



## Match Report

League - London 2 South East

Maidstone 19 v Medway 21



Played at The Mote, Saturday 21 September, 2013

# Brachers

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This was a game Maidstone led until the final play and should have won: if a wake-up call was required to an over confident outfit, this was it. Key lapses in concentration allowed Medway's best performer, Ollie Best, to score at the death and sneak a 21-19 victory. Indeed, by scoring all the visitors points, Best, demonstrated the finishing touch that ultimately eluded Maidstone when they needed it most. Had they taken the chances on offer, Maidstone could have had this game wrapped up midway through the second half. Instead they allowed a determined and well drilled side to keep in touch and, finally, twist the knife with a converted try deep in added time.



With new recruit, Caleb van de Westerlo, side-lined after last week's game with a back injury, Willie Brown stepped back into the fly half role he occupied for most of last year, while returning Steve McNamara found an immediate slot on the right wing and a place kicking role into the bargain. Ben Brill came in at blind side, for his first start, with Matt Iles filling in at centre in the continuing absence of Neil Graves and Sam Brill.



The early exchanges showed that Medway had plenty of slick runners in their three-quarter line and only stout defence prevented them scoring in the first exchanges. But as Maidstone warmed to the task and began to play in the visitors half, their forward pressure was rewarded with two penalty opportunities, gratefully accepted by McNamara on 10 and 21 minutes. A penalty opportunity for Medway, mid-way through the first quarter was missed by Best and as Maidstone began to dominate up front, and show some slick inter-passing out wide, thoughts of an increasingly dominant Maidstone, as last week, came to mind.

This image was quickly swept away as Maidstone missed two kickable penalties in the second quarter and Medway, once more, showed the potency of their three quarter line, with Best finishing off a move that started from a lineout in the Maidstone 22. The ball first moved right before switching back left for the full back to go round the Maidstone defence to score in the corner, on 35 minutes.

Maidstone's answer was immediate and confirmed their dominance in the second quarter. From a tap penalty in the Medway 22, Willie Brown reversed the play to feed Dorman and then Morosan for Dorman to get the final pass to score in the corner. An 11-5 half time lead just about reflected the balance of play but it was clear that the visitors were a potent force and







would need full attention and application if they were to be subdued. Maidstone's dominance in the tight, particularly the scrums, was fully evident but the loss of Lee Evans at half time with an ankle injury was a note of concern.

The high tempo start to the second half by Maidstone indicated their wish to put further points on the board and this they achieved after eight minutes when Jensen got on the end of a tap penalty to score in the left corner and stretch the lead to 16-5. This followed two scrums on the Medway 5-metre line which the visitors struggled to defend. A further scrum and another collapse might well have seen a penalty try and a yellow card so the decision for

the tap had a few heads being scratched.

By the quarter hour, Medway had got themselves back into the game. Two penalties within a few minutes saw Best reduce the arrears to 16-11 and once more the game was in the balance. Maidstone tried to establish field position but their kicking from hand was poor, only managing to bring Medway's runner back into the game and putting pressure on their own defence for long periods. Indeed, Medway played as if they had staked all on winning while Maidstone looked increasingly as if they were afraid to lose, failing to play through their dominant pack, in order to kill the game.



A McNamara penalty on 38 minutes, for a high tackle in the visitors 22, seemed to have given the home side the cushion they required but the last gasp piece of brilliance from Best turned this notion on its head and left some sadder but wiser players in Maidstone shirts.

This was by no means a poor Maidstone performance. There were some exceptional individual performances, with Ben Brill to the fore. But tactical naiveté in the second half cost Maidstone this game and should force a rethink on the application of resources in the future.

## **Maidstone**

Ben Williams; Sam Bailey; Ollie Smith; Alex Sturzu; Lee Evans (Richard Parker 40 mins); Josh Pankhurst; Jack Davidson; Adrian Hogben; Willie Brown; Lucien Morosan; Matt Iles; Mark Dorman (Jason Smith 75 mins); Steve McNamara; Josh Jensen

Replacements: Danny Baker; Richard Parker; Jason Smith

