



Match Report



London & SE Division 1 (South)

Maidstone FC 20 v Brighton RFC 19

Played at The Mote, Saturday 03 December, 2016

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Maidstone won this encounter with Brighton by the narrowest of margins, 20-19, and can thank the kicking skills of Euan Caborn for his significant contribution to the total. After last week's rousing performance against league leaders, Sidcup, expectations were high for a similar performance against the team second from bottom.

The first half proved to be very disappointing and it was only an improved second half performance that turned this game into a win. Without the try bonus point, which never seemed on the cards, Maidstone failed to improve their league position and will have to put together a winning run to make this a reality.

The return of Ben Massey, Rory Beech, Matt Moore and Lucian Morosan to the starting line up should have given Maidstone a familiar starting team sheet. But this was compensated by the absence of Matt Iles and Lewis Stimpson in the back row and Jack O'Connell and Nathan Simpson, up front.

On a bright, cold afternoon with only the lightest of winds from the north east and a firm top surface, the conditions were ideal for an exhibition of open rugby to entertain the crowd, fresh from an admirable Christmas lunch in the clubhouse. The early signs of another dominant display by the pack came in the first scrum, when Maidstone had the visitor's eight moving backwards.



This early success was consolidated by a penalty from the forty metre mark, by Caborn, with five minutes on the clock. Not only did this repay Maidstone's early dominance, it sent a very strong message to Brighton they would be punished by transgressions in their own half.

But rather than build on this early success, it was the visitors that dominated the

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half. An equalising penalty on ten minutes and a second on the quarter hour, both converted by winger Sow-erby, gave Brighton the lead and a try, at the end of the first quarter, by winger, Alldred-Downey, put them in the driving seat.

Throughout this period, Maidstone had good territorial position but failed to press home their advantage. Everything about their play was pedestrian, without speed or invention, and too many wrong options were taken.

When they did manage to up their intensity, Maidstone put pressure on the visitor's defence and another Caborn penalty, just before the half hour, brought the crowd back to life. But the elation was short lived as, just before the half time break, Brighton extended their lead with a second try.

A Maidstone transgression allowed Brighton to set up a line out ten metres from the Maidstone try line and the subsequent catch and drive was finished off by second row, White, to give the visitors a 16-6 half time lead.



It was clear that to get back into the contest, Maidstone had to improve both the intensity and speed of their play, while improving their coordination. With the game barely underway, a quick recovery of the loose ball by winger, Matt Moore, after a Brighton fumble, saw him run in for a try from the just inside the visitor's half. Was this the inspiration needed to begin a recovery?



A catch and drive from ten metres out, following a penalty, after five minutes, could have consolidated the early try,

but Maidstone failed to press home the advantage as Brighton's pack held firm. But with the home side now playing with greater intensity, a series of drives took them deep into Brighton territory and, with the referee adjudging Brighton to have pulled down the maul, Caborn was given a simple opportunity to reduce the Brighton lead to two points, at the end of the third quarter.

With both sides sensing there was all to play for, the match became a series of sessions



of attack by both sides. With Maidstone's defence improving, Brighton were continually rebuffed and as a series of drives by Maidstone gave them field position, a high tackle by the visitors gave Caborn the opportunity to put Maidstone ahead on the half hour.



As the clock ticked down to the forty minute mark, Brighton got their chance to regain the lead after Maidstone went offside at a ruck and Sowerby took full advantage. But with nerves of steel, Maidstone refused to buckle and, following a line out,

were given their own opportunity to recover the lead, deep into injury time. Once again, Caborn delivered and Maidstone played out the final minutes in a series of close drives to run down the clock.



This game demonstrated the close nature of the league this year. While Maidstone did not play at their best for much of this game, Brighton, on this showing, did not look like a bottom three side. With two more games against sides lower than them in the league coming up, this game should have dispelled any notions in the Maidstone psyche of easy encounters.

Maidstone Ben Williams; Josh Pankhurst; Danny Baker: Adam Knight; Ben Massey: Matt Vickers; Ben Knight; Simon Hawken: Brendan Trudgen; Euan Caborn: Lucian Morosan; Craig Webb; Ross Cooke; Matt Moore: Rory Beech

Replacements: Tom Chandler; Will Fox; Copter Brunt

