



Match Report



London Division 2 (South East)

Sevenoaks RFC 31 v Maidstone FC 32

Played at Knole Paddock, Sevenoaks, Saturday 25th Oct, 2014



Encounters last season between these two sides were close fought affairs, and in the corresponding fixture at Knole Paddock last term only a single point separated the two sides, and given the current league placing of the two sides this season, this encounter was expected to be equally as competitive.

The Maidstone side again saw a couple of changes from the last outing against Medway; in the pack James Iles returned alongside brother Matt in the 2nd Row, with Matt Davies on the blind side flank for the injured Alex Hadi and Mike Werahiko. The back division remained unchanged, whilst the bench featured the returning Luke Debnam alongside Damien Grab with Dane Petheram looking to make his debut 1st XV appearance.

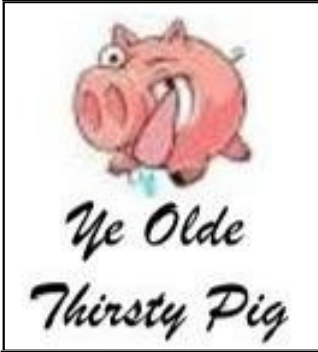


Despite some midweek rain the ground remained firm underfoot and with the match played in bright autumn sunshine the conditions suited running rugby.

In their last two outings Maidstone have started well, and from the kick off Maidstone looked to assert themselves as they pressed the home defence into their own 22m. However, a loose Perigo pass on five minutes as Maidstone looked to move the ball wide was intercepted by the Sevenoaks left wing Simon Tree, and with full back Nick Childs in the Maidstone attacking line looking to create the extra man the 'Oaks' outside back had sufficient pace to run in from 70m to touch down under the posts. With Sam Bright adding the extras the home side had been gifted a 7- point lead against the run of the early encounters. Encouraged by this Sevenoaks continued to press and an infringement by the visitors was penalised with Sevenoaks' Bright gratefully accepting the goal attempt to extend the home side's lead to 10-points on the ten minute mark.



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Despite the early setback, it was Maidstone that looked the sharper of the two sides and almost immediately Sevenoaks presented the visitors with a kickable penalty which Nick Childs duly converted to get the scoreboard rolling for Maidstone; for what was the first of 25 unanswered Maidstone points during the first half.



With points now on the board Maidstone went on the offensive straight from the restart, and their attacking potential was quickly demonstrated as Jonno Skelton on the wrap around released winger Lucien Morosan down the left flank with scrum half Sam McPherson in support and finally tackled into touch just short of the Sevenoaks line.



From this point Sevenoaks struggled to get out of their own half, and an attacking Maidstone scrum on the home 5m saw pressure on the Sevenoaks line with Ben Brill taking the final ball and outmuscling four defenders to touch down for the try towards the end of the first quarter. Childs added the extra points to draw Maidstone level at 10-10.

The visitors added to their score again on 25 minutes, again from a scrum, this time in midfield with inside centre Perigo making amends for his earlier mistake to break through the Sevenoaks defence from 35m out to score in the left corner.

A rare foray into Maidstone territory saw a Sam Bright penalty drift wide of the posts; with Maidstone attacking from the 22m restart to force a penalty of their own on the Sevenoaks 22m in front of the posts which Childs duly converted.

Maidstone continued to be the dominant force and extended their lead just before half-time, from a lineout in the Sevenoaks 22m they were able to move the ball quickly, and will the initial surge was resisted, hooker Josh Pankhurst was fed the recycled ball and able to break through the home defence from 22m out to score to the right of the posts for the first of two tries that would bring him the Moan of the Match award; Childs added the extras to give the visitors a 25-10 lead going into the interval.



The second half saw Sevenoaks start the brighter, although never really threatening a tight Maidstone defence. It was midway through the third quarter that Maidstone were reduced to 14, when flanker Matt Davies was somewhat harshly adjudged to have infringed when stealing the ball at the breakdown. Maidstone started to make changes with Luke Debnam on for Joel Byford in the front row.

As was the case against Medway, being down a man appeared to galvanise the visitors and good defensive pressure in midfield saw them turn the ball over and break toward the Sevenoaks line, with Pankhurst on hand to take the final pass and beat the last two defenders from 20m out for his second and the bonus point try. With Childs adding the extra points this gave the visitors a 10-32 advantage.



It was at this point that errors crept into the Maidstone game, with lapses in concentration seeing possession conceded and defensive errors occurring and whilst still a man down they conceded

two tries in quick succession, with first Matt Dodd touching down for the home side and then Sam Bright crossing, with both scores converted.

Maidstone were still posing problems for the home side, but their game lacked the fluency of the first half, and with 'Oaks' at least looking for a bonus point, their play became more adventurous. The loss of Ben Brill with five minutes remaining set up an interesting finale to the match.

Still shy of a losing bonus point, the closing five minutes saw Sevenoaks throwing the proverbial 'kitchen sink' at the Maidstone line, and whilst they were unable to pierce the visitors defence in open play, a 5-metre scrum under the posts saw centre Tino Vaihu occupying the No8 slot, pick up and barrel over, with Bright adding the extra two points to reduce the margin to just a single point between the sides.

Cool heads were required from the restart, but with the final throes of the match played out in midfield, Maidstone had done enough to take the points by the narrowest of margins 31-32.

In summary, these fixtures are always tight encounters, Maidstone always looked the sharper of the two sides but will need to sharpen up their concentration and reduce the number of unforced errors; for in the majority of cases it was opportunities they presented to the opposition that created their scoring chances, rather than the pressure they were put under.

Maidstone: Williams (C), Pankhurst, Byford, Iles J, Iles M, Davies, Cranston, Brill, McPherson Skelton, Morosan, Perigo, Van de Velde, Eastwood, Childs. **Replacements:** Debnam (used), Grab (used), Petheram (not used)

