



Brachers

law



Match Report

London Division 2 (South East)

Aylesford Bulls RFC 7 v Maidstone FC 38

Played at The Jack Williams Ground,

Saturday 12th October, 2013



What is it about local derbies that causes brain failure by one side and inspiration to the other? If coaches understood this fact, I'm sure they would bottle it, both for the cure and for continuing inspiration. The final outcome of a -7 win for Maidstone hid an awful first twenty minutes when Aylesford played like league leaders and Maidstone played like duffers. The final ignominy was a give-away try that put Aylesford seven points in front and the prospect of a major upset staring the visitors in the face.

But, like all good troupers, Maidstone pulled themselves together, started to play their own game and dominated the remainder of the match. By the finish, they were running ball from their own 22, secure in the knowledge that their defence was tight and could deal with everything the opposition could muster.



Maidstone fielded their strongest side with only changes on the wings from the previous week: Sam Brill taking up the left wing berth and, with Neil Graves moved to the right, Mark Dorman coming back into the centre. Danny Baker provided the front row cover on the bench, a timely return to his old stomping ground.

The first scoring opportunity in the game came after two minutes, when Maidstone were awarded a penalty forty metres out. But Caleb Van de Westerlo's attempt drifted to the left of the posts and, from this early high, Maidstone's game went rapidly downhill. Two missed lineout throws, rushed passes and a series of knock-ons littered the visitors play, negating any attempts at continuity with pressure coming only from the Aylesford team.

Indeed, the Bulls drew comfort from this inept Maidstone display and showed some neat moves from their back line, with scrum half, Mann, looking sharp, getting his back line moving. Just before the end of the first quarter, a sniping Mann run took play down into the Maidstone 22 and from this advanced position,





fly half, Harvey, chipped over the defence and won the race to the touch down over the stumbling cover.

I'm sure a few words of realisation were shared by the Maidstone team as they lined up behind the posts for the conversion, because this marked the low point for the visitors and signalled a revival of fortunes. Going back to basics, Maidstone began to generate some cohesion and just before the half hour a flowing move along the line saw winger Neil Graves, outpace his opposite number to touch down under the posts, giving an easy conversion for Van de Westerlo.

A break by right wing, Graves, set up the second Maidstone try, five minutes later. With Aylesford's defence withstanding the first thrust, the ball was recycled back left and, with Josh Jensen coming into the line, he took the scoring pass to crash over in the corner. A fine conversion from the touchline by Van de Westerlo, saw Maidstone post a seven point lead with half time approaching.

But Maidstone now had the bit between their teeth. And, having cracked the code, proceeded to apply the answer on a consistent basis. Just before the half time whistle, a move down the right, started in their own half, stretched the Bulls defence, followed by an equivalent move to the left wing with hooker, Bailey, on hand to take the scoring pass to finish the move under the posts, allowing a 21-7 cushion to start the second half.



The Bulls changed their back line positions radically for the second half but with Maidstone now bossing the upfront exchanges, particularly in the loose, it was a fruitless exercise and with the first incisive move of the half, stretched their lead with a Dorman try after a Willie Brown set up on the half way line. With Jack Davidson held up over the line, shortly thereafter, Maidstone were looking totally dominant and on the quarter hour, added a further try, this time from a piece of individual Ben Brill brilliance.



A loose Aylesford pass following Maidstone pressure, saw Brill kick ahead and with a neat pick up on the run, he outpaced the defence to score half way out. Another Van de Westerlo conversion saw the score widen to 33-7, with the prospect of a heavy defeat for the home side. But with Maidstone making some changes of their own and a wrong decision, after a fine Dorman break, preventing another try shortly thereafter, Aylesford shored up their defence and worked hard to stop Maidstone's increasingly confident play.

Another break from their own half saw Maidstone's skipper Ben Williams finish off a long range move to record Maidstone's sixth try of the afternoon and take the score to 38-7 just before the forty minute mark. With Bulls mounting their last hurrah, Maidstone spent the final few minutes in defence, not helping their cause by refusing to kick out of defence while still looking for another try of their own.

In the final analysis, Maidstone looked the far superior side with the power, experience and cohesion to overcome the challenge offered by a young Aylesford side. But the lesson from the early exchanges was also there to see, with the simple message that you have to establish



your own control before trying to expand your game. Once this simple fact hit home, Maidstone were never in trouble but it was, indeed, a timely wake- up call.



Maidstone

Ben Williams; Sam Bailey; Ollie Smith: Ben Brill; James Iles: Jack Davidson; Josh Pankhurst; Matt Iles: Adrian Hogen; Caleb Van de Westerloo: Sam Brill; Willie Brown; Mark Dorman; Neil Graves: Josh Jensen

Replacements (all used): Danny Baker; Nick Bunyan; Lucien Morosan