



Match Report



London & SE Division 2 (South East)

Maidstone FC 13 v Charlton Park RFC 43

Played at The Mote, Saturday 22nd September 2018



After a win on the road last week this latest league encounter Maidstone take on a Charlton park outfit that had been amongst the divisions leading contenders last season and in a match played in light rain and overcast conditions the home side struggled to find the required cohesion against a well drilled outfit that will no doubt challenge again this season.

Whilst the 13-43 defeat may look gloomy, it somewhat puts a gloss on the opposition performance against a county town side where head coach Mike Hebden had seen injury and unavailability force him to yet again rejig his resources.

In a number of changes to last week's team, the pack saw Will Fox return to the front row, whilst in the absence of injured player/coach Ben Massey, Ian Lee occupied a 2nd Row berth alongside Charlie Bentley. The back row of Marzetti, Weston and Amos was the only element that remained unchanged. In the back division skipper Lucian Morosan returned with Olly Newton at fly half for the injured Jack Leech, a centre pairing of the versatile Matt Iles and Shaun Woolford and a back three of Will lane, Sean Farmer and Josh Smith. Tome Varker, Aran sage and the veteran Dane Smith occupied the bench.

It wasn't long before the home side were forced into making changes as a head injury to Will Lane in a tackle saw him depart the field. The visitors were the first to trouble the scorers on the 12 minute mark, when from a lineout on halfway the ball was fed to 2nd Row Harlow-Singh who proved a willing carrier all afternoon, an offload in the tackle to the supporting flanker saw the ball moved to the right wing Sidebottom who was able to outstrip the defence to cross in the corner, with McDonald adding the extras with a somewhat ugly looking kick.



Maidstone hit back straight from the restart as good pressure by the home side kept the visitors penned in their own half and as they tried to move the ball under





pressure Iles was able to intercept and canter over from just outside the 22m to touch down under the posts, Morosan added the extras to bring the score to 7-7.

The home side were able to draw some impetus from this and a break by Weston from a scrum in midfield took them up to the 5m line before being brought down with a high

tackle that saw a yellow card for Singh. The resultant penalty saw Maidstone opt for the tap and go and despite a long period of sustained pressure, the visitors organised defence denied Maidstone the quick ball they needed to penetrate the opposition line.

A McDonald penalty on the half-hour saw Charlton Park back into the lead before the try that was possibly the turning point of the match. With their scrum under pressure on their own line scrum-half Knuckery was somehow able to pick up and evade the initial tackle before feeding sizeable left wing Montes who had the strength to hold off tacklers

in a 75m sprint to touchdown by the post, McDonald added the conversion.



The visitors added to their score a few minutes later when Maidstone were penalised at the scrum, the resultant penalty saw a line out deep in the home 22m and the predictable catch & drive saw them cross wide out on the right, with McDonald again adding the extras.

Maidstone resisted a similar situation shortly after and closed out the half applying some pressure of their own with good carries by both Fox and Dane Smith before being awarded a penalty which Newton converted with the last kick of the half to take the score to 10-24 at the interval.

With injured skipper Morosan leaving the field at half time Maidstone were forced into yet another reshuffle as Newton moved to scrum-half and a reshuffled pack saw flanker Amos moved into the centre berth. The home side were under pressure almost from the restart and it was only as the visitors fluffed their

lines when on two occasions they had created the overlap only to see the chances go begging through poor handling. In the end pressure told, three changes to the Charlton park scrum saw them in the ascendancy in the set piece and the after a period camped on the home side 5m they were able to move the ball with 2nd Row McManus crossing to the left of the posts, McDon-



ald predictably added the conversion.

Maidstone were unlucky going into the final quarter of the match, after having

been able to maintain a concerted period of continuity and pressure in the visiting 22m when a mishandled pass dropped into the grateful arms of Park's fullback Raybe who had the speed to outpace the covering defence to score under the posts, with the conversion a formality the score stretched to 10-38.



Raybe was on the scoresheet a few minutes later as a loose ball was again fielded by the defending visitors who moved it quickly to Raybe providing the extra man for the touchdown and with McDonald missing his only attempt of the afternoon the score had stretched out to 43.

Maidstone's heads hadn't dropped and it was they who finished the match on the front foot and despite Montes being despatched to the bin for the closing minutes, the home side just couldn't find the bit of guile that was required to pierce what had been an organised and miserly visiting defence.

In summary, a disappointing result, although with so many players unavailable or playing out of position, coach Mike Hebden will no doubt see a number of positives in terms of both the spirit and effort of the side. The team are still haunted by a high penalty count that needs working on and will be looking to return to winning ways next week as they take on a Heathfield & Waldron side that have also not had the best of starts to their campaign.

Maidstone Will Fox; Ryan Murphy; Jack Bramwell; Ian Lee; Charlie Bentley; Jamie Marzetti; Jordan Amos; Sam Weston; Lucian Morosan; Olly Newton; Matt Iles; Shaun Woolford; Will Lane; Sean Farmer; Josh Smith;

Replacements: Aran Sage; Tom Varker; Dane Smith (all used)

