

Vets Match Report

12/10/2019

Gravesend Moles vs Maidstone Vets

HT 12 - 0

FT 19 - 0

Match report NOT by Matt E (again)

It is said to lose one player on the morning of the match is unfortunate and to lose two is just careless. Not sure what the expression is for losing four but rest assured I can vouch that it is full of colourful expletives.

Thankfully last year's vet player of the season, Ben Court, became available and whilst he has been putting in stellar performances for the first team asking him to play prop, hooker, flanker and 8 would surely be beyond his superhuman capabilities.

Luckily the game was against the Moles, they offered players including any number of front row guys required to get the game on. A great sporting gesture, rugby as it should be.

So armed with a new prop (a young 2nd team player, up against his dad in the scrum) Maidstone took to the famous Gravesend bowl in drizzling rain, ideal rugby conditions!

The remaining 14 vets plugged holes, some lucky enough to be in their favourite position , some playing in unfamiliar rolls learning on the hoof but all stepping up to the mark.

When asked if he could play hooker Nick East remarked that I should trawl back to a match report in 2008 , where , apparently, it is noted he had a good game ! Good enough for me, but if anyone out there can vouch for SC's hooking prowess on that occasion feel free to comment.

Gravesend won the toss and elected to play up the hill first half, apparently there is a minute difference in gradients on the bowl ! Just not visible to the naked eye, so Gravesend using local knowledge to maximise their advantage!

Due in no small part to the weather and terrain the game unsurprisingly centred around the flatter part of the pitch with Maidstone dominating the early exchanges but failing to convert this early domination.

With Maidstone pressing Gravesend intercepted a pass running through 3/4 of the pitch to score under the posts.

Game restarts with Maidstone once again on the front foot, with scrum half Mike Gillies coping well in the worsening conditions and Anthony Haigh, playing on the flank for the first time, enjoying plenty of action.

Stand in prop Tom Clarke playing through the pain barrier has a good carry seeing Maidstone once again on the opposition 22 but unable to break through. Newly returned to rugby winger Rob O'Hanlon (Sir to you Ollie) tries an audacious 'chip and chase' almost catching out the defensive cover.

With time ticking on & in almost a carbon copy of the first try, Gravesend break out with an interception as Maidstone were pressing and once again touch down.

Maidstone went straight back down the other end and with the try line looming only a deliberate knock on stopped Maidstone from registering a score. The official apologised at half time for not punishing the Moles for the infringement.

Thus ended the first half. Moles having a slightly undeserved 12-0 lead.

The Moles ringing the changes at half time from their squad of plenty sees the second half follows the same pattern as the first.

However the fresher Moles front row begin to dominate the scrum, with 8th man Ben Court doing well to fish the ball out on several occasions. Nick East also doing well to hook the ball (on one occasion 4 times in a retreating pack) as well as nursing the now exhausted and injured prop Tom.

On one such exchange our stand-in hooker fed up with hooking the same ball gave one last full blooded kick only to see it blast back hit the startled Moles flanker and end up back with our number 8.

It took a while for SC to stop laughing, and who knows in ten years when asked again about his hooking skills, he can point to this match report in 2019.

Now it was Maidstone fighting a rear guard action with all hands to the pump as Gravesend tried time and again to cross the try line only to be repelled by fair means and occasionally foul.

With the penalty count mounting along with the Moles fresher legs their forwards finally broke though for the only score of the second half.

Stand in flanker Anthony succumbing to injury having had a sterling game was replaced by 'Mole' Garrick.

The last ten minutes or so saw Maidstone once again camped on the opposition 22 scrapping for every inch only to be thwarted by a combination of slope, slippery ball and stubborn defence.

Final score 19-0, Moles captain commenting that the score just did not reflect how tight the game was.

Match award.

Man of the Match :

Nick East. Mighty around the pitch, awesome in the scrum, balletic in the line out and if that wasn't enough managed to nurse prop Tom from start to finish, a job way above and beyond

Many thanks to the brave 14, our hosts who provided us with quality replacements, a bottle of fine port and for putting on a great feast. One of the highlights of playing at this club.

Finally, special thanks to Ollie Court for ingeniously removing an unpleasant mess from the pitch. I'm sure Sir will have taken note.

Team;

- 01 Tom Clarke
 - 02 Nick East
 - 03 Mole Ben
 - 04 Karim Neseyif (Captain)
 - 05 Nigel Maddaford
 - 06 Anthony Haigh injured 2nd half replaced by Mole Garrick
 - 07 Gary Griffiths
 - 08 Ben Court
 - 09 Mike Gillies
 - 10 Mick Walker
 - 11 Paul Hodges
 - 12 Adrian Clark
 - 13 Danny Mcleish
 - 14 Rob O'Hanlon
 - 15 Stuart Bates
- 16 Ollie Court - Water boy / pitch maintenance.