

Bringing people together
to enjoy rugby.

NEWSLETTER

140th Anniversary



President:
Peter Baveystock

Edition No 16, Monday 21st September 2020

The President's Message

I start with some more detail on Michael Christie: Much loved husband to the late Jill, father to Jane, Pauline, Richard and Rachel and grandfather to nine grandchildren. Michael, a retired partner of Nicholls Christie and Crocker Solicitors, a Mental Health Review Tribunal Judge, past President of Middlesex Rugby Football Union, RFU committee member and a past Director of the Injured Players Foundation. A private family funeral was held on 21st September 2020. A celebration of his life will be held at a later date. If desired donations can be made to MIND in Harrow or RFU Injured Players Foundation via Henry Paul Funeral Directors 01895 635642.

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 through September and well into 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 Middlesex County RFU

I think all clubs have now restarted rugby activity in some form. There is plenty of Age-Group activity on Sundays and mid-week training for seniors, with a sprinkling of touch (or similar) formats on Saturday afternoons, some of it shortly to be competitive. It's all very encouraging. I heard some positive feedback from several clubs about the good job done by schools

teaching children how to behave in a Covid world of distancing, hand-washing and sanitizing equipment. All transferable skills for life!

The RFU is making the right noises about going to government with plans for return to rugby. Conversely the noises coming out of government all seem to be about slowing things down, so we shall have to wait and see. The zoning or regionalisation of lockdowns and restrictions must make it harder to re-start meaningful league competitions.

We are in the middle of the first round of Group Meetings, necessarily on Zoom, like everything else. They have been well attended by Clubs and County Management. It has been good to see some new faces, and as Zoom presents probably the easiest opportunity for the curious to drop in for an hour, we hope to see some more.

It's clear that we need to communicate more information about the Adult Competition Review. I am expecting that to include a "Question Time" session on Zoom, but we haven't set a date or an agenda with speakers just yet. We are working on it.

We have a new website! I'm sure Waheed will write some more about it in the sections below. All feedback is a gift and will be treated with gratitude. So please let us know what you think.

Hands, face, space!

Eddie

Rugby Development

You probably don't need me to remind you but we remain at **Stage D** of the [return to rugby roadmap](#). Age Grade teams do require County approval if you are

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planning on inviting three or more clubs. 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.

Please remember that Tag belts are NOT allowed under Stage D and are still classed as equipment. If you are unsure then please do reference the [great resources on the England website](#).

Last week we announced our partnership with the Middlesex Sports Foundation to offer hardship grants out to disadvantaged youngsters. The hardship grants can be accessed by a club or a parent for a child under the age of 18 via the [online application form](#). This is a great opportunity for us your constituent body to support our clubs and their members. The grant is aimed at paying 50% of the players membership, with the expectation that the club will match 50% and/or to help provide kit for the player. Again, we would expect the club to provide the kit at cost.

The [Middlesex Immediate Support Fund](#) is also available. If you have financial concerns due to the impact of the COVID-19 situation then please do reach out to Andy and myself and we can support you in the application process.

And finally, if you do have a player or member that test positive to follow RFU and Government Guidance. We are expecting further information from the RFU as they are working closely with Public Health England. However, you should contact your local public health team or the London Coronavirus Response Cell to report the positive test and they will also be able to confirm any additional measures you as a club or the players will need to take.

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

Stay safe and well

Lou

Louise.latter@middlesexrugby.com

Competitions Report

It's great to hear of a number of initiatives that clubs are organizing around the Ready4Rugby offering from the RFU whether it be festivals, round robin competition or just one off games. However I have been asked by the London Society of Referees who are keen to support where they can and in particular Paul Carroll and Rob Park the North and West List Appointment Managers to make sure that you record your home fixtures are on the WhosTheRef system if you want referees to support your competitions. You absolutely cannot approach Society referees direct. They are not covered by any insurance if there are any mishaps and they have been instructed to say no if so approached.

Both Paul and Rob have enough referees who are very interested in supporting every fixture but if you don't ask in the right way you won't get

Simply you need to set up the fixture on the WhosTheRef system and when you are asked to identify the competition in the drop down box, simply scroll down to and click on Ready4Rugby (L8). Once you have created the fixture you will be notified of your referee in the normal way. Any issues you can always contact Rob or Paul direct.

On Friday you might have seen the Community Game Update circulation and in particular the section around the Adult Male Future Competitions Structure. You will have noticed that the Council vote has been put back from the 2nd October to the 27th November "to allow them to review and consult further on elements of the detail". This Future Competitions Structure was raised at the last county management meeting in early September where it was agreed that whilst we needed to discuss in more detail in order to understand all the issues, we needed to know first what our clubs and in particular the players felt about the recommendations. I have a concern that with everything else that has been dominating club's energies since March this has perhaps gone under club's radar. These proposals will see perhaps the biggest change to the way that we will be playing our rugby since the introduction of the leagues with without doubt the most significant facing our clubs at level 7 and below where there is little or no details to support the proposals and the most questions and concerns. Nationally well over 70% of all clubs across play at level 7 and below, whilst in Middlesex that

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number, with 35 out of our 40 league clubs below level 2, goes up to just over 85%. Broadly speaking there is a lot of support across the game for the proposals down to level six around league sizes, player burnout, travel. These at levels where clubs are playing between 26 and 30 league games a season. At seven and below where apart from the North everyone plays between 18 and 22 there is still debate and many questions about whether those same issues are as much of a problem and require the same solutions. Because, it might the correct way forward for a small part of the game does that make it right for everyone else? Is this one size fits all the answer to all the game's problems. If we accept that these changes are in the best interests of our five clubs who play at levels 3 to 6 can be satisfied at the moment that is the case for the other 85%..

Perhaps most contentious is the intention in the new structure to allow lower xvs in the league pyramid across the country at level 7 and below over the wishes of those clubs, CBs and DOCs who have always resisted their entry in the past and before now were always allowed the final say. Putting back the Council vote until the end of November allows us to ensure first of all that all Middlesex clubs and their players are fully briefed on all aspects of the new structure and secondly allow us to test the support for the proposals across the county.

I plan to have a questionnaire out in the next ten days or to all our clubs, whether they play in the leagues or not. All we would ask is that you distribute the questionnaire throughout your club but especially your players. It is important that as a county we know and understand what our clubs and players want and we still have time to add to the debate before the final decision at the end of November if we need to.

Keep safe

Andrew Smart
Chairman of Competitions

Group Officers Report

So, we are now half way through the September round of Group meetings with the North tonight 21st September at 7pm and the West on Wednesday also at 7pm. Both meetings via Zoom with the joining instructions circulated with the Agenda. If you haven't

received them or would like to join either or both meetings then by all means come back to me, andrew-smart@ntlworld.com and I will forward them to you.

So far we have had a couple of interesting meetings dominated by the issues facing us all at the moment around recruitment, player retention, Junior Sections, finances, subscriptions, etc. There does appear to be some common themes although with so many different types of clubs and not all clubs represented on the meetings this is perhaps a bit of a generalisation. Nevertheless it does appear that for many clubs there has been solid numbers at senior training with regular players returning in good numbers but for all and particularly those clubs that rely on a high turnover of players coming into London every year recruitment unsurprisingly is down and proving a particular challenge. For those with Junior Sections there appears to have been a bounce in numbers with excellent attendance so far in September. What to do about senior subscriptions is causing all clubs angst whilst for junior subs, clubs are determined to charge the full sub. It is also clear that for some clubs their financial position is becoming more difficult. Again I must remind clubs about the County's Immediate Support Fund, the paperwork for which can be found on the following link. <https://middlesexrugby.com/rugby-development/facilities-funding/>

The fund is there to support clubs directly impacted and now struggling because of the virus. By all means please speak to Louise or myself if you require any help or advice around the process.

I had hoped that we would get onto to discussing some of the other issues facing our game but these meetings are driven by their participants and the day to day issues facing our clubs are clearly the paramount concern.

It is really important that we hear from as many clubs as possible. We need to know how each of our clubs are faring during this unprecedented time and at the very least it is great to catch up with friends that many of us haven't seen for many months

Please make the effort to get on one of the meetings even if it is not your group. It would be great to see you and find out how your club is dealing with the issues facing us all and it is only an hour of your time. You might learn something to your benefit or maybe help another club with your own experiences.

To reiterate North Group Meeting Monday 21st September 7pm and the West Group on Wednesday 23rd September also at 7pm

Keep safe and hope to see many of you across the remaining Group meetings this week

Andrew Smart

Director of Communications and Innovation

It was Ernest Hemmingway who said *“never mistake motion for action”*...and your Middlesex County team have been all action last 12 months working for you, I am pleased to now say we have a communications platform and programme that can support all the great work being done.

We recently launched the final phase of the communications infrastructure with the launch of the new website which can be accessed here <https://middlesexrugby.com/> in parallel we have also been updating the content, removing duplicates and generally living up to our strapline of bringing *people together to enjoy rugby*. If there is any other content you wish to see on the website please do let us know.

The new website has been designed to work with our social media channels, facebook, twitter and Instagram as well as WhatsApp and email. I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank Simon Hardcastle and the broader team for helping us get to this stage.

The channels are not just about the county communicating with you but we now have the platform for you to further engage with the county, we have a large number of followers through all our channels and we would like to offer our member clubs an opportunity to “take over” one or more of these starting with our Instagram account.

Use it to promote your club, member activities, any fund raising initiatives, achievements or generally just push out positive messages about your club. It is your opportunity to reach a large audience across the Middlesex region and beyond. If you are interested in this please DM us and we can arrange. We are privileged to have a large number of clubs in the region so not everyone will get the opportunity so we would ask you

to be as clear as possible in what you want to do and why and we'll select clubs periodically.

If you have any questions, thoughts or idea please send them through.

Best regards

Waheed Aslam

Update from Bob Lawless - Representative Playing & Coaching Development.

In preparation for the representative playing season, there are ongoing talks with the Age Grade Managers / Coaches to be as prepared as we possibly can, while awaiting confirmation on when it will be safe to return to rugby.

The following is an update by PDSC (Player Development Sub Committee) on, Age Grade Representative and Pathway Programmes.

Following on from the communication on Friday 11th September, and further dialogue regarding the impact on the game that Age Grade Representative and Pathway Programmes may have during this uncertain time, Player Development sub-committee (PDSC) acknowledge the complexity of the situation across the country including local lockdown measures.

The priority as you are aware is to ensure a safe return to rugby in our community clubs, with an everchanging local and national picture, the decision to restart programmes should be taken at a local level within the Regional Player Pathway Groups. PDSC will continue to monitor the situation and further updates provided as and when appropriate.

The Age Grade Playing Calendar 2020-21 remains as scheduled for the season including Player Pathway (DPP, CB and Academy) activity, to avoid underplaying/overplaying and to prioritise player access and balance with core rugby activity in clubs, schools and colleges.

Guidance for commencement of activity found here. <https://www.englandrugby.com/news/article/rfu-update-on-coronavirus-guidance-for-clubs>

Due to the differences to normal club activity, PDSC also recommend that extra thought be given to the grouping

of players, the number of players attending in any given time slot, car park activity and limiting parental engagement.

Coach Education

Membership of the MCA (Middlesex Coaching Association) is free to all coaches involved in coaching development in all our Middlesex Clubs, Schools, Colleges and Universities. The MCA is partnered with London Irish Academy, The Magic Academy & Coach Logic and Senior Middlesex Coaches who are all committed in developing better coaching in Middlesex.

In addition to a RCDtv weekly circular with current topics of interest, each member has access to over 2,500 Rugby Coaching Skill Development drills. There is also a monthly Coaching Webinar via Zoom. When it is safe to do so, practical coaching CPDs will return to our clubs.

The MCA also run an annual Coach mentoring programme that have benefited past Middlesex Coaches through their coaching pathway. The mentoring programme is open both Female & Male Coaches.

To register Coaches with the Middlesex Coaching Association or if you require further information please contact MCA at coaching@middlesexrugby.com, with your full name, and contact details.

September Coaching Webinar

For more information & Log in details please refer to the "What's On" section of this Newsletter

Bob Lawless

Up and coming events

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

Middlesex Coaching Association in partnership with The Magic Academy invites all coaches to a Coaching Webinar looking at Exploring coaching ideas during the return to play Rugby Road Map.

When - 19.00hrs on Monday 28th September 2020.

Theme - Exploring coaching ideas during the return to play Rugby Road Map.

Webinar Host - John Fletcher,

John worked as Head of Academy & then Director of rugby at Newcastle Falcons before taking on the England Under 18 Head coach position in 2008. England have reaped the benefits of a productive U18 to U20 to senior pathway in recent years.

Who will benefit from this Coaching Webinar?

This Webinar will be of interest to all level of coaches and will look at the various preparation that have taken us up to level D of the RFU Return to Play, Road Map. This event will be followed in early October with a Coaching Forum run by the Middlesex Senior Coaches.

Please Reserve your Place at

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_JtlocMVkTDqOjtYMplVEQg