



## Match Report



### London & SE Division 1 (South)

### Maidstone FC 12 v Medway RFC 41

Played at The Mote, Saturday 9th December, 2017



The clash between top and bottom of the table had only one, predictable outcome. But one point separated the teams at half time and, for sixty minutes, Maidstone competed on equal terms with league leaders, Medway. The final outcome, a 41-12 win for the visitors demonstrated the gulf that exists between the two sides and, once again, emphasised the weaknesses that have bedevilled Maidstone this year.

Crucially, on this occasion, Maidstone's pack was outgunned in the tight and this usual source of secure ball was denied the hosts as the superior Medway eight generated a series of penalties, and a penalty try, from set scrums. But the most significant difference came from mistakes when in possession of the ball. Maidstone tripped up time and again when in attacking mode and gifted the Medway defence the ball, allowing opportunities for counterattack or simply to clear their lines. Until this fault is corrected, Maidstone will continue to struggle against the better sides.

Maidstone welcomed back Ben Massey and Matt Iles into the pack and Vaki Antoniou and Sean Woolford on the wings. With the exception of the long-term injured, this was the best fifteen available and gave some confidence, at the outset, that the team could compete with the league leaders.

And for the first forty minutes this was the case, as Maidstone got off to a flying start, with Jack Leech scoring a try with only two minutes on the clock. The build up came from a line-out immediately after kick off. A catch and drive took play to the Medway 22 and with George Perry breaking the gain line when the ball was spun wide, Leech was on hand to touch down half way out.

Medway's reply came minutes later. From a scrum just in the Maidstone half, the ball was fed to fly half, Harvey, who slipped past the first tackler into open field, eluding three more tacklers before touching down in the right corner. His fine conversion gave



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the visitors a two-point lead and quiet-  
ed any doubts they may have had after  
Maidstone's early score.

The score remained the same until the  
end of the half approached, as both  
teams battled for superiority and the  
penalty count mounted, for both sides.  
After missing a straightforward  
attempt, Harvey slotted a penalty to

extend the visitors' score to ten, on the forty-minute mark.

But in added time, Maidstone hit back with a second try. Once again, the catch and drive set up the score after a line out and when the ball was fed wide, the back row combined to put Lewis Stimpson, Maidstone's man-of-the-match, over the line. The conversion by Ryan Copp put Maidstone's noses in front but an infringement at the restart gave Harvey the opportunity to slot another penalty, which he accepted with alacrity, to give the visitors a one-point advantage, at the break.



With Medway playing down the slope in the second half, it was crucial that Maidstone gave the visitors as little opportunity as possible to kick to the corners. But with penalties being conceded as the visitors mounted a strong opening, after the re-start, this was easier said than done.

With the ten-minute mark approaching, a Medway penalty to Maidstone's 22 was turned into a catch and drive but while this was defended successfully, the cost was a yellow card for Ben Knight. Medway elected for a scrum on Maidstone's five metre line and with Maidstone in retreat, a penalty try was awarded as the scrum was illegally turned, increasing the lead to 20-12.



With the visitors playing their rugby increasingly in Maidstone's half, the hosts began to tire as both line-out and scrum began to yield dividends for Medway. A quick tap by the Medway scrum half extended the Maidstone defence, resulting in another try after a maul, which Harvey converted to extend the lead to 27-12, on the hour.

While Maidstone had a couple of good spells in the last quarter of the game, it was now all about the visitors and two converted tries in the last ten minutes took them out of reach. The first was a pushover try under the posts, but the best was saved to last.



A break from the Medway half, down the right wing, took play into the Maidstone 22, where last-ditch defence prevented a score. But with quickly recycled ball, play was switched across the field to the left wing, Chalmers, to score in the opposite corner. With Harvey slotting the conversion from the touchline, the score moved to 41-12.

Maidstone's late flourish on the visitors' line was impressive but failed to dent the Medway defence, allowing all the spoils to the league leaders.



Despite the loss, Maidstone can take heart from the display which caused concern in the Medway camp for the first hour. But the cleaner, low error rugby of the visitors was sufficient to allow them to coast past the hosts in the last quarter and start to consider the second half of the season on a high.

### Maidstone

Ben Williams; Gary Beck; Kieran Gibbons: Adam Knight; Ben Massey: Ben Knight; Lewis Stimpson; Matt Iles: Lucian Morosan; Ryan Copp: Vaki Antoniou; Rory Beech; George Perry; Sean Woolford: Jack Leech

Replacements: Max Guero; Matt Davies; Jason Hazlehurst (All used)

