



## Match Report



### London 2 (South East)

Horsham RFC 76 v Maidstone FC 12

Played at Horsham, Saturday 6th April 2019

This game marked the end of a seemingly long and turbulent season for Maidstone. With players having moved on, others retired and young players making the transition from Mustangs rugby, coupled with the disruption of an entire overhaul of the coaching structure and style of play, it is credit to this group of players that they have been able to retain their status in this league for next season.

Horsham on the other hand have seen a meteoric rise having only been promoted last season from London 3 and are a completely different side in terms of physique, pace and power and certainly a stark contrast to 4 seasons or so ago, when we put 90 points on them on, when we were climbing the promotion ladder ourselves.

The club have had to dig deep this season and all have played their part, not least those players, such as Ben Court, who probably thought their 1<sup>st</sup> XV days were well behind them but showed as in previous games with the likes of Richard Gray and Martin Maytum that they are more than up to the challenge and certainly do not look out of place at this level. A special mention also needs to go to man-of-the-match and skipper Lucian Morosan for a quality performance at scrum-half and young lock, John Carfrae, making his first Maidstone start and for the welcome return of Luke Debnam.

Playing on a dull, grey afternoon and on a 4G pitch that was more suited to the Horsham style of play with home advantage, this was a tough afternoon for the Maidstone players and despite the score line, they came out this game with a great deal of aplomb for their tenacity and ethos of never giving up the battle and enjoying their rugby regardless of the opposition. For Horsham, this was a must-win game to gain a play-off spot and we wish them well in their quest for promotion to London 1.

In the first half, we were never really in the game and it only took a matter of minutes before Horsham scored their first try by their winger, who was part of a wing duet that had the physique of pumped body builders with pace to match and who are clearly capable of playing at a much higher level. In fact, their back 3 were a handful all afternoon as were their much bigger pack. Nonetheless, it was a good test for Maidstone and the players will certainly be better for the experience, if not, somewhat sore on Sunday morning, when the dulling effects of the alcohol begin to wear off following a Hawaiian themed post-match party that was enjoyed by all (including myself).

Tries came at regular intervals in the first half with Horsham backs and forwards combining well and despite Maidstone's best efforts, they were simply too powerful to keep at bay and an over-commitment at the ruck meant that there were numerous mis-matches in attack that did not help the Maidstone cause when Horsham had the ball in hand. That being said, the majority of the tries came from open play or mistakes by Maidstone that gifted possession and from which Horsham were quicker to react and capitalise on, with a couple of tries coming from a dominant scrum position, including one push-over try. The half finished with 38-0, by which time, Horsham had bagged the points they needed and effectively the game was out of sight.

Maidstone started the second half well, through a combination of holding onto the ball and pegging Horsham back by kicking deep into their 22. However a kick behind the defence from Horsham, with 'no one home', allowed for another try and within minutes with Maidstone looking to go wide at every opportunity to gain ground, the Maidstone pass was intercepted on the 22 for





an easy run-in for a 45-0 deficit.

Lesser sides would have thrown the towel in at this stage but Maidstone kept fighting and a penalty turn-over on half-way allowed Maidstone to gain territory by a superb kick into the corner by Caborne. From the lineout, Maidstone mounted an effective catch and drive and with the forwards hammering up, the ball was fed to Lane to use his strength to crash over under the posts for a well-deserved converted try and at last points on the board.

Within minutes, a Horsham line-out on 10 metres was disrupted by the Maidstone pack with replacement Varker seizing the ball to score from 5 metres out. Whilst, this had no significant effect on the outcome, it clearly flustered the opposition intent on dominating all afternoon. However, any further come-back was short-lived and with Maidstone throwing caution to the wind a spilled ball in contact on their own 22 allowed Horsham to pick -up and score. In the dying minutes of the game, Varker was yellow carded for a cynical foul and from the ensuing penalty the ball was fed to the Horsham winger to score a converted try to mark the end of the game.

No side likes to lose and Maidstone are no different but they are a side in transition and Horsham were man-for-man too strong on this occasion. However, far from being down beat, Maidstone were gracious in defeat to a Horsham side that thoroughly deserved the win with the quality of players that they had on show.

So what have we learnt from this season....that whilst we know we can be competitive in this league that we have probably squandered upwards of 15 points through inexperience and naivety that this developing side will learn from. That with all going on in the background, it is testament to the players and coaching staff that we have managed to halt a potential 'tail spin'. That we have everything now to look forward to next season and a fresh start with some new and returning players that will strengthen the senior squad.

For me as Director of Rugby, this is the end of my current journey at Maidstone as I try to move to pastures new but safe in the knowledge that the playing side is in good hands and we now have a firm platform to build from. I am immensely proud of all of the players at every level of the Club that have bought into the 'one club' spirit and I wish you all the best moving forward.

**Maidstone:** Fox; Murphy; Gilligan; Williams; Carfrae; Lane; Court; Weston; Morosan (C); Clarke; Smith; Newton; De Zoeten; Grice; Caborn

