

**THE RUGBY FIVES ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - SEPTEMBER 2013**

General Secretary's Report

It isn't until you start looking back over the year that you realise just how much activity there has been in the Rugby Fives world! Through this report I will try and give a flavour of the key elements but this is not necessarily exhaustive nor in any particular order of importance!

A year ago I reported that the building work had started on the Cambridge courts and that a fund raising campaign was about to start. Thanks to the fantastic generosity of our members and the tireless work of Bob Dolby the 'dream' of courts there has become reality with the courts due to open in the autumn of this year. We keenly await the first ball to be struck and we are sure that the facilities will be widely used once they become available.

You may recall that last year we were awarded a grant of £5000 by the Jesters and we have continued to enjoy the use of these funds by assisting coaches with their travel costs to schools and by subsidising younger competitors in their travel and accommodation costs to Championships. Additionally, the Jesters funded a reception on the first day of the National Schools championships at St.Paul's which was much enjoyed by players and spectators. We are extremely grateful to the Jesters for their continued support which we do publicise appropriately.

The Fives Coaching Qualification has developed significantly over the last 12 months. So far, thirteen members have attended the Level 2 course with four now fully qualified and a few close to being so. The first Level 1 course was held at Blundell's School earlier this year and we now have seven qualified coaches at this level. Courses will continue to be held at regular intervals and we are hugely indebted to Wayne Enstone for his boundless energy and enthusiasm in not just running the courses but in his overall input to the coaching structure. We hope that the coaches will be able to use their qualification in opening up new avenues for people to play Fives. The Board will continue to subsidise deserving cases and we will shortly be publishing some criteria in this respect.

During the year we have provided funds to assist coaching at Denstone, Edinburgh Academy and Shrewsbury House school in Surbiton. Visits have been paid to Felsted, King's Taunton, King's Bruton and St.Andrews Eastbourne to provide technical advice in the refurbishment of their courts and we hope that the proposals will find favour with the respective schools. We are extremely grateful to Stuart Kirby for his time and efforts in helping these schools in particular and also in providing assistance to others when required. Stuart has also spent much time in revising the court specifications, including back walls, lighting and the use of acceptable and non acceptable materials. We hope that this information will be of use to a number of schools who are undertaking work to their courts.

We monitor closely the health of Fives at all our schools and it is pleasing that in the majority of cases Fives is thriving - as evidenced by the entries at the National Schools championships. We do however have concerns about the situations at UCS, Clifton and some Scottish schools and we continue to look for new ways to revive the game in these locations. We are indeed fortunate to have such an enthusiastic cadre of Masters in charge who year in year out produce boys and girls playing Fives to a high level and in a good spirit.

We hope that members have enjoyed reading the regular Newsletters and the Annual Review. Work is nearly complete in merging our website with the Federation's 'Fives Online' although

they will continue to run in parallel for the time being. Regrettably Andy Pringle will shortly be resigning as Communications Officer due to the demands of impending fatherhood. We congratulate him and his wife on the news but he will be an extremely hard act to follow. I am sure all members will wish to join the Board in expressing their deep gratitude to Andy for making all the publications so interesting and readable and for the consistently high quality that he has produced.

I reported last year that the first Regional Schools competition had been held at Tonbridge and it was pleasing to see this repeated at Horsham this season. Additionally, the first Midland Schools regional competition was held with great success at Bedford and Bedford Modern. As mentioned earlier the National Schools Championships were well supported at all levels and it is encouraging for the future to see both the number and quality of pupils playing the game. At senior level the competitions have generally been well attended and it is good to see so many of the younger players continue in the game after leaving school. We now have over 30 events each year and their success is largely attributable to the unstinting efforts of the volunteer organisers. We greatly appreciate all their hard work.

Both the National and Winchester Ladies Championships were a huge success and both benefited from the increasing number of girls now playing at schools. Alexandra Steel is actively looking at ways to promote the game further through the production of a leaflet, Youtube clips and exhibition matches.

As you will see from their report, the Club section continues successfully and we strive to broaden the list of fixtures with the ultimate aim being that matches will be played wherever a court exists. We thank Hamish Buchanan and Ed Hatton for their hard work in preserving Tom Wood's legacy.

Sadly, I have to report the deaths of some notable figures in Barry Trapnell, Christopher Martin-Jenkins and recently Jeremy Schroeter. They all left their mark on us and the game in their different ways. Full obituaries will appear in the forthcoming Annual Review.

Last but by no means least I must mention some changes within the Board. During the season we lost the services of Kevin Henry who had been extremely valuable in dealing with HMRC over the Gift Aid claim and his contribution generally will be missed. Frank Akerman's two year 'post presidency' term has now ended and he will be leaving the Board with our gratitude for his efforts in maintaining the continuity both on our Board and that of the Fives Federation. His passion for the game is hugely motivating. Finally, Dick Warner completes his time as President. Dick has shown amazing energy in visiting all parts of the country to provide support and advice where needed, sometimes at very short notice and his visibility among the membership and at championships has been striking. He has chaired Board meetings with aplomb and Board members have been spoilt by the marvellous hospitality afforded to them by Dick and his wife Sophie at their home. His infectious enthusiasm will be an abiding memory of his Presidency.

Ian Fuller
August 2013