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to enjoy rugby.

## NEWSLETTER

140th Anniversary



President:  
Peter Baveystock

Edition No 22, Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021

### Presidents Message

Well, what a rapid, but understandable series of events that ran into Christmas seeing us all having to change our seasonal plans. Despite this I hope you all had a happy and safe Christmas and are looking forward to a much better 2021.

I now hope that the vaccine programme can be rolled out and those who are vulnerable whether through health or age can gradually receive it. I was thankful to Past President, Brian Martin, for sending me the photo of him receiving his and expect many more of you will receive yours in due course.

Stay safe

**Peter**

[peter.baveystock@middlesexrugby.com](mailto:peter.baveystock@middlesexrugby.com)

Email: [countyoffice@middlesexrugby.com](mailto:countyoffice@middlesexrugby.com)

### Message from Eddie Keal, Chairman Middlesex County RFU

We are all back in the swing of things for the New Year, although it has the unwelcome sensation of being about as much fun as the end of last year.

We all understand the reasons for the clampdown on our personal liberties, but it is so much tougher on everyone doing it in in the short winter days than it has been before. I have a massive amount of admiration for those that have not only coped, but also made time to help others. There are some very special people out there.

It is clear to all of us that there isn't going to be any short-term change to Government advice about what we are allowed to do. At some point we will need to turn our thoughts to protecting next season, as the likelihood of this season being written off in entirety seems

inevitable. For the time being, we will continue to follow the rules but stand ready to swing back into action, if and when we are allowed. I know how frustrating that is for every team and every club.

On the business-as-usual front, the Management Board continues to meet by Zoom, as do the main committees. There is plenty to keep us occupied, but we all miss the weekend rugby terribly, especially the visits to clubs. Representative rugby, competition finals, end of season awards, dinners and festivals are all on hold until the necessary restrictions can be eased.

On a positive front, most clubs seem to be bearing up well. People are staying in touch by a variety of methods, principally electronic (webinars, conference calls, Zoom meetings, WhatsApp). Engagement with the County through social media continues to grow, which is astonishing given the dearth of rugby content, but it is a testament to the great job that Waheed and his team are doing.

If anyone is interested in helping out with some County work, please reach out to me or any of the County Management Team. There is always room for more! Frankly, now is an ideal time to learn on the job while it is quiet!

We intend to hold a short formal AGM at an appropriate time so look out for that announcement.

It is reassuring to see the leadership development programmes sponsored by Mitsubishi have started to be announced. They are very important to all of us. We have yet to see the RFU support teams functioning fully as the successive restrictions and lockdowns have severely limited what the new organisation is able to do, but they are engaging where they can.

As a County Management team, we need to make sure the RFU doubles down on its attention to, and support

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Middlesex Rugby, PK1 Twyford Avenue Sports Ground, Twyford Avenue, Acton, London W3 9QA  
tel: 020 8896 3400 email: [countyoffice@middlesexrugby.com](mailto:countyoffice@middlesexrugby.com) [www.middlesexrugby.com](http://www.middlesexrugby.com)

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for the Community Game. I know they have plenty of their own problems but solving those without preserving a broad base of rugby throughout the country will serve no-one.

Given that the January round of Group meetings has been postponed or cancelled, I will miss seeing many of you for another month or two. I hope we can schedule some more all-club Zoom meetings, building on the success of the recent sessions. I am, however, always open to a phone call or an email if there is something that you want to raise.

Stay safe and well, stay at home!

**Eddie**

### **Update from Lou Latter – Chair of Rugby Development**

Happy New Year to you all, although probably not the start to the year we were all hoping for.

The RFU last week launched the Mitsubishi Motors Rugby Leadership Network. This is the revamped Leadership Academy and is an exciting and unique opportunity to acquire valuable skills and to network with other rugby leaders. To ensure our clubs are fit for the future and self-sustaining, we are looking for aspiring rugby leaders who can take their club to the next level. More details can be found on the website. Middlesex will also be looking to running the Rugby Leadership Network next season.

I've received a number of enquiries around tours. At the current time, [Rugby Tours](#) are not allowed. For those clubs that have already deferred their deposits from last year's postponed tours, please do give consideration and check with your tour organiser to ensure you can transfer your deposit again.

As a reminder there is a lot of information in the [Club Support Centre](#) on the England Rugby website.

New Government funding has been announced and we would urge all clubs to check whether they are eligible to take advantage of any available funding. There is also other funding information available on the [England Rugby website](#).

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). For those players under 18, the [Middlesex Hardship Grant](#) is still available to support disadvantaged youngsters with membership or kit requirements. Please do get in contact if you are concerned about your club's finances during this latest lockdown.

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

Stay safe and well

**Lou**

[Louise.latter@middlesexrugby.com](mailto:Louise.latter@middlesexrugby.com)

### **Update from Andrew Smart – Chair of Competitions**

On the 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021 following their Competitions Sub-Committee Meeting the RFU finally admitted defeat in its efforts to provide some sort of formalised competition, albeit under adapted laws for all their league clubs across the country.

A couple of days later the London DOC sent out the following communication to its clubs to re-affirm that decision with the last two bullet points perhaps of most interest.

#### **RFU Cluster Fixtures Cancellation**

Dear all,

Due to the additional restrictions announced last Monday to combat the spread of Covid-19, the RFU has regrettably decided to cancel both the adult male & female Cluster Fixtures (for teams that play in RFU Leagues).

The focus will now switch to the following:

- Facilitating fixtures through local organising committees as and when conditions allow a return to playing rugby which could extend into the summer months.
- Ensuring any extension does not encroach on the 2021/22 season start date.

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Any further announcements will be made following the next Government review when we know what rugby activity is permitted. In the meantime, your local organising committee will be in touch with specific information for your region.

**London & SE Divisional Organising Committee on behalf of all our CB Competition sub-committees would like to add the following:**

- The original cluster fixtures may still be used if they facilitate local needs and all the clubs wish to participate.
- We wish to emphasise that any extension of the season beyond the end of April and ***“into the summer months”*** will only be with the specific agreement of all the clubs involved.

In short, the RFU have decided that rather than try to run a national competition it would be more sensible to push it back to local management where there is more flexibility to run local competition especially at short notice. So, if we get any rugby at all this season the onus falls now on the local competitions committees to provide the framework and fixtures. Plenty of work to be done and I have any number of ideas about what we will be able to provide but it is all very much dependent on when in the season we can actually play, what we can play and for how long.

If we are able to play under adapted laws and that doesn't suit some clubs or teams, I will also provide an alternative competition under the same R4R framework that provides enjoyment across both the men's and women's game up to Christmas. At the moment I expect it to be very much be a county wide offering and I intend also to provide similar competition offerings for the ladies if they so wish. There of course is a conversation to be had with our neighbours in Hertfordshire with whom so many of our leagues and merit tables are intertwined and those clubs or teams who want to sort out their own fixtures outside our offering that is absolutely fine, it is going to be challenging but I am confident that we will be up to it.

Keep safe  
**Andrew**

**Update from Andrew Smart - Chair of Groups**

So, despite being in lockdown and with it the cessation of all adult rugby there is still a fair amount to report.

First, we hosted two very successful All-Clubs Meetings in December. Both in their own way were well supported and there was plenty of really positive feedback which was much appreciated by both Louise and me.

The Tax/VAT Webinar held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December saw 17 attendees from 14 clubs. When you consider that a further five of our clubs had already attended the RFU Webinar covering the same topic earlier in the year we can be confident that we have managed to engage the large majority of our clubs who really stood to benefit from the advice provided.

The meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> December meanwhile saw 72 attendees from 35 clubs with Steve Grainger the RFU Rugby Development Director providing comprehensive answers to the queries and concerns of our clubs as we entered Tier 3. Crikey that does seem a long time ago now..... It was an important and well-informed meeting with a high level of engagement from our clubs. It shows that if we can get the topic and presentation right the clubs will support in numbers. Most encouraging.

Anyway, lots of thanks to Louise who first of all did all the hard work on getting the guests for each meeting and also for her quite outstanding facilitation of the secondly meeting. Our intention at the time was to have a further All-Clubs Meeting in January when we hoped that we would have moved back to Tier 2. Of course, events have completely turned that around as we moved into another lockdown. Once things change, we will set up a further All-Clubs meeting to cover any issues not covered in the Tier 3 meeting and there will also be a presentation on the competition offering for our clubs now the RFU have taken the decision to push back the running of any rugby this season back to the CBs.

In relation to the next round of Group Meetings with so little going on because of lockdown, the South and West after consultations with their club have decided to postpone their January meetings whilst the North West

have cancelled their meeting last Wednesday and instead have brought forward their March meeting to the 3<sup>rd</sup> February. The North Group meeting 8<sup>th</sup> February at the moment will go ahead as planned. It is the responsibility of the groups to service the needs of their clubs and at moment it seems pretty clear that for the majority there is little appetite or need for this round of meetings. We are fortunate that with Zoom, should things change the individual Groups can arrange meetings at really short notice as successfully demonstrated with the two All-Group meetings last month.

Finally, on the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2021 the Government announced via the Chancellor Rishi Sunak that businesses in retail, hospitality and leisure will receive new grants to help them keep afloat until spring,

The grants will be worth up to £9,000 per property, the Treasury says and hopefully will benefit all those clubs paying business rates again who were eligible for the similar grants in the first lockdown

- **£4,000 for businesses with a rateable value of £15,000 or under**
- **£6,000 for businesses with a rateable value between £15,000 and £51,000**
- **£9,000 for businesses with a rateable value of over £51,000**

Once again it will be distributed by local councils and whilst some clubs will see the money transferred into their accounts without having to do too much whilst others will need to chase their local authorities for the money. If anyone requires any help in accessing the funding, please by all means come back to me and I should be able to point you in the right direction. I would also be grateful if clubs who have been successful with acquiring the funding would let me know so that we don't have to chase you to make sure that you have received it

Keep safe  
**Andrew**

### Representative Playing and Coaching Update

- Regular online Zoom discussions have taken place with the management teams of all the age groups. All teams are in place and ready to participate when safe to do so.
- The U18s Playing opportunities were planned to run through December & January. Due to the current situation the Programme has been cancelled.
- U17s playing opportunities were planned to run on 28/02, 11/04, 02/05, but programme currently on hold.
- U15s Girls playing opportunities are planned to run on 15/03, 12/04, 26/04, but programme currently on hold.
- U18s Girls playing opportunities are planned to run on 22/02, 08/03, 05/04, but programme currently on hold.
- There was a girls U15s & U18s discussion forum on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> January. These have been regular monthly on-line meetings and our U15s & U18s management team have been in attendance. The idea of these meetings is to assist in the planning of girl's rugby. The Meetings are chaired by the RFU Playing Pathways Manager
- The Age Grade Playing Calendar for season 2021/2022 is being compiled.

### London Irish Developing Playing Programme (DPP)

- The Middlesex / London Irish Developing Player Programme (DPP) has been delayed until Easter.
- There have been concerns over this year's U16s DPP who have not participated in the DPP programme since last March. Discussions are ongoing on the feasibility of running a summer programme or some activity pre-Christmas.
- There have been 4 London Irish Academy players named in the England U20s squad
- 6 Academy Players made their first appearances for the 1st team since the summer.

- 13 current and past Academy players are in the match day squad v Agen
- Coach Development sessions taking place weekly online.

### **Coaching Development**

- To date there has been online coaching webinars running monthly from September – December. They have covered various themes and have been specific to various coaches from Minis / Youth, Club Coaches, Level 3 Coaches and Female coaches.
- The plan is to continue with the online Webinars from January – May, with various themes around sharing ideas for the remainder of this season and player preparation for next season,
- There have been 5 Coaches nominated to participate on the new RFU Mentoring Programme, 3 Female coaches & 2 Male coaches
- Middlesex RCD Newsletter is circulated each Friday and has become very popular with increased membership. The newsletter has been consistent and has been circulated each Friday throughout the lockdowns. The circulation goes out to 460 Middlesex Coaches

For more information on any playing or coaching topics, please contact Bob Lawless Chair of Representative Playing & Coaching (M) 07803 196 409 (E) [bob.lawless@middlesexrugby.com](mailto:bob.lawless@middlesexrugby.com)

Stay Safe

**Bob**

### **What's on**

New to 2021 - RugbySafe Webinars

<http://links.emails.rfumail.com/servlet/MailView?ms=MTE4NDE5MTIS1&r=NDYwMzI0NTQ5MTEsS0&j=MTY3MzA4Mzk0NwS2&mt=1&rt=0>

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