



## Match Report



### London 2 (South East)

Gravesend RFC 22 v Maidstone FC 14

Played at The Rectory Field, Gravesend, Saturday 23rd March 2019

Whilst the Gravesend faithful at this magnificent venue could have been forgiven prior to kick-off for thinking that 4th from bottom Maidstone would be rolled over easily, this proved to be far from true and even after Maidstone had conceded 3 quick 2nd-half tries, one could still hear worried voices on the spectators gallery foreseeing a home defeat, such was the spirited onslaught from the Maidstone team in the last quarter of the game.

A bright start from Maidstone meant that much of the early play took place in the Gravesend half of the field, although an early worry for Maidstone was a creaking scrum, not surprisingly perhaps in the absence of Will Fox who was replaced on the loose-head this week by hooker Ryan Murphy, meaning that No 8 Sam Weston had his work cut-out shovelling difficult balls out of a retreating scrum. Its only fair to mention that the Maidstone scrum improved as the game wore on and this attacking platform for Gravesend became progressively less potent.

It was from a line-out on around 20 minutes that the initial dead-lock was broken as Gravesend executed a front-peel training ground move from 15 metres out to score in the corner – a foot in touch going sadly unnoticed. 5-0. Maidstone then had to dig deep to repel waves of Gravesend attacks but the tackling was good, Flankers Dan Fisher and Will Lane always to the fore and Alex Clark disproving the theory that fly-halves don't tackle.

A fairly routine penalty kick was missed by Gravesend and then 10 minutes before the break, an attacking move in the Gravesend 22 saw 2nd row forward Tom Chandler draw two defenders before executing a deft pass to winger Jason Smith who was able to cross the line unopposed for a try that Skipper Lucian Morosan was only too happy to convert for a 7-5 half-time lead.

It was following the break that Maidstone lost the match. A penalty to Gravesend 10 metres out was stoutly defended but when a further penalty was conceded, the home side opted for a scrum, from which their no8 was able to pick up and drive over on the blind side for an unconverted try (which he appeared to drop over the line.) 10-7.

From the subsequent kick-off, the Gravesend No8 was able to collect and run through 3 or 4 Maidstone defenders before releasing the ball for a score out wide, which again went unconverted. 15-7 but by now Maidstone's heads were somewhat down.

A further score from Gravesend when their centre picked up a loose ball in the Maidstone 22 and found a gap to run through under the posts was converted (to ironic cheers from the Gravesend crowd) for a 22- 7 lead which now looked like a game-over situation.

Maidstone had other ideas. A change of personnel brought Shaun Woolford on for the injured Jason Smith and veteran Ben Massey on for Charlie Williams in the 2nd row. With strong ball carrying from the forwards, Massey and Ashley Gilligan making hard yards into the Gravesend defence, a penalty was conceded 15 metres out and directly in front of the Gravesend posts. With 15 minutes left,





a valuable 3 points were there for the taking but Skipper Morosan opted to kick to the corner.



The catch and drive failed to breach the Gravesend defence but after the ball was worked to the other side of the pitch and repeated forward lunges had failed to cross the line, it fell to inside centre Josh Smith to power over for a try, converted by Morosan,



Maidstone were now in the ascendancy and again worked their way into the Gravesend half where it was starting to look as though they could pull off a "Scotland" and were certainly making the home-supporters nervous, but a promising turn-over 15 metres out from the home team's posts was ruined when a penalty was conceded for side-entry and compounded when 10 yards for dissent were twice conceded, at a time when a losing bonus point at least appeared to be within grasp.



Overall, there was much to enjoy in this performance and a losing bonus point would have been well deserved. The line-out functioned well all afternoon and the back-row turned over a lot of Gravesend possession, whilst the three-quarters defended well and took some good chances. Special mentions for MotM Ashley Gilligan, for Ryan Murphy for performing so well at Loose-head, for Mikey Grice for coming back from uni to help out at full-back and to unused front-row substitute Harry Cole, without whom the game could not have been played.



**Maidstone:** Ryan Murphy; Tom Varker, Ashley Gilligan,;Charlie Williams; Tom Chandler; Will Lane; Dan Fisher; Sam Weston,;Lucian Morosan; Alex Clark; Vaki Antoniou; osh Smith; Scott De Zoeten; Jason Smith; Mike Grice.



**Replacements:** Shaun Woolford; Ben Massey; Harry Cole

