



## Match Report



### London & SE Division 1 (South)

Maidstone 34 v O Colfeians 21

Played at The Mote, Maidstone, Saturday 2nd Sept 2017



On a bright, sunny afternoon and played on a pitch in prime condition, Maidstone came away from this season's opener with a satisfying win against newly promoted Old Colfeians, 34-21. Add in the bonus point for the five tries scored, to please coach, Mike Hebden and one can conclude this was a great start to the campaign.

With an almost totally changed back line, where only Euan Caborn and Alex Clark made it on to the pitch from last year's regulars, the potential in the three-quarters was pleasing to see, with, hopefully, a lot more to come with a few games under the belt. The forwards had a more familiar look, with only two new props, in Italian, Max Guero, and local recruit, Tom Mount, in the front row, blended on to last year's pack. The prospects of further competition for places from a strong Mustangs team adds to the optimism coursing through the squad after an encouraging set of pre-season games.

With Ben Williams still easing his way back into training, Adam Knight led the side from second row, but it was crowd-favourite, Ben Brill that caught the eye and the man-of-the-match award, for a storming performance from open side.

Colfe's fielded a very large pack, that caused the Maidstone eight many problems in the tight and with the rolling maul, all afternoon, but failed to impress outside the scrum. Their line out, in contrast, was poor and gave Maidstone a rich source of ball to add to their own strong line out contribution.



The visitors kicked off down the slope with the intent of making their mark on the game from the outset, delivering a try by prop, O'Malley, within two minutes, following some strong forward play. With full back, Potter, slotting the easy conversion, the visitors posted a seven-point lead.

Having seen the size of the challenge presented, Maidstone hit back with a Ben Brill try,



just past the five-minute mark, gathering the ball inside the Colfe's 22, to score in the left corner. But it was the break by new boy, Perry, in the centre that set up the position for the final switch to the left, for the try.

A second try, at the end of the quarter, by Josh Pankhurst, saw Maidstone grab the lead. This came from a mistake at a

Colfe's throw in, in their own 22, from which the Maidstone hooker took full advantage, to score by the posts. With Euan Caborn opening his account from the tee, a five-point cushion was established.

A catch and drive move by the Colfe's pack, from half way, just before the half-hour, saw them take the ball deep into Maidstone's 22 and only some last ditch defending prevented a try. A yellow card for prop, Guero, was collateral damage of the defensive effort, but with Danny Baker on in his place, the pack held the line in a succession of scrums and gained a penalty to relieve their lines.



With full complement restored and no points conceded, Maidstone had the last word of the half, when another line out mistake by Colfe's, on their own 5-metre line, allowed Ben Brill to win the ball and for debutant, Guero, to secure the try by the posts. An aberrant miss by Caborn failed to take full advantage of the position but a 17-7 lead at half time reflected the respective qualities of the teams.



The second half started with play swinging from one end to the other. Maidstone manufactured the first thrust on the Colfe's line but could not find the gap to make the score and a break out by the visitors took play down to the hosts 22. This time the Colfe's line-out functioned well and a chip through by full back, Potter, rebounded to fly half, Gale, to score by the

posts. With Potter adding the conversion, Maidstone's lead was cut to three points.

The challenge this presented was answered immediately. From the restart, Maidstone regained the ball and began a sweeping move to the right. A well time pass in the centre released Pankhurst to score in the corner and the conversion by Caborn secured the points to restore a ten-point lead and the bonus point.

The next try, on the quarter hour, effectively



secured the game for Maidstone. It came out of nothing when Maidstone were defending, deep in their own 22, having failed to clear their lines. Colfe's dropped the ball, it was regained by Maidstone and fed to Matt Moore, on as a replacement, by the touch-line. Using his off-the-mark speed to good effect, he went round his opposite number and outsprinted the cover to score under the posts, making the conversion a formality.



Colfe's continued to use their pack to play a close controlled game and this did yield a further try on the twenty-minute mark. Second row, Howard, got the touchdown after a catch and drive, and Potter added the conversion to bring the Maidstone lead back to 31-21. But with tiredness creeping into the play of both sides and Maidstone's defence holding up well, the hosts managed the last quarter to good effect and a penalty, converted by Caborn just before the whistle, was the only score in this period.

In summary, a good opening game by Maidstone, having withstood a challenging confrontation by a very large pack and shown their own back line has gained extra penetration, compared to last year, with good debuts from scum half, Jack Leech, and the two centres. Time will tell how this combination stacks up against other teams in the league but this combination delivered all that could have been asked of them, on the day.

**Maidstone** Max Guero; Josh Pankhurst; Tom Mount: Adam Knight; Ben Massey: Ben Knight; Ben Brill; Matt Iles: Jack Leech; Euan Caborn: Vaki Antoniou; George Perry; Ryan Copp; Elliot Green: Alex Clark

Replacements: Danny Baker; Jack Lamb; Matt Moore (All used)

A scoreboard and advertising board for Maidstone F.C. The top section features the club name "MAIDSTONE F.C." in large blue letters. Below this is a row of five logos: "FIRMIN RECRUIT", "cripps law", "MILLWOOD", "HOSPITALITY FINDER", and "FIRMIN XPRESS". The bottom section displays the score: "HOME 3 4 AWAY 2 1".

