

January Newsletter 2022

Email: countyoffice@middlesexrugby.com

Stop Press “Referee Development”

- To all Referees & Coaches, join us to find out about refereeing in the contact areas which include the tackle, ruck & maul. Please note these sessions are not recorded
- **When - Wednesday 19/01/2022**
- **Time - Start 19.00hrs**
- **Theme - Refereeing the contact areas**
- **Target Group - All Welcome.**
- **Log In - Join Zoom Meeting** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82702181657?pwd=czhleGtuaTdWL2xwNmZ6VnVzNi94Zz09> ;
- **Meeting ID: 827 0218 1657**
- **Passcode: 697511**

President’s Message

I don’t know about you but missing the scheduled games on 18th December made me all the hungrier for the resumption on 8th January when I aimed for Harrow on a very wet afternoon, but I have to say the warm welcome more than made up for it. Given the conditions it was a well contested game which ran out to a 20-20 draw.

My last two Sundays were spent with our brilliant Under 18’s Group as well as their very enthusiastic parents and coaches. As you’ll see from Jok’s piece, there were two great wins against Eastern Counties and Hertfordshire. I do hope that Jok finds a way of keeping that group together in some way.

Stay safe

Peter

peter.baveystock@middlesexrugby.com

Message from Eddie Keal, Chair, Middlesex

There is a mountain of news and important items to note in this edition of the Newsletter. I’m sure every reader and every club will find it useful.

The necessary widespread cancellation of rugby on 18th December meant that almost all of us had an extended break this season. It seemed to go down well, despite Covid being the cause. Perhaps it is something that can be built into future seasons. I did notice a larger than expected number of Boxing Day games being held around the country, although I can’t tell whether that was related in any way to the cancellation of the 18th. Personally, I’m a big fan of traditional Boxing Day fixtures, a longer Christmas break may be a way to encourage more.

We are in the middle of the current round of Group Meetings as I write. One down, three to go. I won’t repeat here the update and County overview that I am giving to the groups, as much of it will be included in detail lower down this page.

I hope to have some feedback about the Platform for Rugby review and the Club of the Future Commission in the near future. We have taken a decision to issue this Newsletter in the week that follows the regular County Management Board Meetings (2nd Tuesday of the month) so we’re keeping our communications on “full speed” for the foreseeable future. Should we name the Newsletter now that we’ve settled into a regular publication pattern? No prizes, but suggestions are welcome.

I look forward to seeing many of you at either the Group Meetings or the All-Club Meeting, and of course, like the rest of the Management Board, on our club visits.

Stay safe and well.

Eddie

eddie.keal@middlesexrugby.com

Update from Lou Latter – Chair of Rugby Development

Happy New Year (is it too late into the month to say that?)

Last week saw the launch of the Honda Volunteer of the Year Awards. Nominations are now open until 28th February. Please do ensure that your club members are aware and do please nominate a deserving volunteer. For those that are nominated we will invite them to the annual Middlesex Volunteer of the Year Awards evening. Further information about the awards, categories and how to nominated can be accessed [here](#).

On Tuesday 18th January we are holding a Girls Forum where we will discuss the cluster competition and the new age bandings coming in next season. It will be great to hear from all our girls' clubs on how they are getting on this season.

I'm really pleased to be announcing a new relationship to help rugby clubs address the needs of female players, coaches, volunteers, referees and members. We'll shortly be announcing a special deal for Middlesex rugby clubs from [Fab Little Bag](#). Freda's eco-friendly period care and [FabLittleBag](#) period disposal solution can help clubs create a hygienic and sustainable space that supports the essential needs of players and visitors, ensuring that all feel welcome and respected.

The [Allianz Inner Warrior](#) campaign in January is now open for [registrations](#).

Reminder: please ensure that players in the age grade game are playing in their correct age groups. If you are unsure then please do get in touch.

Regulation 15 details out all information for playing up or down and the process and approvals that are required.

January also means we turn our focus to the Age Grade Playing Calendar for next season. Stakeholders from across the game will be coming together in the next few weeks to play the calendar and we'll then aim to communicate the approved calendar out to clubs in March.

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

Lou

louise.latter@middlesexrugby.com

Message from Andrew Smart, Chair of Competitions

I thought I would start this report with a gentle reminder of the All-Clubs Meeting on the entry of lower xvs into the leagues for next season on the 31st January followed by the opt-out vote between 1st and 1th February, fast approaching. I have covered this in much more detail in my Group Officers report in another part of this newsletter but this is really important and I urge you to make sure that if your club is eligible, (to be an eligible you must be a voting club of the RFU) you have a voice, so please use it and vote. The ramifications for league rugby in Middlesex could be immense and if you don't vote you cannot complain about the outcome.

As you all know the weekend of the 18th December was almost a complete wipeout across London with the matches going over to the 5th February, the start of this season's Six Nations. Clubs continue to be under pressure to get out players and teams but I sense a new determination amongst many of our

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clubs now that Christmas has passed to get on with things and play. Only time will tell if that is the case and I in no way want to imply that any corners have been turned but perhaps some guarded optimism. However, of course that might well be stalled by the arrival of the Six Nations which always puts further stresses on club's ability to get out players. Still the most important thing is that we are back playing, people have somewhere to go on a Saturday afternoon and long may it continue

So, with two further rounds played since New Year by the majority of our clubs here is a round-up of how our clubs are doing. In the Championship, Ealing Trailfinders drop to second on points difference from league leaders Doncaster Knights although they have two games in hand. London Scottish continue to struggle. They remain bottom, now ten points adrift of Nottingham who have played two games less.

At level 5 in the London and SE Premier League CS Stags 1863 remain winless after fifteen rounds now twenty-seven points adrift from the team above

At level 6 in L1N Belsize Park drop to ninth with Old Haberdashers tenth. However, in L1S London Welsh remain top by six points, whilst H&F drop out of the promotion places to fourth eight points behind third placed Medway although with a game in hand. London Cornish remain bottom but picked up their second win of the season on Saturday with an emphatic win at home against London Irish Wild Geese.

At level 7 after eleven rounds in L2NW, HAC and Old Priorians continue to battle it out at the top of table with HAC ahead by two but with a game in hand and still unbeaten. Old Streetonians drop to fifth, Ruislip sixth, Grasshoppers seventh, Enfield Ignatians ninth. Hampstead up to tenth with Hackney now bottom although they have a game in

hand. In L2SW Chiswick remain fourth with Twickenham tenth. This is now a ten-team league after the withdrawals of two of the clubs earlier in the season

At level 8 in L3 Essex Epping Upper Clapton remain tenth whilst in L3NW, Finchley remain top, three points ahead of Hendon in second, Finsbury Park seventh and Harrow eighth. This is also a ten-team league following the withdrawals of two clubs earlier in the season

In Surrey One, Teddington drop to fifth whilst in Surrey Four Old Paulines are second, Harlequin Amateurs third and Old Hamptonians fourth.

In the Herts and Middx County leagues at level 9, after ten rounds London Scottish Lions are now top by ten points, Wasps FC second, Ealing Traifinders 1871 up to third, Saracens Amateurs fifth Actonians drop to seventh sixth, Bank of England, eighth, Kilburn Cosmos with a game in hand ninth with Thamesians tenth and bottom. In H/M2 Brunel University still undefeated drop to third after a ten-point sanction for playing ineligible players against Uxbridge and West London. Old Millhillians go up to second with a game in hand over top placed Watford. Uxbridge fourth, UCS drop to sixth with Staines seventh, West London ninth, London French tenth and Mill Hill eleventh and bottom

In the Allianz Premier XVs after eleven rounds Saracens Women go top by two points with a game in hand, Harlequins Women drop to fourth and Wasps FC Ladies to sixth.

Just before Christmas despite continuing to be one of the better performing merit tables I conducted quite a comprehensive consultation with our merit table sides around the following concerns that we have teams that can get out but can't get fixtures and teams that are struggling to get out regularly

and not sure which fixtures they can honour. I told the clubs that I had two options. The first to continue to allow the merit tables to run as they are or secondly to look to change them to support those clubs who can play and get out sides but at the same time supporting those teams who are struggling but still need to be able to offer their players some form of competitive and regulated competition

Nearly 90% of the teams responded which in itself was excellent. Of those, 92.5% accepting all the issues that we are all facing trying to get out teams and players consistently were generally pleased with how the merit tables were working for them.

Others, who it is fair to say are struggling more than most, stated their intention to remain in the current set up at their current level and tough it out. Some were hopeful that player availability would ease up after the New Year others far more pragmatic that they were better off in a regulated competition able to play when they can then drop out and try to look for fixtures, concerned that if they were to go, they would lose their players anyway.

So, the overwhelming response was us to continue as we are with teams playing at their current level. Only one club asked to combine two of their teams and drop a level which I have supported. Not what I was expecting to be honest but that is what our clubs and teams want so we will continue as we are.

I did get some excellent well thought suggestions for how we can improve what is on offer which I will look at across the summer as part of my preparations for next season. A very worthwhile exercise for me, notwithstanding very little is going to change for the rest of the season.

So, plenty going on, plenty to play for but problems as you all know have not gone away.

Hopefully I will see you all at the All-Clubs Lower XV's meeting on the 31st January.

Keep safe

Andrew Smart

andrew-smart@ntlworld.com

Report from Chair of Groups, Andrew Smart

With the Christmas/New Year break and the almost complete loss of the league and merit table fixtures on the 18th December across the county and division there hasn't been too much to report on since the last newsletter.

However, going forward we have already started the first round of Group Meetings of 2022 with the North West Group last Wednesday. Unsurprisingly in the current climate all the meetings are now on Zoom. For those who wish to attend any or all of the three remaining meetings the joining details and agendas will be circulated closer to the meeting dates

So just to confirm those dates and timings.

Monday 24th January 7pm - **South Group**.
Wednesday 26th January 7.30pm - **West Group**.
Monday 7th February 8pm - **North Group**

We will have two main agenda points at each of the meetings on top of the normal inputs

1 Lower xv Timetable and Vote which I will cover

This will include confirming the All Clubs Zoom meeting on Monday 31st January. I appreciate that this important meeting is unfortunately before that of the North Group on the 7th February. However, the opt out vote will open from the 1st and set to finish on the 11th February and with CBs not able to consult with their clubs until 19th January and obligated to return the results of any voting back to the RFU by the 18th February, with the dates of the group meetings confirmed for many months it was

a real problem for me to find an alternative date that didn't include a training night. It is not satisfactory, and I apologise to the North Group and its clubs but the timetable was set by the RFU and we are doing our best to work around it. Hopefully the North Group clubs will make the effort to attend the All-Clubs meeting on the 31st January which is specifically about the Lower XV Entry into the leagues for the 2022/23 season and the opt out available to CBs. Also, they will still have four full days after the North Group meeting to register a vote so hopefully whilst this will not prove to be inconvenient. So far across London, of the eight CBs, three already have lower xvs in their county leagues and do not need to consult, four Middlesex, Kent, Essex and Surrey are doing their own opt out consultations whilst Hertfordshire have decided against

For those interested the RFU added Appendix 4 to Regulation 13 – Adult Competitions a couple of weeks ago to cover the entry of lower xvs into the league structure and the opt out provisions which you can find via the following link

[Regulation 13 Appendix 4.pdf \(englandrugby.com\)](#)

Whilst we still wait for the wording of the question on the opt out and direction as to who and how many will be required from each voting club entitled to have a say to ensure a valid vote, I draw your attention to 3.B which specifies how a vote can be triggered by its clubs even if the CB is against holding such a vote. Knowing how strongly Hertfordshire Clubs were against the entry of lower xvs into the league pyramid in our two previous votes I would be surprised if they didn't trigger a vote there also

2. Council Representative Election - This will be covered by Tim Miller who as you know has control of the process and timetable on behalf of Middlesex. This is contested and like the Lower XV Vote is open to all the Voting Clubs in the County. Whilst I presume that this will be covered in another part of the newsletter, it has been agreed that it would be patently unfair for the clubs to be asked to vote before all four groups had received the input so as I

understand the voting for this will begin around the 10th February.

These are both important votes going forward for the County both on and off the field. Please make sure that if you have a voice, you use it and vote. Of course, how you vote is very much an issue for each club but if you end up in a position where you disagree with how either or both votes go and you didn't bother to exercise your vote, you cannot look at anyone else but yourself

Couple of other things to quickly update. There will be two more "Pick Up Your Whistle" Courses to be held for North List clubs. One at Haringey and the second at Enfield again. Just leaving it for the clubs and trainer to confirm the dates and I will circulate the details. Many thanks again to Bob Lawless for offering to cover the costs once again from funds he has acquired from the RFU. I am a bit further behind on the West list where I need to find a host club for the course but again Bob has offered to provide the funding to support this. I will sort this out over the next week or so

Finally, the county has agreed to finance a further First Aid in Rugby Course. I have the venue, just waiting for some availability and Louise and I will be able to confirm the trainer. Expect a circulation on this in the next week

Keep Safe and hope to see many of you at the forthcoming group and All Club Meetings. The next month or so is so important for the county and its clubs. Please make sure you have your say

Andrew Smart
andrew-smart@ntlworld.com

Representative Rugby Report, Jok Dunbar



Middlesex U18's vs Hertfordshire U18's

On Sunday 16th January we had our final game for the 21/22 U18 programme against Hertfordshire held under clear blue skies on Wasps FC new artificial grass pitch. This was a rearranged fixture from pre-Christmas and we are grateful that the Herts coaching team were as willing as we were to ensure the game could go ahead. Thank you to Wasps FC for the pitch use and for Marc F stepping in last minute to referee the game.

I am proud to have followed this particular cohort through from the U15's and they have proven to be an outstanding group of young men. In all their games they have played with tenacity, discipline and flair. They have impressed selectors and their opposition and most importantly have presented themselves well on and off the pitch. Although we had some standout players in the squad, there has been selfless play throughout that showed in both defence and attack what a great team they have become. Although they beat Hertfordshire on this occasion the quality of play by both sides was impressive and provided one of the best games of the season.

I wish all the boys involved our very best as they move onto working, university or whatever their future holds. I ask that they remember these days with pride, continue to play to their best ability and not to forget why they play the best game in the world.

Final Score 35 - 21

Middlesex Women

We have held two highly successful assessments over the last two weeks with over 90 women from clubs all over Middlesex and West London showing off their skills to make the squad for this season. The coaching team and selectors were impressed this season with the high calibre of players and the efforts they all made during the sessions, the final decisions have not been made easily and the final playing squad will be announced later this week.

They have their first game on the **20th February**, venue and timings to be confirmed.

Middlesex U20 Men

Sadly due to a number of contributory factors, we just haven't had the numbers required to pull together a team to represent Middlesex against Essex this coming weekend. There will still be training the following weekend as we will see if we can encourage more players to come along for this programme but sadly without squad numbers it is unlikely that this programme of games simply won't happen this season. We have a plan in place for next year to boost the interest and numbers for next year and hopefully normal service will resume then.

Middlesex U18 Girls

Invitations to clubs and schools to nominate for this season U18 girls team have been sent out and we are gathering names for our first trial on **Monday 31st January**. If you haven't received the letter and are interested please contact Jok Dunbar at jok.dunbar@middlesexrugby.com

U16 Boys

The selection for this games will be made from this boys already within the London Irish Programme and we have games scheduled for **Sunday 13th February**, a round robin with Hampshire and Berkshire DPP sites, **Sunday 6th February** against Surrey and **Sunday 27th February** vs Buckinghamshire.

U15 Girls, U17 Boys and Senior Men's programmes all start in April 2022 this season but please contact Jok Dunbar if you have questions about any of those programmes.

Jok Dunbar

jok.dunbar@middlesexrugby.com

Coaching & Refereeing Update, Bob Lawless

RFU mentoring programme – This is a year's long course and Middlesex have 5 RFU trained Mentors looking after the coaching development of 16 mentees from Middlesex member clubs. As a mentoring group we have monthly webinars with the RFU and meet with our mentees on a regular basis. Grant Hathaway the England Rugby Coach Developer oversee the programme and guides the mentors through the mentoring pathway. The RFU mentoring course completes in 2022 and the idea is the Middlesex mentoring programme can consistently give guidance to new coaches coming through the pathway up to the Advanced Coaching Award. The Middlesex mentoring programme is open to all coaches who would like to become coach

mentors and to all coaches who would like support in their coaching pathway.

Referee Development

Middlesex Young Match Officials, continue on this year long programme where they are applying their new found skills in their club environments and other areas where requested.

In additional to the practical skills there are ongoing monthly webinars to assist them on their refereeing journey. Simon Hardcastle leads on the theoretical side of refereeing and have covered topics on the Laws of the game, refereeing at the scrum and the Lineout and this coming Wednesday 19th January, Simon is taking a session on refereeing the contact areas of the tackle, the ruck and the maul. (See below for log in details)

Senior Referee Development

To date there have been 2 “**Take Up the Whistle**” short courses run at Grasshoppers and Enfield. Another course is being planned for Haringey RFC and more information on this will follow. Another short course has been arranged for Monday 21st & 28th February at Grasshoppers (see below for joining instructions)

Middlesex Coach Education

Coach education will be offered to all Middlesex Coaches throughout the season, it is intended to run both on - line and outside practical sessions. To date the following Coach education sessions have taken place.

September 2021 – 3 Courses were run on the New Law Variations, introducing coaches to the new laws being applied this season. Simon Hardcastle delivered on these on-line sessions and they were well attended by both female & male coaches a total of 173 coaches attended

During October 2021 - there were 2 CPD sessions run for both Women and Youth Coaches with a

Theme of Developing a Coaching Philosophy, 48 coaches attended the on-line interactive sessions.

November 2021 – There was an online Coaching 7s Webinar which invited all Middlesex L3 & L4 coaches to attend.

December 2021 – 2 CPD courses were run for both Women & Youth Coaches with a theme of Creating Individual Development Plans to goal set and measure over the season.

February 2021 – There will be practical outdoor scrummage session designed for all coaches. More information on Venue will be sent out via Middlesex social media.

RFU Coaching Courses Update by Grant Hathaway England Rugby Coach Developer

There is a great deal happening in the people development world at England Rugby to develop new and experienced coaches and referees alike. To recruit and retain players they need to enjoy a great experience and supporting coaches and referees goes a long way to improving this.

Right now, we are over half way through the ER Advanced Coaching Award (ERACA) programme, previously known as Level 3. This course is the largest and most inclusive cohort ever taken on and now the course is more about development whilst on course, rather than satisfying strict criteria prior. To ensure we can support this development, my team and I are out in clubs and schools completing regular observations and work on candidate portfolios.

We have aligned our other award courses, the ER Coaching Award (ERCA) and the ER Referee Award (ERRA) with our advanced awards, where now we work with coaches over a longer period of time to truly embed the learning. We offer webinars and support via Coach Logic just as we do on the

advanced programmes to enhance this course experience and ultimately the learning.

These commenced across October/November and will complete in May/June.

We are also half way through the ER Mentoring Award which supports people to employ methods of questioning and processes to empower those they work with. This is such a truly valuable course as it taps into the skills and personality traits of the great people we have in the game and offers them a methodology that helps others in the rugby community, but also, we often get feedback that these skills are used when they go to work and even family situations!

The last webinars and contact days are happening over the next few months.

In March there will be a round of Principles of Lineout courses for you to book on, keep an eye on the ER website course finder for those. The links will also be sent out to all key individuals in clubs and schools, coaches and via this newsletter.

If you or your club/school is interested in anything to do with developing your people I would love to chat.

granthathaway@rfu.com - 07731 008175

Grant Hathaway

England Rugby Coach Developer

07731 008175

For further information on any of the above course please contact –

Bob Lawless, Middlesex Chair of Coaching & Refereeing Development

(e) bob.lawless@middlesexrugby.com (m)
07803 196409.

Bob Lawless

bob.lawless@middlesexrugby.com

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What's on:

Group Meetings

- **Monday 24th January - South Group Via Zoom**
- **Wednesday 26th January - West Group - via zoom**
- **All-Clubs Lower XVs meeting on the 31st January.**
- **Monday 7th February – North Group - via Zoom**

**“Interested in becoming a Referee”
Enrol on the London Society of Rugby
Football Union Referees**

“Take Up the Whistle Referee Course”

£25 per person

Next Course :-

**Grasshoppers RFC on 21st & 28th
February 2022 – 7.00pm to 9.30pm**

Click on <https://buytickets.at/lrffur/607276>
to enrol

County Dinner 29th April 2022 – Contact

Hopefully this finds you well in these times. This email is to update on the Middlesex County RFU 140th Dinner on Friday 29 April 2022.

Thank you for your previous payment for the previous planned event in April 2020 which is still being held for our upcoming event.

As previously communicated, the County Management Committee took the decision to remove the County subsidy to focus financial resources on direct rugby delivery.

Whilst we hope you understand this equitable decision this does mean the price of the 140th

Anniversary Dinner has been revised £60 per head.

With this in mind, we are kindly asking all attendees to contribute the additional £10 per person by **Friday 28 January 2022**.

If you are unsure, please find full payment details below:

Account: Middlesex County Rugby Football
Union Ltd
Sort Code: 30-92-82
Account No: 01066848
Reference: '[Surname]Dinner22'

There are a few edge cases in which some attendees have paid for one person and subsequently added others in which case we will follow up on separately to avoid confusion.

As ever, happy to help with any questions (e.g. how many places you had reserved etc.) that may arise on what should be a great evening!

Yours in Rugby,

Mark Coles mark.coles@middlesexrugby.com