

# RUGBY FIVES FOR WOMEN

VOX FEMINA.

HAVING been asked to write an article on Fives for Women, the only safe way of doing it seems to be to give an account of the progress of the game at University College, London, and to make a few general remarks where possible.

First, perhaps we may be allowed to say that to our mind the aftermath of a Rugby Fives game rather resembles golf with its necessary inquests. When numbers of Fives players are gathered together (In thy name, O Malt), one hears, instead of "I took at 4 at the 19th," "I gave him a most marvellous angle shot," or, again, "She took a clever shot off the buttress in that first game."

But to commence this most memorable history. Two certain young ladies one day saw a Fives Court and used it. In fact they severely inconvenienced the men and rightful owners. After sundry complaints these enthusiasts and a few half-hearted supporters obtained permission to form a Ladies Fives Club in 1928, and this is the first memorable date. The men's club, after much persuasion and many negotiations, had allowed them the necessary use of their Courts for a few stipulated hours per week. These pioneers in University College made excellent use of their opportunities, and by 1929 the Club was in full swing with an active membership of about 20.

Other Ladies' Clubs were sought out and prevailed upon to play matches. Perhaps our enthusiasm would not have been so great had it been forseen in what conditions return matches would be played.

The North London Collegiate School received U.C.'s first challenge. One hardly likes to call the space in which they play, a Rugby Fives Court. (Ye North Londoners, past and present, please take no offence.) In the memorable days of the Good Queen there was a stable in North London with three small loose boxes. Presently a gymnasium was built round them, and here the pioneers of Rugby Fives as a game for women, were bred. The game consists mainly of running to and fro in the gym., and of crawling under benches and round pianos to retrieve the ball. This form of exercise is undoubtedly just as health-giving. In spite of these drawbacks, the School has produced several reputable Fives players, the greater number of whom have come up to U.C. afterwards. As yet no visiting-team has won a match against them. The Old North Londoners' Association also have a Fives team, but one sees and hears little of them. Another experience of the team in its first year was a match against Newnham College, Cambridge. Memory seems to recall loose rubble and breaks, pleasing only to a googly expert. Fortunately for both them and us, matches are now played on the University Courts. King Alfred's School was also among our early opponents. They play on a regular Association court and are a very keen side.

To return to U.C. 1930 saw the beginnings of a little gentle mixed Fives. It must be admitted that since its advent the standard of play has improved, and more variety has been introduced into our game. King Alfred's School had always had this advantage over us, as mixed Fives with them is the rule. It teaches one to hit hard, run fast and use one's mental powers to the full, because the game is, naturally, speeded up.

Also in 1930, a truly memorable year, our first mixed tournament on a handicapping basis was arranged, as well as a singles tournament. The mixed has proved itself to be so popular that it has since been repeated annually.

In 1931 the Club came to the conclusion that the number of hours at which women were allowed the use of the courts was inadequate. We have now obtained a much extended use, which is greatly appreciated, judging by the fighting and wrangling that takes place over booking the courts. We could do with half a dozen courts of our own, so may this reach the eye of a second Lord Wakefield.

The memorable event of 1931 in the history of the Club was a spectacular match against the 2nd IV. of the College of St. Mark and St. John. It was our first match against men. We were beaten, but we have fully revenged ourselves since by a glorious victory of 3 points.

We believe that Newnham plays a good many of the Colleges at Cambridge; and now we have just learnt that the 2nd IV men's team at U.C. have been challenged by the North London Collegiate School. May they be successful!

At the opening of this season we were still more anxious to lengthen our fixture list. Through these pages, we managed to do so, but whether it was a Good or Bad Thing time alone will show. It was, at any rate, memorable. The Nondescripts in the personage of J. Armitage, R. D. McKelvie, J. G. Richards and V. E. Oundjian, being, as you will see, a team of formidable opponents, arranged their first match as such with us.

Let it be said, for the first time, we took to a little serious training. "Constant Reader" will have probably read the result.

Following on this match, we had the audacity to challenge our own men. Ladies scored in hand and out, and, although much against the day's betting, we took two games off them, and finished, down 236—132. We have now received a challenge from them, and it looks like becoming an annual event.

The climax in the history of our own Club up to date, has now, we think, been reached. Some weeks ago we received a challenge from the "Veterans," namely, Dr. Cyriax and his partner, Mr. Marsden. Knowing a little more about Fives, as played by pukka Rugby Fives players, we are not only looking forward to welcoming Dr. Cyriax and Mr. Marsden to the College, but also to the match itself. We must conclude by saying how difficult it is for women to gain any real experiences of the game. There are not sufficient schools which have the facilities for play, and only few of these show interest in the game. For instance, it is on record that a certain undergraduate of University College, on seeing a game of Fives in progress, asked, "Is that a Fives Court?" On being questioned as to what she meant, this fellow studentess explained that they had one at school, but nobody had known what it was. Well . . . !!! The Colleges suffer because no member of these Clubs reckons on remaining there longer than three or four years. The majority on becoming members have never seen the inside of a Fives Court, except perhaps from the gallery. They are taken on to a Court, usually on a bitterly cold morning, by an officer of the Club, and then the self-inflicted torture begins. One's first attempt is certainly memorable.

When public courts and clubs appear we shall have attained a place in the sun, but at present we look forward to the days when we shall be sending a women's team abroad, and thus have a chance of becoming top nation, because Fives is definitely a Good Thing.