

RFA Handbook 1981-82

DAVID HEBBLETHWAITE

From an early age David was a barrel-chested young man who could never resist a challenge. At Bedford Modern School these challenges were largely of a sporting kind whether it was tunnelling his way backwards up the swimming pool, whipping in powerful left-handed shots at water polo or laying low a few over-ambitious Fly-halves from his position of Wing-forward. In the Fives Courts he grafted away to master the rudiments of the game learning from the example of Dickie Jeeps , A.B.W.Taylor and visiting 'giants' in the form of John Pretlove and Dennis Silk.

Exceptionally, he challenged the RAF Medical Board when they failed him for National Service and he WON. While many dropped out, David met the challenge of the Harvard, fuel-cocks, navigating in Ireland and eventually the mysteries of jet-propulsion. National Service Meteor pilots were a rare breed and David was among the last of the few. Coping with the problems of under-shooting and flame-outs were not conducive to keeping up with Latin so that Fitzwilliam were sorry to have to give him the 'thumbs down' for his place at Cambridge.

Undeterred, David entered the world of commerce, first with National Benzole then with London Brick and later as an independent entrepreneur in the petroleum business. Seeking the advice of an employment agency he decided, after a decent interval of time, to buy out part of that agency and hence founded his present business in Technical, Professional and Executive Appointments.

During this time he, naturally, maintained an avid involvement in sport. An exponent of 'coarse' Rugby in the best Michael Green style with Bedford Athletic he also rescued an ailing Bedford Squash Club by taking over as part owner, the club becoming as viable as his own canny skill at the softer game. Fives was, however, the continuing thread. A founder-member of the revived Old Modernian Rugby Fives Club he was stimulated by the challenge of tournaments, club matches and even club nights. David has always played to win but in the best traditions has never forgotten that the game is more important than the man and that friendship and bonhomie are vital adjuncts to the spirit of the game itself. After more than thirty years of pleasurable participation and with the circumference of the barrel drifting to slightly lower latitudes, David can still play a mean game of doubles but does not see that the current challenges are anything to do with age or girth but with the future of Rugby Fives. With this in mind he has initiated links with the Sports Council and has established the concept in their minds of a national Rugby Fives centre. He sees that the problem is fundamentally financial and he will certainly wish to stimulate fund-raising during his term as President. David would also like to pursue a more personal

challenge. In spite of all his travels in connection with Fives he has managed to produce (with a little help from 'Sandy') three sons, all of whom play Fives - Anyone for a family match?