



# Match Report



## London & SE Division 1 (South)

Maidstone FC 15 v Ldn Cornish RFC 18

Played at The Mote, Saturday 10th March, 2018



This last gasp, 18-15, defeat to London Cornish, was a huge disappointment after the hard-work and spirit shown, on the day. While the decisive moments came in added time, at the end of the second half, the vital score that would have set Maidstone up, was missed early in the game.

In the away fixture in November, Maidstone were outgunned in the threequarters and struggled to get into the game but on this occasion, two equally matched sides competed for the initiative, throughout. Man-of-the-match, Max Guero, was prominent in the loose as well as holding his own in the tight, epitomising the growing spirit and togetherness in the side.

What may be missing in individual ability, in this revamped Maidstone side, has been more than compensated by the renewed purpose generated by skipper, Adam Knight and the coaching team. Rugby played with a smile and team spirit can compensate for a lot of individual shortcomings.

With the recent spell of bad-weather and blank Saturdays, it was three weeks since Maidstone's last outing, a convincing win against fellow strugglers, Thurrock. With two changes in the pack, Ryan Murphy at hooker, for Gary Beck, and Tom Chandler in the back row, for Lewis Stimpson, and two in the backline, Sean Woolford, for Craig Webb, and Alex Clark, for Sam Pearson, there was some nervousness that the recent progress shown by the team would be halted.



While the concern was justified, it was clear that no doubts existed in the minds of the payers and, on a still but overcast day, on a heavy pitch, Maidstone set out to play a high tempo game. In this, they succeeded but were matched by a London Cornish team that looked to play their own style, which probed incessantly at the Maidstone defence to find space for a hard running three-quarter line.

Maidstone had the first opportunity to score, with less than five minutes on the

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clock. A penalty just in their own half was punted to touch just outside the visitors' 22. A catch and drive was quickly changed into a move down the line, which caught the defence off-guard. But Sean Woolford's dive for the line saw the ball spilled and the chance gone.

With both teams locked in a struggle for dominance, the first score

only came as the half hour approached. A Maidstone line out, in their own 22, was lost and Cornish took full advantage, swinging the ball right then left and back right again before finding space for right wing, Hill, to cross in the corner.

With the conversion missed, a Maidstone penalty, three minutes later, reduced the arrears to two points which was turned into a five-point lead almost immediately.

Maidstone's opportunity came after a poor restart from London Cornish, the ball going out on the full. The resultant scrum yielded an attacking position, firstly through No 8, Matt Iles and then by a Rory Beech break. He passed back inside to Jack Leech, whose finely weighted grubber kick to the corner set up Vaki Antoniou for the score. A fine Beech conversion from the touchline completed things to put pressure back on the visitors.

The visitors struck back from the restart, regaining the ball and breaking to the Maidstone 22. The scrambled defence was judged illegal by the referee, Jack Leech receiving a yellow card, while the resultant penalty, converted by fly half, Kimmins, reduced the Maidstone lead to two points.



Maidstone and Cornish both tried to add to their position before half time but both defences held firm and set the game up for a competitive second half.

Maidstone thought they had added to their lead on the quarter hour when a catch and drive move in the Cornish 22 yielded a surge to the line. But because the opposition failed to engage, Maidstone were penalised for obstruction. This subtle piece of play not only prevented the score but undid Maidstone's subsequent confidence in this, otherwise, effective tactic.

And it was Cornish that eventually broke the deadlock, five minutes later. A relieving kick from the Maidstone 22 failed to find touch, allowing the visitors to run back at the Maidstone defence, releasing right wing, Hill, to finish the move half way out. With Kimmins adding the conversion, Cornish moved into a five-point lead, 15-10.

Maidstone redoubled their efforts to get back into the game but the solid Cornish defence consistently denied them the space or opportunity to score. But with the clock running down, Maidstone's pressure eventually yielded a turn of fortune, when No 8, Hakes, was yellow carded just be-



fore the forty-minute mark.

The resultant penalty established Maidstone deep in the Cornish 22 and a subsequent brace of quick tap-penalties kept the opposition on the back foot, allowing the ball to be spread to the right wing where replacement, Josh Smith, was on hand to run in the try.

The Beech conversion just shaded the posts, and, with the scores level, both sets of spectators were settling for a draw. But the visitors, on the pitch, had other ideas, and with fatigue setting in, Maidstone yielded at the last. A penalty by Kimmins put Cornish in front with three minutes of added time remaining.



Still Maidstone were not done. Back they came and won a last-gasp penalty that should have given them the opportunity for one last assault on the Cornish line. Unfortunately, rather than go straight into touch, it hit a Cornish player, which effectively ended the penalty and the game.

So near and yet so far.

### Maidstone

Danny Baker; Ryan Murphy; Max Guero: Adam Knight; Ben Massey: Jack Bramwell; Tom Chandler; Matt Iles: Jack Leech; Rory Beech: Vaki Antoniou; George Perry; Sean Woolford; Lucian Morosan: Alex Clark  
Replacements: Will Fox; Jack Lamb; Josh Smith (All used)

