

## June Newsletter 2024

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

### President's Corner

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

May was a busy month with Merit Table play offs, Papa John's Cup, county women, girls' U15, men and boys' U17 matches. I watched our men in action against Hertfordshire and Leicestershire. I attended our County Clubs' Dinner and the Middlesex Club Sevens at Grasshoppers RFC, too.



(\*) 7s: Grasshoppers II (green) v Chiswick

At our Sevens, we were blessed with a warm sunny day. The festival was well organised by Mark Coles, Steve Partridge, and Fred Cracknell - thanks! It was a delight to watch such great play and then to present the plaques and cups. It appeared as if the players and their supporters were really enjoying the day.



(\*) 7s: Actonians (navy & white) v Old Streetonians

Our thanks to the referee team from the London Society for officiating: Rob Park, Chris Howe, Marc Fusil, Cyril Brognard, Peter Grant, Gavin Nichols, Richard Jones, Livia Branga, George Beckley and Ken Fowlie.



(\*) Winners of the 7s Open Pool: CS Stags 1863

Photographs marked [\*] are copywrite and printed here by permission of David Duff at [www.sportsmediaimages.com](http://www.sportsmediaimages.com). The other Sevens photos were taken by Brian O'Connor.

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7s Open Plate Winners: Hammersmith & Fulham



7s: Social Cup Winners: Old Hamptonians



7s: Social Bowl Winners: Actonians RFC



A 7s action round-up:



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As the season closes, I wish to spotlight the 35+ volunteers coaching or managing our representative Middlesex teams. They give a lot of thought and care to creating open access, aiding player development, and giving candid constructive feedback. Thanks to all of you for your service this season. To Jok Dunbar who is stepping down as Chair of Playing, but continuing as a team manager, thank you for your leadership. I managed to support our Men at Hertford RFC where we came second to

a strong Herts side, and then at Wasps when we hosted Leicestershire in a competitive game.

My thanks to Mark Coles, 'Bavey', Kate Hallett, Nicky Fielder and Alice Urquhart for organising the 2024 Middlesex Clubs' Dinner at Ealing Trailfinders on 17 May. Our thanks to RFU President-elect, Rob Udwin (Chiswick RFC) and Floyd Steadman OBE DL (ex-Saracens) who were guest speakers and to all the clubs who supported your dinner this year. During the event League and Merit Table Winners were presented with awards by Rob, Floyd or me.



Presenting the Middlesex Merit Table 3 Winner's Award to Richard Parillon, Captain of West London RFC

Let me close by adding my congratulations to our four Papa John's Community Cup finalists, what a great achievement by Brunel University, Harrow, Twickenham and Saracens Amateurs. Andrew Smart covered this last month, and I know he was very proud and pleased to present the shield, at Ding's Crusaders RFC (Bristol), to Saracens Amateurs who beat Cirencester RFC to win! And, we congratulate Ealing Trailfinders on winning the Championship.

Nigel R Orton

President

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### Message from Eddie Keal, Chair

I think we can finally draw a line and call it the end of the season. Just the celebrations and wrap-ups to complete before a Summer break. I encourage all of you to take some proper down-time from the game. It will still be there when you come back!

I am so looking forward to the Volunteers' evening. It's one of the highlights in a busy and demanding season. Seeing so many of our top club volunteers all in one place is a real treat.

We will have some changes to the Management line-up next season. All will be revealed at the County AGM where they will be presented to you for your election and endorsement. I will do all the big "Thank You's" then. We hope to get a big audience this year, as we have plans to make it much more than just an AGM.

Enjoy the rest of the Newsletter and have a great break. Pre-season starts in a few weeks!

Eddie

Regards

Eddie.

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

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

Forgive me the indulgence as I reflect on my time with Middlesex. My relationship with Middlesex started in 1996 as a county player and then chairing the Middlesex women's representative side. In 2009, Peter Baveystock asked me if I would sit on

the Community Rugby committee to represent women and girls. This, I did reluctantly, in the view that I would find somebody to take on the role. However, I found the first few meetings so enjoyable with the discussions around clubs and development that I took on the role. Forward to 2015 and I accepted the role as Chair of Community Rugby, now Chair of Rugby Development.

As we look ahead to 2024-25 season, it's exciting to know that we will have an RFU President from Chiswick. Congratulations to Rob Udwin as he embarks on his RFU Presidential year.

I have been honoured to be involved with Middlesex for so long and there are many highlights, and not too many lowlights. The biggest challenge by far was navigating the COVID years, but I'm proud of how we supported our clubs and volunteers and didn't lose any clubs during that timeframe. The girls' game has grown and grown and the St George's Day festival, a RWC2010 legacy has been one of the highlights. Now rebranded and working in conjunction with London Irish as the Middlesex Emeralds International Girls Festival. Our mini's festivals each year see hundreds of age grade players enjoying their rugby. Ultimately, it's the volunteer event that I am most proud of. We've built this up over the years and welcome over 100 club volunteers to Twickenham each year to say thank you for the time, energy and dedication they give to the sport we all love.

I'll be spending the next few months working with my successors to ensure they're set up for success. I've thoroughly enjoyed serving the clubs in Middlesex, supporting Volunteers and supporting the growth of the game. It has been an honour and a privilege and hopefully one that I will repeat in the future when work commitments and my RFU Council commitments afford me a little bit more time to come back and focus on Middlesex clubs.

Before I sign off, a few practicalities to remind you of.

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.

- [Support](#) 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](#).

If you are coaching or refereeing in the women and girls game you have the opportunity to access [training vouchers](#) as part of the RWC2025 Impact programme. These training vouchers are for female coaches and club referees as well as all those that volunteer with your girls' teams. The vouchers are designed to cover the cost of an appropriate course for the role that someone covers. So for those involved in older age groups and the adult game, with the requisite experience, this could include our England Rugby Coaching Award or England Rugby Referee Award, but we have designed the application process to help confirm the most appropriate award course(s) for the role being covered and the experience level of the person attending. This is to ensure that everyone gets the most benefit possible from the scheme.

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.

I hope to see you some of you on a sideline during the season.

Lou

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

First of all, I must start by offering my apologies to Belsize Park 2nds who I managed to miss when acknowledging our champion teams, impressive winners of the Surrey Premier MT.

Congratulations also to Ealing Trailfinders winners of the Championship for the third time in four years, by seven clear points. An outstanding achievement. Hopefully decisions made on Friday at the RFU Council meeting with the Professional Game Partnership will help to realise their ambitions of one day playing in the Premiership and certainly sooner rather than later

Then onto our last final of the season played under lights on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> June at Wasps FC in which Old Priorians Vets won the Brian East Trophy by beating Hendon Vets in a very competitive game by 29 -16. So that is twenty trophies won by twenty different Middlesex clubs. Eighteen to men's sides and the remaining two to women sides. Of course, there are far more men's competitions than there are for the women but it is still an excellent season for Middlesex clubs with winners spread across nearly a third of our clubs.

The league fixtures for both the men's and women's league sides have now been announced. They came out at 4pm on Tuesday 11th June and can be found on the RFU website. For the men's leagues they will be easier to find on the news page of the RFU London website, [www.rfulondon.com](http://www.rfulondon.com). You just click on the link for the league you are interested in and it will create a PDF of all the fixtures. All twenty-eight London leagues can be found on this page

which is very useful when you consider we have Middlesex clubs playing across ten different leagues

There was a slight problem for Counties 3 H/M following the late withdrawal of Uxbridge from the league just before the fixtures were due to be announced. This meant a revamp of the league over the weekend before they were due to be released with the additional problems that this league split after everyone has played each other once. As a result, the fixtures for this league were not ready for circulation with the rest. However, they are now out. Uxbridge will go into our merit tables and we wish them all the best as they seek to rebuild their player numbers. Their league position was offered to Old Grammarians at very short notice who had expressed an interest in re-joining the leagues but unsurprisingly they have decided that a further year in the merit tables would suit them better. At the same after a number of years in the merit tables Feltham have re-joined the leagues albeit at level eleven in Counties 5 Surrey. We wish them all the best as they go from the flexibility of the merit tables to the regulated RFU leagues. So, with Mill Hill and Feltham we have two of our clubs returning to the leagues from the merit tables with Uxbridge going the other way.

With that in mind a survey has gone out to our merit table clubs to get some feedback on the last season and to explore some options for improving our competition offering. This has gone out in two parts. Firstly, to the clubs/teams who have been part of our merit tables from last season and a second survey to our vets' merit tables. I will report back on the results after the 28<sup>th</sup> June closing date. Interestingly although invitations haven't yet gone out for the new season, we are fairly confident of increased numbers with a number of clubs adding teams to our competition. We will have to wait to see what finally materialises but Uxbridge aside the advent of any new teams and with that more players has to be good news for our game locally.

I will report in full in the next newsletter on the decisions of Council last Friday, following an FCS

review, to take effect for the 2025/26. This includes a raising of the glass ceiling for lower xvs from level 7 currently to level 6 and also to allow future votes by the nine CBs who voted not to allow lower xvs to play in their leagues to take place before the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024. This of course includes Middlesex who in the vote over two years decided by 41 clubs to 4 (91%) to exclude lower xvs from our leagues. Still a contentious issue but with over 150 lower xvs playing in leagues across the country and including four the eight CBs that play their rugby in London it is understandable why we are going to be asked by the RFU for our clubs and others across the country to look again.

Finally, the Payment of Player Declaration has to be completed by our Clubs who played ta level 7 and above for the 2023/24 by the 30<sup>th</sup> June. The most up to date list was circulated by the RFU last week and of our twenty clubs who must complete the declaration twelve have completed, a further four have submitted their completed declaration and are awaiting sign off by the RFU and four clubs have not started the process. I will chase those four clubs to make sure they complete the process in good time for the 30<sup>th</sup> June.

Andrew Smart

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## **Coaching & Referee Development**

### **COACHING, EMERGENCY FIRST AID AND REFEREES COURSES.**

(ALL COURSES ARE FREE AND SPONSORED BY MIDDLESEX)

### **CLUB LEADERSHIP**

### **"GETTING IT RIGHT OFF THE PITCH WORKSHOP"**

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**This is an ideal workshop for DOR, Head Coaches or Team Managers**

### **Objectives of the Workshop**

- **To raise awareness of the playing culture within your club**
- **To Stimulate new thinking about the coach's role in evolving this**
- **Working towards "everybody wants to join and never leave"**

### **Workshop Tutor**

**Martin Knights, RFU L3 coach, previously at Richmond FC and Head of Rugby at St Benedict's School. Martin, has a vast experience in coaching at various levels of the community game, now operating as a leadership & team development coach.**

**Numbers are limited, so book early, further information will be forwarded on registration.**

**Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2014, 19.00hrs - 21.00hrs  
at Ealing Trailfinders, Vallis Way, London W13  
ODD**

**Is your club interested in running a Summer RFU Emergency Aid Course or a "Take up The Whistle" short Referees Course.**

**All the above are free but limited to those who come forward first.**

**Bob Lawless, Chair of Coach & Referee Development on (e) [robjlaws@aol.com](mailto:robjlaws@aol.com) or on Whatsapp (m) 07803 196409**

### **Congratulations to Discipline Secretary John Orr**

John Orr, Middlesex Discipline Secretary, receives 2024 national award from the RFU as part of the Honda Volunteer Recognition Programme.

John Orr's contributions to rugby were rewarded by the RFU at the annual Volunteer Recognition Lunch

at Twickenham on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2024. As a former LSRFUR referee, John is not active on the field now, but has devoted his "retirement" from blowing the whistle to on-going support of the game behind the scenes.

John's contribution was cited by the RFU for work with LSRFUR as reappointments (West) and many years as Discipline Secretary for the Society, along with his contribution as Middlesex Discipline Secretary and active contributions to the wider CB Discipline group, supporting the other secretaries with difficult cases.



**Middlesex Playing Update**

**Middlesex Women**

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This season has been hugely successful in our recruitment and retention for new players and the squad looked strong giving the difficult task for the selection of our match day squads. Devon were a formidable opponent last year and although their team sheet had changed



9. Emily Stone, Wasps	19. Chloe Nash, Thamesians	Men: Rees
10. Donna McDonald (C), Epping	20. Furio Akaraki, UCL	Physios: Ella Pritchard, Lucy Howard
11. Aze Anifowose, Harpendee	21. Rachel King, Hamish & Fulham	Team Manager: Dan Neilson
12. Amy Howard, Chessnut	22. Hollie McGowan, Ruislip	Chair of Playing: Jak Dunbar
13. Lily Hadziva, Chobham		
14. Hannah Kent, Thamesians		
15. Rachel Castella, Hackney		
TEAMWORK RESPECT ENJOYMENT DISCIPLINE SPORTSMANSHIP		
14. Emma Pascoe-Watson, Belize Park	Men: Rees	
15. Rachel Castella, Hackney	Chair of Playing: Jak Dunbar	
TEAMWORK RESPECT ENJOYMENT DISCIPLINE SPORTSMANSHIP		

with a few new players we knew they would still be a challenge.

## Middlesex 0 - Devon 12

First 15 minutes the Middlesex women camped in the Devon half but struggled to keep possession or convert the territory into points. As both teams calmed the Devon women eventually worked their way into the Middlesex half and were rewarded with a try on the 35th minute. It wasn't until well into the second half that Devon scored again under the posts and with a successful conversion took their lead to 12 points to nil. In spite of the great efforts of the Middlesex finishers and we are down to 12 players for the dying minutes, we just couldn't get the ball over the Devon try line and the game drew to a close. It was

played in great spirit and with great support for both teams, thank you to Devon women for travelling and we wish them the very best of luck in their remaining games.

## Sussex 54 - Middlesex 0

In spite of a very exciting start and we looked like we were going to score early the Sussex defense got the better of us. The Middlesex women played as they should working pods, calls keeping strong on the scrums, but Sussex just proved to string in the breakdowns turning over ball after ball. had we managed to get to 4th or 5th phase there were definite holes in their defending line, but we just couldn't get past the third phase. When mistakes were made Sussex capitalized going 27 points up by half time. Sadly, the second half saw much of the same and in spite of our interchanges we couldn't get off the scoreboard. Full credit to Sussex for their decisive win they played expansive rugby and by keeping possession broke through our defensive lines. their fourth try in particular was a true team effort. Good luck to the team in their game next week against Devon, it should prove to be a cracking competition.

## Dorset & Wiltshire 20 - Middlesex 15

The womens last game against Dorset & Wiltshire took place on Sunday 2nd June at Melksham RFC. Squad selection proved tricky with injuries during the week but in spite of this we managed to field a strong team with a number of our squad offering to change their usual positions of play. Middx led the scoring with a try by Raquel but D&W quickly responded. Em went over to push us ahead again and again the oppo responded with another try



bringing us to 10 a piece. A unfortunate yellow card and we went down another try. With still a half to play Syd went over to even the score again to 15 all. but again D&W came back with another. Proper end to end play resulted in a 20-15 final score but what a great game played in great spirits. Thank you to Melksham for hosting and again to our wonderful supporters for making the journey.

### Wrap Up

Although the scoreline may not reflect it but the Middlesex women's programme have gone from strength to strength over the last few seasons. Nominations tripled this year from previous with nearly 90 names from 14 clubs across the county. Many of this year's cohort will be returning next season and we look forward to building on the foundations set by Gerry 'New Dad' Dolan and the team of coaches. Special mention to Marc Rees for travelling from Wales to be part of the coaching team and best of luck in Australia. Thank you to the rest of the team Nick 'Out of the Park' Allso, Chris 'So Tall' Mason, Andrew 'Traveller' Barrington, Jake Matthews, Ross 'Part Time' Doneghan, Lucy 'Hop-a-long' Howard, Ellie and Heather our fix it Physios and our supportive legends Zee and Bry!

This was a season for rebuilding the county squad. We knew at the beginning it was going to be a tough series of games but were hopeful with the quality of the players nominated we would have a strong squad. Most pleasing was we had a true representation across the county clubs in our match day squads of 13 teams and it was quite clear the gents came together well as a team. The experience of playing for their county was fun, collaborative and most of all a great development experience for players and coaches alike.

### Middlesex Men



### Hertfordshire 59 - Middlesex 19

The warmup game against Surrey had proven useful in getting an idea of our level and we were hopeful that we would give a good game to Hertfordshire, however they proved to be a strong side this year with a number of level 5 clubs to select from. We had moments of great play and a couple of decisions against us that cost us two tries. We also didn't take advantage as Hertfordshire did of the pitch and its ever so slight downhill bowl in the first half. Our thanks to Hertford RFC, the match officials and of course our supporters.

### Middlesex 29 - Leicestershire 48

Coming into the our how game held at Wasps FC we were optimistic on a closer game after Hertford had beaten Leicestershire by a similar margin. This was

MIDDLESEX RUGBY Senior Men vs Hertfordshire		Date	18th May 2024
		Location	Hertford RFC
		Kick Off	3.00pm
<b>FORWARDS</b>			
1. George Bradford, Teddington			
2. Dan Robertshaw, Teddington			
3. Joe Healy, Leighton Buzzard			
4. Matt Cassin ©, London Irish			
5. Abel Leaman, Saracens			
6. Josh Steel, London Scottish			
7. Rhydian George, London Welsh			
8. Tom Williams, London Welsh			
<b>BACKS</b>			
9. Oliver Poulter, Actonians	<b>Finishers</b>	<b>Lead Coach</b>	Jack Bairstow
10. Finlay White (VC), London Welsh	16. Ossama Aslam, London Welsh	<b>Asst Coaches</b>	Jerry Hedigan
11. Arthur Poley, Twickenham	17. Rory Mercer, Teddington		Jack Goldberg
12. Tom Beech, Harrow	18. Lechlan Lewis, London Scottish	<b>Physio</b>	Bex McLaren
13. Emimo Allen, Teddington	19. Fearghal Cooke, Actonians	<b>Team Manager</b>	Steve Partridge
14. Tom Fitzgerald, London Irish	20. Ben Duggdale, Harlequins	<b>Chair of Playing</b>	Jok Dunbar
15. Ben Whimney, Belisle Park	21. Adam Priors, Teddington		
	22. Alex Tarrant, London Welsh		
	<b>Travelling Reserve</b>		
	Jacob Williams, Teddington		

TEAMWORK RESPECT ENJOYMENT DISCIPLINE SPORTSMANSHIP

an exciting high scoring game with a total of 12 tries scored. However the accuracy of the Leicestershire kicker with his five conversions and a penalty put the scoreline well out of our reach. Again, we had moments of brilliance and even scored when we went a man down to a yellow card. Thank you to Wasps FC for hosting and the match officials as always. It was wonderful to be supported not only by the Middlesex committee members but also by the coaches and DoR's of the clubs represented on the field.

### Wrap Up

This squad was a true county team with 16 clubs nominating players and 13 represented at each of the games. The culture that Jack and his coaching team have created is truly inclusive and the feedback from the players shows that although we didn't win either game they were highly competitive for our rebuilding year. Players want to be part of the county team and have taken this back to their clubs. County rugby in my view should be aspirational but also there to help develop the individuals, they should come together and be greater than the sum of their parts and I believe this foundation year has proved that. Thank you To Jack Bairstow, Jerry Hedigan, Jack Goldberg, Bex McLaren and Morgan Beale for their huge efforts this season and I look forward to seeing how this builds next year.

## County Clubs Dinner

Dear All,

We hope this finds you well. This is a short note to say thank you for attending the recent Middlesex Clubs Dinner at Ealing Trailfinders.

We hope you (and any guests) had an enjoyable evening as we draw towards the end of the 2023/24 season.

Please find below some useful links relating to the event

### 1. Photos

Brian O'Connor has kindly shared photos from the evening with us, on the below path

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1\\_uGhjNg8nHs-ieVQvbKE\\_E8f4h4pShaJ?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1_uGhjNg8nHs-ieVQvbKE_E8f4h4pShaJ?usp=sharing)

### 2. Season Montage

We also had a short video montage of the season we were unable to play but if you would like to watch, this can be found on the link below:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1y-z399D0t-4SY6V5TSIUiT03UncRF9Br/view?usp=sharing>

### 3. Feedback

In the spirit of improving future events if you would like to leave any feedback or share with guests to add some, the link below contains a few short questions to feed back to the Management Committee in the autumn.

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1G5\\_VQTSHIR8OUQ6mZ6sBFdLTWXVQAYfsEdnNsax3jEc](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1G5_VQTSHIR8OUQ6mZ6sBFdLTWXVQAYfsEdnNsax3jEc)

## Mark Coles

### What's On

Save the Date: **Middlesex Annual General Meeting Monday 16<sup>th</sup> September Venue to be confirmed.**

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