

"It is a day we will never forget" - Maidstone United's historic FA Cup win

Maidstone United's performance at Portman Road perfectly encapsulated their identity as a club. Founded in 1992 after the original team fell into administration, they proved their resilience in a battle for the ages, showcasing the spirit that defines them.

Maidstone are fourth in the national league south, 98 places behind high flying Ipswich town who sit second in the Championship and are heading for a second successive promotion.

Manager George Elokobi hailed "the magic of the FA Cup" after his side beat the championship side. The result saw his side complete a hat-trick of giant killings as they beat league two side Barrow, league one side Stevenage and now championship side Ipswich to make it to the fifth round of the FA Cup.

The club is the first sixth tier side to qualify for the fifth round of the FA Cup since Blyth Spartans in 1978. Defender George Fowler who had a standout game against Ipswich, making 11 clearances and blocked a near certain goal, said: "It is unimaginable in all honesty, it is still sinking in for a lot of us, but it is a day that we will never forget."

Teammate Chi Ezennolim added: "It feels crazy to know that I am part of a team that has created history. It is an unbelievable feeling."

Forward Lamar Reynolds opened the scoring for Maidstone United in the 43rd minute with a calm and collected chip over Ipswich's keeper Christian Walton. A finish even the best professionals would have been proud of.

But just 11 minutes into the second half, Ipswich would send daggers into the Maidstone fans hearts as Jeremy Sarmiento would level the game with a cool finish into the bottom corner.

Yet the Maidstone players railed again, and in just 11 more minutes Maidstone would break forward again and score the goal that would send them flying into the fifth round of the FA Cup for the first time in their history.

Sam Corne would be the player who scored the decisive goal. This would not be the first time Corne would be heralded as a hero as he was also the player who slotted away the 47th minute penalty against Stevenage town to send them into the fourth round.

His name has been etched into Maidstone's history.

Maidstone were under pressure for the entire game. The Stones had only two shots, which were both converted, compared to the 38 shots by the Ipswich team. A late goal mouth scramble threatened Maidstone's day out, but last ditch defending by the defenders and keeper avoided heartbreak for the 4,400 travelling fans.

The game was not all pretty for Maidstone fans, supporter John Ryan had the unfortunate moment of him falling from the upper tier of a stand and landing on the home supporters. The video detailing Ryan's nasty fall has been viewed three million times.

Elokobi said: "There were a few tears. We have come to Ipswich Town, they are flying high in the Championship.

"For our group of players to be clapped off and applauded by these fantastic fans is just amazing.

"History has been made here."

Forward Solomon Smith said: "It is an honour to have got this far in the competition and it feels like a dream. I remember when I made my FA Cup debut back in 2018. We lost 3-0 in the extra preliminary round."

"To know think I could play in the last 16 against a championship club is crazy!"

Ipswich Town will feel hard done by but will remain resilient to ensure they achieve automatic promotion to the Premier League this season. Kieran McKenna's men achieved promotion to the Championship last season and have shocked the world as they strive forward to try and achieve back-to-back promotions.

Maidstone's landmark victory will just be a small bump in the road for the tractor boys.

As Maidstone look forward, they will try and make a promotion charge as they track down second place Worthing. Maidstone are currently six points behind Worthing but have a game in hand.

In the FA Cup, Maidstone will face either Sheffield Wednesday or Coventry away from home. They were snubbed a premier league team for a third time running but have the chance to play four times winner of England's first division, Sheffield Wednesday.

Maidstone will be set for years with the money they have made. With just prize money, the Stones have made £250,000. When you included ticket sales and TV money, that number will only go up. If Maidstone win their fifth-round tie, they will receive an extra £225,000 in prize money.

Maidstone's win against Ipswich has been carved into FA Cup history. It is the biggest giant killing in the last 25 years with the only game coming close being Luton Town's win against Norwich in 2013. Luton at the time were 88 places behind Norwich, Maidstone are 98 places behind Ipswich.

Manager Elokobi ended his career at Maidstone and has been a catalyst for improving the club. It took him months to get his first win but now he and Maidstone are excelling. He has led them on a magical cup run that their fans will remember forever.



Courtesy of Maidstone X3

