

MIDDLESEX COUNTY JUNIORS

June 2023 to April 2024 - Alison Wadmore

Highlights

- U14/15s placing 5th, making the play-offs for the National Inter-County Finals
- U18 ICT team placing 7th, our second best result in 20 years at the 4 day Inter-County Tournament
- Middlesex Junior players winning medals in every age group from U11 to U19 at the Badminton England Nationals in December (5 Golds, 3 Silvers, 4 Bronze across the age groups, in every event bar Girls Singles)

Matches

Headlines:

U14/15s qualified in 5th place for the playoffs for the National Finals

For the first time, we were able to field two U16/17 teams, giving more players in Middlesex an opportunity to play at County level.

This season we fielded 5 teams across 4 age groups U12/13, U14/15, 2x U16/17 and U18/19, giving 30 matches across the season.

Following the successful Junior Restricted Tournament in 2023, it was gauged that we had enough players to enter a second Middx U16/17s team - this is the first season that we've been able to field a second team in any age group, and shows that the current strategy developing Middx Juniors since 2018 is on the right path. The new players really enjoyed their first season, and were vital in stepping up when the first team players were unavailable.

On paper our 16s and 18s had the best chance at placing in the National Finals, given that these were our players from the 2023 ICT Middx Team who came 3rd nationally, but in reality, player availability in these teams meant the results were not consistent and cost us higher finishing positions. This was due in part to GCSE and A Level exams taking priority, and also due to certain clubs holding players back from playing for County – a situation last experienced prior to 2018.

Our U14/15 team had the best results and made it to the National play offs for the Finals, though lost out to Surrey1 at this stage. This was still a very good result as most of the team had just come up from the U12/13 so we fielded a mainly young team.

There are no play offs for U12/13s with the top 8 teams going straight through – it's a shame as we would have made play-offs as we placed 12th. Again we had a very young squad, as most of the previous season's players moved up to the U14/15s, meaning many players in this age were playing their first county or indeed competitive season.

It was a challenging season in terms of geography, with opposition as far afield as Gloucestershire, Northants, Suffolk as well as the usual journey down to Kent – about 1600 miles of driving, across the teams!

Parents continued to be fine helping with transport (mainly in the younger age groups) and happy to support but would not take on full Team Management, so this continued to be run centrally. Transport for the 16s and 18s was again an issue – with players being available, but their parents not, so needing lifts.



Middlesex Junior Teams U12 to U18, 2023-24 season

	U12/13	U14/15	U16/17	U18/19	Middx Teams
2012/13	18/29	29/39	33/36		3 -
2013/14	30/32	21/36	18/39		3 – incomplete season
2014/15	32/33	21/38	27/38		3 – incomplete season
2015/16	33/33	36/39	34/38		3 - Incomplete season
2016/17	0/17	0/32	0/37	0/40	No Middx teams
2017-18	0/16	0/26	34 / 34	0/41	Withdrew!
Under New Management					
2018-19		17 / 32	27 / 36		2
2019-20	7 / 21	10 / 31	22 / 35		3
2021-22	14 / 16	10 / 25	17 / 28	25 / 28	4
2022-23	2 / 20	13 / 29	10 / 30	17 / 28	4
2023-24	12 / 23	5 / 30	17/33 32/33	17 / 29	5 teams

Tournaments

We ran 2 dates for the Middlesex Restricted, for 14/18, 12/16s. Both were successful and yielded new players for the squads - all age groups had higher entry levels than in previous years.

No BE sanctioned tournaments were hosted this year due to extenuating circumstances.

The Junior Club League (JCL) has held an event per month since January, hosting junior clubs entered with teams of grassroots standard players from School Year 13 down to Year 5, with a dedicated end of season Primary School event.

U18 ICT

Middlesex played in the annual 4 day Inter-County Tournament hosted at Nottingham University by Badminton England, fielding 4 boys, 5 girls. Even though 5 of our strongest players didn't attend, we came **7th** overall, which was a fantastic result and our second best placing in over 20 years.



U18 Middlesex ICT Team 2024

Training

Main County training is continuing on Tuesday and Friday evenings in NW London as the most central location for most squad players.

County Pathway training continues on Mondays and Saturdays and we've needed to draw on these players a number of times to cover injury and absences for tournaments with the main squad.