



Match Report



London 2 (South East)

Charlton Park RFC 32 v Maidstone FC 24

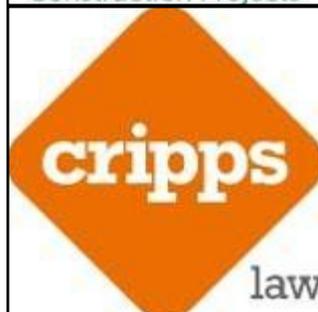
Played at Kidbrooke, Saturday 5th January 2019

Following a buoyant win against Thanet and the Xmas lay-off to recharge the batteries, Maidstone approached this game with renewed vigour and confidence. In doing so, they ran 2nd placed Charlton Park, (CP) close with a gritty and accomplished display that showed there is much more to come from this young and developing squad, providing a performance that belied their current league position – a point underlined by CP officials in the post-match bar talk. Indeed, had it not been for some lapses in concentration, a yellow card during the latter part of the first half and some unforced errors later in the game, Maidstone could well have won this game or at least got the losing bonus point (s) that they so clearly deserved.

The game started with a number of exchanges although it was CP who got their game going more quickly and started to put Maidstone under pressure in defence through some good carries by their forwards and some astute kicking from their fly-half. This resulted in a penalty to CP for a Maidstone infringement at the break-down that was pushed wide, only for a second to be awarded soon after for a similar offence, which was duly slotted by the CP fly-half. The next score came from a CP scrum, which although held by Maidstone was spun wide from the base to create space for CP to score in the corner. With the conversion added, Maidstone found themselves 10-0 down after 15 minutes and the spectators wondering if this game might be a repeat of the early season encounter, when CP put 43 points on Maidstone. However, Maidstone rallied well and got their own game together, through some strong running upfront, through the likes Chandler, Weston, 'Man of the Match', Gilligan and others and in the backs through Newton, Smith and co-workers. As a result, on the 25th minute mark, Maidstone were awarded a penalty for a high tackle, which was duly converted by Perry to get Maidstone first points on the board and settle any Maidstone nerves. 10 minutes later, a superb break by the 'sparky' scrum half, Grice was held up 5m from the line and following a scrum and good off-loading the ball was fed to prop, Gilligan, who bull-dozed his way over the line for a converted try to level the scores.

An unforced error from the kick-off, then led to CP's best passage of play in the half, in which their big winger, who was a hand-full all afternoon ran in a try after a solid scrum that was fed wide. The next CP score came soon after, as the half drew to a close from a powerful push over scrum 5m out. The conversion by CP meant the half finished 22-10 and CP looking dominant.

The second half saw some early breaks by CP but these were repelled by a Maid-





stone side that started the 2nd half with real purpose and with no intention of letting CP dictate proceedings. However, a second try for the CP winger, following Maidstone kicking the ball away in possession stretched the score line further and with the added conversion, a 19 point deficit, stretched further to 32-10 following a penalty for holding on in the tackle, the game was seemingly out of sight with 20 minutes still to play.

To Maidstone's credit and to a man, they rallied and produced their best rugby this season so far. The strong running of the backs and forwards and of particular note, the powerful and fast running by Maidstone, winger, Smith was causing CP real problems as he continually broke tackles only to be held up short of the line with another commanding run by Maidstone centre, Newton, also falling just short. However, with continued pressure, turn-over ball by Bramwell and deft handling led to a well-deserved try for Lane, who had the strength to breach the line from close quarters. Maidstone, now had their tails up and were looking to attack from all areas. This led to undoubtedly the try of the match, when an undercut run by the backs on the left hand flank, breaking out from the 22, stretched the CP defence and with the ball recycled, was moved left to winger, Smith, who coming off his wing cut back inside to beat the flailing CP defence from outside of his 22 and run in unopposed under the posts. The conversion, brought the final score to 32-24, just 1 point outside bonus point territory.

Whilst, it was very disappointing to have come away with no points from the game, to the players it felt like a victory given the poor start they had to the season and how far they have now come as a team that are really starting to gel and perform somewhere near their full potential. This now gives them the perfect momentum moving towards next week's home game against bottom of the table, Heathfield and Waldron.

Maidstone: Fox; Varker; Gilligan; Williams; Chandler; Fisher; Weston Marzetti; Grice; Morosan; Perry; Newton; Smith; De Zoetten; Woolford.

Replacements: Lane; Bramwell; Murphy (all used).

