

February Newsletter 2024

Email: countyoffice@middlesexrugby.com

From the President

The County President, Nigel Orton shares his Middlesex travels and encounters:



On field: My first 2024 visit, at Wasps FC, was to support our **Middlesex U18 Girls v Buckinghamshire Girls' U18s**. Middlesex won 49 pts – 7 pts. After an even first quarter, punctuated with several stoppages, both teams began to settle down to a competitive game. Buck's scrummaging was strong and disruptive, but Middlesex started to dominate loose play showing greater confidence. There were several examples of our forwards successfully ripping the ball away from Bucks in mauls and tackles. In the second half, the Middlesex backs started stretching defences, and finding gaps to exploit to score several tries assisted by good support running.



A large team of Middlesex coaches were on hand, led by Chris Mason, to encourage and direct the squad. The County's Representative Manager, Lachlan 'Jok' Dunbar shared with me that 27 schools and 13 clubs were represented within the squad, and it is clear there is open opportunity to be selected. Hannah Everitt (LSRFUR) officiated.

Well done to Micaiah Essien (8) for leading the team and to vice-captain Poppy Langthorne (12) both scored two tries Other tries were from: Dayana Ortiz Ramirez, Eva Gardener, Jess Howard, Izzy Kennedy, and Amy Howard who also kicked 3 conversions.



It is good news that Poppy Love of Grasshoppers has made the England U18 Squad and Niamh Gallagher of Enfield Ignatians is selected in Ireland's U18s; Congratulations!



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27 January: **London Japanese 1s v Whitton Lions 1s** was an entertaining match. Do ignore the scoreline of 75-5 pts, it was a fairly even contest! The Lions with a much-depleted squad fought bravely, but they couldn't quite capitalise on their opportunities in the way the Japanese did. Several end-to-end runs, and 'kick and chases' from both teams added to the excitement. Try scorers for London Japanese (LJ) included: Sam Dicken, Ben Pooley x3, Ricardo Burrell, Lewis Gray, Joe Grieve, Ben Corkin and Tetsuo Furukawa. This was a Middx Merit Table Div 2 encounter, LJ have been promoted over the last two successive seasons, and this result placed them third in the table.



Well done to Lions' skipper, Peter Nolan for keeping his side vigorously contesting and to Andi Williams their coach for positively encouraging his players.

Hideki Itabashi (9) led LJ and John (JJ) Mitchell coached their large squad. My thanks to the LJ players and fixture secretary, Matthew Dibble for welcoming me at Twyford Avenue.



Ben Stone (LSRFUR) officiated. The match was played adjacent to Wests Warrior ARLFC v Rochdale Mayfield ARFLFC (RL's, Rnd 2 Challenge Cup), Wests winning 28-22.

ロンドンの日本人よ、残りのシーズンを楽しんでください

(Rondon no nihonjin yo, nokori no shizun o tanoshinde kudasai)



Offfield: I received a copy of a signed autobiography, *A Week One Summer*, by **Floyd Steadman OBE** [ISBN 978-1-8384970-8-8]. It is an interesting read

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cataloguing his troubled life as a child in care, his rugby steps from playing for Kingsbury High School's 1st XV to captain Saracens, and his career progression to become a Headteacher. The prologue is by England's Maro Itoje, a former pupil.

Sadly, our county's rugby family has lost two great men: **Frank Harding** passed away in January. Frank taught at Northwood School and ran Middlesex U16s alongside John Powell and Colin Bosley. He was a Middx CSU VP. Frank progressed in England Schools to coach, select and be Chair of the England 16 Group. He had initially played for Percy Park RFC in Tynemouth alongside Don Rutherford, Ron Tennick (later both led the RFU Technical Dept) and Students' Rugby Chair and former RFU President, Derek Morgan. Frank had been at school in Gosforth with Alan Black, he later played with 'Blackie' at Wasps FC. Here is a link for his life celebration event: <https://frank-harding.muchloved.com>

We also noted the passing of **Dr J.P.R. Williams MBE FRCS** who played for London Welsh RFC and gained 8 British Lion and 55 Wales caps. He qualified as a surgeon at St Mary's Hospital Medical School, Paddington whose XV is now incorporated into Imperial Medics. They play Imperial College annually for the JPR Williams Cup in his honour.

Nigel R Orton

President

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Message from Eddie Keal, Chair

This is another blockbuster edition of the County Newsletter. I especially enjoyed proof-reading the President's contribution. We should rename it "Travels with Nigel". The attention to correct spelling of players' names is awesome! I hope you enjoy it too.

I would really appreciate it if all readers could draw the attention of the right person in their club to the Middlesex 7s date and entry form. This festival is really important to the County. We aim to expand it year on year.

Please give someone at you club a nudge right now!
Thanks.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1it2JRULn8ffrLeD8HGO_VmuLMPt7VEeceJ3r5qDCKMQ

I've seen several waterlogged pitches over the last few weeks and more use of our Artificial Grass Pitches than normal. It is truly heartening to see clubs helping each other out with pitches for training in addition to matches.

We're halfway through the current round of Group Meetings. I look forward to seeing North and West Groups this week.

Eddie

Regards

Eddie.

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Update from Lou Latter – Chair of Rugby Development

The Honda Volunteer of the Year nominations have now closed and we are looking forward to welcoming the nominated volunteers to our annual Middlesex Volunteer Awards evening on 12th July. Further information will be sent out to the nominees in the coming weeks.

We have extended the [Middlesex County RFU CB Facility Audit 2023/24](#). Whilst not mandatory, clubs are encouraged to complete the audit so we can target specific funding and initiatives based on club needs. If we are not aware of where you need

support you may miss out on vital funding opportunities.

Well done to the Middlesex team who participated in the U13 and U14 boys festival on Sunday 4th February. 20 clubs (6 clubs/7 teams from Middlesex) entered the U13 boys festival. 12 clubs (4 clubs/5 teams from Middlesex) entered the U14 boys festival.

It is great to see clubs continue to ensure their age grade players are registered. We now have nearly 7,000 U7 – U18 girls and boys playing rugby in Middlesex. However, there are still some clubs that are yet to register their age grade players. If you need further support with age grade registrations please do reach out to either myself or [Sam Clapham](#), Club Developer.

The Middlesex St George's Day Festival has been renamed the Middlesex Emeralds International Girls Festival and will be held over 2 days: U12 & U14 on Saturday 13th April and U16 & U18 on Sunday 14th April at London Irish's Hazelwood ground in Sunbury. Information has been posted out to the WhatsApp group for teams to sign up.

Good club to all clubs participating in the Middlesex Mini Festivals. This year, the festivals will be held as follows:

- U7s – Sunday 3rd March at Teddington RFC
- U8s – Sunday 10th March at Rosslyn Park
- U9s – Sunday 10th March at Ealing RFC
- U10s – Sunday 10th March at Ruislip RFC
- U11s – Sunday 17th March at Wasps FC.



The men's 6 Nations is very open as we head into Round 3 this weekend. Don't forget that the Red Roses will kick start their 6 Nations campaign once the men's games have finished and will be once

again back at Twickenham for a standalone fixture on 20th April. 30,000 tickets have already been sold so make sure that you secure your [tickets](#) quickly. This is a great family day and to watch some exciting rugby.

If you need help and support then please do reach out to me.

Lou

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Message from Andrew Smart, Chair of Competitions

Here is a flavour of what the community game is currently achieving across the country continuing to see a 95% competition rate against 91% at the same time last season which dropped to 89% by the end. Meanwhile the MTs nationally are seeing a completion rate of 77% compared to 64% at the same time last season, finishing at 59%. So really solid figures for the game so far this season, much improved on last with around four rounds to go. Yesterday across the country there were 514 games planned with 13 postponements, 23 walkovers and 1 match abandoned giving a completion rate of just under 93%. In London there 147 planned matches with 7 walkovers pushing the completion rate up to over 95%.

Encouraging figures which of course do not by any means tell the whole story and whilst no-one will pretend that the game is in rude health these are solid figures.

Now to see how our clubs are doing.

In the Championship Ealing Trailfinders remain top by 6 points and with a game in hand after eleven rounds. London Scottish remain bottom although they are four points behind Cambridge with two games in hand

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At level 5 in Regional 1 South, after eighteen rounds, London Welsh remain fourth CS Stags 1863 remain at sixth and Hammersmith and Fulham drop to ninth, now 11 points outside the relegation places

At level 6, in Regional 2 SE, also after eighteen rounds, London Cornish remain bottom, and despite an excellent win on Saturday still 12 points adrift from safety. In Regional 2 Thames after 16 rounds (after Leighton Buzzard dropped out of the league at Christmas) Belsize Park are second, nine points behind the leaders with H.A.C third. Old Priorians remain sixth Grasshoppers seventh, with Old Habs eighth, Fullerians remain eleventh and in the sole relegation spot which remains a worry. As I have said 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. That doesn't apply to London Cornish as they are on a permanent level transfer to Surrey and if relegated would drop into Counties 1 Surrey/Sussex.

At level 7, in Counties 1 Essex, after eighteen rounds, Epping Upper Clapton drop to third although they have a game in hand. In Counties 1 H/M also after eighteen rounds London Scottish after a hard-fought victory at second placed Cheshunt yesterday with a try bonus point victory and securing themselves a six-point cushion at the top of the league. Chiswick are third, Finchley drop to fourth., Old Streetonians up to fifth still with a game in hand, Ruislip stay at eighth, Hackney ninth, whilst Hampstead drop back into a relegation whilst Enfield remain bottom. In Counties 1 Surrey/Sussex Teddington remain top by 10 points but their unbeaten record going back to last season has finally gone after a home defeat in a high-quality game to second placed Old Tiffinians. Twickenham remain fifth but have two games in hand

At level 8 in Counties 2 H/M after ten rounds (a ten-team league) Ealing Trailfinders remain top with Brunel still second but now only a point behind. Wasps up to third Saracens Amateurs, after outstanding consecutive victories over the top two

sides are up to fourth, Old Millhillians remain fifth, Harrow down to sixth whilst Hendon despite picking up their first win of the season remain bottom.

At level 9, in Counties 3 H/M after 15 rounds. UCS remain second by six points although they have a game in hand, Bank Lane remain fifth, Finsbury Park remain sixth, Thamesians up to 7th Actonians drop to tenth, Kilburn Cosmos remain eleventh whilst Uxbridge go up a place to twelfth. In Counties 3 Surrey also after fifteen rounds London Exiles drop one to eight although they have two games in hand.

At level 10, in Counties 4 Surrey after fourteen rounds, Old Hamptonians remain top by three points with Old Paulines drop to fourth, Harlequin Amateurs remain seventh, whilst Staines remain bottom

At level 11 Counties 5 Surrey, after ten rounds, London French remain third

In the Allianz Premiership Women's Rugby after ten rounds, Saracens Women drop to second after their first loss of the season to new top of the table Gloucester-Hartpury Women, Trailfinders Women and Harlequins Women change places and are now sixth and seventh respectively

Andrew Smart

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Report from Chair of Groups, Andrew Smart

As I write we are in the middles of the third set of Group meetings all of which in this round are on Zoom. We have already had the South and North West meetings with the North tonight the 19th February and the West this Wednesday 21st

For those of you who perhaps are not fully aware of the sort of work that the Group Officers are doing on behalf of their clubs I thought I would share this

excellent circulation. Yes, of course you could get this information from a number of different sources and yes much has already been distributed from the County Office but not like this. It is as I am sure you agree a most comprehensive and extremely useful one page document that clubs can use to make sure that they are up to date with much of what is coming out the RFU and Middlesex. At a time when perhaps we are overloaded with information and have little time to seek out what we need to know I am sure you will agree that this is a very sensible and much needed approach. And for those who perhaps can't get to group meetings as often as they want this monthly circulation makes sure that they are completely up to date. Great work by the Group Officers and a real benefit for our clubs

1) The Men's Middlesex Representative Rugby Programme 2023-24

The County Programme provides an opportunity for players to train and be part of a competitive playing programme outside their club rugby. Please forward this email to your coaches or nominated players to complete their nomination by clicking on the link. The player assessment is on Wednesday 28th February at Grasshoppers RFC, TW7 5PN please arrive by 19.30.

2) RFU Support Webinars (free to book and attend)

Sam Clapham (Club Developer, RFU) has provided a summary of free to book seminars from the RFU

Growing and Maximising Sponsorship

20 February, 7-8pm

[Sign up here\(open s in a new tab\)](#)

Managing your Club Finances

21 February, 7-8.30pm

[Sign up here\(open s in a new tab\)](#)

Growing Your Social Media Audience

27 February, 6.30-8.30pm

[Sign up here\(open s in a new tab\)](#)

Decoding DBS: A Webinar for Club Safeguarding Officers

28 February, 7-8pm

[Sign up here\(open s in a new tab\)](#)

Grant Funding

11 March, 7-8pm

[Sign up here\(open s in a new tab\)](#)

Review your Structure

7 March, 6.30-8.30pm

[Sign up here\(open s in a new tab\)](#)

Sustainability & Energy in Community Rugby Clubs

11 March, 7-8pm

[Sign up here\(open s in a new tab\)](#)

**Managing
your Club
Finances**

 19
March, 7-
8.30pm

[Sign up
here\(open
s in a new
tab\)](#)
**Review your
Structure**

 17 April,
6.30-
8.30pm

[Sign up
here](#)
**3) Middlesex County RFU Club Facilities Audit –
from Sam Clapham (Club Developer, RFU)**

The audit will remain open for responses until the end of February. For clubs to be considered for pitch maintenance grants or capital project funding they should complete the audit via the following link - [Middlesex RFU CB Facility Audit 2023/24](#)

4) Volunteer of the Year Awards

Nominations close at 17.00 on Friday 16 February (see attached)

5) RFU NATIONAL RUGBY SURVEY

The survey closes at 9.00am on 25th February - (see attached)

6) Diary Dates and Deadlines

Friday 16 February Nominations for Honda Volunteer of the year by 17.00hrs via the link:

<https://www.englandrugby.com/participation/volunteers/honda-volunteer-recognition-programme/how-to-nominate>

Monday 19th February
Group Meeting - via zoom

Middlesex North

Wednesday 21st February
Group Meeting – via Zoom

Middlesex West

Sunday 25 February RFU NATIONAL RUGBY SURVEY closes at 9.00am (see attached)

Wednesday 28 February Men’s Middlesex Representative Rugby – player assessment at Grasshoppers, 7.30pm

Sunday 03 March Middlesex Mini Under 7s Festival at Teddington RFC

Sunday 10 March Middlesex Mini Under 8s Festival at Rosslyn Park FC

Sunday 10 March Middlesex Mini Under 9s Festival at Ealing Trailfinders RC

Sunday 10 March Middlesex Mini Under 10s Festival at Ruislip RFC

Sunday 17 March Middlesex Mini Under 10s Festival at Wasps FC

Saturday 11 May Middlesex All Club Sevens at Grasshoppers

Saturday 11 May Papa John’s Community Cup finals day

Friday 17 May 2024 The Annual Middlesex County Clubs Dinner at Ealing Trailfinders, book your place via the link:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1WW5t0tac76nHnYyob7M8RH3lMEGNjxAsFENSKjpn04k>

All the best and I hope to see you at a Group meeting seen.

Andrew Smart

Coaching & Referee Development

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Middlesex Coaching presents a "Scrum Half Workshop"

- 🕒 The workshop will be of great value to all coaches.
- 📍 Venue - Harrow School,
- 📅 Date - Wednesday 28th February 2024
- 🕒 Time - 18.45 hrs - 19.45hrs indoors. 19.45hrs - 20.30hrs outdoors.
- 👤 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 - WhatsApp or email Bob Lawless on (m) 07803 196 409 (e) robjlaws@aol.com,

Middlesex Indoors "Referee Development Workshop"

- 🕒 The workshop will be of great value to support all Referees, Coaches and Parents in understanding the Laws of the Game including the New tackle Law.
- 📍 Venue - Ealing Trailfinders, W13 0DD
- 📅 Date - Thursday 29th February 2024
- 🕒 Time - 19.30 hrs - 20.45hrs
- 👤 Tutor - Bob Ockenden RFU, Referee Trainer. Bob has many years experience as a referee and referee developer and will share with you his experiences in administering the laws of the game in a relaxed forum environment.
- 📧 To confirm your attendance - WhatsApp or email Bob Lawless on (m) 07803 196 409 (e) robjlaws@aol.com,

Persons interested in any of the above development opportunities or have any questions on Coaching or Referee development please do get in touch, by call, WhatsApp or email:
bob.lawless@middlesexrugby.com

Bob Lawless Chair of Middlesex Coaching on (M)
07803 196 409

What's On

Middlesex 7's Saturday 11th May –
Grasshoppers RFC

Middlesex County Clubs Dinner – Friday 17th
May – Ealing Trailfinders - £70 per head.

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