

FIVES AT NEWNHAM COLLEGE,

By K. C. HALLUM

TO most people the fact that women play Fives at all comes as a surprise. It is too arduous, they say. But, nevertheless, play Fives, they do, not only at a number of girls' schools but at the University College, London, and at Newnham College, Cambridge.

At Newnham, there are at present two courts, which unfortunately in my opinion are incomplete, for they lack both roof and back wall. They are shaped like a capital T, or nearly so, for the centre side wall, which is the left hand side wall for the right court and the right hand side wall for the left hand court, is nearly twice as long as the other two outside walls. As may be imagined, those who have been accustomed to playing in a more or less standard court, are likely to be handicapped by these conditions.

At first, only one court was built. This was in 1885, a time when women's games were still in their infancy and when even hockey was only just being tentatively started in the college. But the infant Rugby Fives Club flourished and a second court had soon to be added, while to-day the size of the club is such that another court, preferably of the standard build, is badly needed. The funds, however, are not forthcoming for such a purpose.

In the early days of the club, Fives was played only between the various members of the college, both dons and students. Practically all play was singles and the event of the season were the matches for the Singles Cup, or College Championship. However, several matches between the dons and students were played, usually to the advantage of the latter.

It was not until the beginning of the present century, that the club determined to test its strength against the force of other teams, and then bi-annual fixtures against the women of University College, London, and the South Hampstead High School, were instituted. The fixture with the University College has survived the war, but the other has been discontinued.

With the increase of membership in the club, the doubles game became more popular, which enabled us to inaugurate a new series of matches between the different halls of the college. A hall, I might explain, corresponds very nearly to a "house" in school life. Games for "Freshers" are arranged during the Michaelmas term and at the end of that term a number of matches are played, to discover new talent for the club. It is necessary to play these matches at the end of the term and not at the beginning, as very few students have played at school, nor have they played Squash Rackets, which would have helped them to learn how the game is played in a shorter space of time.

During the last ten years, the college has made an entirely new departure; fixtures have been arranged with the men's colleges. These have been thoroughly enjoyable and most beneficial to our play. Women tend, when they play among themselves, to hit the ball too softly, so that the harder hitting of the men, has not only helped to improve our play in general, but enlivened our own games.

Incidentally the club has a very good record for their matches with the other two women's teams, in fact only three defeats have been suffered at the hands of University College, London. Still, compared to the proficiency, I know it is possible for a woman to attain at this game, the standard of play at Newnham is not very high, and will not be, as long as we have only open courts to play in. It is a pity that it should be so, for Fives is a good game for women in itself besides helping them with other sports, as the names of women who have played the game and are now famous as players of hockey or tennis, only goes to prove.