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to enjoy rugby.

NEWSLETTER

140th Anniversary



President:
Peter Baveystock

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President's Message

Last Sunday I enjoyed a visit to Hammersmith & Fulham to see a well organised and safe mini / junior session under the watchful eye of Club Secretary, Chris Cuthbertson. Also on parade was Harlequins and England scrum half, Danny Care. It was great to see over 200 kids enjoying the session and I was further impressed when I saw Club Chair, Terry Alleyne and Club Stalwart, Lyndon Walters also sharing their rugby knowledge on their respective squads. With recruitment going well at all levels I'm sure they are going to have a great season 2021/22 at Level 6.

As we come out of lockdown, I've kept in touch with Past Presidents; Andy Mortimer, Charlie Madge, Brian East and Mike Barnes and Live Vice Presidents; Herbie Morgan, Colin Bosley and Michael Searls and they all send their best wishes and look forward to seeing you soon in person.

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

Stay safe

Peter

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Message from Eddie Keal, Chair, Middlesex County RFU

I think it is clear to all of us now that we are taking meaningful steps forward. Clubhouses are partially re-opening and training has recommenced across the board. There are matches and competitions being played within the allowed formats and everyone is positive.

It is the end of the season, so don't over-do it. We will all



need to be at 100% for the new season, and the training and preparation that comes before it. I think this photo shows that some of us may have lost key skills and will need to re-learn them. Or at least practise in the close season when no-one is looking!

The Volunteer Award nominations have arrived in my email and I will read all of them and add my marks. That is a job that always gives me pleasure.

The next County Board meeting is on Tuesday 11th May. It is a very quiet end to the season, but we have enough work to fill an hour on Zoom and to make some decisions. The RFU has issued some guidance on budgets for next season, but we don't yet have actual numbers with which we can build firm plans.

We will announce the County's on-line AGM shortly. The Groups all held their AGMs a couple of weeks ago. Thanks to all the Officers in the groups who have offered themselves for another season of service. You do a great job.

Stay safe and well.

Eddie

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Update from Lou Latter – Chair of Rugby Development

How is everyone getting on at Stage D2? It's great to be hearing how clubs are transitioning into the adapted laws version of the game.

As a reminder, please do follow the Stage D2 guidance. Scrums and Mauls are NOT permitted at this stage. Further guidance and resources is expected from the RFU this week around Age Grade Out of Season activity.

Stage D2 sees us back to introducing contact (excluding scrums and mauls) and adult and age grade matches can now be played to adapted laws (excluding scrums and mauls). As a reminder, you can find all the information around the latest [Return to Rugby Roadmap](#) in the a [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 information in the [Club Support Centre](#) on the England Rugby website.

Thank you to all those clubs that nominated individuals for the [Mitsubishi Motors Volunteer of the Year](#) awards. The nominations have now close and we will be looking to communicate how we intend to celebrate our incredible volunteers later in the year.

We hosted Women and Girls Club Forum on Monday 10th May. This focused on changing perceptions and utilising digital media channels as well as the work we are doing around mapping school and club girls' activity.

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

Stay safe and well

Louise

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Update from Andrew Smart - Chair of Competitions

So, with much embarrassment I advise that much of what I reported across the April Group meetings and in the last newsletter about the start dates for the leagues is now incorrect. At the London DOC Competitions AGM last week, it was decided that whilst the league season for level 5 and 6 clubs will start on 4th September 2021 and finish on the 23rd April the start and finish dates for the 10 and 12 team leagues will now be changed.

In the RFU structured season circulation both for the ten and twelve team leagues the start date was to be on the 25th September and finish on the 23rd April. The later start was to allow clubs as much time as possible to properly prepare for the return to full league rugby. The intention was also to allow CBs the opportunity to use the first three weeks of September for either CBs cup or some sort of CB organised competition.

However, London decided to change that and now the 12 team leagues will start on the 18th September and finish on the 2nd April. There will be 12 league games up to Christmas and only ten after. Protected weekends include Christmas, New Year and Easter. For those of you that might have seen the London Structured season you might have noticed that Easter (16th April 2022) is shown as a reserve weekend for all 14,12 and 10 team leagues. That is a mistake. It is as I say a protected weekend for 10 and 12 team leagues but not for 14 team leagues, where across a 26-game league season there are not enough reserve weekends in case of problems. The 18th December is a league weekend for both the 14 and 12 team leagues although as much as possible travelling will be kept to a minimum with fixtures to be organised for local derbies. For 12 team leagues there are five reserve weekends across the season Two before Christmas and three after plus the weekends of the 9th and 23rd April for any catch-up games lost either because of further lockdowns or bad weather.

London have provided two potential start dates for the 10 teams' leagues, for us H/M1 and H/M2, for local decision. Option one means a start date of the 18th September but finishing on the 12th March. This would

see eleven league games before Christmas and only seven afterwards and a finish as I say in the second week of March. Option two provides a start date of the 2nd October and a finish date of the 2nd April. Nine league games before Christmas with the last on the 11th December and the other nine afterwards. There is clearly much more balance to option two although it allows for a break weekend after the first game which is not satisfactory. Still, I have decided after consultation with the two leagues secretaries that we will go for option two. There is a slight issue for H/M2 which is likely to be an eleven-team league but we will work to the 10-team matrix with the league splitting after the first 10 league games after everyone has played each other once. The top five will then go in a mini league playing the other teams once again but where for instance in the first round they played their opponents at home away in the second round the fixture will then be reversed. Results only against the other clubs in the mini league will be carried over into the second round. The bottom six will also split into their own mini league where the same will apply. Both mini leagues will finish on the 2nd April. Just some work to be done to sort out the fixture dates across the 18 possible league weekends but it will mean that the top five will play fourteen league games and the bottom 6, fifteen. For those clubs looking for extra games it is expected that Vic Devers the league secretary will again organise his H/M2 knock out Trophy competition

As I said in the last newsletter there will be no relegation at end of the 2021/22 season, no national cup and fixtures are expected to be out on the 1st June.

In the restructure you can confidently work out that 8 clubs currently at level 5 across the country (two per league) are going to be sucked up into level 4 to make up the shortfall and twenty-four clubs at level 6 (three per league) are going to be required to make up the shortfall at the new level five. At 7 and below it becomes far more problematic, not only because of the introduction of lower vxs into the league and where they are going to be placed but also because of the 14 team leagues at seven and below in the North.

Still, that is work for another day.

Finally, the invitations for next seasons MMTs will be coming out at the end of May

Keep safe

Andrew

Update from Andrew Smart - Chair of Groups

We had another successful All Club Meeting on Monday 26th April, this time dealing with Age Grade Rugby and in particular out of season activities, the instructions for next season (which change on the 1st January) and 17 years not playing adult rugby with our special guest Mark Saltmarsh the RFU guru on all things Age Grade. A most useful meeting with nearly fifty people including the County's Safeguarding Officer Neil Horchover, in attendance, representing sixteen of our clubs (about 50% of our age grade clubs)

For those interested, the recording and notes of the meeting can be found on the county website on the following link

[Middlesex Rugby : Middlesex RFU All clubs meeting 26th April 2021 on Age Grade activities : Middlesex Rugby](#)

A very useful meeting. Thanks to Mark for his attendance and expertise and of course to Louise Latter who did all the organising and proved once again a most skilled facilitator on the night.

The success of the various All Clubs Meetings that we have held across the pandemic, covering the Off-Field activity, Return to Play, the Future Competitions Structure and finally Age Grade, where we have had outstanding participation from significant numbers of our clubs. This is contrasted with the relatively disappointing numbers attending our Group Meetings in April, especially when you can consider that all four of the New Year group meetings were postponed. There is no doubt, that several factors contributed to the success of the All-Clubs meetings and those in return perhaps have contributed to the lessening in attendance at Group meetings. First - Zoom has allowed us to set up All Clubs meetings at short notice. The topics have been relevant and timely, and it has certainly helped having council members on the County Management Committee who

have been able to get us access to the most relevant people in the RFU to help ensure their attendance at the meetings and in so doing allow our clubs to get the most relevant and up to date information direct from those people really in the know. These have included Steve Grainger, the Rugby Development Director of the RFU, Stephen Pearson RFU Board member and chairman of the Future Competitions Structure Group and of course Mark Saltmarsh the RFU Age Grade expert. The flexibility of being able to organise at short notice via the Zoom platform, together with the numbers that are able attend meetings (now 300 up from 100) has also allowed us to arrange All-Club meetings quickly and always around the availability of the guest. Together with the fortnightly Middlesex Newsletter and the weekly Community Game Update from Twickenham Clubs have been inundated with information. Not always relevant perhaps but always timely and the All-Clubs meetings have allowed us to perhaps provide more substance on topics and allowed our clubs to raise concerns and get questions answered from those who know best.

Against that, the Group meetings are fixed in the diary and as such have no flexibility around timings. Generally, topics normally reserved for these meetings have already been explored and discussed and of course it is far easier to get the guest for one meeting than try to arrange their diary against four fixed meeting dates. Whilst significant numbers attending All Club meetings can be a measure of its success it also true that not everyone can be heard and perhaps then we have been unable to satisfy their concerns.

The great strength of group meetings, on the other hand, is the intimacy created by the smaller numbers in an environment where you are known and your views and those of your club are respected and understood. It must also mean that everyone in attendance can speak and there is more opportunity for added depth to the discussion around issues relevant to you and your part of the county. The real strength of the groups are the relationships and friendships developed over years, built up at the end of meetings over a pint and a sandwich.

There is no doubt, across these extraordinary times, that Zoom, and the All-Group meetings have been one of the great success stories and of course we will look to continue to utilise these in the future when and if required. However, it is also true that the groups and their meetings must be the way forward for the county

Hopefully the poor number at the majority of the April Group meetings are just a blip and a reaction to the success of the All-Club meetings and the newsletter

There is work for the Group Officers to do, to re-engage with the clubs and their representatives and to continue to make our meetings relevant and useful.

The return of the meetings to our clubs, as we return to normality, will tell us whether we have been successful in that. I for one, am very much looking forward to getting out to our clubs again, a chance to catch up with old friends enjoying the hospitality of some great clubs, enjoying a great discussion, some laughs maybe the odd disagreement but always with friends and about the game we love.

In the meantime, until we can catch up in person, keep safe.

Andrew

Representative Playing and Coaching Update

Middlesex Representative Playing

As the end to this very unusual season comes to an end, incoming chair of playing Jok Dunbar and his deputy Hari McCormack are planning out a new strategy for next season.

With the age grade rugby groups for the boys and girls which are all laid out in the age grade calendar and finances approved for this area, we look forward to next season with much optimism.

The review group looking at the future for the Senior women, men and U20s is ongoing, and Middlesex have strong representation in this area. A partnership with Brunel University through ongoing discussions is being

developed which will give us strong support in these areas of playing.

The structured season dates for next season have been approved and there are dates reserved for these 3 groups. At present the budgets for these groups are being discussed.

I am also involved in the review of the U18s & U20s Divisional playing sides, talks are currently taking place with the 4 Divisions where a format is being discussed with supporting finances.

Middlesex / London Irish DPP & Academy update

DPP – The Middlesex DPP programme will resume in September, giving players the chance to play for their schools & clubs, between now and the end of the season. This was well received by all stakeholders and will put us in a positive position when the programme resumes.

Academy Games

U18 & U16 Academy have returned to training at Hazelwood. We have upcoming/played fixtures at U18 & U17 Academy fixtures (see below)

- 1st May v Harlequins – Home - 8th May v Saracens – Home
- 22nd May v Northampton – Away - 29th May v Bath – Away

Bishop Wand ACE Programme

- Bishop Wand have returned to training and have the following fixtures booked in.
- 7th May v Wellington College - 17th May v Kirkham Grammar - 26th May v Oaklands

International call up's

4 Players named in the England U20 EPS Squad – They will be preparing for the U20 6 Nations taking place in June.

(Will Joseph, Lucas Brooke, Marcus Rhodes, Luke Green)
Please note that **Luke Green** has come through the Middlesex Age Groups and was first coached by our Middlesex DOR Martin Crossan, when Luke was 13

7 Players included in the England U18 Development.

4 Players selected for the Internal England U18 game.

Academy Coach Development Programme

There is in place a 12-week Coach Development Programme for Berkshire, Hampshire & Middlesex – 1 session per week.

300+ coaches signed up for the program with every session averaging 80 coaches in attendance.

The intention of the program was to explore three primary areas:

- Co-Coaching (The roles and responsibilities coaches can have, leading to individual & collective impact every session)
- Giving and receiving feedback (What are the different methods and why would we vary which approach may be best?)
- Game Design (How can we design high-quality adaptive games to support the learning needs of an individual and the playing group?)

We ran these on Zoom and provided Documents and videos to stimulate further thought/reflection for all coaches that attended. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive – great to continue to build relationships with Schools & clubs in our catchment area.

Thanks to Academy manager Patrick O`Grady, DPP manager Jack Pattison and the Academy coaching team, for the partnership working and for the player & coaching development of all players & coaches from Middlesex.

Middlesex Coaching Development Programme

The Middlesex Coach development programme has successfully throughout the season run monthly coaching webinars tailored to the needs of our

Middlesex coaches. The following groups have had access to webinars, mini / youth coaches, L2 coaches, Level 3 & 4 coaches and a female coaching development group. Monthly webinars throughout the season have been regularly running with over 300 coaches having access to their coaching personal development.

In addition, over 400 Middlesex coaches have had access to a Weekly Coaching Newsletter which covers topical information with access to of 2,500 coaching drills to assist in their development.

Discussions are currently taking place for finances to support a structured coach & referee development programme for next season. We look forward to the continued partnership with the RFU, London Irish DPP and Brunel University.

For more information on any playing or coaching topics, please contact Bob Lawless Chair of Representative Playing & Coaching (M) 07803 196 409

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Stay Safe

Bob