EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
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ISSN 2753-2771

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Up to £1 where sold

ISSN 2753-2771

Mighty Maids Run Riot

28 November 2022

MAIDENHEAD 61 – SUTTON & EPSOM 24 – Saturday 26th November. Maidenhead started this season with four extremely impressive wins as they surged to the top of the table by the end of September. That was followed by five defeats before they returned to winning ways in the last round against Bournemouth. In stark contrast S&E have only one win and multiple close defeats in the opening ten encounters. The Berkshire club ran in nine tries in a thumping 61-24 triumph that reaffirmed the league standings of the two clubs.

On a chill and overcast afternoon Maidenhead kicked off. It only took a couple of minutes for the hosts to open their account. Pouncing on a sliced clearance they besieged the Sutton & Epsom line before hooker Dan Hostetler forced his way over the line. Greg Smith added the extras. Hardly had anyone had time to digest the early score when Harry Wells made a surging break from the restart and gifted a try to his centre partner Niall Crosley. Greg Smith added the conversion for 14-0. Sutton's pain in the first five minutes increased as they saw fly half Gareth O'Brien departing with an injured ankle. Jamie See went to 10 and Angus Findlay came off the bench for his league debut.

Maidenhead gave the visitors no time to settle and crossed the whitewash for their third try from Number 8 Will Macaulay. Greg Smith added two more points to his tally for 21-0 after only ten pulsating minutes. Sutton hit back as Seb Priest's sublime grubber into the corner set up a 5-metre line out. The pack ushered Matt Harwood over the line from his preferred distance. Sam Hurley added the conversion and the lead was cut to 21-7.

The second quarter may not have provided as many points but was still full of action. S&E lost hooker Alex Mount to injury on the half hour to be replaced by Jack Howes. Both teams squandered chances to add to their score as the first period entered time added on.

The Braywick Park team reasserted their authority with two more tries. Firstly, good carries by the pack culminated in a deft pass from a prop that found winger Scott Prince in space to finish it off. Not to be upstaged fellow winger Alex Turton scored a wonderful solo score from 60 metres to make it five tries. The metronomic Greg Smith bisected the uprights on both occasions as the first half concluded with Maidenhead comfortably placed at 25-7.

The second period began with a brutal reminder of who was in charge. A strong carry by flanker Ed Atkins set up Niall Crosley for a stunning break deep into the Sutton & Epsom half before setting up fullback Jamie Maddern for the try. Greg Smith chipped over the conversion for 42-7. Then Harry Wells was given a yellow card for a breakdown infringement. Sutton & Epsom certainly made their numerical advantage pay as they quickly scored from another disciplined effort from the pack from a 5-metre line out with captain Chris Farrell taking the plaudits. The conversion went awry as S&E trailed 12-42. The Black & Whites were the next to touch down courtesy of a remarkable line out that rumbled 40 metres down the paddock. The ball was finally released and Austin Bell put Seb Priest in at the corner. Sam Hurley converted from the flank for 19-42.

Restored to their full compliment the Berkshire team regained their scoring mojo as a dummy from James Maddern flummoxed the Surrey defences and flanker Jack Norris finished off with a 20-metre burst to the line. Greg Smith perfect afternoon with the boot ended with his only missed conversion with Maidenhead 47-19 to the good. A couple of minutes later it was more stunning play from the brilliant Berkshire backs as replacement Charlie Scott delayed his pass to perfection to put in the returning Harry Wells. Normal service resumed from the boot of Greg Smith to extend the lead to 54-19. Scott Prince raced in for his second and Maidenhead's ninth, and final, try. Greg Smith was on target again to record his sixteenth point as he stretched the lead to 61-19.

The Rugby Lane men gained some small consolation on a chastening afternoon when they secured a bonus point when they scored a fourth try. Once more it was the forwards, and again a catch and drive from a line out. On this occasion it was replacement Rob Hegarty burrowing his way to glory. Maidenhead's Charlie Scott became the latest victim of the harsh sentence meted out to anyone found guilty of knocking on an attempted interception. With Maidenhead reduced to 14 and Sutton already with the bonus point the game petered out in the last ten minutes in stark contrast to the seismic opening exchanges. The Magenta men celebrated their well-deserved victory as the final whistle blew to conclude proceedings.

The host's victory was based on the power, pace and precision of their first class back division. Having gained the initiative with three early strikes Maidenhead never looked likely to be overhauled. The Sutton cause was not helped by key early injuries to not only their fly half but also their hooker. The home pack had a much harder afternoon. Indeed, the Black & Whites were entirely indebted to their forwards for their bonus point with four tries of similar style based around their improving line out.

The homeward stretch of the league season starts next Saturday, 3rd December, with the first of the reverse fixtures against Banbury. Back in September Sutton were forced to play at the neutral venue of Cobham RFC and the Oxfordshire club narrowly won a hard fought encounter by 26-22. If S&E felt downcast on Saturday when the referee brought the

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ISSN 2753-2771

game to a close one can only imagine the emotions in the Banbury dressing room as they were thrashed 102-22 by league leaders Wimbledon. Both sides will be keen for redemption when they meet at Bodicote Park as Sutton & Epsom visit another new league venue this campaign.

Sutton & Epsom
Michael Davies, Sam Hurley, Freddie Bunting, Jamie See, Sebastian Priest, Gareth O'Brien, Austin Bell, Tom Boaden, Alex Mount, Will Lloyd, Josh Glanville, Matt Harwood, Ben Tame, Chris Farrell © & James Caddy.
Replacements (all used): Jack Howes, Rob Hegarty & Angus Findlay.

Maidenhead
Jamie Maddern, Scott Prince, Harry Wells, Niall Crossley, Alex Turton, Greg Smith, Archie Dunnill, Elio Mandozzi, Dan Hostetler, Elliott Beattie, Phillip Wells, Brook Harvey-Smith, Ed Atkins, Jack Norris & Will Macaulay.
Replacements: Mike Guida, Levi Meek and Charlie Scott.

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