



Brachers

law



Match Report



London Division 2 (South East)

Maidstone FC 72 v Heathfield & Waldron RFC 5

Played at The Mote

Saturday 2nd November, 2013

Maidstone climbed back to the top of the table with this convincing 72-5 win against a plucky, but limited, Heathfield & Waldron side and, in the process, stretched their points' difference past the two hundred mark. If ever a statistic defined the style of rugby Maidstone are looking to play, this one sums it up. And yet, there is still ample room for improvement: with sharper passing, this eleven try romp could have been even greater.



With the debris from last week's storm still littering the ground and another in the offing, there were early concerns that the conditions could play a significant part in the afternoon's proceedings. Heathfield showed, in the first quarter, that given the space to



play, they had the firepower to cause damage of their own, ably managed by their fly half, and captain, Walsh, but once Maidstone weathered their early storm, it was business as usual, as the interplay between backs and forwards swamped the visitors' defence.

With regular full back, Josh Jensen, on international duty with Denmark – a comment not made before in these reports – James Leverington put aside his fitness duties to fill the gap. In the pack, Lee Evans returned in the second row, after his recent injury absence, and Jamie Sims started his first game for the senior side after a replacement role, last week, at Crowborough.

Maidstone's early endeavours to play their high tempo game were quickly rebuffed by a solid Heathfield defence, allied to some handling errors, and Heathfield began to show their own attacking capabilities. Indeed, it was somewhat against the run of play when Maidstone generated the first score, courtesy of a Ben Brill power run.

A long relieving kick by Van de Westerlo had set up the attacking position, built on by some good forward play and once the ball was fed to Brill, it was clear that only a clean tackle would have stopped him in his charge from the 22. With Van de





Westerlo adding the simple conversion, the Maidstone machine began to roll.

But as mentioned earlier, Heathfield refused to be cowed by this early setback and continued to play their own game. Only in the scrum did they look vulnerable, where, with Lee Evans providing extra power in the second row, Maidstone dominated, pushing the visitors off the ball, seemingly, at will.

As the first quarter ended, Maidstone began to put together their all-action game and, from a line out on their own 22, a

slick three-quarter move to Sam Brill, on the left wing, saw him glide outside his opposite number to score under the posts. With a routine conversion extending their lead to fourteen points, Maidstone began to apply pressure on the visitors.

The combination of forward runs in the loose and around the scrums, softening up the defence, followed by sweeping moves from the three-quarters, so stretched Heathfield that further tries seemed inevitable: and so it proved.

A trademark Neil Graves' break in the centre, set up scrum half, Adrian Hogben, for the next score and with half time approaching, a fourth try, and bonus point, was forthcoming when Willie Brown got the touchdown after the forwards had battered away at the line. With Van de Westerlo making both conversions and adding a simple penalty just before the whistle, a 31-0 margin at half time looked impregnable.



From the restart, Maidstone showed there would be no slackening of intensity, as Neil Graves powered his way through the visitors defence, with a weaving run, to touch down half way out. With Brad Ford on for Van de Westerlo, and taking over the kicking duties, his first conversion was adjudged wide, much to the consternation of the assembled spectators, but he got a lot more practice as the afternoon wore on.



As Heathfield tired, so Maidstone turned the screw and tries from Sam Brill, Willie Brown, James Leverington, Sam Brill again, Jason Smith, Matt Iles and Caleb Van de Westerlo completed the rout. In the middle of this deluge, Heathfield's spirits never dropped and, with one of the few opportunities presented to them all afternoon, pierced the Maidstone defence on the half hour to put Phair in at the left corner.

This win was built on the solid foundations of the forwards' hard work, exemplified by No8, Matt Iles receiving the man-of-the-match award, enabling the three-quarters to work in plenty of space. And there is no doubt that the return of Lee Evans in the second row added extra power and nous to their play.

As ever, there is still room for improvement. Some sharper passing and receiving could have generated more tries. It was incidental to the outcome of this game but on a more challenging afternoon, it might have made the difference to the result.



Maidstone:

Ben Williams; Sam Bailey; Ollie Smith; Lee Evans; Ben Brill; Jamie Sims; Josh Pankhurst; Matt Iles; Adrian Hogben; Caleb Van de Westerloo; Sam Brill; Willie Brown; Neil Graves; Jason Smith; James Leverington.

Replacements: Joel Byford; James Iles, Brad Ford (All Used)

