

THE RUGBY FIVES ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT 2007-8

As many of you will have seen from the RFA's website or the mid-season Newsletter, I have now taken over the role of General Secretary from Ian Fuller, so I must go no further without extending my thanks to him for all the hard work he has put in over the last few years. It is only now that I have taken on many of his duties that I have come to realise how much he did – and how well he did it. The board, and the RFA in general, owe him an enormous debt of gratitude, and we are delighted that he will continue to be involved in the game as a board member and Honorary Treasurer. And, while we're on the subject, I'm delighted to report a positive financial situation for the Association, as you will see in the attached financial report.

Never mind financial control, though, this year has also shown Ian's skill as a coach. Over the last few years, we have become used to St Paul's dominating the schools' competitions – and a steady stream of fine young players continues to emerge from Barnes – but, this year, boys from Alleyn's under Ian's tutelage have scored some notable wins, picking up the singles and doubles titles in the Open Schools National Championships, as well as dominating the Under 13 championships.

That said, what must delight us all is that, first, so many schools are entering these competitions and, second, when you consider the plate competitions, so many schools are picking up trophies. Over the four age categories at the National Schools championships, for instance, more than 20 schools were represented, and many of them – including, for the first time in this tournament, Derby Moor – won trophies.

Indeed, the strength of the game among young players is great news for the future. This season, we have seen strong entries in both the BUSA and Under 25 championships, with the final stages producing matches and champions of the very highest quality. Surely, it won't be long before the likes of Dan Tristao, Alan Beverly and Will Ellison are challenging the established stars and winning Open competitions.

This year, Hamish Buchanan completed a memorable double, winning both the National Singles and (with Robin Perry) Doubles titles. But, it's further evidence of the strength in the game that no one player has dominated this season's championships, and several different players have picked up trophies around the country. As ever, our thanks go to the many tournament organisers who give up their time for the various championships and ensure that they run so smoothly.

We were also delighted this year to see the first tournaments on the new courts at Oundle School, but this is far from the only good news about courts. Although there have been some disappointments – we have lost the courts at Abingdon and Haileybury – there is excellent news elsewhere.

As I write, work looks set to start soon on improving the facilities at Alleyn's, while we are delighted that Fives is thriving again at Leeds University and that the court at Heversham Grammar School is set to be enclosed. However, the greatest news of all is that there seems a strong likelihood that Rugby Fives will return to the School that gave the sport its name. Rugby is planning to build two courts and has given a commitment to the game in the future. Naturally, they are looking for a sizeable investment, but something like a third of the necessary £200,000 has already been pledged – and that's before the launch of an appeal to Old Rugbeians, which will hopefully raise a substantial amount of money. Needless to say,

we are delighted with developments and will continue to help the school every step of the way however we can, whether financially or in terms of our experience with other courts around the country. As they say, watch this space...

Or, perhaps more likely, watch our website. I continue to look after the RFA's website and am pleased that so many of you have given such positive feedback on it. I am very grateful, in particular, to the tournament organisers who supply me so promptly with entry forms and results. Indeed, thanks to the miracles of texting, I was even able to have the results of one tournament online before the organiser had returned home! That said, I am always on the lookout for more content – and photographs in particular – so please do send me anything you have. The next step in the development of the site is to try and include video content, and we will be working with the site's developers, Jackson Bone, to have this new section of the site up and running before the start of next season.

At the same time, we will also continue with our other means of communication, the Annual Review and mid-season newsletter, both produced with the Eton Fives Association. Again, we are delighted with the positive feedback on both, and our thanks must go to Ian Roberts for his efforts on the Annual Review. It is a huge and hugely time-consuming project, but the hard work that he and his colleagues from the EFA put in produced a truly impressive document. Likewise, the newsletter met with much approval, and benefited this year from our use of a professional graphic designer to lay it out. We were also able to keep our costs down by distributing almost half of the copies electronically. Using email rather than Royal Mail cuts down on the costs of printing, envelopes and stamps, and I would encourage any member who doesn't already receive publications via email to seriously consider it.

We will continue with these three publications – website, Annual Review and Newsletter – over the coming season, and will continue to work with the Fives Federation to ensure that each has a defined purpose, with as little overlap between them as possible. We will also be working with the Federation to pursue possible avenues of sponsorship and to monitor the progress of the City Fives Association. The CFA is now well established, with its own one-wall tournaments and even selecting players for international competition. It is currently drawing up an ambitious five-year plan, and we hope to be able to report on its continued success in the future.

Last, but very definitely not least, I shall finish with a comment on one very definite success, the RFA's 80th Anniversary Dinner last September. Not only did a large number of RFA members attend the function at the Queen's Club, they all enjoyed a tremendous evening and – thanks in no small part to Dick Warner's efforts as auctioneer – the RFA's coffers were swelled to the tune of some £1700.

Andy Pringle
May 2008