

November Newsletter 2023

Email: countyoffice@middlesexrugby.com

Friday 17 May 2024, Olympic Pavillion, Ealing Trailfinders Sports Club, Vallis Way, London W13 0DD



On behalf of the Middlesex County Rugby Football Union, we would like to invite you to the 2024 Middlesex Annual County Clubs Dinner to be held at Trailfinders Sports Club, home of Ealing Trailfinders and Ealing 1871 RFC.



Building on the 2022 and 2023 event, the now annual All Club dinner is our county's way of saying thank you to all our volunteers both across our county and clubs for the hard work put in over the season.



The evening will offer a four-course dinner with an after-dinner speech/O&A by RFU President -elect and Chiswick RFC club member Rob Udwin, followed by a County update from the Middlesex President, Nigel Orton.



We are also planning some fun with prizes available and presentation of trophies for the County competition winners.

The cost of the evening with a complimentary drink on arrival and table wine will be £70.00 per person.

As with last year we have decided to open this event to accommodate couples in recognition of the unwavering support many partners afford us to give to rugby.

If you, or members of your club would like to attend please fill out the below form by Friday 22 **December 2023** to secure your place.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1WW5t0tac76nHn Yyob7M8RH3IMEGNJxAsFENSKjpn04k

We will need to firm up numbers two weeks prior to the event so we will not be able to take late entries like we have in prior years. Likewise, refunds post 3rd May 2024 will only be given in exceptional circumstances.

Further communication will be sent out to those attending with the final arrangements of the dinner evening and method of payment, during March 2023.











For any questions or queries please contact: countyoffice@middlesexrugby.com

Yours in Rugby,

Middlesex County Rugby Football Union

From the President

14 October: A first, for me, starting a speech with, Dohajydh da pubonan. Meur ras A-dro dhe Londres Kernewek Rugbi Klub a dynnargh, (Translated from Cornish: "Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for the welcome to London Cornish Rugby Club"). This was lunch prior to London Cornish v Gravesend in London & SE Division's, Regional 2 South East League match, in Roehampton Cricket Club.

My thanks go to Jerry Rogers (LC's dinner coordinator) and Tony "Crash" Lander (LC President) for their excellent hospitality. Crash oversaw the catering too! Players from past teams attended the lunch and had fun recalling great times.



L to R: Tim Evans, Jerry Rogers, Nigel Orton (County President) and Mike Herring at the prematch lunch.

We then drove to the Richardson Evans Memorial Ground on Wimbledon Common where the game got underway with Ollie Carter (LSRFUR) in charge. Gravesend had a bigger pack, but Cornish exhibited a rock-solid defence and made good use of their possession with slick handling and evasive running by their backs.



LC's 10, Mike Edworthy converting a penalty to open London Cornish's score.

London Cornish, under Ben Wheeler's leadership, at number 8, won the well contested game 20-13 pts. I was pleased to meet several of their long-standing club members: Frank (Chairman), Gavin Hindley, and their Director of Rugby, Dickon Moon. I was recalled that several of my colleagues played for Cornish in the early '90s and I had refereed a couple of their games.













London Cornish (black and gold) win a line out.

28 October: I was warmly welcomed at Pinner RFC by their President, Peter Hudspeth and club stalwart, David Hiles. Peter introduced me to many key volunteers and lead players including club captain, Milto Tsartsidis. It met Bobby Georgiou owner of B&K Salt Beef Bar who had donated new 1st XV shirts that got their first use that day v Hatfield (Herts & Middx Merit South). B&K are also providing this season's post-match food. Many clubs rely on sponsors, so a big thanks to B&K for stepping forward to support Pinner! And, to all our Middlesex clubs' sponsors.



LtoR Peter Hudspeth and David Hiles



After a 4-week layoff, Pinner took a few minutes to settle into quite a physical game. Their sound tackling and stronger appetite for the ball allowed them to dominate the game, running in six tries. Despite Hatfield replying with 4 tries in the last quarter Pinner notched up a well-deserved win, 41-22 pts.



Pinner (red/black) going forward.

Tries came from fullback, Mike Murphy who opened Pinner's account and set up Josh Parker-Brice's try too. Prop, Lee O'Neil, right wing and captain, Michael Baggs plus John Petrella all scored. Among many good players my attention was drawn to young flanker, Netanel Lawrence-Ojo who tackled hard, Jackling very effectively, and continually disrupting Hatfield. He won line out ball and scored a great try; he was my 'man of the match'. Chris Oke's dummy pass was a nice touch too!



Netanel about to win line out possession.













We must thank referee, Chamika De Silva (LSRFUR), you wouldn't have known that Chamika is in his first season of officiating. I learnt that Pinner has a flourishing mini section and are collaborating with Watford RFC to get viable numbers to field older youth XVs.

In January, Pinner will mark the 70th anniversary of opening their clubhouse. It is a homely atmospheric base for Pinner. I left with all preparing to quietly watch the RWC Final.

Finally, a plea to clubs to check your online presence is up to date and welcoming.

Nigel R Orton President nigel.orton@middlesexrugbv.com

Message from Eddie Keal, Chair

This month's Newsletter from the County is a blockbuster edition with contributions from a few extra people. I hope you enjoy it.

We are almost at the end of the most recent round of Group Meetings, just the West Group to go. It's been a good series of meetings and we've had the chance to talk with plenty of clubs. I've covered a number of items on my part of the agenda, most notably the funding that is available to support the focus areas for development and growth of the game. See Louise's article opposite. We are looking to inspire some new recruitment or rebuilding efforts.

You will see some coach development opportunities later in the Newsletter. Please sign up to them and let us know if you need more repeats or different topics.

Our Club visits are in full swing. And it seems that if you invite the President you get the bonus of a firstclass match report in the Newsletter!

Regards Eddie. eddie.keal@middlesexrugby.com

Update from Lou Latter - Chair of Rugby Development

A big thank you and shout out to all Middlesex Clubs for completing their annual safeguarding audit. We had 100% completion again.

Age Grade registrations still need to be completed across both the boys and girls age grade teams but are still down on last year. Please do ensure that parents are confirming registration via their GMS profiles. If you need support with GMS then please visit Community Rugby Help(opens in a new tab), where additional support and guidance has been added. You can find answers to common questions, view latest updates, or submit a help request.

The Middlesex Financial Support Fund is now closed. We were able to support 61 applications with over £9,000 paid out to support age grade players to continue playing rugby.

A final call for clubs to sign up to the RFU Volunteer Recruitment Programme which gives clubs the opportunity to apply for £500 of funding and access a range of resources to help plan and deliver a volunteer recruitment activity aimed at creating new opportunities to recruit volunteers; raise aware of volunteer opportunities to new audiences; and embed volunteer management in your club's working practices. Applications deadline is Friday 24th November.

We will be running a Girls Club Forum meeting on 21st November at 19:30. If you have not registered, please do so by using this link.

Look out for information coming shortly regarding a boys U13/U14 and girls U14 festival in February in partnership with the London Irish Foundation. This is the first year that Middlesex will partner with the festival and is open to all Middlesex clubs.













We will be sending out the annual Facilities Audit in the coming weeks. A reminder that all clubs are asked to complete this so we can support you with any facilities needs and ensure you receive information around funding that is available.

If you want to have more involvement in Middlesex, Rugby Development and shaping our activities and focus areas, please do get in touch. We have some exciting projects across schools, adult playing, age grade and volunteers for you to get involved in.

If you want to have more involvement in Middlesex, Rugby Development and shaping our activities and focus areas, please do get in touch. We have some exciting projects across schools, adult playing, age grade and volunteers for you to get involved in.

Lou louise.latter@middlesexrugby.com

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

I thought it might be interesting to start by looking at how the adult male game is faring nationally so far this season following on from the problems of the last few years which we know has seen a marked change in the playing habits of a significant number of our players across the community game and a significant increase in the number of matches not being played.

So, let's look at the figures to see if those problems are continuing into this season. For the leagues I am working to the figures provided weekly by RFU's whilst for the merit tables I am working to the figures provided by the RFU for all 113 Merit Tables and our own returns in particular.

The RFU works on completion rates, which is the number of games organised at the beginning of the

season in both the leagues and merit tables and are taken from the GMS, against the number of games played including postponements, walkovers and abandoned games.

So far, the completion rate for the leagues is consistent at 95% against 91% at the same time last season and 89% at the end of the season. This season's completion rate will increase significantly provided any postponed and abandoned games are ultimately played. This weekend for instance there was 1.7% walkover rate across the whole country out of 507 matches.

With the merit tables the figures have increased significantly on last season where at the end, 119 MTs were showing a completion rate of 59%. The number of MTs across the country are this season down to 113 (Indeed we have lost one of ours) but the completion rate is at 79% some 12 points up for the same time last season and 20% up on where they finished. Our Merit Tables, at this time last season we were also at 59% which have gone up to 77% this season and are 85.56% if you look solely at games played against walkovers. There is no doubt that local flexibility and some decisions we took across the summer have largely resulted in those excellent figures for us but they are also being replicated across the country, vastly improved on last season.

So, about a third of the way into the season and despite the fears that the World Cup would see an impact on availability of players and with it, games played have proved unfounded. Yes, clubs lost players, but fixtures were honoured and whilst it is far too early to suggest we have turned a corner the figures are very encouraging and it would perhaps fair to say we are seeing some green shoots of recovery.

Onto our clubs. In the Championship Ealing Trailfinders after four rounds are the only unbeaten team in the league, top with by four points whilst London Scottish are bottom with no points











At level 5 in Regional 1 South, after ten rounds, London Welsh have dropped to fourth, CS Stags 1863 remain at sixth and Hammersmith and Fulham in their first season at this level are seventh

At level 6, in Regional 2 SE, also after ten rounds, London Cornish have dropped into the relegation zone at eleventh. In Regional 2 Thames, H.A.C. remain second, undefeated but with two draws leaving them six points behind the leaders. Belsize Park up into third, Old Priorians remain fourth, Grasshoppers, who had initially struggled have now won three in a row and move up to seventh. Old Habs, have dropped to tenth Early days but at the moment, Fullerians are eleventh and in a relegation spot which is a worry. Any Hertfordshire or Middlesex side that gets relegated from a level 6 league this season, into Counties 1 H/M, will create an extra relegation into the leagues below.

At level 7, in Counties 1 Essex, after nine rounds Epping Upper Clapton are second only on points difference. In Counties 1 H/M London Scottish are top by three points having won eight in a row, Finchley drop to fourth, Old Streetonians up from 9th to fifth, Ruislip drop to seventh, Hackney drop to ninth, Enfield Ignatians remain eleventh with Hampstead bottom. In Counties 1 Surrey/Sussex Teddington continue on from last season, undefeated with maximum points and top by six. Twickenham remain sixth.

At level 8 in Counties 2 H/M after seven rounds (a ten-team league) Ealing Trailfinders are now the only undefeated side six point clear of Brunel University with maximum points 187. Then Wasps FC remain third, Old Millhillians up to fourth and Harrow fifth all on the same points, Saracens Amateurs drop to seventh, with Hendon bottom,

At level 9, in Counties 3 H/M after eight rounds Bank Lane go up to second, U.C.S up to fourth, Finsbury Park drop to seventh Actonians drop to ninth, Thamesians drop to tenth, Kilburn Cosmos up

to eleventh but with a game in hand and Uxbridge bottom. In Counties 3 Surrey London Exiles drop to ninth.

At level 10, in Counties 4 Surrey after seven rounds, Old Hamptonians are top with Old Paulines down to third, Harlequin Amateurs up to fifth and whilst Staines remain bottom, they have now honoured their last three fixtures and won for the first time on Saturday so very well done to them. After really struggling to get out for the first few games they have shown real resilience and all the first to them for it.

At level 11 Counties 5 Surrey, after seven rounds, London French are up to fourth.

In my last report I noted a concern that already six Middlesex clubs have been unable to honour league fixtures so far this season and have had to concede walkovers to their opponents. That unfortunately has gone up to seventh but to be fair whilst a couple are still struggling to honour their fixtures, the majority of others are looking more resilient. One we I need to continue to monitor but perhaps better now than for my last report.

Early days I know but the figures locally for both leagues and merit tables continue to look better.

All the best

Andrew Smart andrew-smart@ntlworld.com

Report from Chair of Groups, Andrew Smart

We are currently right in the middle of the November round of Group meetings with the South held last Monday at Teddington, the North West on Zoom on Wednesday. This Monday we have the North Group meeting at Finchley with the West on Monday 27th on Zoom.











The feedback so far this season has been pretty positive with most clubs reporting more consistent fixtures and less walkovers than last season. The issues around Dual Registration for next season which cause much disquiet in the September Group meetings I believe have been pretty much put to bed for the majority of our clubs. I will be in a better position to report after the December Council meeting but it should be good news as I understand it

The Pickup The Whistle Course for the North Group at Grammarians is now full but we still have plenty of places for the North West Group at Harrow on the 23rd and 30th January 2024. For course details and to enrol please use the following link Middlesex Rugby: Take up the Whistle Referee course at Harrow RFC on 23rd & 30th January 2023 : Middlesex Rugby

Can I just remind clubs that the entry for the Papa John's Community Cup closes this Friday 24th November at 23.59 Hours. As of today Monday 20th November we have 20 entrants from Middlesex at the different levels. Not much time to get your entry in now.

The first link deals with changes to the competition for this season and the second link for entry

Don't forget to enter the Papa Johns Men's Community Cup! - Community Game Update 14/11/2023 | Rise 360 (articulate.com)

Papa Johns Men's Community Cup Competitions (smartsheet.com)

From MCRFU Discipline Secretary, John Orr (discipline@middlesexrugby.com)

In the usual run of weekly matches most of you don't want to be hearing from me! However, I have been asked to make periodic reports about the discipline process that goes on for those unfortunate to bump into us during the season.

Actually some clubs do seem to like to engage with your Discipline Secretary, and it was a particular pleasure to share lunch at Feltham RFC ahead of their recent match which featured so well on Youtube, and is currently on the RFU webpage. How excellent to see a club taking a pride in all the values of the game, that we in the background running discipline are working to also maintain. Thank you, Greg!

Pre-season all clubs get a briefing with reminders. If you want this sent again, do email me. Our up-todate processes are described in brief on the webpage, which should be your first port of call for anything in this area.

(https://middlesexrugby.com/county/committees /discipline/). The RFU have the current regulations on englandrugby.com.

So how been? has your season I am asked that question by other Discipline Secretaries across the country in our monthly meets and, comparing notes with the other CBs, it is clear that the season has not been too good here or across the country. In Middlesex we have already had as many cases as we had in the whole of last season.

What deductions can I make from the cases so far? Well one thing is for sure, the Domestic Law Variations have not led directly to any cases. Tackles which come under the DLVs may have resulted in penalties (but often managed without penalty very well by referees) and have not resulted in cards. It also seems that with attention being paid to DLVs, players have avoided the proportion of tackles "in the same head-space" we saw last year. This is most encouraging.

What is less encouraging is the increase in cases as a whole. Strikes (punch/head-butt type offences) and tackles (beyond horizontal and still some upright/no dip tackles) are the bulk of cases. Players, these are all avoidable!











VEO Citings and With many clubs using VEO, we have seen the footage used in more citing incidents involving foul play (strike, stamp, dangerous tackle, head-butt). Sometimes VEO is clear and covers the incident well, but VEO is not designed for the forensic type of analysis we sometimes have to endure at international rugby. Clubs should always check the

proceeding. Also be aware that there is a nonnegotiable 7 day deadline for all the citing paperwork to be completed by the club making a citing.

incident is "clear and obvious" on the footage before

This season I have received papers for 22 cases this season so far. A few of these are recent and awaiting a hearing. Please be aware that unless the RFU tariff for the offence is 4 or fewer matches, then we do hear all cases in person. I can only note that for some of you a hearing in Twickenham may not be too convenient, but there is a simple answer to that!

Some reminders:

- Clubs must notify me of all red cards within 48 hours of the incident. This is at all levels and ages. It does not matter whether it is a society referee appointment or not.
- Youth cases should also be reported, and our Age Grade Discipline Secretary will help clubs/schools through that process. There have been significant changes here for this season. Caron Evans-Evans details are on the webpage.
- Once a player is sent off then he/she cannot play until there is a hearing.
- We will not tolerate situations where a referee reports that he was "encouraged" not to submit a report after a red card. The process has to work through, and clubs trying to circumvent this offer themselves up to charges under Rule 5.12.

Finally, can I encourage all in the game to work together to give me a bit freer time, and less hearing planning and calling clubs into meetings. I long for a quiet life now I can't run about with a whistle every Saturday! Our referees are doing the best they can, but sometimes players just force their hand by "losing it" on the pitch – let's all have a serious think about game values and avoid tarnishing your club or the match you are playing in.

All the best John Orr

Andy

Bob Lawless Chair of Middlesex Coach Development (M) 07803 196 409 (E) bob.lawless@middlesexrugby.com

RFU Age Grade Presentation for All Middlesex Clubs running Age Grade Rugby

Middlesex Rugby presents an online 1 hour session on an Update of Age Grade Rugby and future developments.

This short session is a must for All involved in Age Grade Rugby

Date - Monday 27th November 2023. Start 19.00 hrs - 20.00hrs

Middlesex Chair Eddie Keal, will welcome all in attendance and give a short update on Middlesex Rugby

Our RFU presenter this evening is Mark Saltmarsh. Mark has been involved in Club & County development and has a vast experience with the RFU in Education & the Development of Age Grade Rugby

It is important that all involved in Age Grade Rugby at Schools or Clubs have a sound understanding of Regulation 9 - Player Safety -Regulation 15 - Age Grade Rugby & Regulation 21 -Safeguarding.













- Mark, will present the session in an easy-tounderstand format, updating us on key regulations and future developments in the Age Grade Game.
- A similar session was run last season with an excellent attendance, the feedback was very positive and all involved with Age Grade Rugby will learn. The last part of the presentation is open to Q&As. If you have any specific questions, please forward them to me.
- All clubs running Age Grade Rugby should have representation. To register - WhattsApp or email Bob Lawless on (m) 07803 196 409 (e) robjlaws@aol.com, in return log in details will be forwarded

Middlesex Coach Education

- Middlesex Coaching presents a "Scrum Half Workshop"
- The workshop will be of great value to all coaches.
- Venue London Irish, Hazelwood TW16 6QU
- Date Wednesday 29th November 2023
- **Ø** Time 18.45 hrs 20.15hrs
- Tutor Patrick O' Grady. Patrick is a Level 4 coach and has represented England at youth level and has been the Academy Manager for the past 8 years, coaching with the elite youth and Senior players
- Note The workshop will give ideas to coaches in the development of the core skills of passing & kicking in relation to the position of Scrum Half
- The session commences with the theory work indoors followed by practical work on the AGP.
- To confirm your attendance WhattsApp or email Bob Lawless on (m) 07803 196 409 (e) robilaws@aol.com

Middlesex Referee Development

The Take up the Whistle short referees course are open to all interested volunteers from Middlesex Clubs. Throughout the season a Referees course will be run in each of the Middlesex Groups. All attending will be presented with a Middlesex Referees Jersey and their course fees of £25.00 will be refunded after refereeing 3 games. Find below information on the next Referees short course.

Enrol on the London Society of Rugby Football Union Referees

> "Take Up the Whistle Referee Course" £25 per person

Next Course :-

Harrow RFC on 15th. 22nd. January 2024 – 7.00pm to 9.30pm

Click on https://buytickets.at/lsrfur/1031729 to enrol

Middlesex Coaching Vacancies



- Mead Coach Wanted
- Pinner RFC, are looking for a new Head Coach.
- Are you, Highly Knowledgeable and passionate to develop a growing team.
- Excited to plan, prepare and deliver weekly coaching sessions for dedicated players
- Able to attend all training sessions and matches.













Pinner has a great mix of experienced and new

We are looking for someone who enjoys coaching a range of skill levels

If you are interested or would like to find out more, please email - Milto-t@hotmail.co.uk

All the best

Bob

A Message from the Counties Safeguarding Officer Neil Horchover.

One of my functions as Middlesex Safeguarding Officer, is to ensure that all inward and outgoing tours are managed safely, especially when they involve age grade players. So, it's very gratifying when we receive feedback as detailed below for the recent Grasshoppers Under 14's tour. And whilst this element of what we do, on the face of it looks a bit like red tape. In reality, by working together the outcome is well worth the extra diligence.

GRASSHOPPERS U14 RUGBY WORLD CUP TOUR TO LILLE 6th to 8th OCTOBER 2023

"When an individual is tired of touring, they are tired of life" Tour management (with some help from Samuel Johnson)

On the 6th October 2023, with 44 tourists (22 Players & 22 Parent/ Guardians), Grasshoppers U14's embarked on their first ever overseas tour, taking in the RWC pool match between England & Samoa and playing against Oudenaarde RFC in Belgium.

Tour management is delighted to report that all 44 came back in one piece having had an amazing weekend.

This truly was a fantastic opportunity to take a squad of players on tour to experience a once in a lifetime trip, some of whom had never had the opportunity to travel abroad before.

A huge amount of work went in to making this happen, our grateful thanks go to Grasshoppers RFC, Ian & Andrea at Venatour Sports Travel, Cyriel Cnockaert at Oudenaarde RFC, Philippe Peirsegaele & Russell Earnshaw. As well as Middlesex CRFU for their advice.

Grasshoppers RFC Under 14's Tour October 2023 Lille, France and Oudenaarde, Belgium by Freddie Baxter

On the way from Grasshoppers RFC, the atmosphere was electric as we were all very excited to get to France, and for most of us, it was our first match abroad. We all sang songs as spirits were high, travelling on the bus together, going on tour. When we had arrived at our hotel, we all had fun playing card games and hanging around with our mates.

After an early breakfast on Saturday morning, we were back on the coach going to our first activity; go-karting. The smell of the petrol and the sound of the karts created a fantastic atmosphere – we were ready to race! There was much fun and competition involved, as we all tried to beat our mates on the racetrack.

Our second activity, and most looked forward to by many, was the England vs Samoa game. This was very special for all of us as it was a once-in-alifetime opportunity to see a World Cup game abroad, and although the result wasn't the greatest, both the adults and the players had an amazing experience at the game. After the match, some of us went to a local French pub where we all got drinks and watched Scotland get demolished by the Irish!













Finally, the last and best part of the tour was the game we had against Oudenaarde RFC. After a short bus journey crossing over from France to Belgium, we arrived at the beautiful clubhouse in Oudenaarde, right next to the Scheldt-Rhine Canal, basking in the warm autumn sun. Although the home team put up a good fight, we came out with the victory. During the game there were some great individual performances, and afterwards we made friends with the other team in the clubhouse. We hope that we can play them again soon or host them if they come to London.

After devouring the lovely match food, we boarded the bus and enjoyed some guizzes before getting on the ferry and spending the last of our pocket money in the duty-free shop. Thankfully, the crossing was very flat so there was no sea sickness.

We would like to say a massive thank you to all our sponsors involved, including Project 1 who supplied all of our kit. Also, a massive thankyou to the coaches and the other people that helped make this tour an amazing reality.

Freddie Baxter Grasshoppers Under 14's

What's On

Middlesex Schools Festivals

- Under 13's Monday 27th November from 10am - St James School
- Under 12's Friday 1st December from 10am - Grasshoppers
- Under 16's Thursday 7th December from 10am (provisional) - Grasshoppers

Take Up the Whistle Referee Course - £25 per person.

Next Course :-

Harrow RFC on 15th. 22nd. January 2024 - 7.00pm to 9.30pm. Click on

https://buvtickets.at/lsrfur/1031729 to enroll.



PINNER RFC ARE LOOKING FOR A NEW HEAD COACH

- · A highly knowledgeable coach: Level 2+
- · Lead the coaching for both senior squads: 1st & 2nd teams
- · Plan, prepare and deliver coaching sessions for senior teams
- Attend all training sessions and matches that involve senior teams
- · Aim to get both senior teams playing every week

If you are interested or would like to find out more. please email michaelbaggs1993@hotmail.com.

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