

April Newsletter 2025

Email: countyoffice@middlesexrugby.com

President's Corner

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

22 Mar: West London 1 v Ruislip 2. This was a top of the Merit Table clash in Division 2 refereed by James Davies (LSRFUR). The match was won by West London, 11 - 5 pts keeping them the table leader.



Zuyderhoff attacks for West London. Photo courtesy of Mark Bannister

With the first half played against the backdrop of a long-lasting thunder storm these two sides battled hard. The last ten minutes saw Ruislip poised to score with repeated attacks in West London's 22. Brave tackling repelled them allowing WL to hang on to the win. Both teams had a high level of unavailability, but had fielded cohesive XVs, Ruislip's team featuring several young men. A tribute to the coaches who gave the sides extended warm up drills and structured the play well.

Good play, of note, came from Ruislip's Zach Huddle (13), Jaden Anakwe (1), Harry McKee (2), Nick Karayiannis (10), and making his debut, Steven Alajide (6). For West London: Sam Zuyderhoff (11), Jack Power (15), the captain Charlie Perry (2), Ollie Plummer (13) and Timmie Barnett (1).



Photo courtesy of Mark Bannister



Ruislip's Tom O'Malley (8) scores. Photo courtesy of Craig Bellis

West London's coaches were Andy Flavin and Simon Fry. Ruislip's coach was Mark Hensen (Chair of Youth), and their captain was DJ Wills (4). My thanks to Team Manager, David Williams for hosting me and to their many former players returning for an 'Old Sods' reunion for reminding me of my past glory days; I played for Old Kingsburians, one of three clubs that merged to form WL in the 80s.

30 Mar: Wasps U17 v Sligo U17. This was Wasps' last fixture of their season, and with low availability, due to Eid and Mother's Day, they had to be bolstered by a couple of Finchley and Teddington players. Wasps hosted a hard tackling touring XV from Sligo RFC, Connacht, Eire. The visitors rushed

ahead with three tries in the opening ten minutes to lead by 19 points, and Wasp captain Sebastian Habdank (6) led well to settle his composite XV and bring them back into play.



A Wasp (yellow & black hoops) tackles a Sligo player (Yellow, black and red hoops)

Wasp coach, Vishaal Thakrar refereed fairly and empathetically. The second half was a tense contest as the teams were on 34 points each at one point, with Wasps edging ahead in the last five minutes to take the game 41 – 34 pts. It was good to meet Aleks Habdank, chair of Wasps Youth.

Middlesex U20 v Essex U20. This was a Jason Leonard Cup match played at Twyford Avenue, officiated by Matthew Blackett (LSRFUR). Coach, Richard Hicks is to be congratulated for relaunching our county U20s and the squad worked really hard. However, Essex were cohesive, attacked at a fast pace with good support runners and totally outgunned us. We spent the game doing our best with the possession we had but largely having to defend bravely.



Despite the match being one sided some Middlesex players impressed the divisional selectors. The team was captained by Finlay Pollard (5, St Mary's Uni). I thought that the 6, Alex Razmilovics (SOAS), his brother Niko Razmilovics (10, KCL) and Daniel Tini (15, Saracen Amateurs) had good performances. The team was made up of players from six clubs, two colleges, three universities and one school.



5 Apr: Ruislip 1 v Brunel University This match was in the LSE Division Counties 1 Herts/Middx league, and it was refereed by Paul Richards (LSRFUR). This was the last league game of the season, with Brunel being league winners; my congratulations to them. Thanks to club chairman, Terry Russell for inviting myself and county colleagues to lunch and to club president, Adam Sharples for acting as our host.



Ruislip in maroon and white hooped shirts attack in Brunel's 22

Captained by Jack Thorn (10), Brunel won the match 66 - 22 pts although the play was more evenly contested than the scoreboard suggests. Well done to Ruislip on earning a losing try bonus point.



Brunel operates a women's and 4 men's teams in the BUCS leagues on Wednesdays, plus this XV in our Saturday leagues. Their coach today was Matt Ingram. Players who impressed me were Martin Cernohorsky (2, 'man of the match'), Matt St Clair (12) and Josh Barnes (14) who was the creator of one of several fine tries for Brunel, with his run from depth.



Ruislip are exploring the possibility of launching a third XV soon. They have had a great season across both men's teams, colts and ladies, so well done. Some colts are already transitioned into the men's teams. Ruislip's head coach was Matt Fieldhouse and their captain was Adam Stone (7). Their 'man of the match' was Ben Stone (1).

Well done to Hayley Jones of Finchley RFC (Oaklands Coll and Emma Mitchell PDG) who has been picked for England v Wales at U18 as hooker. Also to wing, Lily Pereira dose Santos of Ealing Trailfinders RFC (Henley Coll and Maggie Alphonsi PDG) who is also playing against Wales too and will play against Scotland this Easter.

Other news: Two Bishop Wand School, Sunbury students made the England U18 squad that faced Spain on 14 April, both already had two caps: Jerold Gorleku (Harlequins and Twickenham RFC) at hooker and Alan Poku (Saracens and Ealing Trailfinders) was a replacement (17). Our congratulations to both.

Nigel R Orton, President
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Message from Chair, Eddie Keal

The end of another season approaches and the final results for the League and Merit Tables have been coming in thick and fast, Congratulations to so many winning Middlesex Clubs.

At the County, we will be taking a long, hard look at our performance this season and working out what we could have done better and how we might be better organised. All input and views are very welcome.

A key part of that reflection will be looking at our County volunteer base – there is always room for more volunteers – drop me an email if you would like an informal chat about this. Recruitment and new ideas are essential. We'll keep you informed as RFU proposals for changes to Regional structures evolve.

Talking of which, many thanks to all the clubs who engaged in the Special General Meeting and the briefings and roadshow we held.

We will also take a look at our Rules and Policies to make sure they help us deliver effectively for the whole County.

Our AGM will be held at the start of next season, as we did last year. I think it was a better meeting, with more attendance and good engagement on some key topics. I need to find another speaker, with the same talent as Conor O'Shea – or perhaps invite Conor again?

Our representative teams are in full swing, please turn out to support them when you can.

We will try to support our county clubs who make the latter stages of the Papa John's competition and will definitely be at Twickenham for any finalists.

I'd like to offer a massive thank you to all the Middlesex volunteers and hope to see many of you at the Volunteer Awards Evening, the County Clubs' Dinner or at fixtures between now and the final whistle.

Enjoy your rugby!

Eddie

Middlesex Chair

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

There are loads of great rugby development activities continuing to take place as the season heads towards its conclusion.

The Enfield Ignations RFC Middlesex U14 Core Values Waterfall Tournament proved to be a big hit! 250 players across 12 teams were represented. Well done to everyone at Enfield Ignations for putting on such a great tournament, we're looking forward to supporting the event next year!

Elsewhere in the county Hackney hosted 40 players for a week of T1 at their club Easter Camp. T1 is a great way to be able to run camps across multiple age grades and keep players at your club outside of Sundays.

I'm looking forward to the Middlesex Emeralds Cup Competition at London Irish Wildgeese over the May bank holiday weekend. Hopefully, we'll see lots of Middlesex Clubs represented and a real showcase of girls' rugby across the capital.

A big focus for our adult teams will now be on recruitment for next season. If you're struggling and want some ideas, please do reach out.

As always, if you want to be involved in any rugby development activities across the county, please get in touch!

Fred

Fred.Cracknell@middlesexrugby.com

Message from Andrew Smart, Chair of Competitions

The Adult Male RFU League Programme was completed a week last Saturday and after nearly eight months of competitions for our 38 community league clubs it is time to acknowledge our six worthy champions

Level 5 London Welsh

Level 6 London Scottish Lions

Level 7 H/M - Brunel University.

Level 7 Surrey/Sussex Twickenham

Level 8 Hampstead

Level 11 Staines

I will acknowledge both our women's and Merit Table champions later in this report

So, to how our men's sides finished up at the end of the season

In the Championship after sixteen rounds Ealing Trailfinders remain 16 points clear at the top of the table. whilst London Scottish drop to ninth. With six rounds to go it is impossible to see how Ealing Trailfinders will not be champions of the Championship for the fourth year in five.

At level 5 in Regional 1 South Central London Welsh are Champions by eight points. They now become our only National league Club. CS Stags 1863 finished third, with Hammersmith and Fulham after a tough second season at this level ninth and safe.

At level six in Regional 2 Thames, London Scottish Lions are Champions H.A.C finished runners-up, with Belsize Park third. Old Priorians sixth. Grasshoppers seventh, Teddington eighth, whilst Old Haberdashers despite scoring plenty of points in the majority of their games conceded too many and were bottom and relegated

At level seven in Counties 1 Sussex/Surrey Twickenham are a brilliant end to their season

finished Champions. London Cornish finished seventh.

In Counties 1 Essex, Epping Upper Clapton finished seventh.

In Counties 1 Herts/Middx, Brunel University are Champions. Finchley third, Ealing 1871 fourth, Old Streetonians fifth, Ruislip sixth, Chiswick ninth with Hackney eleventh.

At level eight in Counties 2 Herts/Middx at level eight, Hampstead are Champions. Wasps F.C runners-up, Saracens Amateurs third, Harrow fourth, U.C.S. fifth Enfield Ignatians seventh with Old Millhillians bottom.

At level nine in Counties 3 Herts/Middx after twelve rounds Thamesians finished second to Royston by one point. Actonians fourth, Finsbury Park fifth and Kilburn Cosmos sixth.

In Counties 3 Surrey, at level ten Old Hamptonians finished second, whilst London Exiles seventh

At level eleven in Counties 4 Surrey, Harlequin Amateurs finished fifth London French ninth and Old Pauline tenth

At level twelve in Counties 5 Surrey Staines undefeated across the season and only dropping one point are Champions by fourteen points Feltham finished sixth.

So, six Champion men's clubs with Ealing Trailfinders soon to be added to that list

For our Merit Table Clubs.

The Middlesex Merit Tables Premier Division title will be decided on Saturday 10th May at Chiswick between Rosslyn Park 4ths and H.A.C. 2nds after each won pulsating Play-Off semi-finals on Saturday by a single point each. Going to be a great final with the league title to play for. New Zealand Kiwis finished fourth

The Middx MT Division 1 was won by London Scottish Lions 2nds, who with their 1stxv are double champions this season, with Quintin third and London Japanese fifth

The Middx MT Division 2 was won by West London, with Haringey fifth, Whitton Lions sixth, Old Isleworthians ninth and Hanwell tenth

The Middx MT Division 3 was won by Thamesians 2nds, with Ickenham/Uxbridge sixth and Northolt tenth

Saturday 26th April at Wasps FC we have the following MT Finals

In the Cup s repeat of the Play-off Final: - H.A.C. v Rosslyn Park 4ths

Bowl: - London Scottish Lions 2nds v Ealing 1871 2nds

Vase: - Actonians 2nds v Old Streetonians 3rds

Chiswick Silverbacks are the winners of the Middx Vets MT1 with Grasshoppers Vets Champions of Middx Vets MT2

In the HMMT Championship South, Old Grammarians having played a game more are two points behind Cuffley with three to play

HMMT South 1 is a bit of a mess. Pinner are top by eleven points, having played fourteen of their eighteen games. The team in second have only played eleven, Southgate again only eleven with Hendon fourth having played nine. Mill Hill who joined the league after Christmas ninth having only played three. I would like to say that Pinner are Champions but for the life of me I cannot work out how this league works

Now for our Women's teams

In the Premiership Women's Rugby after league part of the competition was completed. Saracens Women were second, Harlequins Women finished third with Ealing Trailfinders Women seventh. In the subsequent play-offs Gloucester-Hartpury Women

defeated Saracens Women in the final 34-19 to take the title

Women's Championship SE 2. With one round to go Hampstead Women re fifth, Hackney Ladies 6th and H&F Women 7th

Women's NC1 SE (North) Thamesians women finished 2nd and Wasps FC Women fifth.

In Women's NC2 SE (Central) H7F Women's 2nds finished fourth and London Welsh Women seventh

Women's NC2 SE (NE) Hackney Ladies 2nds finished fifth

Women's NC2 SE (NW)

Belsize Park Women are champions with Hampstead Women 2nds and Ruislip Women third

Women's NC3 SE (North) Staines Women are our second Women's Champions with Kilburn Cosmos Ladies fourth and Ealing 1871 Women sixth

Finally, the following communication went out to all Hertfordshire and Middlesex Clubs currently looking to play in their respective Counties Leagues for the 2025/26 season on Friday 11th April

Ladies, gentlemen

I trust you are well and looking forward to the break. For those clubs still in the Papa John's Community Cup I wish you every success

Following a productive meeting between the two Counties, lunch time Thursday 10th April, it has been agreed by both Hertfordshire and Middlesex, that with time running out for us to finalise our new leagues, we require all clubs to commit to where they intend to play their rugby at Counties 1 and below for the 2025/26 season

A deadline has been set for by both Hertfordshire and Middlesex for Wednesday 16th April 2025 at 8pm for clubs to respond

Any club that doesn't respond by the deadline will be placed in their own CB Competitions structure for the 2025/26 season

A further meeting between the two CBs will take place on Thursday 17th April at 4pm to confirm their respective Counties Leagues for 2025/26

*Any questions for **Hertfordshire Clubs** please contact*

Simon Embleton Chairman Hertfordshire RFC

07733 266765 simon.embleton@ntlworld.com

David Toon Hertfordshire Representative on the London & SE ROC

07714 510554 davidtoon@sky.com

*For **Middlesex Clubs** please contact*

Andrew Smart Deputy President Middlesex Rugby

07971 178633 andrew-smart@ntlworld.com

Bob Lawless Middlesex Representative on the London & SE ROC

07803 196409 robjlaws@aol.com

Returns for Middlesex Clubs to me andrewsmart@ntlworld.com by 8pm on Wednesday 16th April

Simon Embleton Chairman Hertfordshire Rugby RFU

Andrew Smart Deputy President Middlesex Rugby

Still plenty of rugby to be played with the Papa John's Community Cup which started on Saturday. Completion rates for the first round pretty abysmal at around 50% with walkovers for Belsize Park, Brunel University, Finchley, Hampstead and with Ealing 1871 with a first-round bye. For those Middlesex clubs who did play and won, congratulations to Saracens Amateurs, Harrow, Thamesians and Old Paulines. All the best to our clubs still in the competition with the second round on the 26th April with home ties for Ealing 1871

(although I am told their opponents have already scratched), Harrow, Thamesians and Old Paulines. We also have two Middlesex clubs who both had first round byes playing each other with Finsbury Park at home to Actonians

Some dates for your diary:

Middx Merit Table Cup/Bowl/Vase Finals 26th April at Wasps FC

Play-Off Finals 10th May at Chiswick RFC

Vets Cup Final date and venue still to be determined

Plenty of rugby still to be played with the 26th April a pretty full picture with the Merit Table Cup, Bowl and Vase Finals plus all the second round Papa John Community Cup matches involving Middlesex Clubs

Keep safe and all the best.

Andrew Smart

Group Officers' Report

Right in the middle of the April round of the Group AGMs/Meetings with the South and North-West last week and the North and West group meetings this week. At the South Jerry Rogers stepped down as South Chair after many years of distinguished service with Paul Baksh from Old Pauline elected in his place. Lyndon Walters from Hammersmith and Fulham remains the Group Secretary. At the Northwest Group AGM, I was re-elected as the Chair whilst Mark Foster from OMTs continues as the Group Secretary.

It is fair to say that both were lively meetings, which I expect will continue this week at both the North and West and were dominated by both the Middlesex Roadshow and the RFU SGM. It was clear that the majority of clubs were grateful for the efforts that Eddie put in to get a road show for our Clubs and they responded in excellent numbers to provide a lively and informative meeting. In all nearly eighty people signed for the roadshow with thirty-four clubs represented including twelve from

the North Group which was an excellent representation. There was also a good proportion of of players in attendance better I am told than at any of the other previous roadshows. There were some excellent points raised from the floor and Middlesex Clubs did themselves proud. The great and the good from the RFU said that they were listening, but it seemed clear to me at least, that they weren't comfortable answering legitimate questions about the community game and were happy for the mediator John Inverdale, to skilfully move the discussion onto other points.

At the two Group meetings, there was much discussion about the SGM and some criticism that Middlesex, even if it had taken a position (we did) didn't communicate it to our clubs (we didn't). Eddie and I had taken a view before the All-Clubs meeting and the February Group meetings that it was our responsibility to ensure that the clubs had all the information, they required to come to their own informed decision but it wasn't our position to advise them which way to vote. I think that the two of us together with the Management Board will need to re-visit that position as we lead into the RFU AGM in early July I believe. The same group who engineered the SGM have already lodged eleven proposed changes to the RFU Rules to be heard at the AGM and as a result we will all be asked to vote again. Despite the victories at the SGM for the RFU this has not gone away. Clubs are not satisfied with the Union's leadership and support to the community game and whilst the RFU has bought some time it needs to show that it has a real vision to save the Saturday 15-a-side game and with it all our clubs. As Martin Brooks from Wasps FC at the roadshow said (and I paraphrase) "We were talking about these issues ten years ago and you (The RFU) have done nothing to make things better)

All the best

Andrew Smart

Update from Chair of Team Middlesex – Mark Coles

Greetings All! Spring has sprung and I hope this finds you and your club/school/university well as we've reached the end of the league season for many. September feels both a long time back and not too far away!

As mentioned last month, our Women's programme is now in flight but there are still a few remaining days to sign up/share details for the Senior Men's programme. Please see link below for more details to sign up or share with players.

Senior Men

We are accepting self-nominations this year by Friday 18th April ahead of the assessments on **Wednesday 23rd April**

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1jyNCT0X_CDsLYlBCesaB5ObRQb6gqfuTpMJ6qe1LNNs

These are a real opportunity to take part in a different and complimentary experience to club and university rugby so please do sign up/share with any players you may know who would enjoy the experience.

We've had a little lull in games ahead of the May deluge but that does not mean we've not had much rugby activity going on.

Before I delve into March/April, it is only right to share a belated photo as we just missed the copy deadline last month of our final U18 ladies game back in March against Hertfordshire. This concluded another campaign for our U18 teams, and it is great to see some of our team now pushing on the door of our Senior ladies team as they cross over into adulthood. The future looks bright indeed!



Our U16 girls programme also reached its conclusion in late March with a double header against Berkshire at Reading RFC. For those

unaware and a slight tangent, Reading RFC are also currently fundraising to replace a new roof with £150k needed in the next six weeks with their fundraising efforts and making BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c98ge9254d60>. We wish them all the best in the chase to get the funds they need and keep the club open.

We had two great games (see squad photos below) and concluded with an End of Season awards night at Grasshoppers where an inaugural Great Middlesex Rugby Bake Off was born! The judging panel of Poppy Cleall (current England/Saracens Women's) and our Middlesex Board non-Exec Paralympic champion Emma Wiggs were blown

away with the quality of cuisine on offer and had some tough choices in judging our winners and of course, a Star Baker. Emma and Poppy also both spoke about their own journeys in their respective sports and for all those in attendance, left in awe at the wisdom and experience they were both able to impart upon our participants so a big thank you to both for coming down!



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Finally on the action front at the end of March, our U20s took to the field against a very strong Essex side and although came out on the tough side of the score, stuck at the task commendably against a very organised side with players coming from high ranking clubs. These games are also assessed by London and Southeast Divisional assessors and the feedback we received was that we clearly have talented players who they will be keeping tabs on in our next game against Surrey on 11th May (2pm K.O at Esher RFC).



To conclude, as well as our Open Age teams playing, we also have our U17s taking to the field after sessions throughout the season and taking on Hampshire, Surrey and Hertfordshire respectively.

I've included the below dates for matches in our Adult Age groups. There will likely be additions and changes, but please do make a note in your diaries to come down and support our players.

U17 Boys

11th May- Hampshire- Location- Wasps FC (K.O- 2pm TBC)

18th May- Surrey (H)- TBC (K.O- 2pm TBC)

24th May- Hertfordshire (A)- Location TBC (K.O- 2pm TBC)

U20 Men

11th May- Surrey (Away- Esher RFC)- K/O- 2pm

Senior Women



11th May- Bucks Presidents XV (Home- Wasps- 2pm (TBC))

25th May- Essex (Home- Wasps FC)- Kick Off- 2pm.

1st June- Sussex (Away- Location Brighton RFC)- Kick Off- 2pm (TBC)

Senior Men

17th May- Essex (Away- Thurrock RFC)- Kick Off- 3pm.

24th May- Hertfordshire (Home- Grasshoppers RFC)- Kick Off- 3pm.

31st May- Buckinghamshire (Home- Grasshoppers RFC) RFC- Kick Off- 3pm.

Next month, I'll keep banging the drum again for how we're getting on in busy season, but for now thanks as ever for reading and hope to see you down at games in the coming weeks.

Thanks, as ever for reading and for your support

Mark

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Middlesex Coaching & Referee Development

Middlesex Coach Education

The following photographs are of a Creative Back Play Workshop, held at Enfield Ignations RFC, on Tuesday 18th March 2025, tutored by Rhys Davies the Saracens Academy Coach. The workshop shares ideas of developing creative back play in attack & defence. This is one of a number of coaching workshops held in various North Middlesex Clubs partnered with Saracens RFC our Academy / Middlesex partners.

Harlequins Academy will be looking to run similar coach development sessions for youth coaches in our South Middlesex clubs.

This season Middlesex have run 8 Coach education

/ player development sessions at Grasshoppers RFC, Ealing Trailfinders RFC, Harrow School, Finchley RFC with further sessions planned at Hackney RFC & Harrow RFC. 506 middlesex coaches and players have attended these development sessions.

In addition, the RFU run courses have seen increased numbers with over 800 Middlesex volunteers who have attended the courses which offer a wide variety of player skill development.

The following photograph is of a Creative Back Play Workshop at Enfield Ignations RFC, on 18th March 2025 organised by Andy Roper Chair of Youth Rugby.



Middlesex Referee Development.

The following photograph is of a Middlesex "Take up The Whistle" short refereeing course, held at Enfield Ignations RFC on Mondays 24th & 31st March 2025. 25 attended the course which was run by Referee tutors, Paul Carroll & Matt Todd and organised by RFU referee developer Bob Ockenden. This season Middlesex have run 5 "Take up the Whistle" Courses at Finchley RFC, Grasshoppers RFC, Harrow RFC, Enfield Ignations RFC and Twickenham RFC, where 84 new volunteers, a mixture of youth & seniors have been upskilled to Referee games in our Middlesex Member Clubs.

To support new referees, Middlesex have run 3 Referee education evenings this season at Ealing Trailfinders RFC, Grasshoppers RFC. & Twickenham RFC

The following photograph show a "Take up the Whistle" referees course held at Enfield Ignations RFC on Mondays 24th & 31st March 2025, organised by Martin Baker Player Manager.



Middlesex Coaching Summer Programme.

Best wishes over Easter to all volunteers in Middlesex who have supported the Coach & Referee Development Programme. If you are interested in running coaching or refereeing development

sessions in your Middlesex Clubs do get in touch. The May edition of the newsletter will show the impact of coach & refereeing development in Middlesex during this season and will have information on the Middlesex Summer Coach Education Programme.

Update on RFU Emergency Aid Courses.

Middlesex RFU Emergency First Aid Courses. RFU regulation 9, Player Safety. All clubs must be aware of this important regulation. 9.3 c guides clubs on their responsibilities towards the immediate care provision standards. To support clubs Middlesex have run 4 RFU Emergency Aid courses at Old Grammarians RFC, Ealing Trailfinders RFC, Grasshoppers RFC & Harrow RFC. A total of 38 coaches / physios / volunteers have attended these courses. 2 further courses are being arranged at Old Streetonians RFC and Staines RFC. These courses are free, and the certificate lasts for 3 years. Thanks to Mary Impey our Middlesex Rugby Safe Lead who organise these events.

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:

Middx Merit Table Cup/Bowl/Vase Finals

- 26th April at Wasps FC
- Play-Off Finals 10th May at Chiswick RFC

County Clubs 7's

Saturday 3rd May – At Wasps.

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

<https://forms.gle/gY4JnVw3wVZMRx278>

County Club's Dinner, Friday 16th May



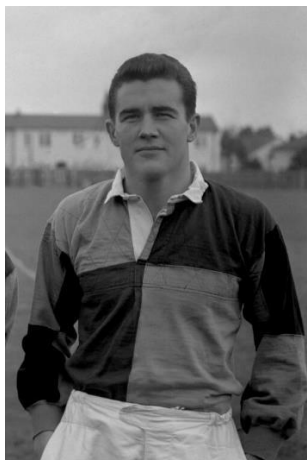
We're looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the County Clubs' Dinner on Friday 16th May at Ealing Trailfinders.

The cost is £70.00 pp, which includes a complimentary drink on arrival and table wine. In recognition of their support that allows rugby to continue to grow, plus-ones are welcome. If you, or members of your club would like to attend, please fill out this form by Thu 17 April 2025 to secure your place:

For Clubs who wish to make a table/part table booking please complete the form with the names of attendees and highlight the principal Club contact.

<https://forms.gle/gY4JnVw3wVZMRx278>
Around the County

Mike Whiteside



We are very sorry to report that Mike Whiteside passed away last Thursday, at the age of 83, while he was recovering in the ICU following a heart operation on the Monday.

Mike was a great gentleman and all round sportsman, and a Harlequins' and an Old Isleworthians' legend.

While in the Isleworth Grammar sixth form he was selected for England Schools Rugby, and on leaving school was recruited by Harlequins.

Mike made his first appearance for Quins at the age of 19 in the Adrian Stoop Memorial match against the Irish Wolfhounds (the Irish equivalents of the Barbarians) on 10th September 1960. It was a memorable day for him. In the morning, he had played in a Harlequin trial match at Fairfax Road, Teddington. In the afternoon, he was called out of the stand at Twickenham Stadium into the 1st XV to replace Jeremy Spencer, who had failed to turn up, at scrum-half. He started in boots lent to him by one of the opposition, Tony O'Reilly, until his brother delivered his own boots. He scored a try on his debut to help Quins win 20-19 against the star-studded Irish team. Unsurprisingly, he suffered from cramp in the second half.

Three days later, Mike was playing in a Middlesex trial contesting for a place in the County side with Keith Pontin, a former Quin. At the end of the 1960/1 season, he was selected at scrumhalf for the Middlesex team touring France in April along with England international, Johnny Williams, who joined the Club the next season.

At the beginning of the next season, Mike was touring again, this time with Quins to East Africa. With Williams, the regular scrumhalf, Mike was his injury cover for both Club and County. So, he started to experiment playing in other positions such as centre and fly-half. At scrumhalf there was also competition from Roger Lewis and Jeremy Spencer, so being a utility player meant more games for Mike.

In total, Mike played 56 matches for the 1st XV scoring 7 tries. His farewell appearance was against Gloucester on 16th April 1966 at Kingsholm. He was back where he started at scrum half. He continued to play for the Wanderers and later the 3rd XV.

In between his times at Harlequins, Mike returned to Old Is where he played rugby, football and cricket. He had a successful three seasons as OIRFC Club Captain. His last Old Is rugby game was in his late 40s in a Veterans tournament final in 1989.

After a number of years in the cosmetic industry, Mike returned to his old school (which had become Isleworth & Syon) as a chemistry teacher until he retired.

Many of you will have seen Mike in recent times as he was a regular in the HPA box and at golf days. He was a member for many years at Wyke Green GC.

Mike will be remembered at Old Is at its annual charity rugby match on the 12th April, and at the next Harlequins home match on the 19th and HPA golf day on the 1st May.

Enfield Ignatians EARN RAVE REVIEWS IN THE WAKE OF WATERFALL TOURNAMENT SUCCESS.



The EIRFC Middlesex U14s Core Values Waterfall Tournament, proved a big hit, having acted as a magnet to some 250 players from 12 teams: an occasion amplified by the Mediterranean

temperatures and great support from the touchlines, as the Enfield Playing Fields crackled to the sound of youth rugby (March 30), writes Jonathan Landi.

A tournament which prizes rugby's core values, much envied by other sports, as much as the competitive element, was certainly very well received, and the feedback from a number of coaches has been overwhelmingly positive.

The rugby also reflected the elements, and we were treated to a regal final, as local rivals Old Grammarians outpointed a very tenacious Enfield Ignatians 'Blues' team by a converted try in the main bill of fare, the Cup competition.