



# Match Report



## London & SE Division 1 (South)

### O. Colfeians RFC 27 v Maidstone FC 28

Played at Horn Park, Eltham, Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2018

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On a bright, sunny afternoon and played on a pitch in prime condition, Maidstone came away from this season's finale on a high, with a satisfying 27-28 win against Old Colfeians. Whilst the start of the week saw this fixture as one of the few meaningful encounters at the rump of the league campaign, with Colfes still hoping to avoid relegation with a positive result; by match day much of that had changed as news of a 5-point deduction for the hosts had been confirmed leaving only pride at stake for both sides in this encounter.

Head Coach Mike Hebden rang the changes for this fixture, particularly in the back line where Matt Iles reverted to the base of the scrum with Alex Clark stepped into the centre berth alongside George Perry. Sam Pearson occupied the fullback slot with Jason Haslehurst on one wing and youngster Mikey Grice coming in on the left wing after Lucian Morosan was forced to withdraw with injury in the warm up. The forwards had a more familiar look with Charlie Williams and Lewis Stimpson accompanying Iles in the back row.

From the start despite both sides looking to move the ball, it was apparent that Colfes strength lay in their big forwards and the opening encounters saw Maidstone pegged to their own half as both sides sized each other up. The first opportunity of note came for the visitors as they broke out of their own half with Stimpson making the incisive break that only ended as he was hauled down 10m short of the Colfes line, with a subsequent knock on bring the attack to an end.



The resultant scrum saw Maidstone penalised and this and another subsequent penalty saw Colfes take play to the Maidstone 5m where playing to their strengths a well-executed catch & drive saw them open the scoring wide on the left, Potter added the



extras for a 7-0 lead. The remainder of the first quarter saw Colfes looking for the same tactic again, this time down the right channel but a resolute Maidstone defence held them at bay.

With the penalty count mounting Maidstone found themselves a man down midway through the half as Ben Massey was harshly yellow carded for

an offence at the breakdown in their own 22m. Despite the penalty being in an eminently kickable position Colfes having a man advantage opted for a scrum, a decision they would come to regret in hindsight as Maidstone were able to repel further pressure.

Maidstone, then began to pull themselves back into the game and exert some pressure of their own in the Colfes 22m, a kickable penalty opportunity was taken with Rory Beech slotting the kick to make the score 7-3.



With the visitors now becoming more adventurous they then went further behind as their left wing Harris was able to put boot to ball on a loose Maidstone pass on halfway and win the footrace to touch down midway out on the left, with potter adding the conversion the scoreline extended to 14-3



The visitors were by no means out of this game and continued to push into the Colfes' half and as the interval approached a scrum in the Colfes 22m saw Iles and Leech combine to feed Beech who was able to almost nonchalantly glide through the gap to touch down under the posts, the conversion was a formality to reduce the score to 14-10. There was still time for

another score as a good kick by Beech into the opposition 22m was well followed up putting the defenders under pressure and forcing the error and the resultant penalty saw Beech reduce the deficit to a single point at 14-13 with the last kick of the half.

Maidstone started the second period much the brighter with a period of concerted pressure in the Colfes 22m and even when they didn't have the ball their defensive play was superb as the hosts struggled to effectively clear their lines. It was this quick oppressive defence that saw Colfes concede a penalty on their 22m line on the 50 minute mark, which Beech converted to give Maidstone a 14-16 lead they were not to relinquish.

Colfes problems were compounded when the lost hooker Corlett to the bin towards the end of the third quarter and it was from this penalty that Maidstone were able to

further extend their lead. From the lineout they were able to drive up to the home 22m and then moved the ball, quick recycling created the space and it was Stimpson who capped a fine 'man of the match' performance who took the final pass just inside the 22m, still with work to do to beat three defenders to touch down right of the post. Beech's unerring accuracy continues as he added the extras to take the score to 14-23.



Colfes came back into the game going into the final quarter when penalties conceded gave them field position close to the Maidstone line, the subsequent lineout saw them drive for the line to burrow over 15m in from the touchline and whilst Potter failed to add the extras the scoreline was now 19-23. Maidstone however responded almost immediately as Colfes conceded a penalty at the restart which Beech drilled deep into the hosts 22m on the right touchline for the lineout, a textbook catch and drive from 10m



saw Colfes unable to respond as Murphy grounded for the try, Beech's conversion attempt narrowly missed but Maidstone had restored a 19-28 two score advantage.

With 5 minutes remaining Potter slotted a 30m penalty to narrow the gap to 6 points and set up a tense finish to the match. Sensing an opportunity Colfes looked to keep the ball alive from the restart and in what was Maidstone's only defensive lapse the host broke down the right flank, as the visitors looked to cover Colfes always had the extra man with prop Vintners touching down midway out on the right,

Potters conversion to win the match drifted wide of the posts as the closing embers of the match were then played out in midfield.

In summary, in what has been a disappointing season and after two recent big defeats this was a confidence building win for Maidstone, bringing the curtain down on the season on a high point. Colfes have a very big pack which Maidstone competed with and proved to have more pace and agility in that area when it mattered. The back line with a number of young faces who will feature next season played well and the defensive resolve shown by the side will be reassuring as they look to build and plan for the next campaign.

**Maidstone** Kieran Gibbons; Ryan Murphy; Will Fox; Adam Knight; Ben Massey; Charlie Williams; Lewis Stimpson; Matt Iles; Jack Leech; Rory Beech; Jason Haslehurst; Alex Clark; George Perry; Mikey Grice; Sam Pearson;

Replacements: Gary Beck; Jack Bramwell; (Both used), Lucian Morosan (Not used)

