



Match Report



London Division 1 (South)

Maidstone FC 23 v Twickenham RFC 10

Played at The Mote Saturday 14th November, 2015

Under leaden skies that leaked an increasingly heavy curtain of rain, Maidstone claimed victory, 23 -10, against a Twickenham side they were meeting for the first time in the long history of both clubs. After the disappointment of the previous week's loss in the derby with Medway, this solid, composed win demonstrated an improving cohesion in the side as they patiently constructed an unassailable points total in atrocious conditions.

After an early, first quarter, assault by the visitors that saw them gain a seven point margin, Maidstone worked their way back into this encounter to claim the lead by half time. Further improvements led to second-half domination that saw them extend their lead and run out comfortable winners at the end.

This was a week of returns from the treatment table for Craig Webb, who slotted into the centre, and Ben Pitkin, who started on the bench, while Rory Beech was asked to demonstrate his all-round capabilities, once again, moving from fly half into the inside centre role, his fourth position in the backs this season, with DJ Kanne-meyer taking over at fly half. The pack had a more settled look, with Joel Byford back in the front row and Lewis Stimpson starting at openside flanker.

Maidstone began this game slowly and for the first ten minutes tried to ignore the wet conditions, trying to play an open, handling game which led to a scrappy first period. Twickenham, on the other hand, looked sharper and more accomplished and were rewarded with an opening try for their inventive play just past the ten minute mark.

A relieving kick by Maidstone was quickly thrown into play by Twickenham and moved left across the field by the three-quarters to give the wing space to run. A cut back inside and a well-timed pass saw centre Brown touch down half way out. With Brown landing the conversion, the visitors posted a seven point lead to help sow some uncertainties in Maidstone minds.

But whereas the pack suffered badly in the scrums last week, this time the upfront platform was more solid, especially in the line out, with man-of-the-match, Hugh Cowan, prominent. From this base, Maidstone climbed back into the game using the catch and drive from the line out to gain ground and control the ball.

With the half hour approaching, Maidstone reduced the deficit with a simple 30 metre, Millar, penalty, awarded for failing to release, after the Twickenham No 8 was caught in possession following a scrum. And with half time approaching, Maidstone gained the lead.

A catch and drive from a line out set up field position and while the following assault on the Twickenham line was stalled by some last ditch defensive work, the ball being held up over the line, from the subsequent 5-metre scrum, Craig Webb was on





hand to force his way over the line by the posts. With the Millar conversion a formality, Maidstone posted a 10-7 lead just before the break.

With standing water on the pitch and the rain continuing to fall in a steady down-pour, it was clear the second half would require even more patience than the first. Maidstone quickly settled into a pattern, playing through their forwards to drive into the visitor's defence, with the line out providing a second line of attack through the catch and drive.

A Millar penalty after five minutes saw Maidstone's lead increase to 13-7 but this was cut back by a Twickenham reply, from Brown, just before the quarter hour. But with handling errors unavoidable in the conditions, the game progressed with little pressure on either try line.

With Pitkin on at scrum half and Maidstone playing an increasingly effective kicking game, territorial dominance began to pay dividends. A cross kick to the right wing was hacked on by Morosan to establish a line out in the Twickenham 22. The catch and drive saw Webb, surprisingly on the end of the move at the back of the maul, to score near the corner to extend the Maidstone lead to 18-10, with twenty five minutes played.

It was now about game management, and this Maidstone achieved. While the visitors were awarded a number of penalties that allowed them to kick to the Maidstone half and build pressure, this storm was weathered and it was Maidstone that finished the stronger, scoring a third try on the forty minute mark.

While a catch and drive from the line out set up the position once again, it was the dancing feet of Pitkin that found a gap around the subsequent ruck to take the score to 23-10. A last flurry by the visitors was quickly subdued by the home defence, confirming the win that reflected a solid all round display by Maidstone.

While there were some notable individual performances in the Maidstone ranks, with Webb and Cowan to the fore, this was a team performance, where everyone played their part. Of equal importance, the game plan was modified to suit the conditions and the team performed for the full eighty minutes. Slowly, but surely, a 'new' side is emerging that looks more than capable of holding its own in this league.

Maidstone

Ben Williams; Josh Pankhurst; Joel Byford; Hugh Cowan; Adam Knight; Charlie Williams; Lewis Stimpson; Jake Eaglesham; Lucian Morosan; Dalton Kannemeyer; Alex Eastwood; Rory Beech; Craig Webb; Jordan Ring; Harry Millar

Replacements: Andi Petelo; Jake Johnson; Ben Pitkin

