

Match Report

London Division 1 (South)

Guildford RFC 60 v Maidstone FC 22



Played at Broadwater, Guildford, Saturday 16th April, 2016



Maidstone's six game winning streak came down to earth with a crash, in this 60-22 defeat, at Guildford, on Saturday. The hosts put on a display of rugby that yielded nine tries and demonstrated the quality Maidstone will need if they are to aspire to play in a higher division.













Guildford were sharper of thought, quicker of action and outplayed the visitors in every department of the game. With one exception, this was Maidstone's strongest line up, so no excuses could be found there. Sometimes, simple acknowledgement that they came up against a better side at the top of their game, is enough to explain the disparity in the score-line.

At half time, there was only one score between the sides, and Maidstone had finished the half strongly, with a last minute try. But two yellow cards that meant the visitors spent the first twenty minutes of the second half with only fourteen players on the pitch, effectively ending the contest, as Guildford used their superiority to dominate the rest of the game.

Too often this season, Maidstone have incurred yellow cards for technical offences. But these two were in the 'soft' category. Maybe the referee's interpretation was harsh and both were implemented to ensure the competitive nature of the game didn't spill over but these lapses have to be eliminated if Maidstone are to compete equally over eighty minutes.

Regardless of the impact of these decisions, it is unlikely that Maidstone would have performed another upset against a side above them in the league. Compared to the team that visited The Mote in December, this Guildford outfit was Spring chalk to Win-





ter’s cheese and showed, time and again, how incisive running in the three-quarters could open gaps in the Maidstone defence. And with 75% possession that came from pressure on Maidstone’s scrum and lineout, this possession inevitably turned into points.

With Ben Williams back in the starting line-up, Jack O’Connell began the game

on the bench. Adam Knight started in the second row in the absence of Ben Massey and, with the return of James Douglas, at full back, the back line returned to its familiar, recent look. Alfie Paea, in his first game since injuring his ankle in training, took up a place on the bench, alongside Lewis Stimpson.

Maidstone started the game with five minutes of continuous possession and probed the Guildford defence throughout this period without finding a way through. It took an interception to allow Guildford to get into things, with centre, Rust, taking play from the Guildford 22 down to the Maidstone 22.



And Guildford took advantage of this field position to score their first try shortly thereafter, when, from a scrum in the middle of the pitch, the ball was moved swiftly left to put overlapping full back, Paton, in to the corner. With Hooper adding the touchline conversion, Guildford moved into a seven point lead.

From the restart, Craig Webb won the ball and charged into the Guildford 22. A resultant penalty, converted by Harry Millar, reduced the deficit and opened Maidstone’s account.



A matching penalty by Hooper, just before the end of the quarter, restored Guildford’s seven point lead once more but with Maidstone being forced into errors, Guildford were beginning to dominate the exchanges. Inevitably, the pressure told and,

on the half hour, Guildford worked the blind side of a scrum, following a catch and drive from a line out, and winger, Harty, had the simple task of touching down behind the posts. With the straightforward, Hooper, conversion, the hosts stretched their lead to 17-3.

Having started slowly, Maidstone then picked up their own game and a series of line outs, followed by catch and drive moves, ultimately led to a try by Richie Bowen, in the right corner, to reduce the arrears to 17-8. But with Rory Beech leaving the field with a twisted



knee and Alfie Paea replacing him, a rejig of the back line was needed, with Harry Millar taking over the fly half role.

With half-time beckoning, Guildford then executed their own catch and drive from a lineout, with prop, Mairs, getting the touchdown to extend their lead to 22-8. But it was Maidstone that had the last say of the half, when Richie Bowen charged down a Guildford clearance and won the follow up. With Millar converting from the touchline, the 22-15, scoreline meant that the game was still to be won.



But then came the yellow cards. With less than a minute played in the second half, Adam Knight was carded for playing the ball in an offside position and with his suspension almost complete, Alex Eastwood received another yellow for a tip tackle. In this twenty minute period, Guildford scored twice and extended their lead to 34-15, but the extra effort required to contain the hosts eventually drained the resistance from Maidstone's legs.

The last twenty minutes of the game saw Guildford score four converted tries to one, taking the final score to 60-22, with their three-quarters creating gaps in Maidstone's defence, seemingly, at will. By this stage, Maidstone had been beaten into submission, with only pride to play for. But this clinical display of attacking rugby, by Guildford, was the best Maidstone have come up against, this season, and sets a standard to aspire to for the future.

Maidstone Ben Williams; Will Massey; Andi Petalo; Adam Knight; Hugh Cowan; Jake Johnson; Richie Bowen; Jake Eaglesham; Lucian Morosan; Rory Beech; Tom Waring; Craig Webb; Harry Millar; Alex Eastwood; James Douglas
Replacements: Jack O'Connell; Alfie Paea; Lewis Stimpson(All used)

