



RUGBY FIVES ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REVIEW 2024-25



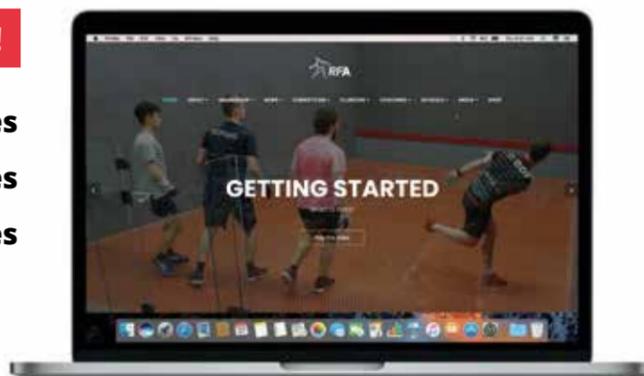
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A welcome from the President

Welcome to the RFA Annual Review. This is not simply a report on the many clubs and schools involved in the sport, but is a celebration of the successes and the pleasure which those engaged have experienced over the past season. There has been plenty of competition, with tournaments taking place all over England and north of the border. I hope the Review gives you a feel for them and the competitors. It is fascinating to see the ebbs and flows of success between the old guard and the new. The coming season should be a cracker.

Many members of the RFA continue to play after they leave school, but many a fine player at junior level does not, for a variety of good reasons. If you have been playing Fives as a schoolboy or schoolgirl and are wondering what the sport has to offer you as an adult, the Review might make you think that Fives is all tournaments. That would be a mistake. Many players turn up to play on club nights and rarely, if ever, enter an RFA regional or national tournament. Let me give you an idea of the life of a club player.

I am a keen playing member of the Wessex Club. I will use that as an example. We meet most Tuesday nights of the year and play on the Winchester College courts. The College has just invested in a new sports centre, so we are most fortunate, in that the centre has, included within it, six Fives courts – four Winchester and two Rugby. The courts are fantastic with fast, braced glass-backed walls, grippy consistent floors and a warm viewing area.

The Club meets from 6:30pm with people arriving, in dribs and drabs after that. We normally play doubles and a four will be put together on an ad hoc basis; although we try and mix up the teams throughout the evening. Some keen souls want to play singles – normally on the Rugby courts (which are better for one-on-one games), but the doubles players prefer the Winchester Courts (Dan Grant did a great highlight reel on Winchester Fives “The Fast-



Paced Handball Sport You've Never Heard Of!” on YouTube that you might like to watch).

As exhaustion kicks in and the “witching hour” of 10:00pm approaches, we retreat to the Wykeham Arms, for a bite to eat and some rehydration.

We have an end of term/Christmas meal, a handicap Doubles Tournament (along the lines of the President's Cup) and end-of-season meal at Easter and a party for players, ex-players and partners in the summer.

For many club players the Fives highlight of the year is the Jesters Tour in Edinburgh. Players from clubs all over the UK make their way to Edinburgh to play Fives of every standard. Teams will be chosen to play against The Caledonian Club, Universities and all the schools in the area which play Fives and against each other. The games vary between coaching sessions and fierce competition. The Tour is over three days and has become a Festival of Fives. Who can survive the combination of too many games and late nights and still make it home for Monday?

All the different Clubs have their own formats. I know that the Executioners have a more extensive social programme (this year: hotpot night, darts, bingo and the Multicourt Masters featuring six ball sports) and that this has been very successful in keeping young players engaged with the club and with Fives. Derby Moor Fives Club runs an annual, invitational end-of-season Doubles tournament; the Marlborough Town Club has a black-tie dinner once a year; the Old Whitgiftians have a tradition of touring; four of the London-based clubs now take part in a League, with matches played each season on a home-and-away basis.

So, if you are a lapsed Fives player or leaving school wondering whether or how to continue to play Fives, just contact the RFA through its website at www.therfa.uk and we will help you to do so.

I hope you appreciate this Review and continue to enjoy Fives in all its flavours.

The 2024-25 Season in Review

Andy Pringle reviews a season in which some new names graced our trophies



At the start of this article, we feel obliged to remind you that this is the RFA Annual Review. Such was the dominance of the Boys from Barnes – especially in the early part of the season – that you could be forgiven for thinking that this reads more like an extract from the St Paul’s magazine.

It was a pattern that was set right from off, with Ed Kay beating Ben Beltrami to win the South West Singles title in July, before the pair teamed up to win the Doubles. The Pauline dominance was emphasised by the fact that the losing semi-finalists in the Singles, and the runners-up in the Doubles – Charlie Brooks, Julian Aquilina and Theo Parker – also came from the Pauline production line.

As the Fives circus moved on to Christ’s Hospital, Alleyn’s, Derby (home of the Yorkshire Open) and Sherborne, the story continued. There were Singles titles for Ed at the South East and London Opens, while Ben picked up championships at the Yorkshire and West of England events. Meanwhile, Doubles titles went to various combinations of Ed, Ben, Julian, Charlie and Dan, while James Tilston and Seb Ion picked up the South East Open championship.

Indeed, before Christmas, it was only in the Yorkshire Open that a non-Pauline player reached the semi-finals of an Open Singles championship, or the final of an Open Doubles event was graced by a pair of two non-Paulines. Lewis Keates reached the semis in the Singles at Derby, while Oscar McIntyre and Gwydion Wiseman were runners-up in the Doubles. That said, we must also point out that Ben’s

ABOVE: Joy for Morgan and Andy at the Vintage

BELOW: Ed and Ben kick off the season at the South West Open

partner when winning the South West Open Doubles was Penn Chai, who learned his Fives north of the border rather than just south of the River Thames.

Nevertheless, it was fair to say that, as the National Singles approached, the money was very much on a Pauline winner – the question was who? Could Ben Beltrami retain his title, would Dan Tristao win again, or could Ed Kay break his duck in the event?



There was also a dark horse, in the shape of current St Paul’s schoolboy Freddie Hammond Giles, who had already reached the London Open semis and won both the London qualifier for the Nationals and the U25 Singles championship – in the latter case making history as the only schoolboy ever to do so.

In the end, Dan knocked out Freddie in the quarters, before edging a super-close semi against Ben. In the final he faced Ed, who had beaten Richie Murby (the only non-Pauline to reach the quarter-finals) in the semis. The match was an understandably tight affair and it took three games of the highest quality to produce a winner: Dan took his eighth title with his first victory over Ed since 2019.

After Christmas, the procession of Pauline winners continued, with Dan doing the double at the North West Open – which was played in Derby after disastrous flooding in Manchester. Having beaten Julian in the Singles final, Dan paired up with non-Pauline Dan Grant to take the Doubles against Ben and Charlie. Then, in Durham at the North of England Open, the Singles and Doubles honours went to Ben, and Ben and Julian respectively.

Pauline names also adorned the trophies at the National Doubles championship – Ed and Dan beat Ben and Theo in the final – and, in the first event on the new courts in Winchester, at the National Winchester Fives Championship. Here, the two Dons beat Ed and Winchester Fives specialist, Old Bradfieldian Dave Butler in the final.

As far as Open championships were concerned, the only break in the Pauline domination came at the Scottish Open – and with two notable firsts: Dan Grant secured his maiden regional Singles title, while Lewis Keates won his first Doubles title, partnered by Penn Chai.

There were more firsts in the age-related categories – where it was all change pretty much across the board. In the Veterans (over 45s) category, new blood, in the shape of Tom Maconie, arrived to shake things up. He qualified for the category for the first time this season and celebrated by doing the double. Having beaten three-time champion John Minta in the Singles final, Tom teamed up with Tim Hebblethwaite to win the Doubles, too, defeating defending champions Andy Pringle and Morgan



ABOVE: Dan Tristao wins his eighth National Singles title

BELOW: Lewis and Penn break the mould at the Scottish Open

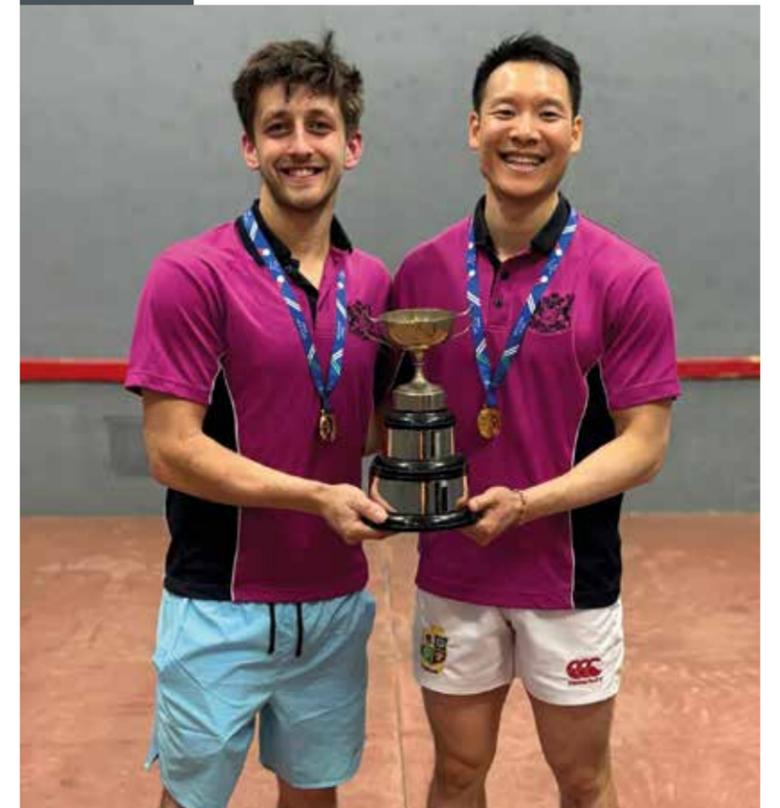
Spillane in the final.

When many of the same players reconvened in Cambridge for the Vintage (over 55s) championships a few weeks later, though, it was very much Andy’s day. He won the Singles convincingly, defeating former champions Ian Jackson and Morgan Spillane, as well as the fancied John Minta, on the way to his first ever Singles title. Then, having survived a massive scare in the semi-final against Tom Kiggell and Harvey Bishop, Andy and Morgan won the Doubles title – their third win in a row at this level – with victory over Hamish Buchanan and John Minta.

Meanwhile, there was a sense of sadness at Masters and Grand Masters level, where the events were played in the absence of the late Tony Hamilton, his long-standing partner Spencer Beal and multiple winner Bernard Atkinson. However, that should not detract from the achievements of Stuart Kirby and Brian Kirk, and Neil Arnott and Chris Horrocks, champions at Masters (over 65) and Grand Masters (over 75) level, respectively.

Again, there was slight disappointment when it came to the team tournaments, with the Owers Trophy for Old Boys not being played this season. However, in something of a statement win, it was the Old Paulines Club who won the Club Championship, beating a dogged West of England squad to claim their third successive title.

Mind you, given how most of the rest of the season had panned out, the destination of the winners’ medals was perhaps only to be expected. ■





Finalists in the Women's National Doubles - Helena, Shinan, Camille and Sophie

Women's Season Review

Bob Dolby reviews a year of further progress for Women's Fives

Women's Fives has never before been in such a good state. We have regular tournaments throughout the season in various age groups, in Singles, Doubles and Mixed Doubles, most of them organised and run by members of the female Fives-playing community

At the youngest level we have annual U13, U14, U16 and U18 championships for the South East region which are played at Christ's Hospital. Most years there is also a schoolgirls event for the Scottish Schools, played in Edinburgh. It is planned to move the Lady's Cup from Cambridge to Edinburgh to encourage female Fives in that area of the country.

The National Schools Girls Championships, held at Marlborough College, has a wide range of competitions and a high standard of play, and it

has been inspiring to see how many champions have gone on to win further titles at senior level. We see this clearly

in the names of those who have won the National U23, now U25, Championships, this year being no exception.



Competitors at the Women's National U25 Championships

For all this progress in the younger reaches of Fives over the course of the past 15 years we owe a debt of gratitude to instigators Ed Hatton and Alex Smith, to organisers Kathleen Briedenhann, Louise Mathias, Lena Barton, Ibbey Lee and Abbie Evans, and to host schools Christ's Hospital, Fettes, Marlborough, Oundle and St Paul's. We do not yet have an established British Universities Championships for women, but this year a competition did take place and was won by the Durham University pair of Phoenix Fleming and Megan Wells. We do, of course, have a Women's Varsity Match, which this year provided the closest contest in its 10-year history: a win for Oxford Women by just 10 points.

The Women's National Championships in Rugby Fives and Winchester Fives date back to the 1980s and 1990s but the number of women's events has been augmented in recent years. The Durham Women's Championships were initiated by Julie McIntyre, as well as the RFA Mixed Doubles and the National Open Mixed Doubles, both competitions now run by Savanna Leboff and Helena Tunks.

We have continued to miss multiple champion Louise Mathias and former Schools champions Ibbey Lee and Martha Nugent and we haven't seen as much as we would have liked of Holly Nugent and Zara Elliot. We were sorry that exams prevented the Scottish contingent from competing in the National Girls' Championships, too. However, Shinan Zhang did manage to stage the cherished Winchester Fives Mixed Doubles, this



Triumphant squad from Alleyn's at the SE Regional Championships for Girls

time at Malvern College.

At the top of the game, and of the Women's Rankings, we have two outstanding players, both former schoolgirl champions: Camille Beattie and Shinan Zhang. Less than previously has been seen of National Singles Champion Camille, in her first year at university, but what we have witnessed in her limited play in Durham and Derby Moor has underlined her preeminence as a Singles player. The ubiquitous Shinan, on the other hand, has become the undisputed number 1 in the Doubles game, winning the President's Cup with Tim Hebblethwaite, but playing mostly with her regular partner Helena Tunks, both of them hard-working and committed match and tournament players.

We can allow ourselves to say that, as with our men, the ladies have a Big Three!

Another former Schoolgirl Doubles champion, Kirsten Bell, won the U25 Singles and the Doubles, with Sophie Lundie, who is now based in London. Phoenix Fleming, who learned her Fives at Marlborough, has emerged at Durham University as a promising senior player, winning first the Durham Women's Singles and Doubles and then the Universities Singles and Doubles, both times with Megan Wells. Lizzie Ware, also formerly of Durham University, is usually to be seen vying for medalware in the final rounds of events: winning the RFA Mixed Doubles with Adam Hutchinson, the Mate's Plate with Theo Parker, Silver with Kirsten Bell in the Women's Winchester Fives Doubles and the Plate in the Singles.

At junior level we saw Jemima Mitchell of Blundell's successfully defend her National U18 Singles title, and then, with Natalia Talbot, win the Doubles again. We hope very much they are able to continue playing post-school. In the younger age groups players from Alleyn's rather swept all before them, both at regional and national level, in Singles, Doubles and Mixed Doubles.

Finally, an extra word of congratulations to Kirsten Bell and Shinan Zhang: to Kirsten for her invaluable work as administrative assistant to the RFA General Secretary, Chris Blakeley; and to Shinan for her indefatigable efforts in organising the London League and a number of tournaments. We owe so much to such supporters of our sport. ■



Medal winners at the Women's Universities Championships

RFA Club Report

Hamish Buchanan reports on a year of increased participation and one sad loss



ABOVE: The annual RFA fixture versus the Old Bradfieldians at St Paul's

BELOW: The RFA versus Oxford University

This year the Club played 14 matches, winning 10 and losing three, with the perennial tie in the Strawson – a slight increase from last season’s tally. The majority of traditional fixtures were upheld, and one or two previously lapsed matches were revived. Hopefully this commitment will continue and keep the spirit of friendly, competitive Fives alive at as many venues as possible. Highlights included the fixtures against Derby Moor and the Old Paulines, with both matches decided by fewer than 10 points.

Sadly we lost Club match manager supreme – the irreplaceable Tony Hamilton – this year. The fixtures he ran at Tonbridge and Eastbourne were legendary and his will be a hard act to follow.

Veteran players continue to form the backbone of many club sides, and the blend of experience and youth is evident in both results and atmosphere at matches. Notable performances from several young players suggest that the future of the game remains in capable hands. Many of those who play for the RFA Club in annual fixtures are also active members of their own club sides, and some, like the Old Bradfieldians, come together once a year to represent their old school against a team from the RFA.

Universities play fewer fixtures these days than in the past but many students are to be seen later playing for club or RFA. RFA Club matches against Oxford, Cambridge and Durham are regularly high quality contests. The RFA versus Universities match – a long-standing representative fixture – was again played in Edinburgh during the Jesters Tour, where this season the RFA was a little more prepared and came out winners 118-106. Another annual fixture,

the RFA VIII versus the Winchester Fives Association, didn’t take place this year but will doubtless resume next season now that the new courts at Winchester College have come onstream.

The 2024 President’s Cup was held as usual at Marlborough College in December and drew a strong field of players from across the country. The competition retained its traditional friendly but competitive spirit, with pairings balanced to create even contests and maximise enjoyment for all participants. This led to one of the hardest fields from which to pick the winners. After nearly 10 hours of competition and with the usual toll of exhausted players, plus the odd injury, the Cup itself was won by Shinan Zhang and Tim Hebblethwaite, who triumphed in a high-quality final against Jim Hughes and Alex Goodwin. The Mate’s Plate went to Lizzie Ware and Theo Parker, the Love Mug to Holly Nugent and Lewis Keates and the T-Pot to Ed Carr and Harvey Bishop. All three contests were played in great spirit and all went to a deciding third game.

Our thanks go to Tom Kiggell and Marlborough College where we hope to return in two years’ time, as next year we will play on the superb new Winchester College courts. This will be the first time the President’s Cup has been played at Winchester Fives, so book up early!

A huge thank you must also go to all club captains and match managers who took the time to organise fixtures, communicate with opposition sides, and ensure that matches were played. Thanks, too, to all those ensuring successful completion of the second season of the London League, particularly to Shinan Zhang.

As always, the RFA remains committed to supporting club matches as the bedrock of the sport, and we welcome ideas from all involved on how to further strengthen our calendar. ■



Around the clubs in 2024-25

Captains and secretaries report on their numbers, their successes and the fun of Club Fives

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY

Marcus Cloke Browne reports: The Cambridge University Club has thrived this season, with a large intake meaning players were queuing for courts. Our first major tournament of the year was the U25s. Cambridge players progressed well through all draws, with Cloke Browne reaching the Singles final, and Thursfield, Milburn and Cloke Browne having good results with their respective non-Cambridge partners. In the Women’s draws, Catherine Abercrombie started her captaincy with a strong Singles Plate win against the recently graduated Harriet Fearon. In the Universities Championships, several Light Blues made it to the later rounds. In the Women’s section Abercrombie and Murphy both reached the Singles semi-finals, with Murphy reaching the

Doubles final partnered by Iona Chorley, while Bruce & Hutchinson took the Plate. In the Men’s draws, Milburn took the Singles Plate while Cloke Browne made it to the final, losing to Sparrow Andrew Boyd. In the Doubles Cloke Browne & Thursfield made the semi-finals, with Milburn & Walton reaching the quarters, foreshadowing strong Doubles performances in the Varsity Match. That encounter was closely fought, with the men’s and women’s contests both decided by fewer than 10 points. The men’s team won crucial games in the eight individual matches, to bring the Singles score level. In the Doubles, points remained close until Cambridge closed out the match thanks to Thursfield & Milburn taking a game off Oxford’s 1st pair. The women’s Varsity teams were evenly matched, with exceptional performances from Chorley and Osborne-Patterson

in the Singles, meaning the result would again be decided by the Doubles. Unfortunately, a more experienced Oxford managed to hold its slight lead to edge the match. However, the squad has been rapidly gaining competitive experience throughout the season and is in good stead to bring the silverware back to its true home next year.

Cambridge at the Varsity Match



CHRIST'S HOSPITAL CLUB

Michael Lacewing reports: The Christ’s Hospital club suffered a notable loss this year. Tony Hamilton, Old Whitgiftian, six-times winner of the Masters Doubles and a long-standing member of the club, passed away unexpectedly in January. Many of the club members were able to attend his funeral in March, and in May, Tony’s widow came to the club to present Charlie Lacewing with a new trophy she had commissioned in Tony’s memory for the National U18s runner-up. Further sad news of the closure of the courts at Whitgift also led to a more positive outcome, with several Old Whitgiftians joining the CH club in the Lent term.

The club continues to perform well at regional tournaments. Charlie won the Singles Plate at the SE open and the cup at the Manchester Challenger, and fought through to the semi-finals of the SW open and the Rugby Challenger. Morgan Spillane won Silver in the Veterans Doubles championship (over 45s) and Gold in the Doubles and Silver in the Singles of the Vintage championships



(over 55s). They remain an inspiration for the rest of us work-a-day lot who turn up for a knock-about once or twice a week!

CH’s Morgan Spillane wins his 3rd consecutive Vintage Doubles title

CITY OF DURHAM CLUB

Julie McIntyre reports: This season has been one of renewal here in Durham. We have seen an influx of younger members, with 16 players playing in the U13 age group or below. The potential for these players is very high, and we were very proud of our results at the U13 competition in March, winning both the Plate Singles, Plate Doubles, and providing a quarter-finalist who took the most points off the eventual Singles winner. Our women’s Fives continues to remain strong, with key players Camille and Eleonora once again showing their quality at a national level. Though unable

to train at university, Camille produced a very skilful display to win a second National Singles title. Elenora had a very successful competition, winning the Singles Plate.

We had a good local entry in the Northern Schools which we host, including an U13 girls match this year, and it’s always a pleasure to host the Durham Women’s event. Over the year we have hosted players from Edinburgh Academy, Strathallan, Manchester and Sedbergh, and visited Fettes and the Academy with our young squad. University Men’s Captain Stuart Scott is now our club Chairman, so keeps a close eye on Durham Fives. Our coaching team remains strong, with Patrin, Tom, Tony, and myself working together. We are also grateful for the support of our students who

provide additional coaching during university term time.



DEEP WEST CLUB

Charles Hattersley reports: Another solid year for the Deep West Club with regular weekly games at Mount Kelly. The good news is that, thanks to a generous grant from the RFA, the adjacent court will be available by September 2025. This will facilitate the training of about 15 Kelly boys who turn up regularly to be coached by Guy Ayling (“the Head”) and, on occasions, newly qualified (courtesy of Wayne Enstone) coach David Dance (“the Prof”). It will also help accommodate the training routines of relatively new members such as Kevin (“Six bikes”) Shadwick, Stu Heale of the National Grid and local entrepreneur Alex Fenton. Gary McAulay, Luke Newman-Taylor and the Prof continue to hit hard balls and keep the rallies long, and there is hope of marketing our great game to 1.45 billion non-playing Indians now that the Prof is having a melioidosis research lab named after him at Manipal University. A South Asian tour may be on the agenda for 2026!

EASTBOURNE COLLEGE CLUB

Spencer Beal reports: A year of mixed emotions. Of great sadness on hearing of the sudden death of Tony Hamilton, who did so much for ECFC during his time in Eastbourne, and of celebration over the final installation of a glass back wall for the court at St. Andrew’s School. Club members Spencer Beal and James Holman-Dine have been coaching and encouraging pupils to take up the game and hopefully continue when they move on to Eastbourne College. Both schools have wholeheartedly supported the growing interest in the game and, along with a significant contribution from the RFA, have covered the cost of the glass back wall. The court is now a smaller, more suitable size for younger players, and has an indoor viewing area. Furthermore, the College courts are being re-roofed over the summer and the St. Andrew’s court is having a paint face-lift in time for OA Day in September when the court will be named in honour of former headmaster Gareth Jones, who initiated its reopening after it long being used as a store room. In the meantime we play every week, using the St. Andrew’s court while the College courts are being re-roofed; and while the StA court is being painted we aim to play some Eton Fives at nearby Friston. Thus we intend to continue our boast of playing every week throughout the year. All-comers welcome, old or young, male or female, beginner or veteran.

DERBY MOOR FIVES

Bob Dolby reports: Playing three times a week plus frequent excursions to Repton to play Eton Fives, Derby Moor can claim to be the busiest club on the circuit. Numbers have been boosted by regular attendance from a group of students from Derby and the very welcome participation of Val Fikhter from the temporarily courtless Y Club in Manchester. More than just a social Fives club – though also quite good at Quiz Night at The White Swan in Littleover – our players have been supporting almost every RFA competition and picking up an impressive number of trophies. Stuart Kirby and Brian Kirk finally landed the Masters (Over 65) Doubles title, fitting reward for several decades of selfless contribution to our game, and Lewis Keates took his first regional title in winning the Scottish Open Doubles with Penn Chai. Richard Christie finally won the Derby Moor Invitational Doubles with Val in possibly the highest quality final in its 21-year history. Mention should also go to Karen Hird for her 13th title in the Eton Fives National Ladies Doubles. The

Successes section on the Derby Moor website lists several occasions on which club players won the equivalent of Bronze, including at the Barnes Bridge, the Wood Cup, the Love Mug, the National Singles, the West of England Doubles and the South West Doubles. Lewis Keates, who now proudly sits in the top 10 of the National Rankings for Singles and Doubles, won Silver at the South East Doubles, the North of England Doubles and the West of England Doubles before going on to Gold in Scotland. Anthony, Bally, Max and Callum have also had their successes. So, a good season for the Club as we make some improvements to our courts over the course of the summer.



DURHAM UNIVERSITY

Stuart Scott reports: An eventful season for DURFC. Despite the departure of many of the previous year’s squad, the club has gained new players from Marlborough, Edinburgh Academy, Tonbridge, Eton and Rugby. This increase in active players required training sessions to be restructured after one session during which 17 players showed up. Women’s captain Meg Wells can take credit for keeping consistent sessions running to accommodate these numbers.

The club has maintained a high profile with many successful tournament performances. Highlights included: Will Milne’s back-to-back Singles Plate wins at BUSF and the Rugby Challenger; Phoenix Fleming and Meg Wells dominating the Durham Women’s event, and then winning the BUSF Women’s Doubles and Gold and Silver in the Singles respectively, plus Matias Morgan and Stuart Scott’s win in the Universities Doubles Plate.

We were proud of our significant participation in the North of England Open, ensuring the tournament could go ahead

despite train cancellations. Our players even managed to capitalise on the smaller entry, with Stuart Scott securing his first open semi-final appearance and the duo of Will Milne and Arthur Noble finishing as runners-up in the Plate Doubles.

Finally, DURFC maintains close ties with the City of Durham Club, with multiple players undertaking the RFA’s activator coaching course, assisting in training a new generation of City players from Durham Johnston School. We hope to continue aiding the CoD Club’s excellent work

by supplying more coaches, promoting good communication between the clubs and strengthening our mutual relationship.

Durham University pair win Durham Women’s event



EDWARD ALLEYN CLUB

Hamish Buchanan reports: The Edward Alleyn Fives Club has enjoyed a highly successful and rewarding year with regular fixtures, strong performances in competitions, and increased participation across age groups. Weekly training sessions at Alleyn’s School remained well attended and productive, with a healthy mix of senior players and emerging juniors. The club enjoyed a second success in the London League, with a strong and consistent team performance throughout the competition. The standout victories were over a tough Executioners side, both home and away, which left the Club unbeaten for the season. Key contributions came from a core group that includes Ed Carr, Tim Hebblethwaite and Hamish Buchanan,

with notable performances from Alex Goodwin and Yarin Negyal. There was a good representation of players in most of the national and regional tournaments, plus schools, Vintage and Veterans. The standout player of the season has to be Tim Hebblethwaite, who enjoyed wins in the President’s Cup and the Veterans Doubles, proving that it’s never too late to start winning titles.

The courts at Alleyn’s remain in excellent condition, thanks to a regular schedule of cleaning provided by the school. The club is looking into improvements to court heating that will hopefully alleviate the problem of the walls sweating.

Edward Alleyn Club player of the year Tim Hebblethwaite with partner Shinan Zhang



EXECUTIONERS CLUB

Andy Pringle reports: As the dust settles after a hectic 2024/25, the Executioners can look back on another hugely successful season. Club members have enjoyed plenty of Business as Usual, as well as scoring some notable firsts.

The BAU, naturally, has been our well attended Wednesday evening sessions at St Paul’s, with a core group of the likes of Penn Chai, Shinan Zhang, Andy Pringle, Freddie Hammond Giles, Adam Hutchinson and Joshua Sze, joined by a rotating cast that could include any or all of Terry McElvaney, Helena Tunks, Wyman and Toby Chan, Zara Elliot, Alex Cranstoun, Lizzie Ware, Guy Davies, Dick Warner, Kirsten Bell, John Hayes, Rupert Mathieu, Matt Cavanagh

and – latterly – Wallball stars Dan Grant and Luke Thomson.

Most of these players represented the club at some stage in the season, either in matches or tournaments – and trophy winners in club tops became a delightfully familiar sight on the RFA website and social media feeds. We reached the semi-finals of the Club Championship and, at the time of writing, look set to successfully defend our second place in the London League.

This keen level of participation was reflected in an excellent turn-out for our end-of-season event on one of the hottest days of the year, when we were able to recognise the club’s many trophy winners – including Freddie, Penn, Shinan, Adam, Helena, Terry and Lizzie. But pride of place arguably goes to two relative veterans of the game – Andy and Dan – who achieved notable firsts in Singles events this year. Dan won his maiden open Singles title at the Scottish Championships, while Andy won his first Singles title ever in the Vintage Championships.

Who says you can’t teach an old dog new tricks?

EXETER AND OLD BLUNDELLIAN CLUBS

Wayne Enstone reports: The good news this season has been the increased number of new players joining the club. The wet weather hasn’t prevented us from playing as often as it would in the past, mainly due to our using the squash facility next to the Fives courts. We continue to be grateful for the Wiseman SquashFives ball – the new plastic-covered ones certainly fly around.

Our competition season began with the usual Chris Reichwald Tournament in October 2024, combining with Blundell’s School players in a Fun Doubles Competition similar in format to the RFA President’s Cup. The afternoon concludes with the award of trophies by the Head and a social tea event generously provided by the OB’s Association. This event also gives us the opportunity to invite the senior players to join us at our evening sessions. It has certainly helped the likes of Jemima Mitchell and Natalia Talbot: the Club was extremely delighted to see them retain their National Girls titles in March 2025. Having played in the National Women’s Championships Jemima is now ranked nine in the country, following in the steps of club members Alexandra Steel and Maddy Raynor.

External fixtures were limited this season, but matches were staged against the Old Whitgiftians and the RFA Club. We lost both matches but all enjoyed the fixtures. We aim to extend our fixture list next season with our new members very much involved. So, if you are in the area, do feel welcome to join us on Wednesday evenings from 6pm.



Jesters on tour at Tonbridge

JESTERS CLUB

Ben Hale reports: Our season started in customary fashion with the keenly contested Strawson-Vaughan fixture against the RFA that surprisingly resulted in a tie. Our following match was against a Tonbridge reinforced with a familiar face, former rep. James Tilston. Alas, despite some strong Doubles we weren't able to recover the deficit from the Singles. The fixture list next took Ben Hale to Oxford University for the battle of the brothers against younger sibling Matt.

A finely balanced fixture came down to the Singles between the university captain and his older brother: age triumphed by a single point and the Jesters by three in

total. We made our annual tour to Edinburgh in January with 60 players representing the Jesters in matches against our host schools Edinburgh Academy, Fettes, Loretto, Merchiston Castle and Strathallan along with keenly contested matches against local teams, the Caledonian Club and Accies. It really is a fantastic weekend that couldn't happen without the generosity of the Jesters and host schools and the hard work of Dave Butler.

A number of Jesters made it to Winchester College to enjoy their new courts and take on the first IV, with the main winner being the games of Rugby and Winchester Fives. On the subject of Rugby, we also paid them a visit just before Christmas. Finally, I'm delighted to have added the fixture against Oundle School & Staff where it sounds like the sixth formers weren't quite able to shift the balance of power in the hosts' favour.

MANCHESTER Y CLUB

Wendy Nicholls reports: We've had a few busy months and lots of players old and new. The season started in June with our American Doubles competition - 16 players of all different abilities, including some new players participating in their First competition: Oscar and Hollie won. In December we hosted the RFA Challenger Singles where Val Fikhter beat Dave Fox in the Plate final. Then, on New Year's Eve, disaster struck; our courts were flooded and were unusable for several months. As a consequence the North West Open moved to Derby Moor, where Val won another Plate. With a defence of his National U16 Singles title in mind, Val started to practise with Lewis Keates and co at Derby Moor, which paid off handsomely: he was successful in the National Schools competition in April, then teamed up with the Derby Moor Club to win the Plate in the Wood Cup later in the month. Val has gradually moved up the National Rankings into the top 40: we are very proud of him. Meanwhile our stalwarts Dave Fox and John Minta have been flying the club flag in the Veterans and Vintage championships, with John getting runners-up medals in both. We are now looking forward to getting our courts back in action in time for the new season.



Manchester celebrate their American Doubles tournament

courts, playing Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday evenings at 6pm. Please do contact us [07970 499264] or simply come along if you'd like to play.

Marlborough Town Club welcome the Old Whitgiftians



Old Tonbridgians celebrate their Grand Master

MARLBOROUGH TOWN CLUB

Neil Witcombe reports: Marlborough Town Fives Club continues to thrive. On our three club nights a week we have most of our four Rugby Fives courts full of Doubles play and sometimes one of our Eton courts in action. We are also pleased to report that we have increased our club numbers and competition attendance and made strides in increasing diversity within the club, with a strong cohort of teenage girls and boys regularly playing.

Our healthy numbers have enabled us to support a variety of competitive events, including our own Doubles Fixture and our usual friendly against

the touring Old Whitgiftians. We hosted both the President's Cup, where Harvey Bishop and Ed Carr won the T-Pot, and the Veterans Championships, where Tom Kiggell and Harvey won the Doubles Plate and James Hughes the Singles Plate. Tom and Harvey represented us at the Vintage Championships and took eventual winners Pringle and Spillane to a thrilling 16-14 in the semi-finals.

Our enthusiasm for the sport of Fives is mirrored in the club social calendar, with a winter black-tie dinner and several ad hoc pub events throughout the year. The Town Club takes advantage of our access to the fantastic College

OLD PAULINES

Theo Parker reports: It has been another successful season for the Old Paulines. Still dominant at the top end of the men's game, Dan Tristao won the National Singles for the eighth time, beating fellow OPs Ben Beltrami and Ed Kay along the way. Dan and Ed then proceeded to win the National Doubles for a third consecutive year in an all-OP Final against Ben and Theo Parker. Plenty of regional titles were won by OPs this year but it is worth making particular note of a first title for Julian Aquilina in the North of England Doubles (with Ben) and an U25 Singles win for Freddie Hammond Giles whilst still in his penultimate year of school. In the Wood Cup, the OP 1st IV (Brooks, Parker, Hammond Giles, Ferro) once again looked like the team to beat, despite the youthful nature of their second pair. And so it proved, with the OPs winning a closely fought final against West of England 1 to make it three wins in a row. Regular and informal practice still takes place at St Paul's on Wednesday and Thursday evenings, so please come along if you want a game - all welcome!

Old Paulines win the Wood Cup



OLD TONBRIDGIANS

Rupert Mathieu reports: Old Tonbridgian Fives has enjoyed another vibrant year, with exciting matches against the school, the RFA and the Jesters; our numbers have been

augmented by the arrival of one of Fives' highest ranked players, James Tilston, who has just about adapted to the OT pace of play; and a highlight - a large feather in the OT cap - has been the Gold



Old Tonbridgians celebrate their Grand Master

medal in the National Grand Masters for our very own Neil Arnott (paired with Chris Horrocks). Other notable achievements included Oxford University's Women's Captain Abbie Evans becoming the first female President of the OU Rugby Fives Club. The OTs were again well represented in both Cambridge and Oxford Past versus Present matches. While we suffered narrow losses to both the RFA and the schoolboys, we were triumphant against the Jesters on a Saturday morning, winning all but one of the Singles and Doubles matches. The Tonbridge courts were then delighted to host other Jesters tour matches in the afternoon, against Allyn's and Derby Moor. It was wonderful to see such a festival of Fives, with some top 10 Singles players, leading ladies, and a few veterans playing at Tonbridge. The club extends its sincere thanks to the school and especially to Tara Biddle and John Shafer for being such accommodating hosts.

OLD WHITGIFTIANS

Nick Woolfenden reports: Whilst the Old Whitgiftians Fives Club is pleased to report as usual on our annual tour, we are also sorry to report on the sad news of Old Whitgiftian Tony Hamilton's death, and the current closure of Whitgift's courts. Tony's death was a huge shock for everyone who knew and had the privilege to enjoy Fives with him over the years. Our love and thoughts go to his family. He is very much missed.

Our annual tour in March 2025 was an enjoyable time for playing and socialising, with matches at Sherborne, Tiverton and Marlborough. It was great to have a wonderfully wide range of ages

of OWs playing and supporting on tour. Alongside this, OWs were active nationally in RFA competitions, with Cameron Low having another great year and ending the season in the top 10 of the National Doubles rankings.

However, we also have to report on the hugely disappointing current closure of the Whitgift school courts in South Croydon – despite extensive lobbying of the school from many quarters. Given their closure, the OWs cannot (at the time of writing) play any Fives at all at the school. In the meantime, we're grateful to other clubs that some of us are able to play further afield. Nevertheless, the lack of court availability in

Croydon leaves a significant gap for many. We don't know what the future holds, but we desperately hope this isn't the permanent end of Fives at the school.

OWs v Marlborough Town



Oxford University Varsity Match Squad

one of our women's team, with almost everyone from last year graduating or going on a year abroad. Thankfully, following efforts to advertise the club more widely and grow our women's team, we managed to form a formidable squad who experienced much success this year. At BUSF, Oxford showed a strong presence in the quarter-finals, with one member making it to the semis. U25s saw a similar result, with a strong quarter-finals representation and

some representation in the semis too. Our Past v Present was an enjoyable and valuable fixture as always, producing some exciting family grudge matches as well

as good preparation for Varsity. There, unfortunately, we narrowly lost the men's match, but did win the men's second team and the women's fixtures, the latter a noticeable feat given the lack of female players at the beginning of the year. We remain a very strong Rugby Fives club, and I have confidence in the team going into next year. With new recruits and previous members returning from years abroad, there is a good chance we will become even stronger, and hopefully we might return to the triple-varsity success we saw in 2024. It has been a pleasure captaining the club and I look forward to now being able to play for the usually victorious Oxford 'past' squad at the yearly Past v Present.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY

Aiden Whitham reports: This has been another successful year for OURFVC. At the start of the year, we had lost all but

STOKE NEWINGTON SWIFTS

Matt Hale reports: The Stoke Newington Swifts have had another cracking year, with an average of 10 players per Tuesday night, as the club continues to grow and enjoy successes at the junior level and the pub quiz. Aitor Irastorza Fadrique was a solid signing over the 2023/2024 summer transfer window. He brought significant Basque flair and a distinct approach to the game. The adult members have competed soulfully in the London League. Unfortunately, the birds only secured one victory this season after being cruelly denied an end-of-year away-win over the Executioners with the final score of 80-79 in favour of the red menaces of Barnes. A fun match played in the scorching July heat provided much competitive Fives.

It is excellent to have so many students from the school on a regular basis. Particular stand-outs: Dylan Gilbody and Tom Kininmonth for their performance at the National U14s; Marlo White and Jamie Ciftci as the two most frequent club attendees; Wilfred Gilbody's individual performance at the U13s and then his partnership with Billy Howard.

We rounded off the season by playing for the inaugural Nightjar in a President's Cup-style tournament won by Dylan & Marlo on a lovely June evening. We were, as ever, greatly supported by Chris Blakeley and the RFA, as well as by Taylor McGuire's work at the school. Thank you, team. Style points, meanwhile, to Killshot for providing an exciting home and away strip for the world's pre-eminent Swift.

SNS in London League kit



UCS FIVES CLUB

Chris Blakeley reports: UCS Fives has continued regularly almost every week of the year on Mondays, and sometimes also on Wednesday or Thursday depending on demand. We have seen around 30 different players at least once during the year, but the number of regulars is more like 20,

and drops further in the summer. This is a shame because it's a really good court, and evening access is freely available. With one court only we don't play matches except those in the London League, where we modify the teams for home matches (three rather than four players) and match structure (Owers Trophy-style Doubles)

to allow the matches to complete at a reasonable time. There is still no word from the school about the future of Fives after the planned demolition of the courts at the end of the 2026/7 school year, though a decision for the School Council about future sports provision and facilities is expected in the autumn.

Wessex Club in ever-increasing numbers



WESSEX CLUB

Harry Akerman reports: We might just be the luckiest club in the Fives community. Having played on some of the finest courts in the country, we've now moved into what is undoubtedly the smartest Fives centre around. Since September, Wessex players have embraced their new home: four Winchester courts and two Rugby courts, all housed in a warm, dry, climate-controlled facility. True, there was sadness in saying goodbye to our beloved old courts, but their state-of-the-art replacements have more than lived up to expectations and could easily serve as a blueprint for future Fives centres. This welcoming environment has helped make it our most successful season yet in terms of player numbers. We've attracted new faces, seen regulars become more committed, and even welcomed back long-absent players like Quintin Fraser and Rob Walton. We were also delighted to welcome James and Sam Tye from Southampton University, whose grandfather, Nigel Cox, was once a member of our club. The addition of two Rugby Fives courts has led to a resurgence in Singles play – although, for one enthusiastic member, the return to competitive Singles ended almost as soon

as it began!

The boys from the College continue to be a key part of our Tuesday nights, and it's now common to see all six courts buzzing with activity and players waiting their turn. Highlights of the season included the inaugural 'Hale Pot' match

against College Past and Present, followed by a fantastic dinner in College Hall. We also enjoyed our annual Fixture against the Executioners, hosted the ever-popular Barnes Bridge, and sent a strong contingent of 12 players to Edinburgh for the Jesters Tour. In a surprise twist, the Letchworth Bowl was not won by Ed Hawke or Giles Munn – for only the second time since 2018. Instead,

congratulations and the trophy go to Ian Mettam and Andy Passey this year. Looking ahead, we're thrilled to be hosting the President's Cup in December and look forward to welcoming more new faces to our growing and vibrant club.

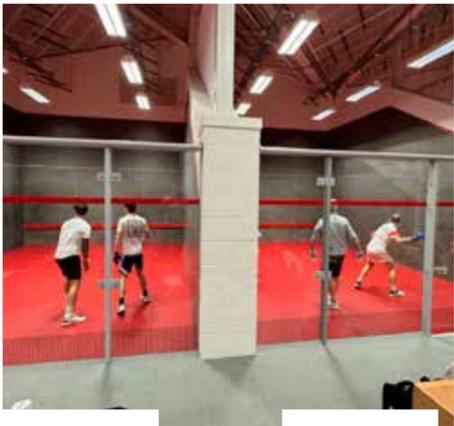
WEST OF ENGLAND CLUB

Kevin Brice reports: Our second season living out of one court continues the West of England Fives adventure. For those of you who know the court, it is the worst one, but against the odds remarkable things continue to happen. We have 15 active club members, the average age has plummeted, we have lots of excellent recruits from university and people moving to Bristol, which presents us with the healthy logistical challenge of getting everyone on court at our three weekly club sessions. Club Fixtures remains something we sadly haven't offered this year, with just the one court not suiting matches or travelling parties. But we do have Dwight and Nick frequently come up from the Deep West and we are hoping to get down to Tiverton for club interaction there next season. Pete Grant continues

to promote SquashFives in the area on Tuesdays and Thursdays, a well-attended addition, by no means a rival.

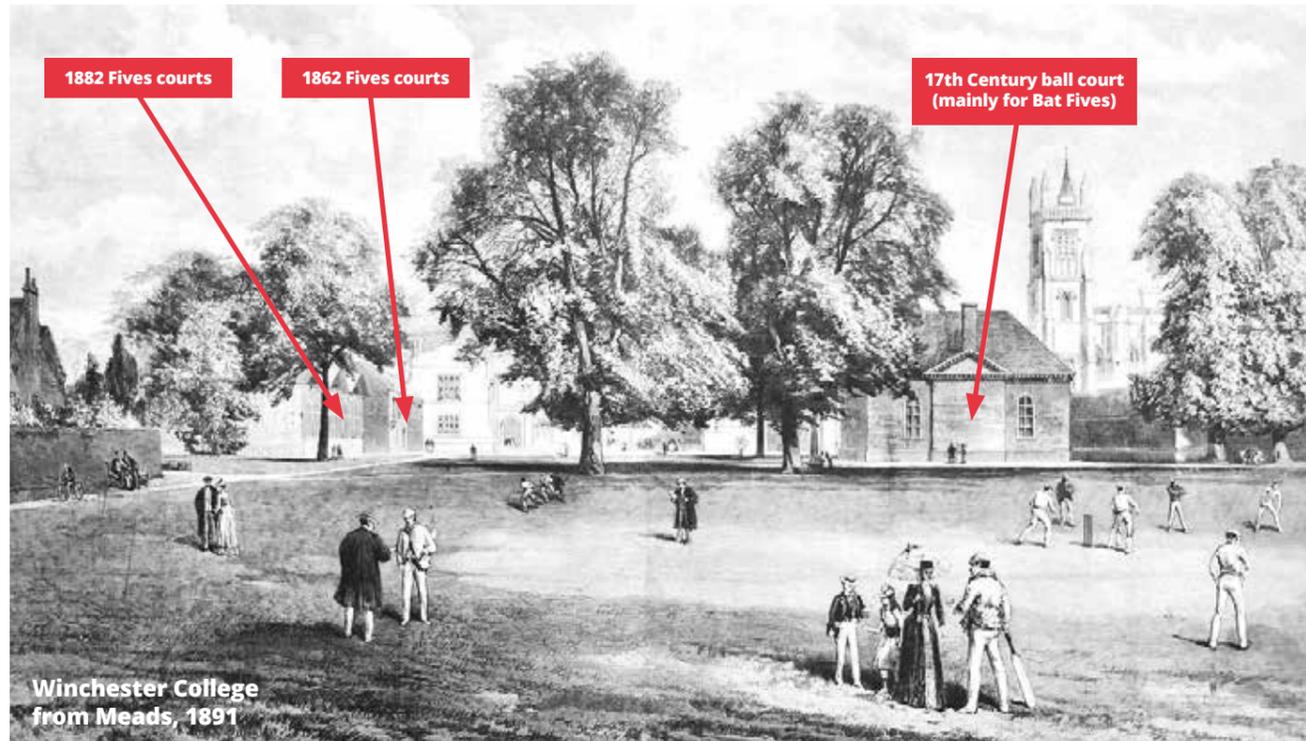
This year we fielded three teams at the Wood Cup, which was remarkable from one court. Our main IV of Toms Mac and W, Cam L and Archie McC pushed the all-conquering Old Paulines hard, but it was not quite enough. We've tried to get as many players as possible playing in other tournaments, including Theo V, Dwight and Nick, while Kevin has returned to the top 50 after a 25-year absence. Club captain Cam Low is very much our leader now, making the top 10 in the Doubles rankings, and still supporting a flourishing University team. Kevin is now Club Chairman, doing his best to fill the enormous space left by Lionel Lawson. The baton has been passed, and our thriving club has picked it up and gone for it.

Celebrating the new courts at Winchester College



Winchester College's Fives Courts

In light of the new additions, **David Barnes** reviews the history of the many courts built at Winchester College



Winchester College from Meads, 1891

The magnificent new Fives courts in the Sports Centre at Winchester are the fifth set of courts built at the College. Four of the six new courts have the classic slanting buttress of the Winchester game, while the other two are 'plain-wall' Rugby-style courts.

This mixture is an intriguing echo of Winchester's earliest courts, built in 1862. Of those four courts, two had buttresses, and two not. The decision to have different styles of court at that time arose from uncertainty on the part of the authorities. They had taken advice from Old Wykehamists at Oxford, some of whom thought that the 1856 Worcester College court, the most popular court in Oxford at the time, was the way to go. The Worcester court had a buttress. No doubt other voices favoured the plain-wall style of other courts in Oxford. 'Two of each' was Winchester's decision.

At the same time, Rugby School, having also consulted Oxford, was faced with the same uncertainty. Their 1860 courts, built onto the side of a large

Rackets court, were three in number: two plain-wall and one with a buttress.

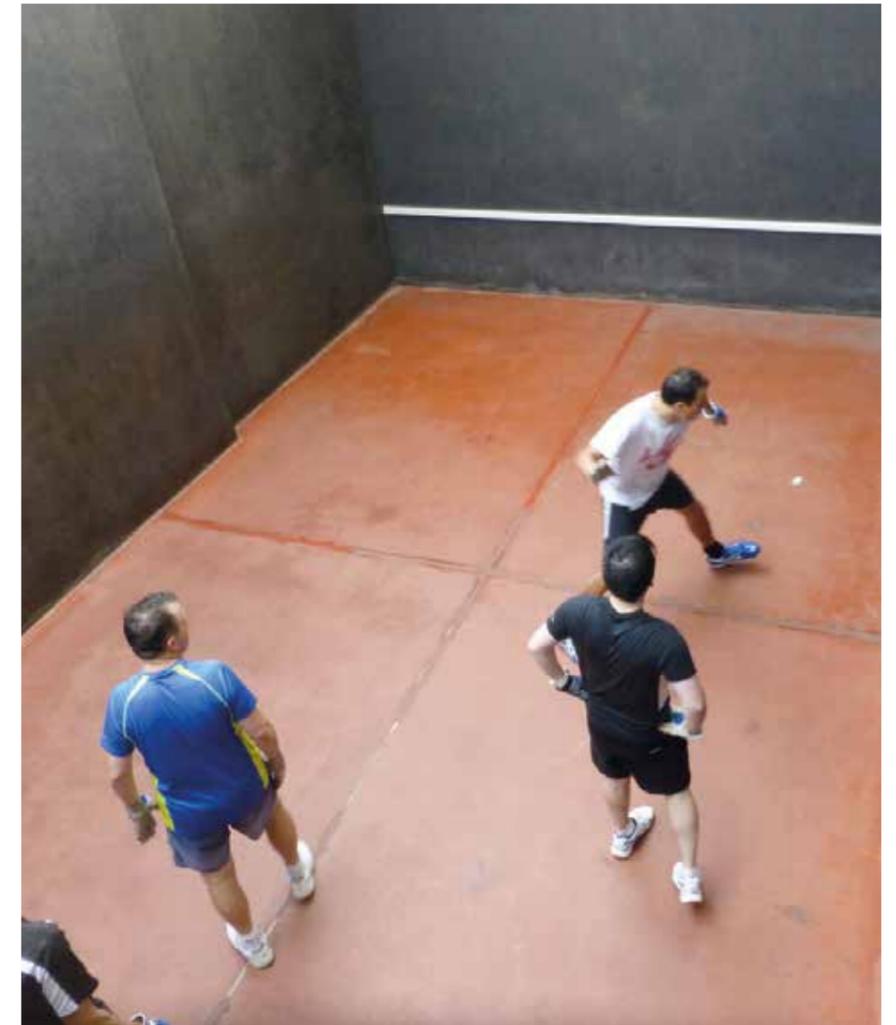
Fate decreed that the pupils at the two schools would be of different opinions. At Rugby, the buttress court was little used, and the offending feature was soon filled in, while at Winchester, the buttress game was the more popular, so much so that a further set of three courts, built in 1882, had a buttress in each court.

1885 Winchester's early Fives courts (on right)



slow and suffered from condensation, but they were well-used according to the reports in The Wykehamist. Many of the boarding houses had their own small court, but they were of modest construction. A game played with wooden bats (unsurprisingly known as 'Bat Fives') had also been played informally at the College for many years. It took place mainly on the one-wall court behind the building called 'School', but it died out in the early part of the 20th century.

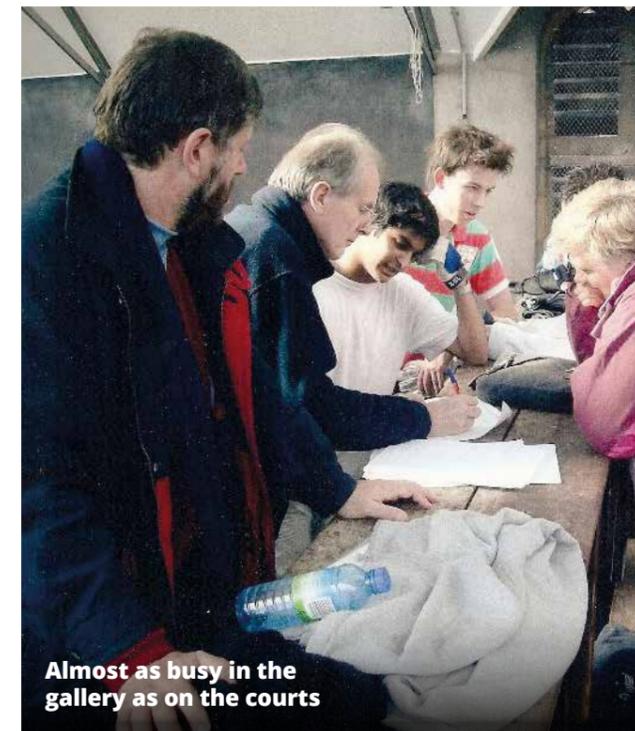
Action on the 1909 courts as seen from the gallery



The big moment for Winchester Fives came in 1909, with the opening of five excellent courts at the same time as a new rackets court. H.M.Burge, Headmaster from 1901 to 1911 and a keen sportsman, had taken the initiative in 1907 with a letter to all Old Wykehamists, appealing for financial support for the new scheme. More than 560 people responded to the appeal, and the final cost of the Fives courts was £2,300.

Four of the 1909 courts, well maintained by the College, were to remain in use until 2024. They were the standard by which other Winchester Fives courts were judged. Over the 115 years of their use, they were enjoyed by generations of Wykehamists and by visiting school and adult teams.

There was one further set of 20th century courts. Plans to build War Cloister in 1922 necessitated the demolition of the first two blocks of Fives courts in Meads. In compensation, the College built eight courts in Kingsgate Park, now on part of the site of the new



Almost as busy in the gallery as on the courts

Sports Centre. These courts were never a great success, and the 1909 courts were so good in comparison that most if not all of the serious Fives activity took place on them. The 1922 courts became workshops and have now disappeared, to nobody's regret.

'History doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes,' Mark Twain is reputed to have said. The new Sports Centre's mixture of courts accords with the College's choice in 1862, but this time

the decision was born of clear thinking, not of uncertainty. It's a welcome feature of the Sports Centre courts that two of them provide a practice and match venue for the singles game. Beginners can find it easier to learn Fives on a plain-wall court, too.

Does this mean that the four new buttress courts will be underused? Certainly not! A great many players, including top Rugby Fives stars, love the buttress game for doubles. It's a superb spectacle when played at a high level, as we saw in the recent Winchester Fives Doubles final, and enormous fun to play on sociable Club evenings as well as in more serious encounters. ■

A full history of Fives at Winchester College, also by David Barnes, can be found at:
therfa.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2014/10/2002-Winchester-College.pdf

Schools Season Review 2024-25

Bob Dolby reviews a season where titles and medals were distributed widely among the Fives-playing schools



Freddie Hammond Giles wins his second National U18 Singles title

It has been a season where all scheduled events have been staged successfully and with ample entries. It began auspiciously, after a hiatus of one year, with the first staging of the Schools Winchester Fives Doubles Championship on the new courts at Winchester College. Over the course of a busy day, with four courts at the organiser's disposal, there was time for the main knock-out competition, and for a first and a second Plate, all dominated by Winchester and St Paul's. It was the St Paul's 1st pair, Freddie Hammond Giles and Josh Ferro, who carried off the trophy at Winchester's top pair's expense, 22 years after the competition was inaugurated by David Barnes, who was present to witness this new phase of the competition.

The Lent Term is when the competitive Fives season gets fully underway for schools, beginning immediately with the West of England Schools Championships at U18 and U16 level. Players from St Paul's School and Winchester College were also prominent in this event, winning the four main titles between them. Freddie Hammond Giles

successfully defended his U18 Singles title by beating Charlie Lacewing from Christ's Hospital and then, with partner Josh Ferro, their U18 Doubles title against the Alleyn's School first pair, Alex Goodwin & Yarin Negyal. In the U16s Nadim Cortas from St Paul's won the Singles by beating Plum Mannion-Miles from Winchester College, but was then runner-up with partner Alex Ponte to the Winchester pair of Mannion-Miles & Felix Coleman. Other silver and bronze medals were distributed among six schools, including Stamford and Derby Moor. It was good to see young contingents from Mount Kelly and Radley as well.

The West of England Schools Championships are open to all schools. The remaining regional events are restricted and are staged throughout the term, with some variation of venue. First up were the Northern Schools Championships at Durham, with competition at U18, U16 and U13 level, featuring players from the City of Durham Club, the Manchester Y Club and Sedbergh School. National U16 Singles champion Val Fikhter from Manchester moved up to win the U18 Singles; Toby Follett from Sedbergh the U16s; and Lucas Manzi from Durham the U13s. In the Doubles it was Sedbergh who won the U18 and U16 Gold; while Durham's six U13 boys and girls competed for the medals in their section.



The Midlands Schools Championships are now in their 12th year and were played this year played at Oundle, with five schools competing in U18 and U15 categories. Players from Rugby, Stamford, Oundle and Derby Moor shared the medals, with Rugby providing both finalists in the U18 Singles and an experienced pair from Stamford winning the U18 Doubles. The U15 events were small and went Rugby's way, with girls from Stamford and Oundle competing in a separate girls' competition.

With the demise of Fives at St Dunstan's and now Whitgift, Alleyn's were invited this season to take part in the South East Schools Championships along with Tonbridge, Eastbourne and host school Christ's Hospital. In the U18 Singles defending champion Charlie Lacewing beat Yarin Negyal from Alleyn's but tables were turned in the Doubles where Yarin and his partner Milo Arie took the title. In the U16 Tonbridge provided both finalists in the Singles and took the Doubles title as well. The standard at these particular championships is perennially high and looks like continuing to be so.

The South West Schools event – named in honour of Charles Colquhoun – takes the form of U18 and U16 Singles competitions. This year's winners both came from Winchester College, indeed, all four finalists did. Organiser Giles

Munn pointed out, however, that there were strong performances, particularly in the semi-finals and the two plates, from players from Marlborough School and Town clubs and from Sherborne in an entry of 23 players.

The Scottish Schools conduct their championships over the course of three mid-week evenings on the courts at Fettes College. This year Jock Lawrie from the Edinburgh Academy won the Boyd Cup for U18 Singles while Monty Duncan and Geordie Maclay won the U18 Doubles for Fettes. In the U16s Weems Henry and Oscar Zbikowski from Fettes won the Doubles. There was no U16 Singles competition, nor any Scottish Girls event this year, but the National Schools Championships were yet to come, where Merchiston Castle School had a memorable success.

The one regional girls event staged, the South East Championships at Christ's Hospital, was to prove a particularly happy hunting ground for Alleyn's, as they won all six titles in Singles and Doubles, mostly at the expense of players from Eastbourne College. Alex Smith also managed to stage a Schools Mixed Doubles Championship at Oundle School in April to round off the season. Here again it was young players from Alleyn's who dominated, in the U18 and U15 categories, providing both finalists in each competition and also winning the

two Plates.

For many of the young players around the UK it is the National Schools Championships, kindly hosted by St Paul's, which represent the culmination of their season. This year's hectic, one-day U13 tournament saw successes and impressive performances from players at a number of the 10 schools represented, with Berkhamsted's Oscar Moss winning the Singles and then the Doubles with Oli Culpan. Other schools whose players made various finals and picked up medals were Merchiston Castle, Alleyn's, Stoke Newington, Stamford, Christ's Hospital, Pilgrims', City of Durham and Mount Kelly. As ever we look forward to seeing many of these keen and promising players return for further national competitions.

The U14, U16 and U18 championships take place over three days, now ably run by Theo Parker. They are a busy and happy occasion where the players enjoy massive support from teachers, coaches, family and friends. The U14 category proved a particularly joyous event for the large Merchiston Castle squad, as William Gordon became their first ever U14 Singles champion, denying the Edinburgh Academy number one. The Academy got their revenge in the Doubles, their pair of Derry and Taylor beating the St Paul's first pair. In the U16s there was little surprise in the



defending champion Val Fikhter winning once more, at the expense of Nadim Cortas from St Paul's. In the U16 Doubles it was the Edinburgh Academy pair of Henry and Lawrie who added the national title to their Scottish one, beating Winchester's first pair in the final.

There was a feeling of inevitability about the outcome of the U18s in both Singles and Doubles. Freddie Hammond Giles was expected to successfully defend his title won last year while still an under 16, and he duly did so, beating Charlie Lacewing from Christ's Hospital in the final. Charlie had the consolation a month later of being presented with a runner's-up trophy commissioned in memory of Tony Hamilton. In the U18 Doubles Freddie and his partner Josh Ferro completed the treble in successfully defending their national title to add to the West of England and Winchester titles. They did so in beating the Winchester first pair of Anthony Cloke Browne and Jeffrey Chan. The overall breadth and quality of Fives at the U18 level was truly impressive, but even more so is the dominance of Freddie and Josh, who will now be striving, next year, to register – in Freddie's case – three successive Singles titles (a feat achieved only once in the history of the game) and, together, three successive Doubles titles.

The RFA thanks most warmly all the organisers of schools competitions. The pleasure and success which the young players enjoy at these events is immeasurable and crucial to the vitality of adult Fives around the country. ■



Around the schools 2024-25

Individual schools report on a busy season of matches and tournaments



Alleyn's stalwarts to whom we say goodbye

ALLEYN'S SCHOOL

Rob Ody reports: The season started with the West of England Championships where Yarin Negyal and Alex Goodwin won Silver in the Open Doubles and Frederick McAllister won the U16 Plate. We then enjoyed our annual fixtures against our regular school opponents. All so enjoyable and always played in a great spirit. We were delighted to be invited to both the girls' and boys' South East regional tournaments where Anna Ratto, Freya Dornan, Sasha Antonova, Annabel Brown, Taylor-Rose Foo, Diva Tiwari, Yarin Negyal and Milo Arie all won their events.

In March we held our Alumni event and it was a great day welcoming back esteemed AOBs and AOGs who spanned the last six decades. The end of term saw the girls' National Championships at Marlborough College and the National Championships at St Paul's School. Standout achievements in the girls were Freya Dornan (U13 Singles), Freya & Sasha Antonova (U13 Doubles), Anna Ratto (U14 Singles), Anna & Isla Lewis (U14 Doubles), Taylor-Rose Foo (U16 Singles) and Annabel Brown & Frieda Hebblethwaite (U16 Doubles). At St Paul's the standout achievement was Frederick McAllister winning the U16 Plate.

The season finished with the National Mixed Doubles. Congratulations to Yarin Negyal & Emily Erdmeier, and Thomas Green & Annabel Brown, who won their respective categories. Thank you to the RFA, to our opponents and to the organisers and hosts who provide so much for our students. Finally, most sincere thanks to an outstanding group

of boys and girls in Year 13 who have contributed so much and have been such great role models for our younger players.

BEDFORD SCHOOL

Henry Vann reports: Fives continues to flourish at Bedford School. We now offer Fives as a sport option in all three terms; consequently as many as 40 boys have been able to play tournaments and regular games sessions. Fixtures this year were principally against Old Bedfordians and Oundle, plus regional competitions, and more are planned next year. The regular junior and senior house competitions were hotly contested – won by Paulo Pontine and Crescent – and engage a wide range of boys. This year also marked Bedford's best performance in recent memory in the National Schools Championships. With two entries (and more lined up for next year), Sam McMurran won the U18 Singles Plate and was awarded his medal in a whole school assembly.



Bedford's historic courts

Our 1892 courts are among the oldest extant Rugby Fives Courts in the country, and there is now a significant pace behind proposals for their redevelopment with invaluable advice from Stuart Kirby from the RFA. This project would include glass backs, whilst maintaining the historical structure of the courts. You can read about these plans in an interview with Peter Mellor ('57-'62), three times National Schools Champion, at: bedfordschool.org.uk/Fives-at-bedford-school-past-and-present/

BLOXHAM SCHOOL

Bertie Matthew reports: This has been a busy and very successful year on the Bloxham Fives courts. The new roof installed last August has allowed for more regular play and a number of home fixtures. Jay S. was announced as Captain of Fives and showed great tenacity and development as a player whilst also freely giving of his time to help train the junior players.



Bloxham juniors

We competed for the Davenport Cup, our annual competition with Radley College, with the accumulative scores of the home and away 1st IV matches resulting in Radley retaining the cup for another year. The U14 VI also had a successful match against a visiting Radley team with Caelan L. proving one to watch for the future. Fixtures were also played against Malvern and one against Marlborough and Rugby in a very enjoyable triangular tournament. There was a welcome return of the House Fives matches in March, with Crake winning the boys' cup and Raymond convincingly winning the girls'.

The Exham Fives club is thriving, with several extremely keen players making excellent progress. Four of them competed in the U13 Championships at St Paul's, doing well in the Doubles Plate. Congratulations to Barney C, William C, Kartar M and Charlie L. It was a great experience for the boys, well supported by their families. Congratulations go to Nina B who represented the school at the Schools Girls' National Championships at Marlborough College, playing with

great determination and skill to reach the semi-finals of the Singles and picking up a medal for third place.

BLUNDELL'S SCHOOL



Blundell's U18 champion (r)

title. They have certainly set the bar high for future Blundell's Fives players. In addition, Jemima has been the first girl to be Captain of Fives at Blundell's this season. Jemima and Natalia have also helped us with coaching and encouraging other Fives players throughout the age ranges. They will be greatly missed and we wish them both well in their future careers.

Competition season began early in September with our annual Reichwald Doubles fun tournament. This event encourages the Blundell's community, Old Blundellians and Exeter Fives Club players to partner one of the school players and compete for the Reichwald Trophy, a good way to generate enthusiasm for continuing to play at all the age ranges. Whilst the start of the season went well and Blundell's played a number of fixtures, the boys Fives squads didn't enter any of the regular tournaments. We hope to see Blundell's back on that scene next season.

CHRIST'S HOSPITAL

Michael Lacewing reports: The senior boys' team was starting almost from scratch, with all but two from last year's 1st and 2nd IVs having left school, and only one other student having any prior experience of school matches. To top it off, our number three fractured his finger and was available for only one game all term. With some careful adjustments by the opposition, our teams nevertheless had a full and enjoyable season. Despite losing overall in most

matches, they managed a good number of individual wins and demonstrated both determination and progress over the season. Charlie Lacewing continued to make good on his promise, runner-up in the final of both the West of England Schools and the Nationals, and retaining



Christ's Hospital's Charlie Lacewing with the Hamilton Trophy

the SE Regional title. The SE cup is in Tony Hamilton's name, and when Tony unexpectedly passed away in January his widow, Julie, created a new trophy for the National U18s runner-up in Tony's memory – Charlie is the first recipient of that trophy. Prior to the Nationals, the final fixture against the RFA saw the return of Old Blue Luke Thomson – former National Schools champion, but now better known as the UK Wallball captain and the best player in Europe. A special day to end the season.

We were unable to field an U16 team this year. However, we have been building junior teams at U15, U14 and U13 for the first time in several years. In the U15s, Loch Pun, Thor Hudson and Quinn Lord learned considerably from their experience in the U16 SE competition as well as in their three fixtures. The younger teams lost by large margins but showed great enthusiasm and gained invaluable experience. We hope for greater success in the coming years.

DERBY MOOR JUNIORS

Stuart Kirby reports: Zach Winson Yates and Max Staryk have had a good year, improving a great deal through playing with the adults on Tuesday evenings. They played in the West of England Schools, where they won the U16 Doubles Plate, then in the Midlands Regionals, winning the U18 Doubles



Derby Moor Juniors at the Midlands Regionals

Plate, and finally the Nationals, where they lost in the quarter-final of the U16s to the eventual winners.

Attempts to recruit younger players into the Saturday morning club have so far met with no success – Covid lock downs appear to have affected this cohort, as it was much easier in the past. We battle on. On a more positive note, we have had Val Fikhter visiting from Manchester on a regular basis while the courts there are closed, and Harry Hill has been joining us regularly out of term time from Malvern. Both have improved from the experience, which is good to see.

EASTBOURNE COLLEGE

Simon Beal reports: Fives at Eastbourne College continues to be a popular games choice, with over-subscribed senior games sessions and well-attended junior activities all year round, and year 9 pupils playing as part of their PE sports rotation. With the Tuesday evening adults club running successfully, Fives at the College is busy and the courts well used.

In the Michaelmas term pupils enjoyed inter-house competitions for both boys and girls at junior and senior levels, followed by fixtures against Christ's Hospital and Tonbridge in the Lent term. Unfortunately, the boys were unable to compete in the South East Regionals this



Eastbourne girls show off their medals

year, but the girls enjoyed success in their regional competition, with runners up in the U18 and U16 Singles and various Singles and Doubles Plates won. Many of the same girls also attended the Schools Girls Nationals, progressing well through to finals of the main U18 Singles and Doubles competitions and picking up further Plate titles.

Meanwhile we have been supporting the provision of Fives up the road at St Andrew's Prep, where the new glass back wall project has now been completed, which hopefully will lead to increased Fives experience and talent feeding through to the College over the years to come. Exciting news: this summer, the long-overdue roof refurbishment at the College courts is finally happening – we are very much looking forward to seeing the outcome and have fingers crossed that 'rain stopped play' will become a thing of the past.

EDINBURGH ACADEMY

Hector McFarlane reports: Fives continued to thrive at E.A. with large numbers of boys and girls playing every lunchtime and after school. A record 70 pupils entered House Fives across various age-groups with the ubiquitous Richie Murby orchestrating sessions to allow everyone time on court. Numerous



Edinburgh Academy's squad at the Nationals

fixtures in the Autumn Term against the other Scottish schools and a great Girls trip to Durham – with wins in the U16s for Amelie H and U14s for Zoe A – preceded a very busy and successful Spring Term. It kicked off with the ever popular Jesters Tour to Edinburgh where youth and experience, talent and enthusiasm do battle across a ferociously full weekend of Fives. Chloe M took home the coveted Girls 'Select Trophy'. Victories in the Scottish Schools U18 Singles (Jock L)

and U16 Doubles (Weems H and Oscar Z) boded well for the annual pilgrimage to St Paul's for the National Schools'. A bumper crop of 23 pupils entered, and all had a brilliant time sparring against fellow ball whackers from across the country. Highlights included having three of the four U14 Singles semi-finalists, alas not the victor though, and superb Cup wins in the U14 Doubles (Josh T and Fin D) and in the U16 Doubles (Jock L and Weems H), which meant some precious Silverware travelled back north of the border. A Plate win in the U14 Doubles and Plate runners up in the U14 Singles and U16 Singles and Doubles emphasised the great strength in depth of our current crop. This left the summer Term and the mammoth House Fives competitions and the, now annual, Accies/Leavers event. All in all a brilliant year and the sporting, competitive and entertaining brand of Fives we look to champion continues to flourish.

FETTES COLLEGE

Peter Worledge reports: On the back of a promising Autumn Term, we welcomed the 37th Jesters tour, where the highlights must include the success of Monty D in winning the Select VI tournament, in which Monty's Jester partner was coincidentally Toby Chan, himself a previous winner of the same trophy. Normal Jesters play was then interrupted by an impromptu Battle of the Siblings (and extended families) involving the McCreath brothers, the father/son Fraser pairing and the narrow victors, the Chans.

On the circuit, the Senior and Colts teams continued to impress whilst the younger sides once again found it challenging against older hands at other schools. When it came to the Scottish Schools Championships, both Senior and Colts competitions were very tight this



Fettes with their U16 medals

year, with Fettes securing the title in the U18 Doubles – many congratulations to Monty D and Geordie M.

Then came the Nationals. Highlights include a heroic comeback in the quarter-final of the U18 Doubles by Ben L and Geordie M – from 2-11 down against a spirited Tonbridge pair to a 16-14 victory; and a similarly emphatic, albeit ultimately less successful, comeback by Monty D and Chris T in the Plate final, also coming from 2-11 down to lose by a whisker at 15-13. In the U16 Doubles there was an all-Fettes semi-final involving Lochie F and Louis McC against Freddie A and Beau W. Lochie and Louis edged that battle before achieving a determined but hard-fought win against an EA pairing to take the Plate.

There continues to be very much to be proud of and I am so very grateful to all the players for their commitment, effort and good humour over the season. Fives at Fettes remains in good heart.

LORETTO SCHOOL

Richie Murby reports: This year saw a relatively small but enthusiastic group of players developing their skills, enjoying their Fives and vying for school ladder supremacy. The addition of a Saturday morning training session to the Fives activity schedule, combined with excellent extra coaching from Caledonian Club stalwart Malcolm Borthwick, contributed to a marked improvement in the standard of play at the school club. There were few matches against the other Scottish Schools this year, but Loretto participated in all three of the boys' Scottish Schools tournaments: while unable to make it through to the latter stages, Nazar B, Jakob S and Jack R made a solid contribution to the tournaments and picked up a lot from the experience. Loretto was also represented at the National Schools Championships, where, undaunted by their relative lack of competitive experience, Archie B and Arthur C threw themselves into the action, played commendably and learned rapidly.

We were also pleased to welcome back last year's top Loretto player, Findlay Stewart, for part of the summer term – he generously provided the younger players with coaching, as well as putting Loretto's regular coach through his paces. Meanwhile, thanks to Findlay's efforts

in his university town, Dundee now has a fledgling squash-court Fives club – which hosted a Strathallan side as its very first fixture. Overall, although Fives at Loretto presents a mixed picture, there are grounds for optimism as we look to build on this year's foundations in the coming season.

MALVERN COLLEGE

Chris Thomas reports: A quiet season with some keen Year 10s playing and some Year 12s who are prepared to come out and represent the school for the occasional match. We have had usual fixtures against Marlborough and Rugby, both twice, and have travelled again to Derby Moor for some coaching from Lewis Keates and an opportunity for the Malvern players to see their coach thoroughly schooled on court. New fixtures against Radley and Bloxham have provided appropriate opposition. Harry Hill is a promising U15 who will be able to give strong opponents a good game soon, and I hope that next season the College can combine with some recent Old Malvernians to form an evening club.

MARLBOROUGH COLLEGE

Tom Kiggell reports: Some great moments to remember this year, even if none of them involve shiny trophies or medals. The squeeze from other sports and from a newly-compressed school day has made it harder to get players through the door, and some new and cleverer tactics will be required to overcome this in 2025-26. The core of existing players enjoyed their season very much, though, and did their best for the club by recruiting one or two buddies to join the fun. Captain Max Di Gleria fought off all challengers with confidence to remain school number one, and he led the team in enjoyable fixtures with Radley, Bloxham, Rugby, Winchester, Malvern and Sherborne.

The only player to step up and compete at the Nationals was U15 Henry Fletcher, who both trained and hit the ball hard, but got no change at all out of the eventual runner up in the last 16. He had also reached the last 16 at the West of England Schools, and was frustrated not to go one better, but will surely put the experience to good use as an U16 next year. Xanthe Barton flew the MC flag at the National Schoolgirls

Championships – no medals, but she did her illustrious sisters proud.

MERCHISTON CASTLE SCHOOL

Matt Hillier reports: It has been another excellent year for Merchiston Fives, with some strong performances at Scottish and UK National level. In the U18 Scottish Schools Singles, Reggie Hargreaves led the way, winning his group before winning his quarter-final 15-11 and his semi-final 15-13, both gruelling encounters. He fell short in the final, but finishing as runner up in Scotland was a great achievement. Reggie again reached the final a week later in the U18 Doubles,



Merchiston's first National U14 Singles Champion

partnered with Lucas Fiddes; they won the first game 11-9, before falling 5-11, 5-11 in the final two games. They will be back next year looking for revenge.

In March, six 3rd formers headed to London for the U13 National Fives Championships. Five out of the six boys reached the last 16 of the Singles, with Archie McCulloch going out in the quarter-finals and Harry Leiper reaching the semi-finals. In the Doubles, Harry and Archie went one stage further, reaching the final where they lost 6-11, 6-11. Another great effort to finish as runners-up against the best players in the UK.

Two weeks later, four U14s travelled to London for the U14 National Championships. In the Doubles, Alan Tang and Raife Scanlin came runners up in the Plate. Will Gordon and Logan McKean lost a very close semi-final in the Cup, 10-12, 11-3, 6-11 in an epic match lasting well over an hour. They went on to win the Bronze medal in the third-place playoff. The biggest achievement, however, came in the U14 Singles, where Will Gordon played some

fantastic Fives to win his group, before moving through the knock-out rounds. He had a little too much power and fitness in the final, winning 12-10, 11-6 to become U14 Singles Champion for the first time in the school's history.

MOUNT KELLY

Guy Ayling reports: Fives is now firmly back on the Mount Kelly programme. Both the U13 and U14 teams ventured to Barnes for the Nationals for the first time in the School's history. Nerves were as high as the standard and the boys acquitted themselves extremely well on this first major outing. Three of the U13 boys secured places in the Singles knock outs, a Doubles Plate final and a top eight finish in the Doubles Cup. From the U14



Mount Kelly U13s at the National Schools

team, four progressed to the knock outs, and the first pair secured an outstanding top eight finish in the Doubles.

A marker has been put down and the boys are already planning next year's campaigns, including a tour. Huge thanks to the RFA for supporting plans to bring a second court back into action at Mount Kelly.

OUNDLE SCHOOL

Victoria Brown reports: Fives has gone from strength to strength at Oundle School this year with an increased number of new sessions, fixtures and tournaments added to the already busy schedule. The introduction of a junior session has meant that First and Second form pupils have



Oundle senior teams

had the opportunity to try out the game and have a go at playing mini matches. Third and Fourth form pupils have been able to develop their Fives skills at a weekly club, and the Fifth and Sixth Form pupils have played numerous successful fixtures against Stamford, Bedford and Rugby and taken part in the Midlands Schools and the Schools Mixed Doubles tournaments. Pupils have also had the opportunity to play in the inaugural Inter-House tournament. This was an exciting and competitive event with every House participating, resulting in Sanderson winning first place for the girls and a Laxton win for the boys. An annual highlight in the Fives calendar is the Old Oundelian weekend, where the senior pupils won, for the second year running, the prestigious Roger Freebairn trophy.

RADLEY COLLEGE

David Robinson reports: The highlight of the season was retaining the Davenport Cup against Bloxham, with a thrillingly close second leg ending 88-89. Our regular first team – Andrej Djordjevic, Jack Chen, Finlay Schelin, and Hajime Koma – was ably supported by Freddie Perhar, Francis Carian and Felix Mason.

Radley made a welcome return to the Schools Winchester Doubles Championship this season. Though our pairs bowed out in the first round, Radley 2's win against Stamford 2 in the Plate competition was a bright spot. The competition was a baptism of fire, but with several Year 11 players gaining valuable experience, the squad is well placed to build for future campaigns.

The West of England Championships brought a little more success. Andrej's emphatic 15-5 victory in the first round of the U18 Singles set a strong tone. Jack's run to the U18 Singles Plate final was a particular highlight, narrowly losing 11-8 to Stamford's Rory Jones. In the U16 Singles, Finlay's hard-fought 15-12 win over St Paul's Joey Hammond Giles demonstrated the promise of Radley's rising talent.

Our rivalry with Marlborough College strengthened this year, with fixtures home and away.

The Old Radleians fixture brought a tough but valuable test against a high-calibre team: Duncan Neale, Henry Ashworth, Tom Maconie, and Rory James-Duff, with Peter de Winton watching from

the balcony. After an initial drubbing, the match evolved into a long and valuable coaching session in mixed pairs, leaving our boys wiser and considerably improved. The boys relished the competitiveness of all events throughout the season.

RUGBY SCHOOL

Ben Lane reports: At Rugby School we have been delighted to host qualifiers for the National Singles and a second Challenger tournament on our courts this season. Hopefully, these can be regular events in the Fives calendar. With our strongest players leaving for university last year, this season was about trying to develop some new players. This was greatly aided by several visits from Derby Moor players during the Advent Term, and by the Lent term we were much more competitive in our regular fixtures against Oundle. It was a great success therefore, that two Rugby students – Vincent Barnes and Jack Skailles – contested the Midlands U18 Singles final and the same players



reached the Doubles final as well. Hopefully, this bodes well for next season too.

ST PAUL'S SCHOOL

Sam Roberts reports: It's been a great season – when was the last time Paulines won eight trophies and made it to so many finals? Freddie Hammond Giles retained the U18 West of England Singles (winning the final 11-0, 11-0), and the U18 National Singles, after he had become the youngest player ever to win the National U25 Singles, and soon after became the first player ever to make the last eight of

the National Singles whilst still at school.

Freddie and Josh Ferro retained the U18 West of England and National Schools Doubles titles, after also winning the Schools Winchester Doubles. Being in year 12, they have the chance to do it all again next year. And to crown a stellar season, Freddie and Josh, playing against adult club teams from around the country, helped the Old Paulines win the Club Knockout competition.

Nadim Cortas won the West of England U16 Singles and has only lost to one U16 player all year – in the final of the Nationals. Also at the West of England tournament in January, our 2nd pair of



Tom Ritchie and Elyas Efthimiou put on an admirable display of retrieving and power hitting in the U18 semi-final against Freddie and Josh.

Our U14s were tremendous this year. The squad was led by Joey Hammond Giles – unusually ambidextrous and willing to put in the hours to work on accuracy. At the Nationals, SPS 1, Joey and left-handed Thomas Outred, played superbly to defeat Winchester 1 to reach the final. Joey's power off his right hand was exceptional, but in the end their Edinburgh Academy opponents were too consistent and harder hitting. But this was the first U14s from St Paul's to reach a national final for over 10 years.

SEDBERGH SCHOOL

Rupert Follett reports: Another good season, with a healthy crop of beginners on the courts on Monday and Friday afternoons during the Lent Term. As is now our traditional season opener, Sedbergh took five players to the Northern School Championships in January. It was a full day of matches in the U18 and U16 categories, with medals awarded for Singles and Doubles. It was particularly pleasing to take two young boys who had never played in a Fives

tournament. All five players won medals. In the U16 category, there were some strong matches played, resulting in a titanic final between Toby Follett and Durham's top player. Toby was losing 6-1 but then turned it around to win 11-9



and with it take the Northern Schools U16 Singles title. In the U18 Singles Ollie Griffin sailed through the opening rounds and was runner-up, defeated in the final by Manchester's top seed.

Next Sedbergh hosted Manchester Fives Club, including Old Sedberghian representation in the form of David Fox. Our, mostly adult, opponents were far more experienced and skilful, and so, despite sticking courageously to the task, we were outclassed and lost the fixture.

Finally, as part of their North of England tour, Strathallan travelled to Durham and then on to Sedbergh. After staying the night in Powell House, they played us on Sunday morning. There were some terrific contests in the Singles matches, with good wins for the top seeds, Phoenix Ogilvie Robertson and Toby Follett. Zeri Tomlinson and Hector Maclean battled hard to earn valuable points from their ties. In the Doubles Phoenix & Zeri had a titanic struggle as did Fred Leslie & Seb Massey Ford, who fought valiantly but were overcome by stronger opponents. In the staff match, Strathallan won. Comfortably. Again.

We say goodbye to stalwarts of the club this summer and look to build again as the next generation take their place.

SHERBORNE SCHOOL

Nick Scorer reports: Another enjoyable and busy season, starting with Sherborne hosting the West of England Schools' Championships in January and a number of our players involved in the senior competition. The senior players also took

part in a further seven School fixtures with a fairly even distribution of wins and losses. The Sherborne Old Boys match was as fun as ever, with eight Old Boys joining the boys and staff for a mini-tournament. The ultimate winners from the eight pairs were David P (OB) with Jordan G (Year 12). The Colquhoun Trophy tournament was a particular highlight, with brothers Tom and Johnny M reaching the final of the senior Plate competition against one another, with Johnny taking the win. In the U16 competition Alasdair T did especially well to come second in the Plate, missing out on the top place by just a few points. Alongside fixtures for both juniors and seniors, we have a regular group of players who enjoy Fives three or four times a week.



STAMFORD SCHOOL

Alex Smith reports: Fives continues to thrive at Stamford; our squad practises on our squash courts and has also been visiting Oundle regularly to play the adult club and sixth formers. This year we competed in several championships. At the Winchester Doubles and the West of England, our pairs reached the U18 quarter-finals, losing to strong Winchester pairs in both. At the West of England Rory Jones won the U18 Plate Singles.

More success came at the Midlands Regionals, with Connor McNaughton and Charlie Sharpe winning the U18 Doubles, the first time Stamford have won this trophy. Our second pair, Rory Jones and Riley Vines, reached the Doubles Plate final but lost by one point to Derby Moor. In the U15s Marcos Hunter and Euan Park were runners up in the Doubles, and Marcos won the U15 Singles bronze. There was an event for female players, with Annie Anslow (Year 11) winning the Singles.



At the National Schools Charlie Sharpe reached the U18 Plate Singles final and, with Connor McNaughton, made the quarter-finals of the U18 Doubles. Meanwhile, our 2nd pair of Rory Jones and Euan Hunter reached the quarter-finals of the Plate. In the U14s Marcos Hunter reached the quarter-final of the Singles and then, with Ollie Streather, got to the same stage in the Doubles; he also made the final of the Bowl (the Plate for quarter-final losers). Levi King, Theo Walton and Tait Vines competed in the U13s, with Levi reaching the quarter-final of the Singles Plate, losing to the eventual winner from Durham.

At the Schools Girls Championships Ellie Morris and April Dennison won Silver in the U13 Doubles, pushing the winners close in the final, and April won the U14 Singles Plate. Finally, Levi and April paired up in the Schools Mixed Doubles and were eventually runners-up to an Alleyn's pair in the Plate.

Overall, great fun and useful experience; we are aiming to reach at least one stage further in the Nationals next year.

STOKE NEWINGTON SCHOOL

Taylor McGuire reports: Fives at Stoke Newington is flourishing as ever with some promising young players who are improving every time they play. Among them are Joe, who is acquiring a good understanding of the game, challenging himself every time he comes; Archie, who has excellent strategy and has been working on variation and consistency to accommodate this; Jim, who brings his squash experience and translates it well across the two sports; and Billy, who has developed some serious power from his

serve and right-handed shots.

In the first half of the season we also had Dylan and Mouad, who bring great competitiveness to the game. Dylan demonstrates athleticism and a good understanding of the game whilst Mouad, with his unconventional style, creates unusual angles and shots which prove very tricky for his opponent. We also had newcomers in Obibini, Steven and Jeremiah – who have the most fun I have ever seen anyone have on a Fives court.

All in all we are very proud of the improvement these individuals and the rest of the students who have taken part in Fives at Stoke Newington have made.

STRATHALLAN SCHOOL

Ewan Lee reports: Another year of squash court Fives comes to an end and we say farewell to some stalwarts who have supported the game at Strathallan for quite a few years. It has been another excellent year of play with plenty of enthusiasm shown throughout, be it at games sessions or on match days. Our fixtures have been numerous and thoroughly enjoyable: in January it began with another delightful encounter with the Jesters, who demonstrated their usual



Strathallan on tour at Sedbergh

sense of fun and sporting good grace on and off court. We then travelled up to Broughty Ferry to play a team of Old Lorettonians in a series of Doubles and Singles matches at the squash club. By March we were ready to go off and play Durham University and Sedbergh School again. This provided the boys, some for the first time, with many different Fives experiences and they will only have benefited from the many hours we spent on various courts. My thanks go to all our Fives friends, especially Julie McIntyre in Durham and Rupert Follett at Sedbergh, who always make us feel so welcome, and to the boys who will be leaving at the end of the school year. Good luck to Reuben L Oscar P and Eric M in your next exciting

chapter and keep playing Fives, wherever you end up.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE SCHOOL

Chris Blakeley reports: UCS School Fives has continued this year as before, with it being offered as a sports option only to sixth formers. With just one court, around eight players is a maximum realistic number, and for obvious reasons we don't play much Singles. Despite these limitations, we entered two teams into the U18 National Schools Doubles, and our first pair – Alex Panigirtzoglou and Matiss Gelwan-Williams – reached the quarter-final of the main draw. Considering their late introduction to Fives and relative lack of experience (two school years) and court time compared with most of their opponents, this represented a very creditable performance. As they were in the same half of the draw as the hot favourites and eventual winners, whom they would have met in the semi, their loss in the quarters was accepted with equanimity. The only other Fives on offer to pupils is a lunchtime house competition, which is run across all three terms, at different age groups (years 7-11). Each house plays each of the others once and the winner is decided on total points. Matches are again Doubles, with rally scoring to 15. Each team member serves once to the same receiver before swapping over, with the previous receiver serving first. This ensures that after every eight points, each player has served twice and received twice, which evens up the sides and reduces the ability of one player to dominate, as well as ensuring everyone gets involved. We usually manage three matches in 35 minutes before they all go off for lunch.

WINCHESTER COLLEGE

Jamie McManus reports: The highlight of the Winchester College Fives year was undoubtedly the move into the new courts here at Winchester. I am delighted to report how well they played on every occasion. The Winchester squad continued to perform well, winning the vast majority of school fixtures, but had to get used to coming second to the strength of St. Paul's and the Scottish schools at the two big tournaments – although a long-term injury to Jeffrey Chan certainly didn't help. Nevertheless, our 1st pair, Jeffrey and partner Anthony Cloke

Browne, did their best to cause an upset at the season-opening Winchester Doubles, taking a game off Ferro and Hammond Giles in the final. There was one trophy won at the West of England tournament: Plum Mannion-Miles and Felix Coleman battled both some internal demons and good strong play from their opposition to overcome St. Paul's I in the U16 Doubles final, after Plum had finished runner-up in the U16 Singles. The West of England tournament should, however, also be remembered for the success for some of the club's lesser known but always enthusiastic lights, with Plate winners medals going to Zach Goulding, Joshua Liu and Noah Wong. There was plenty of good Fives in the various school fixtures with Mr Munn doing his usual wonderful job of mixing things up to make for some close finishes, and it was particularly good to get Radley back on the fixture list. At the Nationals, the squad was depleted due to clashing alternative school trips and it was always going to be difficult to overcome the top seeds but everyone gave their all and Winchester still found itself represented in both the U18 and U16 Doubles final; and our U16 pair of Casper Wilson and Felix Coleman almost pulled off an upset when taking the powerful top seeds, Edinburgh Academy I, to a deciding game.



Winchester's 1st pair at the National Schools

End-of-Season Rankings - Top 75

The National Rugby Fives Rankings summer 2025 as compiled by **Will Ellison**

End-of-Season Singles Rankings 2024-25 As at Scottish Open 2025. Previous: Scottish Open 2024

Current	Previous	Name	Points	Current	Previous	Name	Points	Current	Previous	Name	Points
1	1	Ed Kay	93.6	26	17	Cameron Low	25.7	51	212	Julian Hanton	12.7
2	2	Dan Tristao	92.1	27	22	Terry McElvaney	25.2	52	New	Jeffrey Chan	12.6
3	3	Ben Beltrami	81.6	28	27	Shiloh Wu	24.7	53	38	Richard Christie	12.3
4	6	Julian Aquilina	59.7	29	41	Stuart Scott	23.3	54	New	Richard Guthrie	12.2
5	7	Richie Murby	56.8	30	42	Simon Beattie	23.2	55	91	Yarin Negyal	12.0
6	8	Charlie Brooks	46.9	31	28	James Milburn	22.8	56	40	Aiden Whitham	11.8
6	9	Lewis Keates	46.9	32	65	Ander Iraizoz	22.7	57	43	Marco Skogh	11.7
8	13	Theo Parker	45.9	33	30	Emrys Thursfield	22.5	58	139	Angus Rackham	10.3
9	4	Will Ellison	45.2	34	46	Dwight Murdoc	19.7	58	139	Will Milne	10.3
10	5	Tom Watkinson	44.4	35	32	Archie McCreath	18.8	60	31	David Butler	10.1
11	21	Andrew Boyd	41.8	36	45	James Smith	18.3	61	48	Kristians Davins	9.7
12	18	Marcus Cloke Browne	39.9	37	63	Valentine Fikhter	17.8	62	117	Patrick Harrison	9.6
13	20	Dan Grant	38.7	38	New	Sebastian Ion	17.3	63	34	Addie Chai	9.5
14	139	Freddie Hammond Giles	37.5	39	New	James Toop	17.2	64	49	Malcolm Reid	9.5
15	19	James Tilston	34.5	40	New	JP Cheng	16.1	65	39	Douglas Law	9.1
16	12	Isaac Weaver	32.7	41	37	Nick Geere	15.2	66	69	Ben Lane	9.0
17	24	Gwydion Wiseman	32.3	42	51	Taylor McGuire	14.5	67	74	Hamish Macpherson	8.7
18	15	Ben Jourdan	29.2	43	44	Enrique Castillo Carbonell	14.3	67	72	Toby Chan	8.7
19	10	Sam Russell	28.3	44	New	Riki Houlden	14.1	69	69	Arthur Noble	8.4
20	26	Penn Chai	28.0	45	25	Ben Kirwan	14.1	70	57	George Fox-Edwards	8.3
21	23	Anthony Goodwin	28.0	46	33	Michael Suddaby	13.9	71	59	Bart Callaghan	8.1
22	11	Ollie Arnold	27.7	47	107	Theo Vernacchio	13.8	72	52	Alec Springford	8.1
23	16	Oscar McIntyre	27.2	48	28	Chris Davey	13.6	73	67	Alex Upton	7.9
24	14	Joe Sumner	26.7	49	87	Ben Hale	13.5	74	61	Aaditya Deshmuth	7.9
25	36	Charlie Lacewing	26.2	50	35	Ronnie Brown	13.4	75	56	Max Bolt	7.7

End-of-Season Doubles Rankings 2024-25 As at Scottish Open 2025. Previous: Scottish Open 2024

Current	Previous	Name	Points	Current	Previous	Name	Points	Current	Previous	Name	Points
1	1	Dan Tristao	100.4	26	32	Ben Jourdan	31.3	47	New	Tom Maconie	17.3
2	2	Ed Kay	96.0	27	21	Isaac Weaver	30.8	52	New	Theo Vernacchio	16.3
3	4	Ben Beltrami	84.7	28	46	Andrew Boyd	30.0	53	38	Enrique Castillo Carbonell	16.1
4	3	Charlie Brooks	79.6	29	26	David Butler	28.3	54	43	Aiden Whitham	16.0
5	5	Theo Parker	78.1	30	23	Stuart Scott	27.2	55	152	Max Bolt	15.9
6	9	Julian Aquilina	62.6	31	25	Marcus Cloke Browne	26.9	56	34	Bart Callaghan	15.6
7	11	James Tilston	60.3	32	33	James Smith	25.8	57	36	Stuart Kirby	15.5
8	12	Lewis Keates	55.1	33	20	Richie Murby	25.6	57	37	Teddy Monro-Davies	15.5
9	7	Tom Watkinson	52.3	34	154	Sebastian Ion	24.8	57	40	Max Khurana	15.5
10	14	Cameron Low	51.6	35	147	Patrick Harrison	24.7	60	103	Josh Ferro	15.4
11	27	Penn Chai	51.3	36	New	Julian Hanton	24.5	61	43	Charlie Lacewing	15.2
12	13	Dan Grant	49.6	37	New	JP Cheng	23.7	62	39	Tim Hebblethwaite	14.7
13	15	Archie McCreath	48.6	38	47	Ben Kirwan	23.5	63	45	Vikram Thakrar	13.4
14	17	Gwydion Wiseman	46.5	39	60	Nick Geere	20.1	64	69	James Milburn	13.2
15	8	Ollie Arnold	44.5	40	65	Andy Landon	19.8	65	49	Shiloh Wu	12.9
16	6	Will Ellison	40.2	41	28	Joe Sumner	19.6	66	134	Kristians Davins	12.8
17	18	James Toop	40.1	42	41	Richard Christie	18.4	67	52	Malcolm Borthwick	12.2
18	10	Sam Russell	39.2	43	29	Addie Chai	17.9	68	31	Ashwin Ahuja	11.6
19	16	Bally Singh	36.4	44	89	Ben Hale	17.7	69	56	Camille Beattie	11.6
20	121	Valentine Fikhter	34.1	45	154	Ed Carr	17.5	70	112	Ewan Lee	11.2
21	69	Terry McElvaney	33.2	46	48	Shinan Zhang	17.5	71	New	Will Milne	11.2
22	24	Anthony Goodwin	32.2	47	124	Jez Sinton	17.3	72	57	Christian Blackaby	11.0
23	19	Emrys Thursfield	31.8	47	New	Kevin Brice	17.3	72	86	Simon Beattie	11.0
24	22	Oscar McIntyre	31.6	47	101	Max Frost	17.3	72	57	James Birch	11.0
25	103	Freddie Hammond Giles	31.4	47	New	Jeffrey Chan	17.3	75	79	Adam Hutchinson	10.7

2024-25 RESULTS ROUND-UP

Full details of these events can be found on www.therfa.uk

SOUTH WEST OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2024

Singles: E.Kay
Doubles: B.Beltrami & E.Kay

SOUTH EAST OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2024

Singles: E.Kay
Doubles: S.Ion & J.Tilston

YORKSHIRE OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2024

Singles: B.Beltrami
Doubles: B.Beltrami & T.Parker

LONDON OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2024

Singles: E.Kay
Doubles: C.Brooks & D.Tristao

WEST OF ENGLAND OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2024

Singles: B.Beltrami
Doubles: B.Beltrami & P.Chai

NATIONAL U25 CHAMPIONSHIPS 11/2024

Singles: F.Hammond Giles
Doubles: C.Low & A.McCreath

WOMEN'S U25 CHAMPIONSHIPS 2024

Singles: K.Bell
Doubles: K.Bell & S.Lundie

SCHOOLS WINCHESTER FIVES DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2024

St Paul's School (J.Ferro & F.Hammond Giles)



DURHAM WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIPS 2024

Singles: P.Fleming
Doubles: P.Fleming & M.Wells

CHALLENGER SINGLES Manchester 12/2024

C.Lacewing

NATIONAL SINGLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2024

D.Tristao

RFA PRESIDENT'S CUP 2024

T.Hebblethwaite & S.Zhang

WEST OF ENGLAND SCHOOLS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025

U18 Singles: F.Hammond Giles (St Paul's School)
U18 Doubles: St Paul's School (J.Ferro & F.Hammond Giles)

U16 Singles: N.Cortas (St Paul's School)
U16 Doubles: Winchester College (F.Coleman & P.Mannion-Miles)

U16 Doubles: Winchester College (F.Coleman & P.Mannion-Miles)

NATIONAL WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025

Singles: C.Beattie
Doubles: H.Tunks & S.Zhang

BRITISH STUDENTS' (BUSF) CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025

Singles: A.Boyd (Edinburgh)
Doubles: A.Boyd & B.Jourdan (Edinburgh)

NORTHERN SCHOOLS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025

U18 Singles: V.Fikhter (Manchester Y Club)
U18 Doubles: Sedbergh School (O.Griffin & P.Ogilvie-Robertson)

U16 Singles: T.Follett (Sedbergh School)
U16 Doubles: Sedbergh School (F.Leslie & H.Maclean)

U16 Doubles: Sedbergh School (F.Leslie & H.Maclean)

NORTH WEST OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025

Singles: D.Tristao
Doubles: D.Grant & D.Tristao

SOUTH EAST SCHOOLS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025

U18 Singles: C.Lacewing (Christ's Hospital)
U18 Doubles: Alleyn's School (M.Arie & Y.Negyala)

U16 Singles: H.Thomas (Tonbridge School)
U16 Doubles: Tonbridge School (M.Gustard & H Haigh)

U16 Doubles: Tonbridge School (M.Gustard & H Haigh)

MIDLANDS SCHOOLS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025

U18 Singles: J.Skailes (Rugby School)
U18 Doubles: Stamford School (C.McNaughton & C.Sharpe)

U15 Singles: H.Turner-Linke (Rugby School)
U15 Doubles: Rugby School (H.Skailes & H.Turner-Linke)

U15 Doubles: Rugby School (H.Skailes & H.Turner-Linke)

SOUTH EAST SCHOOLS GIRLS' CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025

U18 Singles: T-R.Foo (Alleyn's School)
U18 Doubles: Alleyn's School (T-R.Foo & D.Tiwari)

U16 Singles: A.Brown (Alleyn's School)



U16 Doubles: Alleyn's School (S.Antonova & A.Brown)

U14 Singles: A.Ratto (Alleyn's School)

U14 Doubles: Alleyn's School (S.Antonova & F.Dornan)

CHALLENGER SINGLES Rugby School 2/2025

T.McElvaney

THE VARSITY MATCH 2025

Men's: Cambridge
Women's: Oxford

NORTH OF ENGLAND CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025

Singles: B.Beltrami
Doubles: J.Aquilina & B.Beltrami

COLQUHOUN TROPHY 2025

U18 Singles: T.Munaretto-Day (Winchester College)
U16 Singles: F.Coleman (Winchester College)

U16 Singles: F.Coleman (Winchester College)

WINCHESTER FIVES OPEN DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2025

D.Grant & D.Tristao

SCOTTISH SCHOOLS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025

U18 Singles: J.Lawrie (Edinburgh Academy)
U18 Doubles: Fettes College (M.Duncan & G.Maclay)

U16 Doubles: Edinburgh Academy (W.Henry & O.Zbikowski)

NATIONAL SCHOOLS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025

U18 Singles: F.Hammond Giles (St Paul's School)
U18 Doubles: St Paul's School (J.Ferro & F.Hammond Giles)

U16 Singles: V.Fikhter (Manchester Y Club)
U16 Doubles: Edinburgh Academy (W.Henry & J.Lawrie)

U14 Singles: W.Gordon (Merchiston Castle)

U14 Doubles: Edinburgh Academy (F.Derry & J.Taylor)

U13 Singles: O.Moss (Berkhamsted School)

U13 Doubles: Berkhamsted School (O.Culpan & O.Moss)

NATIONAL GIRLS' CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025

U18 Singles: J.Mitchell (Blundell's School)
U18 Doubles: Blundell's School (J.Mitchell & N.Talbot)

U16 Singles: A.Brown (Alleyn's School)
U16 Doubles: Alleyn's School (A.Brown & F.Hebblethwaite)

U14 Singles: A.Ratto (Alleyn's School)
U14 Doubles: Alleyn's School (I.Lewis & A.Ratto)

U13 Singles: F.Dornan (Alleyn's School)
U13 Doubles: Alleyn's School (S.Antonova & F.Dornan)

U13 Singles: F.Dornan (Alleyn's School)
U13 Doubles: Alleyn's School (S.Antonova & F.Dornan)

NATIONAL SCHOOLS MIXED DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2025

U18: Alleyn's School (E.Erdmeier & Y.Negyala)
U15: Alleyn's School (A.Brown & T.Green)

NATIONAL DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2025 (Cyriax Cup)

E.Kay & D.Tristao

RFA EQUALISER MIXED DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2025

L.Ware & A.Hutchinson

NATIONAL VETERANS' CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025

Singles: T.Maconie
Doubles: T.Hebblethwaite & T.Maconie

NATIONAL VINTAGE CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025



Singles: A.Pringle
Doubles: A.Pringle & M.Spillane

NATIONAL MASTERS' DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2025

S.Kirby & B.Kirk

NATIONAL GRAND MASTERS' DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2025

N.Arnott & C.Horrocks

NATIONAL CLUB KNOCK-OUT 2025 (Wood Cup)

Old Paulines

SCOTTISH OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025

Singles: D.Grant
Doubles: P.Chai & L.Keates

WOMEN'S WINCHESTER FIVES CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025

Singles: S.Zhang
Doubles: H.Tunks & S.Zhang

WINCHESTER FIVES MIXED DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2025

S.Zhang & P.Chai

NATIONAL OPEN MIXED DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2025

C.Beattie & E.Kay

DERBY MOOR INVITATION DOUBLES 2025

Richard Christie & Val Fikhter

LONDON LEAGUE 2025

Edward Alleyn Club

OWERS TROPHY 2024/25

Not played

THE LADY'S CUP 2024/25

Not played

