



Match Report



London Division 2 (South East)

Thanet Wanderers RFC 10 v Maidstone FC 36

Played at St Peters, Broadstairs, Saturday 11th Oct, 2014



Maidstone found themselves 'on the road' yet again as they travelled to East Kent for what was only their fourth competitive outing this season against a Thanet side that were convincing winners of London 3(SE) last season and had made a competent start to this campaign.

With no competitive fixtures in the last two weeks, Maidstone's side featured a number of changes from their last encounter at Ashford. In the pack Josh McKenzie occupied the hooker berth with Josh Pankhurst moving to the flank and the Iles brothers continuing their partnership in the second row. The back division saw Paul Hathaway shuffle his options, with Sam McPherson starting at nine and Jonno Skelton in the fly-half berth for the injured Brad Ford. In the centres,



Lenny Van de Velde made his first start alongside Jamie Perigo, with Nick Childs also making his 1st XV debut at fullback and James Douglas moving to the wing. The bench saw Will Fox making his first appearance for the 1st XV following a late call up from the Mustangs, alongside Alex Eastwood and Alex Hadi,

Heavy rain both the previous day and overnight could have dashed any hopes of a spectacle of running rugby, but with the pitch at St Peters well drained and firm underfoot this encounter didn't end up the forward battle that one might have expected, with both sides looking to run the ball whenever the opportunity arose.

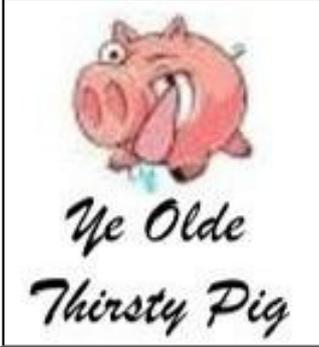
Maidstone started much the brighter of the sides and were on the scoreboard within the first five minutes as pressure on the receiving Thanet side at the kick-off rewarded the visitors with a penalty just outside the home 22m, the resultant lineout saw Maidstone



look to drive the ball forward in midfield through the centres, and although the ball was spilled backwards, Skipper Ben Williams was on hand to field the ball and touchdown to the left of the posts, giving Maidstone an early 5-point advantage.

Through their own making, Maidstone looked to be under pressure from the restart and a penalty for not releasing saw Thanet look for

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the three points with an optimistic goal attempt from 40m out, the kick drifted wide of the posts and was fielded by Eddie Cranston who initiated the counter attack, with Jamie Perogo and Lucien Morosan joining the attack. The final pass was taken by Jonno Skelton, who from 50m out still had work to do, but was able to outpace the covering Thanet defence down the touchline and then touchdown under the posts, giving James Douglas a simple conversion and the visitors a 12-point advantage with only seven minutes on the clock.



Five minutes later and Maidstone were on the scoreboard again as from a lineout the ball was fed to midfield with both Perigo and Josh Pankhurst making good ground before the recycled ball found Cranston, who was able to outmuscle the Thanet defence for the score.



With the match very much going Maidstone's way, a flurry of further tries could have been expected as the home side struggled to cope with Maidstone's high tempo offloading game, but to their credit Thanet dug in and tightened up their defence. Whilst Maidstone very much had

the ascendancy with the overwhelming majority of the play in Thanet territory, they were just not able to execute the final pass or phase to add to the early scores and secure an bonus point.

The closing stages of the first half saw Perigo cooling his heels for 10 minutes after a scuffle following a ruck and in addition to being one man down they also lost hooker Josh Mckenzie to injury and were forced to rearrange their front row just before the half-time interval

As Maidstone had started the match the brighter, so it was Thanet that took the early initiative in the second period, although despite some adventurous back play by the home side, it was Maidstone that were inviting the pressure when poor kicking from hand or decision making in midfield gifted the home side possession.



A poor clearance kick fielded by the visitors early in the half demonstrated the attacking capability of the Thanet side, as the fullback fielded the kick to feed winger Phil Kemp who demonstrated his pace as he looked to outpace the covering defence, and it was only a foot in touch that prevented the score. Ten minutes in and a Pete Macauley chip through again almost beached the visiting defence as Thanet continued to apply pressure on the Maidstone line. As the third quarter was drawing to a close and with Thanet now hammering at the Maidstone line across the full width of the pitch, the defence was



eventually breached wide on the left, with flanker Alan Easter getting the touchdown to reduce the deficit. With the referee having been playing advantage the visitors were again reduced to 14 as Cranston was yellow carded for slowing the ball down at the ruck.

The temporary loss of Cranston appeared to galvanise Maidstone and a good breakout from their 22m initiated by Josh Pankhurst and supported

by Man of the Match Joel Byford and Perigo deserved a score but the final pass to Van de Velde was adjudged to be forward by the referee, Maidstone had appeared to have turned the tide going into the final quarter and parody of numbers was restored with Thanet's Macauley sent to the sin bin for a cynical infringement as Maidstone applied pressure on the home tryline.



With Maidstone back in the ascendency, midway through the final quarter a good break in midfield by skipper Williams saw the ball fed wide to the left, and good interplay between Perigo, Morosan and Nick Childs saw Childs touchdown 15m in from the left touchline to both snuff out any hope of a Thanet comeback and secure the bonus point at 5-22.

Maidstone were almost on the scoreboard again with 7 minutes remaining, with Childs making the break, but an intercepted pas almost saw the Thanet's Dan Shepperson break out of defence, only to be bundled into touch on the 22m. The resulting lineout saw quick ball off the top to scrum half McPherson, who was quick to see the gap in the Thanet defence to scamper over untouched from 22m out, with Childs adding the extras to take the score to 5-29.

As the match looked to be drawing to a close, a Maidstone attack from midfield saw the ball fumbled and was kicked on by winger Kieran Thompson, who won the subsequent foot race against the wrong-footed Maidstone defence to score in the right corner. With the match drawing to a finish and Maidstone still applying pressure on the Thanet line there was still one more scoring opportunity. A poor clearance kick out of defence saw skipper Williams field the ball and break through the home defence from inside the 22m to cross just to the right of the posts, Childs added the conversion to bring the scoring to a conclusion, with Maidstone running out convincing, if not necessarily comfortable 5-36 winners.

In summary, with not having a competitive fixture for two weeks, some elements of match sharpness were absent, in particular they will need to sharpen up on their kicking from hand and some elements of their decision making, from both an attacking and defensive perspective.

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

