



Match Report



London & SE Division 1 (South)

Chobham RFC 32 - Maidstone FC 18

Played at Fowlers Wells, Chobham, Saturday 17 March 2018

On a bitterly cold afternoon, with snow in the wind throughout, Maidstone travelled to Chobham to play the game postponed when snow interfered with the schedule last month. The outcome, a 32-18 loss, pretty much reflected the scoreline when the hosts visited the Mote, earlier in the season.

But the outcome of this game was in doubt at half time, unlike the previous encounter, although Chobham gained the edge in the third quarter and ran out worthy winners at the end.

In the absence of skipper, Adam Knight, and Danny Baker, the pack lost a lot of its power in the tight and this was noticeable on a couple of occasions, so Will Fox was drafted into the front row to compensate with Max Guero dropping to the bench. Tom Chandler moved into the second row, while Lewis Stimpson returned on the openside.

Lucian Morosan moved to scrum half to replace Jack Leech and Sam Pearson returned at full back, with Alex Clark moving to the right wing, in an otherwise unchanged back line.

With the strong wind at Chobham's back in the first half, their tactic of kicking for territory, through fly half Clark, before launching their lively three-quarters, was a sound one and quickly yielded dividends. Maidstone were caught not rolling away after a tackle and full back, Turner, converted the resultant penalty in the 22, from in front.

The drop out gave Maidstone the opportunity to get into the Chobham half, but some adventurous play by the hosts saw them break from their own 22 to take play back to the Maidstone line. A loose pass then turned the game on its head as Sam Pearson snatched the ball, and his opportunity, and ran the length of the field to score under the posts, giving Rory Beech the simplest of conversions, with only five minutes gone.

Territorially, Chobham continued to dominate, and a series of line outs in the Maidstone 22 required considerable effort to keep the hosts at bay, with No 8, Ollie Smith, a powerful and lively presence. But it was a simple error on a Maidstone throw in that presented Chobham with the next score, on the quarter hour.

The bobbling ball was secured by prop, Wynne, and he had a simple task to place the ball over the line to establish a one-point advantage for the hosts.

A knee injury to Shaun Woolford at this point saw him replaced in the centre by Ryan Copp as Chobham continued to exploit the conditions and play the game in Maidstone's 22. A further series of line-outs brought the catch and drive into play and Maidstone's defence of this tactic inevitably led to a yellow card, with Ben Massey incurring the referee's wrath.

Immediately thereafter, Chobham added to their total, with Wynne again the try scorer. With Turner adding the conversion, Chobham moved into a 15-7 lead.

Maidstone struck back almost immediately. A thrust into the Chobham half was stopped by a high tackle, resulting in a yellow card for the Chobham blindside, Buck-





land, and a penalty on the 30-metre mark, which Beech slotted, with aplomb.

Maidstone continued to defend the lively Chobham attacks but an increasing number of penalties and a malfunctioning line out ceded the initiative to the hosts. Just before the half time whistle, Maidstone conceded a further score, with winger Devitt finishing off in the corner, to give them more breathing space than had been hoped.

With the elements now in Maidstone’s favour, Chobham looked to increase the intensity of their play to compensate and this they did to great effect. But first blood went to Maidstone with Rory Beech converting a 30-metre penalty to reduce the arrears to seven points, raising hopes of a comeback.

But it was not to be. With just over ten minutes gone, Chobham No 8, Smith delivered a quick ball off the base of the scrum for a training ground move to release winger, Devitt, on the inside line between the centres, to score by the posts, making the conversion for Turner a formality.

Maidstone continued to fight but with the scrum under pressure in the tight, the line out descending into chaos, at times, and the penalty count mounting, it was inevitable that Chobham would extend their lead. And this they did with twenty-five minutes gone, with the lively No 8, Smith, the scorer, appearing in the three-quarter line to breach the Maidstone defence.

What has epitomised Maidstone’s recent performances is the character they have shown, even when the odds are stacked against them. And this came to the fore in the last section of the game. With the wind no longer an influence, Maidstone worked their way upfield through sheer hard graft and some sniping runs, led by Lewis Stimpson. It was now Chobham’s turn to defend and this led to a series of penalties on their five-metre line.

Maidstone elected to take the scrum option, rather than the line out, and this paid dividends, at the second attempt, as Matt Iles drove over for the try. With the score narrowed to 32-18, Maidstone elected to throw caution to the wind but despite some moments of optimism, Chobham managed to contain the late surge and close out the game.

With too many vital components of the team missing on this occasion, Maidstone could not impose themselves sufficiently to influence the final outcome. The line-out, in particular, will need some attention while the diminished power in the tight, should be restored when the skipper returns.

Maidstone

Will Fox; Ryan Murphy; Gary Beck: Tom Chandler; Ben Massey: Jack Bramwell; Lewis Stimpson; Matt Iles: Lucian Mo-ou; George Perry; Sean Wool-
Replacements: Max Guero; Jack



rosan; Rory Beech: Vaki Antoniford; Alex Clark: Sam Pearson
Lamb; Ryan Copp (All used)