



# Brachers

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## Match Report

RFU Intermediate Cup

1st Round

Guildford RFC 31 v Maidstone FC 28

Played at Broadwater Sports Ground, Guildford

Saturday 19th October, 2013



This game posed more questions than answers: how does a side in front by 28-5 after 60 minutes of play, contrive to lose? Why did Maidstone so dominate the first half but look so abject at the end? Why did the coaching team make so many unnecessary changes in the match? The list could go on but the brutal truth is that Maidstone contrived to lose a game, 31-28, that was theirs to win, with ease.



To add to the damage, the Iles brothers found themselves off the field for the last period of the game, James to a red card and Matt to a yellow. Both seemed harsh decisions by the referee, especially the red, as the game was played in good spirit, throughout, but, when the gods are against you, they seem to deliver fully. But even these reverses could not explain the implosion of confidence and delivery that afflicted Maidstone in the last quarter of the game.



The major changes to the side, compared to last week's selection, was the inclusion of Bunyan and Hadi in the second row, Ford at fly half, with Van de Westerlo moving to full back, and the restoration of McNamara on the right wing. Ben Williams and Neil Graves were stood down completely, with both Iles brothers, Jensen and Luke Debnam on the bench.

In itself, the changes could have been construed as a significant hurdle to overcome but the Guildford side also had its absentees from what has been considered their first choice line up, so there were more than the usual unknowns playing a team riding high in the equivalent London SW league.

From the kick off, Maidstone looked like they were going to dominate and, within five minutes, had their first try on the board. Skipper for the day, Josh Pankhurst, took a short pass from Adrian Hogben, after a five metre scrum, which Maidstone won against the head, to glide over by the posts, making the conversion a formality for Ford.

A second score, five minutes later, was thwarted by a conceded penalty on the Guildford line, and the Maidstone pressure should have delivered more scores before their second try on the half hour. One particular miss followed an interception by Van de Westerlo





where his apparent failure to back his speed to the line allowed the cover to cut him off. Even so, his lobbed inside pass to McNamara, coming up on his inside, was within a whisker of completion but was fractionally too high.

With barely twenty minutes gone, both second rows were changed, which seemed a strange decision, as the physical presence of both Bunyan and Hadi was keeping the Guildford pack occupied in both the tight and the loose. With Matt and James Iles taking over, a further change saw Ben Brill move into the second row after performing so well, up to that point, at No 8.

A Sam Brill run down the left, going outside his opposite number before cutting back to score under the posts began to reflect Maidstone's dominance on the half hour and a second, five minutes later, this time with right wing, McNamara, getting the touch down under the posts, making easy conversions opportunities for Ford, to post a 21-0 lead. Suddenly, it began to seem simple and perhaps that is what upset the appletart, because Maidstone allowed Guildford to score on their first foray into their 22, right on half time.

With Dorman leaving the field with a rib injury, necessitating a further change in the back line, with Jensen coming on, Maidstone's defence lost some of its rigidity and a sequence of moves prompted by fly half, Hopkin, saw left wing Clarke go over in the corner to post the home side's first points.

The second half started with the same characteristics as the first and, when Matt Iles was fed the ball in the centre on the Guildford 22, he stepped inside his man and accelerated to the line, scoring under the posts. With the lead extended to 28-5, after the straightforward conversion, the question on everyone's lips was, how many? And the Maidstone coaches reacted accordingly, bringing on further replacements and making more positional changes.



Unfortunately, no one consulted the Guildford team. Fed up with being bossed about all afternoon and, proceeding to see a glint of opportunity, they began to get their own game underway, playing through the forwards more and establishing themselves in Maidstone territory. With almost twenty minutes gone, scrum half, Davey, found his way over in the corner and a superb conversion by full back, Adam, cut the deficit to 12-28.



A second try, two minutes later, saw the pendulum swinging further toward the home side and with another conversion; the gap was cut further to 19-28. It now seemed impossible for Maidstone to get or hold on to the ball and with penalties being conceded as frantic attempts were made to stem the Guildford flow, it allowed the home side to camp in the visitor's 22.

The outcome of all this pressure was a further Guildford try, just past the half hour, to cut the deficit to one score, at 24-28. With Maidstone defending as if their lives depended on it, the loss of James Iles immediately after, followed by Matt Iles on the forty minute mark put increasing pressure on their defence. Eventually they cracked, after two minutes of added time had been played, with No 8, Kirk, getting the vital score. With another fine Adam conversion, Guildford found themselves in front for the first time.

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It was clear from the players themselves that this defeat was a bitter pill to swallow. It should provide some object lessons in game management, which, if heeded, will stand the side in good stead for the rest of the season.



## **Maidstone**

Joel Byford; Sam Bailey; Ollie Smith; Alex Hadi; Nick Bunyan; Jack Davidson; Josh Pankhurst; Ben Brill; Adrian Hogen; Brad Ford; Sam Brill; Willie Brown; Mark Dorman; Steve McNamara; Caleb Van de Westerlo.

Replacements (all used): Luke Debnam; Matt Iles; James Iles; Josh Jensen