

March Newsletter 2022

Email: countyoffice@middlesexrugby.com

President's Message

As we come to the business end of what has been a challenging return to some form of normal after the pandemic, we see many battles for top league spots. We also see lots of Clubs in safe positions but still aspiring to win their remaining games. However, I don't think we should underestimate the sheer effort that every Club has made to get their respective teams out each week and for that they should feel very proud.

I've had another active month, and it was a great honour to represent the County at the Wasps FC Quinquennial Dinner on 22nd February. On 6th March it was a trip to Teddington to see our Under 7's have their first festival experience with 54 teams from 16's Clubs participating in an excellent morning of rugby. Then in the afternoon it was off to Wasps to see a great Middlesex Under 16's squad beat Surrey. Then on Sunday it was a tour to Ruislip, Ealing and Rosslyn Park (Kings in Chiswick) to see a selection of fantastic under 8's, 10's & 11's rugby and here I have to give a big thank you for all coaches & parents for the commitment they make over a number of years to care for and develop our youngest group of players and then seeing the fantastic improvements made through their development but at the same time putting enjoyment at the centre of everything they do.

Peter

peter.baveystock@middlesexrugby.com

Message from Eddie Keal, Chair, Middlesex

Many of us on the Management Board spent yesterday at the Middlesex Minis festivals around the County. It was great to see so many youngsters out playing together and having fun. I've been on the road again this month and should average three games per week for March, which is pushing my natural limits. Thank you for the welcomes I've received. I took the RFU CEO, Bill Sweeney, to Haringey Rhinos a couple of weeks ago for a Vets fixture against Finchley and a Middlesex Merit Table Division 3 game against Hanwell.

We're still in the middle of resolving the "Lower XV's in the RFU Leagues" question with Hertfordshire, but we need to decide and announce our plan very soon. I expect Andrew will have more to say about that in his Competitions report below.

The Board has decided to assemble a small working group to advise on the future plans for the Middlesex Sevens. We know who a few key contributors will be but if you have an interest or skillset that might be useful we'd love to hear from you. Please email me or Peter Baveystock. We have in mind a few meetings and some research work over the summer months. Nothing too arduous.

Congratulations to Andrew Smart on being elected by our clubs to join me as an RFU Council Member for Middlesex. We'll be a good team for you.

I'm very much looking forward to the finals days and cup competitions to come in the near future. Between those events and the Volunteer Awards evening and County dinner, I should easily get to see every club. Please come and bend my ear!

Stay safe and well.

Eddie

eddie.keal@middlesexrugby.com

Update from Lou Latter – Chair of Rugby Development

I hope you are all enjoying the men's 6Nations and looking forward to the women's 6Nations starting.

Thank you to everyone who nominated a deserving volunteer in the Honda Volunteer of the Year nominations. There have been some great applications and we'll look forward to announcing all nominations and hosting everyone at the Middlesex Volunteer Awards on Friday 8th July.

The RFU will be running a Back in the Game Adult Male Recruitment Workshop webinar focusing on recruitment on 21st March at 7pm. To book at place use this [link](#).

Our Mini's festivals have been running well and it's great to see so many kids playing rugby with smiles on their faces again. Well done to Teddington, Rosslyn Park, Ealing and Ruislip for their festivals. The final festival will be the U11s at Wasps FC on Sunday 20th March. We then shift our attention to the St George's Day Girls festival for U11, U13, U15 and U18s. The festival runs over two days on 23rd and 24th April at Wasps FC.

Clubs are asked 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. Please also remember to get the correct tour approvals from the [Middlesex County Office](#). More details on incoming and outgoing tours can be found on the [England Rugby](#) and [Middlesex](#) websites.

Planning is already underway for next season and I'm 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.

Lou

louise.latter@middlesexrugby.com

Message from Andrew Smart, Chair of Competitions

As we limo towards the end of the season it is clear that the this can't come quick enough for many of our clubs and players. I am still waiting for all the results to come in but already I know it's already one of the worst weeks for walkovers in memory. Saturday was supposed to be the last week of the league part of our merit tables with our champions crowned. However, there are so many games outstanding, so many postponements that are still to be played or probably not, that I cannot be certain now who they are. Anyway, we have a couple of weeks until the play-off semi-finals hopefully we will get some of those games played. At the same time as we come to this time of the season with the MT Cup/Bowl/Vase and Play-Off semi-finals and Finals Days to come we will see the completion rate

go flying up. Everyone want to play in a Final but even so that won't mask what a difficult season it continues to be for us all and the worries that I have for as we look to begin again in September

So, in the Championship, as Ealing Trailfinders begin their appeal to the RFU following the decision by the RFU to bar them and Doncaster Knights from promotion to the Gallagher Premiership for next season. I am sure that I speak for us all when I wish them every success. Anyway, with two matches to go and a game in hand they are currently two points behind Doncaster Knights. No change for London Scottish who continue to struggle. They remain bottom, with one game to go now nineteen points adrift of Nottingham.

At level 5 in the London and SE Premier League CS Stags 1863 who have appealed the decision to remove them for the league after they failed to honour their fifth game of the season away at Hertford had one of the best results of the season on Saturday gaining a losing bonus point at home to Westcombe Park. They however remain winless after twenty-two rounds now forty-one points adrift from the team above.

At level 6 in L1N Belsize Park remain ninth with Old Haberdashers tenth. However, in L1S London Welsh drop to second by nine points although with a game in hand over leaders Camberley. H&F remain fourth now 18 points outside the promotion places. London Cornish, remain bottom some ten points behind London Irish Wild Geese but with a game in hand

At level 7 with only two matches left in L2NW, congratulations to both HAC and Old Priorians who are already promoted. HAC are top by 8 points and require three more to be champions whilst Old Priorians are ahead of Letchworth on points difference. Outstanding season for both clubs who

will both be playing level 6 rugby next season. Old Streetonians remain fifth, Grasshoppers sixth, Ruislip eighth, Enfield Ignatians ninth. Hampstead tenth with Hackney now up to eleventh. In L2SW Chiswick drop to fifth with a game in hand and Twickenham tenth with two games in hand.

At level 8 in L3 Essex Epping Upper Clapton go up a place to ninth with two games in hand whilst in L3NW, Finchley remain top, one point ahead of Hendon in second with a game in hand, Finsbury Park seventh and Harrow eighth.

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

In H/M1 at level 9, with two rounds London Scottish Lions, who remain unbeaten are now top by ten points and require one more to be champions, Ealing Traifinders 1871 remain third, Wasps FC fourth Saracens Amateurs fifth Kilburn Cosmos sixth, Bank of England, seventh, Thamesians eighth and Actonians now bottom. In the H/M2 League Trophy Old Millhillians re top by four points over Brunel University, Uxbridge third. In the H/M2 Plate UCS are top, by three points over West London and four over Staines who both have a game. London French fifth and Mill Hill eleventh sixth

In the Allianz Premier XVs after sixteen rounds Saracens Women are top by thirteen points with Harlequins Women remain fourth and Wasps FC Ladies up to fifth. With only two rounds until the playoffs there is still much to play for.

No too much to say about the Lower XV Opt Out vote and the on-going discussions with Hertfordshire until we hear back definitively on their position. You would have seen the joint statement that was circulated to all the clubs in both CBs from both Chairs. Ultimately with our 91% vote to opt out we

cannot move on our position and it is for Hertfordshire to find a way forward that takes consideration about the majority view of their clubs. If they can, we can continue to play against their clubs in combined leagues. If not, then are options are drastically reduced

With the end of the season fast approaching here are some dates for your diaries. Leagues at level 7 and below finish on the 2nd of April for 5 and 6 on the 23rd April. The Merit Table Cup, Bowl and Vase finals will be played on Saturday 9th April (Venue(s) to be confirmed). The North West Middlesex Floodlit Cup Final will be at Ealing Trailfinders on Tuesday 19th April. The Six MT Plate/Playoff Finals will be at Ruislip on the 23rd April and if they are happy to take the Vets Cup as well it will also be at Ruislip. If not then it will be at the ground of one of the finalists.

Keep safe

Andrew Smart

andrew-smart@ntlworld.com

Report from Chair of Groups, Andrew Smart

There is only one group meeting to report on since the February management meeting and that is the North West on 2nd March at OMTs. Nineteen of us in attendance it was great to get back to in-person but on top of that I thought that it was a tremendous meeting and an excellent example of how effective the groups are when they work well. Yes of course, it was great to back with our friends and peers and talk some rugby, yes there were the normal reports and club updates, which are so important for us in gauging the strength of our clubs and what is required to support them but there were some really excellent contributions from the floor. In particular Jatin Radia, the Ruislip Chairman raised the issue of entry fees for the County Festivals which he believes are too high. Quite reasonably he wanted an explanation of how the £95- fee had been

reached and what was the rationale behind the figure. This produced quite a lively discussion which ended with Eddie, Peter and I assuring the group that we would raise this issue at this management meeting and report back. Peter Hudspeth the Pinner President then followed up with an excellent email reinforcing the points raised by Jatin, which included the following.

“As a small club, every season our Junior Chairman has to make really tough decisions about which festivals they can and are unable to enter, due to the high costs involved. This is quite sad, as it goes against the ethos of getting the young players to play as many games as possible. The other problem that we have as a small club, is that we have to pay the entrance money in advance. Sometimes, for various reasons, we’re unable to raise a team on the day. Unfortunately, no refunds are given! I do hope this issue is looked at seriously.”

Without going on to discuss the particular issue, this is precisely what the groups are there for. Yes, they are there for the CB to ensure that clubs are kept fully up to date with the issues that they need to know about, to allow our clubs the opportunity to hold the management committee directly to account when necessary but perhaps more importantly to make sure that our clubs can raise their concerns direct to the management committee and be confident of some action

Interestingly, I had done some provisional work before the management meeting on this with some local CBs. Surrey for instance allow the host club to charge £50- per team which includes a small payment back to the CB. Hertfordshire allow their host clubs to charge the entry fees for their festivals with £50- per team for their U9 and U10 festivals raising to £70- for their U11s. I am happy to approach the other five London CBs to see what they charge if required but I think the comparisons with those two CBs alone with our own fees are pretty damning and coupled with the idea that some of our clubs cannot afford to enter their teams into our festivals because of the costs should already tell all we need to know.

KEEP UPDATED
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At the management meeting last week Louise and Waheed agreed to pick this up and report back to the board. If anyone has a contribution that they wish to make on this by all means come back to me. I will update the clubs with where we are on this at our April meetings. Good stuff and thanks to Waheed and Louise for agreeing to look at this on behalf of our clubs.

Grasshoppers have held another popular “Pick Up The Whistle Course” for our West List Clubs on the 21st and 28th February and I am delighted to report that O Grammarians will be holding a further such course for our North List Clubs on the 5th and 12th of April. If you are interested in more information or attending, please contact Graham Kantorowicz at Old Grammarians graham.kantorowicz@gmail.com. Once again, the County will reimburse any people from Middlesex Clubs completing the course.

The extra “Emergency First Aid in Rugby Course” again to be paid in full by the CB is already fully subscribed and will be hosted on Saturday 26th March by Wasps FC. Thanks to Harrow, Chiswick Grasshoppers, Old Grammarians and now Wasps FC for hosting these very successful courses for our clubs at no charge. A perfect example of the county and our clubs working together for the benefit of all.

Finally, the next round of Group meetings across April will include their AGMs. Unfortunately, Sean Burke, the North Group Secretary is starting a new business and will be stepping down from his role. It is a great shame. He has done an excellent job for his clubs and his relationship with the North Group Chair Jon Boyle in developing their Group could only have got better for the benefit of all. He is someone who has much still to contribute and we will need to find a way to bring him back in some capacity when he feels he has the time. Its great news that there have already been a couple of excellent candidates who have put themselves forward to cover his position so whatever happens the North Group will remain in good hands

To confirm the dates of the April meetings. The venues, agendas and minutes will be circulated closer to the meeting dates

4th South Group. 6th West Group. 11th North Group. 13th North West – Ruislip

Andrew Smart

andrew-smart@ntlworld.com

Coaching & Refereeing Update, Bob Lawless

During March there will be an outdoor coaching development session on Tuesday 15/03/2022 at Hazelwood, London Irish, observing skill development and gaining knowledge of the youth pathway. In addition, there will be an online referee education session on Wednesday 16/03/2022, looking at the refereeing, in and around the set scrummage and the lineout. Both these sessions will benefit the interested coach, referee, player or parents who would like to gain more knowledge on skill development and the workings of a player development programme or just gain a greater understanding of the laws of the game.

- **Coaching Development, Improving your Youth Coaching Skills**

This month presents an opportunity for Middlesex Youth Coaches to Improve their Coaching Skills and learn about the processes involved with young player development, from applying and being selected for the DPP (Developing Player Programme) and the journey through the DPP and onwards through the London Irish Academy.

London Irish DPP Manager have arranged for all coaches in attendance to view the skill development of the various groups involved with the DPP and academy. All areas of skill development will be explained in detail and also the pathway through the DPP, representative rugby and Academy & beyond.

The session will be valuable to all Middlesex Coaches involved with coaching female & male youth players.

All in attendance should wear suitable clothing and bring a notepad & Pen.

- **Who** - all Middlesex Youth Coaches are invited to view a London Irish DPP / U16s Academy Skills Development session.
- **When** - Tuesday 15th March 2022
- **Venue** - Hazelwood London Irish, TW16 6QU
- **Times** - 18.30hrs meet - 20.00hrs finish
- **To book** - a place or need further info - Email bob.lawless@middlesexrugby.com

Middlesex Referee Online Education evening.

To all referees & coaches, you are invited to an interactive online referee education evening. This will benefit all referees and coaches as the tutor will guide you through practical management of refereeing the Lineout and the Scrummage.

Theme - Refereeing the Lineout & Scrummage

When - Wednesday 16th March 2022

Time - Log in start 19.00hrs

Tutor - Simon Hardcastle, London Society

Registration - No pre-registration, log in below

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89530387756?pwd=MzBxSnhtUno5dHZDWC9KTVFUdWQ2QT09>

For further information on any of the above course please contact -(e) bob.lawless@middlesexrugby.com (m) 07803 196409.

Bob Lawless

bob.lawless@middlesexrugby.com

What's on:

Upcoming Representative Fixtures

- Sunday 20th March - Under 18 Girls 1pm to 5pm Hertfordshire (venue tbc)
- Under 16's Boys v Bucks - 2pm ko Grasshoppers
- Sunday 3rd April Under 18's Girls v Essex away (venue to be confirmed) 1pm to 5pm
- Sunday 17th April Under 18's Girls 1pm to 5pm Venue to be confirmed
- Sunday 17th April Women v Surrey (friendly) 2pm ko (venue to be confirmed)

Under 11's Festival

- Sunday 20th March - at Wasps FC

April Group Meetings

- South Group - 4th
- West Group - 6th
- North Group - 11th
- North West - 13th Ruislip

County Dinner 29th April 2022

To book a place contact Mark Coles mark.coles@middlesexrugby.com and to pay:

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

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