

## Match Report

London Division 1 (South)

Brighton RFC 33 - Maidstone FC 22



Played at Waterhall, Brighton, Saturday 21 November, 2015



Maidstone travelled to Brighton on the back of a solid win against Twickenham the previous week but were ultimately found wanting in this 22-33 defeat. Once again, the weather had a huge influence on the game but this time it was the strong northerly wind that dominated proceedings. Surprisingly, both teams played better with the wind in their faces and both failed to make the best of it at their backs.

After a disappointing first half, Maidstone came back into the game after the break and threatened to overturn a significant Brighton lead. But a couple of key handling errors allowed the hosts to steady a wobbling ship and no amount of late Maidstone pressure could find a way through a solid Brighton defence.

Maidstone's man-of-the-match, Joel Byford, proved a handful for the opposition in the scrum and the loose, scoring Maidstone's first try and going close on other occasions, but Lewis Stimpson pushed him close with a dynamic performance at open-side flanker.

With only one change in the pack, Jake Johnson coming in at blind-side flanker, and two in the three-quarters, where the wing positions were occupied by Tom Waring and Lucian Morosan, hopes for an extension of the previous weeks approach, where a solid platform upfront allowed the back line some freedom to work off a good supply of ball, showed early promise. The loss of the Brighton prop, Bellenie, after the first play gave Maidstone some advantage in the tight and from their first attack came away with a three point advantage after a penalty was awarded on the Brighton 22 for offside. With the wind at his back, Harry Millar calmly converted the kick.







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But once Brighton found their feet and started to use the driving maul from the line out as an attacking weapon, they quickly got back into the game with two tries either side of the ten minute mark. The first started with a line out on the left and, while the driving maul was halted, the ball was switched along the line for the

full back, Nesi, to find space in the right corner.

From the restart, a break by fly-half, Morris, split the Maidstone defence and took play back deep into the visitors half. A penalty for holding on gave Brighton the opportunity to set up a driving maul, which they did, efficiently, with second row, Trevis, getting the touchdown and a 10-3 lead.

Maidstone's set up of the catch and drive at the line out was just as efficient as Brighton's, with Cowan the go-to man, but while they troubled the Brighton defence, they couldn't bring the same degree of ruthlessness to bear and came away from the Brighton half without the rewards they otherwise deserved.



For this they were punished, as another catch and drive by Brighton drew an over-enthusiastic response from Maidstone, for which Eaglesham received a yellow card. With the pack reduced in numbers, Brighton set up a further line out from the ensuing penalty and took advantage by trundling 30 metres for Trevis to get his second try, just before the half hour mark.



But Maidstone refused to buckle and quickly got back down into the Brighton half. This time, the catch and drive from a line out on the 22 yielded dividends as, after two thwarted thrusts at the line,

Byford forced his way over halfway out. Millar added the extra points to reduce the deficit to 15-10 and Maidstone finished the half strongly, putting pressure on the Brighton line.

Maidstone's intent from the second half kick-off was clear, moving the ball through the forwards to establish field position. But an early handling error in Maidstone's half was pounced upon by the Brighton back line and a slick grubber kick behind the Maidstone defence allowed Nesi to beat the de-



fence to the touch down in the right hand corner to extend the Brighton lead to 20-10, with barely a minute on the clock.

With the wind now in Maidstone's face, penalties in the Brighton half were routinely kicked to touch to set up the catch and drive. Unfortunately, while this allowed Maidstone to put pressure on the hosts, they failed to find the try line and it was a mistake by Brighton that brought Maidstone back into the game. A poor clearing kick



from the Brighton 22 set up Millar to run from half way to feed Waring on the wing. While he was brought down short of the line, the ensuing ruck allowed Pitkin the space to touch down to reduce the lead to 20-15.

Two Brighton penalties at the end of the third quarter extended their lead to 26-15 but Maidstone refused to lie down. A yellow card for Brighton's number six, Hoare, allowed Maidstone the advantage, this time, and,

from a quick tap penalty in the home side's 22, skipper, Williams, scored a try by the posts, giving Millar an easy conversion to reduce the deficit to four points.



But the last word went to Brighton. With Maidstone throwing everything into attack in an effort to steal a victory, at the last, another handling error from a poorly judged Brighton kick set up an attacking position for the home side. Fly half, Morris, took full advantage of some tiring legs to glide in to score and with Finch adding the conversion, the

lead of 33-22 proved unassailable.

### **Maidstone**

Ben Williams; Josh Pankhurst; Joel Byford: Hugh Cowan; Adam Knight: Jake Johnson; Lewis Stimpson; Jake Eaglesham: Ben Pitkin; Dalton Kannemeyer: Lucian Morosan; Rory Beech; Craig Webb; Tom Waring: Harry Millar

**Replacements:** Andi Petelo; Ben Massey; Alex Clark (All used)

