

## April Newsletter 2022

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

### President's Message

It was great to see so many of you at the Group AGMs and yes, another busy month of Club visits, with visits to Kilburn Cosmos, Hammersmith & Fulham, Old Streetonians, to help them celebrate their 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. I also attended the Old Paulines 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at Twickenham. Well done to Tim Cunis for his excellent Old P's memorabilia display.

It was great to see the Middlesex Under 18 Girls play in a tournament on Easter Sunday, against Kent, Bucks and Berks and also to see what a great job the coaches and managers had done and their improvement since I saw them at Thurrock. They rounded the day off with a fine 23 – 20 win against Bucks so well done to all including the parents!

And then to round the month off, I saw Old Priorians play Uxbridge in the final of the NW Floodlit Cup and presented the trophy to Old Priorians along with the Middlesex Merit Table 2 winners plaque.

We will be holding a pre-match lunch (curry & Cheeseboard) ahead of our home game against Sussex on 14<sup>th</sup> May at Wasps for which there will be a charge of £15 per head so please email **me** if you're interested.

**Peter**

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### Message from Eddie Keal, Chair, Middlesex

The end of the season approaches. Diaries are packed with finals and play-offs, and the Middlesex Management Board is out in force making sure we attend every event. It's been a very tough season and one that we can look back on with some pride for the tenacity and durability that Middlesex clubs have shown.

We will highlight some of the outstanding personal and club performances at both the AGM on July 4<sup>th</sup> July at Grasshoppers and the Volunteer Awards at Twickenham on July 8<sup>th</sup>. Before those dates we'll celebrate our successes at the much-postponed County Dinner on the 29<sup>th</sup> of this month. I'm truly looking forward to all those events. We need some down-time!

I see many clubs have touring plans, despite the manifold challenges of travel this year. I wish them all the best of luck.

Many of you will have seen in the RFU's latest Community Game Update a reference to the Platform for Rugby. The article contains a link to a presentation which outlines how the RFU's IT support for clubs and CBs will be enhanced beyond what GMS delivers today. Having had a hand in this work, I'd be very happy to be quizzed on what it means for all of us. It is vital that we get it right this time.

I hope to see many of you on my travels over the next couple of months, which include the County adult representative games. Please come along and support! Fixtures for all the Middlesex teams can be found on the website.

Stay safe and well.

**Eddie**

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## Update from Lou Latter – Chair of Rugby Development

Can you believe that we are closing in on the end of a full season, after the last two disrupted seasons? The next two weeks sees the final matches for the Red Roses in their 6Nations campaign. A record crowd saw the Red Roses beat Wales at Gloucester and they head to Leicester on 24<sup>th</sup> April to play Ireland before travelling to France in what should be a cracker of a championship decider.

Age Grade Rugby officially ends on 1<sup>st</sup> May but you'll be pleased to see that the [summer activity guidance](#) is now out should you wish to offer activities over the summer. However, there is still lots to look forward to over the coming months.

The St George's Day Girls Festival is back. Girls from Middlesex and the surrounding areas will be at Wasps FC on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> April (U11 and U13 girls) and Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> April (U15 and U18 girls). This will be the last time these age groups compete as we move into the new girls age bandings from September 2022. If there are any club referees that would be interested in volunteering, then please get in [contact with me](#). We love to have referees that want to get some extra practice in.

Our planning for the Middlesex Volunteer Awards on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> July is underway and we'll be announcing the Honda Volunteer of the Year nominees shortly. Watch our social media platforms for more information and look out for a save the date invitation if you have been nominated.

GMS is always a hotly discussed topic. The RFU has been working with Deloitte's and have taken their recommendations following questions posted by clubs. You can review the presentation here and a

[video](#) explaining the recommendations and questions that were posed during the review. Further details on plans, training any improvements will come out between now and the start of the season, alongside FAQs and you can find all the latest information on the [website](#).

A reminder for clubs to start getting their age grade players affiliated ahead of next season. This is a mandatory requirement ([Regulation 15](#) 15.1.4 and 15.1.5 but we are seeing low levels of age grade players affiliated across our clubs.

I'm still recruiting for new volunteers to join the Rugby Development. If you would like to find out more about what we do and how you can get involved, then please do reach out to me. Specifically, I am looking for a Schools Liaison Officer, Women's Game Lead and Girls Game Lead.

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

Stay safe

Lou  
[louise.latter@middlesexrugby.com](mailto:louise.latter@middlesexrugby.com)

## Message from Andrew Smart, Chair of Competitions

Just about there and whilst it has been a desperately difficult season for most of our clubs sandwiched between the continued impact of covid and the changing player habits which has impacted so savagely on their availability, there has actually a lot of good rugby played and a significant amount of success by Middlesex Clubs. With the league seasons for levels 7 and below now completed it is with pleasure that I can announce our champions  
L2NW HAC

L3NW Finchley  
H/M1 London Scottish Lions  
H/M2 Old Millhillians  
H/M2 Plate UCS

The four combined leagues with Hertfordshire all deservedly won by our clubs. Outstanding. The issues about how many sides apart from Finchley at level 8 and below might or not be promoted still to be addressed

With one more round at levels 5 and 6 to go, London Welsh are already celebrating their promotion to level five next season. Their fifth promotion in six years and a tremendous validation of all the hard work that has gone on since the collapse of the professional club. I can now confirm that CS Stags 1863 have won their appeal to being withdrawn from the leagues. Since they were removed to their credit they continued to get out, honouring their fixtures, recording their first win of the season away at Tunbridge Wells a couple of weeks ago followed by a losing bonus point at home to Sidcup. Provided they honour their last fixture this Saturday away to Brighton they will remain at level 5 for the 2022/23 season

Congratulations, of course to Ealing Trailfinders, back-to-back winners of the Championship after a huge win at home against Richmond. Fantastic achievement and we wish them every success in their appeal against being allowed entry into the Gallagher Premiership for next season.

I am also able to announce our Merit Table Champions  
Premier – London Welsh 2nds  
MT1 New Zealand Kiwis  
MT2 Old Priorians 2nds  
MT3 Whitton Lions  
MT4 London Japanese  
MT5 Northolt

It is worth noting that of our six MT Champions, four are first xvs and as a County we currently have 16 clubs whose 1stxvs play either in the HMMTs (3) or MMTs (13), none of which have expressed an interest to enter the leagues for next season or indeed are running more than once side. Just over a quarter of our clubs playing competitive Saturday rugby do so in merit tables and demonstrates how important they are to the continued good health and development of a significant number of our clubs. It also reinforces to me how hard I need to continue to work to ensure that there is a viable competition offering for those clubs in particular but for all the teams whose players play in our CB run merit table competitions that are my responsibility.

The issues that have faced our clubs across the season have been no different for our vets MTs although congratulations to Chiswick worthy champions of Vets MT1. In Vets MT2 we await the result of Grasshoppers hosting London Welsh in a winner takes all match to determine our champions

A couple of weeks ago Saturday we were treated to an excellent MT Vase/Bowl/Cup Finals Day very well hosted by Twickenham. Thanks to Peter and Simon for supporting the competition on the day on behalf of the management committee and in particular to Steve Partridge who runs these competitions and still suffering from the effects of a full knee replacement was unable to attend. He was missed. Anyway, some very competitive finals on a beautiful afternoon enjoyed by so many. A real credit to our merit tables and the quality of our players who play their rugby outside the RFU leagues. Here are the results from a most enjoyable afternoon of rugby  
Vase Final Harrow 2nds 32-29 Grasshoppers 3rds (AET) Full time 29-29  
Bowl Final Hanwell 15-25 London Sussex  
Cup Final Belsize Park 2nds 27-32 HAC 2nds

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So, as we go into the final week of the 2022/23 season these are the remaining eight adult male cup finals still to be decided. All great fixtures and hopefully you will take the opportunity to join me at some or all of these games to enjoy some great competitive rugby to finish off our season

### **NW Middx Floodlit Cup Final Ealing Trailfinders RFC**

Tuesday 19th April. 7.30pm Old Priorian U25s v Uxbridge

### **Middx Vets Cup Final Wasps FC**

Friday 22nd April. 7.30pm Old Priorians v Chiswick Vets

### **Middx Merit Table KO Plate/Play-Off Finals Ruislip RFC**

Saturday 23rd April

MMT5 Belsize Park Bulls v Northolt. 12pm.

MMT4 Ealing Exiles v Harrow 2nds. 12.40pm.

MMT3. Hanwell v Old Isleworthians. 1.20pm.

MMT2. H&F 4ths v Twickenham 2nds. 2pm.

MMT1. Belsize Park 3rds v Old Streetonians 2nds. 2.40pm.

Premier MT. H&F 2nds v HAC 2nds. 3.20pm.

First match at midday with ko's staggered every forty minutes. There will also be formal presentations of League Champions Plaques to HAC and Finchley by the President

For the London DOC meeting last Monday, I was asked to put forward the potential leagues for our clubs for next season. Until the Herts issue is resolved that is pretty much impossible. I believe that we have three potential scenarios.

1. To continue on with the Herts and Middx teams as we are
2. To set up solely Middx leagues
3. To invite Hertfordshire sides to join us in 1stxv only leagues

In the Allianz Premier XV's with two rounds to go before the play-offs Saracens Women are top by a massive 13 points, Harlequin Women are in fourth five points ahead of Wasps FC Ladies who are in fifth and all but out of the play-off picture

I suppose we should celebrate where we are. A lot of success for Middlesex league clubs both at the top and lower end of the game. The fact that we managed to get almost all our clubs and teams to the end of a really difficult season is a success in itself. Trust that those clubs, OMT's and London Exiles that were forced to withdraw from the leagues have been able and will be able to find the will to start again and continue to provide rugby opportunities for their players. I understand that London Exiles are intending to rejoin the leagues for next season which is great news. We wish both clubs every success.

The fact that we have got to the end of the season with a lot of success for our clubs and strong finish for our merit tables cannot mask the real issues and uncertainty facing the male adult game both locally and across the country.

This Wednesday I have arranged a Zoom meeting with the organisers of all the merit tables across the Division. So far seven of the eight CBs have committed to attend and I am only waiting to hear from Eastern Counties to see if they can join us. A really important meeting for us all as we seek to address some of the issues that have beset us across this season.

The break to be honest can't come quick enough but there is very much still to be done and I continue to have genuine concerns about both the short and long-term problems facing the community game and our clubs

Keep safe

Andrew Smart

[andrew-smart@ntlworld.com](mailto:andrew-smart@ntlworld.com)

### Report from Chair of Groups, Andrew Smart

For most of our clubs the end of this difficult season has not come soon enough. It has promised so much with the full return of the game after a lost season but it has turned into a real slog. Yes, for many of our clubs, they have probably never had as much money in their bank. However, we have all really struggled to get out our teams, get players to commit and honour fixtures and to be frank I think that many of our club administrators are exhausted and desperate for a break and to be honest who can blame them.

As we have now finished our final round of Group meetings numbers have generally been poor and reflects my belief that people have just had enough. There are some serious questions to be asked about how we can continue to make the meetings more relevant for our clubs. The success of the All-Club meetings together with the Newsletter has meant that we have been able to get information out to our clubs much quicker than in the past and the group meetings every six to eight weeks has proved unwieldy. There is no doubt that across the pandemic the club updates that have become a staple of our meetings were hugely important for the CB to gauge the strength of our clubs and provide support where we could. It also allowed clubs to appreciate that they weren't in this on their own and that every club had its own issues. Still as we get back to some sort of normality there has to be more than a tired roundup of how everybody is doing. Yes, at the first meetings so clubs can communicate how they have done across the break and again at our last round of meetings where our clubs can provide the detail of how they feel they have done across the season. But that is no longer enough and the Group Officers meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup>

May is no only to elect our chair for next season but far more importantly to provide a framework for next season and beyond that allows us to re-engage with our clubs and gives the group concept real value. There is much to discuss whilst trying to ensure that in this changing world we remain as relevant as possible to our clubs.

In the meantime, the North-West, South and West Groups have re-elected their officers whilst the North have said good bye and thank you to their secretary Sean Burke who has been replaced by Debbie Stockman-Rose, who is also the secretary of Old Grammarians RFC. Debbie is a most welcome addition to the Group Officers Committee and I believe our first lady officer which is just great

The officers therefore elected for the 2022/23 season are then as follows

South Group. Chair Jerry Rogers (London Cornish). Secretary Lyndon Walters (H&F)  
West Group. Chair Andy Brooks (Old Isleworthians). Secretary Nick Dance (Grasshoppers)  
North. Chair Jon Boyle (Hampstead). Secretary Debbie Stockman-Rose (Old Grammarians)  
North-West Chair Andrew Smart (Harrow) Mark Foster (OMTs)

Thanks to Old Grammarians who are hosting a "Pick Up the Whistle Course" for our North List Clubs with fourteen attendees That is one of a number of courses that we have seen across the county, some supported financially by the CB, others driven by the clubs themselves. I don't intend to take away anyone's thunder but at the AGM you will find the numbers of new referees who have come out of these courses simply extraordinary. Thanks to Grasshoppers, (twice), Enfield Ignatians, Northolt, Old Grammarians and all the other clubs for hosting these courses and of course to Bob Ockenden, Rob Park and Paul Carroll from the London Society of Referees who organised and ran them

The extra "Emergency First Aid in Rugby Course" was fully subscribed and hosted on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup>

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March by Wasps FC. Those five courses across this season were all paid for by the county and has resulted in a further 60 fully trained first aiders across Middlesex. Thanks to Harrow, Chiswick, Grasshoppers, Old Grammarians and Wasps FC for agreeing to host these courses for our clubs at no charge.

The referee, first aid and coaching courses among many run across the season has really proved how important is the partnership between the CB and our cubs much of it communicated and organised via the groups. It has been hugely successful and one we are all determined to continue to support. If someone actually asks what does the county actually do for us you need go no further than point to these.

A gentle reminder that the NW Middx Group Floodlit Cup Final will be played on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> April at Ealing Trailfinders RFC ko between O Priorians U25s and Uxbridge

Tough season. Not quite finished yet. The GO's have stood up, committed themselves to next season to serve in the best interests of their Groups and clubs Let's hope that volunteers across all our clubs will do the same, come back in big numbers refreshed and remotivated to keep our community game and their clubs going.

Andrew Smart

[andrew-smart@ntlworld.com](mailto:andrew-smart@ntlworld.com)

### **Coaching & Refereeing Update, Bob Lawless**

**Coaching Development** - Monthly coach education sessions have been run throughout the season, this has been a mixture of online webinars and on field practical skill development sessions. The sessions have been arranged to cover all aspects of coaching development for mini / youth and senior coaches. Numbers of coaches attending these sessions have increased, due to the ease of attending skill development webinars at home and the

communication platforms in place resulting in an increased number of members being circulated. The impact of the Middlesex coaching development programme has had on Middlesex member clubs and coaches will be published in an end of term report in the May edition.

### **Coaching Courses held since the last Newsletter**

- Monday 14<sup>th</sup> March the RFU held a Principle of Lineout Course at Twyford Wasps this was attended 30 coaches from 12 different Middlesex Clubs.

Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> March, Youth Coaching & Skill Development covered by Rhys Davies at Hazelwood, 30 coaches attended

Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> March, James Lightfoot – Brown from London Irish delivered a session on Back Play this was attended by 22 Coaches from 14 different Middlesex Clubs.

On Monday 11<sup>th</sup> April, 19.00hrs – 20.00hrs London Irish, our DPP / Academy partners run an online Session Design Workshop, this was tutored by the DPP Manager Rhys Davies a total of 46 attended this on-line session.

During May there will be further outdoor coach education sessions which are being planned for Haringey focusing on girls' skill development and an outdoor scrummaging session for those coaches needing to update their skills while learning to build an effect and safe scrummage. More information on these sessions will follow.

**Referee Development** - Thanks to Andrew smart and the London Society of Referees for putting in place a short refereeing course designed to upskill players or any person interested in gaining experience through attending a short "Take up The Whistle Course", which is run over 2 evenings. To date there have been 4 of these courses run by tutors, Rob Park, Paul Carrol and Steven Byles. During May the RFU Young math official course will be completed which will see 12 U18 year olds gain the RFU Young Match Officials Award. More information on final numbers to have an idea on the

impact it has had on our game, will be published in the next newsletter.

To supplement the knowledge of referees in Middlesex, Simon Hardcastle have run regular online sessions covering various aspects of refereeing. These sessions have been very well attended by both Male & Female referees.

Middlesex have supported this referee training by offering all who have attended these courses a free Middlesex Referee Jersey.

For more information on how to receive your free referee jersey for attending the referee's course, please contact [bob.lawless@middlesexrugby.com](mailto:bob.lawless@middlesexrugby.com). (M) 07803 196409.

### **Referee Development Courses held since the last Newsletter**

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> March, Simon Hardcastle tutored an on-line referee development course gaining knowledge of refereeing the Lineout and set scrummage. 22 referees / coaches attended

**The next Referee Development on line Session** will take place on **Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> April at 19.00hrs** and look at Refereeing the 7 - aside Game. Simon Hardcastle of the London Society of Referees will be tutoring this interesting session which is suitable for all coaches & teachers who are involved in refereeing and coaching the 7- aside game. To join the online Zoom session, click on the link below in What's on.

**For further information on any of the above course please contact –(e)**  
[bob.lawless@middlesexrugby.com](mailto:bob.lawless@middlesexrugby.com) (m) 07803 196409.

**Bob Lawless**

[bob.lawless@middlesexrugby.com](mailto:bob.lawless@middlesexrugby.com)

**What's on:**

**Referee Development online Session** will take place on **Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> April at 19.00hrs**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83530296369?pwd=MEo1Q25mVWV4SDMxZjIMTG1QUVNhZz09>

**Zoom Meeting Id – 835 302 963 69 – Passcode – 989369**

### **Upcoming Representative Fixtures**

- **Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> & Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> April** – St Georges Day Girls Festival games start at 10.30 each day at Wasps
- **Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> April** – Middlesex Senior Women v Surrey (home) at Staines RFC 2pm kick off
- **Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> May** – Middlesex Senior Men XV v Berkshire away at RAMS RFC 2pm kick off
- **Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> May** – Middlesex Senior Women v Somerset (away) 2pm kick off (venue to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> May** – Middlesex Senior Men v Sussex (home) Wasps 2pm kick off – **(see above details of pre-match lunch)**
- **Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> May** – Middlesex Senior Women v Cornwall (home) at Wasps 2pm kick off
- **Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> May** – Under 15 Girls v Hertfordshire (away) venue to be confirmed) 1pm kick off
- **Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> May** – Under 17 Boys v away (venue to be confirmed 2pm kick off

**County Annual General Meeting – Monday 4<sup>th</sup> July at Grasshoppers RFC, Syon Lane. Calling Notices will be out soon.**

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