



Match Report



London & SE Division 2 (South East)

Heathfield & Waldron RFC 18 v Maidstone FC 23

Played at Heathfield, Saturday 29th September 2018

This was a hard fought game, which Maidstone managed to edge to provide much needed points on the road and get a further foothold in the table. Both players and Coaches have had to dig deep over recent weeks and this was just reward for their efforts.

Playing in an idyllic location under sunny blue skies, Maidstone started spritely using their ball carriers to good effect and within the first few minutes were awarded a penalty, which was duly converted by Caborne. Maidstone started to play with fluency and confidence and it was the ever-present Amos, who received the ball in open play to pass to winger Antoniou, to score a converted try under the posts on the 15 minute mark. HW were now starting to build some attacking phases of their own and a Maidstone yellow card offence allowed them the numerical advantage to stretch the defence which ultimately led to their first try in the right hand corner, which was successfully converted. With a number of exchanges and probing attacks from both sides, it was a penalty infringement by Maidstone, which was converted to level the scores at 10-10 on the half hour and a further adjudged penalty for an attempted interception allowed HW to finish the half with a 3 point advantage.

Maidstone started the second half full of intent and it took just 5 minutes for a break out from the Maidstone half and for a deft kick down the left flank to be gathered by Antoniou, to score wide-out for his second try of the afternoon. However, this seemed to rally HW and a quick ball from the line-out enabled them to execute a cross-field kick for an unconverted score in the corner and nudge ahead by 3 points. Maidstone kept their shape and started to make further in-roads into the HW half through some good re-cycled ball and strong forward carries to put HW under pressure. This culminated in a Maidstone penalty for side-entry at the ruck, which was duly converted to bring the scored back to level pegging on 18-18.

With both sides striving for victory, possession changed hands a number of times and gaps were beginning to appear. A bullocking individual effort by Newton, looked like being the decisive score only to see the ball knocked on in the process of grounding. However, with Maidstone constantly moving the point of attack and forwards and backs combining well, it took a strong run by Burden to breach the try-line further and bring the score to 18-23. The last 5 minutes saw Maidstone under increased pressure from HW with a number of penalties allowing them to advance up the field through their catch-and-drive game and had it not been for a superb chase down tackle by Newton on the HW 12, following an intercept, the outcome would have been very different. The last 5 minutes of the game were a good test for the Maidstone defence, which stood up well deciding to soak up the continual HW attacks rather than seek the bonus point vic-





tory.

This was a well-constructed win, which showed the gradual improvements that Maidstone are making each week. In particular, the line-out functioned extremely well as did the scrum, which put pressure on the HW forward pack throughout. Movement of the ball wide was effective, they cleared their lines well and the defence on the whole was much more solid. It was also good to see the resilience shown in the last 5 minutes of the game to repel the HW attacks and secure victory. Whilst, there is still much to work on as players return and combinations settle, this performance showed that all is definitely going in the right direction.

Lastly, a big thank you to our hosts at HW, who made us all feel extremely welcome and for a highly competitive game that could have gone either way. We look forward to the return game at the Mote.

Maidstone: Tom Varker; Ryan Murphy; Will Fox; Charlie Bentley; Tom Chandler; Jordan Amos; Matt Isles, Jack Bramwell; Ollie Newton; Jack Leach; Sean Woolford; Joe Burden; Vaki Antoniou; George Perry; Euan Caborn

Replacements: Richard Gray; Dane Smith; Ian Lee

