

## Match Report

London Division 1 (South)

Maidstone FC 23 v Twickenham RFC 10

Played at Parkfields, Hampton, Saturday 5th March, 2016



Maidstone, fielding the same starting line-up as the previous week, eventually, came away from this encounter with bottom-of-the-table, Twickenham, with a 10-23 win. But this was no routine victory, having to come back from a 10-0 deficit with half an hour on the clock. Consecutive yellow cards for No 8 Jake Eaglesham and second row, Ben Massey, in this period, for catch and drive infringements, within two minutes of each other, left both the players and the spectators baffled. Twickenham managed to take advantage of the numerical mismatch this created, to post a 10-0 lead and give Maidstone food for thought but the superiority of Maidstone, outside the scrum, ably led by man-of-the-match, Craig Webb, inevitably gave them the platform for victory.





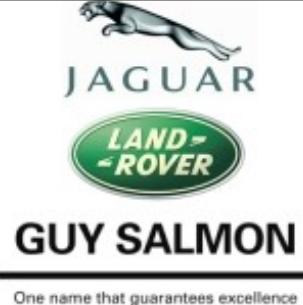







Maidstone's response to being two men down was mature and controlled and showcased the skill base in the side, leading to a comfortable victory by the same score as was posted at The Mote, earlier in the season. And with Ben Williams on the bench, alongside Rory Beech returning from injury, Maidstone had too much firepower to allow the early upset to spoil their afternoon.

On a cold day, with a brisk, but intermittent northerly wind blowing down the pitch, Maidstone had first advantage of the conditions. The first quarter hour showed little pattern in the play with a succession of penalties going to either side, preventing any pattern emerging. But the first significant foray that Twickenham mounted in the Maidstone half, following a penalty, led to them opening their account.

A line out on the Maidstone 22 was driven by the Twickenham eight and while the initial thrust was halted, the referee yellow-carded Jake Eaglesham for his efforts. A replay of the action saw Twickenham start their drive nearer the Maidstone line and, this time,







they reached their goal. But a second yellow-card casualty emerged, this time skipper for the day, Ben Massey, who invoked the referee’s ire to compound the problem for the visitors.

The strategy of playing for time almost yielded a pointless period with both players off the pitch. Maidstone’s defence was exemplary and it was only at

the last knockings of the player deficit that Twickenham extended their lead, once again by employing the catch and drive.

Once restored to parity, Maidstone began to exert their authority. A Millar penalty on 35 minutes got Maidstone on the scoresheet and, following further pressure from the restart, Maidstone showed that they could mount their own catch and drive strategy from deep in the Twickenham 22, with Rob Field getting the touch down in the corner.

With a two point deficit at half-time, any concerns about this being a ‘banana-skin’ game disappeared, and this was confirmed by a good opening spell in the second half. With just under ten minutes on the clock, Rob Field



was again the scorer, following another catch and drive, to post a three point margin in Maidstone’s favour. And this was a lead they never looked like losing.

At this point, all three replacements were brought off the bench and this move proved decisive. But it was the unexpected use of Rory Beech at stand-off, giving Maidstone a new point of attack through his varied passing, while also allowing Craig Webb to run different angles to break the Twickenham defensive line, that sealed the victory.



Now the play was confined to predominantly the Twickenham half and a further score on the quarter hour widened the margin for the visitors. From a line out on the half way, Eaglesham stole the ball and

broke through the Twickenham line. Back up from Rob Field continued the move and allowed the ball to be swept right. Alex Eastwood was the final beneficiary, using his pace to touch down in the corner, but this was a team-try, with execution at pace, the key.

A further reshuffle to the Maidstone back line saw Harry Millar back on, replacing Josh Smith. But, by this time, Twickenham’s efforts were contained within their own half, apart from the odd break out.

With the second half reaching its conclusion,





Maidstone secured the bonus point. A number of breaks from an increasingly dominant Maidstone back line continued to stretch the home defence and with Craig Webb taking play deep into Twickenham's 22, the follow up by Rory Beech secured the final score in the left corner.

A late flurry by Twickenham tested the Maidstone defence at the end but this was too little, too late to alter the outcome.

Maidstone can take some real positives out of this encounter, not least the game management required to come back from a ten point deficit and a double yellow card situation. In addition, Twickenham have generated the majority of their points from bonuses: to deny them further points was an achievement, in itself.

### **Maidstone**

Andi Petalo; Will Massey; Jack O'Connail: Ben Massey; Hugh Cowan: Rob Field; Jake Johnson; Jake Eaglesham: Lucian Morosan; Harry Millar: Tom Waring; Craig Webb; Alex Eastwood; Josh Smith: James Douglas

Replacements: Ben Williams; Adam Knight; Rory Beech (All used)

