



Joint Format

We are delighted to introduce this Newsletter together as the first joint publication produced since the formation of the **Fives Federation**. This is intended to be the precursor to the first joint Annual Report which will appear in the autumn.

As many of you will know, the Fives Federation was formed in February 2005 uniting all forms of Fives under a single banner as the new external face of the game of Fives. The Fives Federation represents all versions of the game when dealing with public bodies and sponsors in any matters affecting Fives generally; and it is our joint objective to raise the public profile of Fives as a handball game with several distinct codes which can bring benefits to the wider community. Today, fives in its various forms is played by some 70 of the country's leading schools and universities, while the Westway Centre in London and James Toop's One Wall Fives initiative, initially

based in the borough of Croydon, are successfully introducing the game to new players of school age throughout the London area.

No court game can match Fives in all its forms for its combination of skill, energy, minimal equipment, low cost and enjoyment. We see the formation of the

Fives Federation as a great opportunity to bring together the experience and enthusiasm of both Associations and to give a new momentum to all that we are each trying to do to strengthen and expand this wonderful game. There is a healthy and ever growing cross-fertilisation of players and coaches

between the various codes and we hope very much that you will enjoy the opportunity to read and learn more about "the other type of Fives" in this Newsletter, which is the first manifestation of our efforts jointly to raise the public profile of Fives as a whole.



Richard Barber
- Chairman EFA
John East
- President RFA

EFA Chairman's Statement

Twelve months ago I reported that the EFA Board had launched a new Strategy to strengthen the game of Eton Fives wherever it is played. I described the plan as ambitious, inclusive (of everyone with an interest in the game) and urgent.

In the last year many exciting and forward-looking initiatives in the game have taken place, some of which were described recently in our Annual Report. Since that was published we have continued vigorously to fulfil the plan's objectives in key areas.

In reinforcing the game at Schools - a central part of the strategy - we organised, in October, the first coaching week-end of modern times for all Masters in Charge of Fives, held at Cranleigh and attended by some twenty masters from around the country. It was such a success that we shall repeat it annually. I have also maintained my programme of school visits through the Autumn in meetings with the Headmasters of Eton, Repton and Uppingham to discuss how together we can support and strengthen the quality and profile of Fives at their schools. I shall be continuing this programme in the New Year.

At adult level, the League has

continued to draw consistent support from its participants. The resurrected Counties Competition held its first round in November with no less than 48 players from all over the country in attendance - hopefully an excellent precursor to another successful Kinnaird Cup weekend on 18/19th February at Eton. A new series of Ladies' events is now underway, organised by Teresa Dunbar.

We have plans for a new Ladies' league. And we have launched the new Ladder competition, a bold initiative to attract more players to Friendly Fives, which is also at the heart of our Strategy.

All these are positive and exciting developments for Eton Fives. However, I have a continuing concern at Club level - about the small number of new members coming through from Schools, the increasing average age of players, the slow withering away of some of our traditional Clubs, the fragility of others, and the dependence of yet others on single individuals whose personal commitment is the only thing which stands between their staying afloat and foundering. One year on from the unanimous support which the Secretaries gave to our new Strategy, the issues which face us at Club level remain by far the most challenging part of the plan.

Continued overleaf.

RFA President's Note

I write this note for my first Newsletter as President feeling definitely positive, although certainly not complacent, about the state of the game as I have watched it on my recent travels. Over 3 consecutive weekends, I saw firstly the BUSA tournament at Sherborne, run as efficiently as ever by David Gardner ably assisted by Chris Jones and David Barnes.

Before long several of those playing will be challenging for places in the National Finals - indeed some are already. Some of those playing have to travel long distances to find a court on which to practice, and it was certainly encouraging to see such a turn-out at Sherborne. Of course our task in the future is to ensure that as many of these players as possible will continue to play after they leave university, but for the present the future is bright at most of our universities and it was encouraging that the new BUSA representative seemed eager to help with university authorities wherever help was needed.

I next went to Manchester to see the final rounds of the National Singles (and thanks to Ollie Stone-Lee and the YMCA for their organisation and hospitality).

Continued overleaf..

Chairman's Statement

Continued from page one...

Club Secretaries play such a crucial role in the overall success and strength of the game, and I call on every Club Secretary to review in the New Year how far they are maintaining their support and efforts in this crucial area of the Strategy.

Bill Gates once said "There are those who think they can, and those who think they can't. Both are right". I have no doubt that, with the support of all Fives players who have the long-term interests of our marvellous game at heart, we "can" - and will succeed.

Richard Barber

RFA President's Note

Continued from page one...

The spectators (including a mysterious lady from Iran) were entertained with some superb quality fives and some very hard fought games with different matches played in very different styles. In the end targeted power hitting won out over other styles of play, with Phil Bishop emerging as our new national champion using his strength from both sides of the court combined with his knowledge of his home courts to very good effect.

Congratulations to Phil. In many ways it is an excellent reflection of the competitive level at the top of the game that we have had 5 different singles champions in the last 5 years.

Turning back the clock a bit, I was also lucky that weekend to witness the two courts in Manchester being named after Fred Beswick and Wayne Enstone with a pleasant ceremony reflecting on the immense contribution that those 2 individuals have made to Fives over many decades.

The following weekend I found myself driving through a pall of Hemel Hempstead smoke on my way to the President's Cup at Merchant Taylor's School, where, incidentally, it was very nice to catch up with a few of the older OMTs who had come down to support the event. A late start caused by the fire combined with some very evenly matched games ensured a tournament of epic duration, but once again it was the evident enjoyment of all the players mixed up as they are in that tournament in terms of age, ability, and indeed both Eton and Rugby fives playing backgrounds, that spoke of the health of the game. Many thanks again to the organisers, Bhaswar and Alex and of course Denise and others for organising the catering. It was good to see Hamish Buchanan joining the select group who have won all 4 trophies at that event and in particular it was lovely to see Joan Wood there herself presenting the

Court News

Cambridge Courts

This year Eton Fives suffered the same frustration that Rugby Fives and the other court games suffered over ten years ago in Cambridge; we lost our courts again! But this time it was The Leys School that did for us by deciding that their two courts could



Mate's Plate (she being the original "Mate").

3 very different tournaments in diverse parts of the country in 3 successive weekends indicated an enjoyment of and enthusiasm for the game at all levels. However, as I said, I am not complacent. The game needs more coaches and to find ways to fill our courts for longer periods as well as more opportunity to showcase the game to a wider audience. One Wall Fives will be a help, even perhaps a great help, in this endeavour, but it doesn't take away from the need for urgent action now. Only a few months ago 6 fine courts at Sutton Valence were demolished and, whilst there have also been recent successes at other court sites such as Denstone and Clifton to compensate, such action shows how easy it is to lose facilities for ever if they are not adequately used.

However, ending on a positive note I am delighted that we have found successors for both David Barnes and Denise Hall-Wilton in their respective roles of Annual Report producer and RFA Club Manager in the form of Ian Roberts and Ed Fuller, to both of whom many thanks and we wish you every success in those roles. It is terrific that there is enthusiasm to take on these essential roles. Although fuller thanks should and will be given at a later time, I would like to take this opportunity to thank David and Denise for their truly immense contribution in these roles over many years (although their contribution will I am sure continue in other ways).

John East

better serve the school by becoming a climbing wall and a storeroom! Considering that it was the EFA and the Trust that had persuaded the school to bring the courts back into use when the Portugal Place Centre was demolished in the early 1990s by offering a financial incentive, this was a particularly galling reverse. We can only hope that another headmaster and bursar will see their priorities differently. Meanwhile the University is practicing on the one

remaining court at Magdalene College and playing its matches 'away'.

And what about the much-discussed new Sports Hall which is to house all the court games lost at Portugal Place except Rackets? Well, it is at least planned and admitted within the major University Appeal mounted to honour the 8th Centenary of the University and is to look like this artist's impression.

The bad news however is that it is to be part of a major new Sports Centre on the west Cambridge site which will cost around £50million and cannot be initiated until the first major donations roll in. Don't expect this to happen any time soon, but hope to be surprised. At least there are some funds put aside specifically for the court games to top up the Appeal monies and give some leverage to us in our discussions with the University.

Rodney Knight - President CUEFC

Court News

Fives Courts in Neath, South Wales

(Extract from e-mail received from Keith Tucker Editor Neath Antiquarian Society)



Neath Fives Courts - it is unlikely that they were used for Eton Fives and may even have been used for a Welsh version of handball.

Since the photograph was taken some years ago the court has become pretty well hemmed in by modern hotel accommodation buildings.

(Ed - full report and further photographs to be included in the Annual Review)

Other Court News



At the recent National Singles Championships in Manchester the two YMCA courts were officially named after Fred Beswick and Wayne Enstone in recognition of their substantial efforts on behalf of Manchester Fives. The photo shows Fred and Wayne at the unveiling.

Progress to resurrect the courts at Leeds University continues thanks to the hard work and determination of Steve Korris and it is hoped that there may be some positive news to report in the not too distant future.

Discussions have started with Sutton Valence School with a view to re-using the old 'bat' fives courts there following the demolition of the six main courts and it is hoped that pupils will be able to start playing next September following renovations to the courts.

The RFA Board is in discussion with Oundle School about a possible scheme to build new courts there following which the existing courts will be demolished. The Board is also keeping a watching brief on other possible schemes at Christ's Hospital and Giggleswick School.

Notes from Denise Hall-Wilton, RFA Club Manager

First, the headline news: Edward Fuller has so enjoyed organising and playing in matches for the RFA Club that he has volunteered to take over from myself as Club Manager from summer 2006. I am delighted at this continuation of a great family tradition, as his mother Jane has been RFA General Secretary and his father Ian is a Past President of the RFA and its current General Secretary.

It is clear from the match manager's results cards received so far that enthusiasm for playing matches is as good as ever. However, a few managers are reticent about sharing their results with the rest of the world - or even just myself! As January is the busiest month for matches, could I beg all match managers to report back to me as

soon as possible after their event?

A new match manager is needed for the match v Old Tonbridgians in the second half of November 2006. He only needs to gather three other RFA players, play the match against the very sociable OTs at Tonbridge and let the Club manager know the result. Contact me immediately if interested!

Thanks to an initiative by Brian Nithsdale, the North v South gauntlet has been thrown down and reinstated in the fixture list. If you wish to be considered for either team, please contact Brian for the northerners or Keith Puckle for the southerners.

The match is due to take place on Saturday 20th May at Oundle - book your gallery ticket now!

Eton Fives Charitable Trust

It is 10 years since the Trust launched its appeal for funds to help renovate courts and provide coaching support for schools without their own resources and the record shows that the money raised has been put to very good use. From helping to bring courts back into use at Eaton School Norwich and Uppingham to an important contribution to the establishment of a fives coach at Westway, Trust funds of over £40,000 have been variously deployed to benefit schools and players of our game.

The original well is not dry, but the rising costs of court refurbishment, and the prospects of more exciting projects to support, mean that it is time now to renew our call to all players and enthusiasts who enjoy or have enjoyed

what must be one of the least costly sports to play.

In the Spring we shall launch a 10th anniversary Appeal for new funds aimed at involving all of you in the future health of the game. We will stress that regular contributions of any size, helped by Gift-Aid, will be welcomed and together with larger donations and legacies will enable us to set up a valuable endowment fund to benefit current and future players and maintain courts everywhere.

Please be ready to help in any way that you can.

Rodney Knight
Chairman of the Trust

The Cranleigh Coaching Weekend



Aerobics, cornflake packets and three-a-side fives in a squash court...it was all part of the EFA coaching weekend at Cranleigh led by Howard Wiseman. Twenty coaches from Berkhamsted, Bryanston, Cranleigh, Eton, Harrow, Lancing, Mill Hill, Oakham, Orley Farm, St John's Leatherhead, Stowe, Westminster, Westway and Zuoz attended.

Howard began by showing how a group of complete beginners could be enthused. (Parts were played by young Cranleigh boys who quickly showed that they were not complete beginners). This involved the maximum amount of running about and hitting a fives ball without it ever becoming a formal game.

He then moved on to drills, with and without a ball, and various simplified games avoiding the serve and cut sequence, which could involve groups of more than twenty pupils with only one coach.

Time was then spent

analysing the cut and return of cut, before moving on to volleying techniques. The final session was spent on more advanced coaching with the aforementioned cornflake packets being placed as targets in strategic positions on court.

There was then an opportunity to watch (and in some cases play in) a game of squash court fives, which began as a demanding encounter between two fit young men but was then extended to an only slightly less strenuous team contest three-a-side.

In an after-dinner discussion the delegates were invited to share any problems they might have running fives in their schools and there was an interesting and stimulating exchange of ideas.

The EFA is grateful to Howard Wiseman, to Mark Williams for his wise counsel on many points of coaching and to Jon Carr and his colleagues (especially the chef) for their hospitality and excellent organisation at Cranleigh.

Further training for coaches is planned for next season.

Dale Vargas

Rugby and Eton Fives Coaching Agency

Many of our Eton Fives readers will know Howard Wiseman well as a player, manager of Westway, an EFA Board member and of course, through the coaching of Eton Fives. The agency currently looks after 25 Eton Fives Schools which will rise to 28 for the 2006/2007 Season. Rugby Fives readers, however, know Howard less well, although the Agency's activities in Rugby Fives are growing steadily. Currently 9 schools are looked after by the Agency – Bedford, Fettes, Whitgift, Alleyns, St. Dunstan's, Stoke Newington, Marlborough, Oundle and Radley and it is expected that this number will rise to 11 next Season.

Howard started coaching when he was in the 6th form at St Olave's and the Fives Team did not have a Master to coach them. They became self sufficient in this area and when he left, Howard was asked by the school to continue his coaching whilst he was attending Music College. Success led to the Headmaster giving Howard a contract for coaching and he became Master in Charge of Fives. From then on the work mushroomed with other schools being pointed in his direction and Howard himself became proactive in promoting the service to a number of schools where the Eton Fives courts were not being fully utilised or not utilised at all. He soon became an expert in prising open courts used as store rooms or propping up the game in schools where there was no Master in Charge. He found that schools were very willing to pay for a professional service particularly as schools increasingly took the view that all their

facilities should be used rather than having some laying idle as a "wasted asset".

Howard's entry into the Rugby Fives world started with the discovery of courts at Stoke Newington School where, although the courts were not in the best of condition, the school was keen to incorporate Fives onto their timetable. Howard made sure he learnt the game before embarking on the coaching role at the school. Work at St Dunstan's and Whitgift soon followed.

There is no doubt that the Agency can now be regarded as a fully fledged business and Howard currently has 3 full time individuals supporting him.

Howard finds that schools are happy to buy in a service and also the enthusiasm generated by the coaches. Issues such as pay and attendance are taken away from the school and are looked after by the Agency which is a far cry away from the days when maybe a lot of schools were relying on the goodwill of old boys to come and support the game at their school.

Many of you also know that Howard is involved with the Handball Supplies Company, although this is very much run by his partner, Jo. In his early days of coaching Howard found that pupils and parents would request equipment and he very much acted as the middle man in this area. He then began making a few gloves because he was unhappy with the standard of those that he was buying and it began to occur to him how convenient it would be for pupils and schools to go to one supplier offering all the equipment and with a big stock of

everything available, not just gloves but goggles, trainers etc. The professional image could be enhanced through the production of a catalogue giving full details of the products and their prices.

Having generated the idea Howard then took a back seat as Jo began developing the business. Her objective was to make it as easy as possible for schools and parents to buy the equipment needed without having to be reliant on school shops. She has also made it increasingly easy for schools to order equipment by phone and by offering as flexible a service as possible.

Jo now has a part-time helper to support her work with the company which has now been running for about 8 years.

Whilst, as mentioned before, Howard is not directly involved with the business, he does take an interest in orders, particularly from schools, as he finds that this is a good indication of what is going on there.

Other initiatives that have come out of this work have been the provision of equipment for squash court fives with the Handball Supplies Company being able to help raise the profile through displaying the equipment in its catalogue and the coaching agency has been involved with the staffing of coaches for one-wall fives.

Not surprisingly, Howard feels that he is pretty much at full capacity at the time which is not only good for him but also a sign that fives, particularly in schools, is alive and well, thanks to the great efforts of Howard, Jo and their teams.

Inner City Fives Association

Following last summer's successful launch of 1-Wall Fives in Croydon, the ICFA is running its first pilot project in the borough this year in co-ordination with the Croydon School Sports Partnership. The project will give all primary and secondary schools the opportunity to play Fives and take part in a Croydon Borough competition in July.

The plan is to expose all teachers who are involved in school sport to Fives. The School Sports Partnership is organizing Inset days where we will have the opportunity to present 1-Wall Fives to all teachers, teach them some coaching games and offer their schools a free coaching masterclass with a REFCOA coach.

We will also be running 90 minute twilight sessions across the spring and summer terms where Croydon teachers and School Sports Coordinators can gain an ICFA Level 1 coaching certificate.

Through the partnership we have



agreed to run several Fives festivals for clusters of three or four local schools, to be followed by an end of season Borough Fives competition for years 7 and 8 from all schools. We will use this event to showcase Fives to potential sponsors and Development managers from future Schools Sports Partnerships.

We are developing marketing materials for pupils, teachers and sponsors. This will be done through flyers, leaflets, and a promotional DVD

(which will be ready in January).

A website will be ready for launch in April which will serve as a coaching resource and reference point for pupils. If anybody would like to or feels they can help with publicity, coaching or sponsorship contacts, then please get in touch. This scheme has real potential to spread Fives across London and raise the profile of the sport, but we need support from the Fives community to make it work.

James Toop

Eton Fives Ladder

This is a new competition intended to provide organised friendly fives between players of roughly the same ability on each court, and to have players of all standards playing in each round. Players new to fives, and players returning after a period of absence or who only play very occasionally, are particularly welcome.

Initial rounds have been played on the "scrambled egg" principle. For the first round, players are placed into three ability groups and the order within each group chosen at random. The top four players are allocated to court 1, with the highest and lowest ranked players pairing each other against the middle ranked pair. The next four players are allocated to court 2 on the same basis, and so on for all of the other players.

Three games are played to 15 (foot at 14 with no setting), but are also time limited to 40 minutes. A rally in progress at the time limit is played to completion, but no new rally can be started. In the event of a tied score at the time limit, the pair who reach that score first are declared the winners. As it has happened, no game reached the time limit (and some finished well before) so

for later rounds there have been four games limited to 30 minutes each. Playing times are set in the hope that a large proportion of players will be able to spend time socialising after each event.

At the end of each round, the winning pair move up a court and the losing pair move down. Again, on each court the highest and lowest ranked players pairing each other against the middle ranked pair, except that no player will play with the same partner again that day. This ensures that players quickly move to play with and against others of similar ability and also play with and against players they might not normally encounter. It has also generated some unusual results, adding to the interest.

The scrambled egg system has received general approval from players and has been continued for the first four rounds.

Players may take part in as many or as few rounds as they like – the emphasis being on providing good games of fives between players of comparable ability. There is no need to commit to more than one round.

The cost of taking part is £5 per round (court fee £2.50, new ball £1.25, administration £1.25), and players are billed at the end of the season.



If you would like to participate in any round, you simply need to contact John Cooley at john@cooleyj.freerve.co.uk at least 48 hours before each round, or telephone him on 01959 574288.

Before long there will also be a website where you will be able to enter, as well as look at your current ranking, and it is intended that eventually the whole competition will run itself via the website.

New players, as well as those returning to fives after an absence are especially welcome to participate, but we hope that all active fives players of every standard will come and play in at least one round. This is an exciting new venture, which should provide a variety of fives with players of your own ability. We commend it to you and encourage you to enter.

John Cooley

The New Eton Fives Online Database & Fixture List

Progress Report

www.fivesonline.co.uk is an exciting new web-based initiative from the EFA. It has a great many useful functions that we hope will make it easier to run our clubs and organise fixtures. In the simplest terms it is a new centralised information "hub" that all Eton Fives players can make use of and contribute to. It includes a **Directory of Players**, an inter-active Fixture List and the facility to enter and score the new **Ladder Competition** online.

Player Directory – what's so good about it?

Imagine you had instant access to information on all Eton Fives Players, up-to-date and at your fingertips, their club allegiances, their ability and their contact details (and a little more besides)...this is what the directory aims to achieve.

You're a match manager recruiting for a fixture. No longer will you have to run the gauntlet through your e-mail address book and scruffy bits of paper tucked in a desk drawer (that by now are probably out of date)...simply visit the online player database and swiftly find the players you want..

However, the benefits don't stop there. The online directory is much more effective than a simple list – because of its ability to SORT players.

...at the touch of a button you can see the entire Fives community – from the youngest new recruits to experienced veterans. Another click and you have a list of every member of your club. If you want to see only those describing themselves as "active" players – that's easy to do too.

Perhaps you're organising the under 25s competition? No problem. Simply sort for players under 25, and your list immediately appears.

There are many different ways to sort through the database – all making it much easier to see who's out there, who's available and generally who's who!

At time of writing (10th Dec '05) this new facility is nearing completion...which is very exciting! I hope that by the time you read this – we will have it up and running for you to visit - perhaps not entirely complete - but at least in some useful form or other! Please do take a look.

www.fivesonline.co.uk has many handy features – They are carefully introduced on the website itself – so I won't labour them here. It is the result of over two year's work and brings the game absolutely up-to-date at a time when Club Fives faces a number of serious challenges. A degree of action and willpower is required from all of us who love the game to see it on a safe path into the future. **If you are (or ever have been) an Eton Fives Player – PLEASE visit the new site at www.fivesonline.co.uk and see how it works. Simply by doing so and Registering with the new player directory, you are contributing to the future health and success of the game. Once we have an accurate representation of the Eton Fives community on the directory – it will be a tremendously useful tool for arranging fixtures and building the strength of our clubs.** We believe that this new web facility and the associated new Ladder competition are excellent (and enjoyable) solutions to help achieve bring Fives into the new millennium and create a structure that can ensure it's popularity in future - come and play in the ladder, it's great fun!

Ed Taylor

TOURNAMENT REPORTS

Rugby Fives reports

RFA CLUB PRESIDENT'S CUP



Merchant Taylors' School, 11th December 2005

"The most physically demanding day I've probably ever had" – that was the verdict from Gareth Price after his win, with Bruce Hanton, in the 2005 President's Cup.

Close matches were very much a theme of this year's tournament, proving the 16 pairs had been selected with no little skill. And, it's testament to the quality of fives on show that there were enthusiastic spectators in the freezing gallery right to the very end.

However, if last year's tournament was remarkable for the youth of the finalists – the four had an average age of just 25 – another theme this year was a resurgence for more, err, mature players.

This year's winner Bruce Hanton first won the cup in 1996, two years after Love Mug winner Hamish Buchanan, while Mate's Plate winner Jeremy Schroeter showed all the delicate touch and sense that are only to be expected of a man who first won the President's Cup in 1981 and has gone on to win it six more times since.

Hamish's victory (with Charles Lamb) in the Love Mug plate was particularly notable, as it means he joins the illustrious ranks of players to have won all four of the trophies up for grabs in the tournament.

BUSA RUGBY FIVES CHAMPIONSHIPS

Sherborne School, 25th / 27th November 2005

Players from Oxford and Cambridge shared the trophies at the BUSA championships, with Oxford's James Bristow retaining the singles title, while Alan Beverly teamed up with last year's winner Charlie Brooks to claim the doubles title for Cambridge.

James' win came at the expense of Steve Korris and was a fitting climax to a dominant display throughout the competition. However, there were fine performances throughout the tournament. In reaching the semi-finals, Alan Beverly and Charlie Brooks gave more than a glimpse of what was to come, and Ed Hawke played well to win the plate.

As it turned out, losing in the singles semi-finals only seemed to spur Alan and Charlie on, and they went on to gain revenge with a deserved win in the doubles. The Oxford pair of Bristow and Jamie Pendergrass put up a brave fight indeed, they were ahead in both games but the power of Cambridge (Alan, in particular) proved too much and the light blue pair won in two close games.

In fact, this was the second major Oxford scalp for Alan and Charlie, after beating Ed Ronan and Will Hardyment in the semi-finals. Durham's Lee and Midmer also played well to reach to the semi-final, while the London pair of Grant and Sjostrom looked very impressive before losing to the top Oxford pair in the quarter final.

WOMEN'S RUGBY FIVES CHAMPIONSHIPS



St Paul's School, 4th December 2005.

Claire Knowles made it a weekend of double celebrations for Manchester as she picked up the Women's singles and doubles titles at the same time as fellow Y Club member Phil Bishop was winning the

men's singles title.

This year's tournament was another demonstration of Claire's dominance of the ladies' game. She has now been unbeaten in both singles and doubles championships since her first win in 1999, and conceded no more than a single point in any one game on her way to the singles title.

Losing finalist in both competitions was Dominique Redmond, who was runner-up in the doubles for the second year running, this year with Lia Redmond. Melanie Whitehead also had a good day's play, only losing to Claire in the singles semi-final, before the two teamed up for a convincing win in the doubles.

Sarah McDowell was a clear winner in the plate singles, while Laura Harvey and Anna Shelley took the plate in the doubles.

NATIONAL SINGLES CHAMPIONSHIPS - BISHOP CROWNED

Manchester Y Club, 3rd/4th December 05.



'Power, but intelligent power' was the verdict on Phil Bishop's blast to his first national singles title.

His hard hitting low into the back corners of his home courts at Manchester's Y Club proved too much (15-8, 15-10) for defending champion Matt Cavanagh.

Matt made his way to face Phil after a repeat of last year's final, overcoming James Toop with shrewd tactics and clinical finishing.

Phil got his first chance at the top prize from a nail-biting semi-final win against past champion Hamish Buchanan. He took the first game and was 14-11 up in the second before faltering in the face of Hamish's ardent competitiveness and having to start again in the third game.

It did not look good for Phil as cramp set in and Hamish raced to a 9-1 lead. But a combination of a tumble for Hamish and Phil waking up from his second game disappointment re-energised the match and Bishop came through despite another late flurry from his rival.

The championship saw a double success for the Y Club with John Minta a worthy winner of the plate competition. It was appropriate then that after the final two greats of the club and the sport – Wayne Enstone and Fred Beswick – were honoured in two plaques naming the courts.

TOURNAMENT REPORTS

Rugby Fives reports

WEST OF ENGLAND CHAMPIONSHIPS

Sherborne School, 29th / 30th October 05.

Hamish Buchanan picked up his third singles title of the year at the West of England Championships, while John Minta and Phil Bishop paired up to record their first ever tournament victory in the doubles.

Hamish's hat-trick of titles came with victory over top seed James Toop, who had reached the final after winning an epic semi-final clash with Phil Bishop. The final was an enthralling match, played in front of a large crowd; and, although James pushed his opponent hard, there was never any doubt that Hamish would emerge the winner.

In the doubles competition, however, the seedings held true: the quarter-finals included seven of the eight seeded pairs. The only non-seeded pair to reach this stage were Alex Smith and Ed Hatton, who had a memorable win over seventh seeds Ollie Stone-Lee and Nick MacIver in three hard-fought games.

The second, third and fourth seeds (Dave Hebden/Neil Roberts, Phil Bishop/John Minta and Jim Hughes/Alex Rew) duly made it through to the semi-finals, but an unfortunate injury forced the withdrawal of top seeds and defending champions Hamish Buchanan and Johnny Nelmes, meaning that eighth seeds Andy Pringle and Chris Jones completed the semi-final line-up.

In the bottom half of the draw, Bishop/Minta powered their way past the experience of Roberts/Hebden, but it was a much closer match in the top half. Hughes/Rew won the first game, but Jones/Pringle came back to win the second and held their nerve to clinch victory in the third.

They went on to take a 6-3 lead in the opening game of the final, but from then on, it was pretty much one-way traffic. Once Minta/Bishop found their length, their combination of power and accuracy deservedly won them the title.

LONDON OPEN

St Pauls School, Barnes
17th/18th September 2005

Hamish Buchanan continued his perfect start to the season with victory in both the singles and doubles at the London Open.

The singles final was a repeat of July's South West Open final but, although the result was the same, London produced a very different match.

Whereas Hamish was a comfortable winner in Devon, this final was a much closer affair, with superb play from both

men. Top seed Hamish edged a tight first game against second seed Matt Cavanagh, but was behind for most of the second game. He eventually levelled at 10-10, though, and went on to win 12-11 to retain the title.

Third and fourth seeds, James Toop and Phil Bishop, completed the semi-final line-up, but the seeds didn't have it all their own way in the earlier rounds: Ollie Stone-Lee, Johnny Nelmes and Chris Jones all beat seeded opponents to reach the quarter-finals, with Chris's win over fifth seed John Beswick a particularly fine result.

The top seeds also made it through to the last four of the doubles, and the final was contested by the day's best partnerships, the all-Manchester pairing of John Beswick and John Minta taking on reigning West of England champions, Hamish and Johnny Nelmes.

The match was a brutal encounter, with the players and ball flying around the court at frightening speed. Minta, playing on the left, tried to counteract the pace of Nelmes's right hand by coming forward to take the ball early on the volley, but to no avail.

In the end, the combined firepower of Hamish and Johnny was simply too much. Although they had to recover from an early deficit in the second game, they were convincing winners in two games.

SOUTH WEST OPEN

Blundells School, Tiverton, 30th July 2005

Hamish Buchanan completed a memorable double at the new season's first tournament, winning both the singles and doubles titles.

Like last year, he faced Matt Cavanagh in the singles final, but this time there was no amazing fightback from Matt.

From the start, Hamish quickly took control and raced through the first game. Matt stepped up a gear, but couldn't recapture his scintillating form from the earlier rounds. In the face of relentless pressure, he made an uncharacteristically high number of unforced errors, and had to admit defeat.

On this form, Hamish is all but untouchable but, in a tournament full of memorable matches, perhaps the most notable performance was from Ed Fuller. Facing North West champion Phil Bishop in the quarter final, he came back from 4-10 down in the third game to win 12-10.

The doubles competition, too, was hard fought, but the top seeds eventually battled their way through to the final, with defending champions Hamish and Dave Hebden facing John Beswick and Paddy d'Ancona.

The match was played in fantastic

spirit, with oohs, aahs and applause regularly ringing out from the gallery. Indeed, one spectator said: 'I thought I knew how to play fives, but after seeing that, I now realise I might as well have been playing Pat-a-Cake all these years.'

From game point down, Paddy and John nicked a tight first game and, for most of the second, seemed to have the measure of their opponents, Paddy fishing out umpteen apparently dead-cert winners from around his ankles to stay in rallies.

Gradually, though, the power, precision and touch from Dave and Hamish began to tell. A succession of quick points won them the second game and levelled the match.

The deciding game carried on where the second had finished off and, although Paddy and John gave it their all, they couldn't quite match their opponents. For Hamish, it was his second title of the day but, for Dave, title number 102.

OTHER RUGBY FIVES CHAMPIONSHIP NEWS

The Whitgift Doubles tournament which pairs senior players with those who have just left school saw Hamish Buchanan triumph with his partner Neil Karia beating Ed Hatton and Cameron Powrie in the Final.

Neil Roberts celebrated the 20th anniversary of his first win in the Yorkshire Open Doubles by reuniting with John Beswick to claim the title for the thirteenth time.

Old Dunstonians (P.d'Ancona, P.Bishop, T.Stock and S.Korris) retained the Owers Trophy defeating a gallant Old Eastbournian squad (O.Stone-Lee, M.Bate, A.Pringle, M.Sands and C.Caroe)

The two schools events held so far have seen a clean sweep for St.Paul's. In the Winchester doubles St.Paul's 2 beat St.Paul's 3 and in the West of England Schools, hosted by Clifton College, St.Paul's won all events in the Seniors and Colts championships beating another representative/pair from St. Paul's in each Final. A truly remarkable achievement!

Full details of the tournaments will appear in the Handbook.

Alternatively, details can be found on the following websites:-

www.rfa.org.uk

www.etonfives.co.uk

TOURNAMENT REPORTS

Eton Fives reports

County Championship 2005/06

Eight teams took part in the semi-final qualifying tournament.

The large entry supported the ideal format of two groups with three pair matches played over best of three sets - with many evenly matched games this led to some excellent fives and a long day. In Group A, the last match of the day saw Courtney Friend and Pete Scholey ensure that Warwickshire finished top of the table by defeating Kent's second pair. In Group B, Middlesex making their first appearance in the County Championship for some years won all their matches 2-1 to top the table. Hertfordshire drawing upon past and present gap-year coaches at Berkhamsted just edged out Suffolk to claim the second qualification spot.

Stop Press! In the semi-finals, Warwicks beat Herts and Middx beat Kent. In the Final Middx won 2-1

London 2005 19th-20th Nov, Harrow

With a last minute change of venue to Harrow School the weekend looked a promising one. A high level of entry in the Main tournament saw 17 pairs entering which was an increase from last year. The festival, slightly down on numbers still looked strong with 21 pairs.

In Pool A the 4 seeds did eventually all go through but not in the expected order with the Dunbars dropping a set to H. Wiseman and Hawkins in a close game of 15-13. Pool B was much the same with close games between the top pairs. The big upset was Taylor/Hutchinson losing 15-14 in what was an outstanding game with Cooley/Varma. The other surprise result in the pool was the Cambridge pair of Patel and O'Callaghan just missing out on points difference in a 3-way tie with Foster/Theodossi and Mew/Cohen.

The quarter-finals were drawn so top of A playing bottom of B and so on. All the results were as expected with Taylor/Hutchinson and the Dunbars winning 2-0. Herring and Rose took the 1st set in their quarter-final only to lose the next two 4-12 2-12.

The game of the round was between the Olavians; Mew and Cohen, Wiseman and Hawkins. The final score was 2-1 in favour of the coach - Howard and Hawkins.

In the semi-finals the Dunbars came up across an in form Seb and his partner Alick. Seb was playing well all weekend, and fought hard, Alick was playing nicely yet struggling to kill the ball off and with Tom and Pete on their home courts they were always in control, winning 2-0 (12-6,

12-4).

Wiseman/Hawkins were up against the Salopian pair of Hutchinson/Taylor. Howard and Dan playing well all weekend and confident started well and the scores were level early on. The Salopian pair started to pull away and their set piece was strong, the Olavians were struggling slightly with their cutting and Taylor especially took advantage and they took the first set 12-5.

The second set was much the same story and 12-6 to the Salopians who were always in control of the match. By the final, Tom and Pete seemed to have sorted out their troubles from the first day.

In the first game the brothers took control returning everything winning convincingly 12-3.

The second set was a cracker! With the scores being level up to 6-6 Tom then showed his class and he and Pete hit a string of winners to take them to 10-6. The game seemed over until at 11-7 Ed cut them down then scored 3 straight points to 10-11. Sadly it was not quite enough and Pete and Tom took the set 12-10 in what was one of the sets of the weekend

Pete and Tom won 2-0 12-3, 12-10

Under 25 National Championships

Saturday 17th December 2005, Westway

There was little to choose between the top four pairs in the group stages. Matches were two set games with positions decided on the number of sets won. In group A, Sanjaya Ranasinghe and Stuart White pushed the first seeds hard in both sets, and in group B, Alick Varma and Simon Randall drew their two set game with Tom MacDonald and Charlie Jewkes but went through in first position as they had won 2 more points across their games.

Tom and Charlie carried their good form into the semi-final and used their strengths to nearly win the first set. Tom used his left hand to good effect in the buttress, and Charlie combated Dave's power with a string of winners from the back court. In the end, experience allowed Dave Mew and James Toop to sneak the first set after which they took control.

The other semi-final was an exciting match which Sanjaya and Stuart would feel they should have won. Leading 8-1 and 9-2 in both sets they were playing excellent Fives, forcing their opponents into errors. At the same point in both sets though, Alick and Simon seemed to turn the game around and win a string of points. Both games were set and could have gone either way, but Simon and Alick managed to swing the momentum their way at the crucial time to take both

sets.

In the final Alick and last year's runner-up Simon, got off to a quick start and led 4-1 before the Olavian pair began to find their feet. Dave was not only using his powerful cut to stop his opponents from scoring points, but returning well and the Olavians took the first set 12-5. Simon and Alick then started to go for their shots at the start of the second, but Dave and James managed to weather the storm and then moved ahead to win the second set 12-3 and with it the title.

The plate final was a close, hard-fought match which Steve Piper and Alex Moore won over Anthony Theodossi and Nick Scott.

Mid-Term EFA Tournament Position

Rossall Open

Doubles Final - M King & J Brierly (Malvern) beat W Betts & C Gough (Lancing) 15-10
Singles - S Ferderock (St Olave's) beat W Betts (Lancing) 11-5

Alan Barber Cup

Semi-finalists - Etonians, Harrovians, Olavians and Salopians

County Championships

Final - Middx bt Warwicks 2-1

London Tournament

Final - P & T Dunbar (Harrovians) beat E Taylor & I Hutchinson (Salopians) 12-3, 12-10

Graham Turnbull

Finalists - A Theodossi & R Perrie (Westway) and D Foster & W Betts (Lancing)

Under 25s Championship

Final - D Mew and J Toop beat A Varma and S Randall 12-5, 12-3

League Pole Positions

1st Division - Etonians but Harrovians and Olavians 2nd and 3rd have games in hand
2nd Division - Olavians but Ipswichians and Carthusian 2nd and 3rd have games in hand
3rd Division - Westminster's II, St Olave's 2nd and Emanuels with games in hand 3rd

Miscellaneous News

Courts - Three new courts under construction at **Millhill School**, completion early 2006.

New private court under construction in Somerset.

Two courts constructed in Provence, France by EFA member Nigel Cox.

Renovations in progress at **Shrewsbury, Emanuel and St Bees**.

Old court found at former **Camp Hill Middleway School**, Birmingham.

Coaching - Refca is to provide coaching for the first time at **Rossall, St Bees and St Bartholomew's Newbury**.