



## Match Report



London Division 2 (South East)

Maidstone FC 34 v Sevenoaks RFC 14

Played at The Mote, Maidstone, Saturday 7th February, 2015



Encounters between these two sides have been close fought battles over the past two seasons, with only a total of six points separating the sides in past three matches, and with the visitors on a six match winning run in their challenge for promotion; the question on the Maidstone supporters minds was whether last week's below par performance was a mere stumble, or the portent of a downturn in form at a critical point in the season.



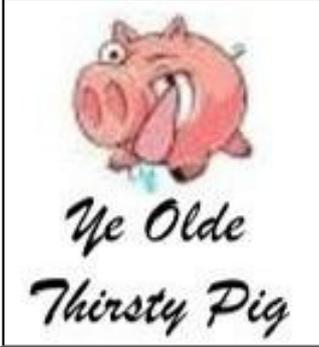
In dry bright conditions, although somewhat greasy underfoot, the question was emphatically answered; as despite the 7-7 half-time scoreline the home side had been the dominant force for the majority of the first half, and a salvo of tries early in the second period as the hosts injected more pace into the game, effectively ended the Sevenoaks challenge with Maidstone running out convincing 34-14 winners.

The only change in the Maidstone line up from the outing at Medway was with Alex Eastwood starting on the wing and the versatile Lucian Morosan covering the wing and scrum-half berths from the bench alongside Luke Debnam and Nick Bunyan.



Large tracts of the first half were played out in midfield with Maidstone for the most part on the front foot and Sevenoaks efforts largely focussed on exiting their own half and playing on the counter, rather than posing a real attacking threat. Despite Oaks having the much heavier pack the home side's set piece at both scrum and lineout

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looked solid. The only real attacking opportunity of the opening quarter came after ten minutes, as Maidstone stole lineout ball on the Oaks 22m and looked to move the ball wide with centre Lenny Van de Velde releasing left wing Olly Newton who was tackled just short of the line. Whilst Maidstone largely continued to operate on the front foot, errors and a hard working Sevenoaks defence prevented them generating sufficient continuity in their play.



It wasn't until early in the second quarter that the deadlock was broken, from an untidy scrum on halfway Josh Pankhurst made the initial break and although the combination of the last defender and a loss of footing brought his run to an end just inside the Oaks 22m, Jonno Skelton was in support to feed Eddie Cranston to cross fifteen meters in from the right touchline, and with Nick Childs adding the extras after an earlier missed long range penalty attempt, the home side were 7-points to the good.

The score appeared to spark Sevenoaks into life and for the remainder of the half their game showed more purpose. This combined with some rash decisions by the home side handed them the advantage and in the closing minutes of the half the pressure told with 2<sup>nd</sup> Row Kelly Anderson exploiting the narrow side to cross wide on the left, and an excellent touchline conversion by the Sevenoaks fly-half Sam Bright levelled the scores with the last play of the half.



Whilst Maidstone had always looked threatening in the first period, they had not always generated the quick ball they were looking for, whatever was said in the inter-

val this looked to have been rectified in short order, as from the restart the home side injected real pace into the game and posted two tries in quick succession to stamp their authority on the match with Sevenoaks having barely touched the ball. The first came from a poor Sevenoaks clearance that saw the back three change the point of attack and winger Newton making big inroads into the Oaks defence, with Skelton in support the ball came to skipper Ben Williams who was able to hold off the tacklers to touchdown 5m to the left of the post with Childs adding the extras.



Straight from the restart the Maidstone forwards led by Pankhurst drove deep into the heart of the Sevenoaks defence and with

quick recycled ball Van de Velde led the attack down the right flank; with James Douglas and Eastwood combining to create the overlap and the ball coming back to Van de Velde to cross wide on the right and extend the lead to 19-7 with barely three minutes of the second half played.



The home side were now very much in the ascendancy, on the 50<sup>th</sup> minute a penalty lineout in the Sevenoaks 22m created the next scoring opportunity, whilst the driving maul was disrupted, quick recycled ball saw centre Jamie Perigo running on at pace to cross for the bonus point score and Maidstone's 100<sup>th</sup> try in competitive outings this season.

Maidstone now started to ring the changes, with Bunyan on for Matt Davies the back row reshuffled with Ben Brill now at No8 and Man of the Match Mike Werahiko moving the blindside flank. The end of the third quarter saw Maidstone cross the line again as from some good defensive work in midfield, a bullock-ing run down the right by prop Joel Byford took play into the Sevenoaks 22m. A penalty at the breakdown saw a quick tap and the ball moved quickly across the park with Newton able to cross in the left corner.



The early stages of the final quarter saw the game become quite loose and whilst Maidstone continued to look to put pace on the game, Oaks were effectively living off scraps at this point, and playing catch up rugby looking to counter attack at every opportunity. It was Maidstone who continued to keep the

scoreboard ticking over as Perigo broke down the left with Newton and fullback Douglas creating the overlap to cross in the corner to take the lead to 34-7. With Debnam now on for skipper Williams in the front row and Morosan replacing Perigo and the backline reshuffled with Childs to fly-half and Skelton moving to inside centre Maidstone continued to play some excellent rugby; but as had been the case in the first half it was Sevenoaks who were to have the final say. After a long period of concerted pressure on the Maidstone line, the experienced back rower Will Thorpe finally breached the defence midway out on the right, Bright added the extras with what was the last act of the match with the home side running out worthy 34-14 winners.



**Maidstone:** Williams (C), Pankhurst, Byford, Iles, Brill, Davies, Cranston, Werahiko, Childs Skelton, Newton, Perigo, Van de Velde, Eastwood, Douglas. **Replacements:** Bunyan, Debnam, Morosan (All Used)

