



Match Report



London & SE Division 1 (South)

Medway RFC 59 - Maidstone FC 0

Played at Medway, Saturday 14th April 2018

On the warmest day of the year so far, with the usual hospitable and ever-present Medway spectators, this was a game that Medway had to win to claim 5 points and move ever-closer to their promotion dreams. For Maidstone it was all about making a decent account of themselves with a re-jigged Maidstone side and whilst, the result of the game went against them, both teams achieved their objectives.

Indeed, it only took a matter of a couple of minutes for Medway to get on the score sheet, when 'king-pin' Harvey at fly half, provided a miss-pass to stretch Maidstone on the flanks in their own 22. A 'bullocking' run from their second row and a key missed tackle allowed an off-load to feed to 13 to run in unopposed. With the successful conversion, this was an ominous start for Maidstone and the writing clearly on the wall.

Living off scraps of possession and giving away numerous penalties allowed Harvey, to peg Maidstone back further and it was from a ball fed from the catch and drive at the line-out that allowed, the open-side flanker, to expose Maidstone on the short-side to score the touch-down. With the conversion, Maidstone were 14 point down after 10 mins.

Maidstone then had their best spell of the game, where they bombarded the Medway line through a series of 'pick and goes' but came away with nothing, with Medway somehow managing to turn-over the ball to launch a counter out of their own 22. Had Maidstone breached the line, it may have enabled them to get a foot-hold in the game but in all honesty, it was always going to be a long afternoon against a very-well drilled side, who were clinical and uncompromising in both attack and defence and who were second in the table for good reason.

Maidstone managed to contain Medway until the 30 minute mark, when another penalty infringement and the resultant pick up by 8 at the scrum and feed to Harvey on the loop. Once again this was converted. Medway were starting to turn the screw in the scrum and it was a push off Maidstone's ball, which was shipped out wide for 13 to score, which provided the required 4 try bonus just before half-time.

The second half saw much of the same with Medway starting to dominate up-front and keep possession, which allowed them the platform to play their fast running, expansive game and to hit holes in the tiring Maidstone defence. And so it proved within 5 minutes of the second half, when the No 8, scored a try from a penalty and resultant scrum.

With Medway attacking at every opportunity and penalty infringements allowing Harvey, fresh from a period in the bin towards the end of the first half, to 'boom' the ball to the touch-line deep in to the Maidstone 22, the next score showed the tiredness of the Maidstone defence, when 14 skipped through a series of tackles to score.

With hardly any ball and not being able to get out of their own half, they were under intense pressure. Man for man, they tried their hardest to defend but the physical Medway pack and back line were now countering at every opportunity and Maidstone found





it very hard to repel the speed of hand and thought of the Medway attack- which resulted in the next try, when scrum half, Dance ran from his own 22 along the touch-line, with a player assist by the hooker, eventually popping up the ball to provide the supporting Harvey with a dot down in the corner - which he duly converted. In particular, Maidstone found the pace and decision making of Ebanks at 12 difficult to contain and whose cuts and deft off-loads allowed him to score the next and make the last for try for 14 to score his second.

On a positive note for Maidstone, the spirit in the side was strong and resilient and they gave their all right up to the final whistle. It was also good to see the return of James Douglas and all that he brings and the introduction of wing Jason Hazlehurst, who did not look out of place at this level.

One could be forgiven for thinking that after the last 3 heavy defeats, it is all doom and gloom. Far from it, Maidstone showed real grit and guts in a game that they were never likely to win given injury absentees, recent defectors to other Clubs and those new to this level. What it further showed is that Maidstone have the nucleus of a side to rebuild and be a real force in London 2 next season. Maidstone travel to Old Colfeians next for their last game of the season, and the opportunity to do the double on them.

Lastly, a special thank you, goes to Medway Head Coach, Taff Gwilliam, who always magnanimous in victory, stood the beers for the Maidstone team. We wish Medway all the best in their last game and route to the play-offs and sincerely hope that they get the promotion that they so duly deserve.

Team

Kieron Gibbons; Max Guerro; Danny Baker; Adam Knight; Ben Massey, Charlie Williams; Jack Lamb; Lewis Stimpson; Lucian Morosan; Rory Beech; Jason Hazlehurst; Ryan Copp; Shaun Woolford; Josh Smith; James Douglas

Replacements: Will Fox; Jack Bramwell, Tom Chandler (all used)

