



## Match Report



London Division 2 (South East)

Maidstone RFC 50 v Crowborough RFC 17

Played at The Mote, Maidstone, Saturday 11th April, 2015



The home side went into this contest knowing just two points would secure the league title and by half-time they had at least got the job half done, with a 12-point advantage and a bonus point in the bag. To look at the scoreline would give the impression that this was a comprehensive victory for the county town club, and in large part it was, but there were signs of a hangover from last week's cup euphoria as they played their rugby in fits and starts, and lapses in concentration gifted the opposition two scoring opportunities which they gratefully accepted. In the end the shine was taken off the side's achievement with a dismissal going into injury-time at the end of the match.

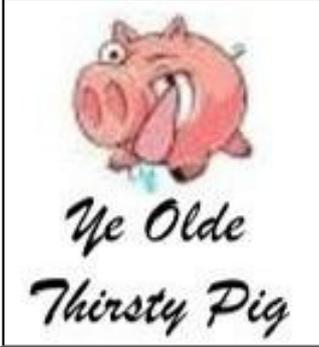


Crowborough are a solid outfit whose league position possibly does not reflect their capability and with a solid set of forwards and a young back division with a propensity to run the ball they have posed a range of threats to their opposition this season.

Head Coach Paul Hathaway made only a couple of changes from the previous week, with Nick Bunyan partnering James Iles in the 2nd Row and Matt Iles dropping to the No8 berth for the unavailable Ben Brill. In the front row, Luke Debnam started with skipper Ben Williams on the bench. The back division was unchanged and accompanying Williams on the bench was Matt Davies and Lucien Morosan.



The county town club made a bright start with breaks by Jamie Perigo and Jason Smith just falling short and pressure in the Crowborough 22m as they attempted a quick line-out saw Eddie Cranston turn the ball over. Despite being hauled down short of the line Bunyan was on hand to pick up and drive over 15m in from the left touchline to open the scoring on the 5 minute mark, and with Ben Pitkin adding the extras Maidstone had an early 7-point advantage.



This was extended on the quarter hour as Jonno Skelton was able to cross after to lovely offloads by Perigo and Olly Newton released Jason Smith, who was hauled down just short of then line with Skelton on hand to burrow over from close range. Pitkin hit the post with the conversion but Maidstone were 12 points to the good and looked to be getting into their stride.



A failure to effectively deal with the restart gave Crowborough possession as they then put together some phases of play, and whilst the Crowborough looked to be effectively marshalled on the home 22m a lovely dummy by flyhalf Ali Main wrong footed the defence as he breached the defence to cross midway out to the right of the posts, with the conversion by Chris Yates adding the extras the Sussex club were very much back in the match.



Maidstone responded with an Alex Eastwood try in the right corner after good work by Lenny Van der Velde and Joel Byford created the space and he was able to drive through Sansbury's covering tackle to touch down to take the score out to 17-7. as the half-hour point was reached Maidstone looked to be playing some flowing rugby with real confidence and the handling and support play was at times out of the top draw. This culminated in the home side playing a couple of quick penalties to maintain some tempo in the game with Perigo able to slip a couple of tackles and touch down just to the left of the posts, and with Pitkin adding the extras for a 24-7 scoreline, Maidstone had secured one of the points they needed for the title.

The home side then replicated their earlier mistake as their concentration lapsed and failed to fully deal with the restart again providing possession to Crowborough who built a couple of phases before the ball was moved right with Adam King able to beat the cover and touchdown wide on the left, and whilst Yates was unable to add the extras, the Sussex club had demonstrated how dangerous they could be in possession as the narrowed the deficit to 24-12



Maidstone looked like being under pressure in the closing minutes of the half, but a scrum against the head on their own 5m line saw them break out of defence with the attack only breaking down just short of the Crowborough line in what was the last meaningful play of the half

As was the case in the first half Maidstone started the second period the brighter of the sides and had secured the points in a convincing third quarter of the match as they ran in four tries and kept Crowborough penned in their own 22m unable to effectively clear their lines. A lineout on the 5 minute mark saw good ball fed out to the backs with Perigo skipping through the defence to dot the ball down under the posts for his second score and with a simple conversion for Pitkin with his last act in the match providing a 31-12 lead the



home side looked to be well on their way. Maidstone made changes as they rotated their bench with skipper Williams on for Debnam, Morosan for Pitkin, and Davies replacing Bunyan with Matt Iles moving into the second row and Cranston dropping to No8.

From the restart Maidstone were again back in Crowborough territory and a scrum under the posts saw the ball moved left with winger Olly Newton the final recipient to cross practically unopposed and touchdown close to the posts, with Jason Smith, who was to collect the man of the

Match award for his all round performance ,picking up the kicking duties to add the extras and stretch the lead to 38-12 the match now looked to be secure. Both Skelton and Morosan went close before Van der Velde was stopped short of the line and Davies was able to pick up the recycled ball and dive over midway out on the right to take the score to 43-12.



The home side concluded their scoring after a 5m scrum in front of the Crowborough posts saw scrum half Morosan able to identify a gap and scurry over from close range to score just to the left of the posts with Smith adding the extras to bring up the half-century.

With the match won the home side then appeared to take their foot of the gas and were guilty of allowing Crowborough back into the game as they looked to get something out of the match in terms of a try bonus point. An attack down the right flank with about fifteen minutes remaining saw winger Sebastian Goodhew cross in the corner for their third try and the real opportunity of getting something from the match. With Crowborough now really looking to move the ball at every opportunity Maidstone closed out the match with thirteen men as Perigo received a yellow card for a high tackle with five minutes remaining and this was compounded the loss of Morosan with a red card as the match went into stoppage time.

In summary whilst the 50-17 scoreline reflects a comprehensive win this was a contest that showed some of the best of Maidstone's play, particularly in the opening periods of each half, but the side were guilty of lapses in concentration which whilst they had enough to counter against this opposition, they will need to address going forward. The match brought up some significant objectives in the teams ambitions with Perigo's second try bringing up the 150th score in competitive matches this season and Newton's subsequent try taking the side past the 1000 points mark for the season.

<b>MAIDSTONE F.C.</b>	
	<b>PANKHURST CONTRACTING</b>
HOME	50 AWAY 17

**Maidstone:** Byford, McKenzie, Debnam, Iles J, Bunyan, Cranston, Iles M, Pankhurst, Pitkin, Skelton, Eastwood, Perigo, Van der Velde, Newton, Smith. **Replacements:** (All Used) Williams ©, Morosan, Davies

