

# TOUCHLINE

End of Season  
2012 - 2013





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# Bob Beney

## A Word From the President

Well what a year and where do I start? The amazing unbeaten league success of the first team, a credit to all of Ben's charges: the uniting of our two clubs at The Mote, another milestone in our history: the complete rebuilding of the back bar by 'chippy extraordinaire' Dave Eastwood: the finest example of catering equipment purchasing by eagle eyed under 16s coach Tony Murphy (£500 for £15,000 worth of kit and equipment) is to mention just a few note-worthy events.

There is one person, however, who has been working tirelessly on behalf of the club, much behind the scenes, and that is Chairman Andy Golding. At times it has been very testing, but he has never wavered in his task. We are extremely fortunate to have people such as him. The future is very bright and is evolving all the time. Watch this space.

This season contrasts so much to three years ago when I began my tenure as your President. I had just lost my wife Ann to cancer and how all of you have helped me so much since, I sincerely thank you. We then had to cope with one of the biggest challenges in our history and with its consequences. What a credit to all of you in dealing with that.

Our 2012-13 season commenced with the President's XV fixture in August (photo), so well organised by Bob Hayton and a great success for our designated club charity the RFU Injured Players Foundation.

The rest of the season is well documented elsewhere in this issue but I must make mention of all the volunteers, as well as the rest of the club, as without you we have no club. Rugby is great fun and it has been made very clear to me that you can enjoy it regardless of ability. You will see some cosmetic changes inside the building, the bar has already been mentioned, the toilets



are being upgraded (the ladies is long overdue) and the bar area redecorated. This has been made possible through the generosity of our brewers Shepherd Neame. Just have a look.

I now come to the business end and make no excuses for being direct. It revolves around the standard of all of the pitches especially the training one and how they can be managed. First of all due to insufficient attention during the previous summers they have not been fit for purpose for the season. It was decided major remedial work needed to be carried out as soon as possible. Vertidrainage and seeding plus 250 tons of specialist sand has been arranged. The cost of this will be £9000. An immediate member's loan has been arranged. This must be repaid.

In addition to this it has been decided to purchase some portable floodlights part funded by an RFU loan. There is a short fall of £7000 this must be paid in September. This is an investment in our future.

The benefit of having portable lights is that they can be erected on ANY piece of ground, thereby resting the training pitch. This will be an enormous help to our forever growing youth section who prefer to train within their age groups. These guys are the future and we must safeguard it.

Our priority is this money and I would ask you to consider making a donation towards this. I hope this will be possible and will very grateful if you can help. We are all looking forward to next season with many local derbies in prospect. It promises to be some season; in the meantime we will be showing all the British Lions test matches at the club plus the other Saturday Lions fixtures, there will be food available. So come all along and enjoy, see you there. **BB**

# Andy Golding

## Chairman's Report

In my time at the club as player, coach, DoR and now in my third year as Chairman, I cannot remember a season as memorable as this one.

Last season saw a period of renaissance after some tough times. Despite not performing quite as well as we had hoped, from a playing perspective, I believe that a great deal of our current success and achievements are due to the solid foundation that was laid then by the sheer hard work and determination of officers and personnel to move the club forward.

On the playing front, I would like to praise the work of Andy Foley as Head Coach and DoR whose unerring passion, drive and energy are plain for all to see. Most significantly, Andy has worked tirelessly to recruit new players, develop the potential of 'up and coming' young players, whilst also recognising that there is no substitute for experience, by utilising the skills of older players who still have the ability to play at this level. This is all underpinned by an excellent coaching infrastructure aided by the introduction of Lee Evans at 1st XV level. Lee has been hugely influential, as has Richard Weston in his first season as Mustangs Coach. There is also a true and collective spirit evident in the playing ethos, engendered by club captain Ben Williams.

The resultant effect of this is that the 1st XV have smashed all league records this year, have retained their regional cup title and were, once again, semi-finalists in the RFU Senior Vase competition. The Mustangs have had a resurgence and the 3s have continued to show that they are a force to be reckoned with. Elsewhere, we still managed to provide a competitive and social standard of rugby to suit all by regularly fielding six sides

Whilst a club's success is often judged on its playing performance, there has also been a huge amount going on behind the scenes which has undoubtedly contributed to and underpinned what we have achieved as a club collective.

Most notably this includes (and in no particular order):

- *New and significant Committee appointments to enable us to continue to grow including the recent appointment of Steve Matthews as Grants and Funding Officer. Steve brings some additional 'new blood' to work alongside the recent appointments of Mike Laurensen, Duncan McClintock (Online subscriptions and Membership) and Ian Wilkinson, (Youth Chair), who are already making a significant impact in their respective roles.*
- *Two highly successful youth rugby festivals as a result of the endeavours of the youth committee and in particular the work of Charlie Goodbody and her event team. The events not only provided a high quality and enjoyable experience for all but they also raised significant funds.*
- *The formation of the Mote Sports Federation (MSF), which allows the rugby and cricket clubs to jointly manage the site for mutual benefit and which in turn has provided us with an extended lease and all year round access to the pitches, training areas, pavilion and tabernacle.*
- *The RFU Presidents XV Runners-Up Award for Player Safety and Welfare. The club was chosen for its work in raising funds (in excess of £7K and awareness of the Injured Players Foundation (IPF). The adoption of the IPF as our charity was in-part in response to the spinal injury sustained by Tom Hughes. In this regard, I would publicly like to praise the swift actions and professionalism of club Physio, Anna Rooke in dealing with the incident.*
- *The Award for Exceptional Volunteers by the RFU:*
- *Trevor Langley for his role as Rugby Club Liaison and his influence on the formation of the Mote Sports Federation.*
- *Allan Crosbie for his long service as a key member of the youth section*





# Andy Golding

- *Bob Hayton for his work with the IPF.*
- *Recognition of our playing success, with features in Rugby World and Rugby Club magazines (twice).*
- *Becoming an RFU approved O2 Touch Rugby Centre. This will enable us to attract additional members to the club and meet the sporting needs of our local community – watch this space.*
- *The procurement of four portable floodlights (part-funded by the RFU) to ensure that we can provide continued training facilities for all users by maximising the space available and by preserving the use of the floodlit training/playing area.*
- *Substantial pitch renovations to preserve and improve our playing surfaces and meet increased demand of usage.*
- *A strategic alliance with Maidstone Football for reciprocal marketing and collaborative promotional opportunities.*
- *The formation of close links with Maidstone Borough Council to promote the rugby club in the local community through various forms of media.*
- *The forging of strong business links and commercial opportunities provided by Bob Hayton and his 'team'. Of particular note are the swathe of advertising boards that fringe the 1st XV pitch.*
- *The continued success of the Capital First, online membership system, to maximise subscriptions and allow us to meet the increasing costs of running a club of Maidstone's size – many thanks to Mike Laurensen for his role in this.*
- *Our community coaching outreach initiative - the continuation of our community work and the establishment of new links with a number of schools and colleges to provide coaching support and to help provide a sustainable pipeline of 'home-grown' future players.*
- *The formation of the 'Old Maidstonians', which has created a formal link between Maidstone Grammar School old Boys and Maidstone Rugby Club. Both have always enjoyed a close and beneficial relationship with many from the school's rugby squads at all levels also developing their rugby skills by representing the club at youth level. Well done to Andy Foley and Jonathan Davies for their work on this. We look forward to the forthcoming planned fixtures.*

To have achieved all this I am, as always, indebted to our volunteers who do so much of the unseen work to keep the club running so

efficiently. This includes all those who give up their time freely and willingly for the benefit of the club – you know who you are, so take a well-deserved bow.



In particular I would like to thank my Deputy Chair, Bob Hayton for his relentless work in gaining much needed sponsorship (amongst a huge amount of other things) to enable a club of our size to continue to develop and provide the things that many of us take for granted. I would also like to acknowledge the huge amount of time and effort that our President Bob Beney puts in on behalf of the club.

Lastly, I would like to say a sincere thank you for the continued support of our sponsors, spectators and players, who as a collective make Maidstone Rugby Club such a special place to play or be involved with.

As is customary in my reports, I thought I would leave you with a quote to ponder over the closed season, which for me sums up the spirit and togetherness of the club as a whole and which I believe is a key factor in where we are now.

"The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team."

So onwards and upwards and here's to continued success in the forthcoming season. **AG**

# Bob Hayton

## Ups & Downs

### *Bob Hayton reports on how the season went for other clubs in Kent*

As ever there was a lot of rugby played elsewhere in Kent and, despite the somewhat damp season, we did not see the respective campaigns ending with a raft of fixtures compressed into the final weeks as a result of the wet and wintry weather.

#### **The National Leagues**

In National 1, Blackheath were never really in the promotion battle after the first quarter of the season and finished in lower mid table.

National 2 (S) In their first season back at this level Canterbury finished creditably in mid-table and with a good foundation on which to develop for next season.

In National 3(SE), Westcombe Park were the county's front runners after a poor start that saw them anchored at the foot of the table after the first four or five fixtures. Things picked up from there and by mid-season they were the leading Kent side, eventually finishing in 3rd spot. After a solid start TJs were unable to kick on from last season's campaign and finished in 5th spot and just off the pace of the leading clubs. Elthamians finished just behind them in 6th place for a solid first season at that level, whilst Gravesend struggled for consistency and were, after the first few weeks, always flirting with the relegation zone. Their fate only decided on the last two weekends when a resurgent Tring effectively torpedoed Dorking's title aspirations at the same time as securing their own survival and consigning Gs to playing in London 1 next season.

#### **The London Leagues**

Kent's interest in London 1 this season was all focused on London 1 (S) as the respective promotions and relegations saw O Colfeians return to the division south of the Thames. Not that it did them any good, as they had a torrid season, posting just one win and were relegation favourites from early in the season. They are joined by Trojans who return to London 2(SW) after two seasons and having struggled in

both campaigns. Beckenham found themselves dragged into the relegation battle for the last of the 'drop zone' places. The final weekend saw Beckenham needing to win against Sidcup in order to ensure survival, and despite Gosport's bonus point victory over Hove, Beckenham had just done enough to seal Gosport's immediate return to Ldn 2(SW). None of the county's clubs really featured in the promotion battle as newly promoted East Grinstead's G-Force swept all before them and went through the season unbeaten to take the title. The battle for the playoff spot against London 1(N) club Eton Manor ended as a contest between Basingstoke and Chichester, although newly promoted Wimbledon were also in the mix in the first half of the campaign. For the second consecutive season Chichester fell off the pace at the critical moment and just missed out, with Basingstoke taking the playoff spot and subsequent promotion when they defeated the London 1(N) club in the playoff.

In London 2 (SE) after last season's campaign, which saw East Grinstead as runaway champions, this season's campaign was much more unpredictable and open. Brighton emerged after the mid season point as the favourites and became more convincing front runners as the season progressed, securing the title with several matches to spare. At the season's mid-point there were still seven clubs in the promotion hunt although with each week's results the list of viable candidates was whittled down to a battle between eventual winners Brighton, with the playoff spot a battle contested between Charlton Park and newly promoted Crowborough. The outcome of the contest went to the last day of the season although the SE London side always just held the advantage and went on to contest the playoff against London 2(SW) club Sutton & Epsom. Unfortunately, for the second successive season their promotion hopes ended in disappointment as they lost out 12-15 in a playoff that saw S&E return to London 1 at the first attempt.

At the bottom of the division Thanet Wanderers were rooted to the foot of the table from the opening weekend and endured a horrendous campaign that saw them relegated for the second

# Bob Hayton

successive season. Again it was the usual suspects in Sevenoaks, Heathfield & Waldron and Deal & Betteshanger who all flirted in the danger zone but in the end it was Dunstonians that just couldn't put together the results and consistency required to avoid the drop.

The battle at the top of London 3(SE) initially looked tight but by mid-season it was obvious that the title was Maidstone's to lose as they powered to the top having dropped only a single bonus point by the time they had secured promotion at the end of February and the title on the first weekend in March. The battle for the second promotion spot looked to be between three other Kent clubs with Sheppey looking the early favourites from Tunbridge Wells and Ashford. Ashford fell off the pace a bit in the second half of the season but still finished fourth, leaving a 'two horse race'. This went beyond the final day of the regular campaign; with a strong finish from the end of January, the advantage swung towards Wells who were able to pick up the bonus points that, in the end, proved critical as they just edged Sheppey by a point, to return to London 2 at the first attempt.

Horsham were the pick of the Sussex clubs despite a poor run of form just before the mid-point that left them struggling in mid-table. Bromley finished in fifth place but gave a number of teams a run for their money whilst Anchorians will be pleased to have given a good



account of themselves in their first season in the London divisions. Folkestone were disappointing, normally strong in the first half of the season, this time they lacked both the consistency and commitment to trouble the main contenders and, whilst they were never really in any relegation danger, they will want to put what was a forgettable campaign behind them. At the foot of the table Vigo struggled to come to terms with life in the London divisions, as did Pulborough who also suffered a points deduction which did nothing to help their cause. Park House also drop to Kent 1 and suffered from an inability to stay competitive for a full eighty minutes in most of their matches.

## *The Kent Leagues*

In Kent 1 the battle was always interesting and it was Dartfordians that emerged from the mid-season point to go on and take the title. The battle for the playoff position against Sussex 1 club Eastbourne went down to beyond the last weekend of the official schedule, in part due to postponed fixtures but RFU Junior Vase commitments also played their part. The usual suspects were always in the hunt, with Cranbrook and Sittingbourne plus Shooters Hill falling by the wayside in the last quarter of the campaign leaving a battle between Beccehamians and Hastings & Bexhill. With the Sussex club having completed their fixtures Beccs capped a good season to secure the playoff spot and then promotion, following a resounding 47-0 playoff win at Eastbourne.

There are sometimes vagaries about promotion and relegation to and from Kent 1 and it was no different this time, this season saw just one side go down as the organisers looked to revert to just 12 teams in the division. A points deduction didn't help new boys Southwark's cause as they struggled in their first season in the division but fortunately with only the one relegation this season they managed to avoid the drop back to Kent 2. Whitstable on the other hand have flirted with the relegation zone for several seasons and this campaign was no different, although this time around there was no reprieve as they finished well adrift of the remainder at the foot of the table.



# Bob Hayton

Having mentioned Sussex 1 earlier, those who look further than just county rugby will have noticed that there are a number of 2nd XV's (and in some cases 3rds) competing in that division. They do so on an 'honours only' basis and promotion is only available to 1st XV sides. That said none of those sides were involved in the promotion battle, as after losing out in the playoffs for the last two seasons, Burgess Hill finished well clear at the top to take the title and automatic promotion with Eastbourne as the runners up and a decent amount of clear water between them and the third placed side.

The battle for the Kent 2 title was interesting for the first half of the season, with several clubs pushing for the title, O Williamsons eventually emerged as favourites and went on to secure the title in March. The runner up battle was between Footscray and Lordswood which went to the last weekend of the season, eventually going to Footscray. Dartford Valley finished at the foot of the table at the end of their first season in the county division although they will look to improve next season as the division expands to 12 clubs with Edenbridge and Faversham rejoining the county divisions.

## **The Cup Competitions**

In the RFU knockout competitions not all the Kent sides seem to enter these days. Of the entries in the Intermediate Cup only Aylesford made the best progress reaching the regional semi-final and beating Dunstonians in Round 2, before falling in a tight battle to North Walsham. Medway had gone out in the Round 1 and Charlton Pk fell to Portsmouth in Round 2. Round 3 made something of a mockery of the competition, with HWO in three of the four ties

In the Senior Vase yet again Kent's hopes were carried by Folkestone and Maidstone as they made the third round, Folkestone fell to Cambridge club Cantabrigians but Maidstone were looking to better last season's National Semi-Final as they progressed to the regional final, beating Folkestone's victors with a convincing 57-7 display. Unfortunately their 'west country hoodoo' struck again and they fell to Gloucester club Drybrook in the national semi-final with what they felt was a disappointingly flat performance.

Last season in the In the RFU Junior Vase, almost all of the county's sides

fell, or withdrew at the first hurdle; this time however, Beccehamians, Cranbrook and Dartfordians made it to Round 4 although Cranbrook and Dartfordians were unlucky to end up drawn against each other, and whilst Darts took the tie, match card issues then saw them disqualified with Cranbrook unable to take their place due to similar circumstances. Beccehamians eventually fell in the regional semi-final to Surrey based Farnham

In the domestic competitions some different clubs appeared in the county finals. The Kent Cup competition saw holders Canterbury fall to last season's beaten finalists in Round 2 along with Gravesend who went out to Blackheath. Maidstone withdrew after a hard fought battle against Deal & Betteshanger in the opening round, but they felt that some priorities had to be set and the league and RFU competition came further up their pecking order. The final saw Blackheath face Elthamians with 'Club' taking the trophy with a 43-25 that makes the final look less competitive than it was.

Given their opening defeat in the cup competition, Canterbury were obvious favourites in the Plate with Gravesend looking like their obvious rivals. Both sides made it to the semi-finals, but on a day of surprises Sevenoaks toppled Gravesend convincingly whilst Dunstonians came from behind to beat Canterbury. So in a repeat of what had been a relegation shootout a few weeks earlier the trophy went to Sevenoaks, who never looked in trouble easing away from Dunstonians in the second half to run out 29-18 winners.

The Vase competition was very open this season, with the main contenders being Kent 1 clubs Cranbrook, Beccehamians and O Gravesendians, along with Kent 2's Brockleians and Ash. The final was an all Kent 1 affair after Brockleians and Ash fell in the semi-finals to Beccehamians and O Gravesendians respectively. Beccehamians took the title to cap a great weekend, having beaten Eastbourne for the promotion spot to London 3 the day before, they then comfortably overcame O Gravesendians 37-17 to lift the Vase title

The Salver favourites were Dartfordians after they lost an extra time battle to OGS in the opening round of the Vase competition. The final saw them pitched against fellow Kent 1 club Shooters Hill, but in a repeat of their three figure demolition of Shooters earlier in the



# Bob Hayton

month the Kent 1 Champions maintained their end of season league form to run out convincing 67-5 winners.

Unfortunately the regional Evergreen Cup competition appears to have withered on the vine this season, Maidstone won through their opening fixture against Charlton Park and then heard nothing further from the organisers although I believe that domestic circumstances for the organisers at Croydon RFC have not helped. *BH*

## *London & SE Promotion/Relegation Summary*

### **National 2 (S)**

Promoted: Henley, Playoff: Worthing

Relegated: Barking, Lydney

Note: only 2 relegations due to the withdrawal of Rugby Lions from the division just prior to the start of the season.

### **National 3 (SE)**

Promoted: Bishop's Stortford

Relegated: Staines, Westcliff, Gravesend

### **London 1 (N)**

Promoted: Bury St Edmunds

Relegated: Rochford Hundred, Basildon, Beaconsfield

### **London 1 (S)**

Promoted: East Grinstead, Basingstoke

Relegated: Trojans, Old Colfeians, Gosport & Fareham

### **London 2 (SE)**

Promoted: Brighton

Relegated: Thanet Wanderers, Old Dunstonians

### **London 2 (SW)**

Promoted: Chobham, Sutton & Epsom

Relegated: Camberley, KCSOB

### **London 3 (SE)**

Promoted: Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells

Relegated: Vigo, Pulborough, Park House

### **London 3 (SW)**

Promoted: Winchester, Weybridge Vandals

Relegated: Old Paulines, Old Blues and Bognor

### **Shepherd Neame Kent Division 1**

Promoted: Dartfordians, Beccehamians

Relegated: Whitstable

### **Shepherd Neame Kent Division 2**

Promoted: Old Williamsonians, Footscray

### **Sussex 1**

Promoted: Burgess Hill

# *Richard Ewence*

## *Invicta & Kent Rural Leagues Review*

### *Richard considers revisions to the structure of the rural game*

The season 2012-13 was played out to a pretty satisfactory conclusion for our 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th team – not to mention the contribution that was made by the Vets in supporting the fulfilment of league fixtures on a number of occasions. Overall, we forfeited just two matches and our teams all finished in the top half of their divisions, whilst our 3rds managed to finish as runners-up.

The overall league position was far less satisfactory. The Kent Rural Leagues recorded 62 forfeits (five teams withdrew altogether). Invicta 1 and 2, recorded 19 forfeits and two teams withdrew altogether. Most of the withdrawals will have been triggered after racking up five or six forfeits, so we can say that the real total across the divisions was around 115 forfeits – the vast majority of which were Away Teams failing to travel.

# Richard Ewence

In response to this situation, clubs voted to regionalize further for next season (to cut down travelling time) although this would be at the probable expense of well-balanced playing fixtures (i.e. the gap between the weakest and strongest teams in a division is likely to grow wider).

This has had a particularly unfortunate consequence for our 4th team, as not only are they now in a league where they are drawn against sides like Deal & Betts II and Thanet III, they are also deemed to be on the Western edge of East Kent, meaning that most of the fixtures are in deepest East Kent. The same applies to our 5ths, who have an even less appealing travel schedule, although their opposition is perhaps less formidable than that which faces the 4th team.

It remains to be seen how we respond to this, although one can't lay the blame at the door of the Competitions Committee, who juggle many competing interests to produce a viable format but who are stymied by the physical shortage of teams in East Kent. However, there seem to be more and more clubs talking about pulling one or more of their lower sides out of the league structure and playing friendlies instead, the main barrier to which is a fear of being unable to find sufficient friendly fixtures.

Meanwhile, at the top end of this format, despite finishing the season in only 4th place in Invicta II, it was felt important that our Mustangs (2nds) should seek to play in Invicta I next season. This required little lobbying in the end, as Invicta II has been scrapped and Invicta I has been increased from 11 to 14 teams. This suits us very well as it provides our 2nd team with a full programme of 26 matches, but quite controversially, Canterbury II have been admitted as a late entry (displacing Sevenoaks II) and will now play against (amongst others) the 3rd teams of clubs such as TJs and Westcombe Park, despite the fact that Canterbury are a Level 4 side and TJs and Westcombe Pk play at Level 5. Many clubs have voiced dismay at the inclusion of Canterbury II but Kent seems disinclined to change their minds and say that they will 'monitor the situation'. From our point of view, I think

it provides a tasty 'scalp' for the Mustangs to aim for.

Our 3rds will also have scalps to aim for, as they will be playing in a 12 team Invicta East division that includes Sevenoaks II, Aylesford II and Ashford II. I foresee some more massive battles in prospect.

Lastly, I think it's worth mentioning the recent three-year Grass-Roots Review of Rugby, which concluded that one of the problems causing playing numbers to fall across the country is that clubs like Maidstone, TJs and Westcombe Park run too many teams. (i.e. if we ran fewer sides, there would be more, smaller clubs and less travelling involved in playing fixtures). It's a superficially interesting argument but I think it misses the major question, which is how clubs like us have managed to maintain our playing numbers whilst other clubs have shrunk beyond recognition. I think that the answer would have to include the words 'sheer hard work'. *RE*

<b>RK &amp; ES Premier Division</b> Currently titled - Invicta 3 East	<b>RK &amp; ES (Late Red) Div. 1 East</b> Currently titled Late Red 4 East	<b>RK &amp; ES (Dragon Fire) Div. 2 East</b> Currently titled Dragon Fire 5 East
<b>Ashford 2</b>	<b>Ashford 3</b>	<b>Ash 2</b>
<b>Aylesford 2</b>	<b>Canterbury 4</b>	<b>Canterbury 5</b>
<b>Canterbury 3</b>	<b>D&amp;B 2</b>	<b>D&amp;B 3</b>
<b>Dover 3</b>	<b>Dover 4</b>	<b>Folkestone 4</b>
<b>Folkestone 2</b>	<b>Folkestone 3</b>	<b>Hastings &amp; Bexhill 3</b>
<b>Gravesend 3</b>	<b>Maidstone 4</b>	<b>Maidstone 5</b>
<b>Maidstone 3</b>	<b>Sheppey 2</b>	<b>Sheppey 3</b>
<b>Medway 3</b>	<b>Sittingbourne 2</b>	<b>Thanet Wdrs 4</b>
<b>Sevenoaks 2</b>	<b>Thanet Wdrs 3</b>	<b>Whistable 3</b>
<b>Snowdown CW</b>	<b>Whitstable 2</b>	<b>Weaving</b>
<b>Tonbridge Juddians 4</b>		
<b>Tunbridge Wells 3</b>		

**Kent RFU - Rural Kent & East Sussex League Structure 2013-2014**



# Andy Foley

## *The Head Coach Summarises the Season*

Well, what a season it turned out to be, starting with a bright sunny day for the President's XV match last August through the mud and rain in mid season to a point where we had just about dried out as the season concluded in April.

### *1st XV*

For the Senior Squad, pre-season training went well and the addition of Lee Evans to the coaching team had a major impact on our style of play and the cohesiveness of the forwards and, whilst we opened our account against Bromley with a slightly stuttering performance, we never really looked in any danger and were able to kick on from there. The away fixture at Uckfield in late September was, I think, the result that really sent out a message to the rest of the sides in the division and was probably our first really cohesive performance, showing that with good quick ball, we were a dangerous attacking force from anywhere on the pitch. From that point on the only side that gave us any real problem was Tunbridge Wells, and whilst we were unlucky not to collect the bonus point, a 19-12 win against a side that we felt posed a comprehensive threat throughout their team, was a result we were happy with as both they and Sheppey looked like being our main competition. In the home fixture against Sheppey we showed some good composure in dank conditions. Whilst they felt they had the better of the second half, the fact that we had stopped competing at the breakdown in midfield, after conceding a raft of penalties, combined with the knowledge that their pick and drive tactics from halfway posed no real threat, demonstrated that under skipper Ben Williams we could control a game even without possession.



By the mid-point of the league campaign the title was very much ours to lose and we had started to focus on the RFU Senior Vase. In the first round a stuttering performance at Hitchin then saw us up against undefeated L3NW leaders O Priorians and in a comprehensive display they were put to the sword 38-0 leaving The Mote somewhat shellshocked as we progressed to the London & SE divisional final for the second consecutive year.

Back with the league and with the winter weather beginning to dictate the conditions and therefore the style of rugby, although they were dry enough for the side to send its own response to some comments made in that last fixture before Christmas. The side were then able to dispose of both Sheppey and Tunbridge Wells in the mud and the snow, and by the end of February promotion had been secured. This was followed a week later in March as the team clinched the league title in style, putting a Horsham team, who were not a poor side, to the sword 95-12.

March was a good month, not only did we clinch the league title, but also saw a successful defence of our divisional Senior Vase title as we disposed of Cantabrigians 57-7 in something of a mud bath. The run in for the league was something of a canter to the line as we ran in some big scores against sides that, in many ways, looked at the matches as a damage limitation exercise, rather than a chance to inflict a league defeat on us.

The biggest disappointment came in the National semi-Final of the Senior Vase when a year to the day since our last defeat, the 'west country hoodoo' struck again as we went down 6-16 to Forest of Dean club Drybrook. Were they better than us? Probably not, they just had the edge and a bit of luck on the day as we put in a flat

# Andy Foley

performance, although with a little bit of luck ourselves we could actually have been 20 points to the good by half-time and put the game out of sight. Small margins!

Anyway, enough about the 1st XV, most of you will have seen them in action at some point through the season and will know what a good side they have developed into.

## **Mustangs**

For the Mustangs XV, they finished fourth in Invicta 2. A bit disappointing and they will look back on the opening weeks as the point where their title challenge was lost. The old adage of 'you can't win the league in the first month, but you can certainly lose it' rings true; as narrow losses from winning positions against Medway and Charlton Park meant that they faced an uphill struggle if they were to challenge for honours. However, an unbeaten run from the mid-point break up until the last day of the season saw them push themselves back into contention and whilst they were unlikely to win the league, they had a big say in who did.

## **3rd XV**

The 3rd XV finished runners-up in Invicta 3 and will look back on the period of the Autumn Internationals as the point at which their campaign faltered, as some of the more experienced heads spent their weekends in the stands at Twickenham watching England's performances. That said, the season has been a watershed in terms of how we bring younger players through into senior rugby, and the 3rd XV have certainly played their part in providing the experienced guidance to some young talent coming through.

## **4th & 5th XV's**

Both the 4th and 5th XV's had competitive campaigns although one has to question a league structure that has 2nd XV's from clubs the 1st XV are playing, pitched against our lower sides.

## **Vets XV**

Finally, the Veterans XV; well what can you say about a side that continues to turn out each week enjoying the more Corinthian aspect of the game and, to distort an old saying 'grow old disgracefully'

In closing I would like to go back to the 1st XV, or more accurately the Senior Squad. Throughout the season 42 players wore the 1st XV's colours, of which the overwhelming majority (65%) are home-grown players, a further 20% are local players and the remaining 15%, which is six players, are overseas players that we have recruited, or have approached us. When I say that, I include our eastern European players who have made a significant contribution alongside our Aussie and Kiwi friends.

Throughout the season the side ran in 214 tries, with a fairly even spread between forwards and backs and scored in excess of 1000 points during the league campaign, although in reality the 1000 point barrier for competitive fixtures was breached in the win against Horsham to secure the league title.

Finally, I would just like to say thanks to all those that turned up to support the 1st XV, and there were some long journeys during the season and it was good to see plenty of faces following the side's progress. It looks like we will have less distance to travel this coming season than we did in the last league campaign. The boys now have a short break and plans are already in place for next season, in fact, by the time you read this, preseason training will probably have already started.

Enjoy your summer and see you all in August when we look to do it all again. **AF**

**SEE PAGE 31 FOR SEASON'S STATS**



# Ben Williams

## *The Club Captain's Perspective*

Well, what a season that was... Firstly I'll try to keep this short and sweet (I know, for me very unusual). To say that the 2012-13 season was a success is a huge understatement. Yes, a lot of this was down to the success on the pitch for all the teams but off the pitch the club has gone through some radical changes. New players, coaches, mind-sets, kits, ideas and ethos have really seen the club grow and flourish in the short space of 12 months. Throughout the club every side has improved massively (especially the Mustangs under the guidance of Rich Weston). This bodes well for the upcoming season, with genuine competition for places throughout the club.

This progress has put our club back on the map with players wanting to join us from all over the county (and further afield) to be part of what were we are doing.

We have a real mix of experience, young blood, home grown and players from more exotic climes which is really creating a buzz around the club and although others may criticize the way we do things it has certainly brought some fantastic results.

The new season will again see further changes, all of which I am incredibly excited about. A few new faces, some new technology,

a tailored training regime and most importantly a new bar! However one thing has to stay the same and that is the 'one club' mentality that I and others have been banging on about. Regardless of what team we play for, where we come from or our ability, we all play for the same badge. I urge every single person who calls Maidstone Rugby 'their club' to embrace the one club mentality even more. Coming back to the bar after a game (even when away) and having a drink, getting involved with coaching the youth section, helping out with the day to day running of the club. All small and easy gestures but crucial in nurturing the atmosphere and ethos we all want for this great club.

A final thought from me:

When I was first offered the role of captain 12 months ago I said it was the biggest honour that I've ever had. I didn't think I could feel any more proud than I did that day, however, here I am a year down the line and glad to have been proved wrong. It'll be a privilege to lead the club into the new season. I look forward to seeing you all over the course of the season and starting the next step of the journey that the club is on. We are a club, One Club - Maidstone Rugby. *BW*



# Development News

## Trevor Langley's Progress Report

### *We're Moving Forward*

There are two items that have made significant progress over the last few months that justify an update to the membership; the Mote Sports Federation and development of the ground. I'll deal with them separately because, at this stage, they are separate items, although if all goes to plan, they will ultimately be linked.

### *Mote Sports Federation (MSF)*

We've just completed an internal review, after the first six months of operation, so now we have an assessment of where we stand. Until we'd reached this point, we were hesitant to issue a statement to rugby club members as we needed some time for the organisation to gel. But let me start by reiterating what the MSF is and its remit. MSF was set up as a combined organisation, represented equally by the cricket and rugby clubs, to run the site at the Mote. It has a governing body of three from each club, including both clubs' Chairmen and Treasurers, plus one other from each club. To this group report sub-committees, covering the operation of the facilities (pavilion plus tabernacle) and the sports ground. The Chairman is elected from the six members on a biannual rotating basis and the first one is Glen Aukett, the cricket club Chairman.

The aim of the body is to improve the efficiency of all operations and to plan for the long-term by maximising the usage of the site throughout the year. In addition we have been granted an extended lease of 50 years, ensuring security of tenure at the site, but with five-year review points, should our circumstances change if alternative options become available in the future.

We will not be able to fully evaluate the success of this 'trial period' of working together until we have been through a full year cycle and, even then, both Clubs have agreed that they will not enter into any formal, longer term arrangements until it is considered right to do so. However, after six months, we can say that the two clubs are working together successfully. We have a clear picture of what needs to be done and we are building solid foundations for the

future. Improvements to the pavilion are underway, we now have a refurbished Tabernacle for youth and club use and we have a new sense of involvement from the ground staff, something that was particularly important at the end of last season when we encountered some nasty weather at a key point for the first team.

Finally, Jon Fordham, former Commercial Director and Operations Director at Kent County Cricket Club, has been appointed (on a retired, voluntary basis) as Commercial Manager with the remit to 'sell' the facilities so that we start to generate income from external sources (outside the members of the clubs) to help off-set operating costs, by generating profit. Jon is already working towards this through the development of a robust Marketing Plan.

There is still much to do and it will take time. But we have already had interest from other clubs, in the Maidstone area, wishing to consider joining MSF in the future. It has also been endorsed widely by other external and influential bodies, including Maidstone Borough Council, enabling us to form a strategic sporting alliance with local major sports clubs, such as Maidstone United Football Club, to provide reciprocal opportunities to promote sport in the county town, for the benefit of all.

Against this back-drop, I think you will agree that progress has been made.



T-20 Match - Just like the IPL, even some southern hemisphere talent



# *Development News*

## ***Ground Development***

As I stated in the foregoing paragraphs, ground development sits outside the MSF because the ground itself is owned, in trust, by the cricket club. After initial joint discussions some years ago, Mote Cricket Club elected to undertake ground development themselves and this has now reached a stage where the rugby club has been brought back into the discussions.

Andy Golding and I attended a meeting with representatives of MCC a couple of weeks ago, so this update is timely and current. Firstly, let's go back to the principles involved here.

The aim of any development is to improve the facilities for the two clubs. The pavilion is now over a century old and it is showing its age. Getting funds together from grants or soft loans, sufficient to fund a major building project, is almost impossible in this time of Government cut back and austerity. The only way sufficient money can be generated is through the sale of land for housing development and this is the route being pursued. It should be noted that Maidstone Borough Council have shown support for raising money in this way, as long as it is invested in improved sporting facilities. This is an important feature of the scheme.

As matters now stand, a scheme has been put together that would involve building on two parts of the ground, one part where the grounds man's house now stands and a second taking up part of the first team pitch.

So how does this impact on rugby, I hear you ask, with a degree of concern in your voice? While there will be a hiatus over one season as pitches are re-laid and a new pavilion is built, under the current proposal and subject to formal plans being produced, the club will retain three pitches within The Mote, one of which will be a full size, 4G pitch, replacing the training pitch, a second pitch of the same current dimensions will be available where the second pitch now stands (with a match day stand, together with some spectator

seating) and a new third pitch will be laid out at right angles to the existing first team pitch. The dimensions of this pitch will be similar to the existing training pitch, albeit, slightly wider. In addition, we are looking to get an exclusive, fenced off pitch in the park, near to the Mote, as an additional playing area.

The pavilion will be completely rebuilt on the site of the existing pavilion on two stories, with six changing rooms complying with latest RFU and ECB stipulations, and two bars. The top story will be essentially for social occasions, while the bottom story will be for sport. We are now entering a period of detailed discussion over lay-out and exact facility specification but, suffice to say, the foot-print of the pavilion will be larger than the existing one, so I think we can conclude that facilities will be a step up on those existing and more tailored to a rugby club environment.

In the not-too-distant future, detailed plans will be available and these will be presented to the membership. The club will then be asked to endorse the changes as we will have to surrender our current rights to the first team pitch, as set out in our lease.

## ***A Long-term Financial Base***

I mentioned in the first part of this update that the development and MSF will eventually come together. When the pavilion has been completed, it will be run by MSF. The aim will then be to maximise income from the social and sporting facilities so that the profits go to pay the running costs of the buildings and ground. This will lighten the financial load on the two clubs and, if all goes to plan, give both clubs a long-term financial base from which to plan their playing development. This is something both clubs have singularly lacked in the past.

This whole scheme could now move quite quickly and we will keep you fully updated as there will be some important decisions to make that will have significant, positive impact on the future of the club. *TL*

# Senior Rugby

## Richard Weston - Mustangs on the Move

Taking over as coach/manager of the Mustangs was a real eye opener for me, as this was a huge step up from coaching youth rugby. After pre-season training a win away at Deal was just the start we just needed but unfortunately, Dan Cummins took an injury and was no longer able to play for the rest of the season.

Then, influential player and skipper Andy Bacon injury against Sevenoaks meant that he was a huge loss to the team. A narrow defeat away to Medway was next and with Dunstonians bombing our next fixture and with other teams pulled out of fixtures, sometimes two-three hours before kick-off, game time was looking to be a real pain.

This was followed by a huge win against Sidcup but an injury to Gary Whitehead saw him out for the rest of the season. Two losses on the bounce and a hard game away to Bromley, which was won with a long range penalty by Dan Eastwood, also produced yet another season-ending injury to Kane Stockwell.

The stage was set for the clash against local rivals Aylesford, but after leading 19-7 at half time, poor discipline cost us a game that we should have won. A win and a loss and another bombed game to end the first half of the season.

After the Christmas break, Dunstonians were first up giving the Mustangs an away victory, however, with a massive penalty against and down to 13 men meaning that the game could only be described

as scrappy. Discipline had to be improved dramatically.

Thanet travelled to a snowy Mote and, after receiving a sound beating by them previously, a tough game was on the cards. After clearing the snow from the lines, however, a fantastic win was achieved. Discipline was improving.

Confidence and self-belief was now growing and away wins at Charlton Park, Bromley, Colfs and Pulborough who all suffered heavy losses against a better disciplined Mustangs side.

Aylesford were next and they imploded as a 49-3 thrashing simply proved that their win earlier on in the season was a fluke.

Tonbridge Juddians suffered the same fate when visiting the Mote but still then went on to win the league title.

Medway did the double over the Mustangs in a tight exciting game which could have gone either way.

An up and down season saw some outstanding performances and some not so good. But we are looking forward to 2013-2014 which is going to be a good one! *RW*

*The Mustangs Results Table*

P	W	D	L
20	13	0	7





# Senior Rugby

## *Tuggy with the 3rd XV's News*

Its been a great season for the club as a whole and the 3rds have certainly been very much a part of it. But I guess I should start by briefly reflecting on the thoughts and objectives I set out for the season.

**I really wanted to build a team to 'have a core of experienced players, to see aspiring players developing their game and skills and transition players back to the 2nd and 1st team'.**

We have had 10 players that have represented the team with over 10 appearances each and supporting that a further 73 players! Ross returned back to the front row, looking as fresh as ever, to link up with Richard Gray. Simon Wright returned two years after neck surgery to play 10 games and even score a try, only to be side lined by a tendon injury to his finger tip. Pathetic excuse but his lovely wife Kate makes the decisions. Having my old mate Nick East AKA SC back has been brilliant. Still winning ball and causing chaos in equal measure. He never lacks commitment to the cause or a wry smile and a 'sorry Tuggy' after he has yet again crossed the fine line of acceptability and then left it way behind him. A mobile Mayhem had a storming season (fortunately his work commitments seemed to fall in line with

our fixtures), as did our politest player Edd Adams until his social diary got in the way of playing, very poor form Edward. What Howsen and Laurenson lacked on the pitch they more than made up for with their beer-fuelled debriefs to me on all aspects of the game and my captaincy. Great to have them alongside me and it also ticks my *Care in the Community* box, so thanks guys. Also, to name but a few, Andy Bacon came back from injury, Cezar and Mikael scared the life out of opposition, Dave 'action' Jackson stepped into the breach and Fergus Carty came into the team and quickly developed his game - One to watch next season.

We faced old adversaries in the form of Paul Essenigh and his young Medway team, beating them once and losing once by a highly dubious penalty try. Although Wilky was involved so you can never be to sure.

We have made new friends with prop geordie Chris Morden who unfortunately had to move away with work but has kept in touch and came down for the team curry. Justin Evans also joined us after many years at Harlow and his commitment and effort has been







# Senior Rugby

## *Ian Ausher's 5th Team Season Summary*

Finishing a respectable fourth in the league and winning the Memorial Cup were the fruits of our labour this season and fourth place in a league in which both winners and runners up were perhaps misplaced and were brushing aside their opposition week in week out, is probably even more creditable than it would initially appear.

After playing our first fixtures against the aforementioned teams and coming away with heavy losses, there was obviously a mismatch but down to excellent support from the club and through selection, we were able to balance the scales for the return encounters, a 10-5 loss and a 14-10 win being the subsequent results.

### *Victory At Last*

As for the Memorial Cup, it is a game held in high esteem by all involved and an honour to be part of. Although a win was recorded for the 5ths (the first in over a decade) the game was, shall we say, somewhat abridged, as injury forced a long delay and the second half was played on a adjoining football pitch. A unique and memorable experience for all involved I'm sure. Behind 10-0 at the half, then playing into almost darkness, the 5ths managed to score the only points in the second half going on to win 12-10 (perhaps the dimming light played a part as I suspect a few of the Vets were experiencing eyesight issues). Either that or perhaps, due to the long delay, a few had aspirations to be back in the clubhouse eating mince pies and emptying the barrels of guest ales.

Joking aside though, I hope that we can retain the cup next time and in a game without any abnormalities.

### *The Skipper's Lot*

On a personal note, as captain I have had a very different set of issues to overcome this season. The main problem last season, following a fantastic recruitment drive, was the struggle to get 20+ players some game-time on a Saturday afternoon. This term numbers have been lower partly because, following last season's large influx of new players, a few of the 5th team's older guard inevitably took the opportunity to either move off to the Vets, retire or semi retire. I'd



like to wish them well in whatever decisions they have taken.

Again due to fantastic support from the other senior skippers and through selection, we managed to stay afloat and honour all of our league fixtures, something that a few other clubs' lower league teams have struggled to do. Aylesford, for example, were dropped from our league because, too often, they were unable to fulfil fixtures.

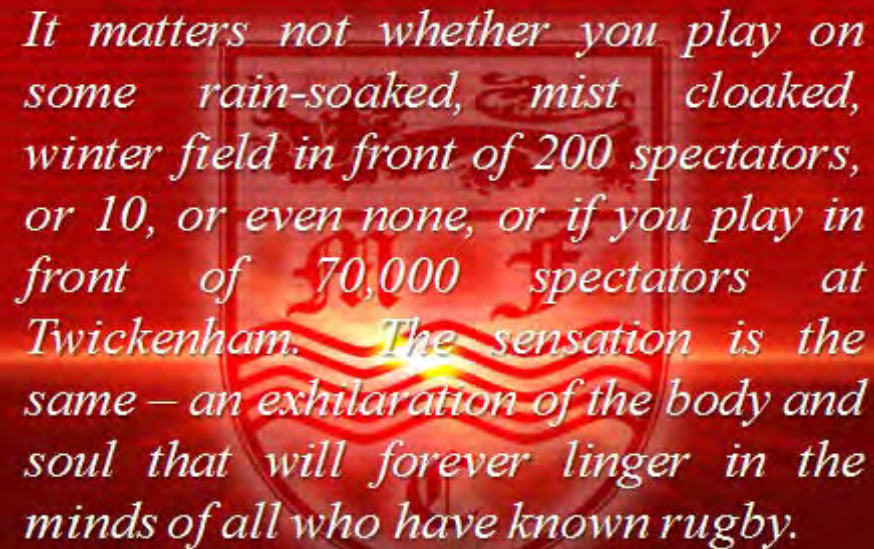
In all a most enjoyable season and I am hoping we can continue and build for the forthcoming season's campaign. *IA*

***"I never comment on referees...  
and I'm not going to break the habit of a  
lifetime for that prat" .***

***Ewan McKenzie***

# Senior Rugby

## *The Die-hards - Steve Vincent On Exploits in Vetland*



*It matters not whether you play on some rain-soaked, mist cloaked, winter field in front of 200 spectators, or 10, or even none, or if you play in front of 70,000 spectators at Twickenham. The sensation is the same – an exhilaration of the body and soul that will forever linger in the minds of all who have known rugby.*

Fred Allen, former New Zealand Rugby Coach

Having reviewed my musings from a previous edition of the Newsletter it would seem that not much has changed in Veteran land. We still manage to honour all the fixtures arranged for us (if only the same could be said for other clubs where we have suffered a number of cry-offs). We continue to provide players to teams higher up the club structure (this season most notably the 4ths) the social scene is similar year by year and we continue to tour.

However, things do change, not least our loss to the 5ths in the annual Memorial Match, the personnel involved within the team and the opposition against whom we have played.

The bare statistics reveal that the Vets played 16 fixtures; winning eight; losing eight – pretty average then! Points For 263; Against 321.

Of the losses those to Canterbury Cardinals (10-52), Canterbury 5ths (12-52) and Old Wills (12-42) were the heaviest and, on reflection,

were fixtures that perhaps should not have been accepted. Our biggest margin of victory was against Gravesend Moles (34-0) with the other wins being relatively close affairs. Whilst our traditional opponents may have changed; no fixtures against TJ's, Sevenoaks, Ashford or Cranbrook for instance, new fixtures are being added or cemented such as Crawley Vets and Ashford Barbarians. The lack of our traditional opponents is, perhaps a sad reflection on the state of Club Rugby in the area as only six of our 16 fixtures could be described as being against teams with a veteran majority. Maidstone Vets will continue to remain up for the challenge of playing against whosoever is put before us, in the spirit of social rugby. Our thanks go to Richard Ewence for his work in organising the fixtures and, where necessary, co-ordinating with other teams within the club to ensure that those vets who wish to play for others, when there is no vet's fixture, have the opportunity to do so.

As mentioned, whilst the vets do play for other teams it should be acknowledged that we have also had help from players higher up the club resorting to our level – notably on one occasion a 1st team player – and for this we are grateful.

A total of 35 players (excluding occasional 'guests' from other club teams) represented the vets over the season with 10 playing 10 or more matches. Two players, Adrian Clark and Dave Jackson managed to appear in all 16 vets games, being closely followed by Steve Vincent (15), Glyn Richards, Keith Newman and Pete Gray (14), Bobby Keynes (13), Mick Walker and Brian Costello (12) and Bob Purfitt, Tony O'Mahoney and Matt Ellesmere (11). (The foregoing exclude any appearances the individuals made for other teams).

The top points scorer accolade very nearly went to our kicking prop forward, Pete Gray with 37 points (four tries, seven conversions and one penalty), however, he was pipped by Brian Costello with 40 points (eight tries – including two hat-tricks) with Mick Walker contributing 30 points (one try, 11 conversions and one penalty). Steve Vincent, Tony O'Mahoney, Bob Purfitt, Ben Jones and Adrian Clark, all with three



# Senior Rugby

tries each, also contributed. (Again, the foregoing exclude any points scored when playing for other teams although, incidentally, Costello would not have been overtaken in the points scoring department if those points were included).

Deciding upon the recipient of the vet's Player of the Year award was no easy task this season with many excellent individual performances within the team environment; however for being a more than regular player and top points scorer – despite most coming in two games – the award went to Brian Costello.

During the season the vets welcomed Bob Purfitt, Ben Jones, Dave Coleman, Ian Davis and Miles Tempan into the side and towards the end of the season Craig Bowden made a return from injury. It is hoped that they stay with the vets for many seasons to come and we look forward to others joining.

As previously mentioned the Memorial Match was lost to the 5ths although, whilst taking nothing away from Ian Ausher and his boys who deserved their victory on the day, the match seemed to turn on a metatarsal injury to a 5th team player (before which the vets were dominating) meaning relocation of the match to an adjacent football pitch. With 'wendy-ball' being anathema to many of the vets, the change of environment clearly contributed to the loss!

The Memorial match was, however, notable for what is believed to be an historic event at the club. It was in this game that Paul Ehrhart took to the field with his son and two grandsons – possibly the first (and probably only) time that three generations of the same family have played for the same club team. To add to the family connections Paul's son-in-law appeared for the 5ths.

Pre-match warm-ups seem to be a thing of the past for the vets who, instead, now hold a pre-match meeting. Of course, this cannot be on the day of the game (too busy focussing, getting in the zone, and all that...) and occurs on a Friday night (in what should become a vet sponsor - 'The Flower Pot') to discuss game plan, tactics, selection and other such nonsense. The Flower Pot joins the usual suspects on the vet's social calendar, others being the Varsity Match, Christmas Curry and Veterans Player's Dinner.

High on the social calendar, although the rugby is also important too, is the annual tour that this season took in matches against West Bridgford and Newark whilst using Nottingham, via Stamford, as a base. Of course, what goes on tour etc. etc. although no negative comments had been made by the time of going to press so the tour must have been good. Our thanks are extended to both host clubs who ensured our stays were welcoming and they no doubt have learnt a few new songs and drinking games for their own upcoming tours.

Finally, something that does not change is the hard work undertaken by many at the club behind the scenes (too many to name but they know who they are) to ensure that a bunch of old, and not so old, gits have the opportunity of enjoying a Saturday run out followed by a good old chin wag in the bar after. Thanks to you all.

In summary the vets have had a relatively successful season and continue to enjoy their rugby, endeavouring to participate in the "one club" ethos. Whilst change is inevitable one constant that must not change is for those of a 'certain age' to be provided with the opportunity to don their boots and represent the club to the best of their abilities, not necessarily focusing on results but more in the spirit of social rugby. **SV**



# *Junior Rugby*

## *The Under 6s*

Firstly, I would like to thank all the U6s for the commitment they have shown this season to turn up week in week out in all weathers. We've had some sunny days, fewer than I'd like to remember, some rainy days but mostly it has been cold. Despite what the weather has thrown at them the U6s have continued to turn up to train and with such enthusiasm. I'm sure the Hotdogs after training had something to do with it.

I'd also like to thank the parents who turn out to support their children and without their encouragement this wouldn't be possible.

For many this was the first time they'd played with an odd shape ball so we started the season concentrating on their ball handling skills, running with two hands on the ball and on spacial awareness. Whilst good progress was made with the individual skills putting them all together proved a little more difficult, with the first few TAG games somewhat chaotic. But practice makes perfect and towards the end of the season the children made huge improvements and were showing good promise.

We finished the season with a fun day involving both the children and their parents followed by a B-B-Q. All the U6's received a trophy along with a Certificate of Achievement to show my appreciation of all their efforts this season.



During the course of the season I have seen some excellent ball handling skills with the children showing a lot of potential at such a young age but above all they enjoy themselves and always carry a smile. I personally am looking forward to next season which will see them start competing in matches at home and away at other clubs.

I hope to see each and every one of them at the club next season.

## *The Under 7s*

Our U7 Squad have had a brilliant season and really stepped up to the challenge of playing in their first festivals. They have trained and worked hard to improve their skills and ability not just as individuals but also as a team. All their coaches are very proud of the commitment that they have shown week in week out.

As of September 2013 we will say goodbye to the old continuum as the new is brought in. Some counties had already taken on the New Tag Rules, however, which meant teaching the children how the new rules worked but without letting them forget the old ones as well. Much to the amazement of both parents and coaches, this didn't phase them at all and we saw them play both continua to the best of their ability.

On Sunday 3rd March we were lucky enough to be invited to compete in a Festival at Allianz Park, home ground of Saracens, and their new 4G pitch. The children not only played really well but also thought the pitch was amazing with only one complaint from most which was "look how shiny and clean my boots are" (due to a really wet season their boots were soon back to their muddy state and just the way they like them). Once the festival had finished we all watched Saracens beat London Welsh 28-23. The whole day was thoroughly enjoyed by players, parents and coaches and is something we hope to do more of next season.

We ended the season with a party for the U6's - U10's which involved players, siblings, parents and coaches playing some rounders



# Junior Rugby

followed by a BBQ and ending with an awards ceremony. Our 1st Team Captain Ben Williams accompanied by Players Sam Bailey, Willie Brown and Lewis Fagg were there to present medals to Ruby Mercer, Ryan Moorhouse, Dominic Sage, Jed Winter, Toby and Josh Philpott, Malaki Harris, Daniel Butler, George Siddoway, Edward Simpson, Dexter Bentley, Zara Collins, Owen Lindsay, Ethan Yates, Ben Walls and Matthew Nixon for their participation during the season. They also presented three trophies in which players, parents and coaches had voted for their outstanding performance during the season. Players' Player was awarded to Ruby Mercer, Parents' Player was awarded to Ethan Yates and Coaches' Player was awarded to Toby Philpott.

I would like to finish by saying thank you to coaches Tim, Ron, John and all the U7 parents for their on-going help and support and by congratulating our U7 squad for their overall performance this season and look forward to continuing to coach them next season in the U8's. **CG**



On Saturday 16th March we saw Malaki Harris and Ruby Mercer here with Captain Ben Williams as mascots for the 1st Team Senior Vase Match against Cantebrigians which Maidstone won 57-7.

## *The Under 8s*

I would like to congratulate all the U8 players on a very successful and enjoyable season. The commitment, effort, and improvement the whole squad have shown this season, both individually and coming together as a team, has been fantastic, and they should all be very proud of themselves.

The majority have been with us in the U7s and many since the U6s and we have had three or four new starters this season, who have fitted in and taken to rugby very well and are great assets to the squad.

We have a group of 25 players and usually average about 20 at training each week.

We have always been strong in attack, so this season we have concentrated on support play, passing skills, quick off-loading to players in space and particularly, working on improving our defence. The work put in has paid off with some good results this season.

We took two equal strength teams to the Medway Festival in October, both winning their pools and making their finals, before losing to strong Sevenoaks and Aylesford teams.

We won as many as we lost at both Maidstone festivals and always played well when playing other clubs home or away.

In March, 53 parents and players boarded the coach at 7am to go to Saracens at their new Allianz Park stadium for a Match Day Festival.

We again took two equal strength teams and, despite some very strong opposition including Hemel who went on to win, they played



# Junior Rugby

well and one team only missed out on the knock out stages by one try. It was a great experience for the players and they loved playing in the stadium on the new 4G pitch. After our matches we grabbed some food and drinks and settled in our seats to watch Saracens play London Welsh. A long but very enjoyable day and we hope to do the same next season.



We took A and B teams to the Kent Prelims at Beckenham. The A team drew two and lost one, pitching us in the Bowl QF against Sheppey, which we won 3 - 2 to qualify for the Finals. The B team played very well, winning two and losing two, just missing out on qualification. The strength of both teams was very good, with little to choose between them.

The A team went to the Kent Finals at TJs on Sun 28th April and beat Blackheath 3 - 2 in the semi of the Bowl competition, giving us a final against Thanet. It was a very hard fought game with excellent play from both sides, but Thanet won 9 - 6. The team thoroughly deserved the runners up trophy and I was so pleased they got their hands on some silverware, just reward for the season's efforts.

After three years of Tag, all the players and coaches are really looking forward moving to contact next season and we have the added benefit of going up through the age groups with the New Rules of Play, which I am confident will benefit all players.

The coaches, Stuart Carroll, Richard Venning, and I, all agree it has been a pleasure to coach them this season. We have had great help from a very good group of parents, offering support and encouragement and helping out at both Maidstone festivals, so our thanks go to them.

I would also like to thank Alan Crosbie for organising the October Festival, Charlotte Goodbody for the April Festival, and Ian Wilkinson for the great job he is doing as Youth Chairman. **RE**

## *The Under 9s*

What a season! The under 9s, the last age group to be unaffected by the RFU Continuum have taken the transition to big kid full-contact rugby in their stride. It has been a massive eye opener to their coaches, to the parents, but most of all to the children.

We trained through the summer at Penenden Heath, with a core group of kids. And what fun we had! Some excellent skills work, some massively entertaining contact work and then, after three or four sessions, to full contact. It was amazing to behold. Strong running, strong tackling and a complete 'what the heck' at the break down. So, we then worked on this, rucks and mauls, body position, grab a mate. It is wonderful to compare those days to the Kent qualifiers when, despite being a physically small squad, the kids played like lions and put their bodies on the line in the name of Maidstone Rugby.

So, the season has seen our numbers swell, then retract. We have lost some to other sports, hockey and cycling, some have just not enjoyed the transition to contact. But we have also blooded some new players who have flourished and become key members of the squad. Our challenge will be to develop through the summer, hitting the ground with a new purpose, playing to our strengths. We are fast, agile and have good handling skills. We do not have the bulk of other teams so need to focus on moving the ball and trying to avoid contact. Rugby should be about evasion, not confrontation. That said, when we hit, we hit hard and fast. The team has some outstanding strike runners, tackles ferociously and, to a player, work tirelessly for each other. The squad has bonded well and discipline



# Junior Rugby

will be a key factor in taking the game to the next level.

The festivals came and went and each time we learnt something new about the squad and also our coaching. I can speak for us all when I say that we are looking forward to the 2013/14 season and that we feel more victories are just around the corner. *JS*

## *The Under 12s*

After four years of storming the group stages and then losing our quarterfinal, the U12s finally managed to win one and make it to finals day at Tonbridge. The players have really developed this year thanks in no small part to the help from Willie and Sam Bailey. The semi-final with Sidcup made the Aviva Premiership final look dull and pedestrian, with the Stones setting a new record for disallowed tries.

With seconds to go our superior scrum gave away a penalty for driving the opposition too far, the boys reacted better than a certain Mr Hartley did, but not as quickly as Sidcup who nipped in to level the scores at 3-3. The rules being the rules the match was decided on a coin toss, which we lost and Sidcup went on to win the final. The result aside it was great to be at finals day. To see the boys playing their best rugby of the season, and with real heart, made the season for all watching. *JM*

## *The Under 13s*

The last six years seem to have been filled with 'Big Steps Up' and this year has been no different. We moved to a full size pitch for the first time and added flankers to finally reach full 15-a-side rugby. Granted, many of the boys had played on a full size pitch in Y7 at school, but with a mix of abilities and experience this was always going to be a tough and exciting challenge. One which I am delighted to say the boys took completely in their stride. We started the season fit and more cohesive as a squad than we have ever been thanks to our ex-Marine-led summer fitness regime and it showed on the pitch – more stamina, less bickering, greater pace, more celebration when things when well, and heads still up when they didn't.



Our first match versus Aylesford was always going to be hard, and hard it was. We lost, but for the first time we saw a glimmer of something having changed, as the squad never gave up, right to the final whistle. Throughout the season we went on to beat Tunbridge Wells, for the first time ever, as well as Canterbury and we gave Gravesend and Sittingbourne each a good seeing-to along the way.

When we reached the Kent Prelims in March we were riding high and boy did we have a great time. We lost three out of four pool games, all very narrowly, and lost out on a semi-final place to Folkestone by just seven points to five. The best rugby we'd seen all season and despite the miserable weather the parents, coaches and boys all left happy that they could have done very little more on the pitch. We also had our first ever 7's tournament – not such a successful day, but the boys got a taste of a different kind of rugby, played the best they could in an unfamiliar situation. We'll be back to do better next year. At least the weather was better than the Kent competition and we got some sunshine.

In terms of ability we're now playing a game that our boys are built for, mostly, and which they increasingly understand more through their developing game sense. We have the space on a full sized pitch to exploit our fitness and pace, running around and through teams who previously relied on tying the ball up in the forwards and pummelling us backwards. Tuggy, Matt and (lately) Miles have done a great job encouraging discipline, communication and innovation in our back line. I have had more than a few comments from other clubs' coaches about the lines of running and moves our backs now

# Junior Rugby

regularly employ. Tactical choices are beginning to make sense from the touch line and we're mixing it up more, creating overlaps and spaces to play into rather than simply trying to beat our way through the opposition and failing.

Pleasingly, though perhaps slightly more slowly, our forwards are now working much harder to get to the right place and put in the work required to keep or contest possession and towards the end of the season were consistently succeeding. Our scrum is a thing of beauty now, taking on and winning against much bigger 8's than us, though we have been blessed with some new players with additional bulk up front this year. As far as we can work out, we have the only hooker in Kent who can throw a straight line-out ball beyond the 15 m line and, finally, our boys have discovered that they CAN jump.

Next year we need to focus – again – on aggression, commitment and decisions at the break-down to increase the amount of clean ball getting out to the backs and, of course, support-support-support.

It is not just the boys who have gelled this year – their parents have been amazing in support of the team and of all the fund raising required for our first ever tour (which many of them also attended). Amongst many other things we've made and sold key rings, packed bags at Morrisons, had a very successful if slightly hazy race night and two of their number even ran a half marathon in support of the boys. Thank you to all of you for your time and commitment. The reward was worth it when we visited Northampton, watched the Saints pummel Sale, bowled until late at night, then went on to play local sides Olney and Northampton Men's Own. Both were very good sides and our boys, resplendent in their brand new sponsored and numbered club shirts, played the very best rugby they ever have. We lost to Olney but won against Men's Own and both matches were stunning to watch. It was so much fun we're already talking about next year's tour.

I could go on for days like this, despite the weather killing weekends, some serious injuries, the loss of one of our players to the 'Got To Dance' finals and some large defeats. We have, all-in-all, had a wonderful season and everything is looking just right to do even better next year.

## ***I'd like to thank***

- All of the parents for everything they have done for the boys.
- Kayleigh Durling for her assistance over the last three years and wish her well in buying a house with her partner.
- Our sponsor – Top Bond Plc – for our most excellent new numbered shirts.
- The senior players who gave of their time on the occasional Sunday Alex Hadi, Willie Brown, Neil Graves, Duncan McLintock, Ben Williams, Josh Mckenzie and James Iles.
- And, of course, for their continued support of my coaching this season, Tuggy, Alan, Matt and Miles.

## ***And Finally...***

I'd like to thank the boys – they have continued to turn up in awful weather, they have listened, learned and put into practice all the new (and old) skills we've thrown at them. Their attitude on and off the pitch has improved immeasurably and they have been a delight to watch when they're playing. It's always difficult to single out any individual, especially now as the level of competence and commitment across the squad is becoming more stable and equal. However it is worth singling out Alfie Hayward, Ben Woodhams, Ollie Jenkins and Lex Ayling, all of whom trialled for Kent and congratulations to Lex who was selected to represent at County Level. Well done boys keep it up.

## ***The Under 15s***

The Under 15's commenced summer training in August and, with new faces bolstering the numbers pre-season to over 30, it briefly promised the prospect of running two teams for the season. However by the end of September it was clear that the numbers in the squad had dropped to under 30 and one large squad would commence season 12-13.

A large squad brings its own problems and this was evident for the first four games of the season where, on three occasions, winning positions were lost as lots of changes were made to accommodate the 25+ players available for each match.

The coaches made the decision that the playing squad would be selected from those players that showed the right attitude and



# Junior Rugby



commitment at training and during matches and not necessarily on ability. The players were informed and the attitude towards training and playing changed for the positive.

Mid November brought the first win at Blackheath 33 - 10, on their first team pitch, followed by back to back wins at Gravesend and Old Gravesendians. The now familiar bad weather during December meant that it would be January before the team played again.

In early January the team travelled to play a strong Canterbury team and lost a very competitive match by just 2 points. Due to the bad weather, training and matches between mid January and the end of March made any continuity difficult. However the team did win at home to Folkestone and New Ash Green with an away win at Beckenham. Two of tough narrow losses against Stanford from Essex and Old Colfs showed there was still plenty of room for improvement.

The Kent Festival was cancelled twice due to bad weather, eventually taking place on 14th April and a, by now, depleted squad were knocked out in the quarter finals of the plate tournament.

The following week the 7's squad managed to go one better and reach the semi finals of the Kent 7's.



This season has been a bit of a mixed bag, but the squad has, as always matured and some are showing glimpses of the potential to play rugby at a high level once they start adult rugby in just over two years.

At the time of writing the squad are looking forward to the end of season tour to Lille and I'm sure suitable chaos and mayhem will ensue, interspersed by a couple of games of rugby.

A big thank you from the whole squad to Steve Oakley for the time and effort he puts into running and coaching this squad, ably assisted by Ray Long, Steve Skip, Gavin, Nick Ward, Alex Craven and Tina Richmond (tour organiser and team admin).

We would also like to thank Willy Brown from the senior 1st team squad for his time spent with the backs and also to Ben Williams the 1st team captain for his help with the forwards.

As always thank you to the parents for their support throughout the season and of course the whole squad of young men who continue to mature and show dedication to the game of rugby. **AC**

## *Our Season's Stats.*

PLAYED	WON	LOST
15	6	9
KENT PLATE COMPETITION		QUARTER FINALISTS
KENT SEVENS COMPETITION		SEMI FINALISTS

***Rugby football is a game I can't claim absolutely to understand in all its niceties, if you know what I mean. I can follow the broad, general principles, of course.***

***I mean to say, I know that the main scheme is to work the ball down the field somehow and deposit it over the line at the other end and that, in order to squallch this programme, each side is allowed to put in a certain amount of assault and battery and do things to its fellow man which, if done elsewhere, would result in 14 days without the option, coupled with some strong remarks from the Bench.***

***P. G. Wodehouse - Very Good, Jeeves (1930)***

# Club Dinner

## Annual Awards

Maidstone Rugby rounded off a fine 2012-13 season with our annual club dinner on Friday 10th May and, as is the tradition, the efforts of everyone across the club, from both playing and non-playing sides, were recognised. Four Vice Presidencies were awarded for contributions made to the club by Mike Laurenson, Jonathan Davies, Bob Peall and Andy Foley. In addition RFU VIP Ties were awarded to Allan Crosbie from the Youth Section, Trevor Langley and Bob Hayton along with a club blazer for long term volunteer and supporter Francis Talbot.

Recognition for their efforts in supporting the on-pitch efforts of the players saw 1st XV Manager Fin Davis and touch-judge Dave Hughes receive the Head Coach's Award with the respective team Player's Player awards going to the following recipients:

- 1st XV – Sam Bailey
- 2nd (Mustangs) XV – Sam Weston
- A (3rd) XV – David Ruaux
- Ex A (4th) XV – Andy Smith
- B (5th) XV (The Captain's Shield) – Simon Seal
- Veterans XV (The Mike Sharples Plate) – Brian Costelloe

Following such a good season and the outstanding efforts of the players, settling on the winners for the club awards was difficult: The David Arnold Young Player Trophy was awarded to winger James Davies who scored 16 tries along the way, despite missing out on the tail end of the campaign with a broken ankle.

The Bernard Hinks Player awards were presented by Stephen Bowman from the club's principle sponsor Brachers Law and went to Matt Cooper in the senior sides for his performances in both the 3rd XV and primarily with the Mustangs XV, whilst the 1st XV award winner was Willie Brown who played in every match during the season, scoring 21 tries and amassing 162 points in all.

Charlotte Goodbody, a stalwart in the Tag Rugby section of the club took the Bernard Hinks Award for the Non-Player, not just for her overall contribution but also for stepping into the breach at short notice to organise the festival as part of visiting Farnham RFC's tour.

The Centenary Cup for the Team of the Season went to the Mustangs XV, who despite not picking up any honours, had a solid season in Invicta 2, and showed great form from the mid-season interval.

Finally, although not awarded every year, The Harry Green Award has been presented three times in recent seasons and it was awarded again this year with Bob Hayton's contribution to the club over several seasons being recognised with the award. **BH**





# *Foreign Invasion*

## *Martin Arnold Busting the Myth*

Much has been made at grass roots level in recent times about the influx of foreign players into our game. Often described as mercenaries, just trying to make a fast buck before disappearing off to the next highest bidder, they take away opportunities for home grown talent to play and cause friction due to payment. Just listen to some of the accents you hear on any given Saturday and you could be forgiven for thinking you've walked into a Walkabout bar with as many 'yeah bros' as 'hello old chaps'.

Whilst there is undoubtedly some truth behind these views, my own experience, especially during my time at Maidstone, is very different. I was very fortunate to have played with some fantastic overseas imports who left an indelible mark on Maidstone Rugby, both on and off the pitch and most of these guys didn't receive a penny.

My first year back from university coincided with a couple of new recruits joining the first team from Dorking. Jonbarrie Sim (JB) and Rob Fergus amazed the Maidstone coaches and players alike when we had played them in a league fixture the previous season. Our forwards dominated the opposition but whenever the ball made it out to Rob and JB they carved us to pieces. Afterwards in the bar an approach was made to the two Kiwis to see if they would consider a move to the county town. They jumped at the opportunity to play behind a pack who they could guarantee would deliver them a lot more ball than they were used to at Dorking. At first I was disappointed to hear we had brought in two New Zealand centres as it meant I ended up on the wing but I profited more than most, as their ability to find a gap or offload in the tackle led to me scoring countless tries. Added to their offensive ability was absolutely ferocious defence and this rubbed off on everybody from the training pitch to match day. I don't think we were used to the intensity they brought to drills at training but we soon learned that if you went in half hearted you'd come off second best. Sadly, due to visa issues their stay was all too brief but during their time we played some of the best rugby seen at Maidstone for a number of years.

At around the same time that Rob and JB arrived at the club, we also had the pleasure of the company of some pretty skilful south sea islanders. Api Kata and Tim Vereivalu played most of their games at Maidstone in the Mustangs but it was fellow Fijian, Lee Laqeretabua, or Lee as we preferred to call him, who made the biggest impact. I think it's fair to say that we had never had anyone like Lee play at Maidstone before or probably since for that matter. The kindest most gentle man off the pitch but an absolute warrior when he crossed the whitewash. Lee's first season coincided with us playing without the number 7 shirt (Lee's position), an amazingly thoughtful tribute to my brother David, unsurprisingly suggested by then club captain, Dave Charlton. In the changing room before the first league game of the season, Lee came up to me and looked me in the eyes and gave me a look that let me know he'd do everything he could to make sure we got the win. He had never met my brother but this simple gesture meant the world to me. The Fijians moved on to our near neighbours Aylesford but in the short time they were with us they always wore the shirt with pride and 100% commitment.

When I started to think about this next part I couldn't help but smile. Obviously I'm referring to the boys from Darfield. I say boys because when Mark McIlroy and Sam Johnston arrived at the club, that's exactly what they were. To say they left as men would probably be a bit unfair on 99.9% of the male population but I think you know what I'm getting at. I believe I'm right in saying that fellow kiwi, Eugene Moore, introduced Macca and Sam to Maidstone. Macca was an extremely talented centre; a strong runner and miserly in defence. Sadly for Macca when God was handing out the brains, he wasn't just back of the queue, he was in the wrong queue. Macca's greatest comment that will live long in the memory of anyone who heard it was "I could eat 100 eggs in an hour; it's only one a minute"!

Much has been said about Sam Johnston over the years, most of which can't be published due to this newsletter being a family edition. What I can say, with some confidence, is that Sam gave everything he had to Maidstone. He rarely, if ever, missed training

# Foreign Invasion

and would gladly play any position on the pitch. Sam will definitely be remembered for being as enthusiastic in the bar as he was on the paddock, a familiar trait with the other Darfield players who represented Maidstone – Scott McIlroy (Macca's brother), Scott Mitchell, Huw Ridgen and also Aussie Mike Catherwood. First and foremost however they wanted to play rugby and they were part of some very good Maidstone teams.

This year's promotion winning side is probably the most cosmopolitan we have seen at the Mote, with representatives from such far flung places as New Zealand, Australia, Poland, Romania and Lordswood. Whilst some spectators might frown at the influx of overseas players, it's really important, especially with the current crop of players in mind, to remember the work and effort many of these players put in to the youth section of the club and the wider community. They aren't just putting in 80 minutes on a Saturday; they are dedicated to developing the next generation of Maidstone players and visiting local schools to widen the talent pool. They also bring new ideas and skills on to the pitch, which clearly rub off on their team mates and Maidstone seem to be doing a good job of making them feel welcome. If you have any doubt about this then have a look at the 'New Players' section of the website and the testimonials given by Willie Brown and Ivan Walkling.

I don't think I'm alone in wanting Maidstone to be playing higher up the rugby pyramid but I want it to be sustainable. I want to see entertaining rugby and I want to see players committed to wearing the shirt with pride and I don't really care what's written on their passport. To date I think Maidstone have got the balance about right but as the game becomes more professional we have to make sure new players realise that Maidstone is a community rugby club. We have a collective responsibility as members to make all new players feel welcome and if we do this we'll get the best out of them on and off the pitch. Never has club captain Ben William's 'one club' mentality been more appropriate. **MA**

## **Editors Footnote:**

*It's not all one-way traffic; although Ivan leaves us to return to Australia, he has already put plans in place in terms of both employment and accommodation for one of our players to travel to Australia early next year and spend a season with his own club in Newcastle in New South Wales. Just his way of giving something back to a club where he feels he was made very welcome.*





# Statistics



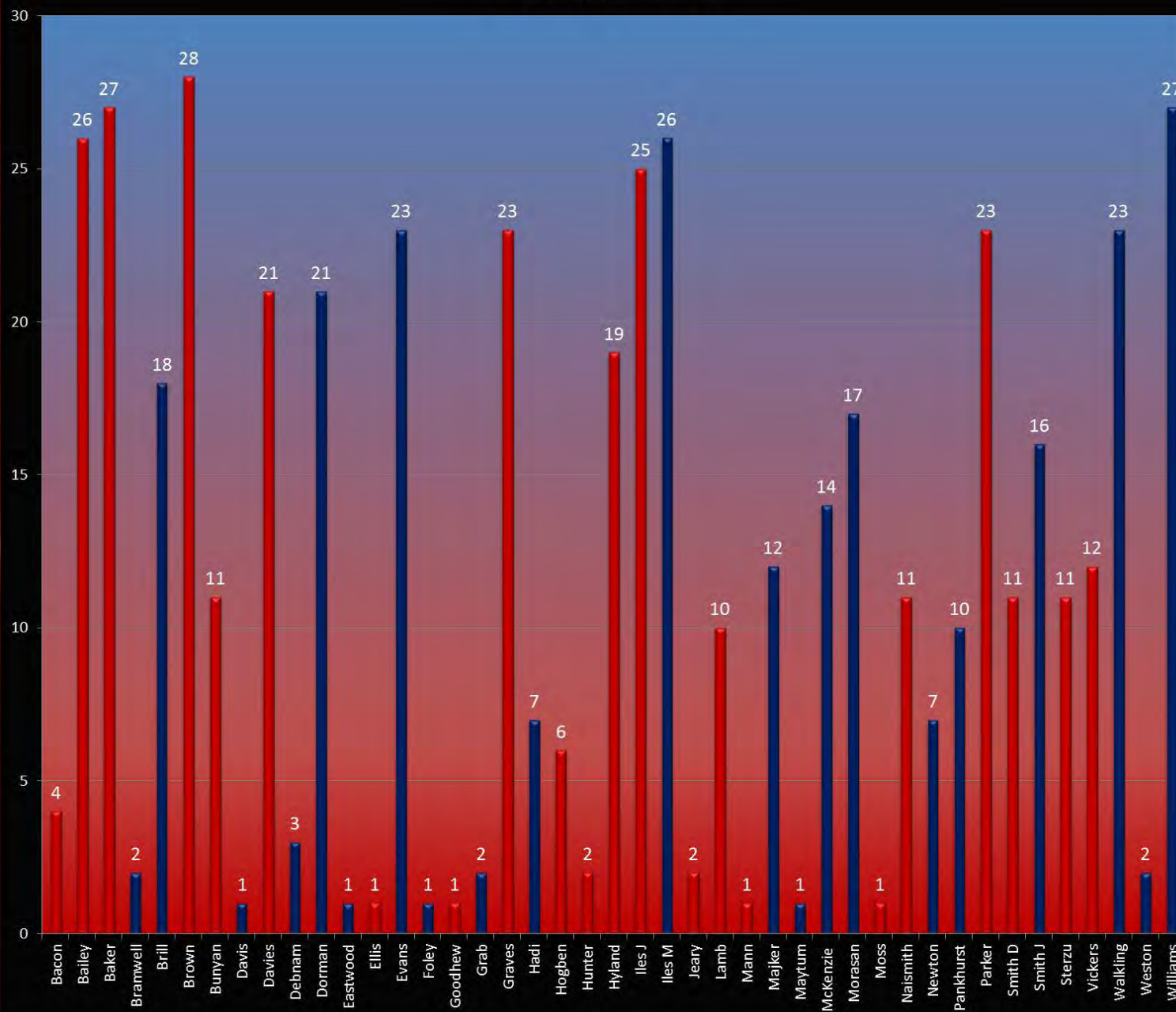
# 1st XV 2012/13 Playing Record

- Won
- Drawn
- Lost



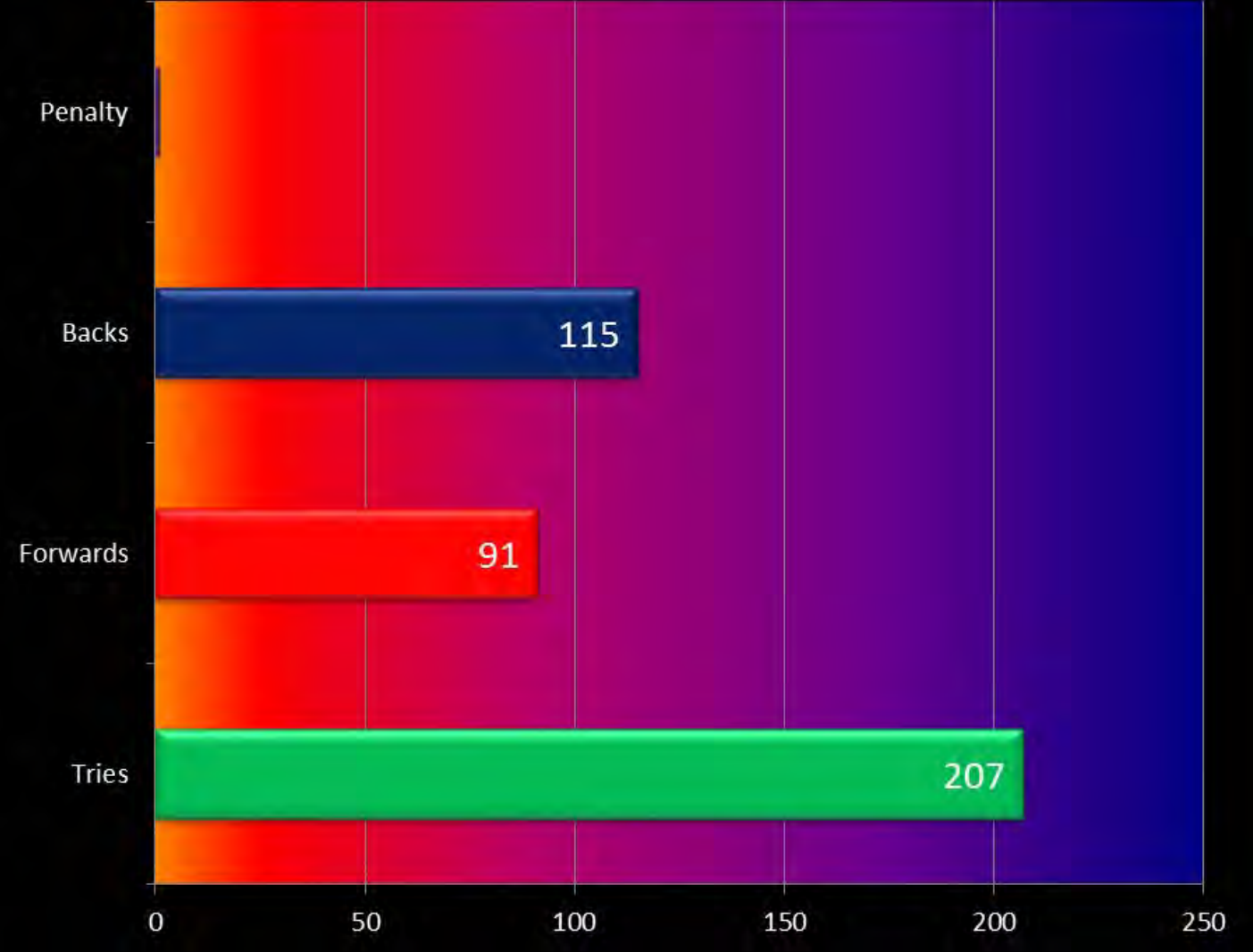


# 1st XV Appearances





# Tries





# Try Scorers

