

**THE RUGBY FIVES ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - SEPTEMBER 2015**

General Secretary's Report

This is my first report as General Secretary so I would like to begin by expressing my heartfelt thanks to Ian Fuller for providing invaluable support since my appointment in April. Preparing this report has highlighted to me both the volume and the quality of activity undertaken to promote the game of fives. Consequently there are a number of positive developments on which to report.

Ladies fives continues to go from strength to strength. The Winchester Tournament in March was a great success whilst the National Girls' Championships highlighted the emergence of a number of promising players. The inaugural Lady's Cup achieved its aim of encouraging ladies to play the game and enter competitions and will therefore, become a regular feature of the tournament calendar.

Elsewhere on court, entries for both school and senior tournaments have been encouraging whilst new events continue to be added. As usual, full details will be contained in the Annual Review although special mention must be made of the successful inaugural South East Championship which included a number of young players and several faces new to the tournament circuit. A disappointing development was the decision of BUCS last July to stop supporting certain sports, including Rugby Fives, by ceasing to award points. However, the tournament was (and will continue to be) held, but now under the total auspices of the RFA, with the same organiser (David Gardner) and with a revised title - BUSF, i.e. British Universities and Student Fives.

The RFA Club reported another successful season both in terms of wins and matches played. Thanks are once again due to Hamish Buchanan and Ed Hatton for both arranging the calendar and chasing recalcitrant match managers for scores and interesting stories.

News regarding courts was positive in the main. The new lighting at St. Paul's is deemed to be a great improvement whilst Bedford Modern plans to replace their court lights before the start of the coming autumn term. At Rossall, following the installation of back walls in two of the hybrid courts last year, the school is now in the process of repainting and relighting the courts. Elsewhere, the Association has been in discussions regarding plans for the new courts at Oxford. UCS has expressed enthusiasm for resurrecting fives although there have been no definitive signs as yet. Our President has asked the RFACT to guarantee a grant of £5,000 towards relaying the floors in the Bedford courts if the school carried out this work by the end of the summer holidays. At the time of writing, a response was awaited from the school.

Communications continue to take major strides forward. The new website went live last year and is proving to be a more flexible and, judging by the “tweets”, popular means of communication. Videos of recent matches including this season’s Singles Final between Will Ellison and Dan Grant, can be accessed on Youtube via a link from the website. Also available via the website is a new promotional video filmed at this season’s National Singles and put together by Dan Tristao. Our archives continue to grow with more and more information regarding the game’s rich history available on the website including articles, tournament reports, photographs and obituaries. The growth in our records of e-mail addresses means that the Newsletter (now under the auspices of Tom Webster, our new Communications Officer) is now delivered electronically to the majority of Association members. More recently, welcome publicity came in the form of a news report by ITV featuring the fives courts and club at Cambridge.

The number of qualified coaches continues to increase with the Association now having ten Level Two coaches. Since last summer, one Level Two course has been held with four participants. Also, Wayne Enstone completed another one day Masterclass at Oxford University.

Once again it is very pleasing to report a significant increase in membership thanks to the indefatigable efforts of our President. New members are of course the future of the sport and we remain very grateful for his energy and commitment.

On a more sombre note, this season has seen the deaths of Ernie Livesey, Alastair Mackenzie, Terry Ronan, Paul Smith and Joan Wood. Tributes have been recorded elsewhere describing the impact these stalwarts of the game had in their different ways. They will all be sorely missed.

A recent newspaper article stated that croquet would become extinct in the next twenty five years due to falling numbers of young people taking up the sport. I think it can be said with some certainty that that fate will not befall rugby fives due in the main to the enthusiasm of volunteers up and down the country who give freely of their time to ensure the game we all love continues to prosper by attracting future generations of boys and girls.

Phil Atkinson
General Secretary
August 2015