

January Newsletter 2024

Email: countyoffice@middlesexrugby.com

President's Corner

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

*On Field ~ 14 Dec: **Old Haberdashers v H.A.C.** This LSE Regional Thames 2 league match was refereed by ex-Middx Board Member, Kasey Allen (Hertfordshire Rugby Referees). The score was 17 – 19 pts. Thanks to OHRFC chair, Ian McCarthy for my friendly welcome.*



OHRFC white stripe on navy & maroon hoops; HAC navy & maroon panels, yellow sox

OHRFC started in 1923 and boast being the “*highest ranked non-training team in the country!*” Rather showing up sides that restrict selection to only those who train. They do not have a coach; their captain was Tom Arnott (5). Their ground in Borehamwood is referred to as Fortress Croxdale.



HAC (yellow sox) defend in their 22m

HAC (The Honourable Artillery Company) is a volunteer regiment of the Army Reserve. It is the oldest British Army regiment, tracing its origins back to 1537 when it was recognised by King Henry VIII. HAC's rugby club started in 1896, and their captain today was Tom Gulland (8) who scored the opening try. HAC's coach is Grant Hathaway. Both clubs are now 'open'.



Habs grasp line out possession

Fortress Croxdale was the scene of an epic battle today with Old Habs pushing the Company right to the wire, strong running and scrummaging being their best weapons. Rucks were hotly and evenly contested. Peter Gordon (15) made his debut for Old Habs.

HAC exhibited effective well-rehearsed back moves and, in general, strong support play. Apart from Tom, Dallas Edens-Te Rito (2) and Jordan Slack (12) had good games.

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Mill Hill

18 Jan: Christmas festivities, ice and waterlogging restricted my recent travel, that resumed when I watched **Mill Hill 1 v Watford 2** in the Herts/Middx South Premier Merit Table. The referee was Andrew Clowes (Hertfordshire Rugby Referees with Peter Brady assessing).



My thanks to chair, Tim Hurst and vice-chair, Geoff Williams for hosting me. Tim and Geoff are both very long serving club members. Tim in the past, being part of the oldest front row in the world. Geoff was once co-opted on to the Hungary Rugby Union Committee, representing them in FIRA and attending the IRB. MH has a homely, clean clubhouse with recent areas of redecoration. In the shadow of StoneX the club acts as a good pre/post-match watering hole for stadium fans. MH has run since 1937 and has hopes for future growth and development.



MH's captain was Conor Turpie (out injured) with Rob Fielder as Head Coach. Mill Hill won 45 - 24 pts. Club secretary, Charlie Hurst (10) was named MH's 'Man of the Match' and 'OJ' Afikuyomi (6), Jayme Cesman (7) and Seb Bulai (15) also put in notable performances. The score alternated and with fifteen minutes left there was just 2 pts difference. MH then pulled away with three further tries to seal their victory, their first win of the season.



Off Field: We were sorry to learn that **Paul McFarland** Secretary of London Scottish FC and the owner of kit supply company, Tacklebag sadly passed away early in December. Paul was known widely around Middlesex and our condolences extend to his family, club and many friends. I valued his keen support for his sons, Will and Toms' rugby and sports teams at Latymer Upper School. He was

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the proud chair of the charity, Scots in London. *Read more [here](#).*

We also learnt of ex-Finchley player, coach and until last season their Director of Rugby, **James Clarke** (Clarkey) who passed away in Bermuda last week. James had also been Head of Rugby at Queen Elizabeth School, Barnet overseeing their big rugby programme including their renowned 7s festival. James had also played for Middlesex and was Head Coach of Jamaica's 18s Olympic 7s squad and their Men's 15s squad last season. Last September, James started as Rugby Operations Director for Bermuda RFU. Our thoughts are with his family, friends, QE Barnet Sch and Finchley RFC.

Nigel R Orton, President
nigel.orton@middlesexrugby.com

Message from Chair, Eddie Keal

Greetings to all. I trust you're enjoying another packed Middlesex Newsletter. I'm told the secret is not the content but the regularity. We seem to be knocking the ball out of court on both counts.

All is well with the County at present, but I wish the RFU was generating fewer headlines. As RFU Council Members, Andy Smart and I will be keeping clubs up to date at the current round of Group Meetings, but we are always available to talk. We both get out to clubs on a regular and frequent basis too.

I'm currently on a talent-spotting mission; looking for people that have a little time on their lives to dedicate to supporting the County's activities. We are a very friendly and approachable team so please talk to any of us if you think you might have something to offer.

You can tell from the quality of this month's Newsletter articles that we are very active just now,

with a full programme of events to deliver over the next few months.

Enjoy your rugby!

Eddie
Middlesex Chair

Update from Fred Cracknell – Chair of Rugby Development (on the field)

Firstly a very Happy New Year to those I've not seen yet. I know it's been a challenging start to 2025 with a large number of training sessions and matches having to be called off due to icy conditions, fingers crossed we're all back on the pitch now until the end of the season.

Lots going on in Middlesex in terms of rugby development. We now have more than half an eye on the Rugby World Cup (RWC) this summer as the RFU is rolling out the delivery phases of the Impact 25 project.

This kicked off with a presentation at the Middlesex Women and Girls' forum earlier in the month from Sam Clapham, Vicky Alexander, and Kesha Drain from the RFU. We covered Inner Warrior Recruitment, using GMS to communicate your events and recruitment plans, Strive25 funding for Councils in London, girls' recruitment and retention, the Middlesex Schools Landscape, T1 resources, a recap of the Impact25 funding, dates for the female coach and match official conference (14th Feb Brighton College), scout and girl guides programme, and finally competitions and playing opportunities in Middlesex. There's loads of great information available if you're trying to grow your girls' section and much of it is transferable to boys. If you'd like a copy of the presentation and/or a recording of the session, please reach out to Sam Clapham or me.

The RFU schools' T1 delivery has started in Enfield with Saracens providing a community coach to deliver to schools in the area. The aim is for these

schools to compete at the London Youth Games coming up this term and next. I'd encourage every club in Middlesex to engage with your local schools if you're not already and work with them to deliver T1 and compete at the London Youth Games or equivalent local competitions.

There are some great T1 resources available for schools including lesson plans available on the RFU website.

To piggyback on what the RFU is doing we are looking to develop the T1 offering for clubs in Middlesex for next season, creating competitive playing opportunities for those who have enjoyed positive experiences of rugby in schools and want to join their local club. We will also be taking back the responsibility for girls' competitions from Kesha, who I wanted to thank for the effort she has put into this over the last season. Expect to see some announcements on this from April.

All of the Middlesex minis festivals are coming up, I believe there is still time to sign up your minis so please reach out to Waheed for details if you don't already have them.

A few events to look out for:

U12 Love Rugby pitch up and play event at Old Grammarians - 9th Feb - Including an appearance from Ella Wyrwas, Kelsey Clifford, Zoe Harrison, Rosie Galligan and Marlie Packer - Reach out to Angela on 07502 228 068 if you'd like to attend

U12-18 Saracens 1 Day Girls only skills camp @ the StoneX Stadium - Wednesday 19th Feb

Female coach and match official conference - 14th Feb, Brighton College

Please don't forget nominations for the Honda Volunteer of the Year are still open. As always any questions, please reach out, otherwise I look forward to seeing you all out and about over the next month or so.

Please do reach out if you have any questions on T1 and how your club could benefit.

Fred.Cracknell@middlesexrugby.com

Fred

Message from Andrew Smart, Chair of Competitions

As we come into the post-Christmas part of the season there are a couple of significant issues facing Middlesex Clubs.

The first obviously has been the weather which has seen across the Country 874 league games to be re-arranged. Of those London has 197, the North 188, the Midlands, 237 and the South West 252.

- 393 of these games have gone over to the 25th January
- 281 to the second NAW 8th February
- 142 to the third NAW 22nd February
- The SW and the North have already begun populating the Break weekend of the 15th March with 9 games
- 22 games to the last NAW of the 29th March
- 27 games across the North and Midlands still to be allocated a date

To break that down further, for Middlesex Clubs we currently have 45 games to be re-arranged with four clubs, Teddington, Hampstead, Harrow and UCS with three games each. It is no doubt a challenging time for our clubs especially those playing now on Six Nations weekends and whilst it remains manageable, there is no doubt that any more bad weather ahead will put significant pressure on the end of the season. Nationally we are already working on contingency plans in case the season does go long and that includes looking at the break weekend of the 15th March. Still as I say we are not there yet but only half way through January and with perhaps a third of the season still be

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played it would be remiss of us not to be looking at all our options

The second is what our leagues will look like next season. We currently have 38 clubs playing rugby in the leagues although to be fair ten of those are currently playing their rugby at levels 6 and 5 with 11 are playing their rugby outside CB boundaries. It would be more but we have lost four clubs from our leagues since the start of the season. Against that I am aware of at least two clubs who are looking at re-joining our leagues for next season and we have another fourteen 1stxvs currently playing in our Merit Table, some of whom might be interested in joining our leagues now travel into Hertfordshire is no longer a concern I am in the process of writing to all our clubs to explain where we are now and to establish expressions of interest for next season.

Counties 3 Herts and Middlesex continues to be the major concern as well faced the withdrawal of a fifth team from the league. In this case Mill Hill who have withdrawn since Christmas. They have the players but not the quality to make any sort of impact. That is now five sides who have withdrawn from this league since the fixtures were announced. Uxbridge and Bank Lane are no more whilst Mill Hill, Hendon and Berkhamsted have returned to their merit tables. We started the season worried how we were going to ensure that the clubs in our lowest league didn't play too many games to now trying to ensure we can get what is left safely across the line.

Against that Middlesex clubs generally are flying across the leagues. We have clubs at the top of community leagues at six different levels plus Ealing in the Championship and Harlequins Women in the Premiership Women's Rugby.

Anyway, a look at how all our clubs are doing following this weekends' fixtures

In the Championship after eleven rounds Ealing Trailfinders are now 13 points clear at the top of the table. Whilst London Scottish up to eighth.

At level 5 in Regional 1 South Central after fifteen rounds London Welsh remain top by five points with CS Stags 1863 up to 3rd, with Hammersmith and Fulham down to tenth, now only two points clear of the relegation places

At level six in Regional 2 Thames, again after fifteen rounds London Scottish Lions, are top by six points from H.A.C and then Belsize Park in third. Grasshoppers remain sixth, Old Priorians up to seventh, Teddington two games behind down to tenth, whilst Old Haberdashers remain bottom although they have won their last two games but still nine points from safety. Three Middlesex clubs in the top three positions in the league all chasing one promotion place

At level seven in Counties 1 Sussex/Surrey again after fifteen rounds Twickenham are second by two points whilst London Cornish drop to seventh. In Counties 1 Essex again after fifteen rounds Epping Upper Clapton are up to Seventh. In Counties 1 Herts/Middx, again after fifteen rounds Brunel University are now top by five points with Fichley third and Ealing 1871 fourth. Old Streetonians remain fifth, Ruislip sixth, Chiswick up to eighth with Hackney remaining eleventh.

At level eight in Counties 2 Herts/Middx at level eight, after fourteen rounds, Wasps are now top by one point over Hampstead who have a game in hand and from Saracens Amateurs who have played two games more. Harrow remain fourth U.C.S. remain seventh, Enfield up to eighth with Old Millhillians bottom

At level nine in Counties 3 Herts/Middx after ten rounds Thamesians are top by nine points from Actonians Finsbury Park remain fifth, Kilburn Cosmos up to sixth. This is the league that has gone from thirteen clubs and are now down to eight

In Counties 3 Surrey, level ten after fourteen rounds Old Hamptonians remain second with a game in hand, whilst London Exiles remain eighth

At level eleven in Counties 4 Surrey, after eleven rounds, Harlequin Amateurs go up one place to fifth London French up to ninth with Old Paulines still winless and bottom.

At level twelve in Counties 5 Surrey after eleven rounds, Staines undefeated remain top by five points with Feltham drop to seventh.

The Middlesex Merit Tables, also devastated by the weather before and after Christmas, are still running at 69.4% completion rate

In the Middlesex Merit Tables Premier Division after nine rounds NZ Kiwis drop to fourth with two games in hand whilst London Sussex have unfortunately withdrawn from the competition

In MMT1 after nine rounds London Japanese and Quintin remain third and fourth respectively

In MMT2 West London, with two games in hand, remain top after eleven rounds by five points, Whitton Lions drop to seventh, Haringey Rhinos drop to eighth, Hanwell remain ninth whilst Old Isleworthians remain tenth and bottom.

In MMT3 after ten rounds, Northolt drop to eight. Ickenham drop to tenth and bottom.

In the Herts and Middlesex MTs Championship South after nine rounds Old Grammarians with two games in hand are currently fourth only five points behind the leaders

In Merit Table South 1 after eight rounds Pinner & Grammarians are top by two points over Hendon who have played a game more. Southgate remain fourth. Mill who are now playing in this merit table after dropping out of Counties 3 Herts/Middx recorded their first win of the season on Saturday and scoring 45 points at home into the bargain

In the Premiership Women's Rugby after twelve rounds Harlequins Women are now top by two points, Saracens Women's up to third whilst Ealing Trailfinders Women drop to seventh

Keep safe and all the best.

Andrew Smart

Group Officers Report

The first set of Group meetings have already started with the South Group meeting on Monday dominated by the events at the RFU. I suspect that this will be the theme at the other meetings which are as follows

North West Wednesday 12th February

North Group Monday 17th February

West Group Wednesday 19th February

Minutes and agendas will come out closer to each meeting which are all likely to be on Zoom

Unfortunately, because of the illness of one of the instructors the Pick Up the Whistle Course was put back a week starting now on the 20th January with the second part also put back a week to Monday 27th. Decent numbers were still able to come which included attendees from Finchley, Enfield Ignatians and even referee from Australia, just moved to London, who has already reached out to the London Society

Further "Pick Up the Whistle Courses"

Grasshoppers RFC. 3rd and 10th February. To enrol [Book your Place – LSRFUR Take Up the Whistle Course \(Grasshoppers RFC\) - over 2 Nights – Grasshoppers RFC](#)

There is also be a further course at Twickenham RFC on the 7th and 14th April. Enrolment details still to be circulated

Some other dates to highlight some of the work going on across the Groups in 2025

Diary Dates and Deadlines

Friday 31 January - Complete your Club risk assessment and medical emergency action plan on GMS

Saturday 01 February - RFU Emergency First Aid course at Harrow. (This is the fourth course to be held across the CB with other three already completed at Old Grammarians, Grasshoppers and Ealing Trailfinders)

Sunday 09 February - Deadline for County U20s nominations

Friday 14 February - Volunteer recognition nominations

As always plenty going on across the Groups and the County

All the best

Andrew Smart

Update from Chair of Team Middlesex – Mark Coles

Greetings All! Happy New Year! I hope this finds you and your club/school/university well and you had good festive breaks.

With the Christmas break, we have not had too many representative games to report on.

The U18 boys campaign continued again after positive showings before Christmas against Surrey and Hampshire with a trip to Thurrock RFC to play Essex. On a bitterly cold day the lads really got stuck in and came away with a comprehensive win to finish their campaign in style. The class of 24/25 have been a real credit to themselves, and the game and we received specific feedback that the attractive style of rugby played really impressed those watching on. A big thanks must also go to parents, guardians and carers for supporting all our players across this and all our programmes getting players to training/games and supporting their

development.



With the campaign concluding this also brought welcome news from the Divisional selectors who have been assessing the boys across the games. For those unfamiliar with the process, the selection team from London and South-East attend all the County games [Surrey, Kent, Essex, Eastern Counties, Hampshire, Sussex, Middlesex and Hertfordshire] and identify players who can be taken forward to a training camp ahead of games against all/some of the three other divisions in England (South-West, Midlands and North). Middlesex were proud to learn we had seven players nominated which is testament to not only the players hard work but the whole coaching and support team (lead by Mark Gardiner and Jok Dunbar) that supported in getting the team into a position to impress the selectors.

A big congratulations must go to the below players as they start the next leg of their representative journeys:

Pierce Kelley – Lock [KCS Wimbledon/Wasps FC]
 Tom Burfitt – Lock [Fulham Boys School/Rosslyn Park RFC]
 Joe Cornell – Flanker [Hampton/London Welsh RFC]
 Sam Griffiths - No.8 [Halilford/London Irish RFC]
 Josh Hagon - Scrum Half [Turing House/Teddington RFC]
 William Miscampbell – Centre [Hampton High/Teddington RFC]

David Shenas - Full Back [St Benedicts/Wasps FC]

Thanks as ever for reading and for your support
Mark

Mark.coles@middlesexrugby.com

Middlesex Coaching & Referee Development

Referee Development Workshop

Wednesday 22nd January 2025, at Ealing
Trailfinders, 19.30hrs start - All Welcome

Referee Rugby Interested?

- Grow with the Game and become a Rugby Referee
 - Learn the Laws and become a better player
 - Experience new Opportunities
 - Learn new skills
 - Stay involved in the Game
- Enrol on the London Society of Rugby

Football Union Referees

“Take Up the Whistle Referee
Course” (see dates below in “what’s on”)

Middlesex CB Funding

Next Course :- Grasshoppers RFC on 3rd. & 10th.
February 2025 – 7.00pm to 9.30pm

Click on -
<https://buytickets.at/lrsfur/1459720> to enroll.

Any Middlesex Clubs that are interested in running
a Young Match Officials Course or an Emergency
Aid course please do get in touch.

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

What's On

Save the Dates in 2025:

Further “Pick Up the Whistle Courses”

- Grasshoppers RFC. 3rd and 10th February. To enrol [Book your Place – LSRFUR Take Up the Whistle Course \(Grasshoppers RFC\) - over 2 Nights – Grasshoppers RFC](#)
- There is also a further course at Twickenham RFC on the 7th and 14th April. Enrolment details still to be circulated.

Other Courses

- Saturday 01 February - RFU Emergency First Aid course at Harrow

Deadlines

- Sunday 09 February - Deadline for County U20s nominations
- Please don't forget nominations for the Honda Volunteer of the Year are still open.

County Clubs 7's Saturday 3rd May, Grasshoppers RFC (please note change of date)

Entry details to follow from Organisers, Steve Partridge & Mark Coles

County Clubs Dinner - Friday 16th May at Ealing Trailfinders – Booking book your place/places below.

<https://forms.gle/gY4JnVw3wVZMRx278>