**14 Man Manor Make A Winning Start**

**Mavericks U18 15 – 24 Eton Manor U18**

On this sunny September morning, Eton Manor scored some impressive tries to make a positive start to life in Colts Rugby, despite receiving a red card in the second half.

From kick off, Manor lost the ball from being held up by suspiciously high Mavericks tackling. The ball was spread wide from the scrum with a penalty being won just on the 22. The ball was kicked into touch, with Mavericks’ big flanker driving over at the lineout to put them ahead just two minutes in, the kicker failing to add the conversion

Manor didn’t let the early score cause a drop in heads, with Henry and Pierre making some strong carries, Mavericks and their unsportsmanlike tricks unable to cope. Numerous penalties were conceded for obstructing quick plays and making high tackles.

In the eleventh minute, Dan Davey executed another impressive penalty kick to gain ground down the touchline. Although the throw was poor and possession was turned over, Manor won it back for a five metre scrum. Three minutes and numerous carries later, Chris Molden used his tall frame to stretch over under the posts, coolly converted by fly half Ale Minns.

Mavericks became wasteful in possession, suffering from heavy Manor pressure, but with Manor failing to take advantage themselves, the game entered a quiet spell.

This was broken on 20 minutes, a strong scrum leading to Ale finding Thomas out wide, his offload to Cormack looked promising as Cormack blasted down the wing, but his offload was then forward to an equally pacey Farouk.

Mavericks took a one-point lead in the 23rd minute with a straight forward penalty kick, conceded from being offside at the breakdown.

This even affair looked like it was going to be settled by which backline could produce more magic. And magic was duly produced, Dan Davey anticipating a loop between the opposition 9 and 10. He intercepted the ball, starting a strong passage of play, so strong that Mavericks could only halt it with a penalty-conceding high tackle. Ale Minns was once again calm and composed from the tee. 27 minutes in and Manor were leading by ten points to eight.

The game continued in its end-to-end manner, both teams keen to strike the balance between forward carrying and silky back play, although there was an element of brutishness to the game too, Seb being tackled dangerously high by the Mavs 22 on the half hour mark. Mavericks continued in their thuggish nature, which included some suspicious calls from their own subs who were running the touchline.

With two minutes to go of the half, Mavericks had a scrum just outside their 22. And once Davey had their scrum half under pressure, the outcome was inevitable. Another penalty to Manor. And although Ale Minns missed, the alarm bells were ringing for Mavericks, who had definitely faded after scoring so early.

HALF-TIME: Mavericks 8 - Eton Manor 10

Half time saw Dan Lockley come on for Ethan Bennett Brown. He and the the rest of the team started the second period strongly, while Mavericks started the same way they finished, with poor discipline. A dump tackle on Luke Stephenson 30 yards out and to the left gave Manor a scrum, and their tight head prop a ten minute spell on the touchline.

The first eight minutes of the second period had seen Manor camped in Mavericks’ half, but struggling to find a break through, eventually losing the ball at their own scrum. Mavericks’ loose head executed a poor clearance kick though, and Manor took advantage. Ale Minns was at the fore front again, carrying the ball in and getting tackled, but rolling away, collecting the ball from Dan Davey, before breaking through a defender and giving Farouk an easy try. Ale converted to make Manor’s lead nine points.

With 48’ on the clock, Mavericks finally gained some control, but soon lost it when they kicked a penalty too long as opposed to  out on the touchline.

This theme of errors continued for both sides, Manor losing the ball from scrums and Mavericks not throwing straight at lineouts.

53 minutes in, captain Henry Horne was red carded for a ‘punch in the face’ in the middle of a ruck. From my view on the touchline, Henry would make a terrible boxer, as it looked more like a weak tug on the arm.

Mavericks slowly gained ground, but were halted in the 56th when Jamie, playing from the age group below, impressively stole the ball at a lineout. He gave it to Ale, who found Farouk Asubiaro to his right. As we’ve seen many times before, Farouk went on a mazy run, evading multiple defenders to go from his own 22 to the Mavericks 22. He was tackled, but Pierre Jean Marie was in support, to receive the ball from him and finish beneath the post. Ale added the extras. Manor lead at this point by 24 to 8.

Despite Mad Matt shouting ‘Simple’ on repeat from the touchline, Manor did quite the opposite for the seven minutes following Pierre’s try, although Mavericks couldn’t capitalise.

62 minutes in, Mavericks’ 22 went on an impressive run, and was stopped by Seb with a monstrous tackle just outside the 22. The home side pushed, eventually winning a penalty five yards out, despite industrious defending from Ale, Cormack and Dan Lockley. Manor continued to fend off the attacks, but the pressure eventually told in the 67th minute, with them conceding a try in the far right corner. An impressive conversion kick meant Mavericks were now trailing by 15 to 24 with just a few minutes to go

With a man advantage, and keen to avoid another loss to Eton Manor, Mavericks pushed, but Manor stood firm, Ale marshalling the defence in the backs and Chris stepping up in Henry’s absence. Manor went another man down, with Seb sent to the sinbin for a high tackle.

This meant Manor finished with 13 men, but you wouldn’t have guessed, playing carefully and with composure to eventually work their way down the field. This is where they stayed for the last few minutes, seeing out the game to get off to a winning start.

FULL-TIME: Mavericks 15 - 24 Eton Manor

Man-of-the-match: A joint award been Jamie for his impressive showing in an older team, Farouk for his crucial try and assist, and Ale for being everywhere on the pitch.

Post-Match Meal:
Eyebrows can always be raised when curry is presented on a Sunday, but the majority of boys presently surprised and happy to receive seconds
Henry: “Lovely. Really really nice. It has a hint of spice to it as well”
Farouk: “It was alright. I rated that”
Coach Matthew: \*Doesn’t respond, pulls a face\*