



## Match Report

London Division 1 (South)

Chobham RFC 31 v Maidstone FC 34

Played at Chobham, Saturday 5th December, 2015



Maidstone had to overturn a nineteen point deficit to win this game but with the weather conditions, once again, having a significant impact on the play, they proved irresistible in a dynamic second half. The 31-34 scoreline barely reflected the bravery of this display or the inventiveness Maidstone brought to their game management.

There were heroes all over the pitch, not least, man-of-the-match Tom Waring, who had his best game for the club since moving from Hastings & Bexhill in the summer. Importantly, the backline, in total, functioned as a unit, showing how potent they can be at this level. And with Jake Johnson prominent in the loose, the pack overcame some early uncertain moments in the tight to contribute fully to the victory, as well.

The final factor was the introduction of Lewis Stimpson and Alex Eastwood, early in the second half, which added extra speed to the attack and an extra dimension for Chobham to consider.

The last time Maidstone played on this ground, they suffered a humiliating 111-0 defeat. While this magnitude of score was unlikely, on this occasion, beating teams above them in the league has been a problem this season. And with two changes in the front row, McKenzie for Pankhurst at hooker and Petelo for Byford at prop, there were early concerns about the ability to win sufficient ball to dictate play.



With Maidstone kicking into the strong wind in the first half, containing the opposition for the forty minutes became the primary concern but this was accomplished for the majority of the half. Indeed, by scoring first, on 25 minutes, Maidstone had exceeded their brief, due to some quick thinking by scrum half, Pitkin. The award of a penalty, deep in Maidstone's half, was the platform for his pass to Morosan to make ground







through a confused defence before releasing Rory Beech to sprint half the length of the field to score in the corner.

With ball in hand, Maidstone looked the equal of the Chobham back line, with Craig Webb proving a handful with some powerful runs, without making the decisive break. In the tight,

things weren't as rosy, with the scrum a particular problem, as the front row struggled to contain the home eight. But, importantly, the defence held solid until the last ten minutes of the half, when three converted tries turned the scoreline on its head.

The first came on 35 minutes from a scrum in the middle of the pitch in the Maidstone 22. Scrum half, Barnes, had freedom to run in space to touch down by the posts. Barnes was also instrumental in the second try, two minutes later, but it was No 8, Smith, who was given too much freedom off the back of a scrum, to score under the posts. Finally, just before the break, when Maidstone looked like they were going to score a try of their own, a long hack downfield gave Chobham a scrum



deep in Maidstone's 22, from which Barnes fed left wing, Devitt, cutting inside to score a third try. With Elliot converting all three, Maidstone were viewing a 21-5 half time deficit.

Chobham started the second half with a spring in their step and an early penalty, by Elliot, increased their lead, prompting the introduction of Stimpson at openside flanker



and Eastwood on the left wing, with Morosan moving to scrum half. A yellow card for Paea, at the same time, raised further concerns but with Harry Millar using the wind to establish field position, Chobham were unable to use the extra man to their advantage.

Maidstone began their comeback at the end of the third quarter. From a penalty

just inside the Chobham half, a line out on the 22 enabled the catch and drive to rumble to the line, with centre, Webb, popping up at the end to claim the try. A Millar conversion, from the touchline, reduced the deficit to 24-12 and with a working formula for playing in the Chobham half, Maidstone continued to worry the hosts.

Another Maidstone try, on the half hour, this time with Ben Williams getting the touch down after a spell of pressure from the forwards, reduced the deficit further, aided by



another Millar conversion from near the touch.

The third second-half try came from the restart. From the catch in the Maidstone 22, Stimpson made a dynamic break, deep into the Chobham half, managing to feed Waring, on his outside, as he was tackled, for the wing to score in the left corner. Another Millar conversion gave Maidstone a two point lead, turning the scoreline on its head.



As expected, Chobham responded and were awarded a penalty in the Maidstone 22 but with the wind in his face, Elliot failed in his attempt to regain the lead, for the home side, and it was Maidstone who came back to score the fourth try of the half. From a line out in Chobham territory, a chip to the corner saw Rory Beech win the race for the touchdown to claim his second try of the afternoon and extend the Maidstone lead to seven points.

And to make up for his missed conversion, with forty minutes played, Harry Millar added a drop goal in Maidstone's next foray into the Chobham half, giving Maidstone a two score margin, 24-34: which they needed.

In the five minutes of added time, it was Chobham that had the last word. From a scrum on half way, No 8, Smith, picked up off the back and weaved his way through the defence to score under the posts. With Elliot adding a drop goal conversion the lead was cut to three points but with the final whistle blowing immediately, Chobham had to be content with two losing bonus points, while Maidstone claimed the full complement of five.

This victory was unexpected but underlined the potential within this Maidstone squad. Not only were the attacking qualities of the side put on show but perhaps, more importantly, the defensive qualities were highlighted as well. As well as the first-up tackling, which was much better this week, the mental qualities required to fight back from a difficult position were also fully displayed.

### **Maidstone**

Ben Williams; Josh McKenzie; Andi Petelo: Ben Massy; Adam Knight: Jake Johnson; Charlie Williams; Hugh Cowan: Ben Pitkin; Harry Millar: Tom Waring; Alfie Paea; Craig Webb; Lucian Morosan: Rory Beech

Replacements: Jack O'Connell; Lewis Stimpson; Alex Eastwood (all used)

