



Match Report



RFU Intermediate Cup, 3rd Round

Maidstone FC 14 v Medway RFC 0

Played at The Mote, Maidstone, Saturday 3rd Jan, 2015



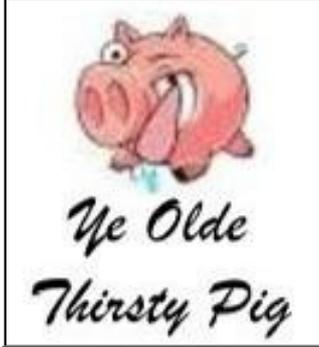
Maidstone opened their 2015 account with a RFU Intermediate Cup fixture in what was the first of two fixtures against local rivals Medway that would bookend the month. With this competition run on a regional basis the quarter final stages featured a number of the leading teams across the four London 2 divisions, but of the four ties, this looked by far the pick of the matches.

In a match played in heavy conditions following significant overnight rain, this encounter was always going to be battle between the two opposing packs of forwards, and whilst Medway probably just had the edge in the set piece, it was Maidstone's ability to gain momentum against a strong Medway defence that gave them the overall advantage. The 14-0 score line does perhaps not reflect the dominance Maidstone had in this game, with the visitors only really posing any offensive threat in the opening and closing ten minutes of the match. The home side always looked the more threatening attacking force, and had they demonstrated greater accuracy with their kicking, both from hand and place kicks, they could have put the match beyond Medway's reach well before they scored their second try.



The somewhat odd scheduling of this cup match meant that Head Coach Paul Hathaway had to make some enforced changes, apart from the unavailability of Luke Debnam and Ben Brill who are still to return after long term injuries, both Ollie Newton and Lucien Morosan were still away on seasonal holidays. However, the side still boasted a strong line up with a largely unchanged pack from the last league fixture with Jack Lamb restored to the flank and Neil Graves starting from the bench. In the backs, Nick Childs retained the scrumhalf berth, with Alex Clark coming in on the left wing for his second 1st XV appearance alongside James Douglas and Alex Eastwood as the other outside backs. The bench consisted of Will Fox, Nick Bunyan, Euan Caborn and





the versatile Neil Graves.

The home side made a sluggish start as Medway, playing with the elements in their favour, kicked off and managed to regain possession of the ball. An early penalty infringement by Maidstone gave Medway an opportunity to set the scoreboard rolling inside the first minute, but the long range attempt by Dan Harvey drifted to the left of the posts. However, the visitors held the early momentum and whilst Maidstone's defence held firm, it wasn't until midway through the first quarter that they began to create any continuity in their play as they started to build pressure in the Medway 22m and it was their own errors that allowed the visitors to clear their lines. The home side were now beginning to apply sustained pressure on the visiting defence and the fifteen minute



mark saw them make several driving attempts at the Medway line following a line-out on the 22m and although the visiting defence held firm the recycled ball saw centre Jamie Perigo cut a good angle at pace to cross 5m to the left of the posts with Childs adding the extras for a 7-0 lead.

The middle section of the first half saw Maidstone applying more and more pressure on a resilient and solid Medway defence, with Jonno Skelton held up over the line and a Childs penalty attempt just drifting wide of the posts.

Whilst the opening ten minutes had seen Maidstone concede a flurry of early penalties, as the half progressed and with Medway under increasing pressure it was they that were now being penalised by referee Evans. He eventually lost patience just past the half-hour mark and the visiting fly half Harvey was yellow carded as a result of persistent Medway infringements; and it was strange that the referee did not reach for his card again as the visitors almost immediately conceded two further penalties in quick succession when under pressure on their own line. The home side continued to apply pressure for the remainder of the half, with a simple penalty in front of the posts pushed wide by Childs, and despite the man advantage Medway's defence held firm with the score at the interval remaining just 7-0 to the hosts.

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Maidstone's performances have tended to feature a strong second half and following the interval they continued to apply all the pressure, even with losing Byford to the 'sin bin' for 10 minutes for some injudicious footwork, they remained camped in the Medway 22m. Two eminently kickable Maidstone penalty attempts during Byford's absence went wide, and whilst the home side remained dominant force with only a 7-point advantage the match was far from won against a Medway outfit that are always dangerous on the break.

The end of the third quarter saw Maidstone make some changes with Bunyan on in the 2nd row for matt Iles and Graves replacing Lamb on the back row.



As the game went into the final quarter a penalty attempt by Douglas just slipped past the posts. Maidstone were still very much the side operating on the front foot and with just over ten minutes remaining they managed to manufacture the

score that provided the breathing space they needed. A clearance kick by Medway was fielded in midfield by winger Eastwood who made the initial break supported by Skelton and Mike Werahiko, skipper Ben Williams was on hand to pick up from the base of the ruck just inside the Medway 22m and a strong run saw him break through three tackles to reach out for the score 5m to the left of the posts; with Childs back on target the home side now had a 14-point cushion.

It wasn't until the closing minutes of the match that Medway applied any real pressure on the Maidstone line, with a penalty providing the opportunity to gain territory they put themselves in the Maidstone 22m for the first time in the second half. Spurning a couple of very kickable penalties, Medway looked for the lineout options close to the Maidstone line and with Childs yellow carded for some back-chat to referee Evans, the final minutes saw the home side having to work hard to keep the visiting attack at bay.



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In summary, this was an error strewn match in heavy conditions where Maidstone always posed the greater attacking threat and should have had the match secured well before their second try. Whilst the conditions underfoot were not ideal for place kicking, the home side will in particular need to look at the opportunities to gain territory and apply pressure that were lost through failed attempts to make touch when kicking from hand.

Maidstone: Williams(C), Pankhurst, Byford, Iles J, Iles M, Werahiko, Cranston, Lamb, Childs, Skelton, Clark, Perigo, Van de Velde, Eastwood, Douglas. **Replacements:** Bunyan (used), Caborn, Fox, Graves (used).

