



Match Report



London & SE Division 1 (South)

Sevenoaks RFC 43 v Maidstone FC 17

Played at Knole Paddock, Sevenoaks, Saturday 9th September, 2017



On what was a bright, sunny afternoon Maidstone went into this encounter having somewhat held the 'indian sign' over local rivals Sevenoaks, suffering only one narrow defeat in over a decade's worth of encounters; however, the Knole Paddock outfit threw off the hoodoo with a convincing display that left Maidstone coach Mike Hebden disappointed in his sides lack lustre performance.

With a number of changes to last week's through injury or unavailability the pack was rejigged with Matt Iles moving into the second row and jack Lamb starting on the back row, whilst new recruit James Farris occupied a spot on the bench. It was in the backs where there were major changes, as Rory Beech in the fly half spot with Pat Sykes making his debut at 12 and Ryan Copp moving to the right wing partnered by Matt Moore on the other touchline, Lucian Morosan provided the cover from the bench.

Maidstone probably felt it was not going to be their day as a penalty attempt converted by Barker inside the first minute had the home side quickly on the scoreboard, although Maidstone saw a chance by Caborn to level the scores just drift past the upright following a period of their own pressure. If defences win matches Sevenoaks were giving themselves every opportunity, as a rapid oppressive defensive line policed the gain line preventing any form of Maidstone penetration. With the ball in hand Sevenoaks looked to string phases together and were unafraid to move the



ball wide quickly and with only some desperate defending by the visitors keeping them at bay. With Maidstone conceding penalties and a chance to extend their lead having missed the target, Sevenoaks continued to press with Maidstone's Sykes picking up a harsh yellow card towards the end of the first quarter. It was from the resultant lineout wide on the left and the thwarted catch & drive that the referee lost patience with the



visitors and awarded a penalty try giving the hosts a 10-0 advantage.

Some desperate defence wide on the flanks kept Sevenoaks at bay until the half hour mark when a good break up the middle by scrum half Goodhew saw left winger Short in support to dot down by the posts with Barker adding the conversion. The restart saw Maidstone able to exert some pressure in the Sevenoaks 22, but the combination solid defence and the visitors trying to force the play saw the opportunity dissolve.

Sevenoaks thought they were on the scoreboard again in the period just before half time as they crossed midway out on the right, only for the referee to call a forward pass. Maidstone didn't help themselves from the resultant scrum close to their own line, as poor decision making saw them turn the ball over under their own posts allowing the Short to cross midway out on the left for his second score, with Barker adding the extras. There was still time for a concerted period of Maidstone pressure on the Sevenoaks line before the interval after a kickable penalty opportunity had been eschewed, but the home side's defence held firm.

Half-time changes saw Farris on for the injured Brill and Morosan replacing Copp on the wing and an early kickable penalty was spurned for the opportunity of a lineout on the right touchline at the Sevenoaks 5m; whilst the home side disrupted clean ball it was Josh Pankhurst who was quickest to react to get Maidstone on the scoreboard at 24-5.



Maidstone were soon back on defensive duties midway through the third quarter after an interval for a serious injury to Sevenoak's barker that saw him carried from the field. The rejigging of their halfback pairing appeared not to interrupt their stride as quick recycled ball inside the visitors 22m saw them move the ball left for centre Gumbleton to cross 15m out on the left to extend their lead to 29-5 as Floyd's conversion attempt drifted wide.



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free to cross in the corner. The visitors again found themselves under pressure when prop Max Guero was penalised at the break-down and received a yellow card from the referee. The resultant penalty gave the home side field position on the Maidstone 22m to set up a catch and drive from a lineout, with the referee signalling advantage Oaks' Derrick was able slip of the maul to touch down midway out on the left with Floyd this time adding the extras.



This by no means ended the scoring as with quite a bit of time remaining as a result of the Barker injury, from the restart Maidstone looked to press forward and crossed wide on the right, only for the referee to call play back for a Sevenoaks knock on. The field position however did see the visitors apply pressure with Matt Iles, Lamb and Sykes going close before the ball was moved wide to Beech who beat two defenders to touch down halfway out on the right, Caborn added the extras.

The match came to a close with what was the pick of the scores; following a scrum in midfield Sevenoaks were able to recycle the ball and move it left with winger Short breaking the tackle and then committing the last defender to slip the ball to Goodhew arriving on a good angle at pace to score under the posts, Floyd added the extras for a scoreline of 43-17 and Oaks biggest ever winning margin against Maidstone.

In this nine try contest it would be wrong to assume this was a loose encounter, and if defences win matches, it is the attack that decides by how much and from the outset it was apparent that it was the home side that had the defensive edge and ability to move the ball quickly. For Maidstone it will be a long look at a lack lustre performance and how to reduce a penalty count that saw them play threequarters of the match down to 14 men.

Maidstone Max Guero; Josh Pankhurst; Tom Mount: Adam Knight; Matt Iles: Ben Knight; Jack Lamb: Ben Brill;; Jack Leech; Rory Bech: Matt Moore; Pat Sykes; George Perry; Ryan Copp: Euan Caborn

Replacements: Danny Baker; Jamie Farris; Lucian Morosan (All used)

