

Bringing people together
to enjoy rugby.

NEWSLETTER

140th Anniversary



President:
Peter Baveystock

Edition No 25, Tuesday 13rd April 2021

Email: countyoffice@middlesexrugby.com

President's Message

Well, is it the beginning of the end or the end of the beginning? Let us just hope that we are all playing and enjoying Club Rugby in September. This week we saw non-essential shops re-open and some of us get a well overdue haircut. We will also see many of our clubhouses and hostelrys re-open for outside eating and drinking and I for one will be enjoying this myself, this weekend.

If you have anything specific going on, please let me know and I would be honoured to pop along.

Stay safe

Peter

peter.baveystock@middlesexrugby.com

Message from Eddie Keal, Chair, Middlesex County RFU

It's been a good couple of weeks on the Covid front, and the outlook is more positive than it has been for a year. I'm pleased to see plans being made and activity re-starting in a safe and sensible way across so many of our clubs.

As always, we are here to help with interpretation of the various guidelines and regulations, more of which are still to come. Please don't be impatient and push things right up to the allowed boundaries. An abundance of common sense is going to be called for over the next few months, and there is plenty of time.

Keep claiming the grants that are being made available. If your club has missed the better part of a year's

income, and it is being offered by the government then take it. We will all need help rebuilding and re-starting.

I enjoyed chairing the Future Competitions Structure all-club meeting on Thursday. The feedback on the session was very positive, so we'll look to follow it up with more meetings in that style. I'm sure Andrew will summarise it below.

We are right in the middle of Group AGMs and election/re-election of Group Officers. Thank you to all those that support our groups so well.

The pubs are now open, so enjoy them if you can.

Stay safe and well.

Eddie

Update from Lou Latter – Chair of Rugby Development

Spring has sprung and rugby has returned.

We are now two weeks into welcoming our players back at Stage D1 and I would love to hear how it is going at your club. How are players feeling? Have they all returned, or do you have concerns over players returning? We have an offer to run an RFU led All Clubs meeting around re-engaging and recruiting players so if you are interested in participating, please do let me know.

As a reminder, you can find all the information around the latest [Return to Rugby Roadmap](#) in the [Coronavirus resources](#) section on the RFU website which will have updated FAQs and everything you need as we move through the stages. There is also a lot of

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

information in the [Club Support Centre](#) on the England Rugby website.

[Out of season activity](#) was published on Friday and we will be looking to host another All-Clubs meeting to discuss what this means for clubs and players. We'll be sending the date and meeting details out in the next few weeks. You'll be glad to hear that we can now accommodate over 100 people so you will all be able to attend future meetings. In summary:

- Summer training guidance and playing guide framework has been published of what is and isn't allowed during June, July and August.
- Detailed guidance and resources will be made available after the 10th May to support players and coaches. This will also include live Q&A webinars, which I would urge you to attend.
- This guidance also includes on-field and off-field guidance and resources around transitioning age grade players to adult rugby and specific support for coaches of girls' teams around coaching dual and triple age bands.
- The scrum is coming back - #Scrumtogether roadmap to be issued (dates subject to hitting the government roadmap dates) to support coaches, officials and players to reintroduce the scrum and how officiate the scrum safely and effectively
- Rugby Camps will be permitted but will need CB approval and will need to follow out of season framework.
- Out of Season festivals, up to 4 teams will be allowed. These are subject to CB approval (via myself and Waheed). We will provide further guidance as we still need to be mindful of bringing large groups of people together so we will not approve festivals across all age ranges in one day. These festivals should be looked at to a specific age group should fixtures be of interest to the players.

As a reminder:

- Stage D1 allows for contact training, and this should not exceed 20 minutes each session. For age grade rugby maximum group sizes have been replaced with coach to player resources so please do read through the Stage D guidance.

- Changing rooms and showers CANNOT be used. We will let you know when confirmation has been received as to when changing rooms and showers can be opened.
- It is anticipated that bars will be able to open in line with hospitality guidance from 12th April. This will be for outdoor groups seated at tables. Clubhouses CANNOT be opened.
- Car Sharing is not permitted until further notice.
- Please check the [Helpdesk FAQs](#) for guidance on spectators. Spectators are NOT allowed but a parent/carer who has brought a child to training is permitted, if abiding by social distancing guidelines.

The [Rugby Union Winter Survival Fund Asset Improvement Loan](#) programme will open for applications on Tuesday 13th April. If you are interested in applying, please do read the information as there are different eligibility criteria for incorporated and unincorporated clubs. Andy and I will of course be on hand to support clubs wishing to make a loan application.

The 2021-2022 Age Grade Calendar has been issued to clubs and is also available on the [website](#).

The [Mitsubishi Motors Volunteer of the Year](#) Nominations are now open. The categories have been changed for this year to recognise individuals and clubs that have gone above and beyond during the pandemic. So please get nominating as Middlesex clubs and volunteers have done some amazing work over the last 12 months.

And finally, for Women's teams – you should have received the competition entry survey on Friday 9th April. The deadline to submit your entry is 25th April. If you need any help or want to discuss your position in the leagues/Inner Warrior Series prior to submitting your entry, then please let Andy and me know so we can support you.

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

Stay safe and well

Louise

Louise.latter@middlesexrugby.com

Update from Andrew Smart - Chair of Competitions

Before I go on to talk about the All Clubs meeting last Thursday and this Friday's Council vote on the Future Competitions strategy. I didn't want anybody to lose sight of two other important pieces of information that I need to circulate.

Firstly, although still to be formally confirmed it seems increasingly likely that for the 2021.22 season, the 14 team leagues, (levels 5 and 6) will start as per normal on the first Saturday in September, in this case the 4th. However, the start date for the ten, and 12 team leagues (levels 7 and below) normally expect to be the following week will almost definitely be pushed back to the fourth Saturday of the month in this case the 25th. The idea is to give the clubs as much time as possible to get ready they return to competitive league rugby. For clubs that will start pre-season training at the beginning of the July this is now effectively three months before the start of their league campaigns, and coaches will need to factor this into their plans. The RFU are expected to ask CBs to provide some alternative, possibly cup competition, for their clubs in September to cover the later start and to support clubs in their preparation for the return of league rugby. I am already looking at what sort of offering I can provide for our clubs across September to support the late start. Like you I await the confirmation of the league start dates before I can translate those thoughts.

Secondly for our women's teams can I remind you that you should have received your competition entry survey and information on Friday 9th April from the RFU with a deadline date of entry of Sunday 25th April. Please do not miss it and if you haven't received the communication, have any issues with the process or the entry criteria then please let either Louise or I know, and we will do all we can help you.

There are a few points that I wish to make around the 'All Clubs' meeting last Thursday. I covered much in my circulation on Friday which if anyone hasn't had seen it, please let me know and I will forward it to you. Hopefully everyone has had access to the video of the meeting, the powerpoint and the questions from the forum. If not then they are on the website on the following link [Middlesex](#)

[Rugby : Middlesex RFU All clubs meeting 8th April 2021 on Future Competition Structure : Middlesex Rugby](#)

The main headline from the meeting was the vote that showed 79% of the attendees against the forced introduction of lower XVs into the league. Extraordinary numbers but no surprise surely to anyone. Middlesex clubs have been asked twice in the last eight years or so, whether they support the introduction of lower XVs into our leagues. On both occasions following properly conducted consultations our clubs voted overwhelmingly against the proposal and in remarkably similar numbers to those produced on Thursday. At the last vote in March 2017, 76.2% of our clubs voted against the introduction and when this was combined with the results from Hertfordshire clubs it went up to 83.87%. No one can say and I direct this in particular to those who are voting next Friday that they do not know or appreciate the fact that Middlesex Clubs have consistently voted against a proposal which they see as extremely damaging both to the game and their own interests. That position didn't change on Thursday. It reinforced what we already know

We currently have 45 clubs playing in the leagues. Six at levels 5 and 6 and 39 at seven and below. At the same time, we have 18 clubs whose 1stxvs play in the merit tables, split between the Middlesex, Herts&Middx and Surrey. That is nearly a third of all our clubs. A simple question then? What are in these proposals around lower XVs is there to encourage them to return to the leagues.

At the same time for our clubs at the bottom end of the leagues if the opportunity to continue to play other 1stxvs, one of the main reasons that many continue to play in the leagues is taken away from then what is the advantages in them remaining in the league structure. If you have to play against lower XVs then surely you are better off in your own CB merit table playing local lower teams than to stay in the leagues traveling to Herts as you have done before, to play some of theirs. Again, there is nothing in these proposals for them. How many will we see simply turn their back on the leagues

Finally, Middlesex as you know have two council representatives.

**KEEP UPDATED
FOLLOW US ON :**

Both Rob Udwin and Chris Cuthbertson extended an invitation at the meeting on Thursday to anybody who wish to discuss any of the proposals or offer an opinion to contact them direct

I would urge you to take up that invitation

robertudwin@rfu.com

chris.cuthbertson@middlesexrugby.com

I would also point out that there are three other members of the Middlesex Management Committee who also sit on Council with specific portfolios who also get a vote

Nigel Orton, our deputy President who represents Schools, Louise Latter Chair of Rugby Development who represents the women's and girls' game and finally Tim Miller the County Secretary who represents Referees

As Middlesex people I am sure that they also would like to hear from you

Keep safe

Andrew

Update from Andrew Smart - Chair of Groups

As I write this, I note that we are right in the middle of the Group AGMs, with the West Group last Wednesday and whilst you read this the South Group would have been last night with the North West this Wednesday and finally the North Group next Monday 19th April. I am pleased that all eight of our Group Officers have put themselves up for re-election and whilst of course it is an issue solely for the clubs of each group, I wish them all the best. I can however report that both Andy Brooks (Old Isleworthians) and Nick Dance (Grasshoppers) have already been both elected back into their roles in the West Group as Chairman and Secretary respectively.

We have now had two full weeks of rugby activity since the return to rugby on the 29th March and whilst I have had some excellent reports from clubs about numbers at training, (particularly strong it appears for those with

Junior sections) that is by no means the whole picture with a number of clubs experiencing significant losses to the playing numbers. It will be interesting to see what comes out of the other group meetings to see if this a worrying trend or fairly isolated instances.

Certainly, for next season when we look to put together the meetings dates for each group, we are very hopeful that when we do meet up again it will be back at our clubs. Zoom has had its place and it is of course by no means gone. I am certainly considering holding the North West January meeting on Zoom rather than asking people to travel out in the cold and wet. Still, it is an issue for each group, but I would be surprised if the general view from the clubs is not to return to our clubs for a chat, a beer and a sandwich with friends we haven't really seen for over a year. Where Zoom has really come into its own, is in the All-Club's meetings where we have been able to get out important information out to the clubs quickly and easily and also provide an opportunity for clubs to seek answers. Yes of course it has had its problems. Not being able to get everybody onto the call being by far the worst and there is clearly a discussion to be had about the value of getting large groups of people onto a call where not everybody who wants to have a say can. However overall, I would say that they have been a success. The last All Club's meeting last Thursday had 65 attendees from 40 clubs. Excellent figures especially on a training night in the week that we returned to some sort of rugby. I will certainly look to utilise them next season when appropriate especially when we have such skilful chairs in Eddie and Louise to facilitate and we can now take up to 300 on a call.

There will be at least two more All-Clubs meetings this season. One around Age Grade with particular reference to the summer activity framework and the second once the off-field guidance become clearer.

Hopefully you would have seen Friday's Community Game Update circulation with particular reference to the Winter Survival Fund Loans, the off-field changes effective from yesterday the 12th April and the approaching movement in the Roadmap from D1 to D2 on the 26th April. If not then by all means come back to me and I will forward it to you.

Keep safe

Andrew

Representative Playing and Coaching Update

How nice has it been to see players back in our clubs, enjoying themselves in each other's company. On recent visits it is evident that the numbers of players have been encouraging through the age grades and Saturday it was interesting to see how Hammersmith & Fulham have engaged with all club members by having a Senior mixed non-contact festival, with over 100 players in attendance and utilising the services of London Society whose refs, were also in need of run around and blowing their whistles.

All clubs are in the process of receiving guidelines for the Summer Activity Programme. There is an ongoing forum looking at activities for the girls U15s & U18s, the next one being on 19th April 2021. The Middlesex Girls management /coaching teams have held information webinars during the lockdown keeping parents updated on representative playing matters.

Although the Representative Playing programme at all levels is on hold until next season, this gives time for our clubs to concentrate through the RFU road map in keeping players engaged.

Looking at the future development of the Middlesex Representative Playing Programme, applications were invited from members of all Middlesex Clubs of those that were interested in taking on the position of the Chair of Representative Playing Programme.

This is a Management Board position which looked for a person with vision and creativity to develop this programme while working closely with our partners of London Irish Academy, Ealing Trailfinders & Brunel University. Interviews were held with 2 applicants who are both involved in the Middlesex Development Programme. Lachlan Jok Dunbar has been nominated for the position of Chair of Representative Rugby and will be assisted by a Deputy Chair Hari McCormack. The Chairs position will be voted in at our AGM and both candidates are working together to develop both the Female & Male game at Age Grade through to Seniors.

Both Jok and Hari are currently being mentored for the RFU Higher Coaching Award and will be gaining

experience in working with both Male & Female, players, Managers & Coaches to put in place an innovating Representative Playing experience for all involved.

London Irish Developing Playing Programme (DPP)

The Developing Player Programme has been delayed until after the Easter break. You may also be aware that one of the return to play protocols announced already for season 2021-22, is the shift for each age groups next set of rules has been delayed until January 2022. The effect of which is as follows.

The new Under 14 Age group who will still play under 13 rules (6 player scrum with strike and push, as opposed to 8 player scrum and pick/run at no8 and no lineout, as opposed to uncontested lineout)

The new Under 15 Age group who will still play under 14 rules (uncontested lineout, as opposed to uncontested and lifting)

The new Under 16 Age group who will still play under 15 rules (uncontested lineout with lift, as opposed to contested with lift)

There is also likely to be flexibility in combining age groups to facilitate potential low numbers and or ability levels which for the DPP would mean under 14/15 and under 15/16.

London Irish Coach Development sessions have taken place monthly with online webinars with tutor John Bates and interviews have taken place for interested Middlesex coaches to get involved with the London Irish DPP Scouting Network

The next London Irish / Middlesex Playing Regional Playing Pathway meeting will take place on Friday 18th June 2021

Middlesex Coaching Development

There has been online coaching webinars running monthly during the lockdown with increased participation. The webinars have been supported by the Magic Academy and by our Middlesex Senior Coaches. The recent Webinar which took place on Monday 29th March 2021, was tutored by the Middlesex Senior

**KEEP UPDATED
FOLLOW US ON :**

Coaches, Sinan Rabi & Jerry Hedigan, The Theme of the webinar was Review and Reflections of our Coaching, Planning & Process and was targeted at all Female Coaches.

The Coaching Webinars will run up to the end of May and will be targeted at Level 3 Coaches and Middlesex youth coaches. These will be advertised on Middlesex Social Media Platform.

The Middlesex RCD Newsletter is circulated each Friday and has become extremely popular with increased membership. This is a free service offered to all 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.

Stay Safe

Bob