

## Match Report

London Division 1 (South)

Maidstone FC 39 v Chobham RFC 24

Played at The Mote Saturday 9th April, 2016



Maidstone served up another enticing game of rugby, to extend their winning run to six games, emerging 39-24 winners over Chobham, the team one place below them in the league. With nine tries scored, with Maidstone shading the split, it was the kicking of Harry Millar, from the tee that essentially decided this match and turned a close fought encounter into a comfortable win.

Fresh from last week's nerve-shredding encounter at Havant, Maidstone elected, once again, to play a fast open game, pressurising the opposition in both defence and attack. Without the same degree of dominance in the line-out and scrum, this turned into a game of thrust and counter thrust but the confidence that is now flowing through the side enabled Maidstone to dominate the final quarter and run out worthy winners.














Skipper, Ben Williams, nursing some minor damage from last week, started on the bench, allowing man-of-the-match, Andi Petalo, to claim the loose-head spot, while Jake Johnson moved to open side flanker with Richie Bowen on the bench. Tom Chandler, an emerging talent from the club, also started on the bench, while Ben Massey returned in the second row, with Hugh Cowan moving to blind-side flanker.

The game started with a collapsed scrum that left Jack O'Connell on the ground, nursing a sore neck. After some delay, he dusted himself off and resumed duties but he was less explosive than normal for the rest of the half.

Maidstone opened the scoring just after ten minutes. Having lost the first line out, following a penalty, a second line out deep in the Chobham 22, yielded a better outcome and while the drive to the line was initially held, Andi Petalo completed the move in the







corner.

Chobham’s reply was immediate. A scrum on the left, following the restart, allowed the scrum half to feed the left wing, Devitt, who skinned his opposite number, and the cover, to score in the corner, to level the scores.

Maidstone reclaimed the lead following a Millar penalty at the end of the quarter, but with the line-out and scrum struggling, Chobham began to dictate play. The opposition was helped further by a yellow card to Alex Eastwood, for an injudicious push on his opposite number, giving them numerical superiority.

Just past the half hour, Maidstone were pushed off their ball at a scrum on the five-metre line, allowing Chobham to gain possession and score. This time, full back, Thompson, succeeded with his kick from out wide to give the visitors the lead, 8-12.



With the end of the half approaching, and numbers restored, Maidstone got their game back together and, with a series of plays, swept down to the visitor’s line. Good defence by Chobham prevented a spectacular finish but Andi Petalo , once again, was on hand to finish matters with a drive to the line. With Millar converting from the side line, Maidstone went in to the half-time break with their noses in front.

Ben Williams emerged for the second half, but it was the visitors that made the early impact. A mistake from the kick off allowed Chobham to establish field position in the



Maidstone 22 and, while Maidstone defended manfully, left wing, Devitt, found sufficient space to cross the line, out wide, to reclaim the lead for the visitors.

Maidstone got their noses back in front again on the quarter hour. A break out, instigated by Harry Millar, was carried on by Josh Smith and then Alex Eastwood, to take play deep into the Chobham 22. From the resultant line out, replacement, Richie Bowen, was on hand to finish the catch and drive move, to give Maidstone a 22-17 lead.

The next score was to prove decisive and it came from an interception by fly half, Rory Beech, on the Maidstone 22. With Chobham committed to attack, he outpaced the chasers and allowed Millar a simple conversion to open up a twelve point cushion.

But Chobham refused to lie down and just





past the half hour, Devitt secured his hat-trick try, converted by Thompson, to reduce the margin to five points. With all to play for, who would have the final say in this game of fluctuating fortunes?

A penalty to Maidstone on the visitor's ten metre line seemed to dictate a kick to the corner but Harry Millar had other ideas and his conversion, which just made the distance, gave Maidstone both a points and mental cushion to play out the last five minutes.

But another score, this time Hugh Cowan finishing the move, after a tap penalty in the visitors 22, sealed the game for Maidstone, along with another Millar conversion.

Maidstone showed endeavour, spirit and attacking intent in seeing off another of their close rivals in the league. The first half was patchy with too many mistakes, but as the game progressed, increasing fluency in the three quarter line began to stretch the opposition defence. In addition, the second half replacements both solidified the tight and provided a sharper cutting edge in attack.

Next week's visit to Guildford will provide another strong test for the team. But with a win against them on home territory, it would seem, on recent showing, they can travel in hope of a second upset.

**Maidstone** Jack O'Connell; Will Massey; Andi Petalo; Ben Massey; Adam Knight; Hugh Cowan; Jake Johnson; Jake Eaglesham; Lucian Morosan; Rory Beech; Tom Waring; Craig Webb; Alex Eastwood; Josh Smith; Harry Millar

