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to enjoy rugby.

NEWSLETTER

140th Anniversary



Edition No 15, Monday 7th September 2020

The President's Message

I trust you're all well and I start this article with some very sad news about Past President (President 1988-91) Mike Christie, sadly passed away last week shortly after 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 in 1986. Although Mike Searls didn't play rugby against Mike, he recalls playing cricket against OMTs for his school UCS and remembers him as a useful bowler a "left arm chucker" as Mike explained. Great pall, Charlie Madge recounted he had a picture of the two of them playing a school match between OMTs and St Pauls with Charlie as he describes it, about to make a crashing tackle although Mike remembered it as breaking the tackle and scoring a try. Mike started his Middlesex journey when he became Assistant Coach to Charlie Madge and then went on to become County Secretary for seven years between 1972 and 1979 and has also served as a RFU Council Rep for Middlesex for eleven years. Our deep condolences are with his daughter Rachel and the rest of the family. Anyone wishing to send a personal message can send it direct to his daughter, Rachel at: rmoakley@btinternet.com or to Rachel Oakley, 29 Long Park, Amersham, Bucks. HP6 5LA.

As we move into September and move to stage D 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

Peter

Message from Eddie Keal, Chairman

Heatwave – what heatwave? Normal weather service is resumed, but sadly not the rugby. September has arrived and what should have been the beginning of a new season of fixtures.

Those clubs with Age-Grade rugby sections seem to be making the most of the return. I know most will be staggering training on Sunday 6th to ensure that whatever they do is within the guidelines and as safe as possible. I urge you all to be patient, September is always training month for Age-Grade, and full-on matches may yet be some way off. The seemingly rapid sprint from Phase B to C to D is very unlikely to move forward again at the same pace.



Question Time was fun once again. David Roberts, Chair of the RFU Community Game Board, was our guest and gave a good account of what is going on "behind the scenes". He offered to come back again and also to attend a County meeting, so we may well take him up on those offers. There is clearly still appetite amongst our clubs for the QT format, so we'll keep running them.

Wouldn't it be lovely to have a face to face meeting? Just one would make a big difference. The groups have re-started and will also be on Zoom, at least for the first round.

The Adult Competition Review will very likely be the hot topic for September. I expect Andy Smart will have plenty to say about it in his section below.

There isn't much news from the Board, we have our first meeting of the new season on Tuesday 8th September and thereafter every second Tuesday of the month. We have some work to do to finish off some of our policies and a vastly reduced budget to grapple with this season.

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As always, our priority will be to deliver as much direct and meaningful support for our clubs as we can.

In spite of everything going on around us, we remain positive and enthusiastic about the new season. When the time is right, we will all be keen to visit as many clubs as possible. That's the part of the season I enjoy the most.

Stay safe!

Eddie

Rugby Development

It doesn't seem that long ago that we were celebrating moving to Stage C, but as of the 1st September, we officially moved into **Stage D** of the [return to rugby roadmap](#). We remain playing a 10-a-side non-contact two-touch version of the game but we are now able to play intra-club games. 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 endeavour to support you.

If you are planning on playing matches against another club, then please ensure you have the relevant risk assessment, track and trace policy and social distancing guidelines in place and have communicated with the travelling team. This is important for spectators and parents. For Age Grade teams, if you are playing another club then you do not need approval. However, if you are planning on inviting three or more clubs then the County will require to sign off as we would normally sign off a festival, with the added request of completed risk assessments, track and trace policy and social distancing guidance.

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.

The weekend just gone saw 25 of our clubs celebrate NatWest RugbyForce 2020 to welcome in the 'official' start of the season. This is all part of a [National Celebration of Rugby](#). Next weekend (12th – 13th September) we have the '[Pitch Up for Rugby](#)' planned.

The provisional women's leagues have been published and it's great to see Belsize Park, Ruislip and Epping Upper Clapton, all with places in the leagues as they enter their second season of women's rugby. That's in addition to the other 14 teams (from 11 clubs already established in the leagues).

The RFU announced in this week's Community Game Update that all national RFU Age Grade Competitions for 2020-2021 will be cancelled. This includes the National Schools Cup and Champions Trophy, U18s Clubs Cup for Boys and U15 and U15 Clubs Cups for Girls and the ACE League.

From a Middlesex perspective, we are still planning on running the U12 boys quadrangular fixtures (under Ready4Rugby regulations) and the Minis festivals in March. We will also look to run the Girls' Pitch Up and Plays that we have scheduled in the calendar – although we have a bit of work to do around how these could work in Stage D.

Finally, please remember that we have the [Middlesex Immediate Support Fund](#) available. If you have a need for financial support then please let Andy and myself know so we can support you.

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

Stay safe and well

Lou

Louise.latter@middlesexrugby.com

Competitions Report

So, after waiting ten weeks to move from Stage B to C on the Return to Rugby Road map we see more movement as we go to D after only 24 days. This allows limited and restricted contact rugby training including the return of tackling, lineouts and rucks but with restrictions. Mauls, scrums, opposed lineouts or upright tackles are still not permissible as the transmission exposure risk remains high. The contact training sessions have to be carried out in small groups of no more than six players. Detail of the permitted training activity is available via the following link.

https://www.englandrugby.com/dxdam/e1/e19e76e9-e52b-48a4-ba94-4db8071aa895/STAGE%20D%20CONTACT%20GUIDE.pdf?utm_source=010920CGU&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=010920CGU&utm_content=Community&spMailingID=10402205&spUserID=MjY5ODA2ODYwMDYzS0&spJobID=1590095487&spReportId=MTU5MDA5NTQ4NwS2.

Reaching Stage D also means that the Ready4Rugby has also been extended from intra club activity to inter club. All credit to David Gershlick at Hendon who has got ahead of the game here and organised the North London Cup made up of the following six clubs, Hendon, Harrow, Finchley, Hampstead, Mill Hill and UCS RFC. The clubs will be playing each other home and away over ten consecutive Saturday's under Ready4Rugby rules. The competition due to start on the 26th September. It's a chance for the players to put on their club shirts, play a form of competitive rugby with their mates against other clubs, open their clubs and bars to visitors with referees supplied by the London Society. It is certainly a most interesting concept and one that I am looking to offer to the County's Clubs provided the interest is there. If anybody is thinking of running their own competition and they require more information then by all means come back to me.

And yet on the 1st September, at the same time as we moved from C to D on the Return to Rugby Road Map, the RFU were making the following announcement "The adult league season (Level 3 & below for men, Level

2 & below for women) will not commence in October. The next announcement about when league rugby will commence for these levels will be on 2 October".

I fear that at the moment it is difficult to see how the RFU will not be making a similar statement about the adult league season not commencing in November at that October 2nd briefing but we live in hope.

Keep safe
Andrew Smart
Chair of Competitions

Group Officers Report

First of all, I hope that you and your families are all well in these troubling times and I look forward to catching up with as many of you as possible across the September Zoom Group meetings. Please note the start times of 7pm and the plan if at all possible is to run for no more than an hour. The joining arrangements for each of the meetings will be circulated with the agendas

Initially I had wondered, with all the communication coming out from the county (for which they should be congratulated), plus the fortnightly Newsletter, the Question time meetings plus the weekly Community Game Update from the RFU, whether there was any benefit in holding these meetings. However, after discussion with all the Group Officers we are in agreement that the meetings should go ahead. First of all, there is some housekeeping that needs to be addressed that includes the need to ratify the voting for the different group officer positions and also to cover off on the minutes of our last meetings. The intention will be to get through that part of the agenda in 10 minutes or so and then devote the rest of the time onto the main thrust of the meeting covered off in agenda points "Club Updates" and "Open Forum". This more importantly it is an opportunity for all of us to catch up. To see how each of our clubs are doing, what are our plans and expectations for the season. How we are engaging with our players and members. What are problems we are facing, what we are doing about them. To see if there is any common ground or ideas around subscriptions and so on. The idea being that perhaps we can learn from each other and help each other where we can. The intention is not to be a formal meeting in the normal sense, with presentations, but a chance to catch up with friends and discuss some common issues. Under the "Open Forum" if there is time, we can discuss items such as the Male Adult

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Competitions Plan, the Return to Rugby Road Map. Basically, whatever you want.

Finally, the more clubs that join, the more of us that are willing to engage and contribute, the more opportunity I believe we all have to get something worthwhile out of these meetings.

We started last week with the North West Meetings which saw twenty three on the call and whilst there were some issues around the format and in particular how I chaired it, on balance I think it was a success, with inputs from all the clubs and with it a benefit I hope for those that attended.

Please note that the North meeting due to be held tonight, Monday 7th September has been put back a fortnight to Monday 21st.

The South Group meeting is on Monday 14th September with the West on Wednesday 23rd September

Keep safe and hope to see many of you across the remaining Group meetings in September

Andrew Smart
Chairman of Group Officers

Update from Bob Lawless - Representative Playing & Coaching Development.

Representative Playing

All Team Middlesex, managers and coaching teams are in place and are looking forward to the commencement of the community game and the return to representative rugby.

The Team Middlesex U18s are generally the team who gets in action first, with games arranged on 06/12, 20/12 and 17/01, it remains to be seen if RFU clearance will be given to play on these dates.

The London Irish DPP, who still have key members of staff on furlough, would generally be looking to commence development of the U14s, U15s & U16s in September. Due to the current situation the DPP will probably not be starting back until January, so the early arranged games at U16s for 8/11 and 13/12 will not take place until 2021. The Middlesex DPP Liaison Officer Jok Dunbar is in regular communication with the London

Irish Academy Staff and a Pathway Group meeting have been held with another organised for October.

Dates for all the other age groups will be included in future newsletters. The down time has allowed online meetings with the Team Middlesex management teams and this will be ongoing along with in house training.

Coaching & Mentoring Development

In respect of the Coaching & Mentoring programme, this will be published in the next Newsletter which will commence in late September and run through to the end of the season. We will start the process electronically via Zoom and then progress with various sessions in our member clubs when permission is given.

We are fortunate in Middlesex to have a number of Level 3 & Level 4 coaches; these senior coaches will be leading on coach development and with the Middlesex mentoring programme.

All representative games, coaching & referee development will be published on the new website along with the relative managers & coaching staff.

The weekly Newsletter, RCDtv circulated each Friday, continue to grow in interest. If you have coaches in your club who would be interested in this free coaching newsletter with access to over 2,000 coaching drills, please do get in touch.

Bob Lawless

(e) bob.lawless@middlesexrugby.com or

(m) 07803 196409

Up and coming events

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**South Group Meeting - Monday 14th September
7pm**

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4822543155?pwd=aVhERnlxaSt6bVY3QXg4elJwcTBRQT09>

Meeting ID: 482 254 3155

Passcode: 3984

**North Group Meeting Monday 21st September
7pm**

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4822543155?pwd=VnZqaG1FekVCWEeLU25ZVm5MUElxUT09>

Meeting ID: 482 254 3155

Passcode: 4030

**West Group Meeting - Wednesday 23rd
September 7pm**

Time: Sep 23, 2020 07:00 PM London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4822543155?pwd=VnZqaG1FekVCWEeLU25ZVm5MUElxUT09>

Meeting ID: 482 254 3155

Passcode: 4030