

May Newsletter 2025

Email: countyoffice@middlesexrugby.com

President's Corner

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

19 April: I was with one of my grandsons at Ampthill RUFC as they took on **London Scottish** in the Championship. We were joined on the touchline by Andrew Smart and Andrew Cunningham (of London Scottish Lions). Ampthill won 38 – 19 pts. No further report from me as both clubs' websites cover the detail.

3 May: Harrow 1 v Chipstead 1 This was a quarter-final in the Counties 2 South Plate of the Papa Johns Community Cup. Harrow had reached this stage with a 1 pt away win over Bec Old Boys, then a walkover against Woodbridge RFC, Suffolk. Their opponents, Chipstead have had a good season finishing third in their Surrey league. These two teams met last year in the PJ Cup, too. Today's score was 7 – 27 pts in favour of Grove Field's visitors.



Chipstead were the bigger, heavier side and the extra kilos made it hard work for Harrow. Both teams had great passing moves to use the breadth of the pitch and long ranging kicks stretched the defences. There was a good use of wingers, Harrow's two were impressively quick. Although Harrow scored first they couldn't generate further points and Chipstead's power took them over the line five times.



Harrow wearing hoops

The match referee was Paul Richards (LSRFUR), Harrow's coach is John Porter-Griffiths. There were good performances from Dan McEvoy (12) and Ed Harcome (9) and Harrow's captain, Tom Beech (13).



Heads and Tails fun to start the County Dinner.

Photo by Brian O'Connor

16 May 'Middlesex Day': I had an enjoyable evening at Ealing Trailfinders for our **2025 Middlesex Club's Dinner**. A good turn out with so many clubs represented and with a good mix of players, administrators and coaches. We dined well and received an inspiring account of Deborah Griffin OBE journey to become next season's RFU President, overseeing our hosting of the 2025 Women's Rugby World Cup. It was also a pleasure to introduce our recently appointed Middlesex Board NED, Paralympic canoeing gold medallist, Emma Wiggs MBE. Deborah presented plaques to clubs that had won their league or merit table. (Read more in Andrew Smart's column!)



Deborah Griffin presents London Welsh with their Regional 1 Winners' Plaque. Photo by Brian O'Connor

17 May: The 2025 Middlesex 7s

It was a pleasant sunny day with four levels of sevens competition, including an inaugural one for women, hosted at Wasps FC. I was honoured to present the trophies to the winning teams. It was great to see King's College London Women (KCL) taking part. I have been promoting student rugby during my presidency. With 28 universities and 450,000 students in Middlesex, we need to create links and have pathways to clubs when these students graduate. We managed to select some students into our County U20M and Men's teams this year.



Wasps win the Women's Cup. Photo courtesy of Martin Hull www.sportsmediainimages.com

KCL, led by Ulyssia Bayley, won their first three games. Anna Cook was their standout performer in a strong squad that had won the Plate at the Hendon

7s. Today, they ended runners up in the cup final to **Wasps 1**, who were captained by Lydia Hume. **Hammersmith and Fulham** beat **Belsize Park** to win the Plate.



Hammersmith & Fulham run in a try. Photo courtesy of Martin Hull www.sportsmediainimages.com



London Scottish: 7s cup winners. Photo courtesy of Martin Hull www.sportsmediainimages.com

In the main men's event, **London Scottish Lions**, captained by Aaron Perrin, were victors over **CS Stags**, captained by Pat Reagan, 26 -10 pts. **Ruislip** won the Plate. In the other men's competition finals, **Harrow** beat **West London**, and in the Plate, **Kilburn Cosmos** took the honour. As the tournament closed a DJ set, street food and the outside bar created a relaxed atmosphere as the teams rehydrated and refuelled in the sunshine.



*West London (green) v Harrow (puce). Photo courtesy of Martin Hull
www.sportsmediaimages.com*

Our thanks go to the London Society Referees' team of Blair Cooper, Gav Nichols, Livia Branga, Francesco Pagliara, Tom Gorton-Clark, Uzzy Anwar, Huw Evans, Richard Jones and Ben Stone all led by Rob Park for officiating 40+ games. And, to Steve Partridge (Actonians), assisted by Laurel Dunne and Sophie Meynell-Anderson (both H&F) for running the tournament, and finally to Wasps for hosting the event.



*Actonian players trying to defuse a Kilburn Cosmos centre. Photo courtesy of Martin Hull
www.sportsmediaimages.com*

This had been a very busy weekend. In addition to the Dinner and the Sevens, the County were successfully playing Essex Men at Thurrock, we had

two clubs winning Papa John's Finals, and on the Sunday, two County U17 teams had wins away in Surrey. It was also Grasshoppers' Centenary Dinner and other clubs had their end of season socials.

Poppy Love (Trailfinders Women, Grasshoppers RFC) is in the England U20 Training Camp at Loughborough University this week preparing for England's summer series.

Nigel R Orton, President
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Message from Chair, Eddie Keal

It may be the end of the season, but we're in the middle of one of the most packed schedules I've known in years. See Andy Smart's note about the silverware that has been won and you'll understand why. It has been a fabulously successful last month. Our Representative teams have been performing too, and I look forward to watching the Senior Men at Grasshoppers on Saturday and the Senior Women at Wasps on Sunday.

So many things are coming together to produce the magic on the field. Together, we must be doing a lot right!

Next stop, off the field, will be the Volunteer Awards evening. Look out for your invitations – the engraving has been commissioned and the food and drink ordered. It's going to be another cracker of an evening, hot on the heels of the excellent County Clubs' dinner.

Our AGM will be in September, as per last year. We'll announce the details shortly.

Before that, we have the thrills and spills of an RFU AGM. Once again, we may need an evening Zoom session to go through the motions that have been put forward.

There is no time to draw breath just yet. I look forward to seeing many of you again very soon.

Eddie

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Middlesex Chair

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Message from Andrew Smart, Chair of Competitions

What a brilliant weekend for Middlesex Rugby and a fantastic way to finish club rugby for 2024/25

It had already been another excellent season of rugby for Middlesex clubs as we headed towards the County Clubs Dinner on Friday night at Ealing Trailfinders with eight RFU League Champions, fifteen different clubs having picked up silverware this season from nineteen competitions. A tremendous return from our clubs (Apologies to CS Stags 1863 2nds who had won the inaugural London Counties & South Coast Premiership Merit Table this season winning nineteen of their twenty fixtures and who I missed out in my report to Management Committee earlier last week. Thanks to Fred Cracknell for pointing me right). By the end of weekend those numbers had increased to nine league champions, nineteen different champion clubs across twenty-six titles) Before I go onto talk about those, I just wanted to say how much I enjoyed the Middlesex Club's Dinner on Friday night. Excellent company a really good mix of clubs, officials and players, good food, plenty of wine and a chance for us to acknowledge our champions. Well done to Nigel, Peter, Alice, our compere Steve Partridge, our guest speaker the President elect of the RFU Deborah Griffin, our hosts Ealing Trailfinders RFC, their friendly and willing staff and everyone else who worked so hard to make it a success. In particular to all of you who supported what was a really good event for the County. Really nice evening. Sorry you had to listen to me but I loved it. Might even go again.....

And then onto Saturday. What a day of rugby for our clubs and what success. Now where to go to watch

Middlesex Clubs. Was it to Wasps FC for the 7's which started at 11am where the champions of the main competition were London Scottish Lions, whilst without doubt the most popular winners of the day (well in my household anyway) were Harrow who won the social event. Many congratulations also to Wasps FC Women who beat Kings College London Women in the final of the inaugural Women's event, and also to Hammersmith and Fulham Women who beat Belsize Park Women in the social competition. Many congratulations to Steve and Laurel for running such a brilliant competition. Thanks also to Wasps FC for their customary excellence in hosting the competition.

Or was it to the Allianz Stadium to watch Brunel University playing in the Champions, Counties 1, Papa John's Community Cup against Stampford at 1pm. Brunel fell at this final hurdle last year but there was to be no repeat this year comprehensive winners and Champions of England at level 7, by 45-15 (HT 33-5) Well done Brunel a league and National Cup double and thanks to Bob and Eddie who were there to support them. Thanks also to Deborah Griffin who was able to present Brunel University with their Counties 1 Herts/Middx League Trophy at the same time as their Papa John's Cup

Or was it to Dings Crusaders RFC in Bristol where Ealing Trailfinders 1871 played Old Bristolians in the final of the Papa John's Community Cup Counties 1 Plate ko at 3pm. Two Middlesex clubs from the same league playing in Papa John's finals shows how strong Counties 1 H/M was this season. 1871 were never behind in the game racing to a 10-0 lead after 20 minutes and going into the half 16-10 up. Ealing played some scintillating attacking rugby but two yellow cards, one in each half and in which they conceded three tries, 1871 kept Old Bristolians in the game before Ealing ran out worthy winners by 28-24. Well done to Ealing. They played some lovely rugby with the two Steadman brothers to the fore but they were also defensively strong when they needed to be for the last ten minutes to get over the

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line. It was great to see so many Ealing supporters at the game and it was a real honour to be able to hand out the winners' medals to the players and coaches and the Plate Trophy to their outstanding skipper Lewis Steadman.

Or was it to Caldy where Ealing Trailfinders needed three points from their remaining three matches to become the winners of the Championship for the fourth time in five years. In the end it was never in doubt with eleventh placed Caldy conceding six tries as they went down 7-34 and Ealing Trailfinders are our ninth league winners of the 24/25 season. Fantastic achievement and many congratulations

Or was it to Thurrock where the County men's side took on Essex in the County Championship winning big by 48-24. Not within my remit but it puts the icing on a brilliant day for both Middlesex Rugby and our clubs and I thought it need to be mentioned

A superb couple of days for us and well done to all concerned

Finally, my club of the season. It could go to Staines whose men and women both won RFU league titles. Maybe to Ealing Trailfinders who have now won the Championship four years in the last five. Maybe to London Scottish who won their league, saw their 2ndxv win MMT1 and they also won the Middlesex 7's. Really tight and you could make a case for any of them but on balance and of course my opinion only, I think it should be Brunel University. League winners of Counties 1 Herts/Middx and Champions of England. A bit of fun. I know you will have your own opinions and happy for you to let me know.....in a constructive way please. I will share any comments in the next newsletter

In may ways it has been a really difficult year for me with my competitions hat on, both locally and nationally and it hasn't finished yet but then you get a weekend like the one we have just had, and I remember why I got involved, why this game is so fantastic and what it still means to me

Great clubs, great people. Great season

Keep safe and all the best.

Andrew Smart

Update from Chair of Team Middlesex – Mark Coles

Greetings All! May is upon us and like a whirlwind we're besieged by Representative Rugby across our various teams, so I hope to do all justice in the coming paragraphs.

One aspect that has really struck me has been the amount of goodwill and support we have had across our programmes these past few weeks from many people from many clubs, so before anything else a big thank you from me and the entire Management Board helping make rugby happen across our region.

Our Senior Men and Women's programmes are now in flight after assessments and selections, but we also have our U17 programme and U20 programme concluding.

Our U17 programme is the earliest entry point now into the Middlesex pathway for boys and despite assessments back in September/October, the meat of the campaign is in May. These then feed into our U18 boys programme that runs towards the end of the calendar year and feeds into the London and Southeast divisional programme. We've had double header games against Hampshire and Surrey already this season to give more lads the opportunity to play county level rugby and access wider pool of talent than had we only had one team. We came away with two narrow losses against Hampshire and two wins against Surrey.



Our U20 campaign concluded away at Surrey (Esher RFC) and after a tough last time out against Essex our lads rallied and put on a superb performance to come away 49-27 winners and finish the campaign on a high. We also had two players who have made the London and South East divisional squad in Fin Pollard (St Mary's Uni) and Terrance Kadieda (Staines RFC) so a big congratulations as they go off and enjoy that experience with players from surrounding regions.



This first season back of U20 has been a real highlight for me and the leadership team and players have been superb in coming together to do our area proud. Now we have a stake in the ground, the off season will present an opportunity to plan, reflect, and review what we want this to look like

next season in how we engage players/clubs and run the programme.

Turning to our Senior Women, they returned to the field for the first time this season against a Buckinghamshire Presidents XV and came away with a 27-20 win in their first game together. A true testament to the girls who played and the coaching team who have come together at pace this season as we head into our first Gill Burns County Championship match against Essex on 25th May.



Finally, and by no means least, our Senior Men's side was announced with representation from 16 clubs across our area. For this side we asked all players to come in non-branded club kit to assess playing ability rather than club from and has been a real success, so something will be rolling out across teams next season to show we are prepared to be open and transparent in our selections when have may good players to choose from. Our first game away at Essex was a success coming away with a 48-

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24 win and we now have two home games against Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire to enjoy (both at Grasshoppers, 3pm K.O).



To conclude, I've included the below dates for matches in our Adult Age groups. There may be last-minute additions and changes, but please do make a note in your diaries to come down and support our players. It really is appreciated by our players and coaches.

U17 Boys

24th May- Hertfordshire (A)- Cheshunt RFC (K.O- 3pm TBC)

Senior Women

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

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

Senior Men

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

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

Next month, I'll do a review of the season, highlights and where I'd like to take these programmes next 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 Hackney RFC, on Tuesday 29th April 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 9 coach education / player development sessions at Grasshoppers RFC, Ealing Trailfinders RFC, Harrow School, Finchley RFC, Enfield Ignations and Hackney RFC. 565 Middlesex coaches and players have attended these development sessions.

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

The following photographs are of a Creative Back Play Workshop at Hackney RFC, on 29th April 2025 organised by Steven Bailey Chair of Youth Rugby.

Learning while having Fun at Hackney RFC



Middlesex Referee Development.

The following photograph is of a Middlesex "Take up The Whistle" short refereeing course, held at Twickenham RFC on Mondays 7th & 14th April 2025. 11 attended the course which was run by Referee tutors, Rob Park & Hannah Everitt 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, 2 further TuTW courses will be run at Ruislip RFC & Ealing Trailfinders. A total of over 80 new volunteers, a mixture of youth & seniors have been upskilled to Referee games in our Middlesex Member Clubs.

A Take up The Whistle Course at Twickenham RFC made up of Senior and YMOs



Referee Education

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

3 YMOs have been nominated for a Middlesex Award for exceptional services to refereeing in our Middlesex Clubs. They are -
Martha Blackman of Ealing Trailfinders
Sean Hegarty of Old Grammarians
Angus Lusty of Old Grammarians

Middlesex Emeralds Girls Festival held at Hazelwood on Sunday 4th & Monday 5th May 2025

Middlesex Coaches Chris Mason and Iestyn Fitzsimmons coaching an amalgamated Girls team of Grasshoppers & Richmond girls.



Middlesex Coaching Summer Programme.

Planning is in place to run a number of coach education sessions during June & July. The following themes will be on offer, (1) A Scrum Half Workshop (2) How to develop defence coaching through games (3) Building a safe and effective scrummage (4) An introduction to

the tackle & contact for U9 & U10 coaches (5) An advanced CPD for coaches at L3 & L4. These will be advertised on the Middlesex Social Media Platforms but do get in touch to register your interest.

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.

Any thoughts or questions on Coach & Referee Development. Please get in touch with Bob Lawless, Chair of Coach & Referee Development on (e) robjlawless@aol.com or on WhatsApp (m) 07803 196409

More Shots from the "Fantastic Middlesex 7's"
Courtesy of: Martin Hull – Sports Media Images



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