



Brachers

law



Match Report



London Division 2 (South East)

Maidstone FC 58 v Lewes RFC 14

Played at The Mote, Saturday 7th December, 2013

It would be easy to paint this ten try, 58-14 victory in a 'return to winning ways' manner but, in reality, this had too much of the Jeckyll and Hyde about it for comfort. If you prefer your metaphors to have more of a western ring, then it was 'the good, the bad and the ugly' that springs to mind.



The good at times was very good; and scoring ten tries against a club that has proved itself Maidstone's nemesis in the past, must be applauded. The bad was the way that once on top, Maidstone reverted to a playing style that was too open, too early, allowing a beaten outfit back into the game and the ugly was some of the defence that allowed a competent backline far too much space.

There are some important improvements needed that the coaching team will, undoubtedly, be addressing, as the second half of the season begins, next week. Game management and ruthlessness seem to be the key components to make the most of the talents available in this richly endowed squad, to ensure the slip up, experienced last week, is not repeated.



There were five changes in the side that took the field compared to the starting XV at Sevenoaks. Josh Jensen and Neil Graves were back from their globetrotting experiences, while James Douglas, Brad Ford and Sam Weston stepped up from the Mustangs into starting roles this week. This was a debut for winger, Douglas, who joined the club last season and who has shown good form, of late.

With Josh Pankhurst on the bench, Jack Davidson moved across to open side flanker, with Sam Weston slotting into the blind side. Another important change was at fly half, where Brad Ford was given the job of controlling the back line.

With the bitter taste of last week's defeat in their mouths, Maidstone started with purpose and intent. A penalty from the kick off allowed good field position in the Lewes 22 and, with concerted movement across the field, Jensen was in the line to cross in the corner.





With barely ten minutes on the clock, a Maidstone scrum deep in the opposition 22 allowed No 8, Matt Iles, to pick up at the base and crash over near the posts, allowing Ford an easy conversion. But it was at this point that the sloppiness started to creep in, as an offside, after the restart, allowed Lewes an attacking opportunity. Maidstone collectively, turned this one round and ended up scoring a length of the field try, started by Sam Brill and finished off by Sam Bailey, under the posts, allowing another easy conversion and a 19-0 scoreline.

From here, it should have been plain sailing. But two factors came into play that disrupted the machine: trying to do too much, individually, and a yellow card for Willie Brown for a dangerous tackle. The latter is excusable and appeared harsh; the former is not, and Maidstone paid the penalty by allowing Lewes to score two tries in the ten minute period when down to fourteen men.

The first Lewes try came just before the half hour. A good break in the centre took Lewes down into Maidstone's 22 and, from a subsequent line-out, they moved the ball left down the line, for full back, Bell to take the scoring pass out wide. Fly half, Pitt, had no problems with the conversion, to reduce the deficit to 19-7.



From the restart, Lewes were awarded a free kick, which was taken quickly, catching the Maidstone defence flatfooted. A swift move down the left saw blind side flanker, Blunt on the end of the scoring pass in the corner, which, once again, Pitt had no problems converting from the touchline.

This double dash of cold water had the desired effect on Maidstone. With the cry of 'back to basics' ringing in their collective ears, and a full complement returned, Maidstone slowly, but surely, refocused their efforts and posted their fourth try, just before the interval. With the forwards establishing field position in the Lewes 22, a straightforward three quarter movement, after a scrum, saw Graves get the touchdown and widen the lead to 24-14.



All three replacements were brought on at half time and within two minutes, a break by Neil Graves was recycled for Josh Pankhurst to get the touchdown. With full focus, another try came after eight minutes, after good work by man-of-the-match, Nick Bunyan, and a further one on the quarter hour, both going to skipper, Ben Williams, with Van de Westerlo adding the straightforward conversions. With a 36-14 lead established, Maidstone, once again, lost focus and it wasn't until the half hour had passed, that the next score was made.

This was a typical, Neil Graves, solo effort. Getting the ball back from a 22 drop out, he ran the length of the field, outpacing the defence, to score in the corner.

The next was a Sam Brill solo effort, standing up his opposite number to weave his way to the try line, while the last score was a combined effort, which saw James Douglas get the final pass to touch down in the corner, to complete the 58-14 scoreline just before the final whistle.

Next week's opponents, Medway, will be remembering their early season win at the Mote and looking to repeat the last minutes defeat they inflicted on Maidstone. A full, eighty minute, focus will be required for



this game.

Maidstone

Ben Williams; Sam Bailey; Ollie Smith: James Iles; Lee Evans: Sam Weston; Jack Davidson; Matt Iles: Sam McPherson; Brad Ford: Sam Brill; Willie Brown; Neil Graves; Jamie Douglas: Josh Jensen

Replacements (All used): Nick Bunyan; Josh Pankhurst; Caleb Van de Westerlo

