

# TOUCHLINE

The Newsletter of Maidstone Football Club - Founded 1880

2009/2010 End of Season Edition - June 2010

## The Club President's Message

*Trevor Langley recalls some of the highs and lows of his tenure*

My, how time flies when you are having fun! My three year tenure as your President has flown by so, for my last piece for Touchline, I will indulge myself by looking back to the high, and low, lights of this period.

Let's start on a positive note: I've seen a lot of good rugby played, both at the Mote and on a number of opposition grounds, and I know that a large number of people, of all ages, have enjoyed themselves in the process. Being the President of the one of the oldest clubs in Kent, and the UK, is a position to be proud of but the sight of all the senior and junior players going about their business as part of the club is what underpins my pleasure.

I know that we've been relegated this season and that could have made it depressing, but I have been impressed by the refusal of the 1<sup>st</sup> team to accept the inevitable and to fight to the bitter end. Rugby is a team game and we have not played well enough as a team to dominate our opposition but I'm confident that we have the players with the right commitment and skills to, not only, start winning again but get us back into London 1 (South). Improving our team play is the ingredient to concentrate on but, once we find it, we'll be back.

What has also impressed me is the willingness of club members to step up and play at higher levels when required. You have to be fully committed to the Club to turn out regularly when in the veteran category: without naming individuals, well done, all of you!

Getting some new training lights in place within the last few weeks is a definite positive for the club. I take no credit for this – Andy Golding has been the driving force – but the contributions of the Vice-Presidents to the costs have helped. We are still not quite at our goal, so anyone who would like to contribute, please send me a cheque. It is never too late!

Our major off-field problem, this year, has been the accident to the Gravesend player, Clarence Harding, who lost the sight in one eye as a result of an incident when playing against us in January. This is still unresolved but everyone from our club, who has been close to it, is convinced it was a terrible accident, despite the attempts of the media to paint it as a deliberate eye gouge. Incidents like this show the strengths and weaknesses of organisations and I am proud to say that our Chairman has shown her immense value to the club. Not only has she held firm to a set of strategies, defined at the outset to help cope with the fall-out, but she has put in hours of work co-ordinating with the police, the RFU, Kent RFU and club members. She and the committee deserve the thanks of everyone.

The major disappointment during my tenure has been the failure to form the Mote Sports Foundation with the other clubs on the site. I had certainly hoped to drive this to a positive conclusion by now, and I will continue trying, but the glacially slow progress has left me frustrated.

Let me finally, in parting, thank everyone for making Maidstone Football Club a wonderful place to spend my spare time: to those who take on responsible roles as Committee members; coaches who strive manfully to improve the play of our teams; Vice-Presidents who support the club in a multitude of ways and club members in general, particularly those who are happy to wear the new club blazer and make a true statement of their commitment to the cause! Thanks to you all.

And now over to Bob Beney, your President designate: let's continue to make Maidstone a welcoming club for members and visitors both; to provide the opportunity to play rugby for everyone in the town and to develop our young members to the highest level we can. *TL*

# The Chairman's Message

## *A positive note from Wendy Pound*

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This is my final Touchline message after four years in this role and it gives me an opportunity to reflect on the past year. A number of times in recent months I have heard the phrase *annus horribilis*. In fact I prefer to think of it as *annus mirabilis* for there has been much to celebrate.

The season began with the U9s winning the Plate at the Medway Festival. The U17s won the Jack Conn Cup at Chingford and ended their season as runners-up in the Kent Cup as well as conquering the Irish on their home turf during their end of season tour. The U10s and U12s both finished the season with two trophies each from the Beccehamians and Aylesford Festivals.

Thanks to the efforts of a great team of coaches, the Tag Section has sought out new sponsors and increased its numbers. In addition it is giving the under 6s the opportunity to experience tag rugby at an early age. The growing numbers in the youth section are encouraging.

Coaches are keen to develop their knowledge and skills and we had a large number attending the Rugby First Course which Maidstone hosted. This course is a pre-requisite for those applying for Level 1 training which many have now done.

We also had coaches from each age group and the senior section attending a Child Safeguarding course which Maidstone hosted. Representatives from those teams who did not have their own first-aider also attended the First Aid course at the club.

The club continued its links with the community and local schools by providing a venue for the RDO to develop new rugby coaches. Inter-school competitions for local senior schools were held over three weeks at the club and once again Maidstone hosted the Primary Schools Tag Festival.

At senior level, Andy Foley has now been appointed as Head Coach. Andy comes to Maidstone with a good track record and is looking forward to the coming season and the opportunities this will bring.

In September 2009 the new look club website was launched which, thanks to the sterling efforts of a number of people, is informative and current and a credit to those who work tirelessly to ensure that it remains up to date.

Due mainly to the efforts of Andy Golding, the club now has new and vastly improved floodlights enabling greater, and safer, use of the training pitch. Fund raising will now turn towards creating a minis training and playing area on the waste ground at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> XV pitch.

Bob Hayton has continued his efforts to develop the number of sponsors supporting Maidstone. In the current economic climate this is a difficult job. The signing of PAR Marketing to assist the club in recruiting sponsors is a step forward.

On the social front there were quiz competitions to be won and the season ended with the traditional ball, held this year at the Village Hotel. Our thanks to Amanda Maddaford for organising this.

The Police enquiry into the incident in the match between Maidstone and Gravesend which resulted in a tragic injury to a Gravesend player concluded that there was insufficient evidence to refer the case to the CPS. An investigation has been carried out by the club and a full report submitted to the RFU who are now conducting their own enquiry. It is expected that this will be concluded by the end of July.

At the time of writing the first draft of the club's portfolio of evidence for the Whole Club Seal of Approval has been approved by the RFU and work on the final stages is now in hand.

The end of this season also sees the end of Trevor Langley's term of office as President. Trevor has supported the club over many years and has given much to the role during the last three years. Trevor will continue in his role as liaison officer for the proposed development at the Mote.

Before I finally 'hang up my boots' I have many people to thank for their hard work and support both for me and the club; in particular those on the Committee: Bob Hayton, Andy Golding, Dave Coleman, Tom Challis, Trevor Langley, Richard Ewence, Tracey Wakefield, Brian McKeon, Alan Hayward and Darren Mitchell. There are many others without whom the club could not function, chief among them the coaches, physios, bar staff, all players and the parents of those in the youth section and, of course, the club's many loyal supporters. The more people who offer their help and support the easier the task for all those concerned. There is no magic wand to change things overnight, but a willingness to try will make a difference.

Have a great summer. *WP*

# Director of Rugby

## *Andy Golding Analyses the Season*

	PLAYED	WON	DRAWN	LOST
1st XV	26	1	0	25
Mustangs XV	19	1	1	17
3rd (A XV)	23	13	1	9
4th (Ex A XV)	24	6	1	17
5th (B XV)	24	11	1	12
Veterans XV	21	7	1	11
Evergreen XV	3	2	0	1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>94</b>

From a collective-results perspective, as demonstrated by the foregoing statistics, this will not go down as one of the best seasons and yet, paradoxically, we have a club as buoyant and as happy as I can ever remember. From a playing point of view on most occasions we have fielded six senior sides, have a membership in excess of 500 with a burgeoning and successful youth section underpinned by an impressive Tag Rugby section that has mushroomed with numbers predicted to rise to 100 U6-U8 players in only their second season.

On top of that, we have new state-of-the-art floodlights, confirmed conversion of the waste ground at the back of the 1st XV pitch (via self-generated funding) as a mini rugby training facility, as well as being well on our way to achieving the Whole Club Seal of Approval - all of which will re-affirm us as one of the premier clubs in Kent either to join or to play for.

In addition, we have a tremendously loyal player base with players coming from far-a-field to play for the club and some who have been playing members for well over 25 years or more. To exemplify this, in a recent conversation with a 'stalwart 3rd XV and ex 1<sup>st</sup> XV player, from the National League era, I asked him why he still played for the club despite living in Southend. He quite simply said: *"I could easily play for Southend but what can be better than playing rugby with your mates, who you have known for years, at a great club like Maidstone"*.

To me, whilst results are important, arguably this is what a successful community, amateur rugby club is all about.

## **FIRST XV - UNCONTROLLABLE FACTORS UNDOUBTEDLY PROVED TO BE KEY**

Moving onto individual team performances, *Annus Horribilis* is a much-overused term. However, in the context of the 1<sup>st</sup> XV, it would seem an apt description. Not exclusively from the playing results alone (although one win and relegation to London 2 speaks for itself) but from a number of other key factors, some controllable, most not, which have undoubtedly impacted on performance.

- *We had/have 'gouge-gate, (as it is known), hanging over us like the 'Sword of Damocles', which has created a lot of adverse publicity despite no evidence to show that the incident was anything but an unfortunate accident.*
- *Experimentation with overseas players, which was a steep learning curve and which, with the exception of Mike Molloy, showed that it takes more than a few overseas players to make a successful team.*
- *An inability to do the basics well borne from not settling on and being comfortable on a pattern and style of play which suited all.*
- *An 'epidemic' of hamstring and other injuries, which highlighted that perhaps we were not as fit, physical or battle-hardened, as we needed to be. In fact, I don't remember one game, where we did not suffer an injury that forced a player to leave the field' and there were at least three players, who got injured during the warm-up before they even took the field.*
- *Level-six rugby, which has gone through the roof in terms of standard and teams boasting many semi-professional and ex-professional players.*
- *Competing for the same player base as our local rivals Ayelsford.*



### **Scrumming down against Wimbledon**

Against this backdrop, and with only one win to show from the season, most clubs would have undoubtedly lost players and fragmented. Quitting, however, has never been an option at Maidstone. We can all ride on the crest of a wave when things are going well but, for me, the true measure of success is how we respond to the difficult times. Easier said than done, you might think - but what we do is we take it on the chin, dust ourselves down and work even harder



to achieve our objectives and that is exactly what we have done and are doing. The fact that the 1<sup>st</sup> XV squad and, for that matter the Mustangs, have stuck together as a team through all the problems we have faced this season pays testament to the players' attitude, commitment and passion to play for this club.

***Some had More 1st XV Starts than they might have bargained for***

There are a number of players, who have made a significant contribution including out-going captain Mark Ryan, top points-scorer, Mike Molloy, top try-scorer Neil Graves (who with his injury record, ironically had the most starts) and players such as John O'Brien, Josh Pankhurst, Sam Bailey and Matt Iles, who have made a real impact. Others, such as 'evergreens' Dave Tugwell, Mark Thurgood and Martin Maytum, played some of their best rugby and had more 1<sup>st</sup> XV starts than they probably bargained for. In addition, we recruited some talented new players to compliment our seasoned 'war horses', namely, Ian Overton, Craig Webb, Ryan Mills and Lee Thompson, who will no doubt stand us in good stead for our assault on the league this coming year. We also continued to develop our wealth of youth talent with players such as Tim Wetjen, Lewis Fawcett and Jon Broadly, having developed immeasurably from 1<sup>st</sup> team exposure both in terms of character and ability. To continue our 'home-grown' youth development policy, we have a number of very exciting and talented U17s, who we hope to integrate into senior rugby and who I am sure will get 1<sup>st</sup> XV squad opportunities this year.

Last but not least, I would also like to formally recognise the contribution made by ex-Head Coach Tim McBenNETT, who after more than a decade of loyal service to the club decided that it was time to move onto pastures new and I wish him well with his deserved appointment as Canterbury's backs coach.

***Time to rebuild in a less-charged environment***

In many ways, I am glad that we have been relegated and whilst I am as ambitious as anyone for this club to do well, we need time to re-build in a less charged environment to start winning again, develop confidence and go back to playing rugby with smiles on faces. Whilst I would like nothing more than for the 1st XV to bounce back to London 1 in our first season, my key objective is to make sure that all players are enjoying their rugby and playing to the very best

of their ability. With new Head Coach, Andy Foley at the helm, ably supported by the likes of Shaun Neaves, Fin Davies and Sadie Jones, I am sure that this will all be achieved. To quote:

***"Success is sweet: the sweeter if long delayed and attained through manifold struggles and defeats"***

*A. Branson Alcott*

***MUSTANGS - BEARING THE BRUNT OF 1st XV INJURIES - WHILE PLAYING IN A VERY STRONG LEAGUE***

The Mustangs also had a very tough season as a result of bearing the brunt of 1<sup>st</sup> XV injuries while themselves playing in a very strong Invicta 1 league. All of which resulted in them being unable to fulfil a number of their fixtures towards the end of the season. In addition, they lost a number of core players (for a variety of reasons), which meant we had to accelerate the progress of younger, less experienced players and, whilst they acquitted themselves admirably, it was hard-going for some and I would ideally have liked them to have spent time learning their trade alongside more experienced players in the lower sides of the club. As such, one of my key objectives for this coming season is to re-establish the player base and performance that have so long been associated with the Mustangs. With a return to league rugby in Invicta 2, I am confident this will be achieved.



***Mustangs vs OEs - No, he's not sleeping***

For the last three seasons the Mustangs have been led by Nick East who, despite living in Sussex, has done an excellent job. In recognition of this achievement, Nick was recently, awarded a well-deserved Club Vice presidency.

***THIRD XV - THE ONLY REGULAR TEAM  
TO HAVE WON MORE GAMES  
THAN THEY LOST***

Having experienced some early difficulties in coming to terms with Invicta League 2 rugby, they adjusted well and are the only regular team in the club to have won more games than they lost. The need to fulfil rearranged fixtures and supply a number of players to the 'Evergreen' cup side, however, meant that they fell away in both league and cup. Yet they still finished a creditable third in their league, having at one point been title contenders. My hope, now they are returning to Invicta 3 rugby, is that those who played so ably in Invicta 2, will move up and play for the Mustangs to provide a much-needed blend of youth and experience. A special mention should go to 'Dorian Grey' skipper, Paul Massey, who has led the 3s by example over the last few seasons.



**3rds vs Beckenham**



**3rds vs Bromley**

***4TH XV - INSTRUMENTAL IN DEVELOPING  
YOUNGER PLAYERS***

The 4<sup>th</sup> XV did not have as good a season as previous years, mainly due to inconsistent availability but led by Mark Staples and supported by Craig Bowden, they still remain an excellent side to play for and have been instrumental in developing some of the younger/less experienced players through their introduction to senior rugby.



**4ths vs East Peckham**

***5th XV - MAIDSTONE FC's  
TEAM OF THE SEASON***

The 5<sup>th</sup> XV had their best season for a decade having been rejuvenated by the likes of Colin Frost, Trevor Bradley, Steve Oakley and Steve Quinn. They have had more players turn up at training than any other team (could there be a correlation to learn from here?) and whose enthusiasm for the game, a player squad in excess of 30 exemplifies. As such, they were well-deserved winners of the Centenary Cup for team of the season – where they all turned up in their corporate red shirts, reminiscent of the unity presented by the male welsh voice choirs of old.



**5ths vs Sittingbourne 3rds**



## **VETERANS XV - SPIRIT, CAMARADERIE AND SMARTEST TO EVER TOUR IOW**

Last but not least, the Vets, who had a mixed season not helped by their reduction in numbers due to retirement and/or injury. They are superb patrons of the club, and have done a great deal for and in support of the club over the last 25 years, not least of which is being ever-present at social functions and boosting the popularity and sales of real ales, such as Gads and Late Red beers. They are also excellent ambassadors for the club and were recently described as the smartest set of players to have ever toured the Isle of Wight in many a year. My latent ambition is to experience the glamour and glitz of a veteran's tour in the not too distant future. Their spirit and camaraderie is evident for all to see, as I witnessed first-hand when I spent a night on their table at the recent Summer Ball. And it is great to see that founder member Paul Ehrhart is still turning out with other seasoned Vets despite having suffered a serious illness.



### **The official 'Eye of the Needle' Tour photograph**

From a whole-club perspective, I am proud to be Director of Rugby and honoured to now also be Chairman of Maidstone FC and I look forward to the new challenges, including the highs and lows (although not too many lows please) that next season may bring. All that remains for me to say is that I wish the club every success for the next season both on and off the field and would like to thank all those who continue to support and contribute to the ongoing development of club, including our dedicated coaching and support staff, club officers, supporters and sponsors. I am keenly looking forward to pre-season now, which begins officially on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> June with a Players Meeting for existing and aspiring squad members and Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> June, where physical training (open to all players) begins.

Lastly, whatever your aspirations are as players or your philosophy as a spectator, our collective club ethos has to be:

'Play to win but also play to enjoy' - AG

## **MIDDLESEX CHARITY 7s**

**Saturday 14th August 2010**

### ***Are you Going?***

Are you intending to go to the Middlesex 7s? If you, here is an opportunity to book your tickets and also benefit the club.

Simply go to the club website and in the club news section and look for the Middlesex 7s article to book your tickets through the club's unique Middlesex 7s URL link. Adult tickets start at £20 with **children under 15 going free** (*Children must be accompanied by an adult, maximum of 2 children per adult*). For every adult ticket booked through the club's URL booking facility, the club will receive £10

The 2010 competition sees another very strong line-up of teams competing in the most famous rugby charity event in the world. This season's event sees a mix of national, GP, representative and invitational sides with the following teams already confirmed: **England, Scotland, Wales, London Wasps, London Irish, Saracens, Harlequins, Newcastle Falcons, Leicester Tigers, Leeds Carnegie, British Army** and **Samurai**, with other invitational sides expected to be announced soon.

This is a great opportunity to generate revenue for the club as well as having a great time at the Middlesex 7's which is one of the most enjoyable days in the sporting calendar in addition to being a great precursor to the 2010/11 rugby season.



# Ups & Downs: What Happened Where in Kent Rugby?

## ***Bob Hayton's Comprehensive End-of-Season Round Up***

Well, apart from our own division, a lot of rugby was played elsewhere in the county. Following a restructuring process during the closed season Blackheath competed in National Div 1 where they had a mixed season that resulted in a less than convincing mid-table position. Meanwhile Westcombe Park and Canterbury competed in the newly titled National 2 (South). Canterbury had another season that promised much but failed to really threaten the promotion places, whilst Westcombe Park, following last season's relegation, found themselves at the bottom end of the table for a long time; relegation would have been cut and dried were it not for Lydney being docked 10-points for an indiscretion during the season. But Combe's major saving was the fact that N2S went through the season with only 15 clubs due to the collapse and withdrawal of Mounts Bay just prior to the season. This meant that only two sides were relegated with three moving up from Level 5 to re-balance the division with 16 clubs for next season.

### ***LONDON 1 (SOUTH)***

Although there was no Kent based side in National 3 (SE) this season, that will not be the case next year as Gravesend built on the promise of last year to take the title in London 1 (South). Unlike last season, where Kent clubs failed to make any real impact in the promotion race, Dover, following a promising first season in this division made a sustained challenge, with Cobham and new boys Chichester also in the mix although it was a late charge from Sidcup that looked like it might deprive Dover of the play-off opportunity (away against the Civil Service from London 1N). A slow start by the Dover in the play-off gave Civil Service the advantage and despite a valiant effort by Dover in the second half they could not overhaul the opposition total and must wait another year for the prospect of promotion. Across the rest of the division it was actually quite tight and, with ten Kent clubs out of the fourteen in the division, it was felt that a number of them would be

competing for promotion. In the end it was inconsistency that prevented any other serious challenge from Kent sides. Old Elthamians really fell off the pace after a very promising opening quarter of the season and with the bottom three sides in National 3 (SE) <sup>1</sup> all destined for London 1(S), their early April loss to Tunbridge Wells saw them relegated to London 2 (SE) after just one season in the division. Obviously, as a club we had a disappointing season, failing to take opportunities when they came our way, and will be playing in London 2(SE) next season. And whilst our near neighbours might feel we were lucky to have stayed up after last season, their unexpected promotion after various appeals and the idiosyncrasies of the restructuring system proved a bridge too far, even with a number of players parachuted in (*both puns intended*).

### ***LONDON 2 (SOUTH EAST)***

If London 1 (South) comprises mainly Kent clubs, the reverse is true of London 2 (SE) where the majority of teams are Sussex or Surrey based. However, the major power was what many have referred to as the 'semi professional Tonbridge Juddians' (after all – '*Money Talks*'), who duly fulfilled the prophecy of Phil Cooper <sup>2</sup> Folkestone's match reporter last season; with the only real question being, "Who would take the runner-up spot?" After just missing out last season, Hove looked to have the position secure by Christmas but Warlingham and a resurgent Sevenoaks, who had rediscovered their form, were very much in the mix. In the end Hove held on to take the play-off position where they defeated Guernsey 17-14 in a tight contest. At the foot of the table Old Dunstonians struggled yet again and only avoided relegation with a last minute try on the final day of the season. Eastbourne were anchored to the foot of the

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1. Haywards Heath RFC, Sutton & Epsom RFC, Portsmouth RFC

2. 20th Sept. 2008, (L4SE) Tonbridge Juddians 126 v Folkestone 0:  
"I am certain Tonbridge will be this season's champions. Actually I'll look even further into the crystal ball and say that they will also win London 2 (SE) next season."

table and it was newly promoted Bromley who eventually filled the other relegation place.

### **LONDON 3 (SOUTH EAST)**

In London 3 (SE) only Charlton Park threatened the promotion positions and newly promoted Medway creditably finished comfortably in the top half of the table, but in the end it was Sussex sides Heathfield & Waldron and Brighton that took the honours with East Grinstead the nearest challengers having fallen off the pace in the second half of the season. At the bottom end of the table Whitstable and Old Gravesendians struggled while Folkestone were never really comfortable but the real losers were Park House, where a transgression resulted in a 10-point deduction in mid season took them from a respectable mid table position to the foot of the table. However, they still had enough time to pull themselves clear of the 'drop zone' and it was Hastings & Bexhill that filled the third relegation place.

### **KENT 1**

In the County leagues, the dominant force was Dartfordians who took the Kent 1 title and appear to have 'steadied the ship' after a slide of several relegations in recent seasons, with Cranbrook as their nearest challengers taking the runner up spot for the play-off against Uckfield where they overhauled a 19-0 deficit in the last quarter to win 19-21. At the foot of the table Sheppey were anchored to the bottom for a long period but managed to haul themselves clear in the second half of the season. Guys didn't help themselves with a 16-point deduction but, like Park House in the division above, managed to recover and avoid relegation and so it is HSBC who drop to Kent 2 along with Erith, both after only one season in the division.

### **KENT 2**

In Kent 2 Lordswood was the dominant force running out clear winners in an undefeated season, although it must be said that they were repositioned in Kent 2 following their withdrawal from the league three divisions higher. The outcome was, therefore, probably to be expected. The race for second place was between three clubs, Shooters Hill, New Ash Green and Orpington who set the early pace. In the end it went down to the last round of fixtures with NAG taking the second promotion place. Brockleians found themselves as the strongest side in Kent, holding everyone else up from the foot of the English Club Championship in Kent.

*(Note: Due to the promotion of two Kent clubs to the London & SE leagues from Kent 1, as we go to press the issue of relegation/promotion between Kent 1 & 2 is not finalised. I am assuming here that it will be two-down & two-up).*

### **CUP COMPETITIONS**

Due to the restructuring of the leagues and the resultant increase in the size of some divisions at Level 3-6, This season had no National competitions for clubs at those levels, leaving only the Intermediate Cup, Senior and Junior Vases. In the Intermediate Cup only Tonbridge Juddians got beyond the second round, reaching the semi-finals nationally when they beat Hampshire club Tottonians 22-15 in the Divisional Final. The semi-final proved a game too far and they lost out 19-13 to Bristol club, Old Redcliffians. In the Senior Vase, Folkestone made it as far as the fourth round before going out to Gosport & Fareham (who made the Divisional Final), whilst in the Junior Vase Sittingbourne managed to get to the fifth round before narrowly falling to Teddington, who went on to win a close fought Divisional Final and then progress to the National Final at Twickenham.

### **COUNTY COMPETITIONS**

In the four county competitions there were a few different clubs in the respective finals. The Kent Cup competition was not as predictable as in previous seasons with the recent change in the rules for National League clubs meaning that not all of the so-called 'big guns' got to the latter stages, and none reaching the semi-finals. The competition seemed to provide the spark that Sevenoaks needed to regain some form and consistency as they disposed of Sidcup in round 1 and then Canterbury in a match played in what at times were blizzard conditions. Our own challenge ended against league rivals Gravesend, who with the 'big guns' all falling foul of junior opposition were probably left as the tournament favourites on the back of their impressive league form. In the end Blackheath's conquerors Old Colfeians fell to Gravesend in one semi final with Sevenoaks' cup run coming to an end in a narrow defeat to Old Elthamians. The Final between Gravesend and Old Elthamians ran to the form book with Gravesend capping a fine season narrowly coming out on top (23-24) despite being pushed all the way by an OEs side that showed much of its early season promise. In fact the pre-match favourites were 20-7 down at half-time.

In a Plate Competition, that seemed to spark little interest in most clubs, Canterbury would have been expected to dominate following



their early exit from the Cup. With most clubs opting to scratch their fixtures, the city club found themselves away at Bromley in the semi final with Beckenham, the other big side in the semis, taking a trip to the south coast to meet Folkestone. The semi-finals ran true to form leaving the line up for the final as Canterbury against a Beckenham side keen to reclaim the trophy they won three seasons ago. In the end, following a 0-5 deficit in a low scoring first half, they proved too strong for the city club that was still fulfilling Saturday league commitments and ran out winners by 22-10.

The Vase competition also saw a number of walkovers in the first round, leaving the semi finals to read Sittingbourne v Cranbrook, in what was played as a Kent 1/Vase double-header Cranbrook came out on top and met a deceptively lowly Lordswood, the Kent 2 Champions having toppled the Kent 1 Champions, Dartfordians, in the other semi-final. The final was a tight contest with only one point the difference, the 18-17 score line going in favour of Lordswood, who had now beaten both the winners and runner-up of Kent 1 on their way to the trophy.

The Salver competition saw a resurgent Sheppey defeat Ashford in one semi-final with Anchorians winning away at Erith by 13-10. The final was keenly contested, with Sheppey eager to register their first win over Anchorians this season, eventually running out convincing winners by 32 points to 10.

On the subject of the county competitions, the topic of their continued relevance, especially at Cup level was often the subject for discussion on the touchline and in the various clubhouses. The December & January snow forced a number of postponements in the league that quickly swallowed up any spare weekends that clubs had earmarked for county competition. With the Cup, in particular, no longer offering qualification into higher-level national competition and the potential for financial reward, is the incentive to compete still there? Of course players want to do well but in the second half of the season, when injuries start to take their toll and a backlog of fixtures is created by the weather, clubs have to prioritise and two matches in two days can be a daunting task at this level. Perhaps, as was suggested by Gravesend's match reporter, we should look at going back to something like the midweek Floodlit Cup competition format that ran in the 80's in order to alleviate the weekend fixture congestion created by the inevitable annual

wet or icy weather. In fact, to their credit Gravesend placed a higher priority on the Kent Cup than the inaugural RFU League Champions Cup; in part because they could not name the required amount of front-row forwards, but also because club touring arrangements meant they would be unable to fulfil the next round anyway. At the moment they are waiting to see what sanction (if any) the RFU will come up with and it could be as bad as being docked 10 points at the start of next season's campaign in National 3 SE, unless of course there is a sudden outbreak of common sense at HQ!

In the regional Evergreen Cup competition, this season saw a different name on the trophy with Sutton & Epsom going out in the early rounds to Haywards Heath. The semi-finals saw Maidstone out muscled by Haywards Heath whilst Cranbrook travelled to Blackheath whose 'star studded' line-up was just too powerful and ran out convincing winners. The final between Blackheath and Haywards Heath saw an emphatic win for Blackheath who had too much all-round fire power for the Sussex club. In the Plate competition, TJs having failed to honour their cup fixture, also withdrew from the Plate. The Plate Final was Sevenoaks Acorns taking on Warlingham, the Acorns have been chasing silverware in this competition for quite a while and their quest came to an end with a comprehensive 34-13 victory. Since there appears to be a waiting list of clubs eager to join this competition, it poses the question as to whether teams that consistently fail to honour their fixtures should be allowed to enter next season.

### ***JUNIOR LEAGUES***

Around the Kent Junior Leagues this article will only concentrate on the Invicta & Mid-Kent Leagues as they are the ones that directly affect the club's other XVs. Of course, with this being the first season of a restructured county junior league system, the outcome of promotions and relegations along with other repositioning of teams will not become clear until well into the closed season. In the Invicta league the big battle was between TJs second XV, who were riding on the resurgence of their successful first XV, and Canterbury's Development XV with TJs just coming out on top. At the foot of Division 1 both ourselves and Old Elthamians struggled. In Division 2 the battle for the top prize was very much a three-horse race between Canterbury third XV, Old Alleynians second XV and our own third XV. In a division that very much took our thirds away from their dominant position in the

Mid-Kent leagues they performed extremely well, and will probably rue a couple of early season narrow defeats that may have cost them the title. At the foot of the table Aylesford withdrew leaving Bromley's second XV anchored to the bottom. In Division 3 the battle was between the third XV's of Thanet and Dover, the outcome being decided in Thanet's favour with a 34-7 victory over their main rivals. The foot of the table was equally close with Ash, D&B second XV, Sevenoaks third XV and Whitstable seconds all fighting to avoid the bottom position. In the end Whitstable lost out by the margin of 2-points, again on the last weekend of the season.

In the Mid-Kent Leagues our fourth XV had been elevated to Mid-Kent A and finished in lower mid table with Sevenoaks fourth XV taking the title and OGs second XV occupying the relegation spot. Mid-Kent B had no representation from the club and was won by Old Tonbridgians at something of a canter, with Cranbrook's thirds at the foot of the division. Our fifths enjoyed their best season for some time, although their league position doesn't really demonstrate the improvement they have shown. The title was won by Aylesford's fifth XV (or is that their 2nds, 3rds or 4ths) it is difficult to tell when they seldom field all their sides on any given weekend. With Anchorians third XV withdrawing from the league the bottom position was occupied by New Ash Green's thirds.

Finally, a word about the club's U17 side who continue to develop and improve and this year reached the final in the Kent Cup, losing out 17-7 to favourites Sevenoaks in a match that was far closer than the score implies and where, with the ball in hand they looked the most threatening. In fact Sevenoaks went on to defeat North Walsham 20-11 in the London & SE Regional U17 Final of the National Competition and then Taunton 20-18 and Old Northamptonians 38-10 in the National Plate Semi-Final and Final respectively, so not a bad benchmark against which to measure the side's improvement over the last couple of seasons.

### **COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP**

The County championship saw Kent competing in Division 2 on the Bill Beaumont Cup having been promoted from the Shield competition after last year's performance. The side based around the national league with a strong showing of Gravesend players swept all before them in Division 2 (South) opening their account with an impressive 55-15 win against Hampshire

at Havant. Another convincing 43-14 victory on their away trip to Taunton against Somerset set them up nicely for their only home fixture in the pool stage at Folkestone, against a Middlesex side that had won one and lost one. The match was a one sided affair with Middlesex outclassed and unable to cope with the strength of the Kent from 1-22, and in glorious weather in front of the home crowd Kent ran out easy winners 66-0. As Division 2 (South) champions and knowing they were already promoted to the Division 1 competition next season, they took on their northern counterparts Warwickshire in the Division 2 Plate Final during the bank holiday weekend at Blackheath. As expected the match was a much closer contest with Kent taking the honours and running out narrow victors by 33-27.

### **LONDON & SE PROMOTION / RELEGATION SUMMARY**

#### **National 3 (SE)**

Promoted: Jersey, Old Albanians

Relegated: Haywards Heath, Portsmouth, Sutton & Epsom

#### **London 1 (N)**

Promoted: Staines, Civil Service

Relegated: Welwyn, Rochford Hundred, Harpenden

#### **London 1 (S)**

Promoted: Gravesend

Relegated: Aylesford, Maidstone, Old Elthamians

#### **London 2 (SE)**

Promoted: Tonbridge Juddians, Hove

Relegated: Eastbourne, Bromley

#### **London 2 (SW)**

Promoted: London Irish Amateurs

Relegated: Winchester, London South Africa

#### **London 3 (SE)**

Promoted: East Grinstead, Brighton

Relegated: Hastings & Bexhill, Whitstable, Old Gravesendians

#### **London 3 (SW)**

Promoted: Gosport & Fareham, Old Mid-Whitgiftian

Relegated: Old Paulines, Kingston, Andover

#### **Shepherd Neame Kent Division 1**

Promoted: Dartfordians, Cranbrook

Relegated: Erith, HSBC

#### **Shepherd Neame Kent Division 2**

Promoted: Lordswood, New Ash Green



**Stop Press  
(8<sup>th</sup> June)**

With the fixtures for Kent 1 & 2 having now been announced it appears there has been some realignment of the divisions required. Kent 1 will consist of 12 clubs as before with the top two from last season promoted and replaced by two clubs coming down from L3(SE). At the bottom of the table things are not as clear cut, with bottom placed Erith and 3rd bottom Guys Hospital relegated, they are replaced by the champions and runners up from Kent 2. second from bottom HSBC are spared relegation.

In Kent 2, Kings College Hospital have withdrawn from the league and have been replaced by Southwark Lancers to maintain the division at 10 clubs. The Lancers were only formed in 2008 and have moved up from the Kent Metropolitan League so 2010/11 will be only their second season of competitive league rugby.

### **THE LEAGUE POINTS SYSTEM**

Next season could see a change to the league points scoring system with amateur rugby from Level 6 (London 1 down) adopting the same system of bonus points as the elite end of the game. Last season, as part of the RFU's Rugby Landscape initiative, bonus points were introduced in National League 3 (Level 5) on a trial basis. As we go to press the RFU is consulting all clubs in the league structure at Level 6 and below as to whether bonus points should be introduced throughout the leagues for next season, 2010 - 2011.

At the moment we don't know whether this will come into effect, or if it does, whether or not it will be adopted by the county's junior leagues. Please see the website for any updates on what decision is arrived at. *RH*

## **Advertising with MFC**

### ***The Deputy Chairman's Challenge***

As we now move into the closed season and a respite from the game for a couple of months, there will be those who administrate the club who will be working hard and unseen behind the scenes. One of those areas is sponsorship & advertising.

My challenge to you, the senior team (1st XV – Vets XV) is to do your bit to assist. Firstly no one is asking you to make a major commitment or donate a limb!

What I would like each of the senior XV's to do, is to try and sell TWO new advertising boards.



If the company you work for is, or may be interested then in the first instance please contact me (Bob Hayton – M: 07979 501433) with the name of the company and the person we need to speak to and we will do the rest.

### ***Shirt Number & Match Ball Sponsorship***

For the past few seasons we have invited supporters to sponsor 1st XV shirts and the match ball. This can be done by individuals, couples, friends or businesses. Your name doesn't actually appear on the shirt but you are listed as the sponsor of that particular shirt number on the team selection page of the match day programme for the duration of the season. Additionally, your name is listed on the poster display of shirt sponsors in the clubhouse. There are 18 1<sup>st</sup> XV match and shirts available for the 2010/11 season.



In the case of match ball sponsorship your name appears in the match day programme for the fixture of your choice plus also on the match ball sponsors display in the clubhouse. There are 11 opportunities for home league fixtures available plus also any home fixtures in the Kent Cup and RFU Intermediate Cup.

If you or your company may be interested in taking one or more of these opportunities then please contact Bob Hayton in the first instance.

# Senior Rugby

## Maidstone 1st XV

### *It's Tough at the Top and You Don't Always Get Back What You Put In*

And so we come to the end of another season and, after five years competing at Level 6, we find ourselves dropping down a league to London 2 (SE).

I know I've said it many times this season, but I just want to re-iterate how proud I've been of the players sticking at it through what has been a very tough couple of seasons. Not many teams in our situation have the team spirit to train and play with the same enthusiasm as the current squad. Our final league position certainly does not reflect the time and effort put in, not just by the players, but the coaches, managers and physio's (I'd get severely reprimanded if I didn't mention the latter!).



#### **Beckenham away - Early pressure not enough**

All the players used this season, of which there were 19 debutants, acquitted themselves superbly over the course of the season, such that it would be unfair of me to pick out individuals, but congratulations must go to Jack Lamb, who was unanimously voted Players' Player of the Year. Jack's work-rate throughout a game is phenomenal and his personal tackle-count in a game usually accounts for a large proportion of the team's total tackles. Throughout the season he has continually proved what a valuable asset he is to the team and it is certainly noticeable when he isn't playing.

On a personal note, this season was a relative

triumph, as I actually managed to play 15 games for the first team (as well as three runouts for the Mustangs), which is the most games I've played in a season by a considerable margin.

Coming to the end of my first year of captaincy, I have, sadly, decided that it will also be my last. This was a very difficult decision to come to, especially with the side being relegated. I have found, however, that I have struggled to find the time to commit fully to undertaking all the tasks a captain should be doing, and that's even before the baby arrives this July. I am very much looking forward to the challenge of playing in the lower league, and helping the side to get promoted at the first time of calling (if selected of course).



#### **Mark Ryan - Stepping down from the Captaincy**

I wish my successor all the best going into next season, and I hope that the club can get back into the winning habit.

Lastly, I would like to thank Tim McBenNETT, who parted with the club back in February. I personally owe a great deal to Tim's coaching over my senior career at Maidstone, and the team in general owes a lot to the time and dedication that Tim put in. A lot of work goes on behind the scenes so that we can put a team out on a Saturday and I would like to thank Andy Golding, Shaun Neaves, Dave Tito and Nigel Maddaford for all their efforts this season. And lastly, my thanks to Steve Matthews who has not only stepped in to lead the side but also for making the speech at the recent club dinner.

I hope you all have a good break over the summer, cheering on England in the round-ball game, and I very much look forward to seeing you all next season. **MR**

*For First XV playing stats, turn to page 11*



## First XV Playing Stats

PLAYER		Sub	Tries	Conv	Pens	Total
N Graves	24	0	4			20
S Matthews	20	0	1			5
A Bacon	18	1	1			5
J O'Brien	17	2	1			5
L Thomson	17	1	2			10
J Pankhurst	16	1	1			5
M Molloy	16	0	2	14	7	59
J Lamb	15	2	1			5
P Horne	15	0		4	5	23
M Ryan	15	0	2			10
L Debnam	14	3				0
G Hill	14	1	1			5
L Fawcett	13	4	2			10
C Simpson	12	2				0
B Court	12	0				0
N Sargent	11	0				0
B Cleary	11	0	2			10
R Jeffrey	10	4	1			5
D Tugwell	10	1				0
S Bailey	9	6	1			5
M Illes	9	6	2			10
N East	9	1				0
D McClintock	8	1			2	6
D Houlihan	7	2				0
T Wetjen	6	3				0
C Webb	6	0	3			15
I Overton	5	0	2			10
R Mills	5	0				0
M Thurgood	4	1				0
A Cairns	4	0				0
M Maytum	3	9				0
S Walker	3	2				0
I Lee	3	2				0
T King	3	1				0
J Dance	3	0	1			5
C Whitehead	3	0		1	2	8
T Harvey	2	3				0
G Milne	2	2				0
D Smith	2	1	1			5
D Salvage	2	0				0
D Grab	1	3				0
T Castle	1	1				0
J Broadley	1	1				0
D Ruau	1	1				0
J Sullivan	1	0				0
H Stockford	1	0				0
C Tresize	1	0				0
B Crystal	1	0				0
E Pritchard	1	0				0
S Poynton	0	1				0
B Rookledge	0	1				0
R Coles	0	1				0
Penalty Try			1			5
TOTALS			32	19	16	256

## 2nd XV - The Mustangs

*Not Straights & Yellow Cards...*

*Nick East's take on 09/10 and more*

It's fair to say the past season has not been one of the Mustang's most successful which is pretty much where we were at the end of last season despite finishing as runners-up or third in the three previous seasons.

So, rather than use this piece to break down the 'what went wrong' and 'what could have been', as I'll be hanging up the arm-band at the end of the 09/10 season, I'm going to reflect on three enjoyable years as Mustangs captain.

I was honoured to take over the captaincy from James Ferris some three or four seasons ago on a permanent basis after vice captaining and leading the pack during his tenure. Aware that the role has been held by such club legends as Nigel Maddaford and Shaun Neaves in the past, I knew I'd have some pretty big shorts to fill. Being captain allowed me the opportunity to pick myself in the position of Hooker, a role that a younger (though even then over 60) Ross Laing had prepared me for as part of the Dream Team's youth policy. Although I've played most positions for the club, Hooker is definitely my preferred role and it has given me the opportunity to play in the front row along side some great people.

One such, is a man who has probably spent more time in scrums with me than any other. During the three years I've held the role he has attended **two training sessions**, scored **one try**, had **a yellow card for kissing someone** and **rarely warms up**, but, if I could pick a player of my captaincy, he is the man who would unquestionably win.

*Ladies and Gentleman, I give you...*

**Mark Thurgood!!!!**

Despite bad knees and ankles Mark has always been there and kept our scrum going forward and on occasion, when he has mistakenly been given the ball, will go on the odd gazelle-like trundle, much to the amusement of all watching. It's been good to see Mark's expertise used in the 1<sup>st</sup> team these past two seasons where, I can say from a position of experience, he has out-scrummaged many of his younger, fitter London 1 opponents.

**Mr. Thurgood, I raise my glass to you!**

Mark has not been the only player to make an impression on me or help me on the field when on the odd occasion I found myself on the wrong side of a referee. Though there have been many while I've been captain (some 150 different players in the last 3 seasons) I can't not mention the following. Mayhem, my other long time front row buddy bringing the occasional red mist... "You know what you did!", Horse providing some great galloping runs and often pulling off the miracle of making me look good at line outs, Mikey Laurenson who would always be a calm head for me when my temper got the better of me and Tuggy, who couldn't put a straight ball into a scrum if he tried though he can pull off a highly amusing goose step!



### **Nick East - Three years as Skipper**

Aside from players, the Mustangs have seen the benefit of several great support staff and coaches over the years. Andy Golding coached the team at first and bought with him dynamic stretching and the very professional approach to rugby that we had been missing at 2<sup>nd</sup> team level. Andy was followed by my good friend Shaun 'Big Ern' Neaves who added his own personal flavour to the Mustangs, which resulted in a league runners-up position with one win separating us and the winners. Shaun's '2 and out' tactic enabled the Mustangs to play a basic but effective game that was backed up by some interesting half-time talks that would bring us back on track and win us games. One such talk was given in the half-time of my favourite victory that saw us go into a strong, early lead against Beckenham away, a team that we had never beaten at home or away (and haven't since) only to be overtaken before the break and find ourselves trailing by a considerable margin. To say that the talk had one or two swear words in it would be an understatement. To say that it was possibly a world record for the

amount of 'F-words' in five minutes with the occasional NON swear word thrown in, would probably hit the nail on the head! Whatever it was, it was enough for us to close the gap and for Josh Pankhurst to find another gap that he could crawl through to score, win the game for us. Fin Davis and Gary Whitehead took over from Shaun when he moved on to assist the forwards coaching of the 1<sup>st</sup> team, though when injury forced Gary to step down for a time, Fin carried on as sole coach. Fin, having only just, hung up his playing boots, again bought something very different to the Mustangs and has remained thoroughly dedicated to developing each Mustang into a 1<sup>st</sup> team player of the future. The physio support we have received has always be first class thanks to Wendy, Anna and Catherine, who have always found my joke of appearing naked from behind doors in the changing room very funny!

The final person I'd like to mention is one who, despite not being a player (unless you count one trip to Gravesend and a high tackle), would still deserve any award we could bestow on him for his contribution to Mustangs rugby. Laurence Waters, or Noel to most, took on the role of Mustangs Manager when I took over the captaincy. Without him the Mustangs would not have enjoyed the successes that they have. Noel does all the work behind the scenes that no one thinks about, as well as helping with match day preparations and, on occasion, coaching itself on match day, despite coming from a cricket background. His input at selection has also been a great help not only to the 2s but those teams around him. Without Noel's help I wouldn't have been able to do half the job I did, Noel I thank you.



### **Safe hands in the line out**

I've always seen the Mustangs as a team combining experience and youth with much of the experience coming from the some of the



more 'mature' players previously mentioned. It has often been the case that the youth of the team have gone on to prove themselves in the first XV as with the likes of Josh Pankhurst, Charlie Simpson and Sam Bailey making good names for themselves among the clubs elite. Although this season some of our 'old boys' have also been called upon to show there stuff there too.

Nor must I leave out this season's crop of promising youngsters who have really stepped up and shown their mettle. Without the likes of Tim Wetjen, Jon Broadley, Josh McKenzie, Euan Caborn and Ben Rookledge it is unlikely the 2's would have managed to play the amount of games we did.



**Promising youngsters - Jon & Josh**

Despite a season that has seen our best result as a 12-all draw vs Old Elthamians, I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to captain and play alongside some great people and still feel as proud to walk on to a pitch today in the Red, White and Black as I did the first time. *NE*

## 3rd XV

***Third in League + Evergreen Semi's then Relegation - But still Up For It***

A season that was entered into with some trepidation, by the aging players, turned into a bit of a classic. But for half the team booking holidays coinciding with a Top Of The Table clash (selfish b@tchf@cs), we could have had a sniff at actually winning the league. And this, after getting mullered by Thanet 2s and Beckenham 3s. Satisfyingly, we reversed these defeats with gritty, no-nonsense graft and nous, where experience beat youth (and we have plenty of experience). Other highlights were home and away wins against Canterbury and Aylesford,

beating Tunbridge Wells 2s in the last minute, trouncing a very youthful Folkstone, after losing twice to them by four points, and the comeback of Ross Laing (I am certain I read an obituary for him last summer - the next thing I know he's propping down against Whitstable).



**The Third XV with their sponsors - Britelite**

### ***So Many Distinguished Players***

It is always a pleasure to play in the company of so many distinguished players as well as with a sprinkling of enthusiastic youngsters. Tom Challis continues to show why he was one of the best blindside flankers in the south of England in his prime. John Hogarth – sublime skills with hand and boot, a superb tactical brain plus a determination to win which has not diminished with age. Mike Hill bounces back (literally) from injury after injury to bring a robust edge in loose play. Jez Major brings a physicality to the tackle which defies his size and is very capable of falling on a ball at his feet to win matches (see Canterbury report). Dominic still dazzles with his jinking runs and side steps. Eugene batters opponents with or without the ball. Matt Plowman has had an outstanding half season, which would have been even better had he turned up for kick off at any stage. Chris Finch and Ben Rookledge roaming round the parts of the pitch, most of the old heads can't reach. Rich Gray who is playing better rugby now than he was twenty years ago – must be his training regime with the brewery. Fishy, still leaping like a salmon in the line out, though I'm not sure his lifters agree. Mike Laurenson always brings a tough South African edge. Wrighty was actually seen running with the ball in space – unfortunately no video evidence available to confirm it. Stu Bates, always reliable and ready to run. Darren Banfield continues to batter would be tacklers when he has the ball (see T. Wells report). Mac, consistently the best forward on the pitch, carries the ball with aggression and determination, never taking a backward step. Sean Charlton, player of the Year, whose

determination, commitment, aggression and rugby skills are an absolute pleasure. Thanks too, to all the other players who took the field with us. We hope you enjoyed the experience.



### **Onward & Upward - Watch out Invicta 3**

Also, grateful thanks to Roger Bentley for his bottle washing, leg rubbing and unstinting support, cheers Roger, we know you would be out there with us if you were a couple of decades younger.

Third place in the league, Evergreen semi final, relegated, but no one is retiring so we'll be back for another year. See you at training. Best regards and thanks for all your effort, commitment and comradeship. *PM*

## **4th XV**

### ***Past Experience + Future Promise***

As the season began we in the 4ths knew it was going to be a tough one. Given the fact that we are the feeder-squad for higher teams in the club the result, come Saturday afternoon, is usually a relatively unsettled team. In a season where we were being asked to play in a higher division, a mid-table finish would have been a great achievement.

Things started well too, with back-to-back wins against local rivals Weavering and Lordswood II. We were able to draw upon some old heads for the Weavering game, and the Lordswood match was a very similar looking 4th team to the previous year, so spirits were high.

Little did I know that this would be the high point of the year as four successive losses followed. The East Peckham and Sevenoaks games aside, however, I feel that we could have won the two close losses against Sheppey and Gillingham

losing 17-5 and 8-3 respectively. Both losses coincided with a dearth of player availability.

This season we have been lucky enough to welcome a number of new players into the club at 4th team level and many, such as Chris Hogg, Damian McCardle, Phil Shaw-Browne, Andy Brown, Ben Lobos and John Newsome, to name a few, became regular starters, even if not solely for the 4th team. We were also lucky enough to get a near full season out of Frank the Tank (here's hoping the Vets don't bribe him with beer to play for them next season).



One of our finest performances came in October, when we beat Ashford 29-10. This was a great show of adventurous heads-up rugby with a steely defence. It was a game where everyone stepped up and played to their full potential, with marauding runs from Frank and a fantastic performance from Jon Broadly at scrum half. It was a shame that it took 11 games until we returned to this level of performance.

This 11 game stretch was tough on everyone and I must say a big thank you to everyone who made themselves available to play in these games, especially the Vets, who pretty much took on our fixture against a tough Gravesend III.





All in all we had 89 different players turn out for the 4th team this season but we tried to play every game in a good spirit and it definitely was a season of 'what ifs?'.

It must have been half way through the season when we finally identified that the main reason for our losing streak was a lack of organisation and training within the team! In fact, all we really needed was a quality fly half. There were a handful of games this season where Ian Davis stepped into the breach, one to watch for the future in that position, but we might need a 4th team physio next season to enable him to play every game.

The last four games of the season were really enjoyable, as we got back to winning ways, beating Old Gravesendians and Medway on back-to-back weekends and producing the kind of performances I wish we could have mustered on a more regular basis. It was good to see some of Maidstone's younger players becoming available to the 4th team, where they can hone their bodies to senior rugby and express their abilities. This period also saw David Ruaux play a few more games with the 4ths, after his return to the club this year and the transformation in his game from the beginning to end of season is a testament to himself and an illustration to others how you can progress. David was our top try scorer with six to his name and one of our strongest attacking threats. Also a contender for player of the year, along with Frank the Tank, he created many opportunities for players around him with his powerful running and tackling, illustrated no more so than against Medway, where the gasp from the sidelines told you they had just seen the tackle of the season.



There were great individual performances from many players throughout the season, but the work ethic, determination and team spirit is embodied by no one more than Dave Jackson, who was the 4th team player of the year. Available every week, and willing to play where ever, for which ever team needed him.



For every high there is a low, and it was a real shame that Chris Pedder's season lasted only 50 minutes before a knee injury kept him out for the rest of the year. I hope he returns next season fully healed. Mid season also saw the return from injury of Andy Staples following the repair of a double hernia, only to have bad luck, probably end his rugby career, in the shape of a shattered finger requiring insertion of no less than four pins while the healing process takes place.

### ***It's a fulfilling job***

As for my role, I do hope that someone emerges to take up the mantle of 4th team captain next season. It is a fulfilling job, you have a number of very experienced people around you and there is always help just around each corner. I have enjoyed my season as captain and will lend a hand to whoever decides that they can rise to the challenge.

As we look forward to building for the future, here's hoping that all the bumps and bruises suffered this year heal well over the off season. And to all those that do not heal, I look forward to seeing you on the side lines supporting - **MS**



# 5th XV - The Barbarians

## *Maintaining the true spirit*

Finishing firmly in the mid table has been a tremendous achievement for us this year. We won five out of 16 league games with a further three games being played and won under league conditions.

Our season has been a successful one, winning as many as we have lost. We've enjoyed two convincing victories against higher-ranked Sevenoaks, two thrilling victories against local rivals Gravesend Moles and we kept league contenders Hastings & Bexhill to within 10 points twice, certainly no easy feat by any standards.

This season has seen an end to the habits of old and brought with it a sense of urgency to win, our heads never dropping and always maintaining a sense of pride regardless of result. Thanks to this pride, we hold one the best winning streaks in the club this season with six comfortable, consecutive wins. On two further occasions coming from three tries down to get a result.

We may be considered a social side, but we spread the MFC gospel by touring annually and producing our own memorabilia for such occasions. It is on these tours that Barbarians of seasons past, re-group to relive the Barbarian spirit a tradition to which, even in the current economic crisis, we manage to adhere.



### **We're gonna need a bigger bottle of Draino**

Mustering enough spare change between us we travelled to Warminster, home of 5th team player of the year Mike Gillies, who helped Trevor Bradley organise the tour, recommending accommodation, local watering holes and an opposition. The result being two closely-fought games, both lost, but as the saying goes...

*Winning on Tour is a Sign of Sobriety.*



Having lost out by just one try in both games we decided to prove our manhood in the bars afterward; comfortably winning the drinking games, downing the dreaded yard-long\* 'Boot of Cider' and wooing the ladies of Warminster with our burly nature.

*\* For the benefit of our younger readers, a Yard is English for 914.4 mm. That's a lot of cider - So DO NOT Try This At Home*



### **The Warminster Wooers (and their burly nature)**

#### ***A Try From Every Position on the Pitch***

We've achieved our goals for this season, to re-integrate the team to the club, train regularly and to win 50% of the games played. We have a combined point score surplus of +91 which is a real credit to all those who have contributed this season – 25 different names scoring 85 tries and a try coming from every position on the pitch.

This has been our most successful season since the incredibly successful 2002/3 season skippered by Trevor Bradley. Although our match records are not quite as spectacular as that remarkable season, most would argue that this has been the most successful season ever considering our achievements which include:

- *Trevor Bradley's long overdue investiture to the prestigious group of Club Vice Presidents in recognition of services over the past decade;*
- *Scrum half Mike Gillies' recognition as the highest scoring player in the club this season with 80 points in the form of 16 tries;*
- *Raising the fabled Centenary Cup as MFC's Team of the Year for the first time since 1983.*

The 5th team marked this momentous occasion with a turnout of 29 attending the annual club awards night, wearing our crimson tour shirts and team ties. A statement that we are very much a part of this club but also earning recognition as a team. It certainly paid off with the foregoing

awards coming our way, marking this season as our most decorated on record.



### Maidstone's Team of the Year

Praise has been given for the sudden turn around of events but I cannot take the credit without giving thanks to the following:

- *Our sponsors Earl Street Employment Consultants for their financial support;*
- *Phil Hadfield and Liz Vinson for their photography of the team and their unwavering support throughout the year;*
- *Steve Pooley for travelling from Devon to Maidstone on a weekly basis;*
- *Alex Craven, Dave Eiffert, Karim Neseiyif, Matt Ellesmere, Paul Arthurs and Steve Oakley for their support, coaching and leadership contributions;*
- *Coach Colin Frost & former skipper Trevor Bradley for their tremendous efforts on and off the pitch, without which the season would not have been so successful;*
- *But most importantly thanks to the entire team who trained in all conditions, who stood true to our motto 'To Play Like They've Never Played Before' because....*

A team that trains together plays together...  
And a team that plays together wins together.

### Statistics for the 5<sup>th</sup> XV *aka The Mighty Maidstone Barbarians* Maidstone FC's Team of the Year 2009/10

		FRIENDLY	LEAGUE
SCHEDULED	24	8	16
WON	11	6	5
DRAWN	2	1	1
LOST	10	1	9
FORFEIT	1	-	1
POINTS SECURED SURPLUS/ DEFICIT	91	220	(129)

### 5th XV Captain's Statement

To have captained this team during this most crucial period, to see it regain its enthusiasm and perform every week with an undying urge to prove itself has been a truly exhilarating experience.

I suppose the story really started 12 months ago when I got the top dogs of the team together in a pub in Bearsted to discuss the future of this side. Coming off the back of our worst season on record it was decided that drastic action was required.

We studied other successful teams and learnt what gave them success. We decided that training was the answer but first we had to get the team training on a weekly basis which was difficult as training had the reputation of being a boring waste of time.

Coach Colin Frost and I agreed on a solution that was interesting and rugby orientated, our solution was simply 'let them play rugby'.

I turned to Trevor Bradley to reinstate some much needed motivation into the team. He came up with a motto suggesting that a team that trains together will play and win together. This sparked the interest that was required.

With the numbers in attendance Colin coached with a focus purely upon rugby. He'd created scenarios that mimicked in-game situations covering all aspects of the game starting always with the basics. Before long a renewed team was training weekly.

As the basics became second nature the situations became more intense and as consequence the fitness of each individual increased purposefully for their role on the pitch. Eventually we became capable of creating and utilising the types of play not normally seen at our level.

It is due to this season's training regime that the 5th team has become a real force to be reckoned with in the Mid Kent C division.

To have had the privilege of raising the Centenary Cup on behalf of and with the Barbarian's has been truly unforgettable.

Thanks to everyone who took part under my captaincy.

I wish Tom Clarke all the best for the next season as the new 5th team captain.

**Steve Quinn** - 5th team captain 2008 - 2010.



# Vets XV

## *Steve Vincent reports on the most recent of 25 Years of Vets Rugby*

At the time of composing the entry for the previous edition of Touchline the Vets had played two matches. Since that time a further 20 fixtures have been completed, with the potential for three further games had TJ's not cried off and the heavy snow not intervened.



Of the 22 games completed we finished our season with a record of:

- *Won 7; Drawn 1; Lost 14;*
- *Points - For 265 - Against 352.*

On first inspection the foregoing statistics may not seem too impressive, however, there are... *Lies, Damn Lies and Statistics* and in only three fixtures were we embarrassed:

- *Canterbury 5ths (lost 7-49);*
- *Gravesend 3rds (lost 0-40) and*
- *Tunbridge Wells 4ths (lost 17-34)*

and therein lies the tale of the Vets' season. The remainder of the fixtures were far from one sided with the Vets producing creditable results, in particular:

- *Lordswood (won 40-0);*
- *Thanet 5ths (won 26-19);*
- *Cranbrook (lost 12-13);*
- *Sevenoaks over 45's (lost 3-5).*

It is a sad reflection of Veterans Rugby in the area that on only 10 occasions (that's only five clubs, allowing for the home and away fixtures) did Maidstone Vets contest matches against teams of similar age (and abilities!). Having said that, the Vets are always up for a challenge and will (and do) take on all-comers in our desire simply to play social rugby in the Corinthian Spirit. We must thank Richard Ewence for ensuring that, even on occasions when the opposition was

several years younger, the Vets had a full fixture card and it is a credit to the players, admittedly with a little help from colleagues in sides higher up the club (and on two occasions from the junior section) that we fulfilled all our fixtures.

Speaking of the players, a total of 54 represented the Vets over the season. Of those 24 played five or more matches. Adrian Clark made most appearances (20 of the 22 games played), closely followed by ex-skipper Glyn Richards (19), Pete Gray, Dave Hughes, Steve Vincent and Richard Weston (18), Keith Newman (17) and Keith Coomber, Mark de Ritis, Bobby Keynes and Simon Randall (16).

Our Player of the Year award went to Dave Hughes who also collected a Club Vice-presidency at the Players' Dinner.

The top points scorer accolade went, again, to Keith Coomber with 54 (1 try, 3 penalties, 20 conversions), followed by Richard Weston 35 (7 tries), Steve Vincent 25 (5 tries), Dave Hughes 20 (2 tries, 5 conversions) and Simon Randall 20 (4 tries).

### ***Twenty fifth anniversary of Veterans Rugby at Maidstone FC***

Many will be aware that the season recently completed was the 25<sup>th</sup> year of Veterans rugby at the club. As such the annual memorial game, despite the 17-34 loss to Tunbridge Wells 4ths (we were playing a league game on behalf of the 5ths) was perhaps more poignant than usual, particularly as the trophy awarded at the end of the match name-checks founding members, of whom some are, sadly, no longer with us.



### **FOUNDING MEMBERS**

**The original Maidstone Veterans XV as they were in their inaugural year of 1986 and wearing the traditional club shirt that Vets still prefer to don when they take the field**



One founding member who is still with us, is Paul Ehrhart and whilst he has been feted, at Havant Rugby Club's Player's Dinner amongst others, it would be remiss if the current veterans did not honour, in writing, his achievement of playing in each season of the Vets 25 year history. Awesome is an over used word in sport, although used here in description of Paul's achievements it seems to be wholly appropriate. It is even more valid considering his recent return to rugby following his treatment for cancer. His playing performance on our recent tour was, well... awesome.



**Vets founding member Paul Ehrhart with Vets captain Steve Vincent**

During the season we welcomed some new players:

- *Duncan Cochrane-Dyert;*
- *Mark de Ritis;*
- *Gareth Howgate and*
- *Mick Price*

and it is hoped that they enjoy many gratifying seasons of Vets rugby at the club.

It was also a pleasure to welcome Dave Francis, even though he was injured in the first game of the season, but he managed to return for the last two matches.

Looking forward, it will be a pleasure to see the return of Steve Norton following his treatment for cancer. And, of course, the Vets always welcome new playing members and those, perhaps, wishing to 'drop down' from teams higher up the club.

## ***Court & Social***

Social events attended by the Vets during the season included the annual pilgrimage to the Varsity Match, the Christmas Curry and, by the time you read this, our End of Season Dinner.



The side also provided a number of contestants at the Quiz Night with two of our number; Richard Ewence (well, we claim him as one of ours even though, these days, he seems to favour playing for the 4ths) and Keith Coomber, ending on the winning team.

In mid-April the Vets set off on our annual tour which, for reasons beyond our control, was changed from the proposed destination of Yorkshire to that of the Isle of Wight. Of course what 'goes on tour - stays on tour', however the feedback received was that it was a 'great' tour, 'excellent', 'fantastic'. All of this and both fixtures resulting in heavy losses!

Thanks must go to both host clubs, Sandown & Shanklin RFC on the Island and Havant RFC on the mainland. Even though the fixtures may have been lost, both host sides certainly met their match in the drinking and singing departments.

On the whole, and despite some of the match results, the Veterans season can be viewed as a success and thoughts are probably already turning to next season and the rugby challenges that will need to be tackled and, I'm sure, enjoyed to the full.

### ***The knees aren't what they used to be***

Sadly, I will not be able to participate on the field of play in future. Following a knee operation, and the probability of knee replacement, the current medical advice is that I should retire from rugby. Reluctantly, I have accepted this and the Vets must now appoint a new skipper. I will, however, continue to support the guys from the sidelines and the club in some other way.

In conclusion, and whilst the season has ended on a sad note from a personal perspective, it has been an absolute pleasure to lead such a great bunch of guys over the past season. Thanks to all within the club who work behind the scenes to enable the Vets to enjoy their Saturdays and best wishes to all players for the future and for the next 25 years of Veterans rugby. *SV*

## Andy Ripley

### *The last in a great English tradition*

As many of you will know Andy finally lost his five-year long battle with prostate cancer on June 17th. It was a fight he conducted in his own inimitable fashion, as he did everything from his highly successful business career, his rugby, to winning the Superstars title in 1980 and latterly as Veterans World Indoor Rowing Champion in 1992. He was at one time described as perhaps the last in a great English tradition of all-round amateur sportsmen going back to CB Fry.

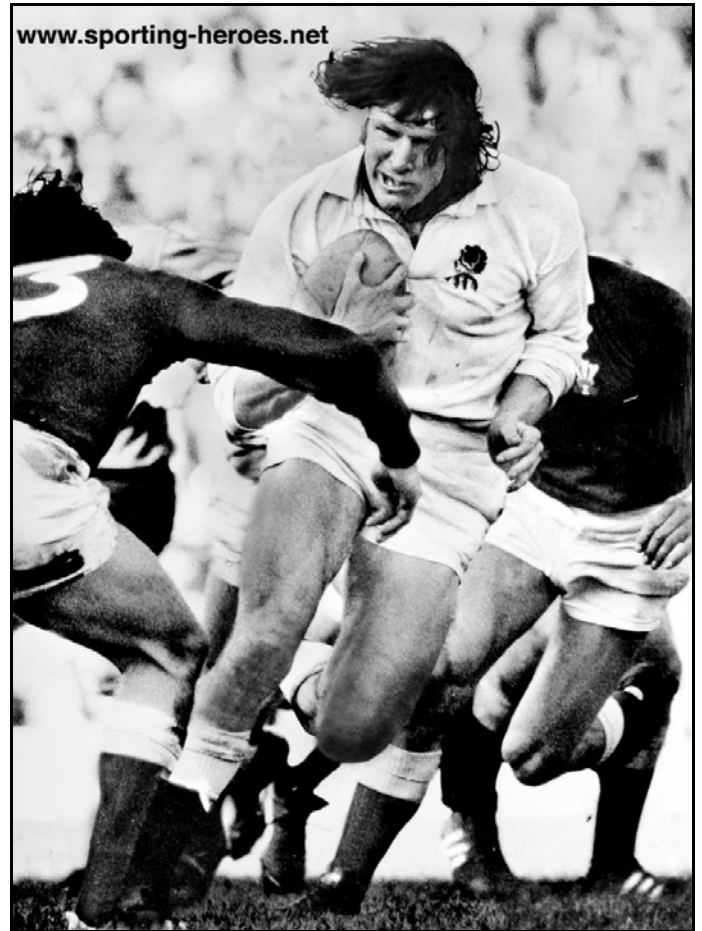
Andrew George Ripley was born in 1947 and he played rugby for Rosslyn Park (his only club), the Barbarians, England and the Lions. I well remember his international debut against Wales in 1972, a time when English rugby was pretty diabolical despite the existence of some darn good players (sound familiar?). On he came ball in hand, crashing into contact and then, just as emphatically, bursting through the other side, long hair streaming out behind him and leaving a clutch of dazed and confused Welshmen in his wake and, boy, could he run!

He rapidly became one of the best Number 8s of his day, certainly the most awkward. His direct approach at a time when I, at the ripe old age of 26, was converting from a centre to a back row, was an object lesson in how to play the game from the back of the scrum.

Those familiar with Paul Kimmage's piece in the Sunday Times of 23rd May this year will also know of the circumstances that, physically at least, reduced Andy to a mere shadow of the guy he was in his pomp. The sight of him receiving his OBE from HRH The Prince of Wales in May, blind and confined to a wheel chair following the return of the cancer in 2008, was a severe shock.

It is hard to see your heroes cut down so cruelly until, that is, you realise that despite outward appearances, the hero that you created in your mind, is still there, still the same guy and still heroic

right up to the end. Indeed he would probably have argued that he was that way because of his circumstances. Besides, what makes guys like Andy Ripley the way they are is not just their physical presence, although in rugby that can be an advantage, no, it is what goes on in their hearts and heads. Cancer cannot change that.



**Crazy Horse - Andy Ripley OBE 1947-2010  
as I prefer to remember him**

Since Ripley's day there have been many outstanding Number 8s and I'm sure there were before him, but I have to think hard about that because, for me, he totally eclipsed what came before him. He is the archetype on whom all my subsequent judgements are based and he will always remain that despite his premature departure from this life. *DW*

**If you have any concerns about prostate cancer, call the Prostate Cancer Charity on their confidential helpline**

**0800 074 8383**

**The line is staffed by specialist nurses and is open 1000 hrs to 1600 hrs Monday - Friday**

**Alternatively try [www.prostate-cancer.org.uk](http://www.prostate-cancer.org.uk)**



# Junior Rugby

## Under 10s

### *Allan Crosbie on a great U10s year with some trophies to boot*

Given that we only had a beginning and an end to the season this year – the middle lost to events that I'll let others complain about more eloquently than me – the U10s have had another great year. Despite the lack of fixtures it has been busy - we've taken part in five festivals this season, most recently winning the Bowl at both Beccs and Aylesford, then narrowly missing out on qualifying for the Cup in the Kent Festival Prelims.

Along with Sittingbourne we've hosted a visiting side from Belgium, Boitsfort, and in doing so made some friends who will return next later this year. Hopefully, we will have learnt the object lesson dealt to us, about close-contact support, and will be able to give them a run for their money when they visit at the beginning of next season.



#### **Bowl Winners at Beccehamians and Aylesford**

We've had some great stand-out matches – beating an unnaturally large Sidcup side at Beccs, repeated close but definitive wins against Aylesford, and a nail-biting final pool match against Medway at the Aylesford festival. Finally, we've also gained a new sponsor – the Tandoor Mahal – and as a result the squad has experienced their first ever curry, minus parents and (for now) beer.

In training the boys have been pushed hard – Jacques and Alan have worked miracles helping develop the boys from unopposed to

opposed scrummaging, to great effect. Despite being on the 'light' side as mentioned in many an article, eight times out of ten their technique wins out – their size is a factor that will lessen as numbers are added to the scrum and some 'padding out' occurs as they grow. Our rucking and mauling continues to improve, the boys showing some real strength, determination and guts around the 'ugly' parts of the pitch where the real work gets done. Tuggy & Stu have re-discovered our back-line, and the team have moved beyond simply being in a line to the players applying some thought to what's happening and where they need to be. Slowly the days of passing and then standing still to spectate in a self-congratulatory manner are passing and we're beginning to run hard in support, creating overlaps and opportunities to break through faltering defences. And across the squad our defensive skills have improved immeasurably – how many times have we been backed against the line and simply refused to buckle, or stopped the breakaway run in it's tracks with an 'ooooohh' - inspiring tackle on the wing? Beautiful to watch and I am sure the boys are beginning to appreciate that it's even more satisfying to play.

Next year we take another big step, locks in the scrum, a full-back and kicking. Heaven help us! There will be a lot more focus on line-outs, and some very strict coaching for the backs around the use of the boot – mostly when NOT to use it. We're playing with the training format to bring in many more 'guest' coaches through our contacts with the senior teams, and we'll be focusing much more on individual development of players now that the squad is now more a single unit rather than A and B sides. We've a crop of new players to bring into the fold, something I'll personally be focusing on during our few summer training dates. And we're welcoming a new addition to our coaching team in the form of ex-Aylesford Ladies, Kent & South flanker Kayleigh - great steal and another forward coach with bags of enthusiasm and experience. Unfortunately we've lost a coach, but gained a Youth Chairman (at last) in the svelte shape of Chunk Mitchell – I'd like to thank him for all his help with the squad, and wish him well in his new role herding cats.

It only remains for me to start my ending with congratulations to three of our top performers:



- *Ben Woodhams, winner of Forwards Player of the Season.*
- *James Kavanagh, our most polite player and winner of Most Improved Player of the Season.*
- *Ollie Jenkins, winner of both Backs Player of the Season and also Parents' Player of the Season.*

It would, however, be remiss of me not congratulate ALL the boys on a great season as individuals and as a team. It has, once again, been a huge pleasure coaching you all and watching you learn and enjoy The Greatest Sport on the Planet, so thank you. Thanks also from me to my coaches, and to all the parents whose tireless support is so crucial to the squad – be it screaming on the touchline, carrying kit, pitching tents, stoking the barbecue or any of the many other ways in which you have contributed to this season's success. I'm sure we'll all enjoy a few lie-ins but I, for one, can't wait until September. **AC**

## Under 12s

*Alex Craven, also in need of some metal polish*

Since December, the season has turned out to be a bit of a disjointed affair. The worst winter in three decades meant that playing competitive games and any consistent amount of training was difficult, with numerous Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings being lost to the weather.

After Christmas the focus of the coaches was to work towards the 15-a-side game that the boys would be playing from September but with one eye on preparing for the Kent and a number of other festivals towards the end of the season. A spirited fifteen-a-side performance against the under 13's showed promise, with the under 13's coaches commenting on a great tackling and defensive display from the 12's. A couple of weeks later a combined Cranbrook A and B team were the visitors and excellent display from Maidstone gave them a 10-5 victory.



In mid March the 12's travelled to Tonbridge for the Kent Festival qualifiers and, after a great winning start, three successive defeats followed and the team, rather disappointingly, failed to qualify for the following week's finals. During the weeks following the Kent Festival, however, the coaches and boys continued to concentrate on areas of weakness exposed during the Festival.

After a break for Easter, we travelled to Becceshamian RFC for an invitation festival. After a slow start the boys began to convert the possession they had enjoyed in the early matches into points, the highlight being a 2-0 win over Gravesend. We reached the Bowl Final and put in an excellent display to beat TJs 6-0, a win made all the sweeter as we had surrendered a 2-0 lead to lose against them earlier in the day.



### **Jake Gardiner steps inside against Gravesend**

The following week the 12's, much encouraged by their display at Beckenham, again travelled to South East London to take part in the Westcombe Park Festival. Whilst not reaching the heights of the previous week, they put in some creditable performances, the highlights being a closely fought 2-1 defeat to Westcombe Park, a 0-0 draw with Folkestone and a battling 5-2 defeat to a very strong Old Colfians.



### **Harry Weatherburn scoring against Ashford**

On the final Sunday of the season we took part in the Aylesford Rugby Festival and again came away with some silverware.

Battling performances against Aylesford, Tonbridge, Gravesend and Medway saw us through to The Shield final where we defeated Ashford 3 - 1. Encouragingly, the team never looked out of their depth or out played in any of the matches. Our season ended on a high and Maidstone's last game of Midi rugby was an exciting win.



### **Bowl Winners at Beccehamians and Shield Winners at Aylesford**

*Standing L to R - Giles Bromme-Ogden, Charlie Oakley, Ryan Maybourne, Henry Buckland, Nathan Baughurst, George Quinn, Harry Weatherburn, William Humphreys, Sam Skipp, John Hudson, Thomas Richmond.*

*Kneeling L to R - Jake Gardiner, James Edwards, Stephan Noyelle, George Craven, Thomas Long, Nat Presneill*

So on to next season, the boy's, coaches and parents are all excited at the prospect of at last playing youth rugby. Many of the team have been together since they were seven and the coaches have seen the boys progress from tag rugby through the introduction of full contact and finally, what many of the boys have been ready for since Christmas, the fifteen man game. So a big thank you to Steve Hunter, Steve Oakley and Ray Long, for their hard work in coaching the boys to this level. They have been ably assisted by the extended coaching team of Steve Buckland, Alex Craven and Nick Ward. Of course, none of this would be possible without a great squad of boys who have continued to work hard throughout this season and have made substantial progress.

And finally a big thank you to the parents, who have stood on the touchline in fair weather and foul, providing great support for the team - even when things were not going well.

Roll on next season - **AC**

## **Under 16s**

### ***Jonathan Davies recalls a season of mixed fortunes with future promise***

By the start of the season the under 16s numbers had swelled and despite some notable departures we had 25 boys regularly attending training; a step in the right direction.



### **A Fast-growing U16s Squad**

Our two opening games against Anchorians and Gravesend were, as expected, very positive but there then followed two narrow defeats by teams we could have beaten (Bromley and Old Colfeans) and then a heavier defeat at the hands of an organised and disciplined Sittingbourne team. Blackheath were, therefore, approached with some caution and although we lost it was, by all accounts, a stronger performance - I cannot tell you as, within five minutes of the kick-off on their all-weather pitch, I was in an ambulance accompanying a 'major' head injury to hospital, only for him to be discharged four hours later with a packet of Paracetamol, still, better safe than sorry.

Next up were Sidcup, who we were beating easily, when indiscipline by many parties caused the game to be cut short (nobody's finest hour). The next weekend we allowed this indiscipline to reappear and lost to an Old Elthamians team we should have run rings around (the biggest disappointment of the season). Our next game, against Old Gravesendians was a victory, although the performance was still not wholly impressive. And so it was, with a great deal trepidation, that we prepared for the visit of Tonbridge Juddians. Without doubt this was our best performance of the season, losing narrowly by two tries to one whereas in each of the previous three years we have lost 50+ to Nil in games which finished early. The return after the Christmas break was eagerly awaited.

Then it snowed and snowed and rugby took a winter break. At the end of January we did



squeeze on to the pitch for a game against Tunbridge Wells which resulted in a loss. Then, on the following Sunday, an early morning drive half-way to Thanet, only for the game to be cancelled, meant that, by now, everybody was beginning to lose their sense of humour. The season then began to get back on track with a draw against Beckenham and a victory against Ashford before the arrival of Medway. They beat us with a last-minute converted try after another committed and competitive performance.

There was a party atmosphere for our Friday night fixture under the floodlights at Aylesford. The Facebook effect meant that the game was played in front of over 200 parents, school friends and hangers-on etc. It was a great experience and a very enjoyable game, not least because we:

*Won,  
Were always in control,  
Played great attacking rugby and...  
Were even responsible for their try.*

The Kent prelims saw some up-and-down performances. As usual the better the opposition the better we played. We almost caused a shock against Canterbury who only beat us by a point with a 'last kick of the game' penalty, but we struggled to defeat Sidcup and lost again to Tunbridge Wells in the first knock-out game. Two more strong performances followed beating Whitstable by seven tries to none in a hard fought and surprisingly close game, given the score line, then victory against a (weakened) Westcombe Park, much to their surprise.

Next we toured Norfolk and played in the East Coast Festival of Rugby hosted by Norwich RFU. In glorious April sunshine we played teams from Windsor, Sheffield, Leamington Spa, Biggleswade and Bromley producing varied performances (Won 2, Drawn 1, Lost 3) finishing seventh out of 10 teams. The highlight was a strong forwards game in defeat against the eventual winners Sheffield.

Following the games, awards for the tournament and the season were given out.

- *Dan Eastwood was awarded 'Player of the Tournament', well deserved as Dan scored several outstanding tries, made numerous tackles and generally worked his socks off throughout the tournament.*
- *Chris Skinner received the ignominious award of 'Player Who Should Have Stayed Home' but through no fault of his own, as he was concussed in the first game against Windsor and unable to play thereafter.*

- *Danny Walsh was voted our 'Most Improved Player', another very well deserved accolade as Danny has become a much better and fitter prop this season.*
- *Our 'Player of the Season' was Dualtagh Franklin a well-earned reward for a season of consistent rugby of the highest quality.*
- *Lewis "Forrest" Fagg received both the Best New Player and the Players Player award, a great achievement in his first year of Rugby.*

The final game of the season saw us entertaining the touring Old Oakmedians from Bournemouth. It was an enjoyable afternoon and a very close game which we managed to lose 22 – 21.

This season has seen the 16s make considerable progress, bolstered by a much stronger squad than we have had in previous years, and we are now competing at a higher level and doing so with a greater degree of consistency than we have seen before. We still lose too many matches after we have worked ourselves into a winning position and there is still room for improvement across all areas of the team. Our technical skills, fitness, discipline and consistency all need work but we are an improving team (nobody thumped us this season) and so we can be very positive about next season.

Thanks must go, as always to our refs Julian and Steve, to all the parents for supporting so well and not forgetting our medic Tony 'Scrubs' Murphy. **JD**



## Under 17s

### ***Victories in Essex and Ireland book-end another strong season***

The U17's had an eventful season, starting with winning the Jack Conn Cup in Essex, and then our league season started. The weather took its toll on fixtures, not only the rain but also the snow which meant we were unable to train or play for seven weeks.

We reached the quarter finals of the league, only to be defeated 5-0 by Sevenoaks, in a truly exciting game. We entered the Kent Cup, which was at Charlton Park and after winning our preliminary games, without conceding a point we went on to face our local rivals Aylesford in the quarters, which we duly won to advance to meet Old Colfians in the Semis. Our opponents went ahead, but Maidstone dug in well and were the eventual winners. The final set us up against Sevenoaks and a chance for revenge.



Unfortunately, our high penalty count was our undoing and we were defeated, despite playing the better rugby.

Our Annual Tour was to Corke, Ireland and was a chance to sample the legendary Irish hospitality. We played two games winning both, but the highlight was beating Dungarven U19's - *RW*

## Under 18s

### *The Magnificent 7- A Final Salute*

As I reported in our last edition, the U18s did not make it into this season as an intact force. The exodus of so many talented players was disappointing for those who wished to continue and for the club as a whole because they were really starting to perform. When you consider how belatedly the squad formed, they made impressive progress in their three years together.

The twin luxuries of player continuity and numbers were never something that this squad could ever take for granted. Losing the core of the team to football at U10 to was very nearly the coup de grace for us, but we rebuilt, often borrowing players from our opponents. Then after a disastrous U13s season, under the worst coach imaginable, we again lost players, this time to our local rivals. But the remaining lads stuck together and the club came to their rescue in the *small-but-perfectly-formed* shape of Pete Barford. Under his expert coaching they started rebuilding, both their numbers and their confidence. With Pete they exacted revenge on Aylesford and their former team-mates. They found success and won silverware in Lille as U15s, in Norwich as U16s and always figured in the knock-out stages of county competitions. Who knows what might have been in 2009/10?

Seven squad members, however, considered that they actually were capable of playing rugby AND getting their grades at A-Level and so they continued to play throughout this season, albeit by dipping their toes into senior rugby for the first time.

Two of their number, Josh McKenzie and Tim Wetjen, have been through it all together, having played in the original U8s team that were runners up in both the Kent and Westcombe Park Festivals and cup winners at the Medway Festival, just prior to the first player exodus.

This then, is our final salute to those players who have demonstrated that, in addition to their

playing skills, they also have stickability. Some will probably be setting out on their university education in September, while others are planning a gap year with the possibility that they will continue at senior level for a while longer. Here's to you guys, thanks for the memories. *DW*



**1 - Josh McKenzie**



**2 - Jon Broadley**



**3 - Nathan Fitzpatrick**





**4 - Karl Smissen**



**5 - Euan Caborn**



**6 - Lewis Fawcett**



**7 - Tim Wetjen**

# CyberNews

## *The Club Website*

The past season saw the launch of the club's new website, which appears to have been well received across the club. It would be wrong of the club not to recognise the efforts of those who have been crucial to both its construction but also its ongoing maintenance, in particular Mike Gammon, who I don't think quite knew what he was letting himself in for when he volunteered. However, his efforts are very much appreciated and create a very professional look to the site.

Additionally, Richard Ewence also puts in a lot of unseen work on the website, although his 'Weekly Round Up' is the most visible contribution. Apparently its publication on Monday mornings is eagerly anticipated in various parts of the globe.

I would also like to thank a number of people who have turned up with their cameras on various weekends and taken the photos of various teams that appear on the gallery; John & Derrick Broadley, Phil Hadfield and Dave Wetjen. The gallery appears to have been well received although there has been a lack of coverage forthcoming from the mini & youth age groups. Whilst we exist in an era of social distrust in respect of photos of children placed in the public domain, I'm sure that some photos could be more forthcoming to create a truly inclusive club gallery.

The web team will be meeting over the course of the summer to look at ways of improving and developing the website, and some suggestions have already been forthcoming. However, regardless of what changes may or may not be made the site is dependent on various contributions to populate it and maintain its currency. In particular the Club News section has been a great way to let the membership know what is going on in the club. The only disappointment in this regard, has been the limited number of contributions that come from the Youth Section. Every age group must have had some achievements and notable events (SDD, Festivals, League Fixtures, Tours or Sponsorship) that they could have shared with the rest of the club and wider community. I also know that Richard Ewence is keen to see a youth equivalent to the 'Weekly Round Up', either as a separate entity or that could be incorporated into the current format. From both a Club News



and 'Weekly Round Up' perspective, each age group has got to be pro-active, it is far easier for a representative from each team to forward a brief paragraph or article (plus photo) for inclusion, than it is for someone else to make up to a dozen phone calls every Sunday evening. I realise we all perceive ourselves to lead busy lives, but, if you don't blow your own trumpet, no one will do it for you.

I mentioned earlier in this piece about Richard Ewence's Weekly Round-Up being viewed across the globe. Thanks to the use of Google's analytical facility I have been able to come up with some statistics and other information about the club's website (*as at 18 May 2010*) since its launch nine months ago.

- *In total, the website has had over 45,500 hits since it was launched.*
- *Of those hits, over 53% were referrals from search engines with 34% being direct traffic and the remainder being referrals from other sites.*
- *30% of hits are new viewers.*
- *It is viewed in many different countries on all continents, apart from all of the European & Scandinavian countries plus the big three SH countries, these include Argentina, China, Columbia, Japan, India, Oman, Thailand, UAE, Libya, and The Phillipines*
- *Most viewers are on the website for at least 2.5 minutes.*
- *The most viewed pages are:  
Senior Fixtures (Results & Match Reports)  
Weekly Round Up  
Club News  
Team Selection  
Youth Rugby*

## ***Touchline Newsletter***

As was mentioned in the last edition of the newsletter, this was intended to be the final edition in a printed format. The plan was that, from next season, the newsletter would be a solely on line publication which could be downloaded and read with Adobe Acrobat Reader.

The main reason for this is that, the push to meet printing deadlines and also combine circulation with other mailshots, has often created artificial and inconvenient deadlines for contributions. By being solely a digital publication many of those limitations are removed, as well as reducing both postage and printing costs. Ironically, it is because we have been delaying publication, to include crucial information, that we needed to amend the original plan and, with time marching on, instead make **this edition** the first to be produced as a solely online version.

## ***Additional Benefits***

There may also be additional benefits to being an online publication; the first and most obvious (as you have no doubt noticed) being the ability to produce full colour editions at no cost, also an online publication is not restricted by having to be created in multiples of four pages as a printed version is. Additionally, there is the possibility of more frequent or event specifically orientated editions, although we will have to look closely at how this dovetails with the content on the club's website.

Obviously the switch to an online publication is the next evolution in the club's newsletter and we will monitor the way in which that develops. As the reader your feedback is vital and will be appreciated.

The main thing to bear in mind is that, whatever the outcome of the transition, the newsletter is always reliant upon contributions from the membership. It is particularly gratifying that for this edition we seem to have captured very nearly a full set from across the club (*shame about the Tag Rugby contribution - Ed.*), because without content it says nothing.

Finally, the club would like to thank Dave Wetjen who, although his son Tim is departing to university, has kindly agreed to maintain his contribution to the club and continue to assemble and edit the newsletter. He has been key to its continued development and improvement as a means of keeping the membership informed. **RH**

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## **Sponsorship**

### ***Bridging the Funding Gap***

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Well what a roller coaster the last few months have been in terms of sponsorship. With the unexpected loss of our long-term Primary Sponsor, Simon Wright Homes, in November the committee have been working hard to fill the gap that this left in the club's finances. On that basis our thanks go to club Treasurer Dave Coleman, who negotiated with **Britelite**, **Homewarm** and **Baxter Homes** to step in at short notice for the remainder of the season. This, however, still leaves us with work to do in order to maintain the required funding level for 2010/11.

A lot of hard work and various negotiations have been going on behind the scenes with the club's existing sponsors to continue their valuable

support for the forthcoming season.

**Aylesford Newsprint**, **Brachers Law** and **Horwath Clark Whitehill** have all renewed their commitment to the club as Official Sponsors for the coming season. Additionally, we are very pleased to welcome **Plastics Sorting Ltd.** a company based in Wales, who have come on board as Official Club Sponsors.

We are also delighted to report that **Britelite**, **Glosrose**, **Sibley Pares** & **ABB Ltd.** have reaffirmed their support and commitment as Club Sponsors. Meanwhile, negotiations are on-going with other prospective companies and the club's link-up with **P.A.R Marketing**, to sell pitch side advertising on the club's behalf, has also commenced.

If you think that you or your company might be interested in supporting high standard, community-based grassroots sport then please contact **Bob Hayton** – (M: 07979 501433) in the first instance.

## Club Dinner & Awards

### *The season's achievers recognised*

Friday 30<sup>th</sup> April saw the annual club dinner take place, for the second time at the Village Hotel, with a good turnout from the playing side of the club. Despite what has been a difficult season it was time to recognise and reward the efforts of those who have stood out across the club, both on the field of play and also behind the scenes.

Most notable was the **Harry Green Award** which recognises a significant contribution to the club over a sustained period of time, for this reason the Harry Green Award is not presented on an annual basis. This year's well-deserved recipient was retiring club Chairman **Wendy Pound**, for her contribution to the club over many years, in both the youth section and the club as a whole, where she has held a number of appointments<sup>1</sup>.

Five Vice Presidencies were also awarded to:

- **Dave Hughes**
- **Nick East**
- **Paul Massey**
- **Trevor Bradley and**
- **Andy Golding**

in recognition of for the recipients' contributions to the club:

<sup>1</sup>. Often simultaneously due to the lack of volunteers!



**New VP Trevor Bradley**

### *The Playing Awards*

The key awards for on-pitch performance were The David Arnold Award for the outstanding young player of the season and the Bernard Hinks Awards which were presented as follows:

#### David Arnold Award

- **Outstanding Young Player - Charlie Simpson**

#### Bernard Hinks Awards

- **1<sup>st</sup> XV Player – John O'Brien**
- **Other XV's Player – Dave Tugwell**
- **Non Player – Laurence Waters & David Hughes**

#### Players Player awards were as follows:

- **1<sup>st</sup> XV – Jack Lamb**
- **Mustangs XV – Ben Rookledge**
- **3<sup>rd</sup> XV – Sean Charlton**
- **4<sup>th</sup> XV – Dave Jackson**
- **5<sup>th</sup> XV – Mike Gillies**
- **Vets XV (Mike Sharples Plate) – David Hughes**

Finally the Centenary Cup for the team of the season was awarded to the 5<sup>th</sup> XV who had their most successful season for a number of years.



**Steve Quinn proudly holds up the Centenary Cup**



# The Club Shop

## *Kevin Bailey reveals his 'Aladdin's Cave' of new Club Kit*

Since taking over responsibility for the procurement at the club a couple of years ago we have sought to introduce, along with Samurai our Team and Sportswear partner, a standard club 'brand' across the range of garments available including personalising garments for each member wherever possible.

As you will appreciate it is not possible to have a dedicated secure club shop within the clubhouse but display cases have been introduced along with a link on the clubs website to advertise the range available which now extends to:

- *Hoodies (special order)*
- *Hamilton Tops*
- *Junior Playing Shirts*
- *Shorts (Junior & Senior)*
- *Socks (Junior & Senior)*
- *Club No 1 Shirts (special order)*
- *Club Jumpers (special order)*
- *Match day bags (special order)*
- *Boot bags (special order)*
- *Ties*
- *Umbrellas*

A big thank you to all the bar staff on Saturdays and my son Sam on Sundays who have provided the 'Sales Assistance' for goods to members.



**Maidstone FC No. 1 Shirt**



**Stand out in a crowd or on the golf course with a  
MaidstoneRugby umbrella**

**New orders for club hoodies are now being taken so that they can be available in October. The order will be placed at the end of July and delivery will be 8-10 weeks.**

**A deposit of £25 is required along with the name/initials required (note total cost will be  
Adults £37.50 / Childrens £32.50)**

**Please contact Kevin Bailey – 07764 245756**



### **The Maidstone FC 'Hoody'**

Kindly modelled here by my good friend Jorge-Angel Costello. Sadly, he was unable to spare the time to model any of our other garments as he had to jet off to Scunthorpe for one of his popular look-alike gigs. Ed.

**Finally, there will be a 'Fire Sale' at the beginning of next season to clear all old items  
Check the website regularly for details**