

RUGBY FIVES REVIEW



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Courts back in use

For over 25 years two courts at Clifton College have lain idle as they have been used for storage purposes. Whilst the other two courts remained and the 4 courts at Clifton Prep were available, Fives at Clifton could continue to flourish. However, the demise of the Prep school courts in 2001 was a major blow not just for Fives at the school but for Fives in Bristol as a whole.

Following lengthy discussions between the Association and the College, also involving the West of England Club and Old Cliftonians, agreement was reached last summer for the courts to be cleared and for new back walls to be built. Work was completed in October (see photos) and all parties are delighted at the outcome. The College now has an excellent indoor centre of 4 courts which have already been used for the West of England regional singles qualifying competition and will be used for either the West of England senior championships or schools competition next season.

In addition, the West of England club has undergone a renaissance. Lionel Lawson, Club Secretary, writes "After a couple of years of uncertainty following the loss of our courts, the West of England club has been dynamically re-inventing itself during the last 12 months. Inspired by the prospect of having all four of the Music School courts at our disposal, we have reached far and wide to get old members back on court and also to attract new members and we are now regularly seeing all four courts in use on our regular Wednesday evening club sessions. There are now over 30 subscribing members including a quartet of Bristol University players and we are therefore hopeful that we are fostering the emergence of a University club from under our wing. Our club evenings are carefully nurtured under the dynamic leadership of our club captain Simon Werkshagen and anyone in Bristol looking for a game on a Wednesday evening should just turn up at any time from 7.15pm and they will be most welcome. Pupils from Clifton College are also encouraged to join our



club evenings which can provide a great opportunity for gaining skills and experience. If anyone is interested in a fixture please contact me, Lionel Lawson, on 01275 791020 (home) or 0117 9299447 (office)".

None of this would have been possible without the availability of funds through the Charitable Trust and in turn the generosity of all contributors to the Trust to whom we are extremely grateful.

MESSAGE FROM GEOFF SHERRATT, PRESIDENT R.F.A

We are only a few months into the 2004-5 season, yet already there have been a number of exciting and encouraging developments both off and on the courts.

Many of you will have been aware that for several years the Rugby Fives Association and the Eton Fives Association have engaged in regular dialogue under the guise of the 'Fives Forum'. Recently both Boards have been involved in discussions regarding their future strategies and both have identified weaknesses in the promotional and marketing aspects of their organisations. It has therefore been decided to strengthen the remit of the Forum and to give it responsibility for promoting and developing the game of Fives in all its versions, in the United Kingdom and overseas. It was considered that in doing so we would become a more attractive proposition to potential advertisers, sponsors and national bodies such as 'Sport England'. The Forum has been renamed the 'Fives Federation' but I must emphasise that the respective Boards will retain full control of such issues as strategy, rules, championships/matches, quality of courts etc. More details of this initiative can be found on

Page 4 of this review. I believe that this is a significant move forward for the Association and one that can only benefit us as the efforts to develop our game continue in the years ahead. In the first volume of the Rugby Fives Review, I confirmed that the renovation and opening of the Rugby Fives courts at Denstone College had reversed a trend of court closures. I am, once again, delighted to confirm this trend continues, and that a further two courts have been fully renovated and brought back into use, this time at Clifton College, Bristol. Once more the Charitable Trust very generously contributed to the total cost of the project. In addition I am extremely pleased to confirm that due to the enthusiastic efforts of Steve Korris, a club is being re-formed at Leeds University, and the courts there that have lain idle for about 14 years, will re-open. Finally, but by no means least, I was equally delighted to hear that the 105 year old courts at The Academy, Edinburgh, are going to have a major refurbishment in the near future, which will hopefully ensure that they will remain standing for a further hundred years and that Blundell's are considering enclosing some of their courts.

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I am also pleased to be able to report that after much hard work and effort by Paddy d'Ancona, a new web site will soon be up and running, giving us a much needed modern and attractive image to present to those who access our site.

Additionally, I am very happy to record that our membership numbers, particularly at school and youth level, are steadily growing.

On the playing side of our sport, I have been extremely encouraged by the new trend of growth in the number of people playing competitively, which has seen the highest number of entrants since 1991 participating in the National Open Singles Championship, and the largest ever number of students entering the British Universities Sports Association Rugby Fives Championships which were recently held in Edinburgh.

We also have a new National Singles champion in Matt Cavanagh, who followed up on his success in July 2004 in The South West Open Championship by defeating the reigning champion James Toop in the final of the National Open Singles Championship. It is good to see a new name added to the list of champions, and congratulations go to Matt for a very skilful and hard earned victory.

All in all, I believe the new season has, in all respects, started extremely positively, and the emerging trends bode well for the future of our sport. Finally, may I, belatedly, wish every reader a very happy and prosperous New Year, and trust that the remainder of the Rugby Fives season brings you continued enjoyment.

BUSA Report

In the average organiser's mind, the success of their tournament can often be determined by their ability to accurately predict the results through seedings. In this year's BUSA for example, seven of the top eight seeds in the singles reached the quarter finals and all four of the top seeds reached the semi-finals. Success number one therefore. To onlookers, a successful tournament is achieved if it has tight, interesting games and everyone gets to the pub in plenty of time for refreshments! Played in Edinburgh at separate locations (Fettes and Edinburgh Academy) the field of 50 for the singles and 22 doubles pairs gave an indicator that the things would be busy from the Friday morning right through to Sunday evening. And so it proved, with play starting at 9am and finishing over ten hours later on both days. The presentation was due at 3:30 on Sunday, which was matched exactly - success number two. However to competitors a successful tournament is achieved if it gives you a chance to play

plenty of fives and you perform at your best. If this is the definitive measurement tool, then success number three has been achieved.

Edinburgh Academy and Fettes themselves entered schoolboys to play in both singles and doubles and Loretto's Jamie Pendergrass established himself as a tough competitor at BUSA level even before he has started at University! Other notable entrants included Steve Korris, who is showing maturity beyond his years in getting a fives club started at Leeds University again, Sam Byron-Evans from Exeter, and London University who are also getting a fives team off the ground with the help of Daniel Grant. Entries also came from the "usual" four universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Durham and now Edinburgh themselves should also be proud to be added to this list thanks to the efforts of Chris Palgrave, Steve Robson and Giles Makins. Even Dublin and the Open University had entrants.

The total of some 60 matches in the main competition and more than 40 in the plate competitions - amounting to about 200 games - just goes to demonstrate this. That's about 70 hours

of fives - lucky we had six courts available and five organisers we could call on. Even with all that mayhem, Henry Manning managed to fly to Birmingham and back between rounds! There was though time for some fantastic games, of which the win by Pumphrey and Mohammad of Winchester College over Beverly and Patel of Cambridge was one of the best, as was the semi-final



between Lee/Nichols of Durham and Bristow/Ronan of Oxford.

But in the end, we all had to find winners. Oxford's James Bristow played with superb timing, power and shot selection to win the singles final against Charlie Brooks of Cambridge. Brooks had his revenge with Brian Elfick in the doubles, beating Bristow and Ed Ronan in a very watch-able doubles final. Plates were also incredibly well contested. Korris took home the singles plate and Oxford won the doubles plate through Jack Furniss and Johnny Heath. The unofficial team championship was won by Cambridge, squeezing out Oxford by virtue of the final match of the championships. The RFA was honoured to have Stewart Fowlie of BUSA award the trophies in what must have been the longest presentation ceremony ever! Thanks must go out to the university and school organisers who managed to get so many of their fellow students to play, and also to the organisers for giving up their time (and money) to arrange such an occasion.

2004 London Open

This tournament saw the super-fit and determined Mike Hajialexandrou definitely move into the top echelon of players, with a win over Matt Cavanagh (the 2002 winner) in the quarter finals - a match that featured numerous marathon rallies. In the semi final, Mike was level with Paddy d'Ancona until close to the end - his main weapon being an impressive reverse angle winner. However, Mike made a series of uncharacteristic errors at both the start and end of the third game, and this proved to be decisive. The match finished at the slightly later than advertised time of 8pm.

In the other semi final, there was a frenetic first game between James Toop and Hamish Buchanan, which James won 11-3. In the second game, however, the tables were turned as

James' shots - which had been winners in the first game - were often hitting the bar.

In the third game, Hamish kept James at the back of the court with his trademark low and hard shots, and built up an unassailable lead.

The final, therefore, featured the same contestants as on the previous occasion, but, in contrast to last year, Paddy wasn't really playing at his best, and Hamish won quite easily.

In the doubles, Hamish and Robin Perry survived an extremely close third game against Matt Cavanagh and John Hayes. In the other semi final, Ian Fuller and Dave Hebden made sure that their close game against Paddy and Ben wasn't the final one, winning by the interesting score of 12-10, 11-1. The final was once again won by Hamish and Robin, by a reasonable margin.

In the plate tournaments, Dan Grant won the Singles and Ed Fuller and Ben Hitchens won the doubles.

Paddy d'Ancona & Nick Geere

Chris Jones

West of England Fives Championships 2004



With a good entry of 31 in the singles and 17 pairs in the doubles and many strong unseeded players there was always going to be some tough early round matches. It was good to have two Sherborne boys (Kirk and Park) participating this year. Although they both lost in the first round they both played extremely well in both competitions.

OTHER CHAMPIONSHIP NEWS

In the South West tournament, kindly sponsored by G6, Matt Cavanagh beat Hamish Buchanan in the Singles Final and Hamish and Dave Hebden beat John Beswick and Paddy d'Ancona in the doubles. Once again, the event was well supported.

The Owers Trophy this season was won by Old Dunstonians who gained their revenge over Alleyn Old Boys in the final. It was pleasing to see a number of new teams entering this year.

The Yorkshire Open doubles saw Hamish Buchanan and Dave Hebden continue their winning ways by beating Neil Roberts and Bob Sandie, the 2003 winners, in the Final.



Claire Knowles won her 5th National Ladies' Championship in December beating Paula Smith and combined with Melanie Whitehead to win the doubles for the third time.

Two schools events have been held so far. The Winchester doubles was an all Winchester final with the first pair beating the second pair. Entries were again up for this increasingly popular event. Marlborough College hosted the West Of England schools for which there were over 50 entries for the senior singles and 45 for the colts. Jamie Prendergrass from Loretto beat H Mohammed (Winchester) to win the singles and Winchester beat Sherborne in the Doubles. The colts singles and doubles were both won by St. Paul's.

Ian Fuller

It was the current Oxford University captain who produced the first upset when he defeated the seventh seed

Stone Lee in three hard fought games. In the next round he beat last year's Oxford captain Hatton but finally succumbed to the second seed Buchanan who had been pushed to the limit in an earlier round by the improving Nelmes.

As is often the case it is the top seeds who reached the semi final stage with Toop overcoming D'Ancona relatively easily. The other semi produced a long and tense match with Roberts finally overcoming the second seed Buchanan.

The final produced an unexpected match with Roberts jettisoning his normal hard hitting game and playing much softer shots down the walls but

always to an excellent length. Toop trailed throughout the first game but pulled back strongly in the latter stages so even though he lost the game a Toop revival was expected in the second game. However Roberts continued his successful tactics of the first game and ended up the clear winner.

In the doubles the seeds won their way through although Jones and Bristow the sixth seeds needed three games to overcome Werkshagen and Maskell.

The final was a fast and exciting battle that could have gone either way. In the end Nelmes and Buchanan hit the ball harder for longer to win in three games.

Peter Dunscombe

Note from Gen.Sec: This was Peter's 30th unbroken year acting as organiser of this tournament which is a truly amazing feat.

The event has been one of the most consistently popular over that period and Peter's efficiency and enthusiasm has not waned at all. Anybody who has stood at the back of the now demolished prep school courts on a cold and bleak Sunday will understand the extra resilience and fortitude that Peter has shown over all these years. The Board is forever grateful to Peter for his magnificent efforts.

RFA Club President's Cup

This year's event was oversubscribed, but withdrawals eventually brought in all those on the waiting list. Like policemen, the players (mostly) looked younger than ever, and the four finalists' average age was a mere 25 years - but of the final, more later.

Unlike last year, the draw failed to produce any real cliff-hangers, and there were only three matches in the main competition which required a deciding game to be played, all of them clear-cut. Despite this lack of tension, much good fives was played, and four zippy G6 balls lasted the whole tournament - a tribute to ballmaker Nigel Gordon's efforts.

The quarter-finals were all decided in straight games, the closest match being the one in which Prashant Chopra and Ed Hatton beat Phil Atkinson and Pete Cohen. It was good to see Phil back on court after his frozen shoulder, but even he was unable to prolong this match to three games. Another keen quarter-final saw Neil and Matt Amott in opposition to each other, with father plus Ollie Stone-Lee beating son and Alex Smith in two good games.

The first semi was a three-gamer, the first game going easily to Richard Baty and Dan Grant, but the next two almost as comfortably to their opponents Chopra and Hatton, who had now started to play rather well together. In the other half, Ben Brookes and Ed M-M Crichton hit the still lively ball a bit too hard for the tiring Arnott, despite Stone-Lee's continuing efforts to counter-attack and thus protect his partner.

There was plenty more lusty hitting in the final, causing a certain amount of muttering in the gallery about lack of variety, but Chopra and Hatton successfully contained most of Brookes's hard left-handed hitting and scored enough back-wall nicks to take the first game easily. The second was much closer, but Brookes and Crichton couldn't quite maintain the necessary fire-power to 'take the match to three games. Congratulations then to Prashant Chopra and Ed Hatton on their first President's Cup victory, and to all the plate winners detailed above.

Joan Wood came to support her favourite tournament again this year, presenting the Mate's Plate and congratulating the



competitors on having almost as much energy as she did! Bhaswar Baral thanked all who had helped with the tournament, including his wife Kanika, his father Kalyan, Susan and Alex Smith, Denise Hall-Wilton, Chantel Sampson, James Clifford and Merchant Taylors' School. Geoff Sherratt presented the other trophies and thanked Bhaswar for organising another magnificent day's fives.

David Barnes

JESTERS CUP NATIONALS SINGLES CHAMPIONSHIPS - NEW CHAMPION

Matt Cavanagh is the new rugby fives national singles champion, beating James Toop 6-15, 15-4, 15-3 in the 5 December final.

Defending champion James struck an array of spectacular angles in the first game but hindered by a painful left arm found Matt too much as he combined consistency and pressure with clean winners in the later stages.

It is the second year running that the fifth seed has won the tournament - despite the fact they face what is, on paper at least, one of the hardest paths to the final. The amount of tired faces and bodies at St Paul's on Saturday was testament to the strength in depth of this year's field, with no easy matches in a high quality draw. The overall entry of 47 players was the highest since 1991.



Ollie Stone-Lee

RESULTS IN FULL

Quarter-finals: Roberts bt Bate 15-8, 15-5; Cavanagh bt d'Ancona 15-5, 15-3; Bishop bt Buchanan 5-15, 15-12, 0-0 (retd hurt); Toop bt Fox 15-8, 15-5.

Semi-finals: Cavanagh bt Roberts 4-15, 15-8, 15-0; Toop bt Bishop 15-7, 15-10.

Final: Cavanagh bt Toop 6-15, 15-4, 15-3.

Notes from the General Secretary

FIVES FEDERATION

Further to the President's note re the above, I thought it would be useful to set out in full the principal objectives of this new body. They are to discuss:

- ways to improve the public awareness of the game of Fives and its benefits to the community as a whole
- ways to achieve greater sponsorship and funding of Fives tournaments or other events
- ways to promote the development and funding of new or refurbished fives facilities of any particular description
- ways to develop coaching skills and proficiency achievement awards on a joint basis (recognising the shortage of such skills in each individual version of the game)
- ways to achieve savings in the administration or costs of running the EFA and RFA, whether of corporate maintenance, insurance, development of equipment, production of web-sites, revision of Policy Statements or otherwise.

Overall, the Fives Federation will become the public face of Fives when dealing with public bodies, sponsors etc in relation to any matters affecting Fives generally and will promote the public awareness of Fives as a handball game with a number of distinct codes.

The Federation will not have any separate legal personality. The EFA and RFA will continue to be responsible for the governance of their own respective games.

A Memorandum of Understanding has been drawn up between the two bodies, a copy of which is available from me upon request. Alternatively, if you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

BOOK ON FIVES

One of the first initiatives being considered by the Federation is a book on Fives. This would cover the history of both games in the UK and overseas, Fives today as a modern sport/recreation for all and the future of Fives. It is intended that the book will be written in a 'lively' style with memoirs from past champions/leading players and personalities. Active discussions are currently taking place with an enthusiastic firm of publishers and we hope to provide more details in the near future.

Ideally we are aiming for the book to be published in 2007 to coincide with the 80th anniversaries of the EFA and RFA.

We will be seeking a sponsor(s) in due course so any thoughts on this would be most welcome!

CHANGE OF VENUE – PLEASE NOTE

The venue for the Under 25's tournament has changed. It will now be held at DENSTONE COLLEGE (near Alton Towers!) and not Oxford as shown in the Pocketbook. The Singles and Doubles championships will be held over the weekend of 5th/6th March.

Accommodation may be available in the school. Contact the organiser Ed Hatton. Otherwise, nearest places are Denstone, Alton, Rochester, Uttoxeter (all within five miles)

For info phone Ed on Tel: 07951 157430

STANDING ORDERS

It appears that following our change of Bankers, a number of standing orders may have been duplicated. If you are one of those affected and wish to receive a refund please let me know. If on the other hand you wish to donate the duplicated payment to the RFA we will of course be extremely grateful but you will need to ensure that your Bank amends their records for the next payment due on 1st September.

GIRLS FIVES

We are greatly encouraged by the growth in the number of girls playing fives. Blundells, Bradfield, Marlborough and Malvern are among a number of other schools where girls are taking up the game and matches are being played. The Board is now considering the introduction of a Girls championship in the near future.

PROFICIENCY CERTIFICATES

Masters in charge of Fives may recall that I sent out copies of the 'Bronze' proficiency certificate last year which is being used at Alleyn's and Derby Moor. I now have available silver and gold certificates – please contact me for further details.

DEPUTY PRESIDENT

At the AGM in June we shall be electing a new President and Deputy President. It is assumed that, in accordance with established custom, the current Deputy, John East, will succeed as President but nominations are now invited for a new Deputy President. Anyone wishing to nominate a candidate please contact the General Secretary by the end of March.

ORGANISER REQUIRED

For many years Michael Beaman has done a superb job as organiser of the Under 13's championships held in March. However he has now decided to call it a day and we are therefore urgently seeking a successor. If you interested please let me know.

The Board is extremely grateful to Michael for his magnificent work in making this such a popular event.

E-MAIL ADDRESSES

Amendments to the Members Pocketbook are enclosed. If you have an e-mail address that you would like included in the Book, please advise me of the details.

OBITUARY

It is with great regret that I advise you of the death of John Watkinson, a former National singles and doubles champion. A full obituary will appear in the Handbook.

Ian Fuller

R.F.A CLUB

A few words from the Club Manager

There are only a few RFA club matches to be played before the main Tournament season is upon us. Many successful matches have been played to date, one or two with just a hint of friendly 'revenge' in their sights! And the long held custom to keep results confidential from the club manager is alive and well.

The RFA is always happy to expand the fixture list. If you have any match suggestions for next season, and the willingness to get a team of four together, please do contact me at parfives@macace.net. Match managers often report on the general enjoyment of a school match and, of course, much is made of the senior matches – with the expectation of exquisite beer (even exquisite conversation) at the local hostelery. It's worth a try!

Denise Hall- Wilton

CHANGES TO POCKET BOOK

Schools

Inserts:

Radley: master i/c **Nick Hamshaw**, nph@radley.org.uk

Pilgrims: **Geoffrey Hammond**, The Close, Winchester SO23 9LT
01962 866 967, geoffreyhammond@lycos.com

Individuals

New members

Bernard Atkinson, Little Applemore,
Wooden House Lane, Pilley Bailey, Lyminster, Hants SO41 5QU
01590 672273

Alan M C Bowden, 73 Alexandra Drive,
Upper Norwood, London SE19 1AN
(H) 020 8670 6286 (B) 07840 096771

Hiro Ishii, Ifor Evans Hall, 109 Camden Road, London NW1 9HZ
0786 330 9552

Jonathan Major*, 9 Rothesay Avenue, Richmond, Surrey TW10 5EB
020 8876 1507 07734 053057

* term time: Grant House, Rm 526 Pollock Halls of Residence, 18 Holyrood Park Road, Edinburgh EH16 5AY

Dr. Patrick O'Brien, 71 Blythesway, Alvechurch, Birmingham B48 7NB
0121 445 3440 (M) 07729 256 628

Andy Passey, Mallory House, Petersfield Road, Winchester, Hants SO23 8RU
(H) 01962 850553 (B) 01256 307777

Dr Ross W Stuart, Badger's, Christ's Hospital, Horsham, W Sussex, RH13 7LG
(H) 01403 265 223 (B) 01403 247 487

Lyn Graham -Taylor, 9 Hawthorne Road, Radlett, Herts WD7 7BJ
(H) 01923 854276

Amendments

Chris Arnold – BN16 1QT

Phil Bishop – 01744 766737 (M) 07764 474494

Laurence Catlow – 1b, Cockle Street, Sedbergh, Cumbria LA10 5DA
(H) 01539 621 439

Matt Cavanagh – (M) 07966 762193

Justin Cawthorne – Beck House, 33 Cedars Avenue, Rickmansworth, Herts, WD3 7AW

John Ellacott – The Old Vicarage, Church Hill, North Rigton, Leeds LS17 0DF
(H) 01423 733340

Sarah Franklin – (M) 07841 110602

Ewan Friend – PE8 5BA

Ian Jackson – 27 Dry Hill Road, Tonbridge Kent TN9 1LU
(H) 01732 357530

Jason Lever – 120 Ladywood Road, Hertford, Herts SG14 2TA

Keith Love – (B) 020 8871 8163

Andy Pringle – Delete Bus number. (M) 07760172904

Dominic Shepherd – (B) 023 8057 3256

Peter Sherratt – c/o Geoff Sherratt

Bob Smith – 24 Sprucedale Gardens, SM6 9LB

James Toop – 2b, Redcross Way, London SE1 9HR
(M) 07834 855957

James Williams – W1H 1SD
(M) 07813 374 723

E-Mail Addresses

Alan Bowden – milestonesblue@gmail.com

Phil Bishop – pwbishop@hotmail.com

Matt Cavanagh – cavanagh444@hotmail.com

Graham Beauchamp – beauchamps@btinternet.com

Peter de Winton – peter.de.winton@uk.pwc.com

Hiro Ishii – h.ishii@ucl.ac.uk

Jonathan Major – jonathanmajor@hotmail.com

Dave Parlby – dsparlby@dsl.pipex.com

James Williams – james_williams@cantab.net