



Match Report



London Division 2 (South East)

Maidstone FC 38 v Medway RFC 22

Played at The Mote, Maidstone, Saturday 18th Oct, 2014



It seems remarkable that with the competitive season now into its seventh week, that this is the county town club's first home fixture; and it was to be no easy fixture as the home side took on a Medway outfit against whom they contrived to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory this time last year; and whilst last week's outing at Thanet had shaken of some of the rustiness created by a two week layoff, it was expected that it would require all of Maidstone's grit and determination against Medway side that is always expected to be competitive.



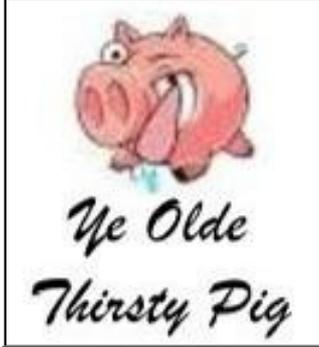
The team was largely unchanged from the win at Thanet, although injury to Josh McKenzie saw Josh Pankhurst restored to the hooker berth, the late withdrawal of James Iles saw a 2nd Row combination of Alex Hadi and Matt Iles. Mike Werahiko came into the starting line up, making his 1st XV debut on the blindside flank. Paul Hathaway made one other change with Alex Eastwood starting on the wing, whilst Jonno Skelton remained at fly-half for the injured Brad Ford; on the bench Ben Pitkin returned to the matchday squad alongside Ian Lee and Will Fox.

Despite some rain during the week, the unseasonal warm & breezy weather meant that the playing surface was in excellent condition and suited running rugby for a team adventurous enough to trust their footing.

Maidstone had started last week's fixture at Thanet at full pace and Medway were confronted with the same hard running game from the outset. With Dan Harvey kicking off for Medway, Maidstone received the ball and immediately looked to move the ball wide and after a series of driving runs into the heart of the visitors defence the ball was quickly recycled with fullback Nick Childs on hand to dive over for the first try without Medway having yet touched the ball. Skelton added the ex-



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tras to give Maidstone and early 7-0 lead.

The home side continued to dominate proceedings and they extended their lead on the ten minute mark when, following a midfield scrum they made the break down the left side of the field through Jamie Perigo who fed his fellow centre Lenny Van de Velde to cross wide on the left, whilst the conversion was missed Maidstone now had a useful early 12-0 lead.



Going into the second quarter Maidstone looked comfortable, dangerous with the ball in hand and applying an oppressive defence whenever Medway were in possession, it was therefore somewhat against the run of play that Medway posted the next score. A chip to the corner by fly half Dan Harvey looked to be covered by Maidstone wing Alex Eastwood, when an unkind bounce deceived him with Medway's wing Leo Luia'ana on had to pounce on the loose ball for a score to reduce the deficit to 12-5



Despite this it was Maidstone that maintained the upper hand and were applying the pressure and on the half-hour after a sustained period of attack close to the Medway line, Ben Brill picked up from the base of an attacking scrum and was able to out-muscle the defence to reach for the tryline and extend the home sides lead.

Maidstone continued to look threatening from almost anywhere on the pitch, although it was Medway that looked like closing out the half in the ascendency, but a turnover close to home tryline by skipper Ben Williams saw a break out of defence down the left flank. Whilst the attack was halted by the covering Medway defence, the ball was quickly recycled and moved through the hands to the right. With Childs joining the line to create the overlap he fed wing Eastwood who was able to outpace the Medway defence to touch-down under the posts for what was the outstanding try of the game and secure the bonus point. With Childs kicking the extras to give Maidstone a 24-5 lead the referee blew for the interval.



Barely a minute into the second half Medway were first on the scoreboard with a Dan Harvey penalty. Maidstone's response was almost immediate as they recovered the ball from the restart, mounting an attack deep into the right side of the Medway 22m with Alex Hadi then moving the ball out to the left, a couple of further drives by the Maidstone pack then saw hooker Josh Pankhurst able to pick up and burrow over for the score, with Childs adding the extras to extend the home side lead to 31-8.

The Medway cause wasn't helped when Harvey received a yellow card for something said to the referee. Maidstone exploited the numerical advantage, when from a midfield scrum, No8 Brill made a searing break down the right flank, and whilst the Medway defence eventually halted his advance, Mike Werahiko was on hand to take the inside pass and touch down just to the right of the posts, with Childs again adding the extra points to take the score to 38-8.



Despite being a man down, Medway continued to look attack, but it was a penalty infringement in midfield by the home side that gave them the opportunity to gain territory to mount an attack; and after a long period of concerted pressure the Medway centre Fred Tila managed to cross close to the posts. With Reuben Meres standing in as the kicker to add the extra points the deficit was reduced to 38-15 as Harvey re-joined the match.

The middle of the final quarter saw both sides making changes, with Medway's Humphrey replaced by Graves due to injury, and Maidstone's Pitkin, Fox and Lee on for McPherson, Byford and Iles respectively. The home side continued to look dangerous with the ball in hand, even from their own 22m, and it was from one such break that they were called back for what was a debateable forward pass. The subsequent scrum gave the visitors an attacking platform in Maidstone territory, and whilst the match was out of reach, they were very conscious of looking to pick up either one or two bonus points. The scrum saw Medway look to move the ball and following the initial attack down Maidstone's right flank, and with the ball then quickly swung to the opposite side, replacement Graves able to score wide out.

The final minutes saw Medway looking to attack, searching for the fourth try, but with Maidstone's defence able to contain any threat to run out convincing 38-22 winners

In summary, the score line does perhaps not reflect the dominance Maidstone had in this game, and whilst some of the scores conceded came from situations presented to the opposition, the home side looked solid in defence and sharp in attack, posing a threat from almost anywhere on the pitch.

Maidstone: Williams (C), Pankhurst, Byford, Hadi, Iles M, Werahiko, Cranston, Brill, McPherson Skelton, Morosan, Perigo, Van de Velde, Eastwood, Childs. **Replacements:** (all used) Pitkin, Fox, Lee

