



Brachers

law



Match Report



London Division 2 (South East)

Deal & Betteshanger RFC 16 v Maidstone FC 11

Played at The Drill Field, Deal,

Saturday 8th March, 2014

Does this 16-11 loss to Deal & Betteshanger, a team beaten quite comprehensively in the equivalent game at home, earlier in the season, presage the collapse of Maidstone's season? Or is it just a blip that will be forgotten once the season is complete? Either way, this was a poor showing by a team that looks to have lost its way.



There was no upfront dominance; the line out was shambolic on occasions; the back line lacked penetration and the team, as a whole, seemed to lack the desire to win, so obvious in the first half of the season.

And, once again, it could all have been so different if the early chances had been taken.



The message from last week's loss against Tunbridge Wells was that there is little difference in many of the sides in this league and a number are improving. Home advantage can be decisive and, with a vocal, local crowd providing support, Deal are always a different proposition on their own ground.

Taking advantage of a lucky bounce from the kick off, Maidstone winger, Smith, immediately put them on to the attack and, for the first five minutes, camped on the Deal line. But lack of vision by Maidstone and strong defence by Deal, prevented a try. An easy penalty, in front of the posts, for not rolling away after the tackle, should have generated an early score for Maidstone, but because the kicking tee was missing, the chance was given to full back, Jensen, rather than Van de Westerlo, and the opportunity went begging. On such small details are games and campaigns lost.

Maidstone continued their early dominance, and, with ten minutes on the clock, Jason Smith finished off a good Maidstone attack, scoring in the right hand corner. Scrum half, Morosan, had set up the chance with a kick through to the left corner, and with Maidstone winning the line out, they set up a catch and drive before releasing the ball to the threequarters to round off the chance in the right corner.

But as Maidstone's early storm began to blow itself out, with indecisiveness and





errors creeping into their game, so Deal came back into the contest. With a neat chip over the defence from the full back establishing field position in the Maidstone 22, the subsequent penalty allowed stand-off, Moss, to reduce the deficit to two points and bolster the confidence of the home side.

This was turned into a three point advantage, five minutes later, when Deal ran back a poor kick out of defence with skipper, Michael, finishing off the move in the left corner. And, from this point, Maidstone's game went downhill. Composure vanished,

passes were spilled and the promising start was reduced to a distant memory.

To compound the situation, the lineout became a problem area rather than a ball winning opportunity, and three relieving kicks were punted over the dead ball line from the Maidstone half, giving the advantage and field position back to Deal. This was incompetence writ large!

But the 8-5 scoreline held until half time as the Maidstone defence held firm and, with the small slope in visitor's advantage in the second half, the prospect of better things to come warmed expectations, like the unseasonal sunshine.

Hopes, unfortunately, were quickly dashed as the kick off saw a penalty conceded by Maidstone for a reckless challenge and the error count, in general play, continue to rise. At no point did Maidstone put together long passages of play, which allowed them to dominate and Deal were happy to take advantage. While replacements Bunyon and Sim, showed up well, the failure to control the ball for more than a single play never allowed Maidstone to put lengthy pressure on the Deal line.



After fifteen minutes, a penalty conceded by Maidstone in centre field allowed Moss to extend the Deal lead to 11-5 but a Van de Westerlo reply, five minutes later kept Maidstone in touch. A further Maidstone penalty, on twenty five minutes, following a better spell of play, allowed them to draw level and a bullocking run by skipper, Ben Williams, from the restart should have given Maidstone the territorial platform to put the game to bed. But poor passing saw two good chances on the left wing go begging and the level scoreline held until forty minutes were on the

clock.

A late tackle incident saw Willie Brown receive a yellow card and the Deal winger, the same for retaliation. But the referee failed to reverse the penalty decision and, while the touchline conversion was missed, the subsequent opportunity from the restart saw Deal skipper, Michael, show his determination and elusiveness by getting the touch-down in the corner with the last play of the match to give the homeside a 16-11 advantage, at the death.

It is easy to be pessimistic after such a defeat but the manner of the capitulation poses questions about desire, within the side, rather than capability. Man for man, Maidstone had the superior hand, but they seem to have lost the team ethic and a yard of pace since the turn of the year. Without a return to the old standards, the outlook does not look bright.





Maidstone

Ollie Smith; Sam Bailey; Ben Williams: Ben Brill; Gareth Ellis: Jack Davidson; Josh Pankhurst; Matt Iles: Lucian Morosan; Caleb Van de Westerlo: Sam Brill; Willie Brown; Neil Graves; Jason Smith: Josh Jensen

Replacements: Nick Bunyan; James Iles; Jamie Sims

