

# **May Newsletter 2024**

Email: countyoffice@middlesexrugby.com

The County's Nominations Committee are seeking to recommend to the Middlesex Board a person suitable to appoint as

> **Director of Team Middlesex** (The county's Representative teams)

For Season 2024-25, to replace Chair of Representative Rugby who has stood down from the end of this season. The Representative sides will form Team Middlesex and play for Middlesex County RFU. This is a volunteer, unpaid role. The successful candidate will join the Middlesex Board.

Anyone wishing to apply should submit a CV, relevant to the post, by 23 May 2024 to: countyoffice@middlesexrugbv.com. The Job Description and notes are attached with this Newsletter. Some applicants will be invited for remote interview as soon as possible after that date.

#### President's Corner

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

On Field: 6 April - My visit to the London Olympic legacy centre on Hackney Marshes, just a stone's throw from the velodrome, as a guest of Old Streetonians RFC was a good end to the 2023-24 league season. 3 of the 82 sports pitches on the marshes are used by the club. Thanks to Dicky Stringer, OS President, and to Ian, Rick and Lyn too for welcoming me.



I had always wrongly assumed Streetonians to be an old boys' club, but its origins are based around Old Street. Dick was a club founder. Everyone sings Lyn's praises for her hard work and attention to detail that has kept the club going; thanks Lyn! A great Rugby Journal article on OS is an interesting read here.



London Scottish Lions (LS) in navy tops, Old Streetonians (OS) in red and navy hoops

## Old Streetonians 1s v London Scottish Lions 1s:

These two teams occupied the top table positions in the L&SE Div's, Counties 1 Herts/Mx league, adding spice to their end of season duel! London Scottish had already been crowned league champions and are promoted to regional 2 SE (level 6) for next season. The match was refereed by Andy Garland (LSRFUR) and Streetonians won by 39 - 27pts to be runners-up in the league.















The game was neck and neck until the last ten minutes, making it a gripping game to watch, but then two tries created a comfortable home lead. There were many good performances on both teams. Stand out for me for Streetonians were fly half, Eion Fitzgerald ('Ojo'), Jake Mccarroll (9), and TV's BGT celebrity vocalist, Richard Hadfield at prop. OS's captain was Conor Mahoney (7), and their coach was Gar Boohig. OS try scorers were Jamie Wilson (14), Gerry Ryan (13), Jack Ridley (11), Jack Longbottom (6), Cillian Burke (15) and Elliot Handler (8).



Lions captain was Sam Boundford (2) making his 50th appearance for the team; Lions coaches were Drew Todd, Dean Hislop and Lee Chowela. Lions tries came from Ben Malloy (9), Christopher Rolfe (3), Fabian Thwaites (15) and Nicholas Hill who also kicked 2 conversions and a penalty.

On a neighbouring pitch, there was much enthusiasm and plenty of action as OS 3s beat Hammersmith & Fulham 4s 36 - 19pts in the Mx Merit Table Division 3 game; refereed by Martyn Lightfoot (LSRFUR).



H&F (in red) make a defensive tackle on OS (rainbow tops) 5 metres out.

Lions run two sides and are based in Chiswick at King's House Schools' playing field. Old Street's home is the *Howl at the Moon*, Hoxton Street, N1.

27 April - I enjoyed visiting Stanmore Common to support Harrow RFC take on Woodbridge RFC 1s in the Plate quarter-final of the Papa John Counties 2 South competition. Both sides play at level 8 in regional counties 2 leagues; Woodbridge in the East Anglia league. With Andy Smart away in Ealing overseeing our Merit Table play offs I was well received at Harrow by Rod, Iain, 'JPG' and Will.



Harrow in stripes













It was an entertaining match between two clubs who had both finished just above mid-way in their leagues. There was end-to- end play and alternating scores for the first three quarters, before Harrow stretched ahead only to let Woodbridge reduce the gap in the last ten minutes. Harrow generally had a very solid defence although it was a high scoring game. Harrow won 40 - 36 pts and progressed to the semi-final against Chipstead RFC.



Maro's brother, Jes Itoje (3) led the team in Will Beech's absence through injury, with John Porter-Griffiths (JPG) coaching. The referee was Paul Richard (LSRFUR). Billy Argent at flyhalf controlled the play well and kicked impressively. Matt McKeown (8), Baran Kendal (7) and Sam Harper (15) all stood out for me.



Finchley RFC's Girls U16 played cup holders, Sandal RUFC from Wakefield at Six Wavs Stadium. Worcester on 28 April in the RFU National Girls' U16 Cup Final, losing 38-10 pts. What an achievement being national finalists, well done, we are proud of you!

Off Field: Season 2023-24 has virtually ended and hours of training, fun and hard work by both players and club volunteers all went in to producing a successful season. Some clubs, of course, had disappointments, but I add my congratulations to those who have won promotion or had other successes. I hope all of you can enjoy having a summer break and let us all then look forward to Season 2024-25. I together with your Council Representatives and other Board members have visited many of you and enjoyed those visits.

A difficult aspect of being President has been finding who is playing and when! A surf of our clubs' outdated reveals websites much historic information, but typically no signposting to where future fixtures, venues, or ko times are posted on other platforms, or who and how to contact a club official. By far the worst are our universities with their info hidden on a coded account BUCS site. On weekends when no invites had landed to confirm upcoming games, I followed the online London Society space to track referee appointments.

If I found this difficult then how is your next star player, looking to find and join a club, going to successfully search? I urge all clubs to review your 'shop windows' before next season and make sure your offer is clear, inclusive, welcoming, and easily navigable to key information. This is the time to recruit and build, perhaps a good time for that push to raise another team, add a Vets game, or get noncontact playing to engage with more people and grow your rugby community.



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Nigel R Orton

President

nigel.orton@middlesexrugbv.com

### Message from Eddie Keal, Chair

There is still a huge amount of activity going on around the County. Whilst all the leagues and merit tables may now have finished and the County dinner and presentations are behind us, the Men's and Women's representative sides are mid-way through their County Championship fixtures. The best of luck to both sides this weekend.

Congratulations to the 19 Middlesex club teams who won competitions this season - see Andy Smart's Competitions article below for the details. It brings home to me just how much rugby we help to deliver as a Management team.

On that topic, we'd like to see a few new faces playing a role at County level next season. Every year, one or two gems come forward. Now is the time to make yourselves known to us! We especially need more help on the sub-committees and in the Groups. No disrespect is intended to the fine people who make the groups work today, but there is plenty of room for fresh ideas and energy.

I will cover highlights and opportunities when we meet at the AGM, which will be in September this year. You will see an announcement in due course. The principal reason for moving it is to increase attendance, and we plan to have a compelling topical theme.

I will thank the outbound members of the Management Board at the AGM, but the thanks to our club volunteers is coming very soon! We expect to send invitations for the Middlesex Volunteers Awards Evening at Twickenham on 12th July very

In the meantime, we have work still to do around reorganisation of responsibilities and some vacancies to fill.

I will be assisting the RFU President, Rob Briers, at Ealing on Saturday presenting the Championship trophy and medals. I suspect I will be there simply to hold the platter of medals. Fingers are crossed for fine weather!

Eddie

Regards Eddie. eddie.keal@middlesexrugbv.com

# Update from Lou Latter - Chair of Rugby Development

As I write my penultimate Rugby Newsletter, I find myself reflecting on my time as Chair over the last 9 seasons.

So much has changed yet the spirit and the rugby family never fails to impress me despite the challenges and changes we face. More of that in next month's newsletter.

The 2023-2024 season may have come to an end for the community games, the professional men's and women's games are heading for an exciting finish to their seasons, with the men's Premiership final at Twickenham on 9-Jun and the women's PWR final at Sandy Park, Exeter on 22-Jun. As the England Men's team head to Japan and New Zealand for their summer tour, the Red Roses will be hosting France (7-Sept) at Gloucester and New Zealand (14-Sept) as WXV warm up games. The New Zealand game will be the first time we host the All Blacks at











Twickenham in a standalone fixture. Ticket information for both games can be found here.

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.

- <u>Support</u> is available for players and there will be a **GMS** webinar for players if they need help accessing their GMS accounts on 17-Jun.
- Webinars will also be run for Club Administrators to learn more about Adult Player Registration and access support and guidance on 10-Jun, 24-Jun and 25-Jun.

Volunteers' Week is being celebrated from 3-Jun to 9-Jun and provides a great opportunity to recognise the amazing contribution that volunteers to your club, CB or referee society have made, as well as inspiring more people to make a difference. Please do send out a thank you and recognise the work they do. We will be looking forward to welcoming our Honda Volunteer of the Year nominations to Twickenham on 12-Jul where we will announce the two Middlesex volunteers that will go forward to the National Awards and all the Middlesex individual and club winners.

For coaches who aspire to coach at a higher level, the new Girls PDG Development Centre roles are now live and you can see the roles and application process below.

Girls PDG Lead Coach. This role will oversee the planning and delivery of sessions in each area. This is a contractor role for 50 days per year.

- Girls PDG Therapist. This role will provide medical care during both training sessions and matches. This is a sessional role.
- Girls PDG Assistant Coach. This role will work with the lead coach to deliver high quality rugby sessions. This is a sessional role.
- Girls PDG S&C Coach. This roll will provide S&C delivery focusing on the athletic performance fundamentals of high potential athletes. This is a sessional role.

For any aspiring competition organisers, we are looking for someone to job share the Herts & Middlesex Junior Boys leagues for next season. The job description is attached to this Newsletter.

### Club reminder:

- Age Grade regulations for the 2024-2025 season are now live on Regulations page under Regulation 15.
- Age Grade Registrations Information for parents/guardians that are renewing their child's registration can be found here. Information for parents/guardians registering a child to play for the first time can be found here.
- For pitch side first aid care provision and training courses please review the RugbySafe requirements.
- The deadline for entering your 2023-2024 15-aside fixtures is Fri-24-May, which impacts your club's international ticket allocation.
- There will be a Girls Forum on 4-Jun at 7pm at Wasps FC. All clubs running age grade girls are welcome and you can register here.

As ever, if you need help and support then please do reach out to me.

Lou

Louise.latter@middlesexrugby.com

Message from Andrew Smart, Chair of Competitions

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Just about there with only the Vets Cup Final still to be decided between Old Priorians and Hendon Vets to be played on Friday 7th June 2024 at Wasps FC Ko 7.45pm

Meanwhile to confirm some of our other champions since my last report

First of all, many congratulations to Epping Upper Clapton Women our second ladies' champions and our sixth league champions who have won NC2 SE (Central) by two points with one game un-played.

And of course, Ealing Tailfinders, who with one game to go in the Championship are already champions. This is their third Championship title in the last four years. This weekend's home game against Bedford Blues where the RFU President Rob Briers and our own Eddie Keal will be in attendance to award the trophy will be a special afternoon for the club, its players and supporters.

Seven league champions. An excellent return on the season

In the Merit Table Finals at Chiswick on the 20th April the results for the three Cup competitions were as follows

MT Cup HAC 2nds 37-21 CS Stags 1863

MT Bowl Quintin 17-0 Finchley 2nds

MT Vase Actonians 2nds 17-15 Northolt

The following week at Wasps FC the Merit Table Play-off Finals saw the following results.

Premier MT KO Plate NZ Kiwis 41-28 Belsize Park 3rds

Division 1 Play-Off Chiswick 2nds

Division 2 Play-Off London Japanese 22-19 Quintin

Division 3 Play-Off Haringey 29-14 Actonians 2nds

Following on from my meeting at Cheshunt with Hertfordshire about the proposed 2ndxv league we had expressions of interest from four Middlesex Club, four Hertfordshire Clubs and one from Essex with a ten-club interested but undecided. Last Wednesday 8th May I held a Zoom meeting with the interested clubs to see if we could get this league off the ground for next season. There are still some issues to be overcome but generally the response from the clubs was very positive and they have been given to Friday 31st May to formally apply to enter this competition for next season. If this league does get off the ground it will be run and managed by both CBs

Last Thursday 16th May, both Steve and I went to Twickenham to discuss how our merit tables have gone this season and what our plans are for 2024.25 Overall, all our Merit Tables have achieved the targets set by the RFU at the beginning of the season and the County will be receiving some further funding in recognition of that. It was pleasing to see how complimentary the RFU Competitions Development team were about our merit tables, not only the results/competition rates but also how well they run and they were able to confirm to us that we were amongst the very best performing merit tables across the country. It was good to hear but hardly a surprise. Well done indeed to Steve Partridge for an excellent season at the helm. Some decisions we took before the season started saw a big upturn in our completion rates and there is no doubt that whilst there is plenty of work to do across the summer to improve on those figures for next year we are certainly going in the right direction

Ten days ago or so, we had weekend of Papa John's Finals across the country. Twenty-six Middlesex Clubs out of the thirty-nine that were eligible started out on their journey across the various competitions with Middlesex clubs reaching the finals of four of them.

First of all, on Saturday 11th May at Twickenham in the Counties 2 Champions Final Brunel University went down by 43 points to 31 to Old Rutlishians













Also, on Saturday in the Counties 2 South Plate Final in Bristol competition Harrow went down 31-29 to Smiths Rugby whilst later on that same afternoon also in Bristol Twickenham in the Counties 1 South Plate Final went down 34-26 against Kingsbridge. So, by end of play on Saturday Middlesex clubs were 0 for 3 and it was left to Saracens Amateurs on the Sunday again in Bristol to restore some pride. In the Counties 2 South Shield Final, with a convincing 44-14 victory against Cirencester. Congratulations to all four Middlesex clubs for reaching their finals and special congratulations to Saracens Amateurs for bringing the only Middlesex Club home a trophy. A little bit of trivia for those who might enjoy this, three of our finalists all came from the same league, Counties 2 Herts/Middlesex.

So, I make that 18 champions clubs across both our men's and women's game from 18 different clubs which will go up to 19 once the vet's final has been completed. Nineteen Middlesex club will have picked silverware this season which is of great credit to them but also perhaps an indication of the healthier state of our game across the county where unlike in previous no one club dominating. Of course, the community game is still beset by all the problems of player availability, less teams, less matches played but we are definitely in a better place at the end of the season than any time since we have come out of the Pandemic. Still much to be done to support the game and our clubs at this level but encouraging signs. Well done to you all and to your clubs so many of whom have had a season of which they can be rightly proud

At the London ROC AGM at the weekend in which we were so ably represented by Bob Lawless there were a couple of matters that I need to bring to your attention

I can now confirm that Mill Hill RFC after a number of years in the H/M merit tables did apply and were accepted to re-join the Herts and Middlesex leagues for next season at Counties 3 This will see the three Herts and Middlesex Counties Leagues as follows

#### 12 Counties 1 H/M **Teams**

Fullerians Relegated from R2Thames

**Old Streetonians** 

Chiswick

**Finchley** 

Cheshut

Ruislip

Hackney

Datchworth

Welwyn

Hitchin

Ealing 1871 **Brunel University**  Promoted from C2 H/M

Promoted from C2 H/M

Counties 11 2 H/M **Teams** 

Relegated from C1 Hampstead H/M

Enfield Relegated from C1

Ignatians H/M

Wasps FC Saracens Amateurs

Harrow

**Tabard** Barnet Elizabethans

Old

Millhillians

Reprieved from St.Albans relegation

Promoted from C3

Verulamians H/M

Promoted from C3

UCS H/M

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#### 13 **Teams** Counties 3 H/M

Hendon Relegated From C2 H/M

Finsbury Park Bank Lane Watford Royston **Chess Valley** 

**Thamesians** 

**Actonians** 

Uxbridge

Berkhampsted

Stevenage

Kilburn Cosmos

Mill Hill **New Club** 

As this season this league will split after everyone has played each other once, with the five Hertfordshire clubs plus Mill Hill and Hendon playing each other once more with the fixtures reversed from the first round of matches and the remaining six Middlesex Clubs doing the same. The title and runner-up promotion place to be decided by the best playing record.

The other matter that came out of the meeting was that despite the dispensation in the structured season that allows the London Counties Leagues to start on the 14th September, one week later than the rest of the country and which London asked for, when it came down to it, the eight ROC reps voted for a 7th September start. I am not sure that best suits our needs. I intend to discuss this with the three H/M league secretaries and if necessary, we will go out to the clubs for consultation.

Finally, all the league fixtures for next season will be released at the same time and no later than the 11th June. If you have issues around pitch availability for instance at the beginning or end of the season or anything else, then we need to know. It is far too late after the fixtures have been circulated for us to do anything for you. Please come back to me immediately at andrew-smart@ntlworld.com

**Andrew Smart** 

andrew-smart@ntlworld.com

### Report from Chair of Groups, Andrew Smart

Not much to say about the Groups now we have finished the 2023/24 season except perhaps to say that there are no surprises or changes from the Group AGMS all held in person on the following dates and locations with the Officers for each Group voted back into office.

Monday 8th April 2024 - South Group at CS Stags 1863

South Group Chairman Jerry Rogers (London Cornish), Hon Secretary Lyndon Walters (Hammersmith and Fulham)

Wednesday 10th April 2024 - North-West at Northolt RFC

North West group Chairman Andrew Smart (Harrow) Hon Secretary Mark Foster (OMTs)

Monday 15th April 2024 - North Group Old Grammarians

Chairman Jon Boyle (Hampstead) Hon Secretary Mrs Debbie Stockman-Rose

Wednesday 17th April 2024 – West Group Feltham Chairman Andrew Brooks (Old Isleworthians) Secretary Nick Dance (Grasshoppers)

A couple of crucial dates for your dairies which must not be missed

Payment of Player Declaration for the 2023/24 season is 30th June. This must be completed by all Middlesex Clubs who played at level 7 and above for the 2023/24 season if you are to remain eligible for RFU













So far of the twenty Middlesex Clubs who must complete the Declaration, as of the 13th May, nine clubs have completed the process, a further three have submitted their declaration and are awaiting sign off and a further eight have not started. Still, plenty of time before the deadline but we will start to chase as we get into June.

I attach the link for how to complete the declaration for all clubs currently at level 7 and above and for those below paying players How to complete Payment of Players 2024: RFU

Any questions about the process or issues about how to complete the declaration please come back to me

Perhaps more important for our clubs the deadline for getting all your played 15 a side fixtures on the GMS to be eligible for International Tickets is fast approaching with the deadline at the end of this week (Friday 24th May). The following criteria applies

### **RFU Voting Clubs Only**

- Every voting club receives an initial allocation of six tickets.
- Each voting club with an aggregate total of 30 players or more at U13 and below correctly affiliated on GMS, will receive an additional two tickets.
- All remaining tickets to be divided between voting clubs, based on the number of 15 a side games played by the club (male and female teams). U14 -U18 age grade teams are limited to a maximum credit of 16 matches per season in accordance with the RFU Age Grade Code of Practice. The club must have enough affiliated players on GMS to fulfil the number of fixtures stated.

In past allocations this has meant for every three to three and half resulted fixtures on the GMS (not walkovers) you have received an extra ticket. This is by no means guaranteed and will go up or down depends completely on the number of fixtures on the system divided by the number of eligible clubs.

I need to add that walkovers don't count towards your total. It must be played matches and the results have to be on the GMS for the game to county

Pease use this link to take you through the process Team Management (englandrugby.com). Once again if you need help inputting your matches played and resulted, please come back to me.

Finally on behalf of the Groups and their clubs I wanted to put on record my huge appreciation for the all the work that Nicky in the county office has done for us across many years. Always a pleasure to work with. Nothing is ever too much. Always positive. Always helpful. The county has been extraordinarily lucky to have had her and I am proud to count her as a friend as well as a colleague. She will be greatly missed. I wish her, her husband Gary and her family all the best in her retirement.

A classy lady and a class act

All the best

**Andrew Smart** 

# **Coaching & Referee Development**

#### **Bob Lawless**

Middlesex Summer Coaching Programme The Summer Programme commences on dates tbc during June & early July. All dates will be circulated by Middlesex Social Media Platforms &

The Middlesex Newsletter.

The Summer Programme will have the following Workshops & Skill Development sessions











<sup>\*</sup>Take up The Whistle. Short Referees course.

<sup>\*</sup>Coaching Workshop, Getting it Right of the Pitch.

<sup>\*</sup>Safety in the Scrummage

<sup>\*</sup>Safety in the Lineout

<sup>\*</sup>Developing innovative Back Play



\*RFU Emergency Aid Course.

Venue - Various Venues tbc

All tutors will be highly qualified and will be known to our Member Clubsl

If your Club is interested in hosting an event, please do get in touch (number below)

All workshop & development sessions are free and sponsored by Middlesex.

For more information on any of the above workshops, contact Bob Lawless by WhatsApp on (m) 07803 196 409

Middlesex Coaching - Invites all Club DORs & Club Coaches to a Coaching Workshop.

Theme - "Getting it Right of the Pitch"

The workshop aims:

\*To raise your awareness of the playing culture within your club

\*Stimulates new thinking about the coach's role in evolving this

\*Working towards everybody wants to join and never leave.

Venue - Ealing Trailfinders, Vallis Way, London W13 0DD

Date - Wednesday 26th June 2024 7pm - 9pm

Tutor - Martin Knights.

RFU L3 coach, with vast experience in coaching at various levels of the community game. Martin was once Head of Rugby at St Benedict's School. Now operating as a leadership & team development coach.

The workshop is an interactive session designed to share experiences at the various levels of Community Rugby and enable DORs & Coaches to go away with ideas on how to grow your club.

This is a free workshop sponsored by Middlesex. Numbers will be limited, so book early. Further course information will be sent on confirmation of your place.

To confirm your attendance, WhatsApp Bob Lawless on (m) 07803 196 409

Middlesex Summer Coaching Programme

"Take up The Whistle", short Referees course.

Date - 10th & 17th June 19.00hrs - 21.30hrs

Venue - Finchley RFC, Summers Ln, London, N12 0PD

There are a few places left.

For more information on the above referees course contact - Bob Lawless by WhatsApp on (m) 07803 196 409

**Bob Lawless, Chair of Coach & Referee** Development on (e) robilaws@aol.com or on Whattsapp (m) 07803 196409

# Message from Dick Pooley, President of **Ickenham RFC**

# 60 Years of Saints (St Nicks Old Boys) Rugby

A superb day organised by the current Ickenham committee incredibly well, with over 40 players representing the Past & Present fifteens and probably a similar number on the touchline cheering them along! There were representatives from so many age groups, including Grandchildren for some of us, up to two of the original Committee members in Richard J Finer and W. Gerald Miller, the first Chairman and Treasurer respectively.

There were any number of players and supporters who had travelled considerable distances to join in the celebrations. The score was almost immaterial, but probably in the order of seven tries to five in favor of the "oldies" and with multiple substitutions, allowing for lungs to recover; at least partially recover!!! Mostly bumps & bruises occurred, apart from Sean Gislingham who managed a broken collar bone in three places. Our best to him for a full recovery. A BBQ followed the match and then presentations, numbering into the twenties, to both past and present Club members. And of course a rousing chorus of "When the Saints go marching in!!!"A great day for all involved and especial thanks to the organising committee. There will be some photos to follow in due course. Here's to the next "milestone" for Saints.













# Celebrating 60 glorious years at Ickenham RFC



Very Best Regards **Dick Pooley** President Ickenham RFC

# What's On

- Sat 25th May @ Wasps FC Senior Men 3.00pm KO vs Leicestershire
- Sun 26th May @ Uckfield RFC, Middlesex Women 2.00pm KO, vs Sussex
- Sunday 26th May @ Maidenhead RFC Under 17 Boys Maidenhead RFC 2.00pm kick off
- Sun 2nd June @ TBC, Middlesex Women 2.00pm KO vs Dorset & Wilts









