



RUGBY FIVES ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REVIEW 2025-26

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President
Andrew Passey



General Secretary
Chris Blakeley



RFA Club Manager
Hamish Buchanan

Directors
Charlie Brooks
David Butler
Stuart Kirby
Will Lyons
Louise Mathias
Alex Smith
James Tilston
Helena Tunks

Editor: Bob Dolby

Design: Leo Gehlcken
Tel: 07834 317 167
Email: leogehlcken@gmail.com

Commissioning Editor
Chris Blakeley

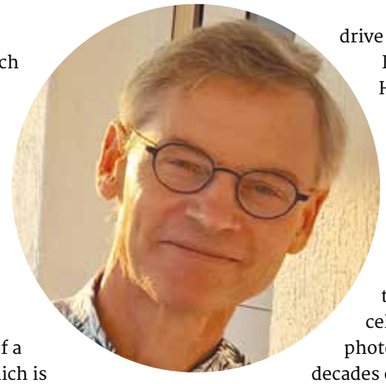
Contributing writers
David Barnes, Hamish Buchanan, Bob Dolby, Dave Hebden, Andy Pringle as well as many club secretaries, coaches and friends of Fives.

Contributing photographers
David Barnes, John Beswick, Chris Blakeley, Penn Chai, Bob Dolby, Lewis Keates, Wendy Nicholls, Andy Pringle and many other players and friends of Fives.

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A welcome from the President



Welcome to the RFA Annual Review, which is both a review and celebration of Fives-related activity over the last year.

One of the attractions of Fives is its community; it is one of the friendliest and most welcoming that you will come across. This might come from the fact that there are no referees, but I think it comes from a sense of a shared endeavour – a game which is a minority sport fighting to keep its place. Courts might be drab (and cold), but a small band of players has persisted and kept Fives alive. A bit like the camaraderie which comes from surviving an expedition together!

This year has seen a full complement of tournaments. Records have been matched and broken. It has not been a changing of the guard at the top level of the sport, but there are some exciting new additions. I hope you enjoy reading about them.

The RFA has continued to support Fives infrastructure. The courts at Stoke Newington have been improved and work has started on refurbishing the courts at Mount Kelly and Bedford schools. The courts at Bedford School are the oldest surviving Rugby Fives courts in the United Kingdom, a legacy dating back to the 19th century. Also, there are plans for new courts that will be part of a Sports Complex for the Scarborough Rugby Club.

Unfortunately, despite efforts by Fives-playing members and the RFA, the Manchester Y Club has closed its two Fives courts and is re-developing them for use as gym space to accommodate new members. This is a blow, as they were the only courts in use in the Manchester area. The reason given for the closure was lack of use. They were being used. However, it was not considered sufficient by the local Y Club Trustees. Some members of the Club are going to try SquashFives. It will be interesting to see how they get on. I think SquashFives is an important development. While it is a significant step for an organisation to invest in new Fives courts, squash courts are already widely available. If we can attract new players and organisations through SquashFives, this will also drive demand for Fives courts.

I hope you will enjoy Dave Hebden's account of his many years of archival work with David Barnes; likewise enjoy David's page on the history of the Cyriax Cup, donated by Dr Edgar Cyriax for what has become the National Doubles Championship, the centenary of which we celebrated this year; and a photographic account of the many decades of Fives courts in Manchester put together by our editor. There is a review of the many open tournaments staged throughout the season, written as always by Andy Pringle, and a review of the ever-expanding programme of competitions in Women's Fives by Bob Dolby. The review of Schools Fives contains an account of not just the health of Fives in our schools but also celebrates the unusual, remarkable and sometimes history-making achievements of our young players.

The Annual Review is more than just a record of the season's events; it is also an illustration of the vibrancy of the sport. Fives is alive and well. We may need to be more creative and outward looking to keep it that way. ●



The Cyriax Cup

OPEN SEASON REVIEW 2025-26

The 2025-26 Season in Review

Andy Pringle reviews a season where the Big Three maintained their impressive dominance



If you heard a groan after most tournaments at the beginning of last season, it was probably from engravers. We can't imagine they make much money from etching a date and four letters onto a trophy, but after a prolific run of good form, E.Kay was all that was engraved on four successive Singles trophies.

Following a strong win over Ben Beltrami in the South West Open, Ed Kay went on to add titles in the South East, Yorkshire and London Opens. His run only came to end at the West of England Championship – where he wasn't able to play. Instead, the trophy went to Dan Tristao, with Ben Beltrami runner-up for the second time in the season, although only after a three-game final.

Come the National Singles Championship, Dan Tristao (the defending champion) was again the centre of attention – but this time for losing a match! He still emerged safely from opening round-robin, but his carefully planned results pitted him against Ed Kay in the quarter-finals.

And Dan's careful match management seemed to be going his way when he reached the final after beating Ed and then – crucially, the following day – Charlie Brooks in the semis. The other finalist was 2024 champion Ben Beltrami, who seemed set for a quick win when he took the opening game 15-2. However, you can never discount Dan, and despite being 13-9 down in the second game, he turned it around to force a third and deciding game. Needless to say, it was a magnificent finale, but Ben held his nerve to take it 15-10 and secure his second National Singles title.

Ben followed this up with a win in the North of England Championships, while Dan took the North West Open before Ed won the Scottish Open. Overall, the consistency of these three is hugely impressive. They were the only players to win Singles titles this season – and they did so against a variety of opponents: Dan Grant, Penn Chai and Lewis Keates all finished as runners-up this season, while the likes of Julian Aquilina and Freddie Hammond Giles kept them honest in earlier rounds.

Many of the same names also appeared at the sharp end of Doubles tournaments, but as ever, there were no established pairs. If there was as a pattern, it was generally that some combination of Old Paulines would win – at least in the 'major' events.

Ben & Ed won in Blundell's, Dan T & Charlie triumphed at Alleyn's, and Ben & Dan took gold in Sherborne. Meanwhile, Ben & Ollie Arnold also took a couple of titles, while Dans G & T (the former an OMT, of course) won at the North West Open.

The exceptions to this run of Pauline rule came in the smaller events. Penn Chai & Rupert Mathieu won the South East Open, while Lewis Keates & Anthony Goodwin won the Yorkshire Open.

Come the National Doubles, though, normal service was resumed. All four finalists were Barnes Boys, with Ed & Dan beating Ollie & Charlie in a nail-biting final, securing the deciding third game 16-14. It was the fourth successive National Doubles title for the pair, and their fifth in total. It also means that Dan Tristao has made it to the final of this event every year since 2012 – a quite remarkable achievement given the quality of the opposition he has faced.

ABOVE: Ed Kay with the third of four Singles titles – the London Open

RIGHT: Ben Beltrami wins the National Singles title a second time





There were more titles retained in the age-related tournaments, although not without more close contests. At the Veterans (over 45s) event, the records show that Tom Maconie retained the Singles and (with Tim Hebblethwaite) Doubles titles, but they don't show how hard he was pushed. In the Singles final, Tom had to come back from losing the first game heavily to Giles Munn, while similarly Dave Fox & Chris Jones won a game in the Doubles final before the defending champions finally secured the title once more.

ABOVE: Pringle & Spillane Vintage Doubles champion 4 years in a row

BELOW: Enstone & East Grand Masters Doubles Champions 2026



However, Dave Fox did end the season with a title. He was never troubled in the Singles at the Vintage (over 55s) championships, regaining the title he last won in 2024. Without doubt, though, the match of the day was the Doubles final between defending champions Andy Pringle & Morgan Spillane and Hamish Buchanan & John Minta. It's best described as nail-biting, except for the fact that most onlookers wouldn't have had any nails left after the second game ended in a 16-15 win for Hamish & John, with both pairs having numerous game balls. The third game was every bit as close. Hamish & John seemed set for the title as they took a 14-11 lead, but Andy & Morgan refused to accept defeat and slowly picked off five unanswered points to take the title – their fourth successive win.

There was more continued success at Masters (65+) level, where for the second year running Stuart Kirby & Brian Kirk took the title. Meanwhile, at the Grand Masters (75+), there was perhaps no surprise that the title went to a new pair, given that the two were Messrs East & Enstone, who have been winning titles together for more than 50 years.

To put that in context, none of the players in the winning team at the Club Championship was even a twinkle in their father's eye when John and Wayne won their first title together in 1972! However, given how often Old Paulines have been mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, it will also come as no surprise that the Boys from Barnes secured the Wood Cup again this season – their fourth consecutive triumph.

Did they just put 'ditto' on the cup? We doubt it – we're sure the engravers will have pushed for the full name, while secretly cursing the longer-named Edward Alleyn Club for only being runners-up. ●

Women's Season Review 2025-26

Bob Dolby reviews an ever more impressive year of Women's Fives



Louise and Camille contest the Women's National Singles final

Take one look at the newly constituted Women's Rankings on the RFA website and you will realise how far women's Fives has come in the past 15 years or so. The quality of the top 20 players, for example, is unparalleled. Of that top 20, ranging from 3-time National Singles Champion, Camille Beattie, and 7-time National Doubles Champion Shinan Zhang at the top of their respective rankings down to Rosa Ogilvie at Nr 20 in Singles and Maddy Raynor at 20 in Doubles, almost every player has won titles, several of them multiple titles, at junior or senior level. To those players could be added a number of other champions who for various reasons have not recently played sufficient tournament Fives to warrant an appropriate ranking but who would surely otherwise figure highly: Ibby Lee, Lena Barton, Martha and Holly Nugent, Katie Sumner, Jemima Mitchell, for example. One wonders where former Scottish champion Meryl Smith would be, were she not playing regular international Rugby for Scotland!

Much of the impressive rise in quality and quantity of female Fives is down to those who encourage and coach the game at schools in England and Scotland, with players from 11 schools and clubs competing in the National Schools Girls Championships at Oundle this year. Much is also down to the senior players who have now taken on the task of organising virtually all of the Women's Championships and the increasingly popular Mixed Doubles tournaments: Shinan, Louise, Helena, Savanna, Julie – and let's not forget the indefatigable organiser of schoolgirl Fives, Alex Smith. Clubs like the Executioners, the City of Durham and the Caley Club are known for their support of female players, while the Fives-playing universities give school-leavers a chance to carry on and new recruits the opportunity to pick up an unfamiliar sport, Helena Tunks' route into the game, for example.

Things are progressing but they are also changing: this season the RFA introduced a new Women's event, the Scottish Open Championship – played at the hotbed of schoolgirl Fives, the Edinburgh Academy, and organised by Louise Mathias, whom we were delighted to welcome back from her two-year sojourn in Australia. 16 players were involved, mostly from Edinburgh and Durham. Unsurprisingly Louise won the Singles from Eleonora Vallascas from Durham; they then teamed up to win the Doubles. Louise's report summed up the day: one of "fantastic Women's Fives all round to start an exciting season to come".



Helena wins the President's Cup a second time



Savanna, Kirsten and Lena at the Women's U25s

The next regional event was the 7th Durham Women's Championships, henceforth to be known as the Women's North of England Open, run by Julie McIntyre and Tom Wakelam. 30 players, 105 games over two days! It saw the keenly anticipated first rematch of Louise Mathias and Camille Beattie – won by Louise – and a second Doubles title for Eleonora, playing with Camille this time.

Injury and illness adversely affected the entry for the Women's U25s Championships. Defending champion Kirsten Bell did the double, edging out Savanna Leboff and Lena Barton in a round robin, then pairing up in Sophie Lundie's enforced absence with Savanna, to beat the Oxford University 1st pair, Lena Barton & Abbie Evans, in the Doubles. Let's hope that this competition and also the inaugural Women's London Open next season attracts a better entry, perhaps with a substantial contingent from Oxford and Cambridge.

Such is the quality of our top women players these days that it has become no surprise to see how well they do in the physically and mentally demanding President's Cup, the last event before Christmas. Martha Nugent, Helena Tunks and Shinan Zhang have won the Cup in recent years and this year Helena won it once more, partnering Theo Parker, while Savanna Leboff won the Mate's Plate with Gwydion Wiseman.

Events involving mixed pairings are becoming more and more popular. In January we introduced a new format Mixed tournament, called the 112, "a fast-paced, innovative addition to the Rugby Fives calendar", featuring 7-point Singles games for men and women and then Mixed Doubles in a round robin format. Hamish Buchanan apparently came up with the format, Savanna Leboff and Andrew Boyd actioned it, Shinan Zhang & Penn Chai won it with maximum points. The intention is to replace the RFA Equaliser Mixed Doubles in future with the 112.

Neither Louise Mathias nor Camille Beattie were playing in the 112. The expectation was that they would meet in the final of the Women's National Championships at Cambridge, and so they did: but not before we had experienced the strongest quarter-final line-up ever seen at this event: Beattie v Raynor, Bell v Tunks, Mathias v Ware, and Zhang v Elliot. That it went to a three-game final was no surprise, nor that Camille had perhaps a little more Fives in her legs than Louise for a 15-4 win in the third game. The semi-finals of the Doubles featured 7 of the same 8 players. Reunited, Louise & Shinan beat Camille & Helena in the final for their 5th win together.

The rest of the season featured several Women's and Mixed events. Oxford Women beat Cambridge reasonably comfortably in their Varsity Match, with Lena Barton back from her Year abroad; Helena Tunks paired up with Ben Beltrami to win the Open Mixed Doubles; Martha Nugent, back from studies in America, won her first Ladies Winchester Fives Singles, beating Maddy Raynor, who then paired up with Helena Tunks to beat the Nugent sisters in the Doubles final.

Meanwhile the girls at Alleyn's dominated the South East Regionals and then the National Schools Girls Championships, where they won every title bar the U13s. The stand-out player was the U18 Singles and Doubles champion, left-handed Taylor-Rose Foo from Alleyn's, but there was a very promising performance by the U13 girls from the Edinburgh Academy. The schoolgirl scene may look very different in 4 years' time. ●



Edinburgh Academy win Gold, Silver and Bronze in the Girls' National U13 Singles

RFA Club Report

Hamish Buchanan reports on a season where club fixtures hit an alarming low



We have hopefully reached the nadir of completed Club fixtures – just 5 matches reportedly played out of a total of 31 scheduled. The results are barely worth publishing but for the efforts of those who arranged and played these matches.

As to why this state of events has come to pass, the answers are probably manifold, although the overriding one is to do with personal time in committing to travelling and playing in a fixture that certainly lacks glory and perhaps a degree of competitiveness. To counteract these negatives we need to bear in mind the benefits: promoting the game, encouraging younger players, providing support for clubs that are struggling and on the edge of folding and doing all that is possible to keep the game alive in as many corners of the UK as possible.

The very recent example of the loss of the use of the Y Club courts for its members is a galling and alarming situation for an institutional member of the Fives fraternity; it demonstrates that nowhere is safe. Every school and club needs support, and the best and easiest support is to visit and play. Court use equals investment in the game and empowerment to those championing our sport.

What is the easiest way to support the game? Find a match, or two, that appeals, sign up and play, as simple as that. Even better would be to organise the fixture. This requires players to engage and take the initiative, no one does all the heavy lifting, the manager needs to send a few emails and do a bit of cajoling and the RFA are here to help.

Matches need not be the classic 4v4 – 3v3 works successfully in the Owers Trophy and even a 2v2 match is better than no contact at all.

Some clubs struggle to play matches as their home turf is either not available or the current playing members are geographically distant from their alma mater. This is not a reason to avoid the chance to get together, enjoy some fives and catch up with friends. The Old Bradfieldians do this on a regular basis with a match at St Paul's; it rarely happens on the date specified but with a little effort it is usually played. Players have fun, catch up and support the game.

With the recent loss of the courts at Merchant Taylors' School and now at Whitgift School, and the reduction of available courts at Bristol to just one court at Clifton College and also at UCS to just one (destined for demolition in 2027), we have lost an effective home for four previously vibrant clubs. We are fortunate to have regained the courts at Stoke Newington School, now joining the Edward Alleyn Club and the Executioners in promoting Fives in the London area.

We would urge clubs outside London to think about the possibility of a weekend tour to other clubs – to Derby Moor, City of Durham, Eastbourne, Old Tonbridgians, the Caledonian Club, Marlborough Town, Wessex Club, Exeter & Old Blundellians, Cambridge and Oxford – clubs with 2 or more courts and regular club nights. Or invite a Jesters side? There are also schools whose 1st IV would welcome a visit from an RFA IV. Once upon a time Tom Wood dreamed of a fixture list of 100 RFA Club matches. Why not we aim for 30? Offers please to me or the General Secretary. ●

ABOVE: Jesters versus Executioners at St Paul's

BELOW: Club night at Alleyn's on World Fives Day



Around the clubs in 2025-26

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

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY

Jack Pyman and Catherine Abercrombie report: CURFC entered the season with all but one of last year's Men's VIII remaining. The customary recruitment drive in Michaelmas brought new members who developed their skills at the training sessions twice each week. We secured wins in two home fixtures, the first against Bedford School, the second against an RFA IV.

In the Lent Term Matt Ord, Jack Pyman, and Emrys Thursfield played together in the Universities tournament at Oundle, where Emrys made it to the semi-finals and Jack reached the final of the Bowl. As usual there was a strong turnout from players for the PvP, with the Past securing a win of 303-181. Crucially, the Varsity Match one week later was a different story for CURFC! A lead of 17 points after the Singles carried us through, as the Doubles was a tie. Whilst there were celebrations after Varsity, they by no means marked the end of our season. Training continued and we staged and won an enjoyable fixture in early March against a St Paul's VI.

On the Women's side, we had a strong start with recruitment; four of our players attended the Women's Nationals. At Varsity we played a IV, but lost despite our best efforts. Next year, we hope to play a larger women's team, more representative of our efforts throughout the year. With a large number of leavers the club will now have something of a rebuilding period, but we look forward to the squad flourishing under the new leadership of James Milburn and Katie Parry.



Cambridge squad celebrate at the Varsity Match

CITY OF DURHAM CLUB

Julie McIntyre reports: Representatives from the club entered six competitions this season, plus making a trip to Edinburgh. This was largely based around the current demographic of some adults, year 12 girls, plus boys and girls from years 6 to 9.

Camille won the Women's National title for the third time, despite studying at a university with no courts, and was runner-up in the National Open Mixed Doubles (with Freddie HG). Eleonora, Emily and Evelyn were all very competitive, entering multiple tournaments this year. Eleonora was unfortunately unwell for the National Girls Schools competition but made her mark in winning three Doubles titles: at the Durham Women's (with Camille), the Women's Scottish Open (with Louise) and the Northern Schools (the U18 Doubles with Evelyn). The Northern Schools had a very good home entry, with some of our younger players competing for the first time and most winning medals in their age group. We also had year 6 and 8s (and adults) playing in the Derby Moor Invitational, where all were impressed by the standard of play of our juniors.

Stuart Scott has been our chairperson once again this year. However, after a rousing speech at our AGM, he has now completed his studies, and we'd like to thank him for all his support and coaching over his four years in Durham. Our head coach Tom Wakelam has been doing great things again this year and we look forward to seeing some of our newer (very) young players make their mark next season.



Durham host the Northern Schools

CHRIST'S HOSPITAL CLUB

Stephen Walsh reports: The CH club is in a good place and still benefiting from the 'ill wind' principle – the membership has been boosted by bad news elsewhere. As previously noted some Whitgiftians have arrived in their flotilla of small boats, while the shortage of competitive pupil players in the school means that those we have are now able to come and play in club sessions. This is a win-win – the pupils get good, competitive Fives and some ad hoc coaching; the club players get a bit of variety and the assurance of busier club nights.

The club is chiefly social but some players who wear the club vest have brought home some silverware. Morgan Spillane won the Doubles Plate at the Veterans, and vintage title for the fourth time, while Charlie Lacewing, who can no longer play at Challenger events as he made it to the top 16 nationally, was third in the Universities Championship Singles. We played a rare fixture, combining with the Old Blues against a visiting Wessex side and losing only by the odd point, and had an enjoyable mixed pairs session with the CH boys.

We now have a regular programme of twice weekly sessions and an occasional beer in the staff bar. Back in its traditional spot, the 5.30 Wednesday club is the more popular – we have even had to move on to courts 3 and 4 once or twice recently. Sunday at 5.30 is thinner and occasionally a moveable feast, but via the glory that is WhatsApp there is usually a game on offer. Any players at any level are of course welcome to join us – we are blind to age, gender and (dis) ability.



CH's Morgan sports his Veterans medal

CLUB REPORTS 2025-26

DEEP WEST CLUB

Charles Hattersley reports: The Deep West club has continued its tradition of playing every Thursday or Friday on a weekly basis thanks to the comprehensive and very committed support of Mount Kelly and in particular its current head – Guy Ayling ("the Head"). Not only has the Head personally checked the courts every week but he has played with great enthusiasm and increasing skill so that his form can match that of all-round athletes such as Gary McCauley, Luke Newman Taylor and the ex-schoolboy doubles champion and international cricketeer – the local coach Professor David Dance. Charles Hattersley, John Ogle, Kev and Alex have made up the numbers in an attempt to ensure there is always a IV on court and there are enough wallets to pay for the invariable rounds of refreshments at a local hostelry. Luke NT managed to nail the Kelly West of England champions' title playing with a member of the Kelly 1st IV – who are travelling the country and giving some of the established Fives institutions a real run for their money; so long may that continue, which, with the continued support of the Head, should not be an issue. In an age where there's so much choice of sports for athletic children, it has to be hoped that Rugby Fives at Kelly will continue to expand and flourish.


Derby Moor Invitation Doubles 2026

DERBY MOOR FIVES

Bob Dolby reports: We play 3 times a week for fun at Derby Moor, but are also quite competitive. When I look at the 'Successes' section on the club website, which Stuart Kirby kindly runs for us, we've had a really good season. 6 players sharing 11 bronze medals for Singles and Doubles Plates at national and regional level; 4 of those 6 players winning a total of 6 silver medals again for singles and doubles. Then two titles for Lewis Keates – the Yorkshire Open Doubles with clubmate Anthony Goodwin, followed by the Barnes Bridge with Dave Butler – while Stuart Kirby and Brian Kirk retained their Masters Doubles title.

It's been a real delight to see two young players from other clubs come and develop their play with us: Harry Hill from Malvern in the school holidays and Val Fikhter from Manchester throughout the season. Harry teamed up with our young Zach Winson Yates to win the U16 Doubles Plate at the West of England Schools and played in our Invitation Doubles, while Val, who has experienced nothing but disruption at Manchester during his playing years, thoroughly deserved his silver in the National Schools U18 Singles. He also showed his class as a doubles player in winning our Invitation event with Matt Ord from Cambridge.

It's been our pleasure to welcome Simon and Camille Beattie, Dan Swinbank, Dave Butler, Richard Guthrie, Andy Williamson, Yale Brewer and Jeremy Tullett to join us on an occasional basis. Lewis, Stuart, Brian and Richard Christie drive the club. We owe them a great deal.

DURHAM UNIVERSITY

Stuart Scott reports: This season has been one of consolidation for DURFC. Building on the foundations laid last year, the club has maintained its core numbers, with a strong returning group ensuring that the team spirit and progress established in 2024-25 continued this year.

The club made its presence felt on the tournament circuit in 2026, with deep runs in main draws. At BUSF, Stuart Scott & Charlie Lacewing reached the semi-finals of the Doubles, with Charlie Lacewing also making the semi-finals in the Singles. Furthermore, Will Milne continued his excellent form from last season, taking the Singles Bowl for Durham. We were once again well represented at the North of England Open, with 8 players making it into the draw. The standout performance of the weekend came from Nathan Groombridge-Westacott, who took home the Plate on his first entry into an open event.

We have continued to build on our outreach, hosting players from nearby "court-less" universities and helping them to continue their Fives. The club's ties with the City of Durham Club have also remained strong, with coaching continuing to be a key part of the season: Ethan Hudson became newly activated as a coach this year, joining Stuart Scott, who continued in his role coaching the City's younger players. DURFC was also proud to once again host Strathallan School for its annual fixture, a match that the club always looks forward to keenly.

Finally, we lose many stalwart players as this season comes to a close. The outgoing captain takes real pride in having witnessed the progress of both the players and wider community that has developed over his time at Durham. He leaves the role confident that the club will continue to flourish in safe hands of Will Milne.


Nathan and Plate

EASTBOURNE COLLEGE CLUB

Spencer Beal reports: This past year has seen the club move forward in a number of different directions. The College courts have been completely re-roofed, and, with replastered walls and repainted floors, the whole set-up now looks almost modern. The greatest benefit by far is the fact that the courts are now completely rainproof – a 'first' in my lifetime – and there is no longer the constant threat of last-minute cancellations to matches or club sessions. Condensation and damp walls remain an occasional problem in the winter, but the repainted floors now provide a much grippier surface, and the bounce and speed of the ball are as good as ever – reasons why the Eastbourne courts have always proved popular with visiting players. The slightly smaller court size is also a meaningful inducement for the more mature player such as myself, so if there are any clubs out there that would like to come down to the south coast for a less than energy-sapping experience on pacy courts, you would be most welcome. We are continually on the look-out to recruit more players, although we manage to assemble at least a quorum (4) almost every Tuesday evening throughout the year, and our fixture secretary, James Holman-Dine, has widened the club's appeal by arranging matches against Tonbridge, home and away, and the Jesters Club. We look forward next season to more matches, more players, more success and more enjoyable Fives.


Eastbourne Club v Jesters

EDWARD ALLEYN CLUB

Hamish Buchanan reports: A stable year for Club attendees, with some regulars becoming occasionals and vice versa. This summer the class of '22 are generally returning, which should give us a few more alumni in our numbers. With some recent leavers and one or two from the more distant past the Club managed to win the Plate in the three-a-side Owers Trophy and field two teams in the more traditional four-a-side Wood Cup, where we were runners-up and Plate winners. Special mention goes to Ed Carr and Inigo Ackland for forming an effective, if rather chaotic, partnership that was always enjoyable to watch. And to Yarin Negyal for regularly making the trip back from university to turn out for the Club. We retained the London League title but lost our unbeaten record to UCS in the last match. Close games away to Stoke Newington Swifts and at home to Executioners made this League as enjoyable as ever.

We are hoping that Alleyn's School will be doing some renovations to the courts and installing heaters which we expect to combat the sweating problem that plagues us in the winter months. The Fives Club and the wider reaching Edward Alleyn Club are funding the majority of this work and hope that it will promote Fives for the future players at the school.


Edward Alleyn Club at the Wood Cup

EXECUTIONERS CLUB

Andy Pringle reports: More than anything, it's the wide range of players at the club that makes the Executioners such a success. Among our regulars this season, we can count national champions from U16 Schools level all the way up to Vintage, securing men's, women's, Challenger, mixed and team titles on the way. And we have players taking to the courts for more than 50 years going up against complete novices – including Roehampton students as part of an RFA initiative.

Our end-of-season event was a perfect example of this breadth, with no fewer than 16 players taking part. Players including myself, Rupert Mathieu, Penn Chai, Adam Hutchinson, Helena Tunks, Edd Horder and Tony Julius were among those split into two teams captained by Fives Royalty – Dick Warner and Chris Blakeley – competing for a trophy donated by Bob Dolby. The event was run by Penn, with a selection of new 'jokers' that could be played, including all (deliberate!) drop-shot winners scoring two points, all blackguards counting as real serves, and one player on each pair in a match only able to use one hand. Dick's team won, and the great man was only too happy to receive the Dolby Stein in our second home, The Bridge. He also retained the award for Best on-court banter, while Terry McElvaney (again) was voted the Player most likely to be injured. Player of the Season title was shared between Freddie Hammond Giles and Shinan Zhang. The one sad aspect to this season is that we have had to say farewell to Shinan after work took her away from Europe. She has been an outstanding player and club member. Sadly, however, we couldn't mark her departure with a win in the London League that she helped revive, so that remains top of the wish list for everyone at the club for next season.


Executioners playing for the Dolby Stein

EXETER AND OLD BLUNDELLIANS CLUBS

Wayne Enstone reports: This year's Club report begins sadly with the loss of Angus Rackham back in September, who had been a junior member since he began playing Fives in Year 7. He is greatly missed as he did become such a great contributor to club life. His memory will live on, as it has been decided to rename our Reichwald Tournament the Reichwald and Rackham Tournament. This event took place in January and was most successful, as it helps integrate the Club and School players in a friendly yet competitive doubles competition. Shortly after that we had our annual match against the Old Whitgiftians. They beat us, but we did have a number of our more recently joined players involved and really enjoying it. On the national scene Maddy Raynor continues to enter events and organises the Ladies Winchester Fives Championships, where she won Silver in the Singles and Gold in the Doubles. Together with club player Dwight Murdoc, Maddy also recently won the South West Open Doubles Plate, while Dwight won the Singles Plate. We are very proud of them.

We hope to grow our numbers over the next season, though we have already had as many as 20 players at a Club night – an impressive number. We continue to be grateful for the use of the squash courts on occasions the Fives courts are too wet to play. Here's to a successful next season; we welcome anyone who would like to join us on our Wednesday night 6pm sessions.



Exeter Club's Maddy Raynor wins the Ladies Winchester Fives Doubles with Helena Tunks

JESTERS CLUB

Ben Hale reports: Our season started in predictable fashion with a hard-fought draw against the Rugby Fives Association in the annual Strawson-Vaughan match at St. Paul's. The feelings of déjà vu looked to be continuing in our second match against the Old Tonbridgians when we found ourselves, as we had last year, on the back foot after the Singles. The team rallied in the Doubles though and avenged last year's defeat with a 29-point victory. Then to really dispel the ghosts of seasons past, and to the despair of the absent writer, the long promised but never delivered curry finally materialised. I'll have to hope for selection next season.

Following on from last year's battle of the brothers match with Oxford University the Jesters returned, having recruited the now former OU captain to their ranks. Unfortunately, the Oxford talent pipeline proved superior and they triumphed by four points. We finished 2025 with a couple of school matches at Oundle and Rugby – two developing sides providing stiffer competition each year.

January blues aren't a problem in the Jesters Rugby Fives world as we head north of the border to Edinburgh. The tour continues to increase year-on-year with nearly seventy tourists taking on teams from the host schools made up of pupils past and present along with other local players. We enjoyed a fantastic reception at Fettes on the Friday night with more than a hundred Fives players, parents and guests. My thanks as ever to the schools for hosting us, the Jesters for their support and Dave Butler for his organising.

Our season finished as it started with a couple of matches in London. At St. Paul's a 22-player fixture saw a combined school and Executioners club team beat the Jesters by one point. Finally, at Alleyn's, the baton was passed, former Jesters games rep. Tom Maconie teaming up with Nick Whitney, who I'm delighted to say has agreed to join me as a Rugby Fives rep.

MARLBOROUGH TOWN CLUB

Neil Witcombe reports: The Club has had another great year, with a busy social calendar, and strong participation in a range of competitions, from 'friendlies' against other clubs to national events. On most club nights we have our four Rugby Fives courts full of doubles play and sometimes one of our Eton courts in use. We also continue to strengthen our cohort of younger players, whilst maintaining focus on attracting new members from as many walks of life as possible.

Our healthy numbers have enabled us to support a variety of competitive events including our own doubles tourney with enjoyable competition from players of all abilities. In terms of hosting, we have played our usual friendly against the touring Old Whitgiftians, with several strong sets of pairs making for a great contest. We also hosted the Veterans Championships, where we had a particularly strong showing of club players across a range of abilities playing in both the singles and doubles tournaments. Note-worthy performances included Tom Hillman and John Sanders who won Silver in the Grand Masters, James Hughes who was narrowly beaten to third place in the singles, Tim Bury who gave an incredibly strong personal performance with partner Giles Munn, just missing out on the doubles final, while at the other end of the spectrum Neil Witcombe & Harvey Carpenter won the Tankard. We also had representation at the National Vintage Championships, with James Hughes winning the Plate.

Our enthusiasm for the sport of Fives is mirrored in the club social calendar where a strong grouping of 'partners of the club' have enabled a successful winter black-tie dinner and a well-attended summer BBQ. The Town Club takes advantage of our good fortune to have access to the fantastic College 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 at the Vintage: Harvey and James in action

OLD OUNDELIANS

Alex Smith reports: The adults Fives club, the 'Nene Valley Poachers', continue to play at Oundle on a Tuesday or Wednesday evening from 6 pm. The highlight of the season is the Multi-Sports Weekend, when a match is played between Jesters & Old Oundelians on one side and the School & Staff on the other, for the Roger Freebairn Trophy, established in honour of the great schoolmaster. The trophy is now housed in the courts' gallery. The school has won the Trophy for the past two years but this year the Jesters & OOs held on to win by 110 points to 98.

If you wish to play Fives at Oundle, please contact Alex Smith or the school.

OLD PAULINES

Theo Parker reports: It's been another very successful season for the Old Paulines. Having not entered a team for a few years, Ben Beltrami, Julian Aquilina and Freddie Hammond Giles won the Owers Trophy quite comfortably in September. We then followed this up with a fourth Wood Cup victory in a row, this time represented by Charlie Brooks, Theo Parker, Josh Ferro, as well as Julian and Freddie. The challenge for next year is to enter multiple OP teams for each competition. Club dominance has been backed up with success in the national and regional competitions, with the two main highlights being Ben winning the National Singles for a second time, beating fellow Old Pauline Dan Tristao in the final, and Dan retaining the National Doubles with Old Pauline Ed Kay for the fourth consecutive year.



Old Paulines retain the Wood Cup

OLD TONBRIDGIANS

Rupert Mathieu reports: Meeting every Tuesday, the Old Tonbridgians have enjoyed another busy year with now regular fixtures against the RFA (a narrow loss), the School (a thumping win) and the Jesters (surely a tie?). We also have had new home and away fixtures against the thriving-again Eastbourne Club, a fixture noted for both competition and conviviality (and wins). The OTs also again happily hosted the Jesters tour of the South, with players from all over the country, young and old, men and women, competing in a glorious exhibition of (mostly pretty good) Fives. All the OTs played, including Messrs Tilston and Keyes, bar Rod Oscroft, whose season has been hit by injury (although he is back now!). Most exciting, we have brought Jon Lidiard, former MiC of Fives at Sedbergh, now teaching at Sevenoaks, back to the game – and how good it is to have a left-hander in the side. Finally and not least, we are very pleased to report that the OTs had the most players (Harman, Mathieu & Jackson) at the National Vintage Championship, with Ian Jackson (and Nick Geere) retaining the Doubles Plate. Elsewhere Neil Arnott (with Chris Horrocks) was delighted to win the Grand Masters Doubles Plate. OT Fives at Tonbridge continues to thrive and we are working hard with the School to keep the boys' interest up, with Guy Harman, Rupert Mathieu and Neil Arnott coaching several sessions in the Lent Term.



Old Tonbridgians versus the Eastbourne Club

OLD WHITGIFTIANS

Nick Woolfenden reports: Whilst still hugely disappointing that Whitgift school has currently closed the Fives courts and no Fives can be played there, the Old Whitgiftians were pleased to regroup for our annual tour to the South West in March 2026. Travelling from far and wide, a small but well-formed group of Old Whits and supporters enjoyed good matches and socialising at Sherborne, Tiverton and Marlborough. Touring players were myself, Robert Dalman, Jon Higgins, Chris Jones, Cameron Low, Nick Morgan and Graham Norman – a good range of decades represented there. Although the loss of Fives at Whitgift is still a huge blow in so many ways, we're grateful for the other Fives clubs that some of us are regulars at. It's also very pleasing to report Cameron's and Chris's continuing successes in national competitions – all the more reason to keep going.



Old Whits on tour at Marlborough

OXFORD UNIVERSITY

Abbie Evans reports: This has been another successful year for OURFvC. At BUSF, Oxford showed a strong presence in the plate competitions, with members winning both the singles and doubles events. U25s saw a similar result, with one member reaching the final.

Our Past v Present fixture was, as always, an enjoyable and valuable occasion, providing an excellent opportunity for current players to test themselves against former members of the club, and producing plenty of entertaining matches. Both the men's and women's teams recorded victories on the day. It also served as useful preparation for Varsity, helping players gain competitive match experience ahead of one of the most important fixtures of the year.

At Varsity, we narrowly lost the Men's Match after a closely contested encounter. However, there were significant positives to take from the day, with victories in both the Women's and the Men's 2nd team fixtures. These results highlight the strength of the club across multiple teams and demonstrate the continued development of players at all levels.

We remain a very strong club, and I have confidence in the team going into next year. With new recruits joining alongside experienced members returning, there is every reason to be optimistic. Hopefully, this growing strength will allow us to build on this year's successes and return to the triple-Varsity triumph achieved in 2024. It has been a pleasure to serve as President this year, and I look forward to captaining the club again next year.



Oxford Women's IV win the Silver Salver at Varsity

CLUB REPORTS 2025-26

STOKE NEWINGTON SWIFTS

Matt Hale reports: It has been an excellent season of Fives in Stoke Newington at the Swifts. With tidied-up courts – improved floors and smoother walls – we have enjoyed much better facilities, for which we thank direct donors and the RFA alike. These improvements have made the usual Tuesday evening club nights all the better (7-9pm, welcome to all) and the bounce more reliable for the various victorious opposition sides who managed to crack the fortress (The Nest?) in the London League. It should be noted, however, that we beat the mighty Executioners in our home fixture.

Pleasingly impressive was the performance of our junior squad, which saw Wilfred Gilbody come runner-up in the National U13 Singles and later put in another good performance in the U14s. Tom Kininmonth and Dylan Gilbody had a good showing in the U16s, but that was a step up, given they were a year young and are eligible for that category again next year. Our second end-of-season tournament (President's Cup-style) saw Jim Keegan & Tom Kininmonth lift The Nightjar.

We have had many consistent attendees who will doubtless be competing in due course at an appropriate level but, more importantly, seem to enjoy the club nights and help generate an upbeat Fives atmosphere. So, it's onwards and upwards – thank you very much to all our players for a lovely season of Fives.



Stoke Newington Swifts versus the Executioners

UCS FIVES CLUB

Chris Blakeley reports: The UCS courts will be demolished in the summer of 2027 and it has now been confirmed that that there will be no immediate replacement. There are modestly encouraging noises about including Fives in a future multi-court complex, but the plans for this building are still quite sketchy and the school has indicated that it will not even be seeking planning permission until the major school redevelopment which is bringing down the current courts is well advanced. A 3-year hiatus, at least, is to be expected, during which squash Fives (at a local club) would be the only option.

As for the UCS Club (Old Gowers) there have been fewer players this year, and although UCS continues to raise a team for the London League (led by Terry McElvaney), its player pool can't match the powerhouses of Edward Alleyn Club or Executioners. Evening club matches on Mondays have very variable attendance, with several regulars, including myself, having moved away.

WESSEX CLUB

Harry Akerman reports: A second season on the new courts in Winchester once again saw busy Tuesday evenings, with all six courts regularly in action. Several masters from the school have started playing Fives – or, in some cases, playing again – and the welcoming environment is definitely making it more appealing for new players. We know how lucky we are.

Stuart Wills has taken it up "to give his knees a break" from squash – eek – and Noah Cooper is also new to the game. Both have done well, and there is no need to "hold back" when playing against them. I am not sure whether that says more about them or us. Mark Ashley has also become a semi-regular on his trips down from Marlborough to see his son at Peter Symonds College in Winchester.

Wessex had a good turnout at the President's Cup, the Jesters Tour and Hever Castle. Our end-of-season tournament saw 31 players fight for the chance to be partnered with Ed Hawke, and Bev Boag ended up picking the golden ticket, ensuring his name goes alongside Ed's on the cup this year. The season has, in fact, continued for a few players, who have used Fives as an excuse to sit in the air-conditioned courts as an escape from the extreme midsummer heat we have had in recent weeks.

A massive thank you to Rory and Boo for hosting our summer party, with their huge firepit put to good use on a fresh early-June evening. As ever a fine array of food was put on, highlighting many off-court secret talents amongst our members.

WEST OF ENGLAND CLUB

Kevin Brice reports: West of England Fives continues to thrive, despite being in the perilous position of having just one court in use, but still, against the odds, our numbers are flourishing: 16 active club members, and a lively student body, meaning the Fives is fast and furious, and a lot of fun. Club Fixtures remains something we sadly haven't offered again this year, with just the one court available, nor have we fulfilled our desire to get down to Tiverton more, but did undertake an away fixture with Winchester School, great for all concerned. Peter Grant continues to successfully develop SquashFives in the area on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Well attended, it runs concurrently with Fives, an addition and not a rival, now a little better known nationally.

As a Club, we have had a really strong presence at the Wood Cup in the 2020s. This year we hoped to continue our recent high level of performances, but we didn't have quite as strong a pool of players. It was great though to field two teams, and a good experience for them.

Where we've really stepped up is in attending other tournaments. Cameron Low leads from the front, a high-ranked player in both singles and doubles. He's followed by the ever-improving Theo Vernacchio, with Nick Geere and Ian Jackson generating excellent points from a recent stellar performance in winning the Vintage Plate. This, along with Cam and Theo's double at the at the Universities Championships, shows just how broad a club we are, and how vibrant we remain, despite the adverse situation.



West of England's Cameron and Theo win the Universities Singles and Doubles

MANCHESTER FIVES

More than a century of Manchester Fives

Fives has been played in Manchester on courts of several designs since Victorian times, at Lads Clubs, schools, colleges and halls of residence, but mainly at the YMCA Building on Peter Street on narrow courts and, since 1990, on standard courts with glass-back walls at the Y Club in the Castlefield area. Fives was also played to a lesser extent at the McDougall University Sports Centre. With the closure of the Y Club courts in July 2026 the future of Manchester Fives remains uncertain. Here some photographs from the RFA's Photographic Archive.



YMCA building in Peter Street built in 1911



Castlefield site 1990-2026



NW Open Doubles 1991



Y Club's courts with traditional colour scheme...



2 non-standard courts on the 7th floor up 135 steps



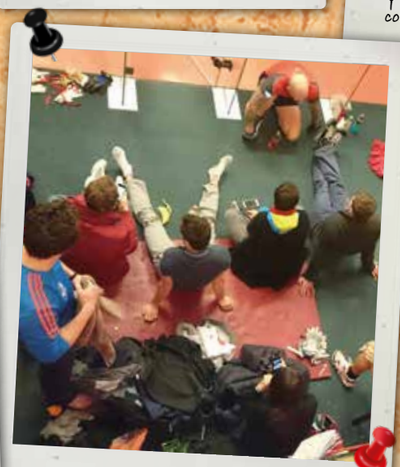
Singles and Doubles on narrow courts



Decades of Doubles here



... and gallery viewing for photography and filming



Convivial ground level viewing



New colour scheme after flooding in 2019



John Beswick wins the GMC U16 Singles in 1981



Doubles at the McDougall Centre



Promoting the sport in the local media



One last gathering of friends July 2026

25 years and more à la recherche

An appreciation of RFA Archivist David Barnes from **Dave Hebden**



David Barnes and Dave Hebden enjoy a taste of Archivists' Ale in Bucklebury

David Barnes took over the role of RFA Archivist from Fred Beswick in 2001. In the period just prior to that point, I think it is fair to say that the role was largely a passive one, the incumbent being principally responsible for being the custodian of various records and historical items associated with the game of Fives. David changed that. Over the years that he held the post, he actively foraged for information, thereby filling gaps in our knowledge of the history of the game, and has collected a treasure trove of books, photos, letters, and Fives artefacts, including trophies, Fives balls and many other items of interest, all of which have helped our understanding of the evolution of our game. There cannot be too many School and University Archivists in the land who have not been pestered by David in this search for information, but I'm sure that all his targets will have enjoyed the contact, because being pestered by David is something that is never unwelcome.

The legacy of this work is huge, and includes the wonderful series of in-depth features on Schools and Universities that have graced our Annual Reviews over the years. Take a look at the feature on the next page, summarising 100 years of the Cyriax Cup, which we have celebrated this year, as an example of David's craft.

David and I have had plenty of fun searching the web and chasing eBay items to enrich our Archives over the years. The eBay items have been mostly trophies but we have other oddities including medals, a teapot, a match striker, a hip flask, and a "vesta case", all with Fives inscriptions. Why do we do it? Well, some of the exhibits are beautiful, but most importantly each one tells a story. For example, one of our prized acquisitions is a lovely 2-pint tankard with a red starburst glass base from Worcester College, Oxford. Dated 1861, this is just about our earliest trophy (we do also have an 1859 cup, again from Oxford). The 1856 Worcester College court was once played on by the future Edward VII when at Oxford. He was said at the time to be an "underemployed layabout", perhaps ideal for the game of Fives! The courts at Worcester College are very important to the story of our game. They provided a model with their left-wall buttresses on which many other courts across the country were later based.

We hope that on suitable occasions – perhaps the celebrations of the RFA's own centenary next year – some of the more interesting Archive items can be displayed for the enjoyment of the wider Fives community.

Through my collaborations with David over the years, I have become very aware of the huge amount of time and effort he has devoted to the role. His breadth and depth of knowledge of the game is second to none. I know that David will continue to help those of us who have an interest in the history of Fives, but with his stepping down as Archivist, it is timely for us now to warmly give thanks to him for all his efforts. ●

100 Years of the Cyriax Cup

David Barnes celebrates the Centenary of the RFA National Doubles Championship

The short-lived Fives Association (formed in late 1923) announced the draw for the first 'Rugby Fives Competition' in The Times of January 20th 1925. Entries were open to pairs representing any Club, University, University College, Hospital, or any individual pair. 24 pairs entered, some of them under fanciful names such as 'The Casuals', 'Hampstead Wanderers' and 'Grasshoppers', and the progress of the competition was slow because pairs were expected to arrange their own matches. Both singles and doubles were to be played. The second-round draw was announced on March 10th, with one first-round match still to be played. We have little further record of the competition, except that the eventual winners were Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge (W.H. Powell & J.E. Scott) who beat U.C.S. Old Boys "A" (C. Barratt & E.F. Cyriax) in the final at the Bank of England Club by 79 points to 53. By that stage it was already October 1926!

Dr Edgar Cyriax, a finalist in that first competition, presented a cup bearing his name to the winners. Although he was the best-known player in the game, unbeaten in singles matches over a period of 34 years since leaving University College School, Dr Cyriax was never to win his own cup. His greatest contribution to the game he loved was to found the Rugby Fives Association in 1927 and to bring about the standardisation of rules and court dimensions in the endeavour to develop the game in the period between the wars. He chaired the early R.F.A. Committee meetings and became its President from 1946 until his death in 1955.

Records of the competitions for the Cyriax Cup from 1927 to 1929 are lost to us, but it is clear from occasional references in The Times that at least two of them were played, taking most of 1928 and 1929 respectively to complete. In January 1930, The Times announced that 'The Rugby Fives Competition for the Cyriax Cup is this year confined to Doubles', and this year marked the emergence of the Alleyn Old Boys as the premier Rugby Fives club of the day. Pairs from the club, all of them including Philip Malt, probably the greatest player of the 1930s, won the Cyriax Cup every year from 1930 to 1933.

In 1934 the competition was officially named the 'Amateur Doubles Championship' and the names of the winners rather than the club began to be engraved on the trophy. Of course, this did not prevent players from the same club from entering and in many years from winning. Members of the Old Paulines and Old Alleynians – two of the strongest clubs along with the Alleyn Old Boys – started to win the coveted cup, and regular club pairs were always the winners up to and including 1939.



Cyriax Cup Centenary t-shirt

After the war, the competition continued with a different cast of characters, with one exception: the most prolific winner of the pre-war years, 'Bill' Bailey of the Alleyn Old Boys, was to add one further victory in 1952 to his five previous ones.

Since the 1950s, the Cyriax Cup has been characterised by several winning sequences, notably those of John Pretlove & Dennis Silk (1956-59), Mike Elliott & John Watkinson (1962-64), David Gardner & Stuart Reid (1970-72 and 1974), John East & Wayne Enstone (1975-79), Ian Fuller & Dave Hebden (1980-85 and 1987-90), Wayne Enstone & Neil Roberts (1991-99), John Beswick & Neil Roberts (2000-03) and Hamish Buchanan & Robin Perry (2004-11).

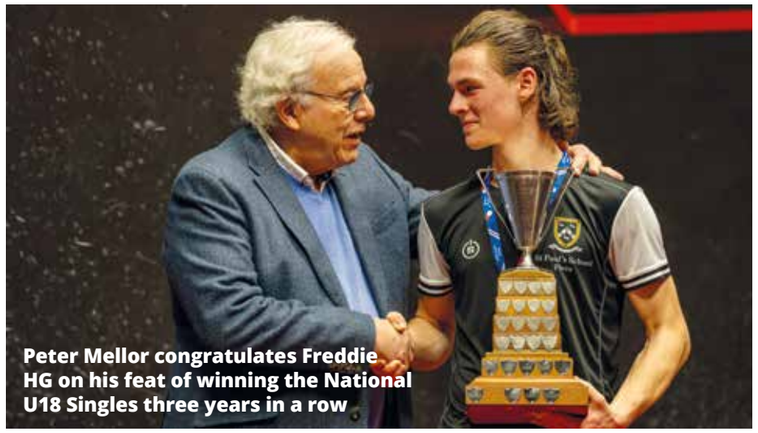
A quite extraordinary record was created by one of these pairs, Ian Fuller & Dave Hebden, who appeared in every final from 1980 until 2000 and won ten of them. Neil Roberts's thirteen consecutive victories (with two different partners) from 1991 until 2003 are also a remarkable achievement. Since 2012, no all-conquering pair has emerged, although Dan Tristao has appeared in every final since then. Five top players have shared the spoils: Charlie Brooks & Will Ellison have won five titles; Ed Kay & Dan Tristao four; and Dan Grant two, with Tristao as his partner.

The Cyriax Cup is normally held at Alleyn's School and is now officially known as the National Doubles Championship. ●

SCHOOLS SEASON REVIEW 2025-26

Schools Season Review 2025-26

Bob Dolby looks back on a season where history was made



Peter Mellor congratulates Freddie HG on his feat of winning the National U18 Singles three years in a row

Surprises in Rugby Fives are quite rare. Shocks are very rare. History being made extremely rare indeed. This season, however, there was a strong feeling that history would be made in the realm of the National U18 Singles and Doubles. It would have been a surprise if Freddie Hammond Giles hadn't performed a feat which has not been managed since the 1960s, by Peter Mellor of Bedford School, namely winning the National U18 Singles title three years in a row. It would have been a surprise if Freddie and his partner, Josh Ferro, had not again won all three U18 schools Doubles titles in one season, something that has in fact happened a number of times. It wasn't really a shock that Freddie and Josh made history in winning the National Schools U18 Doubles three years in a row, something which has never previously been achieved. What was, to many, a surprise - indeed quite extraordinary - was that Freddie's younger brother Joey won the National U16 Singles and Doubles at the same time as Freddie and Josh were making their history. Perhaps it shouldn't have been a surprise at all, though, as Joey had previously won the West of England Schools U16 Singles and been runner-up in the U16 Doubles. I would be amazed if we ever see the like of such a family double and all these overlapping records ever again!

In all of this success for the young players from St Paul's we should not forget that Freddie's opponent in the final of the West of England Schools and the National Schools was also making his own bit of history. Like the great Wayne Enstone before him Val Fikhter, a year younger than Freddie, has emerged from the Manchester Y Club to be a top player of singles and doubles, learning the game outside the schools Fives system on courts now closed to the public, nevertheless winning various titles at national and club level.

To celebrate a very special National Schools Championships the RFA commissioned a video which can be viewed on YouTube at: tinyurl.com/RFA-Schools-Nationals-2026. I can recommend it most warmly.

Quite apart from all the inter-school fixtures which take place across various age groups and in appropriate formats, there are also various regional championships which occur before the Nationals. The first this year was the aforementioned Schools Winchester Fives Doubles championship at Winchester in November, with five schools involved. Winchester's 1st pair had the unenviable task of playing St Paul's 1st pair in the final, while Stamford's 1st pair won the Plate from Alleyn's. It was good to see Radley competing.

After Christmas the Schools' season kicks off immediately with the West of England Schools Championships at Sherborne. St Paul's duly dominated in the U18s, winning both the Singles and the Doubles. In the U16s St Paul's won the Singles in the person of the younger Hammond Giles but had to give way to the Alleyn's pair in the Doubles. It is always good to see success for other schools in the Plates, Bowls and 3rd place play-offs: this year Derby Moor, Stamford, Sherborne, Winchester and Alleyn's all registered successes in these categories.

One by one the regionals are then played: In the Midlands Championships at Bedford School Rugby dominated in the U18s, Stamford in the U15s. A similar pattern occurred in the South East Regionals, at Tonbridge School, with Tonbridge winning U18 Singles and Doubles, Alleyn's both U16 events. The Northern Schools championships are held in Durham, giving players from Sedbergh School and the City of Durham Club in particular a chance to test themselves in competition. This year Sedbergh did particularly well, winning U18 Singles, U16 Singles and U16 Doubles, but two girls from the Durham Club, Eleonora & Evelyn, won the U18 Doubles – not history-making, as Camille & Leah had already done this in 2024. In the Colquhoun Singles Trophy for South West Schools, played at Marlborough College, it was Sherborne who won the U18 Singles and Marlborough the U16 Singles. Meanwhile, over a period of some weeks, the Scottish Schools Championships produced a clean sweep for the Edinburgh Academy, playing at Fettes College: Jock L first won the U18 Singles, then with Weems H the U18 Doubles, after which Ludo C & Prannav J won the U16 Doubles.



Alleyn's beat St Paul's in the West of England U16 Doubles at Sherborne

There is also a regional championship for schoolgirls in the South East, featuring competitors from Alleyn's School, Christ's Hospital and Eastbourne College. This event was heavily dominated by the girls from Alleyn's. It was also hoped to stage a second National Mixed Doubles Championship for schools, but in the end it was not possible to find a suitable date to enable a viable entry.

The Schools season ends with the National Schools Championships at St Paul's, with Freddie Hammond Giles making history with his third U18 Singles title, then, partnered with Josh Ferro, their hitherto never done three-time victory in the U18 Doubles. Younger brother Joey HG won the U16 Singles and then the U16 Doubles with Tom Outred. In the U14s it was players from the Edinburgh Academy who won the Singles (J Walker) and the Doubles (R Jamieson & J Walker).



Sedbergh at the Northern Schools Championships in Durham

Three weeks earlier Berkhamsted School had swept the board at the National U13s, with Oscar Moss winning the Singles for a second time, then the Doubles once more, with H Seddon, in an all-Berkhamsted final. Moss's two consecutive wins in this Singles competition were not history-making – a player from Lambrook School had previously achieved that feat – nor was winning the Doubles two years in a row, but young Oscar is the first to have done the double twice in a row – that is history-making. Moreover, his opponent in this year's final, Wilf Gilbody from Stoke Newington School, is the first player from that establishment to make the final of a National event since D. Mason-Malik won the U14 Singles in 2000 and was runner-up in the Doubles.



Scottish Schools U18 competitors on the Fettes College courts

It is always the case that Fives is flourishing in some schools while suffering a low in others. Things can change fast in both directions for all manner of reasons, but year in, year out we are able to rejoice in the successes and progress that schools record in the annual account they give on the following pages. One only has to attend a tournament or an inter-school fixture to see how much the players enjoy the game and to realise how much the RFA owes the teachers in charge, the coaches, the parents for supporting and nurturing Fives at school level.

Next season we will see new young stars emerge as the current crop of champions leave school or change age-group or junior players play their first tournament. The several hundred children who play Fives in our clubs and schools are the future of the sport. The existence of courts on which to play, their state of repair, their accessibility are permanent issues of concern to the RFA who are always happy to give advice and support in any way they can.

As always, the RFA owe a huge debt of gratitude to our various organisers of junior tournaments throughout England and Scotland. Thanks go to Richie Murby for what he does on our behalf for school Fives in Scotland; also to Julie McIntyre and Tom Wakelam in Durham; to Harry Akerman in Winchester, and to Tom Kiggell in Marlborough. That our Schools tournaments at Sherborne and St Paul's run so smoothly is down to Theo Parker, Sam Roberts and Alex Smith in particular. To all of them the RFA would like to express a warm thank you. ●

SCHOOLS SEASON REVIEW 2025-26

Around the schools 2025-26

Individual schools report on a busy season of matches and tournaments


Alleyn's at the Girls' Nationals

ALLEYN'S SCHOOL

Rob Ody reports: Another most enjoyable season of Fives with a full fixture list against our normal opponents and participation in various regional and national competitions. The season started with the West of England Championships in which Rumi Kohashi-Khan & Frederick McAllister won the U16 Doubles. We then participated in the SE Regional Championships. For the boys, Rumi & Frederick were U16 Champions and Thomas Green won the U16 Singles. For the girls we finished as winners in six categories, Isla Lewis (U14 Singles), Freya Dornan & Sasha Antonova (U14 Doubles), Annabel Brown (U16 Singles), Annabel & Anna Ratto (U16 Doubles), Taylor-Rose Foo (U18 Singles) and Taylor & Issy De Soyza (U18 Doubles).

In March we held our hugely enjoyable and well supported alumni Fives event. The season then came to a close with the respective girls' and boys' National Championships. In the girls' event we became National Champions in six categories; Freya Dornan (U14 Singles), Freya & Sasha Antonova (U14 Doubles), Annabel Brown (U16 Singles), Annabel & Anna Ratto (U16 Doubles), Taylor-Rose Foo (U18 Singles), Taylor & Diva Tiwari (U18 Doubles). Other standout performances were M Worthy (U13 Singles Plate Winner), M Worthy & M Nethercot (U13 Doubles Silver), S Antonova (U14 Singles Silver) and A Ratto (U16 Singles Silver).

Standout performances in the boys' competition were Sam Negyal (U16 Singles Plate winner), Thomas Green (U16 Singles Bronze), Thomas and Sam (U16 Doubles joint Bronze), Kohashi-Khan & McAllister (U16 Doubles joint Bronze), Milo Arie & Henry Severino (U18 Doubles Plate winners). Well done to all who took part and a most sincere thank you to our coach, Howard Wiseman, to our opponents, and to the RFA for organising so much for our young players.

BEDFORD SCHOOL

Henry Vann reports: The 2025/26 Fives season for Bedford School was busy, with all our usual fixtures against Rugby, the University of Cambridge, the Old Bedfordians and Oundle taking place. The regular house Senior and Junior competitions were also held and hotly contested – definitely so in the heatwave for the junior Fives, but with the cool Fives Courts being put to good use.

With Fives on offer at the prep school and across three terms, the team expanded and the numbers of boys doing Fives in the summer term has gone from 4 to 24 in the last few years. The Easter break saw Junior House Fives won by Paulo Pontine, and we had one of the more successful entries in the National Schools for recent years, with Sam McMurran and Fraser Morgan making it through to the quarter-finals before being knocked out by the eventual winners.

Most exciting is the progress of fundraising now underway for the Fives Court renovation project, with a plan for new glass backs, an outer wall and courts re-painted, all to be completed over the summer. This will make Fives far more visible within school life and at the centre of many pupils' journeys on the school site.

CHRIST'S HOSPITAL

Stephen Walsh reports: Although our number of active competitive players is low at the moment, those who are playing at a good level are as keen as ever. Thanks to the flexibility of the coaches at other schools we had some really enjoyable, well matched games, beating a St Paul's side in a close match (72-69) and drawing with Tonbridge in an even closer one (39-39). The boys won four of seven fixtures, while the girls had a 100% record (played 1, won 1).

We had good days at the regionals. Oscar brought home the U18 Plate; Kavin, a year young, the U16 Singles Plate, and Thor & Quinn the Doubles. Our girls were no match for the Alleyn's juggernaut, though Daria & Eden were pleased with their U14 Doubles Plate medals. Nkenna & Matilda, the Fivesistas (trademark registered), won the U18 Doubles Plate on Thursday, having played their first-ever game on the Wednesday.


CH's Oscar with U18 SE Regionals Plate

We thanked Michael Lacewing at the end of the season for his wonderful leadership, so coaching-wise we are all Indians and no chiefs. CH Fives is hale and hearty however. Most afternoons all five courts are full, heartrates are raised in a gentle sort of way and the ambience is genial. Good news is that CH Fives has a sponsor. The Worshipful Company of Glovers celebrated CH's links with the city with a generous offer to foot the bill for a year's glove supply; a delegation came to the school to see some court action. If only there were a Worshipful Company of Ball-makers – then we would truly be in clover.

DERBY MOOR JUNIORS

Bob Dolby reports: It's been a frustrating year for the club with respect to increasing the numbers of junior players. Despite several attempts by Stuart Kirby, in particular, to encourage pupils at the school to take up the game, our two main players have remained Max Staryk and Zach Winson Yates, who have played regularly on club evenings as well as on the Saturday morning sessions, striving to improve their game. Their efforts paid off at the West of England Schools tournament at Sherborne in January: Max won the U18 Singles Plate and Zach the U16 Doubles Plate. This he did with his partner Harry Hill, a pupil at Malvern College who plays with us in the holidays. Zach had already tasted success earlier in the season at the Yorkshire Open, winning the Doubles Bowl with Dylan Wright. Not to be outdone Max teamed up with Val Fikhter at the West of England Schools to win the Bowl for quarter-final losers. Though not a member of the Derby Moor Fives Club, Val has been coming down to Derby regularly to play with us and we are therefore delighted with the success he has enjoyed at schoolboy level this season.


Derby and Malvern combine to win the U16 Doubles Plate at Sherborne

EASTBOURNE COLLEGE

Simon Beal reports: The big news at the beginning of the year was the completion of the Eastbourne courts' roof project - a fairly long time coming but a fine job in the end, replacing the roof of the courts themselves and of the viewing area - along with a full paint job and 'shiny' new floor. Unfortunately, early on we made the discovery that the new floor lacked grip and this resulted in a significant number of sessions needing to be cancelled, which continued on and off up until the Lent term when the floors could be repainted. Despite this, Fives has remained a popular games choice throughout the year for girls and boys alike, with junior year groups signing up for Fives activity slots. Pupils enjoyed girls and boys fixtures against Christ's Hospital (unfortunately the Tonbridge fixture had to be cancelled this year) and the usual inter-house competitions for girls and boys across three age groups - always fiercely contested and conducted with great Fives spirit. At the end of February our girls competed in the South East Regionals, coming away as U18 Singles and Doubles runners-up and U18 Singles and U16 Doubles Plate winners. As the season drew to a close the girls journeyed to Oundle for the Schoolgirls Nationals, not quite enjoying the successes of recent years this time, but with all developing their game well and really enjoying the experience overall.


Eastbourne's medal winners at the SE Regionals

EDINBURGH ACADEMY

Hector McFarlane reports: 2025/26 was another strong season for the Fives players at E.A., especially for the younger pupils. For the first time in the school's history we achieved a clean-sweep of the Boys Scottish Schools' events, with Jock Lawrie retaining the U18 Singles title, before partnering Weems Henry to win the U18 Doubles, whilst Ludo Clark & Prannav Jesuarul won an all E.A. final in the Scottish U16 Doubles. The E.A. girls had a strong showing at the Durham Women's and the new Scottish Women's Open events, with various medallists across multiple age-categories and a notable semi-final appearance for Zoe Armstrong in the Open Singles. Meanwhile the Jesters' January tour was its usual mixture of great Fives and riotous fun for all involved and kick-started a very busy Spring Term. We had a bumper crop of 15 E.A. girls attend Nationals at Oundle this year, with Amelie Hurwitz finishing as runner-up in the blue-riband event of the U18 Singles. Isobelle Gair waltzed her way to the U13 Singles title and partnered Mia Linklater to also win the Doubles Cup. Meanwhile in the National boys' event we had 20 entrants across the three age categories. In the U14s James Walker was


EA's U14s dominated their age-group at the Nationals

SCHOOLS SEASON REVIEW 2025-26

commanding in his Singles Cup victory, whilst he and Robert Jamieson lifted the Doubles trophy in an all E.A. final. Roof troubles mean that our home courts are out of action for the foreseeable, but fingers crossed the hordes of Fives-loving boys and girls will be able to return to the game next season.

FETTES COLLEGE

Peter Worlledge reports: Following a busy Autumn Term of team and game development, the Spring term began with the 38th annual joust with the Jesters as they descended once again upon Edinburgh for a packed weekend of highly competitive and hugely enjoyable Fives. Regular fixtures throughout the remainder of the term allowed all teams to develop, with encouraging progress visible across every age group. The girls in particular enjoyed a very successful season with increasing depth and confidence throughout the squad.

At the Scottish Women's Open Championships, Faye S secured an excellent victory in the Doubles Plate, marking the first Fettes participation in the event and a significant achievement for girls' Fives at the School. The Scottish Schools Championships also brought success, with Lochie F and Louis M finishing as runners-up in the Senior Doubles Plate while Jonty C-M and Rory L achieved the same result in the Colts Doubles Plate. At the National Schools Girls Championships at Oundle School, Iona N produced a superb performance to win the U16 Singles Plate, while in the U18 Doubles event Faye S reached the quarter-final stage against a strong field.

House Fives competitions once again proved fiercely contested. In the girls' competition, College West emerged victorious ahead of Dalmeny. Carrington secured the Junior boys' title while Glencorse won the Senior competition to become the 137th holders of the historic House Fives Cup. There remains a tremendous amount to be proud of across the Club. Participation numbers remain strong, enthusiasm for the game continues to grow and there has been clear improvement across all squads over the course of the year. My sincere thanks go to all players for their commitment, resilience and good humour throughout a very busy and enjoyable season. Fives at Fettes remains in excellent heart!

LORETTO SCHOOL

Richie Murby reports: This year Loretto Fives club experienced progress and challenges in equal measure. Players like Nazar B, Fergus R, Angus D and Jack R trained diligently and significantly improved their level, and are always a great group to work with. However, due to their limited numbers and other commitments, school matches were fewer than we would have liked. One highlight was Jack and Angus teaming up for the U16 Scottish Schools Doubles in the Spring term. They acquitted themselves well against some pretty tough competition, and, while they eventually lost out at the semi-final stage of the Plate, they came away from the tournament with a lot of positives to take forward.

Meanwhile, recent Loretto leaver Findlay S has been hard at work setting up a squash court Fives club in Dundee, where he is studying – following a fixture with Strathallan, the new Dundee club are poised to host the Caley Club, and hopefully others, for matches in the coming season. Another adventure for the Jesters in January, perhaps?

Back at Loretto, the Fives courts have been subject to both leaks and condensation this year, which has significantly cut into playing time and at times affected matches too. This setback may, however, present an opportunity to enhance the venue, in particular the viewing gallery. This could be vital in our drive to increase the visibility, profile and image of Fives within the school and restore it as a suitable venue for school and adult tournaments. Discussions have begun on this and we are hopeful that an exciting solution can be found.

MALVERN COLLEGE

Chris Thomas reports: Malvern College has seen a few players playing regularly, with Fives now an established part of the Year 9 induction carousel. Hopefully some of these will continue playing in the future. The highlight has been Harry Hill (U16), who has developed into a fine player, but sadly lacks decent opposition, save for the increasingly decrepit Master i/c. Harry reached the final of the U16 Doubles Plate at the West of England Schools, partnering one of his fellow Derby Moor club members. He had a decent run at the Colquhoun Trophy and will be a force to be reckoned with in a couple of years. Regular fixtures with Marlborough, Radley and Rugby have been maintained, but more are welcome from our Midland neighbours! There are a few Year 9 girls playing who I have hopes for in the future, and a new school timetable might open up more playing opportunities.

MARLBOROUGH COLLEGE

Tom Kiggell reports: The highlights of the season were the trip to the Girls' Nationals with a keen squad of U14s and the exploits of U16 Henry Fletcher. The new girls took to the game with great enthusiasm, practising hard from October onwards; the team of 6 gave everything at Oundle, with Gina Good & Lucy Hender taking home Bronze in the Doubles, and Louisa Lavan the runner-up spot in the Singles Plate. It was one of those rewarding days when you saw players drawing on resources of skill, teamwork and guts they didn't realise they had – and enjoying themselves along the way. Stage one in a good Fives journey for these girls, I hope.

Henry Fletcher nursed his disappointment at losing in the last 16 of last year's U16 Nationals, and released the emotion to blitz numerous opponents in the course of the season, many of them U18s. Combining


Marlborough's U16 Colquhoun winner

reach, power and competitive coolness, he outplayed all-comers to win the U16 Colquhoun Trophy in February. Teammate Roger Xie also demonstrated the enormous improvement he had made over the year. Playing together in the National U16s they reached the quarter-finals of the U16 Doubles, to be knocked out by Alleyn's first pair. Others made their mark over the year, guided and inspired by captain Ivo Corrie; it is to be hoped that they will step up to compete on a national level in the coming year. We look forward to renewing rivalries with our friends on the SW circuit in 2026-27.

MERCHISTON CASTLE SCHOOL

Matt Hillier reports: It has been another very positive Fives season at Merchiston. In addition to the regular fixtures against Fettes and Edinburgh Academy, we were treated to a visit from Mount Kelly on tour in October, who provided very worthwhile fixtures against our U15s and U14s. In the U18 Scottish Schools Singles, Fergus Foley led the way for Merchiston, winning his group, his quarter-final and a gruelling semi-final 15-12. He fell short in the final, losing narrowly by 2


Merchiston's U13s at the Nationals

games to 1; but finishing as runner-up in Scotland was a great achievement. In the U18 Doubles, Fergus partnered with Reggie Hargreaves, and again reached the final before also falling one place short of the title.

The highlight of the Fives season for the boys is undoubtedly their annual trip to London, to test themselves against the best in the UK. At the U13s there was a noticeable improvement in performance as the day progressed, with Angus Dunn and Zachary Siu ending up as winning Bronze in the U13 Doubles. Then five boys travelled to the U14 and U18 Nationals. In the U18 Singles, Reggie Hargreaves reached the last 16 of the U18 Cup. With Fergus Foley injured, Reggie paired up with a boy from Radley in the Doubles, where they lost in a tight semi-final of the Plate 15-13. A great experience for Reggie in his final year at the school. In the U14 Singles, all four boys qualified for the Cup after the group stages. Archie McCulloch and Jack Walker both fell at the last 32 stage, while Harry Leiper and Henry Dunbar both went one round further. In the Doubles, Archie and Harry reached the quarter-finals of the Cup, and Henry and Jack the quarter-finals of the Plate. A great learning experience for the boys, who will be keen to return for the U16s Nationals in two years.

MOUNT KELLY

Guy Ayling reports: We are grateful to the Association for its generous funding of the refurbishment of our second court, reflecting the Association's commitment to growing the game at all levels. With 30 players, the additional court is vital in order to train efficiently and inclusively. The court was officially opened in October with the inaugural Devon Open, perfectly capturing the spirit of our game. Mixed adult-pupil pairs created a fantastic atmosphere of shared enthusiasm and mentorship, underlining the strong links between generations in our community. Chris Blakeley joined us, and we all enjoyed a celebratory lunch also. Pupil Hugo Dyson and Deep West stalwart Luke Newman-Taylor took the silverware. In the Michaelmas half term, we enjoyed a highly successful three-day tour of Scotland, with excellent Fives played at Merchiston Castle, Edinburgh Academy and Strathallan, and wonderful hospitality to boot.

As a young programme our oldest players are 15, yet once again they acquitted themselves well in competition. A pair reaching the quarter-finals of the U18 Doubles at the Regional Championships, held at Sherborne, provided a promising sign


Mount Kelly at the Nationals

of future achievement. There was a further chance for development with a friendly against Sherborne, with both schools bringing on their least experienced players. As expected, the National Championships was a highlight of the year. Securing a final spot in the U16 Doubles Plate and winning the U14 Doubles Plate wrapped up the year well. We are already planning our advance on next year's tournament.

Looking ahead, there is a third court to be refurbished and a 'Fives Pro' to welcome in September, as well as another Scottish foray. Continuing to grow the girls' squad remains a priority. Overall, the year has been one of strong progress, growing confidence and much fun, underpinned by the Association's much appreciated support.

RADLEY COLLEGE

David Robinson reports: Our season began with a closely fought home fixture against Malvern. Finlay Schelin and Hajime Koma continued as regular first-team players, while William Payne and Kai Pullen-Campbell represented the College for the first time. The match was an excellent contest throughout, with Malvern eventually edging a narrow victory by just two points.

Isaac Jimenez-Jubb made his debut for the school against Marlborough College. Although the final score of 75-133 was less close than we would have liked, the match proved excellent preparation for the forthcoming Schools' Winchester Doubles Championships. There Finlay Schelin secured a group-stage win and Francis Carian & Felix Mason were one of few pairs to earn a rare point against the tournament's winning pair.

A particular highlight of the season was Radley's return to both the Colquhoun Trophy and the National Schools for the first time in many years. In the Colquhoun, Finlay Schelin produced an excellent quarter-final performance and looked capable of causing an upset before the eventual winner found greater success by targeting Finlay's right-hand side. Hajime Koma also enjoyed a strong tournament, finishing runner-up in the U18 Singles Plate.

The annual fixture against the Old Radleians was perfect preparation for the National Schools. There was a welcome

return to the courts for Andrej Djordjevic, this time playing as opponent. Our thanks go to Duncan Neale for organising these much-appreciated fixtures, and to Rory James-Duff for sharing his experience and offering Finlay valuable coaching advice.

At National Schools, Finlay was Radley's sole representative, but thanks to the generosity of a Merchiston player stepping in to form a doubles partnership, he was able to compete in both the Singles and Doubles. Despite being drawn against the top pair in the opening round of both competitions, Finlay and his partner progressed impressively to the semi-finals of the Doubles Plate, a significant achievement.

RUGBY SCHOOL

Ben Lane reports: The early season visits from Derby Moor gave a tremendous kick-start to our year of Fives and showed the players the standard they


Success for Rugby at the Midlands Schools

should be aspiring to. During the Lent term, several players achieved notable success at regional and national level. In February 2026, Jack Skailes retained the Midlands Regional Singles Cup and, alongside Vincent Barnes, secured the Midlands' Regional Doubles Cup. This marks the fifth consecutive year that the Singles cup has remained at Rugby School.

In March, a few players also competed in the National Schoolgirls Championship, where Ivany Mebou Talla & Grace Harwood reached the final, finishing as runners-up to Alleyn's School. In addition, Jess Carter won the U16 Doubles Plate with a partner from Edinburgh Academy, leading to it being nicknamed the "Rugburgh Plate." As always, departing players will be sorely missed next year and the continual cycle of building and developing new players starts again.

ST PAUL'S SCHOOL

Sam Roberts reports: It's been one of our most successful seasons at tournaments, creating history along the way. In their final year at school, Freddie


St Paul's dominate at the West of England Schools

Hammond Giles and Josh Ferro became the first pair ever to win the National U18 Doubles three years in a row, and Freddie became only the second player to win the U18 Singles three years in a row. In Doubles, Freddie and Josh have been utterly dominant, with Josh's extraordinary power on the left and Freddie's impressive reading of the game and faultless retrieving. Freddie's Singles play has been exceptional – built on astonishing speed, balance and accuracy. He has not lost a game to a school player for over three years, and he ends his time at St Paul's at No. 6 in the adult rankings – surely a record for a school player.

Other highlights of the season: Our Yr12s Nadim Cortas and Zen Okada beat the 1st pairs of Winchester and Tonbridge in the fixtures, and made it to the semi-finals of the two schools tournaments. Our U16 second pair, the left/right-handed combo of Aarav Bhalodia and Ishaan Baijal, won the Plate at the Nationals, but their best match was probably their narrow 12-10, 11-9 loss to the Winchester top pair in the main draw.

The U15s were highly competitive. In Singles, Joey Hammond Giles was again in a class of his own – regularly beating much older players in fixtures. His toughest opponent at U16 turned out to be our own U16 Alex Ponte. During practice sessions, there were many high quality battles, with honours pretty even. But when they met in the finals of the West of England and the Nationals, Joey won both. Congratulations to Joey and his partner Thomas Outred for a memorable victory against our U16s in the Nationals final – after Alex & Ranvir Puri had come through a gruelling semi-final against the top seeds from Alleyn's. Freddie and Joey Hammond Giles are the first pair of brothers ever to win Singles and Doubles at U18 and U16 at the Nationals. Noah Thomas, Jamin Agostino, Leo Bauer and Minwoo Choi made up the U15 top six. Their highlight was winning the Winchester fixture, 112 to 111 points. The U14s were tremendous again this year, beating opponents in school fixtures who often defeat us, and going deep at the Nationals, with Kosti Cortas losing the Singles final. We're looking forward to seeing what they can all do next year.

SEDBERGH SCHOOL

Rupert Follett reports: Sedbergh Fives has enjoyed another good season. At least 20 players have graced the courts most Monday and Friday afternoons during the Lent Term. The season opened with the Northern Schools Championships, a full day of matches in the U18 and U16 categories, Singles and Doubles. It was particularly pleasing to take some Year 10s who had never played in a Fives tournament. In the U16s there were some strong performances, with Fred Leslie winning the title. Fred then joined with Hector Maclean in the Doubles to sweep all before them and claim the title. In the U18 Singles Charlie Lythe battled hard in his side of the draw, falling to Durham's top player in the semi-final. Toby Follett made it to the final and was eventually a triumphant


Sedbergh and Strathallan on court together

winner. In the Doubles Toby & Charlie finished runners-up to the top Durham pairing.

As part of their North of England tour, Strathallan travelled to Durham and then on to Sedbergh where they stayed the night, the match taking place on Sunday morning. First up were the Singles matches. There were some terrific contests and good wins for the top seeds Toby Follett and Seb Massey-Ford. Fred Leslie and Hector Maclean battled hard to earn valuable points from their ties. In the Doubles Joe Hanley & Teddy Wilson formed a strong Winder House pairing while Robbie Stephen & Charlie Lythe tried valiantly but were overcome by stronger opponents. After 3 hours on court, played in a friendly and positive way, Fives was the certainly winner … … and Strathallan. In the staff match, Strathallan won. Comfortably. Again!

In another highlight Sedbergh hosted the Barnes Bridge Winchester Fives Tournament. Some of the country's leading adult Fives players travelled to Sedbergh, and the event attracted a number of Old Sedberghians – it was good to have them back on the Sedbergh courts.

SHERBORNE SCHOOL

Nick Scorer reports: Another enjoyable and busy season for Sherborne Fives, starting with us hosting the West of England Schools Championships


Sherborne's Colquhoun Trophy medallists

in January where Johnny M and Jordan G won the Senior Plate Doubles competition. It was excellent to have a pretty consistent 1st IV who took part in nine School fixtures, winning the majority of their matches. The Sherborne Old Boys match was as fun as ever, with lots of current and former pupils taking part. The Colquhoun Trophy tournament was also a highlight: Will H won the Singles Plate and Jordan G the Open Singles. Our Colts and Junior Colts also enjoyed plenty of competitive fixtures through the term. 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: A successful season with a strong squad of U18 players and some very decent lower years players, particularly Marcas Hunter and Levi King. We also have a good squad of junior girls and an enthusiastic group of years 7 to 9 who practise on the squash courts twice a week.

Tournaments began with the Winchester Schools Doubles, where our first pair (Connor McNaughton & Charlie Sharpe) won the Plate. Then, at the West of England, they caused a potential upset in the quarters by winning their first game against Winchester's first pair, but could not hold onto their advantage in a closely fought second and third game. Connor gained some revenge in winning the singles Bowl against Zach from Winchester. The Midlands Regionals were closely fought at the U18 level, with Connor & Charlie losing a close final to the Rugby first pair, and Connor runner-up in the Singles. Charlie Burrows won the Plate and Marcas Hunter the Bowl. Stamford dominated the U15s, with Hunter winning the U15 Singles and Levi King & Tait Vines winning the Doubles.

The girls also played well at the National School Girls, with Ellie Morris taking the U14 Singles Plate and the U14 Doubles Plate with April Dennison. Meanwhile our new players in Y8 competed fiercely in the U13s, with Isla Parton & Orla Sharp winning the U13 Doubles Plate. In the National Schools, Connor reached the quarter-final of the U18 Singles and, with partner Charlie, the quarter-final of the Doubles, where they lost a close match to their now regular nemeses, the Winchester 1st pair. Meanwhile, Hari Jones reached the U18 Singles Plate final, while our 2nd pair of Rory Jones & Marcas Hunter reached the U18 Doubles plate final.

STRATHALLAN SCHOOL

Ewan Lee reports: This has been another most enjoyable season, during which there has been a pleasing mix of continuity and variety. The Fives year began in the autumn with a new fixture against a touring side from Mount Kelly School, and I am happy to say that they will be travelling North this coming academic year to play us again. In January we had our usual encounter with the Jesters and the Caledonians before going off to play at Durham University and Sedbergh School. The team very much enjoyed playing at these two excellent venues and the boys were able to gain more experience, especially playing the Winchester version of the game. I am most grateful to our friends on the circuit for their time, patience and generous hospitality. Thank you, of course, to the team under the captaincy of Oliver DH, who has been a stalwart of Fives for a good number of years and has encouraged others to play, and to his Doubles partner Alec P, Alfie P, Isaac Y and James DH, all of whom will be returning to play in the new school year. We look forward to next season and hopefully the chance to play at other venues.

TONBRIDGE SCHOOL

Henry Swales reports: The season began promisingly across all age groups, with strong numbers and a clear sense of momentum within the club. Boys have competed with energy and purpose in fixtures, the ever-competitive weekly leagues, and a full programme of House competitions.


Tonbridge win two U18 titles at the SE Regionals

The senior group led the way, producing the standout results of the year at the South East Regional Championships. In the U18 Singles, Oliver Carroll produced an excellent run to take the title in a closely contested final. Huw Thomas added to the success by winning the 3rd place play-off, and the pair then combined to secure the U18 Doubles title. Further depth was evident as James Seddon & Devan Radia claimed victory in the Plate. Carroll led the club admirably as captain of Fives, combining personal improvement with strong leadership and enthusiasm throughout the year. The 1st IV tested their mettle in a series of challenging fixtures, including matches against a strong RFA IV and in the Old Tonbridgian fixture at the end of term. Carroll also enjoyed a decent run in the Singles at the Nationals and, alongside Thomas, progressed well in the Doubles before they were narrowly defeated by a strong St Paul's pair.

At U16 level, Tonbridge encountered particularly strong opposition at SE Regionals, notably from Alleyn's and Christ's Hospital. While the principal honours went elsewhere, there were a number of encouraging performances, with Henry Wilson reaching the latter stages of the Singles. The U15 and U16 teams faced a series of demanding fixtures against Winchester and Alleyn's where again there were clear signs of progress across the group.

The U14 cohort has been particularly strong in number and enthusiasm. Competition in both the Novi tournament and the leagues has been fierce, and the age-group has performed with considerable promise against strong opposition from Winchester, Alleyn's and St Paul's. This group clearly provides a solid foundation for the future.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE SCHOOL

Chris Blakeley reports: For a school with only one court and a coach only one day each week, Fives has been modestly successful this year. The regular sports curriculum spot is for sixth formers, but each term there are also lunchtime house Fives Doubles tournaments for a lower year pupils (usually between years 7 to 10), in which each plays the other team once, and the two with the most wins/points play a final, televised in the main hall of the school. A combination of rally scoring and a system in which each of the 4 players serves in turn helps even out the matches, but as many have never set foot in a Fives court before, each game to 15 usually only takes about 10 minutes. These competitions feed a few of the keener and more able pupils into the after-school activity session. This year we sent one sixth former (Charlie R) to the West of England, where he was a Singles Plate finalist, and to the National Schools. He also played in the President's Cup. And if all goes well he will reappear at Oxford in September. We also had 4 players in the U13 Schools, where they acquitted themselves respectably, and hopefully they will continue to play next year as U14s.



UCS at the National U13s

WINCHESTER COLLEGE

Giles Munn reports: Winchester College Fives has had a season hit by injuries and illness, with, for example, neither of last year's U16 Doubles finalists getting on court for more than a couple of hours all season. Despite this the club still seems to be doing well, with 35 players representing the club over 23 matches.

At the West of England Schools our captain, Arthur James-Duff took 3rd place in the Singles, and paired up with Zach Goulding to take the runner-up spot in the U18 Doubles, a feat they also managed in the Winchester Doubles. Meanwhile Ludo Carnegie and Henry Franks fought for the spoils in the Plate final (Henry won) before pairing up to battle to the semi-finals of the Doubles.

At Nationals, with our captain Arthur unavailable it was up to Theo Munaretto Day to step up and he did so admirably. He may have lost to Ferro in the quarter-finals of the Singles but in do so also claimed the "shot of the tournament" tag, assigned by Ferro's doubles partner Freddie, with a behind the back lob winner. Theo then paired up with Zach Goulding for the first time to make it all the way to the U18 Doubles final. We managed to take only four U14s to the Nationals as the tournament was during our holidays, ruling out a number of others. Nevertheless, all four made it through the group stages and into the main part of the Singles, with Rian Dhital, our number 1, taking 3rd place. Unfortunately, his partner, Kingsley Hang, picked up a bad bruise and they went out 11-12 in the 2nd round to the eventual runners-up, Edinburgh Academy II.

We say goodbye to a number of U18s this year, an enthusiastic bunch that have added both quality and good humour to the club. I hope to see them on court again soon.



Winchester 1st pair runners-up in the Schools Winchester Fives Doubles

End-of-Season Rankings - Top 75

The National Rugby Fives Rankings summer 2026 as compiled by **Will Ellison**

End-of-Season Singles Rankings 2025-26 Previous: End of 2024/25 Season

Current	Previous	Name	Points
1	1	Ed Kay	94.6
2	3	Ben Beltrami	94.2
3	2	Dan Tristao	90.3
4	13	Dan Grant	61.0
5	4	Julian Aquilina	59.9
6	14	Freddie Hammond Giles	49.4
7	6	Charlie Brooks	48.4
8	6	Lewis Keates	48.0
9	5	Richie Murby	42.7
10	20	Penn Chai	39.6
11	17	Gwydion Wiseman	39.1
12	8	Theo Parker	36.2
13	27	Terry McElvaney	35.2
14	26	Cameron Low	34.9
15	15	James Tilston	34.6
16	25	Charlie Lacewing	33.0
17	22	Ollie Arnold	32.9
18	11	Andrew Boyd	31.1
19	12	Marcus Cloke Browne	28.1
20	47	Theo Vernacchio	27.6
21	33	Emrys Thursfield	27.5
22	21	Anthony Goodwin	27.2
23	23	Oscar McIntyre	26.7
24	29	Stuart Scott	26.1
25	32	Ander Iraizoz	24.6
26	37	Valentine Fikhter	24.4
27	10	Tom Watkinson	23.7
28	16	Isaac Weaver	23.0
29	30	Simon Beattie	22.0
30	39	James Toop	20.8
31	35	Archie McCreath	20.6
32	9	Will Ellison	20.5
33	18	Ben Jourdan	20.3
34	41	Nick Geere	19.4
35	62	Patrick Harrison	19.4
36	24	Joe Sumner	16.8
37	28	Shiloh Wu	16.4
38	58	Will Milne	15.7
39	New	Dwight Schultz	15.1
40	19	Sam Russell	14.7
41	156	Nathan Groombridge-Westacott	14.2
42	53	Richard Christie	14.0
43	38	Sebastian Ion	13.4
44	51	Julian Hanton	13.1
44	55	Yarin Negyal	13.1
46	36	James Smith	13.1
47	40	JP Cheng	13.1
48	60	David Butler	12.0
49	31	James Milburn	11.3
50	44	Riki Houlden	11.0
51	54	Richard Guthrie	10.5
52	42	Taylor McGuire	10.2
53	49	Ben Hale	10.0
54	52	Jeffrey Chan	9.8
55	108	Jeremy Hughes	9.1
56	69	Arthur Noble	8.7
57	80	Kaito Bremner	8.4
58	156	Nick Whitney	8.2
59	46	Michael Suddaby	8.2
60	58	Angus Rackham	7.9
61	50	Ronnie Brown	7.7
62	108	Matthew Ord	7.2
63	66	Ben Lane	7.1
64	New	John Keyes	7.1
65	57	Marco Skogh	6.9
66	43	Enrique Castillo Carbonell	6.8
67	56	Aiden Whitham	6.8
68	104	Shinan Zhang	6.6
69	63	Addie Chai	6.1
69	New	Will Bishop	6.1
69	New	Arthur Borthwick	6.1
72	New	Zachary Winson Yates	6.0
73	New	Giles Munn	5.9
74	73	Alex Upton	5.8
75	48	Chris Davey	5.7

End-of-Season Doubles Rankings 2025-26 Previous: End of 2024/25 Season

Current	Previous	Name	Points
1	1	Dan Tristao	104.6
2	2	Ed Kay	94.1
3	3	Ben Beltrami	86.9
4	4	Charlie Brooks	86.5
5	15	Ollie Arnold	72.4
6	12	Dan Grant	68.0
7	5	Theo Parker	66.3
8	6	Julian Aquilina	60.8
9	11	Penn Chai	60.3
10	10	Cameron Low	59.1
11	13	Archie McCreath	57.5
12	8	Lewis Keates	56.7
13	33	Richie Murby	52.7
14	7	James Tilston	48.8
15	21	Terry McElvaney	47.1
16	14	Gwydion Wiseman	44.5
17	20	Valentine Fikhter	41.2
18	52	Theo Vernacchio	36.2
19	25	Freddie Hammond Giles	35.8
20	17	James Toop	35.2
21	22	Anthony Goodwin	35.0
22	24	Oscar McIntyre	34.9
23	30	Stuart Scott	31.7
24	29	David Butler	30.2
25	26	Ben Jourdan	29.3
26	9	Tom Watkinson	29.0
27	35	Patrick Harrison	27.8
28	47	Tom Maconie	26.1
29	27	Isaac Weaver	25.1
30	61	Charlie Lacewing	24.4
31	62	Tim Hebblethwaite	24.2
32	72	Simon Beattie	24.1
33	New	John Minta	23.7
34	28	Andrew Boyd	23.2
35	19	Bally Singh	22.8
36	New	Richard Guthrie	22.6
37	New	Kevin Diggins	22.4
38	New	Josh Ferro	22.0
39	42	Richard Christie	21.5
40	45	Ed Carr	21.3
41	23	Emrys Thursfield	21.2
42	New	Rupert Mathieu	20.0
42	18	Sam Russell	20.0
44	36	Julian Hanton	20.0
45	34	Sebastian Ion	19.2
46	92	Jeremy Hughes	19.1
47	31	Marcus Cloke Browne	19.1
48	37	JP Cheng	18.3
49	46	Shinan Zhang	18.0
50	32	James Smith	17.7
51	149	Dan Swinbank	17.5
52	104	Keith Kennerley	16.7
53	38	Ben Kirwan	16.4
54	New	John Keyes	15.8
55	69	Camille Beattie	15.6
56	New	Dwight Schultz	15.1
57	16	Will Ellison	14.8
58	39	Nick Geere	14.3
59	101	John Savery	14.1
59	New	Maddy Raynor	14.1
59	New	Simon Maskell	14.1
62	92	Josh Buchan	14.0
63	116	Yarin Negyal	13.9
64	44	Ben Hale	13.9
65	40	Andy Landon	13.8
66	53	Enrique Castillo Carbonell	13.7
67	47	Jez Sinton	13.4
67	47	Kevin Brice	13.4
67	47	Max Frost	13.4
67	47	Jeffrey Chan	13.4
71	130	Alex Goodwin	13.3
72	77	Louise Mathias	12.6
73	71	Will Milne	12.6
74	149	Rob Mason	12.5
75	55	Max Bolt	12.2

2025-26 RESULTS ROUND-UP

2025-26 RESULTS ROUND-UP

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

SOUTH WEST OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025
Singles: E.Kay
Doubles: B.Beltrami & E.Kay

SOUTH EAST OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025
Singles: E.Kay
Doubles: P.Chai & R.Mathieu

YORKSHIRE OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025
Singles: E.Kay
Doubles: An.Goodwin & L.Keates

LONDON OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025
Singles: E.Kay
Doubles: C.Brooks & D.Tristao

CHALLENGER SINGLES Rugby 10/2025
T.McElvaney

WOMEN'S SCOTTISH OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025
Singles: L.Mathias
Doubles: L.Mathias & E.Vallascas

WEST OF ENGLAND OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025
Singles: D.Tristao
Doubles: B.Beltrami & D.Tristao

NATIONAL U25 CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025
Singles: F.Hammond Giles
Doubles: C.Low & T.Vernacchio

NATIONAL WOMEN'S U25 CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025
Singles: K.Bell
Doubles: K.Bell & S.Leboff


Wayne scoring at the SW Open


Women's Scottish Doubles Champions

OWERS TROPHY 2025
Old Paulines

SCHOOLS WINCHESTER FIVES DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2025
St Paul's School (J.Ferro & F.Hammond Giles)

DURHAM WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025
Singles: L.Mathias
Doubles: C.Beattie & E.Vallascas

NATIONAL SINGLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2025
B.Beltrami

RFA PRESIDENT'S CUP 2025
T.Parker & H.Tunks

WEST OF ENGLAND SCHOOLS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2026
U18 Singles: F.Hammond Giles (St Paul's School)
U18 Doubles: St Paul's School (J.Ferro & F.Hammond Giles)
U16 Singles: J.Hammond Giles (St Paul's School)
U16 Doubles: Alleyn's School (R.Kohashi-Khan & F.McAllister)

112 TOURNAMENT 2026
S.Zhang & P.Chai

BRITISH STUDENTS' (BUSF) CHAMPIONSHIPS 2026
Singles: C.Low (Bristol)
Doubles: C.Low & T.Vernacchio (Bristol)

NATIONAL WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIPS 2026
Singles: C.Beattie
Doubles: L.Mathias & S.Zhang

NORTHERN SCHOOLS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2026
U18 Singles: T.Follett (Sedbergh School)
U18 Doubles: City of Durham Club (E.Terry & E.Vallascas)
U16 Singles: F.Leslie (Sedbergh School)
U16 Doubles: Sedbergh School (F.Leslie & H.Maclean)

NORTH WEST OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2026
Singles: D.Tristao
Doubles: D.Grant & D.Tristao

SOUTH EAST SCHOOLS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2026
U18 Singles: O.Carroll (Tonbridge School)
U18 Doubles: Tonbridge School (O.Carroll & H.Thomas)
U16 Singles: T.Green (Alleyn's School)
U16 Doubles: Alleyn's School (R.Kohashi-Khan & F.McAllister)

MIDLANDS SCHOOLS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2026
U18 Singles: J.Skailes (Rugby School)
U18 Doubles: Rugby School (V.Barnes & J.Skailes)


Anthony and Terry at the Challenger


At the Yorkshire Open

U15 Singles: M.Hunter (Stamford School)
U15 Doubles: Stamford School (L.King & T.Vines)

SOUTH EAST SCHOOLS GIRLS' CHAMPIONSHIPS 2026
U18 Singles: T-R.Foo (Alleyn's School)
U18 Doubles: Alleyn's School (I.De Soyza & T-R.Foo)
U16 Singles: A.Brown (Alleyn's School)
U16 Doubles: Alleyn's School (A.Brown & A.Ratto)
U14 Singles: I.Lewis (Alleyn's School)
U14 Doubles: Alleyn's School (S.Antonova & F.Dornan)
U13 Singles: I.Gair (Edinburgh Academy)
U13 Doubles: Edinburgh Academy (I.Gair & M.Linklater)

THE VARSITY MATCH 2026
Men's: Cambridge
Women's: Oxford

NORTH OF ENGLAND CHAMPIONSHIPS 2026
Singles: B.Beltrami
Doubles: O.Arnold & B.Beltrami

COLQUHOUN TROPHY 2026
U18 Singles: J.Graham (Sherborne School)
U16 Singles: H.Fletcher (Marlborough Collegel)

WINCHESTER FIVES OPEN DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2026
D.Butler & L.Keates

SCOTTISH SCHOOLS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2026
U18 Singles: J.Lawrie (Edinburgh Academy)
U18 Doubles: Edinburgh Academy (W.Henry & J.Lawrie)
U16 Doubles: Edinburgh Academy (L.Clark & P.Jesuarul)

NATIONAL SCHOOLS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2026
U18 Singles: F.Hammond Giles (St Paul's School)
U18 Doubles: St Paul's School (J.Ferro & F.Hammond Giles)
U16 Singles: J.Hammond Giles (St Paul's School)
U16 Doubles: St Paul's School (J.Hammond Giles & T.Outred)
U14 Singles: J.Walker (Edinburgh Academy)
U14 Doubles: Edinburgh Academy (R.Jamieson & J.Walker)
U13 Singles: O.Moss (Berkhamsted School)
U13 Doubles: Berkhamsted School (O.Moss & H.Seddon)

NATIONAL GIRLS' CHAMPIONSHIPS 2026
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 (A.Brown & A.Ratto)
U14 Singles: F.Dornan (Alleyn's School)
U14 Doubles: Alleyn's School (A.Antonova & F.Dornan)
U13 Singles: I.Gair (Edinburgh Academy)
U13 Doubles: Edinburgh Academy (I.Gair & M.Linklater)

NATIONAL CLUB KNOCK-OUT 2026 (Wood Cup)
Old Paulines

NATIONAL DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2026 (Cyriax Cup)
E.Kay & D.Tristao

CHALLENGER SINGLES Dulwich 4/2026
J.Toop

NATIONAL VETERANS' CHAMPIONSHIPS 2026
Singles: T.Maconie
Doubles: T.Hebblethwaite & T.Maconie


Women's National Doubles Champions


Ian and Nick at the Vintage

NATIONAL VINTAGE CHAMPIONSHIPS 2026
Singles: D.Fox
Doubles: A.Pringle & M.Spillane

NATIONAL MASTERS' DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2026
S.Kirby & B.Kirk

NATIONAL GRAND MASTERS' DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2026
J.East & W.Enstone

SCOTTISH OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2026
Singles: E.Kay
Doubles: O.Arnold & B.Beltrami

WINCHESTER FIVES MIXED DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2026
S.Zhang & P.Chai

NATIONAL OPEN MIXED DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2026
H.Tunks & B.Beltrami

WOMEN'S WINCHESTER FIVES CHAMPIONSHIPS 2026
Singles: M.Nugent
Doubles: M.Raynor & H.Tunks

DERBY MOOR INVITATION DOUBLES 2026
Val Fikhter & Matt Ord

LONDON LEAGUE 2026
Edward Alleyn Club

NATIONAL SCHOOLS MIXED DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2026
Not played

THE LADY'S CUP 2025-26
Not played

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Rugby Fives Association 2026