

Bringing people together
to enjoy rugby.

NEWSLETTER

140th Anniversary



Edition No 18, Monday 26th October 2020

President's Message

I had the pleasure of visiting Wasps in Acton yesterday for another session of "Ready 4 Rugby". They hosted a team from London Japan and there was, what looked like, a Vets game playing on a second pitch. The games looked extremely competitive and with over 50 players taking part across the two games I thought this was an excellent way to keep players involved during these difficult times.

Stay safe and please let me know if you are hosting a "Ready 4 Rugby" event, or any other Club event and I'd love to come along and see you at your Clubs. Peter.baveystock@middlesexrugby.com

Peter

Message from Eddie Keal, Chairman Middlesex County RFU

The news from Twickenham isn't getting any better for Community Rugby and as I write, we're waiting to find out if the match against the Barbarians will go ahead on Sunday. Which means it could be bad news for the professional game too, and the RFU's coffers which would earn TV money from the fixture. Fingers are crossed in the hope that it goes ahead.

The clocks go back this weekend, which means for early birds such as me it is good get to get a little more daylight. The night owls (or those who feel the urge to re-arrange the furniture at mid-night) probably see this differently – just an earlier end to the daylight.

For our clubs it means all training is now under floodlights, which is an additional expense. If anyone is still using old fashioned lighting technology, I do urge them to upgrade, Modern lamps use much less energy, and the payback time can be very short. The quality of the light is better, and the lit area better defined, which can help with neighbours who don't like light pollution.

It's great to have the men's and women's Ready4Rugby mini-leagues up and running. Andy Smart has put a lot of work into making this happen, so I hope that clubs respect his (and others') hard work and do their best to get teams out.

Sunday activity remains strong across the whole County, which is very pleasing.

Coaches everywhere are doing their best to keep all the players motivated and enthused. We'll continue to run the forums for them to share experience and ideas. They seem to be very much appreciated.

Club coaches for all sections probably have the greatest burden through this pandemic. As clubs (and the County) we can tighten our belts, turn down expenditure to a minimum and preserve the fabric, but we need our players to stay engaged. If there is more that you think the County could be doing, please let us know.

The County organisations (Constituent Bodies as they are called by the RFU) have really upped their game across the whole country recently and that has been recognised. My view is that no ask of the RFU is too big (other than things that fall under the rules of Covid-19 safety). If there are things that can be done at the centre or by the County, I don't think anyone is going to stand in our way. Let's be creative and dynamic about how we keep the wheels turning and the players playing. Feel free to send your ideas directly to any of us.

As always, Stay safe!

Eddie

Rugby Development

A reminder to clubs that we remain at **Stage D** of the [return to rugby roadmap](#) and at Level 2: High in the lockdown restrictions. Please do follow this guidance. It is not acceptable to adapt this guidance e.g. tackling and

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rucking are still NOT allowed. If you are unsure then please do get in contact and I will offer support in what is and isn't acceptable.

At time of writing we have issued 18 hardship grants to support disadvantaged youngsters. Thank you to the clubs involved for being supportive of these applications. 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.

Sport England have announced £16.5m of additional funding in their [Return to Play Fund](#). Some clubs have already taken advantage of the Crowdfunding as part of the Return to Play: Active Together Fund. However, clubs may find they can benefit from the Return to Play: Small Grants and Return to Play: Community Asset Fund.

Training courses are back!!! The RFU have announced the new training courses that will be available from November. I recommend viewing the 15-minute [on demand webinar](#) that runs you through what is available, and there is increased e-learning included.

It won't surprise you that we are starting to see some increased positive tests. Please remember to complete the [Positive Test Notification Form](#), which will allow the RFU and Middlesex to monitor positive cases and provide the necessary support to clubs.

I am keeping close to the RFU personnel in the effort to get our changing rooms open. Ongoing discussions with DCMS and Sport England, will hopefully give us some clarity and guidance on how we can get changing rooms back open. There will be strict social distancing measures in place when this happens but Andy and I will support clubs in getting everything in place. Please do ensure you have fully drained all water from the pipes and tested for Legionnaires disease prior to any changing room usage. 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

Louise.latter@middlesexrugby.com

Lou

Competitions Report

Obviously, the big news in Competitions was the announcement that came out on the 13th October, the day after the last newsletter, concerning the Adult Male Competitions Proposals originally due for implementation next season 2021/22. In case you missed the circulation, I include the main points

As Covid-19 restrictions are still with us, and we remain uncertain of the timing and nature of the 2020/21 season, the Community Game Board have taken the decision to pause implementation of any changes to league structures (should these be approved at a future date by RFU Council) to season 2022/23. Work on the review remains a priority and will be discussed again at the RFU Council meeting on 27 November, where it is likely a vote on some key matters of principle will be taken.

We will also contact Honorary Secretaries at adult male clubs (levels 3-12) in the near future to ask for their input into a survey which aims to help us better understand the level of interest from clubs to entering Lower XV's teams into the RFU Leagues Pyramid to up to Level 7. At the same time, we will share some draft criteria for this happening. The outcome of the survey will assist the FCS Group in understanding the number of teams coming into the pyramid. Whilst there is no commitment from clubs at this stage, the information will provide an important steer in assessing the level of interest from clubs and any potential impact on future structures.

Can't really argue with the reasoning in the first paragraph but I just despair for our game and clubs when I read the next.

Enough said.

On a brighter note, to provide some sort of competition opportunities for our clubs, we have looked to embrace the Ready4Rugby format across the county. We have currently two competitions running successfully in the North of the county with five Middlesex clubs in each being run by David Gershlick at Hendon and Martin Baker at Enfield Ignatians. A bit behind, I have put together men's and women's competitions for the rest of the county. The women's competition is made up of nine clubs playing in pods of three home and away. The men's competition is made up of 21 clubs with 32 teams, which have been split into 8 pods of 4 again playing each other once home and away. After this round of competition should teams wish to continue, I will create new pods made up of teams that finish 1st in their mini league and another set for those that finish 2nd and so on, and we will continue until we have champions at each level. The men's competition started on Saturday with excellent feedback overall from the clubs and teams that played whilst the lady's competition starts next weekend. The intention is that the first round of competition will finish before Christmas with any further competitions to start in the new year should competitive rugby not begin by then.

It's not rugby as we know it, but it is quick and skilful and it is providing some opportunities for our clubs and their players and it is more than any other CBs that I am aware of, that have simply left it to their clubs to sort out their own fixtures and tournaments.

I cannot pretend that it is not going to be a fair amount of work to manage week on week and I am really grateful to both Steve Partridge from Actonians who runs the MT Cup Competitions who will be helping me and also the London Society who are supplying the referees. I suspect with the bad weather to come, no access to showers or changing rooms (The RFU really need to look at the guidance around this if they expect players to continue to train and play), that some teams will not be still there by the time we get to the end of the competition but we have provided the opportunity and clubs will not be able to criticise us for not at least trying.

Andrew

Group Officers Report

I hope you enjoyed the reports of each of the September meetings by their officers in the last news-letter suggested by the President and enthusiastically supported by the officers who clearly had enough of reading what I had to say. Unsurprisingly, all four meetings were held by Zoom. As it turned out, although as we know the format is not perfect and especially for group meetings where so much is achieved with a beer and a chat afterwards, actually overall I think that they were a success. Numbers were good and at least three of the meetings saw new faces from our clubs. Everyone who attended had a contribution to make and it was a good opportunity for the officers to catch up with their clubs to identify common issues and get feedback from clubs about the issues facing them to try and identify good practice to help clubs across the county. There was also a high and visible attendance from management which I believe sent out the right message that we are all in this together and particular thanks to Eddie Keal who opened up each of the meetings using the County's Zoom account.

Perhaps most importantly it was great for us all to catch up with friends from across the county whom many of us haven't seen for many, many months. It is difficult to see that when we get to the November meetings unfortunately, how they can be in any other format apart from 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. With that in mind I would be delighted to hear from anyone who thinks that they can improve the format and the offering.

I and the other Group Officers believe that there is much value for us all in continuing these meetings and we very much hope that our clubs continue to support them/

So just to confirm the November dates. The start times will be at 7pm and I plan again for each of the meetings

to run for no more than an hour although of course that is very much in the hands of each chair.

South. Monday 2nd November.

North West. Wednesday 4th November.

North. Monday 9th November.

West. Wednesday 11th November

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

Middlesex Representative Playing

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. A recent meeting has taken place with the U17s / U18s Manager Richard Wilmott and lead coaches Marting Crossan & Jerry Hedigan. The meeting was joined by our County Chair Eddie and the L&SE U18s Manager Peter Johnson. We have in place a very experienced management / coaching team with an eagerness to develop our youth players in these very important age groups.

DPP Update

Middlesex DPP liaison Officer Jok Lachlan Dunbar has been in contact with the Parents of the U15s & U16s and updated them on the situation with DPP activities. It is hoped that DPP activities can re commence in January. The next Regional Academy on line meeting will take place on Friday 20th November 2002

Coach Education

An online webinar coaching CPD targeted at our Middlesex coaches was well attended on Monday 28th September 49 Middlesex coaches logged in and where the discussion took place on Exploring coaching ideas during the return to play Rugby Road Map

A follow up coaching zoom meeting took place on Monday 12th October hosted by the Middlesex Senior Coaches Mark Jackson, Cai Griffiths and Phil Smith who discussed their experiences while coaching through the

RFU Rugby Road Map and their experiences with the ready for Ready4Rugby non-contact game.

I have visited a number of our Middlesex Clubs viewing training and Ready4Rugby games. I have been most impressed on how our Middlesex Coaches have adapted to the needs of the restrictions put before them. We are fortunate in Middlesex to have great coaches motivating and encouraging our players through these tough times. Conversations with players have been very positive.

Monday 26th October an online CPD webinar will be taking place by London Irish Academy Coaching Development Officer the Theme will be Coaching Impact and to date 81 mini / youth coaches have enrolled.

Monday 26th October a CPD for Middlesex L3 & Senior Coaches will be taken by John Fletcher of the Magic Academy the theme will be "What is trending in Rugby since the world Cup and what that means for our coaching and how we are designing our sessions and environments.

Middlesex coaching Association is committed to developing all coaches in Middlesex by monthly on-line coaching webinars.

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.

Stay safe

Bob

Upcoming Events

South Group - Monday 2nd November.

Topic: Middlesex South Group Meeting

Time: Nov 2, 2020 07:00 PM London

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4822543155?pwd=TENETVJMbEpTMIBOSVQzRFjzeE1oZz09>

Meeting ID: 482 254 3155

Passcode: 2231

North West Group - Wednesday 4th November.

Zoom details to follow

North Group - Monday 9th November.

Topic: Middlesex North Group Meeting

Time: Nov 9, 2020 07:00 PM London

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4822543155?pwd=K0RrSGVSczhzQTdsL0VVCg5Fb2NYdz09>

Meeting ID: 482 254 3155

Passcode: 2263

West Group - Wednesday 11th November

Topic: Middlesex West Group Meeting

Time: Nov 11, 2020 07:00 PM London

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4822543155?pwd=NkVNdkpMYzRteG0wK2xqeHdJYnErQT09>

Meeting ID: 482 254 3155

Passcode: 6178