



Match Report



London & SE Division 2 (South East) Maidstone FC 20 v Aylesford Bulls RFC 0

Played at The Mote, Saturday 9th February 2019



With both sides occupying the lower half of the table this was a match that going into the final quarter of the season was important to both sides in terms their survival at this level. Maidstone came away from what was the third local derby encounter of the season against league rivals Aylesford feeling they had significantly redressed the balance, having let the previous extremely winnable encounters slip through their fingers.

In what was a largely settled side that featured an unchanged forward pack from their comeback encounter against Deal & Betteshanger it was the back division that saw some alteration as Shaun Woolford slotted into the centre berth alongside Scott De Zouten, with a halfback pairing of skipper Lucian Morosan and Alex Clark, Mikey Grice occupied the fullback berth with Josh Smith and Ollie Finn providing the pace on the wings.

Despite the recent heavy rain, on what was a dry, bright, sunny afternoon and played on a pitch that held up well considering the week's drenching, playing with the wind and the slope the home side started sluggishly in a series of opening encounters largely played in midfield it was a series of early penalties that disrupted any continuity they attempted to build in addition to either relieving the pressure on, or giving territorial advantage to their opponents. It was from one of these penalties after 10 minutes that the first scoring chance fell to Aylesford, but in what was their only real opportunity to trouble the scoreboard throughout the match, Ridout's attempt from 30m was hooked well wide of the goal.



This appeared to be the shot in the arm that Maidstone needed as after what had been a sluggish start they started to settle, building phases of play that took them into Aylesford territory and the 20 minute mark, an offside penalty centrally located but just outside the opposition 22m saw Morosan opt for the posts and a confident conversion saw the early advantage with the





home side. Maidstone added to this five minutes later when a penalty took them deep into the Aylesford 22m, from the resultant lineout the catch and drive was thwarted by the Aylesford defence, a pick & drive by Gilligan saw the ball recycled and with hooker Varker running on a good line at pace to pierce the defence midway out but able to run round to touch down under

the posts. With a straightforward conversion added by Morosan the home side stretched to a 10-0 lead.

Maidstone gradually dominated the game as the half progressed building more continuity into their phases of play, although too often it was their tendency to infringe that curbed their attacks rather than the opposition defence. That said Aylesford were also conceding and shortly before the interval Morosan converted another opportunity to extend the lead to 13-0. Maidstone had one further opportunity deep into what was 7-minutes of added time before the interval with a penalty that saw Aylesford's Webdale yellow carded, but the attempt narrowly drifted wide of the posts.



With Maytum on in the front row for Gilligan, Maidstone started the second half very much on the front foot from the restart, although again it was their tendency to infringe that prevented them from really threatening the opposition tryline, allowing them to clear their lines. However it was an Aylesford infringement that created the next scoring opportunity; good midfield defence by Maidstone saw the opposition penalised for not releasing on halfway. Quick thinking by Marzetti who took a quick tap penalty and showed enough pace to breach a lethargic defence to cross and touch down under the posts from 50m out, with Morosan adding the extras to take the home side to a 20-point cushion.

Some ill-discipline towards the end of the third quarter saw both sides reduced to 14 as Fisher and Aylesford's Rumsey were yellow carded. Much of the game thereafter was played in midfield, and whilst Maidstone largely dominated without really threatening the Aylesford line, although breaks by Clark and Smith looked promising but eventually petered out. The match which aside from being a local derby where the result was important to both sides and was by no means a spectacle, was finally brought to a close after what was 13-minutes of added time, which was somewhat perplexing given there were no real injury breaks.



In summary, the 20-0 win was a testament to the growing confidence of this side and will go a long way to easing any relegation fears they may have still harboured, whilst simultaneously inflicting a real relegation setback on their opponents as the season enters its closing quarter. That said, there is still work to do and whilst the coaching team will be pleased with the improved defensive effort of the side and a set piece that on the whole functioned well, they will no doubt look to reduce a penalty count that is still too high, as well as improving on the side's composure and execution in attack.



Maidstone Will Fox; Tom Varker; Ashley Gilligan; Charlie Williams; Ben Massey; Jamie Marzetti; Dan Fisher; Sam Weston; Lucian Morosan (c); Alex Clark; Josh Smith; Shaun Woolford; Scott De Zouten; ollie Finn; Mikey Grice;

Replacements: Martin Maytum; Tom Chandler; Will Lane (All used)

