



Match Report



London & SE Division 2 (South East)

Dover RFC 31 v Maidstone FC 30

Played at The Crabble, Dover, Saturday 16th February 2019



Following last week's performance Maidstone travelled to Dover with a growing confidence and the knowledge that a positive result could see them overhaul their opponents in the placings. The county town side have seen a noticeable improvement in both form and confidence since the turn of the year, whilst their opponents were looking to arrest a poor run of recent results.

Maidstone however will have come away from the match wondering quite how they managed to throw away such a commanding advantage having dominated large parts of this game, securing a solid half-time lead, which dissolved in the last quarter due more to their own loss of structure than the threat posed by the opposition. And with better kicking from the tee, the narrow loss could have been avoided; such was the closeness of the final score.

The side showed a few changes from last week's win, with the pack largely unchanged except for Will Lane coming in on the flank for the unavailable Fisher. The changes in the back line were in the back three which looked a potent attacking force with Ollie Newton occupying the left wing berth and Jason Smith coming in at fullback. The bench saw Ryan Murphy and Tom Chandler as the forward replacements with experienced player coach Dave Charlton covering the backs.

Maidstone started the game in spritely fashion and on the scoreboard within the first five minutes as they forced the error from the Dover defence to earn a midfield scrum; from this the ball was moved to the right to make inroads deep into the Dover 22m. quick recycled ball through a couple of phases saw Marzetti on hand to breach the defence and touchdown just to the left of the posts, and with Morosan adding the extras Maidstone had an early 0-7 advantage.



Having shown their attacking intent the visitors continued to move the ball with the two Smiths making significant incursions deep into the Dover 22m after Maidstone had won turnover ball, and whilst the attack was thwarted Dover had infringed and Morosan took the option to go for goal, adding the points to go 0-10 up after ten minutes.

The fifteen minute mark saw Dover on the scoreboard after Maidstone infringements had con-





ceded territory which put them under pressure, Maidstone initially withstood the onslaught, but after a number of attempts by the Dover pack to break the visitors line the ball was moved to the backs and it was the experienced Beaumont that cut the defence to touch down under the posts, with his own conversion a formality Dover had pulled the score back to 7-10.

Maidstone still maintained the ascendancy and the 25th minute saw them breach the Dover line again, a penalty lineout on the left touchline just inside the Dover 22m saw the ball moved quickly along the backs where Josh and Jason Smith again combined, with fullback Jason taking a well-timed inside pass to cross in the right corner and extend the lead to 7-15.

Whilst the Maidstone still held the ascendancy, a Dover incursion into their half saw the visitors infringe in midfield, with their lineout stuttering, rather than kick for touch Dover opted for the posts and Beaumont calmly picked up the 3-points for 30m out.

From the restart Maidstone again forced a Dover error and the resultant scrum saw the ball moved with De Zouten forced into touch just short of the Dover line. Maidstone however upset the Dover lineout to steal the ball, a couple of drives in front of the posts saw quick ball and a long pass to left wing Newton saw him stroll over to touch-down midway out on the left. With the conversion missed Maidstone took a 10-20 lead into the interval.



The second half saw Maidstone dominate the first ten minutes in the Dover 22m but without really threatening the opposition tryline, a failed penalty attempt midway through the third quarter being the only attempt to trouble the scoreboard. Five minutes later a Dover clearance kick failed to make touch and was fielded by Newton who made inroads into the Dover defence before feeding Jason Smith whose chip ahead from the Dover 22m was sufficiently weighted for right Wing Josh Smith to outpace the Dover defence to touch down in the right corner. With the conversion missed, the lead extended to 10-25. Maidstone further extended their lead shortly after with another incursion into the Dover 22m saw the ball again recycled well with the forwards combining well down the left flank with Weston receiving the final pass from Varker to cross 5m in from the left touchline.

Going into the final quarter a Dover attack in the Maidstone 22m saw the visitors penalised in front of their posts and with Dover opting to take a scrum over an attempt at goal, they launched from the base with the ball eventually reaching the openside flanker who slipped two tackles to cross wide out on the right, Beaumont added the extras to narrow the deficit to 17-30.



Another Maidstone on their 22m penalty shortly after saw Dover again opt for the scrum, they were able to move the ball from the base and with the left wing crossing in the corner and Beaumont who was faultless with the boot narrowing the gap to 24-30.

With all to play for Dover looked to move the ball around, Maidstone at this point needed to retain their shape and play the safe option of retaining possession; their predisposition to run the ball whilst pressing the Dover 22m saw the classic interception as Beaumont stepped in to catch Maidstone flat footed and run in under the posts from 75m, with the conversion a formality Dover had completed the comeback 30-31.



The final act wasn't yet played out, Dover infringements saw Maidstone camped on the home side's line for the closing stages and after a series of pick and drives from a line out, prop Fox thought he had driven over for the score, but with the referee unsighted and unable to award the try the final whistle blew.

There is an old saying from the 'Sermon on the Mount', "do unto others as you would be done unto" which seems rather apposite given Maidstone's remarkable comeback a few weeks ago. That said, this is a young side that is beginning to gel, and whilst some wrong options were taken at key times there was much to be impressed with in this performance. The scrum was solid, the lineout functioned well and the back line posed a genuine attacking threat.

Maidstone have no game next week but are in action again on the 2nd March against fifth placed Haywards Heath

Maidstone: Will Fox; Tom Varker; Ashley Gilligan; Charlie Williams; Ben Massey; Jamie Marzetti; Will Lane; Sam Weston; Lucian Morosan ©; Alex Clark; Ollie Newton; Shaun Woolford; Scott de Zoetten; Josh Smith; Jason Smith.

Replacements: Ryan Murphy; Tom Chandler; Dave Charlton.

