 22m with a high tackle that saw Diggle yellow carded. The resultant line-out from the penalty saw Maidstone look to drive the ball forward before eventually shipping the ball to Smith who had cut in off his wing to

crash through the two defenders under the posts, Morosan added the conversion to take the score to 10-33.

Maidstone were by no means finished, whilst it may have been late they were now playing some rugby; a kick fielded by Jason Smith was run back at the Heath defence before feeding De Zoeten and then Josh Smith; a deft grubber kick saw him able to turn the defence and recover the ball for the second of his brace of tries. With Morosan again converting the deficit was reduced to 17-33.



Maidstone continued to press to the final whistle with the only incident of note being a yellow card for Heath's Beckett for the latest in a series of high tackles as Diggle returned to the pitch.

Maidstone will be disappointed with this performance, whilst their set piece largely functioned well; they looked sluggish and lacked the sharpness they have shown in recent matches. Next week sees them travel to face an O Colfeians where they will be looking to get something out of the match, with the Eltham based club now out of league contention but with one eye on their cup final the following week.

Maidstone: Will Fox; Tom Varker; Ashley Gilligan; Ben Massey; Tom Chandler; Charlie Williams; Dan Fisher; Sam Weston; Lucian Morosan; Ale Clark; Josh Smith; Scott de Zoeten; Shaun Woolford; James Douglas; Jason Smith.

Replacements: Ryan Murphy; Ian Lee, Dan Kew (All used)

