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to enjoy rugby.

NEWSLETTER

140th Anniversary



Edition No 17, Week Starting 5th October 2020

The President's Message

I had the pleasure of visiting Hendon last Saturday to see the first weekend of the Hendon organised "Ready 4 Rugby". They hosted two teams from Hampstead, and I saw some great and enjoyable non-contact rugby albeit not as we would usually see. I would like to thank Hendon and especially their President, David Gershlick for him driving this initiative. At the end of the four sessions Hendon's 1st Team ran out 13-9 winners. I know that this type of competitive game will expand, and I look forward to coming along to Clubs to see it.

Yesterday I joined the English Counties Rugby Counties Association (ERCA) virtual AGM and we were pleased to have updates from Bill Sweeney and Steve Grainger with the following highlights:

Bill Sweeney

- Premiership spend on average £100k per month for COVID 19 testing
- Things were positive until the recent infection increase
- As per the above any positivity has been dented by the increased infection rate rise so the next two weeks will tell on what progress can be made
- RFU will have more conversations this week
- If no movement then an adaptation of the Laws could be the way forward

Steve Grainger

- He thanked the hard work and dedication of the staff that have been released
- Any furloughed staff will be returning in late October
- They are looking at not implementing in full the league restructure in 2021/22 and delay to 2022/23 but it's possible that some element of the restructure such as league sizes and player breaks could still be included

Stay safe and please let me know if you're hosting return to play or any other Club event.

Peter

Message from Eddie Keal, Chairman Middlesex County RFU

I'm writing this on the morning of Sunday 4th October. It's inspiring to see so many runners completing their own individual marathons on the streets and footpaths, because there is no formal London Marathon this year for them. What amazing things people will do on a wet, cold Sunday morning Not unlike our own age-grade coaches, who I know will be toughing it out at clubs across the county to make sure our children get the opportunity to play the game. Well done to all of you!



We're all building new plans based on the recent RFU announcements. No league rugby until the New Year, but we live in hope of some relaxation of the current restrictions before then, so we can start to prepare properly for full contact rugby.

It's certain that the Autumn Internationals will be played "behind closed doors" and very likely the 6 Nations fixtures too. All this makes the RFU's financial problems more difficult, and we expect the second half of the (much reduced) County funding to be under threat of cancellation.

I think our focus has shifted slightly from "make the most of difficult circumstances" to "make sure we're still around when this is all over" and I would urge clubs to do the same. The biggest part of that is probably not fund-raising or financial but making sure that we still have the players we need in the game to survive.

There are now several initiatives under way across the County to get competitive Ready 4 Rugby fixtures arranged. Let's make the most of this game, even if it is

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not the ideal, we all want of a full return to normal rules. I sense a supportive attitude from the RFU towards allowing some flexibility to help make things happen. But quite rightly **NO** flexibility when it comes to complying with rules around social distancing and safe behaviour. I'm sure we all understand and support that.

Hope fully some more good news by the time of the next Newsletter. In the meantime, stay safe!

Hands, face, space!

Eddie

Rugby Development

While we remain at **Stage D** of the [return to rugby roadmap](#) it is great to see more teams starting to arrange some local non-contact friendlies with neighboring clubs. Please remember you do need to 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.

I am pleased to report that we have issued the first hardship grants to support disadvantaged youngsters. Thank you to the clubs involved for being supportive of these applications. Please do pass on the information to your different age groups so we can support those in need of financial support during these difficult times. 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](#).

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

The RFU have produced further [guidance](#) around a player or member testing positive for COVID-19. Please ensure you complete the [Positive Test Notification Form](#), which will allow the RFU and Middlesex to monitor positive cases and provide the necessary support to clubs.

Please do ensure you have fully drained all water from the pipes and tested for Legionnaires disease. Further guidance can be found on the [Health and Safety Executive website](#).

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

Stay safe and well

Lou

Competitions Report

Guys I trust that you and your families continue to be safe during these turbulent times

Since the last newsletter and the decision by the RFU to suspend all community rugby until at least the 1st January I have been looking at what we can do to provide some type of competition across the county under the Ready4Rugby Guidelines. With this in mind I extended invitations to all the merit table clubs last week and I have been delighted with the response. The invitations have been extended to include league sides and also to our women's teams in their own competition

There is still plenty of planning to be done before we can get out the leagues and fixtures and I am very grateful to Steve Partridge from Actonians who is very kindly helping me to organise and run these competitions. At the moment I am thinking of putting teams in mini leagues of four with everyone to play everyone else home and away once. So, six matches played across seven weeks with a break between games 3 and 4. Games to be played on Saturday afternoon although the ladies may prefer to still play on a Sunday. The games will be 4 x 15 minutes quarters under the Ready 4 Rugby Guidelines. Teams of 10 with up to five replacements with unlimited rolling substitutions. Two front five forwards to be on the field at any time.

It is a competition, but the focus is all about participation, a chance to pull on your club shirt, play with your friends and perhaps generate a bit of badly needed income for clubs.

At the end of the six rounds, clubs to be placed first to fourth as with any league. Then if clubs want to

continue, I will create new mini leagues of four so that clubs placed first in their pods will now play another three clubs who also finished first in their pods. I will do the same for those that finished 2nd, 3rd and 4th and the intention will be to keep the competition running, whilst the teams support it, until we get eventual winners at every level or real rugby starts.

For the men to date we have had twenty-one clubs enter with thirty-five sides and with others still to confirm I expect those numbers to go up. With the women so far, we have a further eight sides with the entry cut-off date this Wednesday 7th October. Steve and I will be looking to formulate the leagues and competition format this week so if anyone else would like to join you must tell us now and certainly no later than the 7th.

Plenty of work to be done but we expect to have the leagues and fixtures out in the week beginning the 12th October

Keep safe

Andrew

Group Reports from the respective Groups

North West Report

After the last group meeting of September, the President wondered whether rather than hearing from me again it might be better if each of the Groups did short reports on their meetings covering some of the highlights. (He didn't quite say it like that, but I know what he meant!!!!!!) Still you get to hear from me anyway even if it is only to cover to the North West. Ours was the first and it was always going to be interesting to see whether the Zoom format, restricting the meeting to about an hour and concentrating mainly on the clubs worked or not. It proved a well-supported meeting with twenty three on the call so decent numbers with a couple of new faces which was a real bonus and whilst there were some issues around the format, 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. There were some common themes which were to be replicated across all the groups with solid numbers at adult training and a bounce in Junior numbers. There were of course frustrations around the return to rugby and the restrictions around training but whilst they were manageable at the moment concerns about what would happen if we remained in a similar position first in

November and then into the New Year. Generally NW clubs were confident about their current financial position but in six to nine months' time that would change.

On top of that it was great to catch up with friends from throughout the group whom we hadn't seen since our March meeting at West London RFC. It is almost definite that when we get to the November meeting that it will still be on Zoom. It will be interesting to see then if numbers remain similar and our clubs believe that there is value in continuing to support these meetings whilst nothing is happening around a return to play until we know now until at least the New Year. With that in mind both Mark and I would be delighted to hear from anyone who thinks that they can improve the format and the offering.

Andrew Smart (Chair North West Group)

South Report

The first Group meeting is normally where we see each other for the first time in the season and discuss hopes (and fears) for the coming season. Where we tell each other how fantastic the pre-season has gone with its exceptional recruitment meaning we will be fielding x number of sides all filled with super-talented players; and with some gossip and tittle-tattle thrown in for good measure. Some may have even played a game or two - and solved the conundrum that had been exercising them all summer as to who ate all the pies...But optimism is generally in the air. Zoom forward to Sept 21 and it wasn't all doom and gloom but optimism was in short supply - and that was before the RFU announcement pushing everything back to Jan 21. Of course, everyone is doing what they can to prepare for when the game does re-start, with playing initiatives being considered to relieve player boredom and give them some sort of 'competitive' rugby. And the County, through its excellent Newsletter, is keeping everyone abreast of developments and, critically, highlighting what it can do to help - much appreciated by all. Seemingly, the one very bright spot is that minis/youth has weathered the virus well - with big numbers returning to the Clubs. For some, something to hang on to!

Oll an Gwella

Jerry Rogers (Chair South Group)

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North Group

Clubs said they had maintained the full subs fee despite the COVID-19 pandemic because they are continuing to provide training, though some clubs have partially reduced fees. Membership cancellations were not yet a big problem though sponsorship was a concern for some clubs. The Middlesex Emergency Support Fund was flagged as a source of help to clubs financially hit by Covid-19. On the playing front, Hendon were congratulated for organizing a touch competition involving a number of clubs in North Group.

Jon Boyle (Chair North Group)

West Group Report

I must say it was great to talk to some other clubs even if it was only over zoom. Seems a very long time since we had our last meeting in January. That said, I was very pleased with the practicality and positivity shown by our clubs. Most had set to and reacted in a positive way to rules and regulations, keeping as many players as possible engaged and running fitness and touch sessions. Those with mini and youth were very busy juggling space with numbers. One incident, however, provided a reminder for those clubs with clubhouses to maintain as much activity as possible in and around the building. Feltham's new clubhouse was set upon and, although not much was taken, the break in caused much damage. We should all be vigilant. But, in these times of woe, following the tragic loss of one of their former players, the Quintin Rugby 'Family' got together and over 100 past players, many back in New Zealand and beyond, joined together to raise money in memory, heartwarming in these troubled times. All clubs hoped this type of attitude would stay with all players and they would all return when we eventually get back on the field.

Andy Brooks (Chair West Group)

Update from Bob Lawless - Representative Playing & Coaching Development.

Middlesex DPP.

Regional Playing Pathway Group meetings have taken place, where DPP planning is underway in preparation for the commencement of activities. Regional DPP activity may commence following adherence to RFU guidance. The plan is that no DPP activities will take

place with our partners London Irish until January 2021, unless things take a turn for the better.

Middlesex Representative Playing

PDSC (Player Development Sub Committee), have given agreement for the U18s to play on the divisional dates in January / February. This will be subject to approval for playing given by the RFU.

It is important that all age groups adhere to the Age Grade Calendar and the playing programme for all age groups must not exceed 1 assessment, 4 training and 3 playing opportunities.

Middlesex Coaching Development

It was good to see a well-attended turnout at the coaching CPD webinar last Monday evening, with 49 coaches logging in. There will be a follow up to this CPD with the Middlesex Senior Coaches discussing experiences in club coaching on the RFU Return to Rugby Road Map, from A – D.

This forum will take place on Monday 12th October at 19.00hrs. The invite is for any coaches involved in coaching with a Middlesex Club. Please refer to the “**What’s on**” Page of this newsletter for more information.

Middlesex Coaching Association (MCA)

Membership of the MCA (Middlesex Coaching Association) is free to all coaches involved in coaching in Middlesex. The MCA is committed in developing better coaching in Middlesex.

All coaches registered with the MCA will get the Rugby Coaching tv weekly circular with current topics of interest, and 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 with the Middlesex Coaching Association or if you require further information please contact the MCA at coaching@middlesexrugby.com, with your full name, and contact details.

Bob Lawless. Middlesex Transition & Integration
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Bob

Up and coming events

Middlesex Coaching Association, invites all coaches to a **ZOOM** Coaching Forum looking at their experiences in club coaching during the RFU Return to Rugby Road Map, from A – D. The Forum will cover all age groups & Senior F/M

When - 19.00hrs – 20.00hr on Monday 12th October 2020.

Theme – Club Coaching experiences through the RFU Return to Rugby Road Map A - D

Forum Leads – Mark Jackson Hammersmith & Fulham, Cai Griffiths London Welsh, Phil Smith Hendon, Hari McCormack London Irish

Zoom Log in Details –

Topic: Middlesex Coaches' meeting
Time: Oct 12, 2020 07:00 PM London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81616209399?pwd=Z1VYa kVKcXp2ZGdKUHRHUmZocU9sdz09>

Meeting ID: 816 1620 9399
Passcode: 9490

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