

Steve Davies (Bedford School & Queens' College, Cambridge) 1955-2026



Steve learned his Fives at Bedford School during a period when Bedford was perhaps the strongest Fives-playing school in the country. Between 1960 and 1976 a player from the school won the National U18 Singles title on 10 occasions. Steve will have undoubtedly played with or against several of these title-winners. He was surely a very good schoolboy player of the game.

Going up to Cambridge in 1974, Steve won his Half-Blue for Rugby Fives as a freshman, playing in the 4th pair of an VIII that lost to Oxford in 1975 by 224-255. In his 2nd year he was promoted to number 3 in the Singles and 2nd pair in the Doubles, in a Varsity Match won by Cambridge by 254-205. In his 3rd year he was elected Honorary Secretary and played at number 1 in the Singles and 2nd pair in the Doubles in a win by 252-192.

He was elected Captain of Cambridge University Rugby Fives Club in his 4th year, played at number 1 in the Singles and 1st pair in the Doubles. His side won the Match in 1978 by 260-233. The previous year he and his partner Mark Lloyd-Williams won the British Universities Rugby Fives Doubles Championship. By the time Steve left Cambridge he was already a very competitive and experienced player of the game.

It was while playing in Manchester in the years that followed that Steve matured into a title-winning Doubles player and a highly ranked Singles player too. He played at the Manchester YMCA Club, on their non-standard courts in Peter Street, and clearly made further progress in the company of some of the most successful players of the time, including the unmatched 23-time National Singles Champion, Wayne Enstone. It was in Manchester that his successful partnership with Adam Hyde developed. Together they won three regional Doubles titles: the North of England Open in 1982; the Scottish Open in 1984 and the Yorkshire Open in 1984.

Steve and Adam were in the winning YMCA Wood Cup sides of 1983-86. This was the fiercely contested club knockout competition, consisting of Singles and Doubles, dominated in the 1980s by the Manchester Club. At the time Steve and Adam were each ranked nationally in the Top Ten of both skills.

Steve also got involved in the administration of the game and performed various roles on the Rugby Fives Association Committee. By the 1990s Steve was no longer playing Fives.

Later in life Steve came back to the annual meetings of the Cambridge Past and Present as a spectator, not a player. When the chance came to have purpose-built courts at the University Sports Centre in 2012-2013 Steve was a generous benefactor to the Appeal for funds to enable the project

Tributes

Gareth Quarry: I was a couple of years behind [Steve] at both Bedford and Cambridge. He was one of the Fives' stars of his generation – talented, gracious and highly entertaining, both on and off the court. We will miss him dearly.

Bob Dolby: [Steve] was a great player, real fun on and off court, and a loyal Sparrow, as ex-Cambridge Fives-players are known. I have many good memories of him, and was delighted to see him back at the Past versus Present in recent years before his diagnosis with MND.

Rob Cleave: Steve was always such fun and enthusiastic. I was Captain when he was in his first year and delighted to be able to award him the first of his Half Blues. We entered a number of tournaments as a pair and narrowly lost in the semi-finals of the National Doubles. He later bettered that with other partners. He was at my wedding and vice versa. It was great to catch up again in more recent years.

Richard Kemp: It was a privilege to have known Steve, with whom I played Fives at both Bedford and Cambridge. A hugely talented sportsman, but more importantly he was a warm-hearted and supportive friend with remarkable resilience and calm persistence in the face of adversity, and a great sense of humour.



Past versus Present 2009 at Oundle School
with Andy Pringle



Past versus Present 2015 at Cambridge
in front of the Honours Boards



Cambridge Men's VIII 1978
with President Jock Burnet
