

May Newsletter 2022

Email: countyoffice@middlesexrugby.com

President's Message

County Dinner – After a long wait the County Dinner took place on 29th April at London Welsh with 74 in attendance which included 28 of our Clubs. We will be sending out a survey to those who attended to give their feedback which will help us plan next years County Dinner. However, we'd also like to get feedback from those who didn't attend, and we'll be looking to see what's the best way to do this but if any of you would like to email me with any specific reasons for not attending then please drop me an email and the organising group will discuss them.

As you will appreciate it's been a very busy period both on and off the pitch, but I'd like to start by offering my sincere condolences to John Gunner and his family for the sad loss of John's wife, Julie Gunner after a long illness. We'll be sending the funeral arrangements out from the County Office in due course.

It's great at this time of the year to be able to go and present winning plaques to our winning Clubs and this was especially so on 6th May when I popped into the UCS Old Boys end of season dinner to present the Herts & Middlesex 2 plate trophy to them with League Secretary, Vic Devers and then on Saturday 14th May I popped into the Whitton Lions end of season BBQ to present their Middlesex Merit Table 3 winner's trophy.

Representative Rugby has been full on and it was great to see so many "Blazers" at the Senior XV's fixtures when we played Berkshire at Rams on 7th May and Sussex at Wasps on 14th May. We lost to Berkshire but had a great win against Sussex, so

we'll await that result to see if we're in a play off which is scheduled to be played at Richmond on Saturday 4th June.

The Senior Women have played two Championship games away to Somerset on 8th May when I saw them win well and at home to Cornwall on 15th May just losing 5-10 in what was a fantastic game so well done to the Players, Coaches and Managers of all of our representative sides.

I was updating Past President, Charlie Madge, who was Team Secretary for 18 years, on the Senior XV games and he mentioned a game against Munster in the late 1970's and he recalled the game in which they beat Munster 28-6 with Middlesex Coach, Earle Kirton telling the Munster boys that they were going to get stuffed by the All Blacks but they beat them, so this proved to be a great win!

Peter

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Message from Eddie Keal, Chair, Middlesex

May is proving to be the busy month we all expected. The Management Board is out in force, including some travelling greater distances to watch our teams in the County Championships. Full marks to Peter Baveystock for going to Weston-super-Mare on Sunday 8th May to watch Middlesex Women beat Somerset. I will be at Westcliff next Sunday to watch the Middlesex U15 girls play Essex and Hertfordshire. I know we had County representation at three matches on Sunday 15th May and a good showing of support on Saturday at Twyford Avenue to support the senior Middlesex men.

All the fixtures are on the website, although I find a combination of Instagram (for the team lists) and WhatsApp the best way to manage my diary. I do

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meet a lot of new faces “on the road” supporting our age-grade teams and would encourage all of you to support all of our teams.

The County dinner at London Welsh was a great success, the AGM in July is a matter of weeks away.

We’re beginning to see (and disseminate) information about next season and the make-up of leagues and tables. The Management Board will be having a budget and business planning session in early June to plan our approach to supporting as much direct rugby activity as possible.

Most clubs are now winding down their rugby activity and planning their summer refurbishments, pitch treatments and such-like, but please find time to take a break. It’s been a difficult season in so many ways and we all need a little time off.

I’m looking forward to seeing many of you very soon, hopefully at a county game.

Stay safe and well.

Eddie

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Update from Lou Latter – Chair of Rugby Development

As the season draws to a close there is still a lot to do for Rugby Development.

A successful St George’s Day festival was held across the weekend of 23rd – 24th April after a two-year break. Over 500 girls enjoyed their rugby across the four age groups. Thank you to all those that helped out across the weekend.

It was exciting to hear the news that England will host the Women’s Rugby World Cup in 2025. We are currently in the planning stages as we prepare for the introduction of the girls new age bandings in September as the girls change to U12, U14, U16 and

U18 age groups. This will include new playing opportunities, educational sessions and a Girls U16 DPP programme. Further information will come out over the coming months.

A reminder to all Age Grade teams to refer to the [summer activity guidance](#) should you wish to offer activities over the summer.

We have conducted a review of the Mini Festivals registrations fees following feedback from clubs. We are pleased that we will change the entry fee structure for U7 – U11 age group festivals for the 2022-2023 season. We shall send out communications on this at the start of the season when we start preparing for the March festivals.

We are pleased to have sent out messages of congratulations and invitations to all our club volunteers nominated for the Honda Volunteer of the Year recognition programme. We are looking forward to welcoming everyone to the Middlesex awards evening on Friday 8th July.

For our schoolteachers, there is an Introduction to Coaching course planned for 26th May at Queensmead School, Ruislip. Use this [link](#) to book on.

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. Please also ensure that you are familiar with the playing up and down regulations. We must maintain player safety and welfare and not play players out of their age group without the correct approvals. Please note, playing up is NOT allowed in girls rugby.

I’m still recruiting for new volunteers to join the Rugby Development. If you would like to find out

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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

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Message from Andrew Smart, Chair of Competitions

With the 2021/22 season now finished I can announce the results of those competitions that had yet to be completed at the time of my last report

The NW Floodlit Cup 19/4/2022 - Ealing Trafinders RFC
Uxbridge 9-44 Old Priorians U25s

Vets Cup Final 22/4/2022 - Wasps FC
Chiswick Vets 7-5 Old Priorians Vets

Middx Merit Table Plate & Play-Offs 23/4/2022 - Ruislip RFC

Premier MT KO Plate- H&F 2nds 13-28 HAC 2nds
MMT1 Play-Off- Belsize Park 3rds 17-40 Old Streetonians 2nds

MMT2 Play-Off- H&F 4ths 14-32 Twickenham 2nds

MMT3 Play-Off Hanwell 15-26 Old Isleworthians

MMT4 Play-Off Ealing Exiles 21-41 Harrow 2nds

MMT5 Play-Off Belsize Park Bulls 7-5 Northolt

After such a difficult season it was great to see so many people enjoying themselves. Great afternoon of rugby at Ruislip and a fitting end to the MT season. Well hosted, great support from the London

Society of Referee with all that is great about our game to the fore. Well supported by the President and other members of the Management Committee

The final Merit Table title was settled on Friday 6th May with London Welsh Vets travelling to Grasshoppers Vets under lights in a top of the table clash in Vets MT2. In a cracking game London Welsh Vets won 39-31 to take the title and promotion for next season.

In the Allianz Premier XVs with all eighteen rounds now completed the four play-off teams are now decided with Saracens Women top by eleven points, guaranteed a home semi-final this Saturday against fourth placed Harlequins Women. Wasps FC Ladies finished fifth.

The most important news for our clubs concerned to the decision by FCS Implementation Team not to allow Old Albanians and Hertford 2nds a place in the league for next season. Tring 2nds and 3rds who are on the border have been allowed to play next season in the BBO Leagues. Work continues to find the two clubs an alternative competition offering to suit their needs probably in the Red Bull leagues

At the same time with that issue now settled I was finally able to put together the Herts and Middlesex combined leagues for next season from level 7 downwards which were submitted to Twickenham on Friday morning 6th May for ratification. These have been agreed. However, as with everything to do with competitions over the last couple of years it was not straightforward. At level 7 on top of the three clubs guaranteed promotion a fourth club (Fullerians) also went up on "best playing record". With no relegations down to and including level 7 to take their place we are down four clubs before we even started

On top of that Cuffley, have withdrawn from the leagues for next season whilst Staines and London French made written requests for permanent level transfers to Surrey. Both applications were supported at the Middlesex Management Committee. The requests by London French who already play their home games in Surrey and Staines who are very close to the border are understandable and made sense for both clubs. A similar application by Brunel University both to level transfer and be promoted to level 7 in Surrey was rejected out of hand at meetings of the CB Management Committee, the RFU Competitions Sub Committee and also FCS Implementation Team. The loss of Staines and London French however means that we now have ten Middlesex Clubs subject to permanent level transfer all playing their rugby outside Middlesex.

So, working on which clubs were left and taking into consideration the request by Chiswick subject to a level transfer for this season to 2SW to return to our leagues, which we were delighted to accept, that left us with 37 clubs. I considered any number of options before arriving at the following four.

1. 10,10,10,7-
2. 10,10,9,8-
3. 10,9,9,9-
4. 12,12,13 (with the league splitting after the first round of games 7/6 giving the top seven, 18 games and the remaining six ,17 matches

In the end I went for option four. There were pros and cons for each that I am happy to go through in detail should I be asked but ultimately the primary considerations were that the last option guaranteed the clubs the most rugby and provided the most competitive leagues. Perhaps a lesser consideration but important nevertheless after such a torrid season this option ensured that none of those 37 clubs would be relegated. Indeed, fifteen will now be playing at a higher league next season. As yet because of an embargo by the RFU I am currently unable to confirm the composition of next season's leagues until their formal announcement but hopefully there is now far more clarity about next

season than we have had since the end of the league season on the 2nd April

It is not perfect by any means but I believe that it is the best way forward for the vast majority of our clubs

The next significant issue is the Structured Season which whilst it is still to be confirmed will see the majority of our clubs at level 7 and below starting in either the first or second week of September and definitely finishing our league campaigns on the 18th March. Then to be followed by the new National Cup Competitions over the next six weeks or so for those clubs that wish to enter. I suspect however that when clubs across the country become aware of what is being envisaged and the timetable there will be some quite significant "rumblings of discontent". It is apparently what we wanted during the FCS Consultation period. It will be interesting to see if that "remains" the case once clubs see the detail.

Finally, the invitations for next season's Merit Tables will be circulated later in the week

Keep safe

Andrew Smart

andrew-smart@ntlworld.com

Report from Chair of Groups, Andrew Smart

Had a very good Officers wrap up meeting last Wednesday with each Group reporting fully on where they thought they were and where they saw themselves going forward. Generally, all the Groups were pretty positive but whilst they all agreed that attendance could be better. They were all very supportive of the Newsletter and the All-Club's meetings which they all thought were excellent and should definitely continue but despite their success they didn't believe that they detracted from the work and importance of the Groups. It was agreed that the Group format far more than any other was absolutely crucial in holding the County Management Board to account

and as importantly ensuring that there was a strong and direct communication link between the clubs and their CB.

We all believe that it is crucial that the individual Groups are allowed to develop as their Clubs through their Officers see best but some areas of discussion aimed at refreshing and improving the offering to our clubs included the following

1. Combining some of the meetings i.e., West/South and North West/North-Via Zoom to improve attendance and interest
2. Having dedicated Zoom meetings (at least one per Group to see if it improves attendance both at that meeting and across the season)
3. No requirement for a return to "Presentations" at each meeting unless it is necessary and not if its own sake
4. Each Group to look at whether the numbers of meetings work for them
5. First and last meetings of the season to be "In person". The Group Officers to decide on the others

So, plenty of work for the Group Officers do but a clear appetite to improve and refresh the offering for our Clubs.

The election of the Group Chair for next season in the hands of the Group Secretary Simon Hardcastle

Finally, hopefully you would have seen this circulation from the County Office last Thursday. If not, can I urge you to make sure your club doesn't miss out.

Reminder of May Deadline for International Ticketing Allocation

The deadline of 20 May is fast approaching for clubs to enter their non RFU league fixtures in the Game Management System. By doing adding your 15 a side fixtures played, will help your indicative allocation sent out later this summer.

RFU Voting Clubs

- Every voting club receives an initial allocation of **six tickets**.
- Each voting club with an aggregate total of 30 players or more at U13 and below correctly registered on GMS, will receive an additional **two tickets**.
- **All remaining tickets** to be divided between voting clubs, based on the number of 15 a side games played by the club (male and female teams). U14 -U18 age grade teams are limited to a maximum credit of 16 matches per season in accordance with the RFU Age Grade Code of Practice.

Fixtures need to be in 'Approved' status with a result entered to count toward the allocation.

If you have any questions around the process or need any help with getting your fixtures on the system, please feel free to come back to me

Andrew Smart

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Coaching & Refereeing Update, Bob Lawless

Referee Development

Saturday 21/05/2022, is the final day of the RFU Young Match Officials award course. Middlesex have supported **12** young player between the ages of U16s & U18s through this year long course.

Take up the Whistle Courses

The London Society of Referees have run **6** of these "Take up The Whistle" courses in Middlesex Clubs. The participating clubs were Twickenham RFC, Enfield Ignatians, Northolt RFC, Old Grammarians RFC and Grasshoppers RFC have run 2 sessions. Other courses have been run in Surrey and Essex where Middlesex players have been in attendance.

In total **102** players / former players both F/M from Middlesex have attended these courses. Thanks to Andrew Smart, Paul Carrol, Rob Park, Steve Byles & Bob Ockenden for making these courses possible.

England Rugby Refereeing Award (ERRA), The RFU have run an ERRA award course in Harrow School. **16** interested referees from Middlesex attended this course.

In total, Middlesex have in our Member Clubs **130** new trained referees, this season.

Ongoing education referee support has been available to all these new referees in the form of a monthly on-line interactive education sessions provided by Simon Hardcastle of Middlesex and London Society of Referees. Simon has delivered the following themes – New Law Variations, refereeing the scrummage, refereeing the lineout, refereeing the contact area and open play and refereeing the 7 a side game. These sessions have been run on more than one occasion to accommodate availability. In total **329** interested referees have attended these on-line interactive webinars

Middlesex Mentoring Programme

Following an advertising campaign in summer months Coaches were identified and attended the RFU mentoring Programme. In addition, Middlesex advertised for interested coaches who would like assistance on their coaching pathway. **5** Middlesex Mentors overseen by RFU Coach Developer Grant Hathaway have worked to develop the mentoring of **12** Middlesex mentees through the coaching pathway. **3** of the mentees are waiting to enrol on the RFU Advanced Coaching Award.

Middlesex Coaching Development

Middlesex coach development programme is a free education programme to assist all coaches both F/M coaching at any level of the game to gain further knowledge from on line and on field learning.

A total of **8** sessions were delivered by experienced coaching tutors. The themes were – developing a

coaching philosophy, designing a coaching session, creative skill development, understanding back play, what is trending in the professional game and coaching the 7 a side game. Some of these sessions were run on more than one occasion to accommodate coaches' availability. A total of **192** Middlesex Coaches attended these coach education sessions.

In addition, there are **420** coaches / assists enrolled on the RCDtv weekly circular which gives them access to over 2,500 coaching skill drills. This platform also allows Middlesex clubs to advertise coaching vacancies. This season have seen a record number of clubs advertising with some success.

RFU Coaching Courses

The RFU have run the following Coaching Courses in Middlesex, Play it safe, kids first contact, principles of scrummaging, principles of lineout and the England Rugby Coaching Award. Some of these courses have been run on more than one occasion. In total **170** Middlesex Coaches have enrolled on GMS to attend these courses

Middlesex Summer Coaching Programme,

Middlesex will continue the coaching development around the County with the following themes, building a Safe Scrummage, Youth Skill Development during the summer months. These free courses will be advertised through the Middlesex social media platforms and through the monthly newsletter.

Middlesex have opportunities for interested persons to attend an RFU England Rugby Refereeing Award (ERRA) or an RFU Mentoring Award. Please contact the details below for more information.

For any other information on coaching, mentoring & refereeing development please contact me direct on Bob Lawless on (E) bob.lawless@middlesexrugby.com or (M) 07803 196 409

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

Bob Lawless

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What's on:

Open Coaching Education Evening, Thursday 19th May 2022 at Hazelwood, London Irish RFU Regional Academy

Improve your coaching knowledge of Player Skill Development_

🏉 Suitable for all Youth & Senior Coaches both F & M,

🏉 Theme - What's Trending in Regional Academy Player Skill Development.

LOGISTICS

Venue - Outdoors at London Irish, Hazelwood TW16 6QU

Date - Thursday 19th May

Time - 18.15 hrs Start

Tutors - Regional Academy Coaches.

🏉 Note - DPP Manager Rhys Davies, will assure a quality of experience, through explanation and close observation of innovative & creative skills you can take away and develop your players.

🏉 To register your attendance WhatsApp or text Bob Lawless (M) 07803 196409

- Sunday 22nd May – Women Senior XV – Away to Dorset & Wilts, Royal Wootton Bassett RFC, 3pm kick off.
- Sunday 22nd May – Under 15's Girls – away at Westcliffe RFC 1pm – Tournament Essex, Herts & Middlesex, 1pm start provisional.
- Sunday 22nd May – Under 17's boys – At home to Herts at Grasshoppers, 2pm kick off.
- Sunday 29th May – Under 15's girls – Tournament starts at 10am at Wasps including Middlesex, Berks, Bucks & Kent
- Sunday 29th May – Under 17's boys – At home to Devon at Grasshoppers – 1pm kick off.

Please note, If you're going to any of these games it's worth checking the location and kick off time to be absolutely sure.

- **Friday 27th May the Presidents Walk**
Revisited event start at 11am from Chiswick RFC walking to Twickenham
- **County Annual General Meeting – Monday 4th July at Grasshoppers RFC, Syon Lane. Calling Notices will be out soon.**

Upcoming Representative Fixtures

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