

Old Gravesendians vs Maidstone 25/11/18

HT 6 - 14

FT 21 - 33

Tries

Chris Leggat (con DC)
Marin Maytum (con DC)
Stuart Bates (con DC)
Simon Seal (con DC)
Stuart Bates

Squad

01 Martin Maytum
02 Bob Purfit 1st half / Mark Ingram 2nd half
03 Richard Gray 1st half / Pete Grey 2nd half
04 Nigel Maddaford replaced 2nd half Tom Clarke
05 Tom Clarke 1st half / Richard Ewence 2nd half
06 Colin Frost
07 Nick East injured replaced 2nd half Bob Purfit
08 Ian Lee injured half time replaced by Tom Clarke, recovered returned 2nd half
09 Mick Walker (Captain) injured 1st half replaced by Shaun Charlton
10 Dave Charlton (Captain)
11 David Ruaux replaced 2nd half by Andrew Bell
12 Gary Whitehead injured 2nd half replaced by David Ruaux
13 Simon Seal (yellow card 2nd half)
14 Stuart Bates
15 Chris Leggat

16 Lee Morrison
17 Karim Neseiyif
18 Canadian Mark

00 D & J Tugwell (Waterboys)

99 Caroline Surtees (Physiotherapist)

Paul Massey Coach/Manager & Match Reporter;

In celebration of my 57th birthday I arranged to meet an old rugby pal of mine, Dave Shock (who played for Maidstone first team in the late 80s and 90s), in West Malling to watch the international and indulge in a beverage. On arrival who should we bump into but Shaun Charlton, who had a similar idea-though not celebrating a significant anniversary. We got chatting over a beer and I asked him if he fancied a game on the Sunday, to which he responded yes, having last played in the plate final v Canterbury in 2016. He also had a pal, Mark, over from Canada who foolishly agreed to play as well-not having played for 12 years. He was aware of some rule changes,

but asked if 'punching' was still allowed? (Typical No 7) I directed him to Gary Whitehead for clarification.

Anyway, I thought I had made a bit of a coup as backs had been dropping like stones; family, strains, pulls and other excuses that strictly should have had a note from matron. After about 10 beverages and a curry it sounded like a great idea. Waking up this morning it sounded less so. Being stout rugby men they both turned up to play, but the boots I provided for Mark didn't fit so he said he was happy to just watch. Shaun said the same and was going to go back to the changing rooms to take his kit off when someone mentioned the changing rooms were locked. He was not a happy bunny, cold, regretting the decision to come, but hoping that Mick Walker would last the game. We'll come to that shortly and the significance of this opening ramble-feel free to scroll down.

Old G's had beaten New Ash Green in the opening round so we suspected that they may be a tidy outfit. They knew how to play the pitch and with Maidstone playing downhill first half it was essential they got some points on the board early doors (football reporter speak, Brian). Within a minute of the kick off Dave Charlton sold his dummy and made a searing 50 yard break, which should have resulted in a try but determined OG defence snuffed it out. This happened on about 3 further occasions, with the last pass not quite clinical enough to finish off the excellent approach work. Credit to the OG defence which was gutsy and committed.

Eventually, following good line out ball, the ball went down the line with great hands to Chris Leggatt, who stepped on the accelerator, swivelled his hips a few times and dotted down for a much needed score. DC slotted the extra two points. However, despite being under the cosh OGs showed a bit of what was to come. Their back line could run with pace and on good lines, particularly the right winger who made ground every time he got the ball. A cheeky tapped drop out by DC looked like catching them out but they counter rucked and won a penalty which they duly slotted having missed a previous attempt.

It should be noted that the young referee contributed to an excellent game. He showed his authority when he yellow carded the OG second row (apparently a contestant in World's Strongest Man) for verbal abuse after he was pinged for coming in at the side.

Maidstone kicked to the corner to earn a line out and have shown what they could do with a catch and drive, OGs did not compete and stood off the jumper. Horse reacted quickly and drove into the to set a platform, Bob Purfitt then took the ball towards the line, then the ball was popped short to Mayhem who drove over from 5 yards (Maidstone's Strongest Man). 14-3 looked a better score but on the stroke of half time OGs got a penalty for kicking the ball out of a ruck. They were very pleased to turn round 14-6 down knowing that their lumpy forwards could rumble down the hill.

This brings me to the Shaun Charlton link, as just before Mayhem's try, Mick Walker, who up to that point had been having a storming game at 9-urging the forwards on, providing quick ball to DC, tackling and ripping ball, as well as advising the ref on his decisions-tweaked his hammy, so Shaun had to warm up and get his mind on the game. The other link in the opening paragraph was my 57th birthday and this was to

note that Mick is actually 58 years young and still playing with the determination of a teenager. Additionally, Richard Ewence entered the fray at half time and he too is 58, but tacking like a twenty year old and won some impressive line out ball.

Just following the kick off after half time there was an unfortunate incident involving Nick East, who was already struggling with a shoulder injury. OGs won a line out tap and Nick went through to tackle the receiver. However, the guy swung with his elbow straight into the throat of Nick. Red card, but end of game for Nick. On the plus side, it did mean he couldn't speak for the rest of the game. Sad to report his day got worse when he got a puncture on the M25 going home-shit happens.

From this position, Sean rolled back the years and exploited a weak blindside, freeing Gary Whitehead, whose take and give in one move put in Stu Bates to extend the lead and relieve the tension. DC again slotted nicely, 21-6 and looking rosy. Not so. OG's took exception to the red card and were suddenly galvanised. Hard running back play combined with pick and go from the front five put Maidstone on the back foot and it wasn't long before the right wing was creating havoc every time he touched the ball. A missed tackle in mid field saw a good score near the posts and very soon after the number 14 made a searing run, jumped a tackle to score and to add to Maidstone's woes, Simon Seal received a yellow card for sliding in as he scored the try. 21-18 and all the momentum going down the hill with OG's. a penalty for not releasing saw the game tied up at 21 a piece with Maidstone seemingly in disarray. Only a crucial tackle by Sean Charlton prevented OG from reaping further havoc, and probably a turning point in a game full of turning points.

At this stage Horse came back on at 8 following some back treatment from Caroline our wonderful physio, who used more tape and spray in one game than the whole of last season. He quickly made an impact with pickups from the base of the scrum and links with Sean and DC. Additionally, Maidstone's line out was functioning strongly with Colin Frost nicking plenty of ball and Richard Ewence benefitting from the accurate throwing of Mark Ingram. From these Maidstone got some good driving mauls going and started to starve OG's of ball. With the game going into the last 15 minutes and no one wanting extra time as the skies darkened, Maidstone played a tighter, more disciplined game tying in the OGs forwards leaving more space out wide. From this Simon Seal got the ball in midfield and a dummy and go saw him break through the first defender and have enough gas to get him over the line. From zero to hero. 28-21 with time running out. To complete the game, powerful carries by Clark, Purfitt, Pete Gray allowed a long cut out pass from DC to Dave Rauax who slipped it to Stu Bates for his second of the game and seal a hard fought victory 33-21. Never in doubt.

Mentions should also go to Andy Bell, for running touch and coming on late in the game when our backs were dropping like flies. A crucial tackle in midfield stopped a potential OG comeback. Also, Rich Gray for his all round contribution in the first half-strong scrummaging against a much heavier opponent. To Lurch who put in a great stint in the second row and to Lee Morrison who came along, but didn't get on-thanks Lee, much appreciated. Tuggy and son are always a welcome addition to match days too.

A second win and one that took a lot of character and positive thinking. Finishing was an issue, as was ball retention early on, but with the next game not until January we can work on these in the bar. Get well soon to all those crocked. One more win and we make the semis, but NAG will be another stern test.

Final thanks to OG's who gave us a really hard, physical game of rugby and showed a deal of talent and rugby know how. Hope you stuff Aylesford.

MOM Dave Charlton-still amazes everyone that people always assume Dave is going to pass the ball. An outstanding performance-handling, running, tackling-rolled back the years. Reminded me of Dave's first ever senior game-he ran the show aged 17. Well played.

Report and research by PM and KN