

## February Newsletter 2022

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

### President's Message

Wow, the days are getting longer, and we'll soon be back to 3pm kick offs. However, I must admit that I've become very fond of Friday Night's under lights, and especially the company of Andy Smart to watch: London Scottish Lions v Wasps, Grasshoppers v Old Streetonians (at Grasshoppers) & UCS v Old Milihillians (at Stonex). In relation to Saturday fixtures, I visited Old Grammarians v Saracens Amateurs on 11<sup>th</sup> February and Hampstead v Grasshoppers on 18<sup>th</sup> February.

On the Age Grade front it was over to High Wycombe last Sunday to see two squads of Under 16 Girls play Bucks in a round robin session which ended pretty even across the two squads but more importantly we saw some great rugby enjoyed by the girls.

I'm pleased that the RFU will be giving room to finish the league season but hope to see more of you during the end of season cup competitions.

Kind regards

Peter

[peter.baveystock@middlesexrugby.com](mailto:peter.baveystock@middlesexrugby.com)

### Message from Charles Portsmouth, Treasurer

**Club financial statements** - It is a condition of membership of the County that we receive copies of the latest set of Club Accounts or Financial Statements. This enables the County to meet the RFU's requirement for us to monitor the financial health of our member Clubs. The due date for receipt of the financial statements / accounts is 30 September each year.

There are a significant number of clubs who have not sent copies of their accounts relating to Season 2021/22.

If this is the case for your Club, please email a copy directly to me:

[charles.portsmouth@middlesexrugby.com](mailto:charles.portsmouth@middlesexrugby.com) or to the County Office [accounts@middlesexrugby.com](mailto:accounts@middlesexrugby.com).

**Membership Subscriptions** - At the end of 2022, Lloyds Bank retired the direct debit system the County used to collect the annual membership subscriptions.

We will therefore be asking Clubs to set up a standing order to pay their future annual subscription. In March, we will be writing to all Club Treasurers asking Clubs set up the Standing Order for next season's subscription.

Thanks, in anticipation.

Kind regards

Charles

### Message from Eddie Keal, Chair, Middlesex

What a busy month! Who knew the issue of tackle height could generate such passion. It just goes to show, if you handle something badly you get a lot more attention than when you do things well. We've tried very hard to keep the County updated on the issue. I've talked about it on all four group meetings and we have the second All Clubs meeting on the topic tonight, Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February.

Those All Clubs meetings will continue throughout the proposed consultation period and then the implementation phase, if that is what the County requires. We're hoping to engage a broad audience across the whole game, as the regulation change, when it arrives, will be for everyone at all levels in the Community Game.

On another topic where communication hasn't landed as we intended, last month's Newsletter

mention of the search for a new Deputy President may have also given the wrong impression. All County positions are open to applicants in the normal way.

That is, the County Secretary will give notice several weeks before the AGM. The Management Board may, if they choose to, put forward their own nominations at that time. What we were trying to do was comply with our own Diversity and Inclusion Policy and make sure the net was cast as widely as possible (see my words from last month's Newsletter).

The County Policy says (amongst other things) "It is committed to promoting diversity, in its widest sense, in the composition of its Board, Committees and volunteers such that it reflects wider society and in particular Middlesex." There is no cause for alarm that we may have invented a new process without consultation! We'll leave that to the RFU tackle height folk.

Please spend some time on your volunteer nominations. They are so important.

Please enter the Middlesex Sevens! We are aiming to make it a day of celebration and fun for the whole County. This will not be the last you hear from me on that topic!

Regards

Eddie

[eddie.keal@middlesexrugby.com](mailto:eddie.keal@middlesexrugby.com)

### **Update from Lou Latter – Chair of Rugby Development**

I hope you are enjoying the Men's 6 Nations. There have certainly been some cracking matches to feast on.

As a reminder, the [Honda Volunteer of the Year nominations](#) are now open and **deadline for entries is 5pm on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February.**

Nominations will not be accepted after the entry deadline so please do get nominating your club volunteers. So far, we have had 43 nominations from 19 clubs so I know there are still more nominations to be submitted. All nominees from Middlesex clubs will be invited to our awards evening at Twickenham Stadium on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> July, where we will announce the overall volunteer winners and club winners.

For those with funding requirements, Sport England have relaunched the [Sport England Small Grants programme](#). The grant has a maximum potential grant of £15,000 and any application should have planning consent or landlord's consent submitted with the application and the project be ready to start within 6 weeks of the award date. Closing date is 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

This week's sees the start of the Middlesex Mini's festivals. We look forward to seeing our younger age grade players enjoying their festival experiences.

U7s – Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> March at Teddington

U8s – Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> March at Rosslyn Park

U9s – Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> March at Ealing

U10s – Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> March at Ruislip

U11s – Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> March at Wasps FC

The 2023-2024 Age Grade calendar will be with you by the beginning of March. As a reminder, all club festivals need to be approved by the County so please direct any festival enquiries to [Waheed Aslam](#)

For those clubs/teams wishing to tour, please do ensure you get the correct approvals from the [Middlesex County Office](#). More details on incoming and outgoing tours can be found on the [England Rugby](#) and [Middlesex](#) websites.

For those club volunteers that have a penchant for competitions, there is the opportunity to apply for a new formed Women's Competition Advisory Group. This will act as an advisory body to the RFU Competitions Team and associated sub-committees. The RFU are currently recruiting for group members and a Chair. You can find the details below via [LinkedIn](#).

We've also had several research requests to come in so please do circulate around the relevant sections and to get in contact with me if they would like further information:

- Women's Voluntary Leadership in Rugby research, conducted by Kate Marks from Leeds Beckett University.
- Menstrual cycles in Rugby, conducted by Amy Waghorn from University of Nottingham

As ever, if you need any help and support on or off the field, then please do reach out and let me know.

Lou

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

### **Message from Andrew Smart, Chair of Competitions**

At last, something from the RFU, about the Papa John's Cup circulated in the Community Game Update last week. To be honest apart from the start date going back a week to the 1<sup>st</sup> April to allow the completion of outstanding league fixtures with the finals for the majority of the competitions going back to Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> May and a guarantee that the majority of clubs will not need to play over the Easter weekend I am little clearer about the various formats. Even worse the expectation by the RFU that local CBs will be able to provide alternative competition offerings for those clubs who are interested has not been helped at all by this announcement. Certainly, my plans to allow for those clubs who are knocked out in the first rounds

of the knock out competitions to join ours is dealt a severe blow by the new date. With Easter Saturday on the 8<sup>th</sup> April it would mean starting our competitions on the 15<sup>th</sup> which isn't going to work for anybody especially those clubs who finish their league campaigns on the 11<sup>th</sup> March and aren't entering the national cups. We will definitely be providing alternative competition offerings for those who want it but I am going to have to rethink my plans. I will look at it at the end of the week and look to get something out to our clubs next week

Anyway, onto the rugby and how are clubs are doing

We start with the Championship where Ealing Trailfinders, just over than a week ago, were informed by the RFU that for the second year in a row they had failed the minimum standards criteria for promotion to the Premiership, should as expected, they win the Championship once again with the following announcement

- Ealing Trailfinders were not able to evidence the necessary licensed capacity, supported by a safety certificate or planning permission to achieve a capacity of over 10,000. Ealing Trailfinders are therefore not eligible for promotion to the Premiership at the end of season 2022/23.

Can't think that was a surprise to Ealing Trailfinders but still extremely disappointing that a club who would have achieved promotion on merit are denied the opportunity because of capacity criteria. You can argue the criteria but it looks and sounds unfair. Anyway Ealing Trailfinders remain top albeit only by one point after another surprise loss this time at home to Coventry at the end of January. Unfortunately, London Scottish continues to struggle, bottom and now ten points adrift.

At level 5, in Regional 1 Central, London Welsh, remain sixth whilst in their sister league Regional 1 South-East CS Stags 1863 continue to go in the wrong direction and have fallen another place to tenth albeit with an eight-point cushion above the

**KEEP UPDATED  
FOLLOW US ON :**

relegation places although they have played a game more.

In Regional 2 Anglia HAC drop to fourth, still with a game in hand over the sides above. In Regional 2 Thames Hammersmith and Fulham, remain top now by eleven points, Old Priorians drop to fourth. London Cornish up to seventh, Belsize Park drop to ninth with Old Haberdashers who have now won four out of six matches since Christmas remaining in tenth but now ten points clear of the relegation places. This is important because as I have said before any relegations from level 6 leagues by Herts or Middlesex clubs creates a further relegation place in the Herts/Middx Counties leagues

At level 7 in Counties 1 Essex, Epping Upper Clapton go up two places to seventh. In Counties 1 Herts/Middx Grasshoppers are top by two points although they have played a game more. Chiswick remain third, Old Streetonians fourth. Ruislip and Finchley change places, now seventh and eighth respectively, Hampstead drop another place to tenth, six points and two games in hand over eleventh placed, Enfield Ignatians whilst Hackney with two games in hand remain bottom. In Counties 1 Surrey/Sussex Twickenham remain fifth but with one game in hand

At level 8, in Counties 2 Surrey, Teddington continue their brilliant season, still unbeaten and top by eight points whilst at the other end of the table London Exiles continue to struggle and remain bottom. In Counties 2 Herts/Middx Ealing Trailfinders 1871 remain second by three points from Cheshunt who have two games in hand, only two points ahead of London Scottish Lions who again have two games in hand. Saracens Amateurs remain fourth also with two games in hand, Wasps FC up to fifth, Hendon drop to sixth whilst Harrow go up to tenth following their try bonus point victory at Barnet on Saturday

In Counties 3 Herts/the league has split for phase two of the competition. In the Trophy Competition which will determine promotion Brunel after their loss at Bank Lane on Saturday are now only two points ahead of Old Millhillians. Their fixture on the

11<sup>th</sup> March will almost certainly decide the champions. Bank Lane are third, twelve points behind Brunel with a game in hand. UCS remain fifth and bottom. In the Shield Competition Actonians are top by four points, with Kilburn Cosmos in second, Uxbridge fourth and Thamesians fifth after their excellent 30-29 victory at home to bottom place Chess Valley.

At level ten in Surrey 4, Old Paulines drop to third with Harlequin Amateurs fourth.

At level 11 in Surrey 5, Old Hamptonians lead at the top drops to one point but with a game in hand.

In the Allianz Premier XVs after eleven rounds, Saracens Women up to third, Harlequin Women drop to fourth whilst Wasps Women, who are having a really torrid time, are now bottom with no points although they have a game in hand

Andrew Smart

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

### **Report from Chair of Groups, Andrew Smart**

Unsurprisingly the last round of Group meetings across January and February together with the All-Clubs meeting a couple of weeks ago, were dominated by the “Tackle Height” debate following the disastrous and incorrect communication following the RFU Council Vote on the 16<sup>th</sup> January .

Once again, a combination of the Groups and an All-Clubs meeting this time now with the Newsletter have showed the strength of the communication tools available to us as to engage with our clubs around items of real interest and for the clubs to hold to account those who have made the decisions. At the All-Clubs meeting we had 30 clubs in attendance and when you include those clubs who had already been fully briefed by Eddie in particular at the other four group meetings, I am very confident that we have been able to get out to the vast majority of our clubs which is again excellent. At the same time as the RFU begins its consultation and engagement strategy with the community game



we fully intend to have as many All-Clubs meetings that are required to support our clubs and players through the process in good time for next season if that is indeed that remains a viable timetable.

By the time you read this we would have had a further All-Clubs meeting on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February covering the engagement process with the game that the RFU will be conducting with our clubs and members across the country. This will include a number of forums both virtual and face to face with the RFU leadership and as a CB we have been asked to identify forty-five people from as broad and representative cross section of our game in Middlesex to best represent the views of the community game. We have been asked to provide those names by Friday lunch-time and this meeting is the first step in identifying those people.

On another note, personally I would like to thank all those people across the Group and All-Clubs meetings for the way that they conducted themselves. To be honest I have heard some horrendous stories of the abuse and hatred extended to their Council members by some of their constituent clubs. We haven't had that across Middlesex or if we had I haven't seen it. Of course, the anger following the RFU miscommunication around the word "waist" is understandable but clubs have allowed us to explain what actually happened, what we were actually asked to vote on and what we actually voted for and I believe that we have had a very fair hearing for which I for one am very grateful

I for one am not taking any for granted and there is a fair way to go in the process before we may have to face the new regulations/laws for the 2023/24 season but your CB and your Councils Members are fully committed to providing the maximum support we can to our clubs and players

Onto other issues. The "Pick Up The Whistle Course" at Harrow again proved successful with 16 attendees. There was an issue when the instructor wasn't able to make the second training day when he was caught in an accident on the M11 and was stuck for three hours. All the second day went over

to the following week some of the students weren't able to attend and complete their training. Arrangements are being made to ensure that does happen.

Paul Carroll from the London Society of Referees reported at the North Group meeting, that following "Pick Up The Whistle" courses run across Middlesex and Essex eighteen of the attendees have applied to join the society, which is great news indeed and an excellent return on CB investment

As previously promised, I plan a further All-Clubs meeting to include clubs from Hertfordshire as part of the consultation process around my plans for the three Herts/Middx Counties leagues for next season, a date still to be confirmed

Going forward our next round of Group meetings which will include our AGMs are as follows with agenda and minutes to follow closer to the meeting dates

**North-West – Wednesday 12th April**

**South – Monday 3rd April**

**West – Wednesdays 5th April**

**North – Monday 17th April**

Andrew Smart  
Chairman Group Officers

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

## **Update on Coaching and Referee Development**

### **Coaching Development**

- 26 Middlesex Coaches are on the RFU England Rugby Coaching Award Course (ERCA), The final day of this ERCA course, is on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2023.

- 7 Coach education sessions have taken place this season with 151 coaches attending.
- A number of our youth coaches attended an online Age grade Rugby update delivered by Mark Saltmarsh. 54 Middlesex youth Managers & Coaches logged in
- Next Coach education session will take place on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February run by London Irish Academy Coaches.
- RFU Principle of Lineout course will be run at Ruislip RFC on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023.
- Summer programme for young player development / coaching development, with London Irish Academy coaches is in the planning phase. In addition, Middlesex is planning to run a coaching conference in July, run in partnership with London Irish Academy.

### Referee Development,

- To date this season, our Middlesex clubs have run 5 seniors Take up The Whistle courses & 1 Young Match official's course. 98 new referees have been upskilled.
- 2 further Take up The Whistle Courses are planned for this season –
- Mondays 20/02 & 27/02 – at Grasshoppers RFC
- Mondays 17/04 & 24/04 – at Twickenham RFC
- Currently we are working with Rob Park to invite referees to the Rosslyn Park 7s in March

**For More Information on any areas of Coach & Referee development or an update on any of the above information. please contact Bob**


**Lawless on [bob.lawless@middlesexrugby.com](mailto:bob.lawless@middlesexrugby.com) or (M) 07803 196409.**


### What's On

#### Don't forget to nominate your Volunteers!

The [Honda Volunteer of the Year nominations](#) are now open and **deadline for entries is 5pm on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February.**

### Coaching Development


 To all Middlesex Coaches you are invited to a Coach Education Evening of Developing Back Play,


 Theme - How to organise "Different Attack Shapes"

\*Venue\* - Indoors at London Irish, Hazelwood TW16 6QU

\*Date\* - Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2023

\*Time\* - 19.00 hrs Start - 20.30hrs Ends

 London Irish, Coaches Patrick O'Grady and James Lightfoot - Brown, both with international honours and coaching with the Academy & Senior Players, will guide you through an innovative evening looking at various forms of "Back Play Attack"

 Numbers will be restricted due to limited indoor space so book your place early. Register your attendance, by WhatsApp or text to Bob Lawless (M) 07803 196 409.

### Middlesex Festivals

- U7s – Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> March at Teddington
- U8s – Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> March at Rosslyn Park
- U9s – Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> March at Ealing
- U10s – Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> March at Ruislip
- U11s – Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> March at Wasps FC

### April Group Meetings / AGMS

- North-West – Wednesday 12th April
- South – Monday 3rd April
- West – Wednesdays 5th April
- North – Monday 17th April

### Calling all budding Referees

[Book your Place – LSRFUR Take Up the Whistle Course \(Twickenham RFC\) - over 2 Nights – Twickenham RFC, Mon 17 Apr 2023 7:00 PM - Mon 24 Apr 2023 9:30 PM \(tickettailor.com\)](#)

**Middlesex 7's – Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May at  
Grasshoppers RFC.**

The invitations and online registration form is just about to be circulated to all clubs

### County Clubs Dinner

To ***Committee members, match officials and players, volunteers, and coaches in Middlesex's Clubs***



**Friday 19 May 2023, Old Deer Park, 187 Kew Rd,  
Richmond TW9 2AZ, 7.00 for 7.30**