

THE EXETER COURSE 23rd - 30th JULY 1983

A Report by the President

*RFA Handbook
1983-84*

If you enjoy playing fives, eating, drinking and socialising - not many fives-players that I know don't - the course run by the R.F.A. Coaching Development Officer and World and Amateur Singles Champion, Wayne Enstone, as part of the Exeter University 'School of Sport', is a uniquely satisfying experience. I have just returned, positively bursting with fitness and fives expertise, from my first visit and I shall certainly be back next year.

The fives is intensive - 9.00 to 12.30 and 2.00 to 5.30 every day except for a free 'half' on Wednesday afternoon - but varied and immensely enjoyable and there is usually time for a rest between games, breaks for coffee and tea and an opportunity to sunbathe by the pool after lunch.

On Sunday we warmed up (an appropriate metaphor as the temperature was in the 80s for most of the week) with round-robin doubles, changing partners after each game, interspersed with the odd single just to liven things up. Wayne and Steve Ashton were in the gallery to observe, advise, and offer criticism and suggestions. In the afternoon we worked on particular experimental techniques, such as positioning, speed and adaptability of footwork enabling one to take service with the right hand instead of being committed to a left-handed return, or concentrating on the reverse angle and straight drop-shots into the nick. All the time Wayne tried to get us to think about new possibilities while not forgetting the basics.

Over the next two days seven of us played a sealed handicap singles tournament (you don't know what your handicap is until the whole thing is over). Mike Capaldi, despite proving to have the biggest handicap, won this handsomely.

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Standing (left to right): Steve Ashton, John Beswick, Andrew M'cGregor, Phil Atkinson, Mike Capaldi, Pete Clayton, Taf Nasser, Anthony Boggiano.

Seated (left to right): Chris Heron, Dave Curry, Wayne Enstone, Alastair Mackenzie, Fred Beswick, Danny M'cGregor.

Meanwhile the others played doubles with Wayne and Steve and we all watched an exhibition single between these two, who were respectively winner and runner-up in the recent World Singles Championships and together won the Doubles. It was spectacular stuff.

On the Wednesday and Thursday we had a doubles tournament in which everyone played. The authorities (i.e. Wayne) awarded the President Steve Ashton as a partner - or to put it another way I was Steve's handicap - and despite losing narrowly to Wayne and Taf we fought off a blistering attack from Fred Beswick and 'Dangerous' Dave Curry and beat everyone else comfortably to win the trophy (an Exeter University 'T' shirt each) on points.

The final day saw another handicap singles tournament with known handicaps this time and all fourteen players taking part. Wayne managed the handicapping so skilfully that he plunged to defeat in the second round at the hands of Phil Atkinson. There was no holding Dangerous Dave this time though and he thundered his way to victory taking lumps out of the court here and there with his vicious kills.

You can see that there was plenty of action during the day. Well the 'apres-fives' was equally impressive. There was much fraternising with the other courses (squash, tennis, badminton and archery - all of which had ladies in their number) and, as you can imagine with Danny M'cGregor in charge of the social life of the fives-players and Fred Beswick as Social Director for the whole 'School of Sport', there was never was a dull moment. The food in the refectory was good and plentiful and the beer and ambience in the Edgerton were definitely alpha. During the week we had three discos, a barbecue and two splendid formal dinners at Reed Hall, a sort of posh stately home and University dons' club on the campus. We also had a beer and skittles evening with a competition between the various courses. The skittles was a clean sweep for the fives-players, our 'B' team (bolstered by two attractive lady guests) beating our 'A' team in the final. We also won the beer-drinking.

On another evening the tennis-players gave a party and on several occasions the hard core of the 'School of Sport' gathered in the fives quarters after closing time, for informal chat and entertainment. On the final evening between the dinner and the disco each group put on a caberet act. Ours, devised and choreographed by National Coach Wayne, consisted of six bronzed and beautifully muscled young men - sorry, five b. and b.m. young men and one slug-white President - clad only in the skimpiest of pants, going through a mock-serious routine of steps, postures and exercises to a Diana Ross number. It brough the house down.

All in all it was a memorable week and I would like to thank Wayne and Fred especially for making it so, but also all the other fives-players for their company on and off the court, not to mention the members of the other courses - like one Steve Davies (squash!).

At £115 all-inclusive (except the beer) it is surely unbeatable value for a week's holiday. All ages (from eighteen) and standards are welcome: our age-span this year was eighteen to fifty-two. Why not try it next year?

Anyone who wishes to know more about the course please contact Wayne, Fred or me or write early next year to: Conference Booking Officer, Exeter University, Devonshire House, Stocker Road, Exeter. (Telephone 215566)

ALASTAIR MACKENZIE