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to enjoy rugby.

## NEWSLETTER

140th Anniversary



### Edition No 14, Monday 17th August 2020

#### President's Message

I trust you're all well and start this article with some more sad news about Past President, Mike Christie following concern from Mark Foster and Mike Searls that they hadn't heard from him. I contacted his daughter Rachel and she told me that "Dad isn't great at the moment but she said that it would be good if we passed on our best wishes to him in the Newsletter and especially on his celebrating his 83rd birthday". I recall Mike was very helpful in setting up Grasshoppers new Constitution in 1987 and his brilliant speech at our Players Dinner at the Cabbage Patch - All the very best Mike. Anyone wishing to send a personal message to Mike can send it direct to his daughter, Rachel at: [rmoakley@btinternet.com](mailto:rmoakley@btinternet.com)

As we move into August and move to stage C in the RFU recovery plan, I know that many Clubs have been working hard to be ready for rugby, both on and off the pitch when it returns. I am keen, as I start my Presidency, not to lose time in getting round to see how those preparations are going so please drop me an email and let me know, and also to possibly arrange a visit on [peter.baveystock@middlesexrugby.com](mailto:peter.baveystock@middlesexrugby.com)

Peter

#### Message from Eddie Keal, Chairman Middlesex County RFU

The heatwave is making life doubly difficult as we now have two reasons to do as little vigorous socialising as possible. Sedentary home entertainment is the order of the week.

I see many clubs have re-started training and are finding their limits within the Covid-19 rules.

That's very positive, and I hope that those that have been able to re-open clubhouses and bars can do so safely and profitably.

I'll let others comment on the move from RFU stage B to stage C on the Return to Community Rugby Roadmap. It's good news.

The next "Question Time with celebrity guest" has been scheduled for **7pm on Wednesday 26th August**. Sign-in details are in the Events section below. Our guest speaker will be David Roberts, Chair of the Community Game Board and therefore also a Director of the RFU. David is the Council Member for Hertfordshire. As with previous guests, David will make some opening remarks and then take questions from the audience. Clearly there are some items he can't discuss, but he will follow the trend of openness established by Bill Sweeney and Steve Grainger.

I've come across a couple of instances where the Local Authority has contacted clubs to ask for confirmation that the club is adhering to RFU guidelines. In Hillingdon they are contacting all sports and other users of council land to ask if they are complying with their governing bodies' requirements. Be prepared to show them your risk assessments to reassure them you are compliant.

Sadly, there are plenty of people out there who are willing to report poor standards of compliance, or to post photos on social media.

Clearly not much is going to happen when 1st September comes around, but things are slowly getting better.

We should be getting more details about the outcome of the adult competition review, views on the future of the English Championship and the prospects for International Rugby in due course. We'll share whatever we can as soon as we can.

Stay safe!  
Eddie

#### Rugby Development

For those that didn't see the press on 1<sup>st</sup> August, we are now in Stage C of the [return to rugby roadmap](#). This moves

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us to a 10-a-side non-contact two-touch version of the game. There are some [great resources on the England website](#) and I urge you to read/watch everything thoroughly. If you have any questions, then please do let me know and I will endeavor to support you.

It is still essential that clubs follow this guidance. Non-compliance puts clubs and coaches in breach of government policy and RFU guidance and could invalidate insurance. Clubs must also follow any local government lockdown restrictions that may be implemented. If a CB or the RFU are made aware of any breaches, then charges under Rule 5.12 will be considered against the Coach responsible for the session and/or the Club itself. If in doubt, please drop me a line so I can answer any queries you may have.

September will see a [National Celebration of Rugby](#), starting with the NatWest RugbyForce 2020 weekend has on 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> September. There is also a [‘Pitch Up for Rugby’](#) planned for the following weekend of 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> September. Please do let us know what you are planning, you never know, you may get a visit from a member of the Middlesex Management Board.

Finally, as we start to move, albeit slowly, to rugby returning with more players and clubhouses and facilities re-opening, please remember that we have the [Middlesex Immediate Support Fund](#) available. If you have a need for financial support, then please let Andy and I know so we can help.

As ever, please do get in contact if you want to discuss anything.

Stay safe and well

Lou  
[Louise.latter@middlesexrugby.com](mailto:Louise.latter@middlesexrugby.com)

### Competitions Report

So, finally some good news on the Return to Rugby Road map as we hit stage C. Initially focused on Ready4Rugby, a non-contact game enabling two teams of up to 10 players, from within the same club to engage in some sort of match activity. Clearly some good news however I must point out that it has taken us ten weeks (1st June when we moved to stage B) to actually hit stage C and whilst I appreciate how

frustrating it is for you and your players I ask clubs to be temper your expectations about when rugby will actually start again. Yes, it is of course movement but I, like many of you suspect have little expectation that we shall see any competitive rugby for many months to come.

The other big news this week was the circulation by the RFU on Friday 14th August of their plan for Adult Male Future Competitions Structure for the 2021/22 season onwards. For those of you not included in the circulation please use this link to access the paper.

[https://www.englandrugby.com/dxdam/3c/3c8f721a-48bc-4351-ae64-a2a55cd4413c/Adult%20Male%20Future%20Competitions%20Plan.pdf?utm\\_source=140820CGU&utm\\_medium=Email&utm\\_campaign=140820CGU&utm\\_content=Community&spMailingID=10240301&spUserID=MjY5ODA2ODYwMDYzS0&spJobID=1573496276&spReportId=MTU3MzQ5NjI3NgS2](https://www.englandrugby.com/dxdam/3c/3c8f721a-48bc-4351-ae64-a2a55cd4413c/Adult%20Male%20Future%20Competitions%20Plan.pdf?utm_source=140820CGU&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=140820CGU&utm_content=Community&spMailingID=10240301&spUserID=MjY5ODA2ODYwMDYzS0&spJobID=1573496276&spReportId=MTU3MzQ5NjI3NgS2)

At the very least, it is an interesting piece of work centered as they say around the following points:

- Creating space in the fixture schedule for appropriate specific breaks from league rugby, this has had unanimous positive feedback from players, coaches and clubs
- Delivering a sufficient number of guaranteed fixtures (league and knock out) which can help towards club sustainability. This will be achieved by:
  - Restructuring leagues, in most cases by reducing the number of fixtures required to complete the season, flattening the pyramid through more leagues at certain levels, and therefore reducing travel time to/from matches.
  - Offering excitement to all stakeholders involved in the club game (but particularly players) through ensuring league games right up to the end of the season are meaningful for all teams and not just those challenging for the league title or fighting relegation, via introduction of a revamped knockout offer at levels 5 & 6, levels 7 and below.
- Considering increased stability within the leagues by reducing the ‘churn’ of promotion and relegation, and the damaging impact it can have on a club’s short term and long-term sustainability.

- ‘Regionalisation’ to reduce travel which involves all teams at a given level being grouped geographically, potentially disregarding current CB and divisional (DOC) boundaries in an effort to minimise travel across the country (and to keep this refreshed annually to continually minimise travel and ensure appropriate competition).
- The introduction of more teams in the pyramid to support more consistent local competition and club sustainability. This is achieved by allowing Lower XV's entry to the RFU leagues beyond the current scope of regulations and raising the ceiling from Level 8 to Level 7 (which will provide consistency across the country as well as supporting regionalisation and the principle of minimising travel time). The criteria and application process will be carefully reviewed to ensure any concerns over future regulations are addressed.

Clearly there is much sense in what the RFU are trying to achieve in this paper, for which they should be rightly congratulated, especially around player burnout, a revamp cup competition and a lessening of travel. It is however this last paragraph that causes me the most angst. After no consultation, with no mandate, with no detail at all and at best a woolly, at worst I suggest a worthless guarantee the RFU is seeking to ensure the entry of lower XV's into leagues across the country even in CBs like ours where in the past it is has been fiercely resisted.

If as the RFU say the introduction of the Lower XV's into the pyramid is required to support more consistent local competitions and club sustainability, why have they not bothered to consult with the clubs on this point. Surely if the point has value and it is crucial to their plans for future competition, they should be looking to take the game with them.

As I am perhaps overly fond of saying, there is more rugby played in our County and probably many others in the Merit Tables on a Saturday than in the leagues. How is trashing the MTs in order to support the leagues more sustainable for clubs? I have seen no evidence at all to support this position and as far as I am concerned the RFU are using this process to get lower XV's into the league effectively through the back door and have been afraid to properly consult with the clubs because they know what resistance there is to this, effectively taking the decision

away from the DOCs, CBs and Clubs who have always had the final say.

This is an issue for you and your club. If you accept the premise that the entry of lower XV's into the league is a requirement for the success of this plan you must of course say so. If you are not convinced, then the same applies.

As I have said there is much merit in this paper, and I don't want to decry the efforts of those who have clearly put in some much work and effort on our behalf. It is however the lack of detail that is most disappointing. If you lose the divisional and CB boundaries for your competitions who and how will they be administrated. Who has the responsibility? At a time that the RFU is making large scale redundancies across the community game, making the role of the CB so much more important in the support of its clubs to fill those gaps, it is at nullifying their role in competitions.

I would very much urge you to read the document and if you have an opinion then please make sure you take the survey via this link.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/8KCJ3N6?spMailingID=10240301&spUserID=MjY5ODA2ODYwMDYzS0&spJobID=1573496276&spReportId=MTU3MzQ5NjI3NgS2>

Keep safe

Andrew Smart

### **Group Officers Report**

I trust you and your families continue to keep well and are good spirits as we all continue to deal with this crisis in our own ways.

I know I have covered it in my competitions section above but again I must caution clubs that although we have now moved to Stage C, the start of competitive rugby is still, in my opinion, a long way away, and you will need to manage the expectations of your players and coaches.

Almost two weeks ago now the RFU announced its “Proposed Organisational Changes” that will see significant redundancies across the Rugby Development Department that services the Community Game with all the Area

Managers, Rugby Development Officer and Community Rugby Coach at risk. A total of 185 roles are “at risk” is the wording used in following the redundancy process but basically the Local Delivery Teams that support the clubs are gone. They are to be replaced by 81 new roles covering 3 key areas of work

- CLUB SUPPORT – supporting clubs in operating sustainably through facility/business support, volunteer development, member recruitment and targeted club financial support.
- COACHING & REFEREEING – supporting effective training, qualifications, development & deployment for coaches and match officials.
- PLAYER EXPERIENCE – managing and growing competitions & mass playing opportunities, supporting a strong player pipeline through schools, colleges & universities and initiating targeted player growth & retention.

I am not sure yet how the RFU think that these 81 roles will adequately replace the 185 they intend to make redundant and of course the repercussions will clearly be felt by us where it is likely the burden will once again fall on our own already hard-pressed volunteers.

Nevertheless, I understand that these roles are open to applications from the Local Delivery Teams and hopefully many if not all of those that have served Middlesex Clubs so well will find new positions in the RFU that will guarantee their livelihoods going forward.

However, whatever happens I just wanted to take this opportunity on behalf of the Groups and our Clubs to say thank you to everyone for their help, support, expertise and friendship over the years and wish them all the very best in whatever challenges they face.

Keep safe.

Andrew Smart

#### **Update from Bob Lawless - Representative Middlesex Playing, Coaching & Referee Development/ Deputy President**

The representative Team Middlesex managers & coaching staff have all confirmed their positions for next season.

The playing programmes are governed by the age grade calendar. If any dates are missed due to the current situation then we move on to the next Calendar date.

The current playing programme for the Girls U15s & U18s and the boys U17s & U18s allows one assessment, four squad preparation sessions and three playing opportunities.

The boys U14s, U15s and U16s playing programme which is now a part of the single pathway and is a joint responsibility of Middlesex and our partners London Irish. All players representing Middlesex will come from those players in the DPP programme. The management of this programme is undertaken by the Middlesex London Irish Liaison Officer Jock Dunbar. All games will be published during September.

The Senior Women, Men and U20s although there is no funding it is hoped that some form of activity will take place for each of these groups later in the season. More information will be given as the season progresses.

More information on appointments and representative playing programmes will be shared after the next Rugby Development meeting which takes place on Monday 24th August.

#### **Middlesex Coach Development**

The Coaching Newsletter Rugby Coaching Drills (RCD) is delivered to all Middlesex Registered Coaches each Friday. The Newsletter has been circulated each Friday and has not missed a single edition throughout the lockdown.

The RCD circular covers a topical introduction and coaches can gain access to a myriad of coaching drills to assist coaches with skill development. The newsletter also allows Middlesex Clubs to advertise for coaches or coaching events.

Please contact me if you have coaches that are interested in registering for this free newsletter.

More information on coaching CPDs will be published when we get the all clear to organise meetings.  
Bob Lawless

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### Upcoming Events

The next "Question Time with celebrity guest" has been scheduled for 7pm on Wednesday 26th August.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81001991747?pwd=RmZvckhwR3NRcm5sQlhvbzkyYWp1UT09>

Meeting ID: 810 0199 1747

Passcode: 062629

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