

October Newsletter 2025/26

Email: countyoffice@middlesexrugby.com

President's Corner

The Middlesex AGM was only just four weeks and it seems to have flown by. Still feel a bit overwhelmed to be elected to this position and just wanted to say thank you for allowing me this opportunity. Like many of our Presidents in the past I will continue to get out as often as I can to see and support Middlesex Clubs. A small group of us try to get out to as many Friday night games as possible and that will continue. As I have done over many years when Harrow 1sts are at home my duties are to my club but when away as I have then I like to get out to watch as many Middlesex Clubs as I can. Anyway, as I have said I have only been in post for just over four weeks so it seems sensible to cover what I have done since the start of the season

First of all, in relation to the September Group meetings I managed to cover three out of the four. Two were in person meetings with the North West Group at Harrow and the West Group at Staines whilst the South Group meeting was on-line. Unfortunately, I was unable to get to the North Group meeting at Finchley as Annette and I were away for a few days in the New Forest. I know Andrew Walker and Eddie did attend so thanks to both of them and anyone else from the Management Committee who might also have gone

Unfortunately, again in the same week I was unable to attend the October RFU Council meeting as I was travelling back but I did arrange for Paul Astbury to cover for me and the CB.

- In relation to club visits I have been to
- Ruislip to watch them play Old Streetonians,
- Grasshoppers to watch them play Brunel University
- Harrow of course to watch their 1stxv host Barnet Elizabethans

- Harrow to watch their 2nds play Northolt
- Teddington to watch them play Harpenden
- L S Lions to watch them play Worthing
- CS Stags 1861 2nds playing L Welsh Druids
- Chiswick play Finchley
- Last Friday night I went to Fichley to watch them play UCS
- On Saturday I was hosting a lunch at Harrow before we played Old Millhillians

This weekend I have a couple of options both in the RFU Community Cup. Either to go to London Cornish to watch them host Chiswick in a re-arranged first round game in the Counties 1 South Plate or to Actonians to watch them play Old Hamptonians in the second round of the Counties 2 South Plate.

So far so good

Enjoying it and hopefully see you on a touchline or clubhouse soon.

Andy Smart

Message from Chair, Eddie Keal

It's been a flying start to the season. We had good engagement at all four of the group meetings, which is very pleasing. Three of the next round in November will be online which makes them easier on the time and travel but not so much fun.

The Management Board is running well. We remain very focused on club rugby with an eagle eye on follow up activities from the Women's RWC.

It was strange to meet without Peter Baveystock for the first time in my Middlesex experience. Peter has been part of the Management Committee for all of my time, but has dropped off the Immediate Past President role. We are all very grateful that he has offered to carry on with this Newsletter 😊.

Thankyou to those clubs that are up to date with their Middlesex subscriptions and competition fees. If you haven't yet paid you should have received a gentle nudge. **See also Carmine's exhortation below!**

The Coach and Match Official development programme continues apace. It truly is the gift that keeps giving.

The Management team are scheduled to visit one of the Leadership Academy sessions early in the new year, and we're all looking forward to supporting that.

The weather has been kind to us so far – in spite of some worries about dry pitches after the Summer. Which means clubs should have some gaps to enjoy the Autumn Internationals. Having said that, I see a the Fiji match is a 5.40pm kick off so presents a good post-match entertainment opportunity. The final fixture on Sunday 23rd v Argentina is at 4.10pm which almost clashed with some of the Women's fixtures that day.

I have no doubt I and my colleagues will see many of you over the coming weeks. We look forward to getting out and about. Long may the weather hold!

All the best

Eddie

Middlesex Chair

Eddie.keal@middlesexrugby.com

Message from Steve Partridge, Chair of Competitions

This is my first report as Chair of Competitions. Some enormous shoes to fill, Andrew Smart has been a great mentor, supporter, and friend to me over the last 10 years and has set me up well to take over, ensuring Competitions continues to deliver rugby to our clubs, considering we are now completely stand-alone, having broken away from our long-term partners Hertfordshire. I wish him all the best as he takes over as County president from Nigel Orton. Here is how our clubs are faring in their respective leagues. London Welsh is currently at the bottom of National League 2 East, having played 7 games with 1 win and 6 losses. In Regional 1 South central CS Stags are sitting in 3rd place with 22

points, having won 4 games and lost 2, whilst London Scottish Lions are currently 6th place in the same league on 21 points with the same win-loss ratio. Jersey, who are currently at the top of the league on 30 points, are unbeaten with 6 out of 6 wins. Only 2 points separate 2nd place from 6th place in the league. Hammersmith and Fulham are in 12th place, having lost all 6 games but picked up 4 bonus points along the way. In Counties 1 Essex Epping Upper Clapton are currently joint top of the table on 20 points having played 5 games and won 4. H.A.C. are sitting 4th place in Regional 2 Anglia on 21 points, having won 4 games and lost 2, and are 5 points behind league leaders Brentwood. Twickenham are currently sitting 9th in Regional 2 South Central, with 15 points, having won 2 games and lost 4. There are 2 clear leaders in Winchester and Bournemouth, who have won all 6 of their opening games. Belsize Park are currently sitting top of Regional 2 Thames, on 26 points with 5 wins and a loss. Brunel are hot on their heels in 2nd place with 5 wins out of 5 and sitting on 25 points. Teddington in 5th place on 20 Points, Old Priorians in 6th place on 17 points and Grasshoppers in 9th place on 10 points. In Counties 1, Middlesex Old Streetonians are currently sitting unbeaten at the top of the table on 24 points, with 5 wins out of 5. followed closely by Finchley, Ealing Trailfinders 1871 & Old Haberdashers who are all sitting on 4 wins and 1 loss, followed by Chiswick, Hampstead, Ruislip, Saracens Amateurs, with both Wasps, & UCS sitting bottom of the league with 5 losses out of 5, In Counties 2 Middlesex, Barnet Elizabethans are joint top of the table with Actonians on 14 points having both won 3 and lost 1 game, Then the league is comprised of the following teams by league position Hackney, Enfield Ignatians, Harrow, Finsbury Park, Kilburn Cosmos and Old Millhillians in last place on 7 points with only 7 league points separating 1st place to last place, this looks like a very tight league and bonus points will have a large impact on the

overall league positions this season. All weekly league results can be found [here](#)

In respect of our Merit tables. We have 40 teams in 4 leagues, Premier and Division 1 have 9 teams each and Division 2 & 3 have 12 teams each. I tried to even out the leagues at the start of the season but asking clubs to step was a stretch too far for very valid reasons. We welcomed back Pinner & Hendon and are glad to be back in the fold. We have also seen newly formed 3rd teams from Chiswick, HAC, and London Scottish join the merit leagues. It is fair to say it has been our slowest start to Merit competition this season compared to the recent seasons. I am hearing from you, the clubs that players were slower to return after the summer, and general availability and appetite to play week in and week out are significant issues so far. Additionally, the start of the cup competition at the beginning of the season and the break for the Women's World Cup final have added an extra strain. I am hoping that as we go into November, this will pick up, but we are going into the Autumn International season, which always has a higher impact on Middlesex clubs. I do fear we will lose a couple of teams from the merit leagues before Christmas due to availability and player commitment.

Overall

- Premier Total 16 Games -15 Played(1 Game On), 1 postponed – 93.7%
- Div 1 Total 16 Games - 11 Played (0 Game On) 2 Postponed & 3 w/o – 68.7%
- Div 2 Total 31 Games - 20 Played, 4 postponed & 7 w/o - 64% Div 3 Total 31 Games - 21 Played (1 Game On) & 10 w/o - 67%
- Totals 94 Games 67 Played (2 Game On), 7 PostP, 20 W/O's – 71.2%

Just focusing the commentary below on our Merit teams who are a single team club and how they are faring this season so far Premier merit table sees the top 5 places being held by lower 15 sides with New Zealand kiwis as our highest non-league team in 6th place with Quintin 1 place behind them in 7th place. Division 1 Merit table, West London in 2nd place on 19 points having won 2 and lost 2 and 2 points

behind the league leaders with London Japanese in 3rd place Division 2 Merit table Pinner in top place on 32 points having won 4 and lost 2 games this season so far with Hendon in 9th place on 16 points, Haringey Rhinos in 11th place with 8 points and Whitton Lions at the footer of the league with 4 points. Division 3 Merit table Newly formed Ickenham & Uxbridge are currently top of the league on 37 points having played 6 games and won 5 followed by Hanwell in 7th on 20 points, Old Isleworthians in 8th place on 18th points and Northolt at the foot of the league on 7 points.

Weekly results for the merit tables can be found [here](#)

We have also been able to keep Middlesex Vets going and have 4 teams commit to a league, which was looking unlikely over the summer. We have lost a lot of Vets teams since COVID. So, thank you to Wasps FC, Hammersmith & Fulham, Grasshoppers and London Baa Baas (London Cornish, London Japanese, Esher & London Welsh) & Nigel Doe as organiser for keeping Vets Rugby alive in Middlesex. W/C 20th October the RFU are holding workshops to cover competitions and provide updates, I will summarise what was discussed in my next month's update but hopefully it won't be needed as you will all be there to hear it for yourselves.

Finally hold the date May 9th Middlesex 7's at Wasps FC.

If you need anything from me please do not hesitate to reach out.

Steve Partridge

Update from Chair of Team Middlesex – Mark Coles

I hope this finds you all well. Regarding Representative Rugby, whilst we are yet to get into the meat of the Age Grade games (more on later), we are seeing more of our age group teams assessments taking place.

Our Girls U16 Foundation (formerly the Girls ERDPP) is now into its fourth week post the assessments held with around 50 girls taking part in the programme, covering core skills and a classroom session on TREDs principles (Teamwork, Respect, Enjoyment, Discipline, and Sportsmanship).

Our U17's Boys assessments have been taking place last Friday (17th) with a strong number of player nominations from clubs for what we hope will be a competitive team and leaving the coaching team with a few hard decisions after we have seen all players. Having been down and seen what we are doing and some of the feedback we have had from parents it's a programme we can be proud of as the next cadre of players come into our teams. I did not do this much last season, but this season hope to put more of the feedback we get from parents/coaches/players in our newsletters to showcase the work going on. This week on the U17boys we received the below from one parent:

"Can I also compliment you on a very well-run assessment process. It was great to see a large number of (very competent) coaches - good coach to player ratio, coverage of a wide range of skills - lineouts and scrums a particular favourite for me, the boys had a thorough workout across a number of competencies, and all achieved in a friendly environment. Parent comms also very insightful so we now understand the process."

Irrespective of outcome across any of our team, we give players as much individual feedback as possible so they can keep developing whether it be in the programme or back with their clubs and we may see next year. A big thanks to Jok Dunbar, Chris Grilli (U16G head coach) and Mark Gardiner (U17B Head Coach) and all their teams for bringing these sessions to life.



Our U18's Boys and Girls assessments are also happening towards the end of the month (26th October and 2nd November respectively) and again we will be blessed with strong numbers giving our coaching teams a 'nice problem' to have in assessing players moving up from the U17's Boys and U16 Girls cohorts, and new/returning talent coming in.

With first matches on late November and early December we're all looking forward to seeing the squads developing in the coming weeks.

On our Open Age programmes, work is going on in the background as to what these programmes will look like this year, and we hope to be advertising any coaching vacancies in near future on our social media channels/emails. Our U20 programme will

also shortly be shared with clubs as that kicks off early in the new year.

I also trailed last month our Vets offer is being brought back this season and we hope to be able to put games on for both genders. So far, we have a male SuperVets (50+) game against Hertfordshire lined up for the 29th November (at Wasps FC) and male Vets (35+) game lined up against the RAF on 21st January (location- TBD). We are hoping to be able to advertise for female players for a London and Herts combined side (very TBC) ahead of a first ever solely Middlesex female Vets game at the end of the season. Emails and social media posts to clubs will be going out to collect interest and explain more so we can field full sides.

Next month, I'm hoping to update on the progress we will have made on the above appointments/ideas, and share more on the assessments and games we have coming up but for now thanks as ever for reading and for your support

Mark
Director, Team Middlesex
Mark.coles@middlesexrugby.com

A Report from Chair of Groups Andy Smart

So, we have now completed the September round of

Group meetings. Three were in person

- North West at Harrow
- West at Staines
- North at Finchley
- Whilst the South Group meeting was on Zoom

The dates and venues for the November meetings are as follows

South Group Tuesday 11th November at CS Stags 1863

North West Group on Wednesday 12th November on Zoom

North Group Monday 17th November on Zoom

West Group to confirm their meeting date but will be on Zoom

At the November round of Group meetings there will be presentations from Mary Impey from Hackney RFC on the new First Aid provisions and from Sophie Johnson and Henry Kolton (a player for Old Millhillians) who are both members of the National Youth Council

I can now confirm the dates and venues for the Group's Pick Up The Whistle Course for this season

North Group Old Grammarians 20th and 27th November

North West Group Harrow 19th and 26th January

West Group Grasshoppers 9th and 16th February

The details for the South Group Course are to follow but likely to be at Twickenham RFC in April 26

A call to action from Discipline

The County is looking to recruit panellists to join the current Discipline team.

More panellists means we can share the load. Panel hearings are either in person or on-line. New panellists can bring their experiences in the game to help an established panel chair to decide on outcomes following discipline incidents (red cards & citations). We ask clubs to encourage their members (players, ex-players, officials etc.) to consider this opportunity to support the game in Middlesex. Initially volunteers are asked to observe a hearing to get a feel of the role. Panellists would then be eligible to

join the rota so they can manage their commitment.

The county is also looking for an Assistant Discipline Secretary to assist the current Discipline Secretary manage hearings and support panels ahead of hearings. The role will need organisational and IT skills. Knowledge of the processes involved can be quickly picked up while working alongside the current Discipline Secretary.

Anyone interested in helping in either of these roles can email countyoffice@middlesexrugby.com for further help about what is involved.

Many thanks
Simon Hardcastle
Assistant Secretary

Middlesex Coaching & Referee Development

Coaching Corner

The photograph below is of Hampstead RFC in a "Developing Back Play Workshop". The workshop was of much benefit for the 48 Hampstead coaches & youth players in attendance.

The workshop was run by Rhys Davies Saracens Academy Coach. Thanks to Walter Ladwig and Hampstead RFC for hosting.



The photograph below is of Middlesex U9s & U10s coaches who attended an "Introduction to contact and the tackle". The course tutor was Dan Cottrell of Rugby Coach weekly who delivered an interesting session which will benefit many Middlesex coaches and players

Thank to Ross Fountain for organising this event and to Grasshoppers RFC for hosting.



Upcoming Coach Education

Monday 27th October 2025

Rich Whiffin (Wales U20s coach) will be leading on a coach education session for Middlesex Senior coaches. The theme of the session is "Ball Carry in the Middle of the Pitch" To date 22 Middlesex coaches have registered from 12 different clubs and Middlesex schools

Wednesday 26th November 2025

All Middlesex Youth coaches are invited to attend a Saracens Player Developing Group (PDG), at Harrow School. The PDG Manager Edd Conway will spend time with coaches in explaining how the PDG / Academy works and what's Trending in Skill Development. Those coaches who attend will be close to all practical skill development and will take away much knowledge which will assist Middlesex youth players in their development.

Focus on a Middlesex Coach, Luke Povey

The below photograph is of the Harlequins Amateurs, who have got off to a good start this season and play in Surrey County 5.

Luke, has been with Harlequins Amateurs for 10 years, coaching for the past 4.

In addition Luke is now part of the County U20s coaching team.

Luke represented Middlesex at U18, U20 and Senior Men's levels.

In Luke's words

I am currently a Level 2 coach and eager to continue my development by pursuing additional coaching certificates. My coaching aspiration is to help players improve while achieving tangible results, continually growing and coaching at the highest level I can. I aim to provide a structured environment that still allows players the freedom to play what they see, fostering both creativity and discipline.

My ultimate goal as a coach is to make a meaningful impact on each player, helping them reach their potential, while also continuing to develop myself personally and professionally while supporting the growth of both Harlequins Amateurs and Middlesex Rugby.



Referee Development

The next Take up the Whistle short course will take place at Old Grammarians RFC on Thursdays 20th & 27th November 2025.

First Aid Courses

London Welsh are running a series of First Aid Courses to primarily meet their own needs, but also open for other Clubs. The next one is in November (dates below)

Details are:

London Welsh are hosting a Rugby Ready First Aid Training Course - run over two evenings Tues 11 Nov & 18 Nov 7pm - 9:30. Old Deer Park TW9 2AZ, near to Richmond Station, parking available. £55 book

here: <https://www.londonwelshrfc.com/events>. This is an accredited EFAW Level 3 Course tailored for rugby and meets RFU requirements.

For further information. Please contact

David Brunson
London Welsh Welfare Officer
m: 07766 426250

For further information on the above coach / referee education sessions. Contact - Bob Lawless on (m) 07803 196 409

All the best
Bob

**A Call for applications for the Financial Support
Fund from Andrew Walker**

**MIDDLESEX RUGBY FINANCIAL SUPPORT FUND
2025/26**

Middlesex Rugby are pleased to continue their commitment to supporting disadvantaged young people at our rugby clubs. Clubs, teachers, and parents or guardians can now apply for a grant to help with membership fees and/or club kit and rugby boots for economically disadvantaged children and young people up to the age of 18. To access the application form, please scan the QR code below. For successful applicants, Middlesex Rugby will contribute up to 50% of the annual costs of membership fees, with the expectation that clubs will cover the remaining costs. Middlesex Rugby may also contribute towards the cost of club playing kit, sports bras, boots and gum shields. Applications will be reviewed by a panel consisting of the Chair of Rugby Development, the Chair of Groups, the County Treasurer and the Club Representative. The panel's decision is final.



Applications will remain open until 30 November
2025

financialsupport@middlesexrugby.com

Reminder

**A reminder from Carmine, our County
Administrator**

A reminder to those clubs who have been issued an invoice to pay their Middlesex membership subs and have not done so. Please do so asap!

Thanks,

Carmine.

What's On

Take up the Whistle

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For further information. Please contact

David Brunsdon
London Welsh Welfare Officer
m: 07766 426250

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- **May 9th Middlesex 7's at Wasps FC.**