



Match Report



London Division 2 (South East)

Beckenham RFC 3 v Maidstone FC 39

Played at Balmoral Ave, Beckenham, Saturday 15th Nov, 2014



League leaders Maidstone travelled to Balmoral Avenue for what was the first encounter between these two sides for a number of seasons and with the hosts also occupying a position in the top half of the table and eyeing an immediate return to London 1(S) the match looked set to be the county town club's stiffest test of the season as they looked to maintain their 100% record.

With the delayed autumnal weather having now arrived and with the pitch being soft underfoot this looked like being the first of the season's encounters where a slower and more patient forward orientated approach could hold sway. In truth, Maidstone never really looked in any danger in this fixture, as their defence contained any threat the hosts posed, and most of the Beckenham territorial advantage in the first half was gifted them through either penalty infringements or handling errors by the visitors. The county town club always looked the more potent of the two sides, as they played with a sustained level of pace and penetration that the opposition couldn't match.

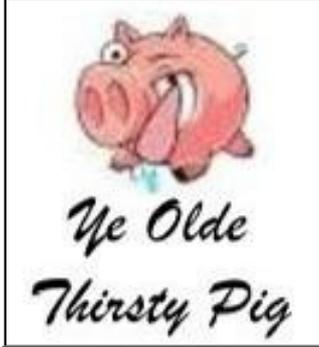


With last week's cup battle against Harrow having left its mark, the combination of injuries and unavailability meant Head Coach Paul Hathaway was forced to yet again reshuffle the pack. Josh Pankhurst returned to the hookers berth between skipper Ben Williams and Joel Byford, whilst Nick Bunyan retained a berth in the 2nd Row alongside Matt Iles who replaced brother James. The back row saw a reshuffle, with the returning Mike Werahiko taking the No8 slot, with Jack Lamb and Eddie Cranston on the flanks.. The only change in the backs saw Lucien Morosan in for Alex Eastwood, whilst the bench saw a debut for Sam Kendal alongside Ian Lee and Damien Grab.



Maidstone's trait of starting well this season was again evident, they started energetically as they had in recent matches and were quick out of the blocks. After the initial midfield skirmishes as both sides looked to gain the upper hand, and an early Nick Childs penalty attempt hitting the post, it was Maidstone who struck first with winger

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Douglas opening the scoring midway through the first quarter after quick ball from a lineout on the Beckenham 22m saw the ball quickly moved through the hands with Douglas on hand to finish the move wide out on the right for a 0-5 lead and the first of his hat-trick of scores. Despite this early score it wasn't until the closing stages of the half that the scoreboard was further troubled, as despite the visitors having the upper hand and Beckenham

guilty off kicking away far too much possession, penalty infringements and handling errors gifted Beckenham both possession and field position and the majority of play was conducted in the Maidstone half without the hosts ever really threatening. In the closing stages of the half a period of concerted Maidstone pressure saw kickable penalty opportunities spurned until the referee lost patience with the Beckenham defence and despatched flanker Robbie Redmond to the 'bin'. Skipper Ben Williams duly pointed at the posts and Childs obliged with the obligatory 3-points to give Maidstone a 0-8 half-time lead.



after the interval with the fluency to their game restored and Beckenham were under pressure from the first minute of the restart and whilst this didn't yield immediate results, within 5 minutes Maidstone had the scoreboard rolling again. This time a scrum in the middle of the pitch saw scrum-half Sam McPherson make the initial break with Childs cutting a good line to breach the home defence from almost 50m out and touchdown to the right of the posts, adding the extras himself Maidstone were 0-15 to the good.

Midway through the third quarter the visitors conceded their only points of the game, penalised for not releasing on their own 10m line, Beckenham's Jake Caddy kicked a good long range penalty to temporarily raise the home supporters spirits. The Maidstone response was not long in coming as the home side were penalised on their 22m and a quick tap by flanker Eddie Cranston saw the ball moved quickly through the hands, a couple of quick phases after good work by Williams, Byford and Lamb saw Matt Iles able to drive over from 5m for the score to extend the lead to 3-22.

Maidstone have scored at least 30 points and not failed to pick up the 4-try bonus point this season and their next two tries in this match showed just why. The first saw left winger Lucien Morosan breaking from the 22m the ball was then driven up by the forwards until good recycled ball was moved quickly down the back line, with Douglas on hand to receive the last pass and outpace the covering defence to score in the corner.

The next came after a period of where the match became really loose, as Beckenham, desperate to post a score ran the ball at almost every opportunity and it wasn't until the closing stages of the match that the game settled back into a pattern. At this point Beckenham were applying all the pressure as they hammered at the Maidstone defence for several minutes. Home spirits were however dampened, as Maidstone turned the ball



As was the case last week, whatever was discussed in the half-time huddle obviously worked; Maidstone came out of the blocks after the interval with the fluency to their game restored and Beckenham were under pressure from the first minute of the restart and whilst this didn't yield immediate results, within 5 minutes Maidstone had the scoreboard rolling again. This time a scrum in the middle of the pitch saw scrum-half Sam McPherson make the initial break with Childs cutting a good line to breach the home defence from almost 50m out and touchdown to the right of the posts, adding the extras himself Maidstone were 0-15 to the good.

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over on their own 5m line and turned defence into attack as they proceeded to break out of their 22m. With the Beckenham cover back pedalling, they were never in a position to stem the tide as the visiting forwards drove forward before the ball moved quickly down the backs with a grateful Douglas on hand to outstrip home defence from 70m out, and cross under the posts to round off his hat-trick. With Childs adding the extras for a 3-34 score line, and Maidstone fielding their replacements, one might of thought the scoring was complete for the afternoon but the visitors had one more score in the locker.



A poor Beckenham restart gave Maidstone a scrum in midfield and following an initial drive up field by full back Childs, the recycled ball reached debutant Sam Kendal, on in the centre, who was able to outpace the defence to cross in the left corner to round off the scoring for the match.



In summary, Maidstone never really looked in trouble in this fixture although they may look to the penalty count and their own handling errors, which effectively gave the opposition more of a say in this match than they should probably have had. That said, Beckenham defended resolutely but never really had an answer to the sustained tempo at which Maidstone played this match.

Maidstone: Williams (C), Pankhurst, Byford, Iles J, Bunyan, Lamb, We-rahiko, Cranston, McPherson Skelton, Morosan, Perigo, Van der Velde, Douglas, Childs. **Replacements:** (All Used) Lee, Grab, Kendal

