



Match Report

Shepherd Neame Kent Shield Maidstone FC v Aylesford Bulls RFC



Played at The Mote, Saturday 1st September, 2018



On a bright, sunny afternoon and played on a pitch in prime condition, Maidstone came away from what was their first competitive encounter of the season having let an extremely winnable encounter slip through their fingers.

In a much changed side from last season, a new look pack saw Will Fox and the returning Ashley Gilligan in the front row either side of Ryan Murphy at hooker, with a second row of Charlie Williams and debutant Charlie Bentley who joins from Canterbury. The back row saw a debut for Jordan Amos alongside regulars from last season in Seth Waterworth and Jack Lamb.

The back line also saw changes with skipper Lucian Morosan at No9 and Jack Leech in the fly half berth. A centre pairing of Olly Newton and Alex Clark was supported by a back three of Josh Smith, Vaki Antoniou and Euan Caborn. The replacements saw the experienced Matt Iles, with Tom Varker who joins from Sheppey alongside Jack Bramwell and youngster Mikey Grice looking to make his second 1st XV appearance.

Maidstone started brightly enough but conceded early penalties, a trait that was to haunt their afternoon, to provide the first scoring opportunity as Aylesford's Ridout as he slotted a 25m penalty from the right of the posts to give the visitors the early advantage. Maidstone levelled on the 10 minute mark with a Caborn penalty from in front of the post after a period of Maidstone pressure. Further pressure



by Maidstone who were looking to move the ball saw Aylesford's centre Batstone yellow carded for deliberately slapping the ball down. The resultant lineout saw Maidstone look to move the ball wide with Caborn joining the line to cross in the corner only to have the score ruled out for a foot in touch. As the home side continued to press Aylesford's problems were further compounded by another yellow card to fly half Rum-



sey for exactly the same cynical offence, reducing them to 13. Maidstone opted for the scrum, and with No 8 Waterworth picking up from the base he was able to quickly recycle the ball for Bentley to dive over just to the right of the posts, Caborn added the extras for a 10-3 advantage at the end of the first quarter. With the visitors reduced numbers Maidstone should have stretched their lead as they created opportunities but held onto the ball too long in midfield when moving the ball would have proved more fruitful and as the Aylesford returned to full complement they drew confidence that their defence had held.

Aylesford then had a period in the ascendancy, and whilst Maidstone's defence looked solid, it was the conceding of silly penalties that kept them under pressure. Eventually, with five minutes of the half remaining Maidstone's defence was breached as some quick recycling saw the ball moved left for winger Bailey to cross 15m out from the posts and a good conversion from scrum-half Ridout saw the scores level at 10-10. Maidstone applied the pressure for the last five minutes with Clark brought down just short of the line in the right corner in what was the last real action of the half.



The interval saw Varker and Iles introduced for Murphy & Lamb, and an early exchange of penalties took the score to 13-13.



Maidstone were back on the scoreboard midway through the third quarter when a penalty put Maidstone into the corner for a lineout, a good catch saw the home side drive forward with Gilligan peeling off to dive over 15m in from the touchline, Caborn added the extras for a 20-13 lead. The end of the quarter saw the visitors reduce the deficit as Maidstone conceded yet another kickable penalty in line with

the posts and Ridout needed no further invitation to take the points on offer to bring the score to 20-16.

Going into the final quarter of the game Maidstone winger Antoniou was almost in in the left corner, hauled down just short before being penalised for holding on. The turning point of the match came on 65 minutes when from a central scrum just outside their 22m, Aylesford broke, as they moved the ball right with fullback



Rumsey joining the back line to create the extra man to feed replacement Proctor on the wing who was able to skirt the home side's defence in the corner and touch down under the posts, with Ridout predictably adding the extras the visitors held a 3 point advantage they were not to relinquish. The same move was then almost duplicated five minutes later with a knock on interrupting the attack.

Aylesford were again reduced to 14 after another Yellow card, and despite Maidstone's efforts the visitors held on to post a 20-23 win and progress to face either Charlton Pk or defending champions Dover in the next round.

In summary, Maidstone will look on this result as a match in which they threw away a positive result and will rue their lack of execution in attack, particularly when they held numerical advantage, but perhaps a area of more concern that Mike Hebden and his team will be looking at, will be the high penalty count, a problem which dogged the team last season.

Maidstone Will Fox; Ryan Murphy; Ashley Gilligan; Charlie Williams; Charlie Bentley; Jack Lamb; Jordan Amos; Seth Waterworth; Lucian Morosan; Jack Leech; Josh Smith; Olly Newton; Alex Clark; Vaki Antoniou; Euan Caborn;

Replacements: Tom Varker; Jack Bramwell; Matt Iles; Mikey Grice (All used)

