

# AN OPEN LETTER

Dear Dr. Cyriax,

Long, sir, before we were the proud possessors of our first pairs of knickerbockers, you were as famous in the world of Rugby Fives as you are in 1932. It is not, then, without diffidence that we take up our pen to write this Open Letter of appreciation to you. We are conscious, also, of the honour that we do ourselves, for there can be few who doubt that the name of Dr. Cyriax will go down in the annals of our game as second only to that of Jack Cavanagh. We fear, sir, you must be content with second place, for although of Cavanagh we know but little, of him Hazlitt has written, and Hazlitt had the power with a few strokes from his quill of making a man immortal however scanty his record. For ourselves we must be satisfied if we can but remind you of your great prowess in the game of Rugby Fives, and what, indeed is far more important, your untiring energies that you have devoted to the game. For like Cavanagh you are a man of great personality and a fine exponent of the game of Fives, but unlike him, you have not only been a player but a leader to all those who would further the interest of this sport.

We shall not dwell for long on the list of your triumphs; they are too well known to need repeating here. Nor shall we make any attempt to discover the secret of your great success. You tell us that you do not know yourself, but that you seldom volley; neither, sir, did the great Cavanagh. Enough for us to tell, that you are a man of great physical strength, that you possess the secret of keeping going, and that the winds whisper that you are to be seen running round the Square of Cavendish at night, and that stranger still, you advocate and practise, a hot bath, a cold shower and the immediate donning of one's clothes. But this we do not believe.

As long ago as 1887, when you had been but two years a pupil at University College School, you won your place in the school Fives team. You were then only thirteen. Two years later you became school champion, and for the three years, 1889, 1890 and '91, you retained that high position. In 1890 you were beaten by A. O. Jones, who was then at Bedford Modern School; you were not defeated again until 1927. From 1890 until 1927, a period of 37 years, although playing continuously and meeting the best players of the time, you remained undefeated. It is no doubt a record that will remain unequalled through all time. In that year, 1927, P. A. Malt of the Alleyn Old Boys was your proud conqueror, and it was fitting that it should be so, for he, too, is a fine player,

Once, sir, you told us that you would do almost anything that lay in your power for the game of Rugby Fives, for it was the only game of which you had been really fond. I can well believe you. We believe we are correct in stating that it had always been your ambition to impart some degree of uniformity to the game of Rugby Fives, and that to do this you wished to bring all the clubs in England under the leadership of an Association. In 1927, when the Rugby Fives Association was first founded, with yourself as Chairman, you came a long way towards realising that ambition. It was no easy task that lay before you. The objects of the Association were to "act as a control authority, to formulate, alter and add to the rules governing the game of Fives," and on paper they appeared simple enough. But tradition is stronger than any number of associations, and the recognised dimensions proposed for future courts were not easily agreed upon. These difficulties you surmounted, but the rules of the game presented fresh and more intricate dilemmas. The first draft which you sent round the clubs for their approval came back with some objection to each and sundry, excepting in the case of one, which read, "the umpire's decision shall be final." However, you did not despair, with the result that we have now a working set of rules, which, although they may not be agreeable to everybody, in each particular, are at least recognised as the final court of appeal.



DR. EDGAR CYRIAX

Nor is this all that you have done for Rugby Fives. In 1926 you inaugurated the first Open Fives competition for Doubles play, presenting a cup yourself to the winning pair. That competition for the Cyriax Cup, has now become of chief annual importance in the world of Rugby Fives. You, yourself, still take part in this competition and last year partnered by Mr. Scott, himself no longer a young man, you won a splendid victory in the first round over K. C. Gandar Dower and J. F. Burnet. This year we are hoping to see your name among the list of competitors for the Singles Championship.

For you, Fives is a national sport, beloved above everything else, to be played at all seasons of the year, at all ages from seven to seventy. You have little mercy for those who after the age of twenty-five need a racket to save them from undue exertion and bending. Let them bend and keep fit, you say, and if their wind is short, let them pick up the ball more slowly between the rallies. Sir, they do not all follow your advice. Instead they smile and say, "It is not for nothing, that he is called the G.O.M. of Fives."

COURT & LINE.

SqR, F, T & R 12/11/32

### Accuracy

To the Editor of "Squash Rackets and Fives."

Sir,—In reading your very enjoyable account of the great Dr. Cyriax, it suddenly occurred to me that the writer of the article is incorrect in saying that Dr. Cyriax was unbeaten until P. A. Malt defeated him in 1927.

I myself watched the match between St. Paul's School and U.C.S. Old Boys, which took place (on reference to "The Pauline") on January 26th, 1924. The School were successful by 239 points to 78, and Dr. Cyriax was beaten by the School captain, G. Avgherinos, who afterwards played for Oxford and is now the Secretary of the Old Pauline Club. The score was 15—8, 14—15 in favour of Avgherinos.

I feel that in the interests of accuracy and the history of the game, this particularly fine feat on the part of a schoolboy ought not to be passed over.—Yours faithfully,

"EYE WITNESS."

Kensington, W.

SqR, F, T & R 19/11/32

### Accuracy

To the Editor of "Squash Rackets and Fives."

Sir,—Your interesting "Open Letter" to Dr. Edgar Cyriax published in your issue of November 5th of "Squash Rackets and Fives," contains one inaccuracy. The Letter states that "From 1890 until 1927 . . . you remained undefeated." The Letter continues: "In that year, 1927, P. A. Malt, of the Alleyn Old Boys was your proud conqueror. . . ."

With no wish to discredit Mr. Malt's victory over the Doctor, I would ask the courtesy of your columns to point out that Dr. Cyriax had previously been defeated since losing to A. O. Jones in 1890. The occasion was in 1924, when the Doctor, playing against St. Paul's School IV, was beaten by Mr. G. Avgherinos, who is now secretary of the Old Pauline Fives Club. The score on that occasion was (the Doctor first) 8—15, 15—14.

As a matter of fact and of interest, I well remember Dr. Cyriax making a short speech at the end of that memorable match in which he congratulated his opponent and informed the packed gallery, *inter alia*, that the occasion was the first on which in over thirty years he had suffered defeat.—Yours, etc.,

IAN MURRAY LESLIE.

4, Catherine Street, W.C.2.

To the Editor of "Squash Rackets and Fives."

Sir,—I have read the letter from "Eye Witness" in your last issue (p. 61). It is, as he states, quite true that on January 26th, 1924, I was beaten by G. Avgherinos at St. Paul's School 8—15 and 15—14 (not 14—15 as stated). As I played the games while suffering from a feverish cold, with recurring shivering attacks, I suggested to Avgherinos to replay our Singles when I was well again and regard the result thereof as conclusive of our respective abilities. Avgherinos readily assented with the greatest courtesy and we met at St. Paul's School on April 15th, the result being 15—9, 15—12 in my favour.

The above events were duly reported in "The Gower" (the magazine of University College School) of 1924 (pp. 221, 260) in which I was pleased to add my tribute to the abilities of Avgherinos as a Fives player.—Yours sincerely,

41, Welbeck Street,

EDGAR CYRIAX.

Cavendish Square, W.1.