



## Match Report



### RFU Intermediate Cup

Maidstone FC 3 v O Cranleighians 62

Played at The Mote, Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2018

After the excitement of the previous 3 weeks in the league, with one fine win and two very narrow losses, there was reason to expect that a cup victory vs O Cranleighians might be on the cards, despite the absence of 3 or 4 regular starters. OC had started the season with a similar playing record to Maidstone but having won only two of their 8 League matches, so the threat did not seem too daunting.

It was a fine sight to see the team led out by skipper for the day, Will Fox, who has completed the transition from 5th team rookie to 1st XV regular and is a popular talisman for players at all levels in the club. However, the optimism and excitement that comes with a cup fixture was not to survive for long after kick-off.

Cranleighians proved to be a very good side and attacked with intent from the outset. They ran hard at the Maidstone defence with forwards and backs and as fast as the Maidstone defenders tackled them, they recycled the ball efficiently and at great speed.

In the opening passages of play, Maidstone were dealt an early blow with an injury to 2nd Row Charlie Bentley, causing the pack to be re-shuffled. Maidstone resistance was fierce but cracks quickly appeared as the gain-line was crossed time and again by the OC runners. Eventually, the pressure told as a catch and drive on the halfway line was propelled to the Maidstone 22, before the ball was spun wide for an easy canter round the outside for a score under the posts, with just 9 minutes played. Maidstone rallied and dug in hard to stem the tide of runners but struggled to secure possession, and when it was gained, struggled to retain it, with the ball regularly lost in the tackle or turned over in the break-down. It took 25 minutes for Maidstone to mount their first attack into the OC 22 but the attack broke down and OC quickly breached the Maidstone line to run in their 2nd try, 0-12.

A good field position enabled Euan Caborn to kick a 30 metre penalty shortly before half-time, giving cause to hope that, despite appearances, the game could be salvaged in the 2nd half, but hopes were quickly dashed when OC ran in another converted try to bring the score to 3-19, leaving Maidstone with a mountain to climb in the 2nd half – and whilst not exactly a mountain, the uphill slope of the pitch to add to their task.

Maidstone were invigorated briefly at half time with the welcome return of 1<sup>st</sup> Team Skipper Lucian Morosan to the team, following an injury lay-off of 4 or 5 weeks but in another change, Dan Fisher was replaced owing to a shoulder injury and Tom Varker went to the back-row.

With Morosan occupying the scrum-half berth and Jack Leech now at 10, the game plan altered to try and keep the ball tight in the forwards but the





first box-kick launched into OC territory was fielded comfortably by the OC full-back, who out-paced the whole Maidstone defence to touch down for a further 7 points. Further scores followed at regular intervals, and even when OC lost a player to the sin-bin for a high tackle on Alex Clark, Maidstone were unable to trouble the OC defence.

With 30 minutes played, Alex Clark was knocked cold in a tackle and was helped off the field without any memory of the preceding minutes, which is now a significant selection problem at full back until he recovers, having played there with distinction in recent weeks.

The closing minutes of the game were an exercise in trying to retain some pride and maintain some respectability in the score-line, against what was undoubtedly a well drilled and powerful opposition, that completely belied their League position.

**Maidstone:** Will Fox; Ryan Murphy; Ashley Gilligan; Charlie Williams; Charlie Bentley; Jamie Marzetti; Dan Fisher; Sam Weston; Jack Leech; Euan Caborn; Josh Smith; Joe Burden; George Perry; Scott De Zoeten; Alex Clark.

**Replacements:** Tom Varker; Jack Bramwell; Ollie Newton; Lucian Morosan.

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