

# THE NEED FOR RUGBY FIVES COURTS

By EDGAR CYRIAX

**M**ANY young adults will tell one that they used to play Rugby Fives when they were boys and thoroughly enjoyed the game, but after leaving school they gave it up. If one inquiries of them the reason for so doing, about 99 per cent. will tell you that it is quite simple: they have no court on which to play. And about 50 per cent. of these will inform one, that even if they had a court, they would not and could not play Fives any more because they are too old.

As regards the first reason, that they have no court, this is unfortunately only too true. Although old boys of many of our public schools which possess Rugby Fives courts are allowed to play on them on one (more rarely on two or even three) day a week, they cannot habitually take in visitors other than opposing match teams. This is because the number of courts available is usually small—few schools having more than four—and the number of old boys desirous of playing is generally enough and often more than enough to fill all the courts during the hours allowed.

So that as regards school courts one cannot, excepting very occasionally as a great favour, get a game of Rugby Fives on any of them excepting on those of one's former school. And as most of our quondam players live very far from their old schools, their only alternative is to get a game on some private court owned by a club or on some other court available for use by the general public. In London, however, sad to relate, the most careful search has failed to reveal the existence of any such private or public court. And as far as I know the same holds good for the rest of England, Scotland and Wales. The nett result is that if after leaving school one cannot get a game of Rugby Fives at one's old school, one cannot get one at all.

The remedy for the above, theoretically, is quite simple, namely to build Fives courts. With this object in view the Rugby Fives Association as a body, as well as its members individually, have been trying to persuade clubs, athletic and otherwise, owners of open spaces, and private individuals, to build such courts, but so far without success. The reasons given for declining are two; the lack of space and lack of funds. Yet one often hears of new squash courts being put up in spite of the fact that they require more space and are more costly than Rugby Fives courts.

I know personally several hundreds of former Rugby Fives players resident in London, and I am convinced there are hundreds more—I feel tempted to say thousands—who are longing to play this game again and would be only too glad to know that courts were being built in our great metropolis. And I am convinced that to build would in no way be merely a philanthropic act. The erection of such courts on the basis of even a small membership fee and charge for hire would, I am certain, prove a sound financial proposition. This would especially be the case, if some athletic club, with a ground in or very near London, which already possesses a pavilion with changing rooms, refreshment room, etc., would allot one of its outlying unused corners which is bringing in nothing, for the building of Rugby Fives courts upon it.

Concerning the second reason mentioned above, of being too old: many men seem to consider that thirty, others that twenty-five, is the age limit, and in addition, extraordinary to relate, there are a number of others who actually hold the opinion that as soon as one has left school, one is too old to play Rugby Fives any more. This latter opinion, put into other words, means that they consider that one's maximum athletic prowess for Rugby Fives is attained at the age of about eighteen, after which deterioration sets in with such rapidity that attempts to play

the game after this age are nothing more nor less than dangerous. Curiously enough this opinion is not considered by them as applying to cricket, football or any other form of sport or athletics.

Yet with football, track racing, and many other forms of sport, one naturally cannot pause during play to take a brief rest in order, say, to recover one's breath; one simply has to go on. In Rugby Fives, on the other hand, there is a pause after each rally, which brief though it is, is sufficient to allow the necessary breather. Neither is it necessary, when advancing years begin to tell, to play matches: one can confine oneself to ordinary games. And if the remorseless advance of time makes it evident that playing singles is about to become too great a strain, one can drop them and only play doubles. In fact, this "being too old to play" is, in the vast majority of cases, purely a myth and were Rugby Fives players enabled to continue to play regularly after leaving school, this would soon become very evident.

In London, it is evident that there is a great demand for Rugby Fives courts and this demand is increasing daily. I trust that the time is not far distant when the "Central London Rugby Fives Courts" will be opened and that Rugby Fives will receive the attention and recognition it so richly deserves as one of the national games of England.

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