

March Newsletter 2024

Email: countyoffice@middlesexrugby.com

From the President

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

Off field: It was a proud moment to see Middx and Saracens', Floyd Steadman OBE receive the prestigious RFU's Rose Award from RFU Senior VP, Rob Udwin ahead of England v Wales on 10 February at Twickenham. Floyd's guest was former Saracens' President, John Buckton. The late Brian Jones, Floyd's Kingsbury High rugby master brought Floyd as a Sixth Former to Northwick Park to run out for Old Kingsburians 2s in his first adult game. He and I were the half back duo on that day! Brian as county schools' union secretary recruited me to county volunteering.



Rob and Floyd

It was also a pleasure to welcome Amanda Bennett to Twickenham as a new Wales Rugby iNED Board Member. Amanda is also an ex-Saracens player, and a Welsh international who worked with me on the RFU Game Development Committee.

I was pleased to see at Welford Road on 25 February in the England A squad v Portugal were included four Harlequin players, plus Ollie Hartley of Saracens and Hammersmith & Fulham RFC; and Tarek Haffer of Northampton Saints and Grasshoppers RFC; with Dom Waldouck as the

Defence Coach (Latymer Upper Sch and Wasps FC prior to his premiership career). Absolutely right that the RFU acknowledges players' junior rugby journeys to recognise their clubs and coaches' involvement in developing talent.



Referee Stokes, "Heads or Tails"?

On Field: 9 February: **Saracens Amateurs 1 v Brunel University** in the London SE Div Counties 2 (Herts/Mx) league played under lights. Saracens won 26-13 pts. Paul Stokes (Herts Ref Soc) officiated. Saracens were captained by Nick Bloch and coached by their Director of Rugby, Jack Goldberg. Brunel University were coached by Ross Stewart and Noah Damm, their skipper was Jack Jones.



(Saracens wearing red socks)

Saracens are pleased with the recent relaunch of their girls' section within a thriving mini and junior set up. They run 2 XV's and occasionally a Vets XV. In the BUCS leagues Brunel field 4 men's and 1 women's team, plus a side in the Herts/Mx league that is largely an U20s known as *World War II XV*,

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which in terms of playing level sits between their 2s and 3s.



The game was physical and tough, played at a fast pace, with Saracens having a bigger, heavier pack giving them an edge. Another decider was the trusted boot of Saracens' kicker, Michael Scrace playing in his 150th 1st XV game. Saracens also had George Vreko playing at scrum half, George was recently capped by Albania against Kosovo. Their try scorers were Abel Leaman and Alex Douche. Brunel's talent included a couple of our Middlesex U20s. Both sides are congratulated on their handling given very wet conditions.



My thanks to Saracens Vice-Chair, Eugene Yost for hosting me at Bramley Park and introducing me to other volunteers. It was great to catch up with

Eugene who use to coach the County's U20s with me.



17 February: **UCS 1s v Finsbury Park 1s**. This was a London SE Div Counties 3 (Herts/Mx) league game. UCS won 36 – 7pts. The match referee was Ken Fowlie (LSRFUR).



UCS

The first score came just before half time. UCS then started to dominate in the second half, playing down the slope. UCS' tries were scored by Chris Silk, Aaron Hamilton, Chris Ebulu, Ollie Clague and Diego Garces de Marcilla x2. On show were two internationals: Mert Zabcı (7) holder of 13 caps for Turkey and Aaron Hamilton (11) who has played Sevens for Jamaica. Frazer Warren (2) was captain and in addition to those mentioned, I was impressed by fullback, Conrad Palejowski's for his tactical kicking, evasive counterattacks and defence.

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My thanks to Gideon, Fraser, and Ciarán for making me feel welcomed at Farm Ave, NW2 where UCS Rugby is hosted by the school with its impressive new pavilion. UCS run 1 team, occasionally a 2s.



UCS' Hamilton (11) attacking



Finsbury Pk run two men's and a women's team. They operate from the *Faltering Fullback* pub in Perth Rd, N4 and find that a good base to promote their culture, focused on a strong social vibe, and to recruit. Formed in 2011, they weathered the Covid storm better than most clubs I have visited and were promoted last season. Their captain was Fred Bromley, and their try came from Paddy Joyce (8) who along with Johnny Oliver (15) showed good form. Captain Urban Coningham whilst out injured was coaching.

Players expect good pitch side care, our thanks to both physios in this match. I offer a 'shout out' to all in our clubs who provide first aid for players. In an era where good communications are vital, I commend UCS' YouTube match highlights, a great idea!

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Off Field: It was sad news that Lucas Yoxall of Enfield Ignatians RFC suddenly passed away early in January. Thanks to clubs who rallied in support of EI and for the many tributes to Lucas. A [fund](#) has been set up in his honour to help pay for young people to discover and enjoy rugby.

https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/Lucas-Yoxall?utm_term=DA7AgPdZ

Nigel R Orton

President

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Message from Eddie Keal, Chair

We have another packed Newsletter this month. I see multiple references to silverware as several teams from the county are in the late stages of competitions for trophies. The winners of our own league and merit tables are beginning to emerge too.

At the young end of our game, the Middlesex Mini festivals proved once again to be a huge success. It was good to see so many of our clubs represented across the age groups.

On the same topic of representation – or “reach” – I note the number of different clubs that have submitted nominations for the Volunteer Awards evening. A key metric for us is maximising the number of clubs that are engaging with us, and the evening looks set to be another massive success.

Many of us have diaries full of club visits and end of season finals and awards. I’m looking forward to all of them.

The Group AGMs are approaching fast – please do think about doing a little for your group if you can spare a few hours during the season. The turnover of officers in the Groups is notoriously slow and we seem to rely on the same people for far too long.

Just because it’s close to the end of the season doesn’t mean we let up on our coach and match official development, nor our first-aid courses. There are dates in the usual place below.

I look forward to the senior Representative match schedule for the County Teams in the coming weeks and hope we can get plenty of Middlesex support along to cheer them on!

Eddie

Regards

Eddie.

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Update from Lou Latter – Chair of Rugby Development

What a final weekend we had in the Men’s 6Nations and congratulations to Ireland on their back to back championships. We now turn our attention to the Women’s 6Nations with the Red Roses starting their campaign against Italy this weekend in Parma. Hopefully you we will see some of you at [Twickenham on Saturday 20th April](#) when the Red Roses play their penultimate 6Nations game against Ireland.

We had a superb response to the Honda Volunteer of the Year nominations with 93 nominations received covering a 152 individuals from 30 clubs. Further information will be sent out to the nominees in the coming weeks.

A big shout out and thank you to Teddington, Rosslyn Park, Ealing, Ruislip and Wasps for hosting the Middlesex Mini Festivals. It is great to see so many players from U7s through to U11s enjoying their rugby.

Congratulations to Enfield Ignatians U16 girls who made it to their Regional Cup final. Unfortunately,

they were beaten by Old Reigatians in a great showcase of girl's rugby. Middlesex still have representation in the National Cup with Finchley U16 girls becoming Divisional Champions and will play in the National Semi Final on Sunday 31st March at Finchley. 2pm kick off. Please do go and support if you are able to. Congratulations also go to Harrow School who last week won the Boys U18 National Schools Cup.

As we look ahead for preparations for next season, now is the time to review your pitch side first aid care provision and to book volunteers onto the relevant training courses. For more information, please review the [RugbySafe](#) requirements.

As we continue to feel the effects of climate change (rain, rain, go away (please!!)) the Facilities Team have sent out a survey to all Club Chairs and Secretaries around the impact of flooding over the last 5 years. Please do complete this online questionnaire so we can understand and tailor future strategy with the impact of extreme weather.

Club reminder:

- Please do complete the [Middlesex RFU CB Facility Audit 2023/24](#) if not already completed.
- [Age Grade registrations](#) should still be completed, especially as we start to look ahead for next season.
- Adult Registration for [men](#) and [women](#) will be mandatory from the 2024-2025 season. In preparation, please do ensure your adult players emails addresses are up-to-date and have been verified on GMS. This will make the start of next season a lot easier if the work is put in now.
- Middlesex Emeralds International Girls Festival [registrations](#) are still open for U12 & U14 on Saturday 13th April and U16 & U18 on Sunday 14th April at London Irish's Hazelwood ground in Sunbury.

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

With only two matches to go before the completion of the league part of the season there is a significant amount going on across competitions nationally.

Whilst the weather continues to cause disruption across the country with significant numbers of postponements at the moment, I am extremely confident that apart from London French who are two games behind all the Middlesex clubs will be able to complete their league campaigns by the 6th April with the Papa John's Community Cup due to start the following weekend on the 13th. This is not the case for many leagues across the four ROCs and last Monday at an emergency meeting of the ACMSC a number of important decisions were made about the end of the league season which were announced to the game via the Community Game Update circulation last week

Simply they are as follows

Teams who are not entered in the Papa John's Cup, or where promotion/relegation is still to be determined will be able to complete outstanding fixtures after the 6th April

Provided both teams agree matches can be allowed to be played over Easter Weekend. If the fixture is not played on this weekend, then the organising committee reserves the right to allow the fixture to be played after the 6th April, or determine the results, based on an approved methodology.

If a club withdraws from the Papa John's Cup, provided it impacts on either promotion or relegation they can continue to fulfil their league fixtures

Where promotion and relegation are still to be determined, where one team wishes to play the league fixture and the other team wishes to remain in the Papa John's Cup, priority will be given to the team that wishes to remain in the cup competition. Once again where the match is not played the organising committee reserves the right to determine the result based on an approved methodology.

The main driver is to get postponed matches with promotion and relegation still to be decided, played even if it means going beyond the 6th April and at the same time as much as possible support the Papa John's Community Cup competition by not allowing clubs to play league games where the matches are effectively dead rubbers

As each weekend passes the number of clubs affected by promotion or relegation should hopefully decrease. The management of this has been pushed down to the ROCs who already have day to day responsibility for their leagues

Anyway, now to see how our clubs are doing

In the Championship Ealing Trailfinders remain top now by 10 points and with a game in hand after fourteen rounds. London Scottish remain bottom although they are on the same number of points with Cambridge with a game in hand.

At level 5 in Regional 1 South, after twenty rounds, London Welsh go up to third, CS Stags 1863 remain at sixth and Hammersmith and Fulham remain ninth, and now safe from any threat of relegation. Excellent seasons for all three of our level 5 clubs with special mention to H&F for their very first season at this level.

At level 6, in Regional 2 SE, still with two rounds to go, London Cornish are relegated. The last two seasons with injuries have been particularly difficult for our friends at Cornish and their luck as finally run out. In Regional 2 Thames after 18 rounds (after Leighton Buzzard dropped out of the league at Christmas) Belsize Park are second, six points

behind the leaders, Amersham and Chiltern and their fixture at home to the leaders this weekend is an absolutely crucial game. Win and trust that Grasshoppers can do them a favour at A&C on the last game of the season and they could be champions. The odds are not with them but they have already beaten A&C away this season and win again on Saturday the title is still there to be settled on the 6th April. H.A.C remain third. Old Priorians up to fourth, Grasshoppers up to sixth (a very respectable result for the club after their dreadful start). Old Habs remain eighth, whilst 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 now relegated drop into Counties 1 Surrey/Sussex.

At level 7, in Counties 1 Essex, after twenty rounds, Epping Upper Clapton remain third. In Counties 1 H/M also after twenty rounds London Scottish Lions have a nine-point cushion at the top of the league. One point from their last two games (on wins) will see them deserved champions and promoted. Old Stretonians continue their relentless surge up the table and go third. They have lost four games this season three in the first four weeks. Had their start to the season been different they could have been challenging for promotion. Finchley remain fourth. Chiswick drop to fifth. Ruislip stay at eighth, Hackney ninth, whilst Hampstead remain eleventh and in a relegation place but following their excellent result on Saturday at home to Chiswick, they are now only one point behind Datchworth and safety. Their game at Datchworth this Saturday is a huge one for their season and we wish them all the best. Enfield unfortunately remain bottom and are relegated. In Counties 1 Surrey/Sussex Teddington after twenty rounds and following their win away at Eastbourne on Saturday are champions. One game lost across two seasons. An absolutely phenomenal record.

Many congratulations to the club, its players and coaches. League champions twice in a row, Papa John National Champions last season. Great times at Teddington. Twickenham up to fourth and another decent season.

At level 8 in Counties 2 H/M after 16 rounds (a ten-team league) Ealing Trailfinders 1871 and Brunel University are both promoted. Ealing are top by one point but their match this Saturday at Ealing Trailfinders on the main pitch following the Championship side's fixture again London Scottish will pretty much determine who will be champions. Massive fixture for the two Middlesex sides. Can't say anymore but trust for a great game. Wasps remain third Saracens Amateurs remain fourth, Old Millhillians fifth, Harrow sixth whilst Hendon continue to struggle and are now relegated.

At level 9, in Counties 3 H/M this takes some explaining. All thirteen sides played each other once and then split Middlesex and Hertfordshire. With the Middlesex clubs (7) playing each other again once and the Hertfordshire sides (6) again playing each other once. So, the Middlesex clubs will be playing eighteen games and the Hertfordshire sides seventeen.

In a pre-season consultation, the clubs voted for the following option.

Run as a single league with the top two teams promoted against the points percentage criteria. (Required where the Herts sides will only be playing 17 matches with the Middlesex Clubs 18) No play off. With "**Points Percentage**" is best described as "the number of championship points accrued across the whole season, divided by the number of points available".

As it stands UCS sit top of the table by one point over Verulamians, but having played one more game their points percentage is 78.82% compared with Verulamians on 82.25%. Both have one game to play and even if UCS win theirs with a try bonus point, it would only take them up 80% whilst a

victory for Verulamians will see them champions on 82.35%. Whatever happens both clubs have been promoted.

Thamesians are fourth, Finsbury Park sixth, Actonians, seventh, Bank Lane ninth, Kilburn Cosmos eleventh with Uxbridge thirteenth

In Counties 3 Surrey after sixteen rounds London Exiles go up one to seventh although they have a game in hand.

At level 10, in Counties 4 Surrey after sixteen rounds, Old Hamptonians have the same number of points as Streatham-Croydon who are top because they have won more games. With Old Paulines drop to fifth, Harlequin Amateurs remain seventh, whilst Staines remain bottom and relegated

At level 11 Counties 5 Surrey, after fifteen rounds, London French remain third although they have two games in hand

In the Allianz Premiership Women's Rugby after thirteen rounds, Saracens Women remain second with a game in hand, Trailfinders Women and Harlequins Women remain sixth and seventh respectively

Some dates for your diary. Venues still to be confirmed

Vets Cup Final – April 20th

Merit Table Cup/Bowl/Vase Finals – 20th April.

Merit Table Play-Off Finals – 27th April.

Very, very busy time for us involved in competitions at all levels. We are just about holding it all together but there is no doubt that we are creaking at the seams.

Andrew Smart

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Report from Chair of Groups, Andrew Smart

With Easter only just round the corner and then the final round of Group meetings combined with their AGMs, the end of the season is suddenly now not that far away. All the Groups Officers are determined that the last round of meetings will be in person and apart from the North-West Group who will be hosted by Northolt RFC we are looking for venues for the other meetings. I know that the Officers for each group are hard at work looking for venues for their meetings but if your club is keen to host can you please come back to me

South Group Monday 8th April - venue to be confirmed

North-West Group Wednesday 10th April at Northolt RFC

North Group Monday 15th April - Venue to be confirmed

West Group Wednesday 17th April - venue to be confirmed

The AGMs will also see the election of the Officers for each group for the next season. So, if you are interested in standing and would like some more information about the responsibilities by all means contact me.

The South Group "Pick up the Whistle" course is due to be held at Twickenham RFC on the Monday the 8th and 15th April. There are places still available so if you are interested you can book a place via the following link [Book your Place - LSRFUR Take Up the Whistle Course \(Twickenham RFC\) - over 2 Nights - Twickenham RFC, Mon 8 Apr 2024 7:00 PM - Mon 15 Apr 2024 9:30 PM \(tickettailor.com\)](#)

The take-up so far this season at the three previous courses, Grasshoppers for the West Group, Old Grammarians for the North Group and at Harrow for the North-West Group have been excellent and I expect nothing less at Twickenham. So please book a place now if you don't want to be disappointed.

Finally, some dates for the diary

Friday 22nd March Wasps FC are holding a Super Vets Match in the evening - Exact details and format to be defined based on interest. All I can tell you at the moment is that it is only open to players 50 years and over and free beer for over 60's.

Anyone that is interested please get in contact with Richard Green either richardmgreen@hotmail.com or 07432 704184

Middlesex 7s - Grasshoppers on 11th May and **Middlesex County Club Dinner** on 17th May at Ealing Trailfinders.

All the best

Andrew Smart

Coaching & Referee Development

Coaching Development

- This season 8 Coach Education sessions have been held with **327** Coaches attending
- The sessions have provided skill development for **116** youth players
- The RFU Courses this season up to the end of December have seen **555** Middx Coaches in attendance

Referee Development

- This season have seen **89** Coaches attend Take up the Whistle Courses with **74** attending the England Rugby Referee Award (ERCA)
- Two further Take up the Whistle Courses will take place at Ealing Trailfinders on Thursdays 14/03/24 & 21/03/24 & Twickenham RFC on Mondays 08/04/24 & 15/04/24

Emergency First Aid Courses

- **8** Emergency Aid Courses to date with **82** attending
- A further Emergency First Aid Course is to be run at Ealing Trailfinders Saturday 16th & Sunday 17th March 2024

Note to all Managers, coaches & volunteers with any of the Junior or Senior Teams, it is regulation that at any Training Sessions or Game, there must be competent qualified person available.

- Any person who is interested in attending an RFU Emergency First Aid Course, please contact the number below

Interested in becoming an RFU Qualified mentor Mentoring

- Mentors are required to support and develop coaches & referees. Please contact the number below for more information.

Play it Safe

- All involved in Age Grade Rugby, will benefit from this RFU run Course.
- Any person interested in attending an RFU Play it Safe course please contact the Middlesex Rugby Safe Lead Mary Impey on mimpey20@gmail.com

Any Volunteers interested in becoming a Coach, Referee or Mentor would like information in any of these areas please contact Bob Lawless Chair of Coach & Referee Development by WhatsApp on 07803 196409

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

A great turnout for Middlesex Men and Women's training on 15th March:



A selection of U16 girls vs Sussex – Yes it was a bit muddy:



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What's On

Group AGMs

South Group Monday 8th April - venue to be confirmed

North-West Group Wednesday 10th April at Northolt RFC

North Group Monday 15th April – Venue to be confirmed

West Group Wednesday 17th April – venue to be confirmed

Middlesex 7's Saturday 11th May – Grasshoppers RFC

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

Please pass this onto your players, coaches & volunteers – tables of up to 10.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1WW5t0tac76nHnYyob7M8RH3IMEGNJxAsFENSKjpn04k>

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