

November Newsletter 2022

Email: countyoffice@middlesexrugby.com

President's Message

Brian East (Past President) – It is with great sadness that I must inform you of the sad passing of Brian East on 11th November 2022 after a fight with pancreatic cancer at his home in Harpenden. Brian was a true gentleman and always had a positive approach to rugby which is borne out by many of the messages that I've already received.

Brian's first role within the County was in 89/90 as league Sec Herts/Middlesex League and held a number of similar positions until he was asked onto the then 7's Committee in 2000, enlisted by great friend and fellow Old Vulgarian, David Gershlick. Brian became a great supporter of Old Vulgarians, and along with Sue, went on many tours with them.

The County soon spotted Brian's talents and he became County Secretary in 2004 and held the role until 2010. During that time, he served on Community Rugby (now Rugby Development) supporting both myself and current Chair, Louise Latter. Brian and Sue also threw themselves into supporting women & girls representative rugby.

Brian went on to become president 2014-2016 and was a great mentor to me personally throughout my involvement with the County. After completing his stint as President, he took on the role of North Group Chair, where he continued to display his ability to encourage those around him.

Brian's skills and enthusiasm were also evident with his beloved Belsize Park where he was an outstanding supporter and administrator borne out when I spoke to their Chair, Tom Symond on Friday.

Our heartfelt condolences go out to Brian's daughters, Alex & Emmeline along with the rest of his family at this sad time and we will let you know of the funeral arrangements when we have them. In the meantime, if anyone would like to send letters of cards of condolence then they can be sent to Alex Reay, 35 Stanfell Road, Leicester. LE23GD.

I look forward to seeing you at the remaining Group Meetings.

Kind regards

Peter

peter.baveystock@middlesexrugby.com

Message from Eddie Keal, Chair, Middlesex

I hope you all continue to appreciate the regularity of these Newsletters. I know they are very popular. The hard part is getting them out every month in a timely fashion, which is down to the efforts of all the contributors. Similarly, we work hard to get Management Board minutes to you within days of a meeting.

I can't resist promoting the Middlesex 7s, even though the competition won't be until 13th May. We have changed the formula to something simpler and more local to appeal to Middlesex Clubs. I'd like to see every club represented by at least one team. Costs will be minimal and we're recycling all the revenues back into our own clubs. Part of that is done by holding the competition at a Middlesex club ground, to be decided by open tender.

I am enjoying this current round of Group meetings. Themes for this round include how to get more and better engagement from our clubs members and topics include Competitions (including RFU Leagues and Merit Tables), enhancing the role of Groups and Club of the Future. If you want to get involved in any of those topics, please shout! We have had a lot of interest

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in the two meetings so far, and I expect more from North-West and North Group which are in the next week.

We will be out and about on Club visits. I look forward to seeing many of you.

Regards

Eddie

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Update from Lou Latter – Chair of Rugby Development

Kia Ora from New Zealand. What a brilliant RWC2021 final we had in Auckland on Saturday. Congratulations to New Zealand but wow, what a performance by the Red Roses. Whilst the Red Roses couldn't quite bring the trophy home they have certainly inspired us all and now pass the world cup baton to their male counterparts as we start to build up to RWC2023 in France in 9 months' time.

The national Honda Volunteer of the Year Awards were held at Twickenham on Friday 28th October. Will Gilgrass of Old Streetonians and Jasmine Ono/Catherine Thomas of Kilburn Cosmos represented Middlesex as they were the overall winners from the Middlesex Volunteer of the Year awards back in July. Congratulations to Will Gilgrass who was the national winner of the Game for All category You can view the announcement and videos by the links below.
<https://www.englandrugby.com/news/article/honda-volunteer-of-the-year-winners-announced>
<https://twitter.com/RFU/status/1587051761486901248?cxt=HHwWgMCtueTKq4YsAAAA>
<https://we.tl/t-9qvjFm1pzi>

A reminder the Club Safeguarding Officers need to complete the Club Safeguarding Audit by 31st December 2022. This is available on GMS and if you have any issues then please do reach out to the Middlesex Safeguarding Officer, Neil Horchover.

The Saracens Foundation are running a free webinar as part of their Empower Her programme on Body Image and Self Confidence, with guest speaker Ellie Boatman (England and GB rugby seven's player, Harlequins rugby player and Looseheadz ambassador) taking place on Friday 18th November at 7pm. You can access the Microsoft Teams invite here.

The Middlesex Financial Support Fund has again been well received with over 50 applications and over £6,000 paid out to date.

Stay safe

Lou

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Message from Andrew Smart, Chair of Competitions

I start this report with a copy of what I have sent to the London and SE ROC before their meeting on Monday evening about the state of our game across Hertfordshire and Middlesex which I am afraid make some pretty grim reading

"As we go into the weekend of the 12th November, we continue to see the stresses that bedevil the community game in Herts and Middx in both the leagues and Merit Tables

To date our three Herts and Middlesex Counties leagues have seen nine walkovers, two of our clubs withdrawing from the league altogether and now playing their rugby in our merit tables, with another about to make an imminent decision about their own future and all by November

The picture is much worse in both the Middlesex and Herts and Middlesex Merit Tables facing unprecedented walkover rates, organisers have already had to re-vamp part of their competitions in an effort to try to ensure that those clubs that can play do and those that clearly can't have an alternative competition offering outside the regulated competition. Even in the Middx top merit table one 2ndxv of a level 6 club hasn't yet been able to honour any of their fixtures and our champion side from last season has failed to raise a team on tour occasions so far. If these are the problems at the top of the merit tables you can only imagine the carnage further down

As far as I am concerned the game across our two CBs is in a perilous state. Yes of course there are a few clubs bucking the trend but far too many fighting every week just to honour league fixtures, savaged by the impact of an unforgiving, uncaring and ridiculous structured season that as much as anything is driving players away from our game. The knock-on effect on the lower teams of clubs just to get out 1stxv is there for all to see. Unfortunately, what many of have predicted as we argued against the direction of travel by the FCS, exacerbated by the extra problems created by this structured season has and is causing untold damage to our game and for our clubs"

Despite these strains on our game and clubs, rugby of course continues to be played and it is time for an update on how our clubs are doing

In the Championship Ealing Trailfinders have had a perfect start with seven try bonus point wins, two points above Jersey Reds who are also unbeaten. Unfortunately, London Scottish continue to struggle and are currently bottom now seven points adrift with only a couple of bonus points to show for their efforts so far.

At level 5, in Regional 1 Central, London Welsh after a couple of wins, have moved up out of the relegation places into eighth. In their sister league Regional 1 South-East CS Stags 1863 have dropped slightly off the pace and are currently fifth

In Regional 2 Anglia HAC after a one-point loss at the new leaders Letchworth and a postponed fixture after the referee got injured after ten minutes at home to Brentwood drop to third now eight points behind Letchworth the new leaders. In Regional 2 Thames Hammersmith and Fulham, remain unbeaten and top after ten rounds with ten try bonus point victories averaging 51 points a game with Old Priorians now thirteen points behind in second place. London Cornish remain fifth with Old Haberdashers eleventh and currently in one of the two relegation places five points adrift of safety

At level 7 in Counties 1 Essex, Epping Upper Clapton remain tenth. In Counties 1 Herts/Middx Grasshoppers now lead the table by five points with Old Streetonians dropping to third, Chiswick up one place to fourth, Finchley up two to seventh, Hampstead remain eighth, Ruislip with two games in hand up to tenth, Enfield Ignatians drop to eleventh and Hackney with a game in hand remain bottom. In Counties 1 Surrey/Sussex Twickenham are fifth but with two games in hand

At level 8, in Counties 2 Surrey, Teddington unbeaten sit proudly top by four points and with a game in hand points whilst London Exiles move up to eleventh. In Counties 2 Herts/Middx Ealing Trailfinders 1871 remain top by one point over London Scottish Lions who have a game in hand. Saracens Amateurs are fourth six points behind Ealing but with two games in hand, Hendon sixth, Wasps FC up to seventh, Harrow remain eleventh with Finsbury Park bottom.

At level nine in Surrey 3, Staines are bottom now with minus one point after they failed to honour one of their fixtures, ten points adrift of the clubs above them. In Counties 3 Herts/Middx Brunel University who remain unbeaten drop to second by three points, after their fixture at Kilburn Cosmos had to be postponed on Saturday. Old Millhillians up to third, UCS up seven places from bottom to fourth Bank Lane rise two places to sixth, Thamesians are seventh, Actonians eighth Uxbridge ninth with Kilburn Cosmos tenth but with a couple of games in hand

At level ten in Surrey 4, Old Paulines up to second and Harlequin Amateurs drop to fifth but with a game in hand London French on minus five after failing to honour a fixture are tenth and bottom

At level 11 in Surrey 5, Old Hamptonians are top by five points with maximum points and a game in hand.

The Allianz Premier XVs begin this weekend.

The merit tables continue to struggle. This week saw the start of the new MMT4 competition, and I am delighted to say that in its first week of competition we have seen a 100% completion rate for games played. At the same time unfortunately in our top merit table we have seen four of the five games go to walkovers. This is supposedly a level 8 competition containing the seconds teams of our highest ranked clubs and yet one game could be played out of five because at least four of the teams were unable to raise sides. I will do a full report on the merit tables for the next newsletter as we go into the Christmas break, but it is really disappointing and shows the impact the struggles that so many of our league sides are having getting out teams. I finish with a paragraph of my management report from last week which hopefully will give you some idea of where I think we need to be for next season if our game is not to collapse completely

"The community game continues to be under real stress, not only in Middlesex, but also across the division and pretty much across the whole country and the problems facing the league teams are magnified for those playing in CB merit tables. We continue to see high levels of walkovers and too many one-sided games and nothing I see or hear from the RFU or indeed anyone else gives me any confidence that they have any realistic plans that are going to change that and whilst I understand that there is an acceptance finally that this season's structured season was a mistake it has nevertheless contributed significantly to the decline in the male adult game playing figures. I have already told anyone that is prepared to listen that if there is not a more sensible structured season on the table for next season with guaranteed regular breaks for players, the only way

that I can provide that for our clubs in the Herts/Middlesex Counties Competitions is to drop from twelve to ten club leagues. I have always felt that 12 team leagues with 22 matches is the preferable option but without the breaks promised by the FCS we will have no option but to create them ourselves by playing fewer games. What this season has reinforced is that there are too many players who don't want to play week in and week out unless we provide enough guaranteed breaks across the season, we will continue to drive players away and our clubs will continue to struggle"

If anyone has any other ideas or wishes to contribute to the debate about our leagues and merit tables, I would be delighted to hear from you. The more people who can and do contribute the more chance we have to get things right for next season. I clearly don't have the answers at the moment and any help, suggestions and advice would be really appreciated

Keep safe

Andrew Smart

andrew-smart@ntlworld.com

Report from Chair of Groups, Andrew Smart

As I write we are in the middle of the November round of Group Meetings and by the time you read this we would have had the West group meeting last Wednesday on Zoom, the South Group on Monday at Teddington with the North West at Harrow on Wednesday. I will circulate the details for the North Group once confirmed by their Officers, but it is good to be back with some in person meetings and I still believe that a combination of both Zoom and in person meetings are the best way forward.

You might have seen from the minutes of the Management meeting last Tuesday that Tim, Eddie and I are beginning a discussion around the way forward for our groups. There is room for one more person on this sub-committee and if anyone feels

that they wish to part of that discussion then please let me know. The Groups are the link between the CB and its clubs and vice versa and remain absolutely the right way forward. The success of the All-Club meetings, together with how quickly Simon Hardcastle is getting out to our clubs the monthly management minutes plus the monthly newsletter has all meant that Middlesex is able to get information out to its clubs and members much quicker and with real detail than we did before the pandemic. That of course has impacted on the traditional role provided by the Group. This is not a discussion about getting rid of the Groups but to improve what we have, make them more relevant to our clubs and protect their position which is guaranteed in our constitution.

The recent RFU Club audit identified a number of Middlesex Clubs in danger of losing their Voting Statuses and with it their guaranteed allocation of International Tickets. I have now written to those at risk, first of all, to let them know where they stand, to explain the criteria required to maintain their status and finally to provide some ideas about what we can do to support them to maintain it. There is no doubt that the majority of these clubs are playing in failing merit tables, but I am confident that by providing both early warning of their position and some credible playing options to ensure that they get over the line in relation to the number of games they need to play this season to be safe we should be able to ensure the continued voting status for the majority of these clubs. I am confident that working together we will be able to ensure that they reach the required threshold and I have guaranteed that I will continue to monitor each of them going forward keeping them individually updated with where they currently stand and make sure that they get over the line and retain their status.

The "Pick up the Whistle" Courses being held across the four Groups are continuing to prove very popular with 20 completing the West group course at Grasshoppers in September and nineteen on the

North Group course at Old Grammarians with has just been completed over the 3d and 10th November. I can confirm that the North-West Group course will be held at Harrow RFC on the 23rd and 30th January with the South Group course at Twickenham in April dates to be confirmed. Once again, many thanks to Bob Ockenden from the London Society of Referees and our own Bob Lawless for all their work in getting these courses organized and running and of course to the county for continued financial support. Joining details for the Harrow course will be coming out shortly. At a time when the North and West Referees list continues to struggle to allocate referees to our game these are absolutely crucial in identifying and supporting the referees of the future without whom we would have no game at all.

Andrew Smart
Chairman Group Officers

andrew-smart@ntlworld.com

Coaching & Refereeing Update, Bob Lawless

The November coaching theme is "What's Trending in the Academy & DPP"

These open Coach Education Evenings are suitable to all Middlesex Youth & Senior Coaches.

These are outdoor sessions, where those registered will be guided by the DPP manager Rhys Davies, who will assure a quality of experience through explanation and close observation of innovative & creative skills you can take away to develop your players.

Coaches need to wrap up warm and bring a pen & pad to take notes.

Wednesday 23rd November 2022 – Harrow School – start 18.15hrs- 20.30hrs

To register your interest contact Bob Lawless (e) bob.lawless@middlesexrugby.com or text or WhatsApp (M) 07803 196 409

RFU Coaching Courses for November 2022 “Principles of Scrummage”

Find below a link to join the upcoming Scrum coach development evening at Wasps on 23/11/22. This is an excellent course which will give you technical knowledge and confidence in delivery, in areas of safety & technique of scrummaging.

<https://bit.ly/ScrumWasps231122>

Referee Development

This season to date, has seen 4 “Take up the Whistle” referee courses being run at Grasshoppers, Wasps, Ealing & Old Grammarians with 64 new interested referees being trained up to referee local games.

Further “Take up the Whistle” Referee courses are being arranged at the following venues.

Mondays 17th 24th April 2023 - “Take up the Whistle Course” Venue Twickenham RFC

“Take up the Whistle Course” Young Match officials Course – Grasshoppers & Finchley Dates TBC

“Take up the Whistle Course” at Harrow RFC, Dates TBC

For Further Information or any queries on Coaching or Referee development contact Bob Lawless Middlesex Chair of Coaching & Referee Development on bob.lawless@middlesexrugby.com or on (M) 07803 196 409 by call, text or WhatsApp.

What's On

RFU GMS Coaching Courses

- Wednesday 23rd November 2022 – Harrow School – start 18.15hrs- 20.30hrs

To register your interest contact Bob Lawless (e) bob.lawless@middlesexrugby.com or text or WhatsApp (M) 07803 196 409

Middlesex Schools Finals at Grasshoppers 29th Nov – 2nd December 2022

Tuesday 29 Nov		
U15 Festival	2	10:00 - 12:00
U15 Plate	1	13:30 - 14:30
U14 Plate	1	14:45 - 15:45
U14 Cup	1	15:45 - 16:45
Wednesday 30 Nov		
U18 Festival	3	12:00 - 15:30
U18 Plate	1	10:00 to 11:00
Thursday 1 Dec		
U16 Plate	1	10:00 - 11:00
U16 Festival	2	11:00 - 15:35
Friday 2 Dec		
U12 Festival	3	10:00 - 15:00

Sunday 11th December Under 20's Finals – Grasshoppers RFC from 1pm

Hold the Date - Middlesex Clubs Dinner

Friday 19th May at London Welsh RFC

Guest Speaker RFU Chairman, Tom Ilube

- £65 per head
- RFU League Winners Awards to be presented
- Lots of interactive stuff

Booking details out soon

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