



Match Report



RFU Intermediate Cup

London & SE Regional Final

Maidstone FC 29 v Chiswick RFC 12

Played at The Mote, Maidstone, Saturday 14th Mar 2015



With a place in the National Semi-Finals against Coney Hill RFC at stake, this final saw two of Ldn & SE regions strongest sides pitted against one another as unbeaten Maidstone hosted Ldn 2(NW) promotion contenders Chiswick at The Mote. In what was an intriguing contest the home side proved to have the edge as they ran out 29-12 winners on the day.



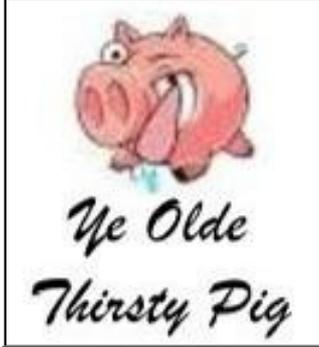
Whilst the scoreline may appear to make the match up look less than close, this encounter was hard fought, with the visitors strong in the set piece and more than prepared to run the ball in the back line; but it was the tempo at which Maidstone played large periods of the game that was real difference, with good support play maintaining momentum once any breach in the Chiswick defence had been created.

In the month since the regional semi-final Maidstone have continued their league campaign with a number of absentees, with the semi-final encounter at



Diss having taken its toll. That said, good work on the injury management front by the teams physios meant that Head Coach Paul Hathaway was able to select from practically full strength squad. Skipper Ben Williams and Josh Pankhurst returned in the forwards whilst the Iles brothers con-

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tinued their partnership in the second rank. The only other change in the pack saw Mike Werahiko return at No8 for the injured ben Brill, with Jack O'Connell retaining a spot on the bench in the absence of Matt Davies. The back line remained unchanged from the previous week's outing at Tunbridge Wells, with



Lenny Van de Velde have failed to recover in time for the final, with O'Connell joined on the bench by Jason Smith, Nick Bunyan and Luke Debnam.



In a match played on a bright spring day but with a stiff northerly breeze, the early encounters saw Maidstone in the ascendency but unable to capitalise as their set piece in both lineout and scrum stuttered and it was Chiswick who opened the scoring to take an earl midway through the first quarter in what was their first foray into the home side's territory. A lineout on the left touchline allowed them to set up quick recycled ball with No8 Sam Leslie-Miller the final recipient as the ball was moved through the hands to cross in the right corner, a difficult touchline conversion by Simon Hallett just drifted wide of the posts, but the visitors had

laid down their marker with an early 0-5 lead.



Maidstone's response came on the 15-minute mark as an initial break by Werahiko was followed up by Matt Iles who made deep inroads into the Chiswick half before being brought down on the

Chiswick 22m. Quick ball was moved right with Cranston on hand to fix the Chiswick defence and feed James Douglas who was able to outstrip the covering tacklers to cross in the right corner, and whilst the conversion drifted wide of the posts Maidstone had tied the game up at 5-5.



Maidstone were now applying the majority of the pressure and it was only resolute defence from the visitors that kept their line intact as they resisted drives by Werahiko, Byford, Cranston and skipper Williams. Early

in the second quarter Maidstone took the lead as turnover ball saw Ollie Newton make the initial incursion into the Chiswick 22m, with James Iles continuing the drive but stopped short of the line the ball was came to Williams who was able to wriggle out of the tackles just enough to reach out and place the ball on the line 10m to the right of the posts, with Ben Pitkin adding the extras the home side had a 12-5 lead.



On the half-hour mark Maidstone were then guilty of almost allowing Chiswick back into the match, although the visitors had a period of possession, Maidstone's defence had looked comfortable as they managed to keep the visitors at bay on their 22m. However, having



turned ball over, instead of looking to play some phases and retain possession themselves, a poor clearance kick gifted possession back to Chiswick which they were able to run back at the home defence. With Maidstone's defensive alignment momentarily out of shape Chiswick were able to exploit space down the right flank with flanker Jon Joyce the eventual recipient of the final pass and able to beat the last tackler to cross the

line and touchdown midway out on the right. Hallett added the extras to tie the game up at 12-12 as half-time approached.

Maidstone responded well and a Jonno Skelton attacking incursion into Chiswick territory had the home side back on the front foot, whilst the foray came to nought initially Maidstone were again camped on the visitors 22m. From a scrum in front of the Chiswick posts No8 Leslie-Miller looked to drive the ball upfield but was dispossessed and quick ball saw Maidstone counterattack from close range with Jamie Perigo on hand to beat the defence and touchdown midway out on the left with Pitkin converting for a 19-12 lead going into the interval.



With the benefit of the slope in the second half Chiswick held sway in the early encounters although never really putting the Maidstone line under any real pressure and also saw a Hallett penalty attempt just sliding past the posts. Maidstone weathered the early storm and as the mid-point in the half approached scored in the left corner to extend their lead. The score came initially from James Iles able to recover loose ball on the home 22m, good inter-

play between forwards and backs saw a quick counter attack with Williams the final recipient and able to beat two defenders close to the touchline from 22m out to score in the left corner. Whilst the conversion attempt was unsuccessful the home side now had a more comfortable 24-12 cushion.

Chiswick continued to press, with Maidstone's defence holding firm and they were quick to counterattack with turnover ball, a breakout by Newton was halted just outside the Chiswick 22m and an attacking

move that saw Perigo with players in support ended just short of the tryline, when he couldn't get the pass away in time.

Chiswick by this time were playing catch up rugby and their game at times became quite loose as they looked to take quick tap penalties and keep the ball moving, although Maidstone were happy to just hold them at bay in midfield and capitalise on turnover ball.

The home side killed the game off with five minutes remaining

after a Newton incursion into the Chiswick 22m saw him offload to the supporting James Douglas who was able to cross in the left corner to bring the score to 29-12 and effectively out of reach of the visitors.



To their credit Chiswick continued to attack as they looked for a consolation score and thought they were over in the right corner in added time, only for the final pass to have been adjudged forward by the officials.

In summary, this was a solid Maidstone performance; and whilst their set piece stuttered initially, after the opening five minutes it broadly functioned well. Their support play was

good with only the occasional circumstance where players were isolated. As always there will be aspects to work on, but in a performance in which everyone contributed coach Hathaway and his team will on balance be relatively pleased with the display.

Maidstone: Williams(C), McKenzie, Byford, Iles J, Iles M, Pankhurst, Cranston, Werahiko, Pitkin, Skelton, Morosan, Perigo, Newton, Eastwood, Douglas. **Replacements:** (All used) O'Connell, Bunyan, Debnam, Smith.

