

Extract from "The Home Book for Young Ladies"

Open-Air Pastimes.

27

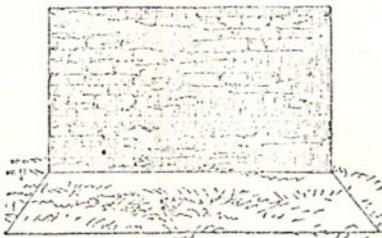
Published
1884

FIVES.

This is a very old game of ball. It was known in the days of Queen Elizabeth, and declared by her to be the best sport she had ever seen.

It may be played, in a rough way, almost anywhere: the only absolute requirements are a tolerably smooth and lofty wall, fronted by a reasonably smooth and level piece of ground. With these and a tennis-ball a game may be got up at almost a moment's notice.

The wall and ground require some little preparation, which need not, however, take more than a few minutes. A line must be drawn horizontally along the wall, with chalk or other suitable substance, at about 30 inches from the ground; and three lines on the ground, two extending parallel from the wall, about 15 feet apart, to a distance of some 18 or 20 feet; and one parallel with the wall and about 6 feet from it. The line on the wall is called simply "the line," the two long ones on the ground "the boundaries," and the cross line "the scratch." The ball when in play must be made to strike the wall above the line, and must fall to the ground inside the boundaries.



The number of players may be two or four. As there is no material difference between the game with two and that with four players, the description of the one will do for the other; for simplicity's sake, therefore, the game with two players will be described.

The theory of the game is as follows: One player strikes the ball with his hand up against the wall above the line, making it fall beyond the scratch, and the other is then bound to meet it, and before it touches the ground a second time, to return it again to the wall for the first player to meet it in like manner, and so on alternately, only that after the ball is "served" it is not requisite that it should fall outside the scratch. The players toss up for first lead off, and the winner serves or delivers the ball as above described; if he himself is first to fail in properly returning the ball to the wall he is out, and player No. 2 becomes server; but if the second player so fails, the server counts one towards his game, and serves the ball afresh for a new bout. If any player misses the ball at the rebound, or strikes it beneath the line on the wall, or hits it outside bounds, the opposite side counts one. "Fifteen" is the game, and whoever counts it first wins.

When four play, they play two against two, and the game proceeds exactly as above, it only being necessary that the ball should be played by one of either side alternately. Usually they divide the ground between them, one of either side standing near the wall and the other well back.

The player should wear stout leather gloves to save the hands.

(GB); 2, R-Y Bost's Ulmos du Saulcy (France); 3, A Bologni's Mayday (Italy).

RUGBY FIVES

Enstone captures 20th title

By Christopher Martin-Jenkins

WAYNE ENSTONE, of Manchester, won his 20th Open singles championship yesterday, making his already unique record that much more unassailable.

He beat Neil Roberts 15-7, 15-6 at Bedford Modern School in a contest of often breathtaking quality lasting an hour and 20 minutes. It was a match between an outstandingly fit and skilful player and a peerless champion, a Lancashire v Yorkshire battle played in a wonderful spirit: the umpire was superfluous.

Roberts, a vet from Settle in the Yorkshire Dales who learned his fives at Giggleswick but now plays it mainly at Halifax, may be 10 years Enstone's junior but deserves every credit for giving as good as he got in rallies often 30, 40 and 50 shots long.

The first game alone took 50 minutes and when Enstone, only 9-6 up in the second after leading 6-0, was forced into some untypical errors as he strove for winners, there were momentary doubts about the outcome. He dispelled them by changing gear and hitting the ball even harder and more accurately.

"When you hit the ball into the nick and believe it has to be a winner but it keeps coming back," said Roberts in awe afterwards, "you wonder what you have to do to win."

TELEGRAPH

7-12-93

201
h for
d) —
-3) hd
it close
e (2m)

woody t
tson (7)
phreys
Railton
laguire
emark
ton (3)
cNeill
ellamy
Holley
gwater
ittery t
upple t
mson &
urigan
avis (3)
c, 10-1

good to
ereford
-13) 21,
ns. Its
Nov 8
-0) 111
d when
ereford
never a
ed run.
uth's
month

mson
ughty
arvey
lpton
ck (7)
on (3)
ngton
guire
arson,

2½m)
f The
3rd to
d first
st on
60½
akes.
f 3 to
ate.

Wall
y (7)
ene
tery
ater
ude
r (5)
reys
lton
leill
ton
well
rne
uire
elsh

Oy)
d to
50
at
run
with
ing
an
—
to
on
at

A bunch of fives that hurts like hell

Rugby School gave its name to two sports in the nineteenth century of which one, the Webb Ellis way to cheat at soccer, caught on. The other, rugby fives, did not. The sport survives in 50 British schools, a dozen universities, Manches-ter YMCA and the odd global outpost. The secretary of the Rugby Fives Association regu-larly gets letters from people who think he runs five-a-side rugby.

This is a little puzzling because whacking a ball against a wall is the most natural sporting instinct there is. But the common prejudice runs to using a racket to help. It seems quaint to do without; it has overtones of mouth-
caction of the flesh, especially as the fives ball is rock-hard and feels like it even through padded gloves. They warn you that your hand will hurt a bit the first time you play. This is misleading. It hurts like hell.

My first, utterly un-
inglished, appearance on a fives court came during a lull in the Cynriax Cup, the national doubles championship on the squirrel-haunted courts at Alley's School in South Lon-
don. Alley's is a traditional

rugby fives school. So are Rad-
ley, Bradfield, Merchant Tay-
lors, St Paul's and Hackney
Downs Comprehensive. Eton,
Harrow and Chateaufosse play
Eton fives, which has no back
wall but a front wall full of
hazards, like a vertical golf
course. Winchester has its own
variation. The three do not
communicate much.

Rugby fives has more in
common with squash and the
courts appear so similar that
you wonder why they can't
build dual-purpose ones. In
fact the standard fives court is
a shade smaller; more impor-
tant, it needs a rough stone
floor or the hard ball would
just die. Though it comes rela-
tively slowly off the hand, it
gathers pace off the wall and
keeps going. You have to be
ambidextrous to some degree
or a smart player will work on
your weak hand and break
you.

The list of past Cynriax Cup
finalists includes a number of
a county cricketers and the clas-
sic, graceful fives shot is not
dissimilar to an off-drive.
There are also plenty of people
on the list with more middle
initials than is strictly essential
and one chap whose name

began with two small fs. How-
ever, the leading player these
days is an un-silver spoon sort
of chap called Wayne Enstone,
who learned to play at the
Manchester X.

Enstone and his partner
John East did not join the
lunchtime group in the Crown
and Greyhound. The other top
pair, Ian Fuller and Dave
Hebden, had a swift pint and a
few Britvics and went on to
beat them in the final. It was
noted darkly in the pub that
Wayne was very keen on
fitness.

This was said good-naturedly,
as indeed was everything else.
I cannot recall meeting a more
pleasant bunch of people in
any sport. Mrs Fuller sent up
coffee and egg sandwiches,
which helped make up for the
fact that fives spectators have
to stand out in the cold and
peer in.

The Association would like
to improve the facilities, get
some sponsors, get the results
in the papers, interest more
people who did not play at
school. There were plans to
build a national centre outside
Manchester, with the help from
the County Council, but these
have been Thatcherised indef-

nately. Some people are not
sorry; they suspect develop-
ment would change the sport
for the worse — umpires
might become necessary, a lot
for unsightling the opposition
might become something de-
manded rather than offered; it
might become less sociable and
less fun.

"It may be said," wrote Haz-
litt, "that there are things of
more importance than striking
a ball against a wall and there
are things, indeed, that make
more noise and do as little
good, such as making war and
peace, making speeches and
answering them, making verses
and blotting them, making
money and throwing it away.
But the game of fives is what
no one despises who has ever
played at it. It is the finest
exercise for the body and the
best relaxation for the mind."
Wayne Enstone backs him
up. "I can't think of anything,
except just possibly swimming,
that demands more fitness.
You're using the whole of your
body, right side, left side,
bending as well. I'm going to
ache for days after this." He is
not the only one.

Matthew Engel

The Guardian : 18/7/81