

Bringing people together
to enjoy rugby.

NEWSLETTER

140th Anniversary



President:
Peter Baveystock

Edition No 21, Tuesday 8th December 2020

Presidents Message

Wow, what a rapid change in playing rugby, moving from Lockdown to Stage E - implications for you and your Clubs included within this email. Up to the Lockdown and during Stage D I had been out and about, and it was great to see the enthusiasm within Clubs and hope that will now continue with the move to Stage E.

As temporary 'Rugby Safe Lead' I was fortunate enough to be able to attend a Webinar last week which covered the Return to Rugby - Stage E and Regulation 9 (First Aid requirements for season 2021/22). I should emphasise here that it is important that every Club has a 'Rugby Safe Lead' and that they are registered in GMS – this is a 'golden rule' during this period. At last count, there were 24 Clubs yet to register a 'Rugby Safe Lead' so I recommend you rectify this as soon as possible.

We have packed a lot into this Newsletter and unless we need to get something important to you before Christmas this will be the last Newsletter until 2021. I'm not sure that there are any more things to say about 2020 that haven't already been said other than take a deep breath and wish for a better 2021! I'd like to thank all those who work so hard within Middlesex to ensure that you have all the best information and advice to enable Club Leaders are ready when we eventually get through this. So, on behalf of the County I'd like to wish everyone a very merry, happy and safe Christmas and an even happier 2021 as we transition back whatever normal will be.

Stay safe

Peter

peter.baveystock@middlesexrugby.com

The County Office contact details are:

Telephone: 020 8896 9050

Email: countyoffice@middlesexrugby.com

Message from Eddie Keal, Chairman Middlesex County RFU

At last! Onwards and upwards! Full Lockdown is over, and we are back to the tiered restrictions. There has been a great deal of information and advice in the last few days from the Government and the RFU which we are doing our best to interpret and explain in a Middlesex context. We will organise a Zoom call or two for all our clubs to add to the valuable work that Andy and Lou are doing.

Our needs, as always, are not typical of the rest of the country. We need to make sure that this is kept in mind as the new RFU Organisation kicks into gear, and are working on it. We are very pleased and happy to see the RFU staff beginning to return.

I'm sure a feeling of positivity and warmth will creep up on us after what has been a very difficult month. It seems as if we are all in for a busy run up to Christmas, planning for the New Year and what is left of the season beyond.

Those of us that are itching for the opportunity to stand on a frozen touchline on a weekend afternoon may get our wish quite soon. Warm clubhouses and restorative beer may take just a little longer.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on the next Zoom call.

Stay safe

Eddie

Update from Lou Latter – Chair of Rugby Development

It was good news last week when the RFU announced we could resume at Stage E of the [return to rugby](#)

KEEP UPDATED
FOLLOW US ON :

 Middlesexrugby.com

 [@MiddlesexRugby](https://www.facebook.com/MiddlesexRugby)

 [@MiddlesexRFU](https://twitter.com/MiddlesexRFU)

 [@MiddlesexRugby](https://www.instagram.com/MiddlesexRugby)

Middlesex Rugby, PK1 Twyford Avenue Sports Ground, Twyford Avenue, Acton, London W3 9QA
tel: 020 8896 3400 email: countyoffice@middlesexrugby.com www.middlesexrugby.com

Middlesex Rugby is the operating name of Middlesex County Rugby Football Union Ltd. Registered in England no. 29174R
Registered Office: Sproull & Co, 31-33 College Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 1EJ // VAT NO.223174395

[roadmap](#) from the 3rd December and adapted laws could be used in fixtures from 18th December.

There have been a lot of questions about some of the detail around Stage E and the adapted laws. Please do watch the 15-minute on demand webinars ([U7-U13](#), [U14-U18](#) and [Adults](#)) as this will hopefully answer some of your questions and there are some great resources that break down the information in the [Coronavirus Resources](#) section. You can also find questions that other clubs have asked at the [Club Support Centre](#) on the England Rugby website. You can also submit your own questions.

[Off-field guidance](#) has also been provided that gives details on changing rooms, travel, spectators and hospitality. Additionally, Andy and I have sent all clubs information recommending that all clubs have a COVID-19 Manager, and to let us know who this is so we can send communications directly that cover any updates.

As changing rooms and showers are able to open, all clubs must ensure that they have completed a full risk assessment of changing room and shower usage and also ensure they 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](#). Every club is different, so it is difficult to provide exact guidance that covers all our changing rooms. Some simple tips on how many players you can have in the changing room at each time include: measure out two-metre squares (Government advice is 100 sq ft per person), provide a time limit for changing pre-and post-match e.g. 10-15 mins. Remember when matches restart there will be a lot of players to get through the changing rooms, keep windows and doors open, players to clean and sanitise shower and changing room between use.

Clubhouses can reopen but are subject to follow hospitality guidance - you can only serve substantial meals, like a main lunchtime or evening meal. Alcohol can be served as part of such a meal and all food and drink is to be ordered and consumed at the table. Tables can only be same 'Household/Support Bubble' and must be two metres apart from each other. Takeaway must be

consumed off the club premises. Do check with your local authority around your licensing requirements.

Please remember to complete the [Positive Test Notification Form](#) if you do have any positive cases at your club.

Thanks to all those that attended the Tax Webinar on the 2nd December. 15 clubs were in attendance and have taken away information that means they can review whether they can reclaim VAT or not. If you are VAT registered and could not attend, please do let me know and I'll pass on the information.

It has been great to see so many of our Middlesex clubs' shirts being displayed at Twickenham Stadium for the [#ShowYourShirt campaign](#). I was lucky enough to be at Twickenham on Sunday for the finals of the Autumn Nations Cup, and it certainly was an impressive display.

The Inner Warrior Camps will return in January to welcome female players back to your club in the New Year. Allianz have been announced as the Inner Warrior partner, which will enable us to grow the brand, increase visibility and reach more potential new participants in the future. Agree a date to run your event and then [Register](#) your event(s) by Friday 18th December. Do get in contact if you would like to discuss this further.

We know how difficult it is for clubs and individuals at the moment. The [Middlesex Immediate Support Fund](#) is still available and we will support you in making any applications (which must be related to the COVID situation). The Sport England [Return to Play Fund](#) is also available for clubs. Please do reach out to Andy or I if you have any concerns, whether immediate or longer term. For those players under 18, the [Middlesex Hardship Grant](#) is still available to support disadvantaged youngsters with membership or kit requirements. We are waiting on details on how to access the £23m funding from Government and will communicate this when we have the details.

Finally, it is now more important than ever that we ensure all clubs are complying with Government and RFU guidance. Public health and police will be doing

spot checks. If your facilities can be viewed by the public, please do consider what their perception will be. What we don't want is to see an increased number of complaints and non-compliance that could put outdoor sports at risk.

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

Stay safe and well

Lou

Louise.latter@middlesexrugby.com

Update from Andrew Smart – Chair of Competitions

Well after nearly eight months the RFU announced on the 30th November that the Government had approved their submission to return to 15-a-side contact rugby with some law adaptations which include no scrums and mauls. For anyone who hasn't seen the adapted laws you can find them here.

[ER COVID19 - Law Variations - Fact Sheet.pdf \(englandrugby.com\)](#)

So, rugby I guess although perhaps not as we know it. As it stands we reverted to Stage E on the 'Return to Rugby Roadmap' from Wednesday 2nd December. This allowed clubs to begin adapted training in preparation for local friendly fixtures for those that want to, under the adapted laws from Friday 18th December. So great news then. Well, I suppose so, although with some significant reservations especially around the provisional start date of the RFU Cluster Competition which is supposed to be on Saturday 16th January. This is not set-in stone but that is the date they are working to.

My concerns are that whilst clubs do have the opportunity to play before Christmas under the adapted laws what is the likelihood of that and of course we then break for the holiday. Again, although we can resume on the 2nd January is that again likely to happen for the majority of clubs from level 3 all the way down to level 12 across the whole country. That means probably for the majority of clubs there might only be one opportunity to play a game under the adapted laws before the

Clusters Competition starts in earnest and that would be the 9th January. I suspect that any number of clubs will take the view that they are not ready to start the following week. It is a position that I have sympathy with and if enough clubs take that view then I feel that the RFU will have to re-consider putting back the start date. I know of plenty of clubs who have expressed a similar view and once the provisional start date becomes more widely known I am sure this will become a more common complaint.

The announcement has caused havoc across the four County wide Ready4 Rugby Men's and Ladies' competitions with teams withdrawing in so called preparation for the playing of the new adapted laws competition whether it be RFU or Merit Table. I offered all the Ready4Rugby clubs the opportunity to continue with their allocated fixtures but changing to the adapted laws from the 18th December. No one has taken up this opportunity and whilst many are citing the concerns of catching COVID from contact as we lead into Christmas, I wonder whether there is a more significant concern. I seriously doubt that the RFU will get clubs to commit to their competition in the middle of January especially as we continue to face issues around travel, changing rooms, showers and in particular Tier 2 Hospitality restrictions. What is the incentive for clubs to host fixtures where all the costs are theirs and the matches come with no real opportunity to generate income to offset those costs? And of course, how interested really are our players when given the opportunity to play they have said almost unanimously no. I am surprised I cannot deny but that has been the overwhelming response across our county.

As I continue to say, we and the clubs won't know until the first whistle blows, which have been able to get out their players? On top of that what is in these adapted laws that will interest front row forwards. If you have someone who can throw in at a lineout and a couple of guys that can lift what is there for our front rowers to do.

Anyway, in the end despite some issues we got a 100% opt in for the RFU Competition across both Middlesex and Hertfordshire which at least makes the competitions at 7 and below manageable. There are still some significant issues for our clubs in the 5/6 clusters

**KEEP UPDATED
FOLLOW US ON :**

following the opt out of three clubs across the Division. This will mean that the clusters will have to be re-visited and re-organised. At the moment none of our six clubs can be confident that the cluster they were originally allocated will be the one they end up in. At the moment because of some issues with Sussex I cannot even let you know when those clusters will be confirmed and indeed when we can expect the fixtures and dates to be circulated. I absolutely understand and appreciate the issues facing the organisers, but it is very unsatisfactory, through no fault of theirs, and must put additional pressure on the 16th January proposed start date

I have said that I will run the merit table fixtures dates in tandem with the RFU Clusters but if the start date remains at the 16th January, I think that will untenable. I have some flexibility because the RFU clusters are six whilst the MTs are five so I will have a couple of free weeks to play around with, but it's not where I would prefer to be.

So, some good news I guess but it comes with real concerns. Apologies for being so gloomy but I for one can't get excited about what is on offer.

Keep safe.

Andrew

Update from Andrew Smart - Chair of Groups

I am really pleased with the response to the All-Clubs VAT Webinar we held on Wednesday, which I thought went really well. We had an excellent initial response with 16 different clubs signed up for the meeting. Although one club had to drop out, I was delighted that 15 of our clubs, all represented by their treasurers got to benefit. Well done and thanks to Louise for putting it all together, to Dave Stubbley from the RFU who facilitated on our behalf and in particular to Russell Moore, a VAT specialist retained by the RFU for a most useful presentation. A number of clubs you would have expected to have perhaps been on the call had already been on Russell's RFU Webinar previously and so we are confident that the majority of our clubs who would stand to benefit from the input did so. Some excellent feedback and I am aware of at least three clubs on the meeting who will be taking advantage of this resource to contact

Russell direct for further advice. The first conversation supposedly timed at no more than 30 minutes is free and then the RFU have secured a reduced rate down from £150- per hour to an £100- for his expertise. Well worth it when you consider he had already achieved over £600,000 in rebates for rugby clubs across the country without even talking about considerable savings for clubs going forward. By all means come back to me or Louise if you would like to know more.

The announcement last week of the Return to Play with the off-field guidance around travel, changing rooms, showers, hospitality amongst others has created a flurry of questions and concerns for clubs if my phone and email has anything to go by. It seemed to us that rather than try to deal with each on a club-by-club basis it would be sensible to organise a further All-Clubs meeting with someone from the RFU so that many of these questions and concerns can be addressed direct. Louise is currently looking at finding our RFU expert. Originally, I was looking at this Wednesday for the meeting, but I accept that is impracticable, so I am now looking at Wednesday 16th December. That date is not yet confirmed but it will happen even if it ends up being CB led without a representative from the RFU, so please make sure you don't miss any communication either from the County Office or via the Groups about when it is going to be. This is really important as we look to find the best way forward for us all.

Hopefully your clubs would have received the communication that Louise and I with the support from Steve Weekes Chairman of Ealing 1871 put together, entitled "**COVID Manager for Clubs and Fixtures Check list**". We have put a lot of work into this. It is by no means meant to be a definitive document and we accept that it can and will be improved but it is there to provide a guidance that promotes some consistency across the county and allow clubs to have the same confidence whether they travel or indeed host. Whether you have your own facilities, rent, or use someone else's it is your responsibility to ensure that all those people coming to you are as safe as possible. If you have comments either about the document or how it can be improved, then of course please come back to us. The very minimum you should be doing it letting us know who is your COVID

manager is. We have more than enough to do without having to chase clubs and please accept that we do all this for your and not our benefit.

Finally, I now know six clubs you have received their lock down grants and as yet nobody anyone who has received any tier 2 funding. Again, still waiting to hear from too many of you.

Keep safe
Andrew

Playing & Coaching Activities Since Last Newsletter 14/12/2020, Middlesex Coaching Association. Coaching Webinar for December

Introduction to Female Coaching Webinar – 14th Dec

This is open to all interested females who are 18 years of age and over and who are interested in coaching Rugby Union. The Webinar which will discuss all aspects on how to get involved in Coaching.

The Introduction to the Female Coaching webinar will be hosted by John Fletcher of the Magic Academy. John has a wide range of experience in coaching and developing female players in a number of sports including at International level.

The Female Coaching Introduction Webinar will take place on Monday 14th December at 19.00hrs - 20.00hrs

The evening will look to cover the following -

- Introduction to Coaching
- The Coaching Pathway
- Preparing a Coaching session
- The Coaching Toolkit, looking at Skill development using Coaching Challenge Cards

To register, please contact Bob Lawless Middlesex Coaching Association on (m) 07803 196409, with full name and club or school

bob.lawless@middlesexrugby.com

Middlesex U15s & U18s Girls Rugby

- Scheduled dates in the calendar

- U18 – 24th Jan, 7th Feb, 28th Feb, 14th Mar, 11th April
- U15 – 31st Jan, 21st Feb, 21st Mar, 18th April, 2nd May

The following Principles for the Girls programme are:

- To create an Environment that encourages players to grow
- To keep a broad a base of players engaged as possible
- Selection to be based on readiness and potential
- Aligning the development, playing and training programmes for girl players.

There is an RFU Girls forum group which met on 18th December to discuss the girls programme and playing opportunities. The next meeting will take place on Monday 18th January 2021. The Girls programme will be advertised later in December and will confirm the format of the playing opportunities, with dates for training and venues.

Middlesex Age Grade Boys Rugby U15s – U18s

- DPP to commence in January and playing opportunities for the U15s & U16s will be sent to all stakeholders by the London Irish Academy
- Hopefully the U17s Programme will commence in January – More information will be sent to all stakeholders in due course.
- U18s Boys Programme will not take place due to the current COVID situation.

MIDDLESEX RUGBY ONLINE FITNESS PROGRAMME –

Fitness Coach Ian Burbidge of Hammersmith and Fulham R.F.C invites all players to engage with this free online fitness programme. The first short videos on warm up & core stability exercises together with sessions 1 & 2 are posted on the www.middlesexrugby.com website

Stay Safe

Bob

What's On:

The Inner Warrior Camps - will return in January
Agree a date to run your event and then [Register](#) your event(s) by Friday 18th December.

Introduction to Female Coaching Webinar - To register, please contact Bob Lawless Middlesex Coaching Association on (m) 07803 196409, with full name and club or school
(e) bob.lawless@middlesexrugby.com

MIDDLESEX RUGBY ONLINE FITNESS PROGRAMME –
The first short videos on warm up & core stability exercises together with sessions 1 & 2 are posted on the www.middlesexrugby.com website

Rugby Safe – Please keep an eye out for information on First Aid courses which will be compulsory from season 2021/22. Peter.baveystock@middlesexrugby.com