

January Newsletter 2025/26

Email: countyoffice@middlesexrugby.com

President's Corner

First of all, my friends, Happy New Year to you and yours and here's to a much better 2026 for us all.

At the tail end of 2025 I was a guest of Tim Hodgson and Twickenham together with Paul Astbury to watch a Friday night game under lights between Twickenham and Old Tiffs in Regional 2 South Central. Excellent hospitality decent crowd but very cold. Most enjoyable evening. The following day I was at Harrow as we hosted Finsbury Park in Counties 2 Middlesex. We also stepped up to host Finsbury Park 2nds against Ruislip 2nds in Middx MT 1. A full clubhouse, a busy bar. A good way to sign off for 2025

Then Christmas, followed by the first real spell of cold weather in the New Year. With no league rugby at level five and below I had intended to go to watch Whitton Lions v Hanwell in MMT3 but with all games across Middlesex on grass called off on the Saturday morning because of frozen pitches, I managed to pick up a game at Chiswick on their AGP between their thirds against and Old Isleworthians again in MMT3. A competitive game in the cold starring Andy Brooks and his front row colleagues with over 180 years between them, still lacing on their boots, still getting stuck in. A credit to themselves and the game and easily putting some of our younger players to shame. Also managed to catch up with Clive Roberts who was also struggling to find some rugby to watch and also Piers Skinner the new West List manager spotting a new referee to the society on his first game. Nice afternoon catching up with two top rugby guys at a great Middlesex venue watching a competitive well fought game. Sometimes you need to ask what more can you want

Then back at Harrow hosting Actonians in Counties 2 Middlesex in a 10 game try fest split five and five before Harrow ran out winners by 44-34. Cracking game and a real credit to this level. The Harrow 10 scoring 39 points and so easily the difference

between the two sides. Very cold and the players raced off the field at the end to get in the warmth. Busy bar and another enjoyable afternoon. Joined by Simon Harcastle who was spotting the referee.

On Friday I was at Aylesbury watching top of the table Brunel University in their first season at level 6 (Regional 2 Thames the league I am responsible for) running out comprehensive winners against a very game home side who never gave up and were unfortunate not to pick up a try bonus point, the very least their efforts deserved. Brunel University are a very formidable side looking for their fifth promotion in five years. Caught up with their Chairman/DoR Gareth Rise who is doing a simply outstanding job with his young charges

On Saturday Eddie and I were guests at top of the table Ealing 1871 for their very first pre-match lunch in their short history before their Counties 1 Middlesex against Ruislip. In the end Ruislip were unable to honour the fixture. It was nevertheless a most enjoyable afternoon. Sixty people sat down to an excellent meal and Eddie and I were very well looked after by Dick Criag and our friends from the 1871 club. Turned up a bit earlier and managed to watch a bit of Ealing Exiles against Old Isleworthians in MMT3. Again, Brooksy was out there doing his bit for his club and our game. Almost managed to get the first five minutes of Ealing 1871 2nds hosting London Cornish in MMT1. If the 1st team game had gone ahead that would have been three Ealing 1871 teams at home on the same day. The club is flying and many congratulations to Paul Clarke and his management team, coaches and players for what they are achieving. With no 1st team game on I took the opportunity instead to go to Old Priorians, just down the road and watch the second half of their Regional 2 Thames game against Marlow. 21-7 up at half time they were hanging on at the end, deserved winners by 29-26.

This Wednesday, we are hosting at Harrow the Middlesex Vets against the RAF Vets. Hopefully we shall see some of you at Grove Field shouting for our Middlesex Vets

Thursday I will be at Grasshoppers for the Middlesex Club Surgery Workshops

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Then on Saturday I plan to go to Marlow v Grasshoppers in a re-arranged fixture in my league, Regional 2 Thames, after the original fixture went down on the 10th January because of a frozen pitch

The games are coming thick and thin. Brilliant

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

Andy Smart

Message from Chair, Eddie Keal

Welcome to another information-packed County Newsletter. I'd be very interested to hear opinions about whether this would work better in a different format – perhaps more video? We know the Newsletter is popular in some circles, and we would very much like to extend its reach and perhaps better engage with players. All feedback is a gift, don't be shy!

I'll resist the urge to comment on the weather and focus instead on the County Management Board. We have a strong team. Please give them your support. So much of what they do is hidden from view, but without them the County's rugby would stop.

Another round of Group meetings is just around the corner. We will be updating everyone on County and RFU initiatives. There is plenty going on, much of which will be directly relevant to our clubs. I acknowledge that some of it will be dull, but we'll aim to sift out only the good stuff for you!

Wishing everyone the best of luck for the rest of the season.

Regards, Eddie

Middlesex Chair

Eddie.keal@middlesexrugby.com

Message from the Treasurer, Charles Portsmouth

County Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 2025

The accounts for the County were approved by the Management Board at its meeting on 13 January. The accounts are available on the County's website [here](#).

In addition, the accounts will be circulated to all Club Chairs, Treasurers and Secretaries via email.

Club financial statements

All clubs are reminded that Middlesex County RFU as the constituent body, has an obligation under Regulation 5 to monitor the financial health of its member clubs. As such, we require every club to send to the County its financial statements annually. Regulation 5 can be found [here](#).

These financial statements should be submitted by the Club Treasurer and include confirmation that these have been presented to the relevant governance body at the club.

To date we have received few financial statements for 2025. Please could those Clubs who have not submitted their financial statements do so as soon as possible.

Club subscriptions

A few Clubs have not paid their annual subscription for 2025/26. We will be chasing those Clubs who are to pay but to reduce our work load it would be helpful if Clubs who have not paid could do so without delay.

Wishing all our Clubs a prosperous 2026!

Charles Portsmouth

Treasurer

charles.portsmouth@middlesexrugby.com

A Report from Mark Coles – Team Middlesex

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 concluded just before Christmas after positive showings Surrey and Sussex with a trip to Thurrock RFC to play Eastern Counties. The class of 25/26 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.

The U18 Girls also returned to the pitch since our last update after their win on the road against Eastern Counties to take on a strong Hertfordshire side down at Wasps. Full credit to Chris Mason and his coaching team who prepared the team well and had to make some difficult decisions in the selection for the weekend, showing the breadth of talent we have within this team. The girls conclude their campaign on Sunday 15th February vs Essex (further details TBC) and hope to round off their season in style.



Middlesex U18 Girls vs
Eastern Counties 31-7



Middlesex U18 Boys vs
Sussex 19-21

On the boys side concluding the campaign 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 eight 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:

James	Alleyne
Antonio	Cortese
Namkha	Dorjee

Sam	Francombe
Timothy	Mazela
William	Miscampbell
James	Neville

As a small side note this is the second U18 selection for Will Miscampbell (Twickenham/Gordons School) having been involved last year when in the U17 so a big congratulations on this achievement.

Looking ahead to February beyond the London and South-East (L&SE) U18B representation, we have our U16G home on Sunday 8 February to Berkshire as they look to build on their game pre-Christmas against Sussex.

Turning our attention to the Adult Age (U20, Women, Men) team, our first assessments will be the U20's on 25th January at Wasps (2pm). We've almost doubled the amount of players who have signed up on last year which can only be seen as a positive.

We as a County see the U20s as key age demographic for retention and the hope is to build a pathway into the senior side for our club/university and Age Grade players that we can be proud of.

The Senior Men's and Women's nomination forms will also shortly be coming out from the County Office, so like with the U20s please share with any players to put themselves forward.

January has also seen the relaunch of our Vets (35-50) for the first time since Covid, and the side held their preparatory training session at Grasshoppers on Friday 16th Jan ahead of the game against the RAF Vets on 21st Jan at Harrow. In all, 12 clubs are represented and is a continuation of our Vets programme having successfully ran the Super Vets in November.



We've also received 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. We're particularly pleased to be welcoming a Buckinghamshire Presidents XV down to our County as they look to build out women's rugby in their county with players in this side coming from clubs they have previously not drawn, from and look to showcase the game ahead of the Women's Rugby World Cup in the autumn.

U20 Men

22nd February- Essex (Away- Eton Manor RFC)- K/O- 12 Noon

15th March- Hertfordshire (Home- Wasps FC)- K/O- 2pm

Senior Women

10th May- Hertfordshire (Away (TBC))

16th May- (double header with mens team)-Essex (Away (TBC))

24th May- Sussex (Home- Wasps FC)- Kick Off- 2pm

Senior Men

9th May- Eastern Counties (Home- Chiswick RFC)- Kick Off- 3pm.

16th May- (double header with womens team)- Essex (Away (TBC))

We also have a Club XV game planned for Friday 13 March against an Old Priorian/St Benedicts XV. Emails will be going out to nominate players for this evening game. This is a league down weekend so please do support if able to.

Next month, I'll be banging the drum again for dates of assessments so players can be put forward for our teams, but for now thanks as ever for reading and hope you enjoy the start of the (men's) Six Nations.

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

Middlesex Coaching & Referee Development

Middlesex Coaching Corner

Welcome to the first coaching update of 2026. Since our last Newsletter update, Middlesex has run 2 Coach Education sessions.

The first was on Monday 17th November 2025. The session was run by Nick Evans (Harlequins Attack Coach) with the session theme, "Developing Counterattack principles through Drills & Games". The session was well attended and all coaches / teachers, took away much knowledge.

Thanks to Jon Bates of Coach Centered & Nick Evans for the excellent coach education session upskilling Middlesex Coaches.

Middlesex Coaches at a Nick Evans CPD session



The second coach education session was for Middlesex youth coaches and was held at Harrow School on Wednesday 26th November 25, Middlesex Youth coaches from Ruislip, Pinner, Hampstead, Hillingdon & Harrow RFC attended and all were updated on the work of the Saracens PDG / Academy and observed the

skill development work with the Player Development Group

Thanks to Ed Conway the PDG manager and his coaching team for time spent developing our Middlesex youth coaches.

Middlesex Coaches at a Saracens PDG session,



Upcoming Middlesex Coaching Events

Wednesday 21/01/26 at London Welsh RFC an evening with Stephen Shingler (Ealing Trailfinders Women Attack Coach & Scotland Women) Stephen will be delivering a session on Understanding Kicking as part of your game strategy

Tuesday 24/02/26 at Chiswick RFC. Tutor Dan Cottrell. All youth coaches are invited to learn how to deliver 30 Practical Drills and Games to Improve the Ruck

Monday 02/03/26 at Grasshoppers RFC - All youth coaches are invited to view a youth skill development session with Harlequins PDG Manager Jonathan Perkins. Jonathan, will be

sharing time with you to explain how the Harlequins PDG / Academy works and coaches will observe the PDG skill development session

Thursday 05/03/26 at Ruislip RFC - Saracens Academy Coach will be holding a Back Play Workshop looking at various attack and defence in game situations

Wednesday 22 /04 /26 at Harrow School. Middlesex Youth coaches are invited to view a skill development session with a briefing on the PDG which will assist coaches to gain knowledge in skill development and how the PDG / Academy operates.

Focus on Middlesex Coach Dave Samuels



Dave Samuel has been coaching rugby for many years, first getting involved when in 2002 he took his son Thomas to play for Richmond FC U8. Dave was still playing at the time, just, but it was always his intention to coach even from an early age.

Over the years Dave has coached at many places including, clubs, schools, universities, academies and Middlesex Representative sides.

Currently, Dave is imparting his rugby knowledge at Old Isleworthians RFC, Merchant Taylors School, Chiswick RFC Youth and the Middlesex Women's Representative Team

In Dave's Words -

"Having played rugby at Chiswick School, I went on to play for the school's old boys Old Meadonians, that became Chiswick RFC".

Even at a young age, I was always interested in and enjoyed coaching other players, getting a thrill out of helping others to develop and improve.

I believe passionately in the core values of the game and all that it teaches, both physically and mentally.

Development before success – The success will come if you develop.

Good core skill – Break down skills to component parts, build back up.

Teamwork and cohesion – Foster collective effort, work for each other.

Equal time for all – Empower self-confident players to perform".

Middlesex Refereeing Update

The next Take up the Whistle Refereeing short course will take place at Grasshoppers RFC on Tuesdays 09/02 & 16/02.

Old Grammarians RFC "Take up the Whistle Course" held on 20th November 2025



The above courses will be advertised on the Middlesex social media platforms. For more information on the above coaching or referee courses, or if your club would like to host an event or any aspect of coaching, please do get in touch.

Bob Lawless Middlesex Chair of Coaching Development (M) 07803 196 409

What's On

May 9th Middlesex 7's at Wasps FC.

FREE WORKSHOP FOR ALL CLUBS ON SPONSORSHIP

For many clubs, sponsorship is a primary source of income. The RFU's Clubs & Communities team are therefore delighted to be providing a free evening workshop on that topic, for Middlesex clubs:

**on Thursday 12th February, from 6:45pm,
at Grasshoppers.**

The workshop will be led by Martin Woodward, the RFU's Club Business Manager, and Tom Baynton-Williams from sponsorship experts' [Orchard](#), an award-winning sponsorship agency which has provided dozens of community rugby clubs with detailed support, over the past three years. It will focus on the essentials of maximising sponsorship, drawing on Orchard's experience of working with rugby clubs, with opportunities to ask questions and share experiences.

The workshop has been run with great success in five other counties, and while it is aimed at sponsorship leads, all are welcome - please do come along if you think it might be of interest. There is no limit to the number of people that can attend from any one club but please register [here](#), so we can track numbers for food (a light supper will be provided free of charge before the workshop starts).

Timings for the evening are as follows:

Time	Item
6:45	Arrivals and light supper served
7:05	Introductions
7:10	Orchard – Sponsorship session part 1
7:55	Break
8:05	Orchard – Sponsorship session part 2
8:55	Wrap up
9:10	Drinks and informal chats/depart at leisure

CONCUSSION AWARENESS

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PLEASE NOTE THAT THE RFU ARE RUNNING A CONCUSSION AWARENESS TRAINING COURSE, SEE

[HTTPS://GMS.RFU.COM/GMS/COURSEFINDER](https://gms.rfu.com/gms/coursefinder).

THE INFORMATION IN THIS COURSE IS APPLICABLE TO THE UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGEMENT OF CONCUSSION ACROSS A RANGE OF ROLES, INCLUDING: COACH/MATCH OFFICIAL/TEACHER/PARENT/FIRST AIDER AND PLAYERS AGED 15 AND UPWARDS. ATTENDEES WILL LEARN WHAT CONCUSSION IS, HOW IT LOOKS AND FEELS, HOW IT CAN BE PREVENTED, BEST PRACTICE CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT THAT IT IS FOLLOWED.

BY THE END OF THE COURSE ATTENDEES WILL HAVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF CONCUSSION, THE OBSTACLES TO DELIVERING BEST PRACTICE MANAGEMENT AND THE VITAL ROLE THEY CAN PLAY IN PROTECTING PLAYER WELFARE.

FURTHER, CONCUSSION AWARENESS MADE CLEAR PITCH SIDE CARDS AND DISPLAY POSTERS ARE AVAILABLE FROM [HTTPS://WWW.FIRSTAID4SPORT.CO.UK/RFU](https://www.firstaid4sport.co.uk/rfu), FREE OF CHARGE WITH THE PROMO CODE RFUFREE (YOU ONLY HAVE TO PAY POSTAGE).

A message from Middlesex Schools Rugby

Dear Colleagues,

After 13 years as Chair of Middlesex Schools Rugby, I will be handing over the reins to Matthew Kenny (*Head of sport at St Richard Reynolds*) as New Middlesex Schools Chair. I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the role and would like to thank you all for your continued support and engagement with our competitions, which has enabled thousands of children to participate in rugby and has contributed to the wider national success of the Rugby Football Union.

Matthew Kenny will commence his new role in January 2026 and will be in contact in due course with details of some exciting opportunities ahead. I would also like to take this opportunity to introduce the Middlesex team who will be supporting schools next season.

Middlesex Chairman: **Matthew Kenny**

Middlesex Treasurer: **David Jones**

Under 12 Middlesex Schools development: **Oliver Burke**

T1 Competitions: **Conall Devlin**

U18 Competition Organiser: **Dan Brown**

U16 Competition Organiser: **Ben Wassell**

Middlesex Schools Girls development: **Ross Doneghan**

Middlesex Schools Rugby Sevens Competitions

Middlesex Schools Rugby Football Union are delighted to send you details of the forthcoming Middlesex Rugby Competitions for the 2025/26 season. We are very excited to welcome all schools back and look forward to hosting another successful Sevens season. [Entry form](#).

Spring competition dates and venues:

Sevens Competitions	Date/Time	Venue
U12 Boys	06.03.26 1pm to 4 pm	Grasshoppers
U13 Boys	12.03.26 1pm to 4 pm	Grasshoppers
U14 Boys	10.03.26 1pm to 4 pm	Grasshoppers
U15 Boys	11.03.26 1pm to 4 pm	Grasshoppers
U16 Boys	18.03.26 1pm to 4 pm	St James'

U18 Boys	04.03.26 time tbc	St Benedicts
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The Girls Rugby Sevens competition dates are to be confirmed soon.

Middlesex School Competitions -

The English Schools RFU and Middlesex Schools Rugby are dedicated to raising the profile of rugby within Middlesex. We are committed to developing and supporting emerging schools and being inclusive. All schools are welcome regardless of experience.

There will be a £40 entry fee per competition to help with the cost of medals and trophies. BACS payment: **Barclays Bank, Sort Code: 20-37-16, Account no: 70816140 Reference: school name**

Please click on this [ENTRY FORM](#) to register your team(s).

If you have any questions regarding subscriptions or competition entry, please let us know.

Davey Jones