



Match Report



London & SE Division 1 (South)

Maidstone FC 22 v Tottonians RFC 37

Played at The Mote, Saturday 16th September, 2017



Tottonians have been Maidstone's 'bête-noir' since they came into the same league three years ago and, in that period, the Southampton club have won three of the four games played. This loss by 22-37 conformed with the trend but this was a game that could have been won had Maidstone managed the game better.

There were periods when the home side retained the ball and put the visitors under considerable pressure and on each occasion turned that pressure into tries. But at other times, they lacked coordination, failing to act in concert, thereby allowing the visitors to regain the initiative at key moments.

In contrast, Tottonians played to their strengths, seeking to counter-attack by spreading the ball wide, to the wings, and this tactic earned them two tries that began by Maidstone needlessly kicking away ball in attacking positions. Added to this, the visitors had a reliable kicker in fly half, Searle, who got the scoreboard moving early and always kept them in front. Their final point of advantage was the catch and drive from the line-out, which yielded a try and many yards.

Maidstone had their own points of advantage. They consistently pushed the Tottonians' eight backwards in the scrums and turned one of these moves into a try. In addition, when they protected the ball and sought to find space through multiple phases, they were every bit as potent as the visitors. Unfortunately, this lesson was too quickly forgotten, despite the



pleas from the touchline. In summary, the final score reflected the application of the sides on the pitch rather than the competence levels of the players in both teams.

Maidstone had several changes from the team fielded at Sevenoaks the previous week. Stuart Doust, making his debut, came into the side at full back and Jamie Farris, a recent

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recruit from TJ's, made his first start at open side. Danny Baker came into the front row, in place of the injured Tom Mount, and Matt Iles continued in the second row, for the injured Ben Massey. Lucian Morosan started on the left wing, replacing Matt Moore, and, on a positive note, Vaki Antinou, returned from injury, on the bench.

The game did not start well for Maidstone as, with barely a minute on the clock, following a scrum awarded to the visitors for a Maidstone knock on, fly half Searle dropped a goal to give Tottonians the lead. He doubled it to six points, just before the ten-minute mark, with a 35-metre penalty but Maidstone hit back immediately from the restart.

In a purple patch, Maidstone mounted a series of moves that brought forwards and backs into play that put the visitor's defence under extreme pressure. With one thrust, to the right, held, the ball was switched to the other wing where Ben Brill got the final pass to evade his marker and score in the corner, reducing the deficit to 5-6.



With the first quarter of the game complete, Tottonians took full advantage of a penalty to take play down into the Maidstone 22. While their first catch and drive attempt on the Maidstone line was held, this yielded a further penalty from which the visitors opted to try the same move again. This time, the maul was pulled down illegally and a penalty try was awarded, with Danny

Baker getting a yellow card for his sins.



With one man down, Maidstone defended manfully but the pressure from Tottonians eventually yielded its rewards, when second row, Ramos, crashed over the line. With Searle adding the conversion, the visitors extended their lead to 20-5 on the half hour.

With full complement restored, Maidstone came back into the game. A scrum which saw the visitors shunted backwards yielded a penalty which was punted to the Tottonians 22. While the initial move was held, a quickly taken penalty by scrum half, Leech, set up Josh Pankhurst for a try in the right corner, to bring the score back to 10-20 on the stroke of half time.

Maidstone started the second half brightly but an early opportunity to test the Tottonians' defence ended when a line out was overthrown, allowing the visitors to clear their



lines. But a more fundamental error occurred shortly thereafter, when Maidstone chipped the ball into the Tottonians 22, allowing full back, Raqio, to start a move that outflanked the Maidstone defence and ended in a try in the right corner. With Searle, once more, slotting the conversion, the deficit grew to seventeen points.



Maidstone hit back immediately, scoring two tries in a five-minute period. The first came from the restart, with Josh Pankhurst getting the touchdown from a catch and drive move: the second was finished off by replacement winger, Antinou, on for Morosan, which again demonstrated the capability of the Maidstone attack, which stretched the visitors past their limits.

With Beech making the conversion, Maidstone reduced the deficit to 22-27 and with a four-try bonus achieved, the prospect of a win, or a losing bonus point seemed in the offing. But it was not to be as with plenty of time on the clock, the visitors steadied the ship and slowly, but surely, regained the initiative.

A penalty attempt from Searle, just past the half hour, hit the post and while Maidstone defended the rebound, a subsequent scrum gave Searle the opportunity to make amends by slipping through the defence to score half way out. In a piece of symmetry, his conversion also hit the same upright and failed to add to the 32-22 score-line.

With the clock ticking down to full time, Maidstone threw everything into attack but another poorly directed kick allowed Raqio to set up the Tottonians' back line again, with winger, Lee, scoring in the same right-hand corner as before. The final 22-37 score-line slightly flattered the differences between the sides but until Maidstone deliver a more consistent threat throughout the eighty minutes, they must expect to receive more lessons from the opposition.

Maidstone Danny Baker; Josh Pankhurst; Max Guero; Adam Knight; Matt Iles; Ben Knight; Jamie Farris; Ben Brill; Jack Leech; Rory Beech; Ryan Copp; Pat Sykes; George Perry; Lucian Morosan; Stuart Doust

Replacements: Ashley Gilligan; Tom Chandler; Vaki Antinou (All used)

