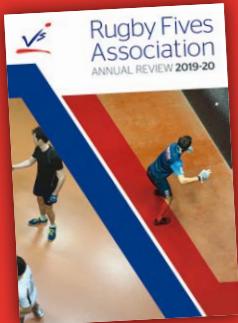




Rugby Fives Association

ANNUAL REVIEW **2019-20**





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The Rugby Fives Association 2019-20

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A welcome from the President

David Bawtree reflects on a difficult few months



It has been a difficult few months for the whole nation, not just Rugby Fives, and our sympathies go to those who have lost loved ones to Covid-19. But life has to go on and indeed has with many initiatives from our enthusiastic membership.

The Podcasts have been a welcome addition to our community, where Dave, Matt, Sam and Theo explore everything going on within the world of Fives. This is an exceptional way of keeping us all in touch and my heartfelt thanks go to them, as indeed it does to Dan Grant for his two money-raising Pub Quizzes.

Dan is taking on a leading marketing role to spread the news that Rugby Fives is a brilliant game which can be played at all ages, in my case from 11 to 79! His tasks will include enticing non-players to take up the game and renewing our logo.

Our female players were as enthusiastic as ever in the 2019/20 season, short as it was. Thankfully we managed to complete the Lady's Cup at Cambridge, an expanded City of Durham Ladies' tournament, the Ladies' U23s, Girls' U18s and the Ladies' Nationals.

All Open events after March had to be postponed, if not cancelled, and then with great reluctance we halted play altogether. We watched carefully how other court games were being managed and set about putting together a detailed

guide ready for the resumption of play. Ultimately the final say has to be with the owner of the courts; all the RFA can do is advise on 'best practice'.

We have been able to provide a number of grants to improve courts. Funding has been given, for example, to Stoke Newington to install viewing platforms. So far this year we have given total grants of over £16,000. Clearly we would like to do more, so we have initiated a major look at our strategy and the plans to increase our membership and income. We aim to launch this 'Sustain, Nurture and Grow' programme at a special event next year.

I now stand down as President and pass the baton on to David Parlby, who has been our exceptional Treasurer for the past four years. I am grateful to him and all the board members who have put their hearts into promoting our sport. I am grateful also to Bob Dolby and Andy Pringle for their work with the media and to my predecessor, Bernard Atkinson, whose contributions have been greatly valued. I also express sincere thanks to Phil Atkinson for his work as General Secretary.

Finally thank you all for all you have done to make my two years so memorable. I wish all Fives players every success and hope you continue to enjoy the game as much as I have.

BELOW (L-R)
Stoke
Newington
courts

Bernard
Atkinson at
Cambridge

Bob Dolby
congratulating
Julie
McIntyre at
Durham Ladies
Tournament



2019-20 Season Review

Andy Pringle reviews the events of the 2019-20 season

Anyone coming to this report looking for a changing of the guard will perhaps be a little disappointed to read repeated mention of the names of Tristao, Ellison and Kay. But we'd prefer to look at things a different way: let's rejoice in a time when three such wonderful players are gracing courts up and down the country.

Of course, there's no getting away from the fact that these three dominated the events that took place before coronavirus forced an early end to the season. Yes, they won every one of the Open singles tournaments this season – and at least one of the three was in the winning pair at the accompanying doubles events on all but one occasion – but no single player was ever able to dominate.

Mind you, in the season's opening events, it did look as if one man was on a charge. Ed Kay beat Dan Tristao at Blundell's to win the South West Open, and he followed that up with a win at the South East Open. However, if whispers had started that this might be Ed's year, they were swiftly stifled in the London Open at Whitgift, when a resurgent Will Ellison took the title, beating Dan in the semis and Ed in the final.

Then, to confuse matters further, it was Dan who took the honours at the West of England championships, which this year made a return to Sherborne. He did have to work for his title, though – taking three games to beat both Will in the semis and Ed in the final.

What that meant was that no one went into the National Singles championship as a favourite – although it would have been a bold gambler who bet against one of the three leaving St Paul's with the Jesters Club Cup.

Perhaps the most impressive thing about the Dan/Will/Ed triumvirate is that they never seem to have an off day. No matter how much their opponents raised their games, the Big Three only ever lost to one another in singles events. That's some record, given the quality of players snapping at their heels.

So, it was no surprise all three made it safely to the semis of the nationals, and while Will bowed out at that stage, it was only after losing a three-game epic against Dan. And, although Ed had an easier time of it in the semis, Dan suffered no after-effects from his battle with Will, going to take the ultimate singles prize for the fifth time.

So, just who are the players snapping at the heels of these Big Three? Perhaps the name that immediately springs to mind is the fourth player in the semi-final line-up at the nationals: Ben



ABOVE
Ed Kay and
Will Ellison
rivals at the
London Open

RIGHT
National
Champion
Dan Tristao



Beltrami. He might have done even better this season, but for an unfortunate habit of finding himself drawn against Ed at crucial times – losing in the semis at Blundell's, Sherborne and St Paul's, as well as the final at Giggleswick. However, he did prove himself a worthy champion, picking up a notable double this season, winning both the National Students and Under 25 Championships. David Butler, runner-up in those student championships and twice a semi-finalist in open events, is another who may yet force his way into the very top ranks of the game.

However, for the first time this year, not every event was about the top-ranked players. Indeed, in the first ever RFA Challenger event, the top 16



ABOVE
Ben Beltrami
and Ollie
Arnold U25
Champions

RIGHT
Challenger
Champion
Christian
Blackaby

'THE BIG THREE ONLY EVER LOST TO ONE ANOTHER IN SINGLES EVENTS'

players were banned from competing. The tournament was held alongside the National Singles, and it's hoped more such events will be run (a second was scuppered by the pandemic), with players set to follow in the footsteps of first Challenger champion, Christian Blackaby.

Christian also scored a notable result at the Under 25 Championships, reaching the semis, but it was one of his conquerors that day – Ollie Arnold – who joins Dan Grant as the closest to challenging the Big Three at the top of the doubles game.

So, while Messrs Tristao, Ellison and Kay continued their dominance in doubles events, there was some variety in their partners. It was Ollie and Ed who teamed up to win at Blundell's, for example, while Dan partnered Will to a win in Manchester. And Ollie can claim a double of his own this season, following in Ben Beltrami's footsteps by winning both the Students and Under 25s. He's yet to repeat his doubles success in singles, but there seems no doubt that his powerful left hand could soon see him breaking into the top three of the doubles rankings.

Given this close competition at the top of the doubles game, perhaps the most notable event lost to the pandemic was the National Doubles – there's no doubt it would have been a classic.



Sadly, though, it was one of many events that couldn't take place in 2020 after the RFA was forced to postpone all its events from mid-March onwards. That included the North of England Championships and the seniors' events – Veterans, Vintage, Masters and Grand Masters – as well as the Club Championship.

However, let's not dwell on what might have been. Instead, let's concentrate on what a glorious series of events we were able to enjoy, and be grateful for the people behind the RFA Pub Quiz and Podcast, who allowed us to revel in the camaraderie of our great game even when we weren't able to get on court.

And, when we are finally able to return to court, what a great season is in prospect. Will that change of guard actually happen? Maybe. Maybe not. But, what a great time we'll all have finding out.



The Ladies' National Doubles Champions

Ladies' Season Review

Bob Dolby reviews a truncated season where there was still much to be pleased about

Ladies Fives was hit hard by the coronavirus lockdown with its ban on indoor sports. It meant that Shinan Zhang was unable to stage her first Ladies' Winchester Fives Singles and Doubles competition at Winchester College where Maddy Raynor would have been able to defend her Singles title and, with Alexandra Steel, the Doubles title, too. Likewise, Alexandra was denied the chance to promote the Mixed Winchester Fives Doubles competition at Bradfield College, one of the most fun events of the Fives calendar and one which is often young players' first experience of adult Fives.

Louise Mathias and Ollie Arnold will now have to wait a year before they have the chance to make it a hat-trick of titles in this event. Sadly, too, Louise would have hoped this year to run just the second National Mixed Rugby Fives Doubles Championship at Alleyn's School and give Helena Tunks and

Douglas Law, if the rules allowed them to pair up once more, the opportunity to defend the title they won at last year's inaugural event.

But in December the sun had shone on Ladies Fives. It so happened that the RFA had decided to move the National U18 Girls' Championships to the weekend of the National Singles finals,

'IN DECEMBER THE SUN HAD SHONE ON LADIES FIVES'

played at St Paul's School. The thinking was that it would avoid the clash with the exam season that sometimes put off those sixth-formers facing major exams at the beginning of the summer term, when the event was traditionally played. London was also thought to be a more practical venue than Marlborough to access for the extremely talented young players playing at the Scottish schools.

As it happened the Scots were unable to attend in December 2019, but there was an entry of 11 players from five schools, including a group from Eastbourne College. The dominant players in Singles and Doubles came from Alleyn's and Bedford Modern, with Martha Nugent from Alleyn's winning the Singles and Katie Sumner and Maddie Kent from Bedford Modern beating the Alleyn's 1st pair in what was the best game of the day. It was a delight to see young Camille Beattie from the City of Durham Club showing her immense promise in the knock-out Singles, and Lena Barton from Marlborough, better known as a Doubles player, winning the Singles Plate in convincing style.

The December date had also been chosen to coincide with the weekend of the Ladies U23s, which meant that Martha and Lena played on both days. They were joined by organiser and

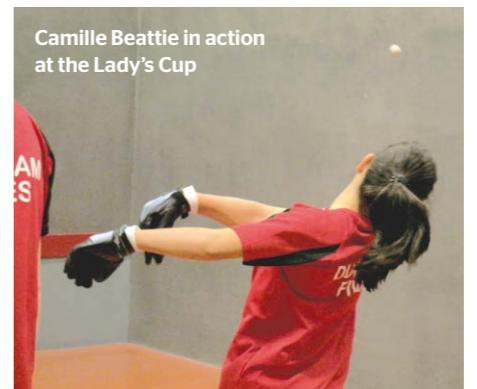
defending champion Louise Mathias from Bristol University, Phoebe Thornhill and Viola King Forbes from Oxford University, Holly Nugent and India Blaksley from Cambridge University, Ibby Lee from London University, and Helena Tunks, now playing with the Executioners. With the event now in its fourth year it is surely fair to say that the standard of the players was the highest yet, though we missed Tessa Mills and Shinan Zhang, no longer eligible.

With such a high standard of players involved it was no surprise that nearly everyone could claim success for themselves: Louise in winning Singles and Doubles once more, the latter with Martha who was also runner-up in the Singles at a very young age; Holly and Phoebe in fighting out the Singles Plate, to Holly's advantage; Ibby in making the Singles semi-final and the Doubles final with Helena, India in reaching the Doubles Plate final with Holly; and Viola in winning the Doubles Plate with Phoebe.

After Christmas the players moved on to their National Singles and Doubles Championships, which took place at Manchester. This time there were entrants from Edinburgh Academy and the City of Durham Club



The Ladies U23s



Camille Beattie in action at the Lady's Cup

to swell the numbers to 16, all of whom made their mark in the Singles and Doubles, particularly in the two Plate matches. The titles went, perhaps predictably, to Louise Mathias in the Singles and to Louise with partner Shinan Zhang in the Doubles, but not before Martha Nugent and Katie Sumner, paired for the first time, had offered the defending champions a serious challenge.

Ladies Fives didn't quite come to an end then, because in February the sixth Ladies Varsity Match took place, proving to be the closest yet, with Cambridge recording a victory by 137-91. All eight players had reason to be proud of themselves, as Oxford had been granted Half Blue status last year and Cambridge the same this. Both University Clubs had done excellently throughout the season in bringing on new players, so much so that there was actually a reserves match, something the men's clubs have not always managed in their long history.

We have plenty to be very optimistic about in regard to the women's game. Chris Burrows has taken to producing Women's Rankings in Singles and Doubles, to match what Dave Hebden does for the National Rankings. There is no doubt these dedicated rankings have an inspirational effect.

Let's hope next season is a full one and the various clubs and schools can maintain the level of progress being made while others are inspired to match them.



The finalists in the Girls' U18 Singles and Doubles



Schools Season Review 2019-20

Bob Dolby looks at a season from which schools could still draw positives

There were huge disappointments this season for those who had set their sights on school competitions, above all the National U13, U14, U16 and Open championships.

Yet in the context of what many suffered in the coronavirus crisis we should look to the positives from what took place.

Several schools play enough Fives in the autumn to have completed some matches and in November there was the one tournament, the Winchester Fives Doubles Championships at Winchester College, run for the 18th and final time by David Barnes. David was supported this year by Alleyn's, Marlborough, Merchant Taylors', St Paul's and, of course, Winchester. It was fitting that, as a Wykehamist, David was able to award the trophy to the Winchester 1st pair of Fraser and Percival, who overcame the Alleyn's 1st pair in a three-gamer.

This event whetted the appetite for the West of England Schools

Championships in January at Sherborne as there was likely to be, in Doubles particularly, an interesting field of top players from Alleyn's, Merchant Taylors', St Paul's, Winchester, and possibly Derby Moor. In the event Taylors' did not enter a pair so the final four were indeed as expected and this time it was Alleyn's who beat St Paul's in the final.

If there was a degree of predictability about the Open Doubles there was little about the Open Singles where the unseeded Raheem from Derby Moor confounded all expectations by beating the top player from Alleyn's, Winchester and St Paul's in succession, two of them in matches of three games. Meanwhile in the U16s Shiloh Wu from



FAR LEFT
Rossall and Sedbergh dominate the Northern Schools Championships

TOP RIGHT
Winchester take the West of England U16 titles

BELOW RIGHT
Loretto win the Scottish Colts Championship

Winchester won the Singles and, with Marcus Cloke Browne, the Doubles, in both cases at the expense of players from Alleyn's.

So it was that masters and players began to look forward to the National Championships in April. Coronavirus was in the air elsewhere at this stage, but few expected it to disrupt the upcoming regional events or indeed the 'Big One'. As it happened only two of the regionals could be completed. Raheem faced little real opposition at Oundle in the Midlands Open Singles, but he and his hard-hitting partner Dean Ali were given a stern test by the Oundle 1st pair of George Crawley and Henry Hollund. At Tonbridge the South East Regionals it was Christ's Hospital in the form of Murray Dare and a powerful Tonbridge squad who dominated in Open and U16s.

No Colquhoun Trophy proved playable in the South West, nor the Midlands U15s, nor chunks of the Scottish Schools Championships, but the City of Durham Club did manage to stage the first Northern Schools Singles, which gave gold to Rossall and City of Durham with various silvers and bronzes to Sedbergh. I have long said what a positive role these championships play in players' development. Their loss was a real shame.

So, of course, was the loss of the National Championships. One's heart particularly goes out to players in their final year of school, deprived through no fault of their own of the chance to win a national title. Let us hope it gives them the positive desire to carry on and win other laurels in future.

'ONE'S HEART GOES OUT TO PLAYERS DEPRIVED OF THE CHANCE TO WIN A NATIONAL TITLE'

Around the schools 2019-20

Individual schools report on an unusual and curtailed Fives season

ALLEYN'S SCHOOL

Rob Ody writes: There is huge enthusiasm for the sport in the school and I am indebted to our school coaches, Howard Wiseman and Dominique Redmond, for their commitment to our youngsters and generating such a positive environment.

It was obviously a great shame that the season and the major schools' championships were affected by the lockdown, but until that point we had enjoyed another Lent term of fixtures against our familiar, annual school opponents. In addition to our school matches we had two very enjoyable fixtures against Cambridge and Oxford Universities.

We were able to participate in three



Success at the West of England Schools

tournaments. In November we entered the Winchester Doubles Championships, where Gwydion Wiseman and Pruthik Puvanendiran were runners-up, losing a close match to Winchester College. In December we participated in the Girls' Under 18 Championships at St Paul's, where Martha Nugent won the Singles and Martha and Katie Innes were Doubles runners-up.

In January we competed in the West of England Championships at Sherborne. Stuart Scott was U16 Singles runner-up, Stuart and Martha Nugent finished runners-up in the U16 Doubles, and Gwydion and Pruthik won the Open Doubles.

We now look forward to seeing you all again in the new season.



BMS at the Lady's Cup

BEDFORD MODERN SCHOOL

Robert Kay writes: I am incredibly proud that Katie Sumner and Maddie Kent leave the school as National U18 Doubles Champions. In December's Singles competition they were unfortunate to have to play each other in the semi-final, from where Katie went on to be runner-up. They have been wonderful ambassadors for the game. Not only did they continually develop their own game but also delivered great coaching sessions to the younger years. One of their prodigies was Lady's Plate winner Surianne Griffith.

BEDFORD SCHOOL

Henry Vann writes: This year the 1st IV had L6th players Will Cliffe and Hugh Halsey as the regular first pair and a rotating set of other players stepping in to make up the team including Rob Menhart, Darcy McBride, Shiva Songara and Joshua Mital. This bodes well for future years, with no top team U6th formers leaving at the end of the year.

Whilst the season may have been cut short, the teams scored wins in our

regular fixtures against BMS, Derby Moor and the University of Cambridge, with losses to the RFA, Jesters and Oundle. The Midlands U18 tournament at Oundle was an exciting event, with Will Cliffe winning the RFA Mug – a hugely enjoyable day's worth of games with superb quality of play across the field.

The internal school singles competitions were won by Shiva Songara (Seniors, Dawes Cup) and Callum Ward (Juniors, Mellor Cup), with some great promise shown for future years.



A coveted RFA Mug!

BLOXHAM SCHOOL

Simon Batten writes: Bloxham experienced a rebuilding year, both in terms of developing players after a large leave from an experienced group of seniors and of starting to address some overdue structural issues with the courts. Between them the courts, which leaked when they were not sweating, and the lockdown for the coronavirus accounted for all our fixtures. This seems an apposite moment for Bertie Matthew to take on the running of Fives at Bloxham, though I shall be on hand to assist him, with some talented youngsters coming through.

BLUNDELL'S SCHOOL

Wayne Enstone writes: Blundell's Fives continues to develop on several fronts, with the Prep School now playing throughout the year, thanks to Alexandra Steel, ably assisted by coach Tim Lewis, and additional sessions now included in the Senior School PE programme.

Our season began in September with the annual Chris Reichwald

CHRIST'S HOSPITAL

Bart Callaghan writes: It has been a year of progress and change for Fives at Christ's Hospital. We have had a huge uptake across the school, attracting a good number of juniors to the sport. With plans afoot for the conversion of an adjacent squash court into a Fives court, and some general cosmetic improvements, we hope to see even more success soon.

At the South East Boys' Regionals, Murray Dare fought off strong Tonbridge players to claim the U18 singles title. Although he and his partner Ollie Heath did not manage to retain their doubles title, it was an excellent swansong for them. Our U16s have become an enthusiastic and hugely competitive group, who I look forward to seeing progress.

For our girls' Fives, it has been an unusually quiet year, though Aiysha Alli had rampant success at the South East Girls' Regionals, and we are looking forward to relaunching

Tournament. This is a fun doubles tournament, with predominantly Old Blundellians partnering the younger school players. The quality of Fives never ceases to amaze at this event, which has the effect of encouraging the players for the rest of the year. The rest of the term was spent enjoying playing internally, but unfortunately the Colquhoun Trophy had to be postponed and was certainly missed.

Spring term began with the West of England Schools, where the eight-player squad competed well over the two days, some reaching the quarter-final stages. There were the usual fixtures against Pilgrims', Malvern and Sherborne, with wins in all encounters. In addition, there were the much valued fixtures against the RFA, Executioners, Old Blundellians and the Exeter and Tiverton Clubs. On occasions the West of England Club, used the courts, which gave Blundell's players the opportunity to watch and play them.

These fixtures also gave us the opportunity to field relative newcomers to Fives.



this next year, headed by our first female coach.

It will be sad to see our leavers depart, especially at such an uncertain

BRADFIELD COLLEGE

Jeremy Ball writes: There was an exciting first for Bradfield this season when two U14 girls, Flora and Charlotte, competed in our first Junior girls' fixture – against Malvern – and later against Marlborough.

The U14 boys were competitive and there are a couple of strong sportsmen amongst them. As ever, it will depend on how many return to the courts next season, but I'd like to think some will be keen to do so. A loyal band of brothers – quite literally twins and a pair of siblings! – made up the U15/16s and they played with their usual enthusiasm, charm and sportsmanship. It always helps boost resources when the current U16 champion joins the College and Max enjoyed some decent, competitive games of singles and had to endure playing doubles with me on a couple of occasions.

Thanks to the Wessex Club for making Max welcome on a Tuesday evening: the opportunity to play with adults helped him to sustain a decent level of performance.



Raheem wins the U18s at the WoE Schools

EDINBURGH ACADEMY

Hector McFarlane writes: Though truncated, this season has been another very enjoyable and successful one. The usual round of fixtures against the other Edinburgh schools were supplemented with new ones against visiting sides from Sedbergh, Bedford Modern and Strathallan. It was great for our pupils to expand their experience of playing other Fives enthusiasts. A great season for our U14 boys saw them unbeaten, with 10 different players taking part. Three of them also regularly played in the U16 and U18 sides, which bodes well. Callum C, our only Senior boy, helped coach the younger players.

The popularity of Girls' Fives continues to grow, with strong numbers at all levels and many taking on and beating some of the boys. The

Academy Girls at the Ladies Nationals



FETTES COLLEGE

Peter Worledge writes: The Spring term kicked off with the annual Jesters joust, with 50 of them descending on Edinburgh. Fettes pupils notched up over 70 games during the weekend and all will have gained huge experience and enjoyment from it. Aside from the sheer volume of Fives played over the weekend, highlights must include the inaugural Fettes-hosted girls Select X tournament involving 10 Edinburgh schoolgirls paired up with a record 10 female Jesters.

Lewis Keates and I have continued to run Saturday and Sunday morning sessions until the shutdown and we look forward to resuming. Raheem and Dean have been running lunch-time sessions for a very nice group of Year 9s and 10s. We are building up numbers nicely.

Regular fixtures against other schools provided opportunities for progress throughout the term; in the Boys' 1st IV, Alex C and Temi A stood out as a pair. The younger teams

Senior players – Sophie L, Ailsa C and Flora M – managed to balance their multiple other commitments to continue their infectiously positive efforts on the Fives courts. They were joined by Louise H at the National Ladies Championships, which resulted in Plate victories for Sophie in the Singles and for Ailsa and Louise in the Doubles. Sophie and Cecily M were also silver medallists at the Durham Invitational Tournament.

A highlight was, as ever, the Jesters visit in January, with ever more fixtures squeezed in. A first victory for the E.A. Girls Senior VIII was a great achievement as Zara E dusted off her gloves to join the other girls in a great all-round performance. Sophie edged Cecily in the Select X tournament, whilst Callum scored a victory against the UK No.1 in the boys' equivalent.

experienced a year of consolidation, some finding it challenging against older hands at other schools; a developing Junior Colts team and growing interest from junior girls bode well for next year, however.

And so the Scottish Schools Championships: firstly, the singles and a highly competitive series of games led to an all-Fettes final in the Plate with Toby C edging the win over Wyman C. In the Boys' doubles both Senior and Colts competitions were very tight, with Fettes securing the overall win in the Senior Plate and close runners-up in the Colts Cup final. Sadly, the Girls' doubles competition had to be postponed and remains a tale for another day.

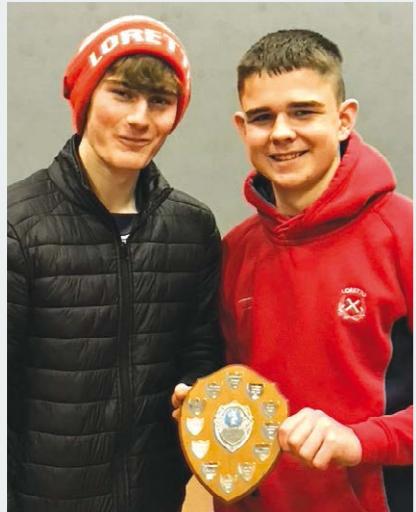
LORETO SCHOOL

Richie Murby writes: Our players made the most of unusual circumstances this season. With the courts intermittently closed for repairs and maintenance, most matches were played away from home, and on several occasions players took to the squash court with a handball – a fun introduction to Fives skills for beginners and an intriguing challenge for the more experienced!

Loretto's tight-knit band of Colts took on the U16 and U18 fixtures once again this year. They continued to push themselves and improved markedly, winning the majority of their matches in both age categories. Sadly, a final tilt at the UK Schools event at U16 level was not to be. However, the Scottish Schools Colts Doubles did go ahead. This turned out to be especially good news for Loretto, as their two pairs won the Plate and the Cup respectively.

We were also delighted this season to join Sedbergh and EA for a packed afternoon of round-robin games, kindly hosted by Fettes.

On the singles side, Nathan fought well to reach the semi-finals of the Boyd Trophy, and was a close runner-up at the Scottish Schools Boys 'Select VI' event on the Jesters tour, while Robyn represented Loretto very well in the Girls 'Select X' match.



Loretto win the Colts Plate

MALVERN COLLEGE

Chris Thomas writes: Malvern College have enjoyed some excellent internal games and house competitions, and, with Fives on the PE rotation, a lot of pupils are managing to access the courts. However, getting them to stay and really develop the game is a lot harder!

The lack of Senior players is problematic, but hopefully the young Year 9 and 10s will keep on playing. We had good matches as usual against Marlborough, Bradfield, Winchester and Rugby, as well as the touring UCS Old Boys for a very good game. Sadly, the Girls' season was hampered dramatically, but we look forward to that continuing next year.

MARLBOROUGH COLLEGE

Tom Kiggell writes: Captain Lena Barton retained the National U18 Singles Plate, and Freddie Kottler beat two high-quality opponents at the West of England Championships before going down fighting in the last eight. He and Charlie Jobson turned themselves into a good pair, notching notable victories over St Paul's II and Alleyn's at the Schools' Winchester Fives Doubles. Kirsten Bell couldn't play in the Nationals in December, but was playing quite beautifully by March, only to see her target events cancelled. Conrad Peck specialised in winning nail-biting singles matches, winning successive cliff-hangers against opponents from the RFA, Oxford University and the Exeter Club: a sign of creditable mental strength.

U16s Adam Kiggell and Archie Todd-Leask stepped up to the U18s when needed and did themselves proud. Adam in particular pushed the top Paulines hard in our U16 fixture. The same goes for Phoenix Fleming and Alisa Allin in the U14s, and their counterparts in the boys' team Max Wyman and Piers Fulford-Smith.

There were several close matches: wins against Wessex and Sherborne, and a loss to Oxford University, climaxing in an epic 116-117 mixed U14 game versus Bradfield. The Town club, who supplied several players for the Jesters and RFA, were once again splendidly supportive allies in their encouragement of the game.

Thanks go to all schools and clubs

MERCHISTON CASTLE SCHOOL

Matt Hillier writes: The 2019/20 Fives season proved to be another excellent one for Merchiston, with Ben Afshar and Marcus Mulvey asserting their dominance in the U18 age group in Scotland. In the Scottish Schools Singles Ben beat Tom Mackintosh in the semi-final in a repeat of last year's U16 National Schools Singles semi-final.

This took him to the final, where he beat Marcus in a closely-fought game to become the U18 Scottish Schools Singles Champion. In the U18 Edinburgh Schools Doubles, Ben and Marcus combined to defeat Tom and Lachlan Ferguson in another all-Merchiston final.

who made it out to Wiltshire, and to the players themselves, who were great value on and off court. The attitude to the game that Charlie, Lena and Kirsten exemplify will surely influence the next generation for the better.

MERCHANT TAYLORS' SCHOOL

Simon Hardman writes: With half our fixtures scheduled for March, unfortunately we saw little in the way of competitive action. Our fixtures at Christ's Hospital, Rugby and Winchester earlier in the season were entertaining affairs, with one win and two losses. Jamie Graham also attempted to defend his Schools' Winchester Fives Doubles title.

Though we have now completed three years without home courts, our players have continued to develop and show an outstanding commitment to the sport. Once again this year, we played on squash courts in Watford under the expert guidance of Gareth Price, who continues to do so much for the sport at MTS.

As next year's Lower Sixth will be the youngest year group to have played on Fives courts at MTS, next season will be a challenging one. However, I am hopeful that the enthusiasm they show for the game will encourage those in the younger year groups to get involved and to keep the sport running competitively at the school.



Ben and Marcus are Scottish champions

In addition to a strong U18 season, a young U16 pairing performed very well to reach the semi-final of the U16 Edinburgh Schools Doubles and the U14s had a competitive domestic season in Scotland.

The boys also enjoyed having visits from both Sedbergh and Bedford Modern on tour, as well as the wonderful annual Jesters weekend, where Ben Afshar won the Select VI tournament with his Jester partner – another win for a Merchiston pupil after Doug Tidy's three consecutive wins before that.

We now look forward to next season and hope to bring a strong group down to represent Merchiston at the National Schools Championships in 2021.

OUNDLE SCHOOL

Tony Burrows writes: This year has been successful in that the number of boys playing the game is up from last year, encouraged by a senior IV, who have acted as inspiring models throughout the year.

The lack of full-time coaching probably hindered the seniors from reaching their potential but it has been encouraging to see their sportsmanship second to none. In particular their performance at the U18 Midlands Schools Regional event was heartening.

All players have performed with impressive energy, and their grace in both victory and defeat has been refreshing. The senior boys for 2020 will have big shoes to fill, but they are not short of enthusiasm for the game and for all it stands.



Success for the Oundle 1st IV

the team, with some particularly high quality opposition pushing our players to the limit. In the end the scores did not always reflect the excellent matches had on the day, but it was great to see such excellent Fives on display.

The highlight of the Lent term was the home fixture against Tonbridge – with very closely fought matches demonstrating the progress made throughout the year. The fixture against Marlborough was played against the background of a fencing injury to our talismanic captain, but offered the opportunity for our fiercest young player to get some excellent match experience.

RUGBY SCHOOL

Trevor White writes: The loss of the main national tournaments was a big blow and certainly for the younger girls removed an opportunity to show just how far they had come through the year. Several of these players attended the Lady's Cup at Cambridge in October, showing great potential.

The most able and most improved of the senior girls is Shona McGuinness: taking Fives as a games option in the second term gave her practice with the senior boys and meant rapid progress. Other senior girls with real talent were Claudia Harrison, Lulu Hamwee and Iona Grahame; with Honor Richards also getting into the courts regularly, the senior girls' team was formidable – perhaps the best in the land.

The boys were less successful. Only two boys showed real ability and quality. Xav Christopher, the captain, continued to improve and was always enthusiastic and determined. The other is Tom Hortop, who looks a great prospect from Y11. Only Xav decided to take Fives as a Lent term option and so the gulf between him and other senior players widened. Novice Luke Wandless, who seemed to enjoy every aspect of the game to the full, partnered him on several occasions. We hope both will continue to play at university.

Matches for the boys and girls included Stamford, Marlborough and Malvern, plus the Midlands Regional tournament for the senior boys which provided good opposition from Derby Moor, Oundle and Bedford.

ST PAUL'S SCHOOL

Sam Roberts writes: Our season began with the West of England tournament in January (after failing to raise a pair for the Winchester Doubles in November). In the U18 singles Teddy Monro-Davies clawed his way back after losing the first against his doubles partner Louis Odgers in a seesawing semi but then lost the final in three to Raheem of Derby Moor, who was playing with superb precision.

The U18 doubles final began as a one-sided affair, with the Alleyn's top seeds too strong. The second game was a classic, as St Paul's soaked up pressure and made it to game ball. Alleyn's held their nerve and closed the game out.

In the U16 singles, we were involved in two tremendous matches: Aiden Whitham nearly pulling off a fabulous fightback against the eventual winner and Ben Harrison playing maturely but losing to the Alleyn's number one. In the Plate, Monty Brown got better and better as the day went on, but his opponent in the final had too much.

In the Spring term, Teddy, Louis and Ben Pymont in the U18s, and Ben Roberts, Alex Ridley, Whitham and Harrison in the U16s jostled for top

spot, and had closely fought matches against Winchester and Alleyn's. In the U15s, Charles Calzia, Will Sauvel-Porter, Seb Ion, Ben Yu, Oscar Lakatos and Stefano Frigo all made progress. Some excellent players emerged in the U14s: Fintan Delaney, Will Freebairn, Thomas Wong and Leo Walton.

SEDBERGH SCHOOL

Jonathan Lidiard writes: Our young but enthusiastic squad were fortunate the bulk of their matches were early in the Lent Term, meaning that the season felt busy despite its early end. It was brilliant to make the trip to Edinburgh for a weekend of Fives for the Colts against Loretto, Edinburgh Academy and Merchiston. Our Colts, mostly in Year 10, had a tough time against impressive opponents, but learnt much from playing at this standard.

It was exciting to be part of the inaugural Northern Schools' Championships at Durham, where we were U18 runners-up and U16 cup semi-finalists and plate winner. Our season finished with another great tour, to the Midlands, where we enjoyed Derby Moor and Oundle's hospitality and a cracking few games.

SHERBORNE SCHOOL

Nick Scorer writes: The Fives team have had a healthy fixture list with nine matches and one national competition this season.

Benedict M and Harry H led the senior squad and enjoyed games against both school and adult teams, with victory over the Old Whitgiftians a particular highlight. We also had another epic battle against the Old Shirburnians, which was a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon with plenty of Fives. Benedict and Harry were joined by a number of Year 11 pupils who have started to play at senior level and enjoyed the chance to test themselves against experienced players.

Lower down the school we have some regular Year 10 pupils, and in Year 9 there are plenty of enthusiastic players who are new to the sport and were keen for as many fixtures as possible. It was a delight to see the progress they made through the season, including their ever-closer scores against Blundell's, who unusually we played three times but could never quite beat!

STAMFORD ENDOWED SCHOOLS

Alex Smith writes: Fives at Stamford, practised in the squash courts, has continued as well as was possible under the circumstances. Girls and boys from Years 7 to 10 took part in a Fives activity after school twice a week before lockdown. We have played in various events, including some great mixed fixtures at Rugby and Oundle against more experienced players who kindly helped our young players along.

There were two particular highlights of the season. In October six girls and six boys played in the Lady's Cup at Cambridge. Each Stamford girl (from Year 10) partnered a Year 8 boy and had a great day competing against pairs from the University and a variety of schools. Zara Pollock and partner Chase Burgess played particularly well and won the Lady's Bowl.

Then in February, the Year 8 boys



Chase and Zara win the Lady's Bowl

brought their skills to the Eton Fives game, entering the Thring Trophy for U14 beginners at Uppingham School. All pairs fought valiantly, learning quickly how to play this unfamiliar version.

Sadly, this was to be their last competitive outing as the season was

then curtailed, and so our players were not able to compete in the Nationals, where they had been hoping to build on 2019's success. In any event, our keen young players are aiming for more trophies next season! We even dream one day of having our own courts in Stamford.



Will Redgate and Ollie Knight at SE Regionals

TONBRIDGE SCHOOL

Ian Jackson writes: Tonbridge Fives continues in very good heart with 66 boys playing in the Spring Term and school matches arranged for 11 different teams, enabling a good percentage of those playing to experience a match at their level against some different players.

We had our first ever win at the West of England Schools, with Will Redgate beating Ollie Knight to win the Senior Singles Plate. We also had our best ever year at the SE Regionals, winning four of the five trophies on offer.

Two incidents from the top and bottom of the club stand out from this year. Boy number 66 was leaving early to return to Hong Kong and apologised for missing the last leagues session of term. However, at 2.15pm he showed up, saying that the taxi wasn't until 4pm, and he had an eighth and last attempt to beat boy number 65. He gave it his all. Sadly, however, it was not to be, but his commitment and determination impressed us all.

At the top end our internal senior doubles final was among the best ever. Left-handed Charlie Crooke from the 2nd IV was on the form of his life and with his house partner forced a decider against the SE Regional champion. With a 9-6 lead, Charlie hit the side wall on the full and then found the back nick; it looked like game ball, but somehow Massimo Campanale dug it out, the momentum changed, and the champions claimed the school title to go with their SE Regionals win.

On a sad note, in January we learnt of the death of Mike Bushby, who ran Tonbridge Fives, nominally for about 20 years, but in practice for over 30.

WHITGIFT SCHOOL

Nick Morgan writes: This Fives season really didn't get off the ground. Our senior squad was too weak to truly trouble the opposition and the junior boys were often too inexperienced despite their enthusiasm. Early encounters with Christ's Hospital saw us defeated at both levels and this did not bode well for future fixtures. With the majority of matches planned for the second half of term to avoid the perennial problem of sweating courts, Covid-19 prematurely ended the season before it had truly begun. The only tournament we played in was the SE regionals at Tonbridge in February. It was hard to leave without a single trophy, the first time since 2013.

At school the seniors frequently joined the Old Whitgiftians on a Thursday evening, and it was encouraging to see so many schoolboy players attend. When weather conditions made play possible it was great to see a real buzz around the courts, often with all four of them in action.

The refurbishment of 2017 has not proved entirely successful. The main roof gutter continued to leak leading to peeling paint and unsightly stains on two of the courts, but I have been promised action on this and a repaint before the autumn. But the lighting has been a massive improvement.

With my imminent departure from Whitgift I am still unsure of the future of Fives. Maybe Covid-19 will awaken the school to the importance of on-site activities that are cheap to run and have fewer issues with social distancing than say squash. After all, the courts are basically outside with excellent ventilation, but the crux of the matter will be to find a member of staff to run the activity. I have been eternally grateful for David Butlin's coaching support and offers of help from the OW's. It would be a tragedy to see the courts fall into disuse simply for lack of staffing. Fives can really help the niche sportsman find that activity where he can thrive; over the past 30 years at Whitgift time and time again I have witnessed boys take up Fives and truly excel. Our sporting policy is changing at Whitgift, so let's hope Fives is very much at the front of the new masterplan.

WINCHESTER COLLEGE

Jamie McManus writes: The competitive season started, as usual, with the Winchester Doubles tournament where Dom Percival and Seb Fraser went one better than last year in winning the title, overcoming Alleyn's in a competitive final. At the West of England tournament they found things slightly tougher, losing 12-10 in the third to St. Paul's in the semi-final. Nevertheless, their efforts helped to inspire the U16s. Here Shiloh Wu, still only an U15, showed his potential by winning the U16 Singles title and then teaming up with Marcus Cloke Browne to win the doubles title, despite tough competition from St. Paul's and Alleyn's. The U16 tournaments showed the strength of Winchester's squad as Kaito Bremner won the U16 Singles Plate competition and then teamed up with Henry Akerman to win the Plate in the U16 Doubles as well.

Harry Gujadur began to strut his stuff for the 1st IV in matches, while Marcus Cloke Browne also benefitted from stepping up to the 1st team. This allowed Shiloh Wu and Chris Lee to step up in turn and take on the U16 competition. Meanwhile U14 JP Cheng, following encouragement from his housemaster, decided to give Fives a go: already a talented badminton player, with housemates Wu, Lee and Akerman to practise with, he made quick progress.



Winning the Schools Winchester Fives Doubles

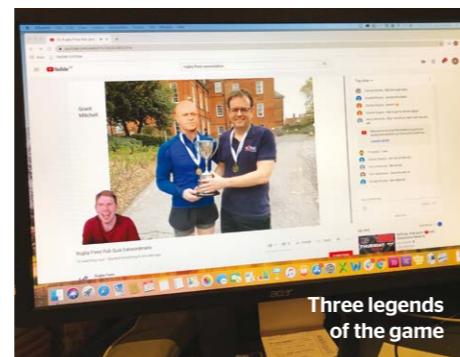
FIVES IN LOCKDOWN



Podcasting has never seen anything like this



"Never Tear Me and Fives Apart"



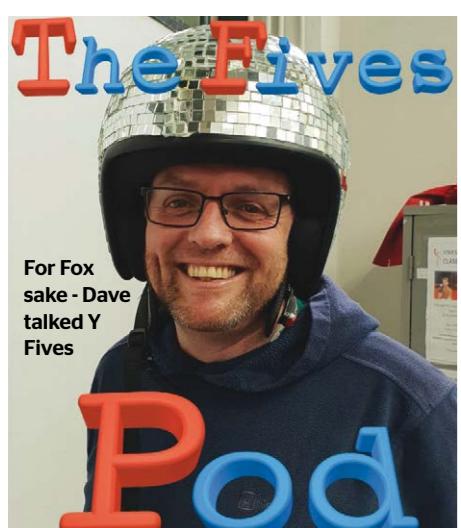
Three legends of the game



Post-quiz Zoom party went into the night



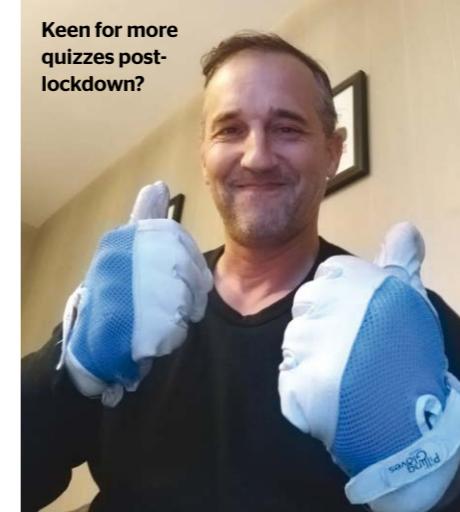
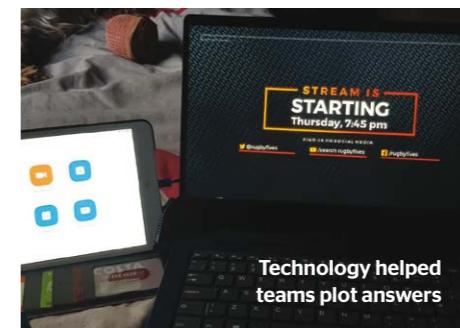
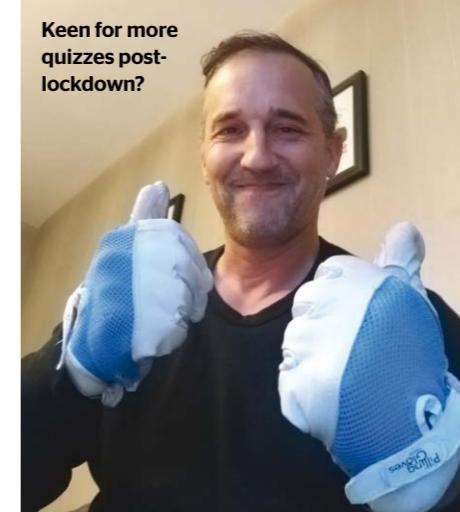
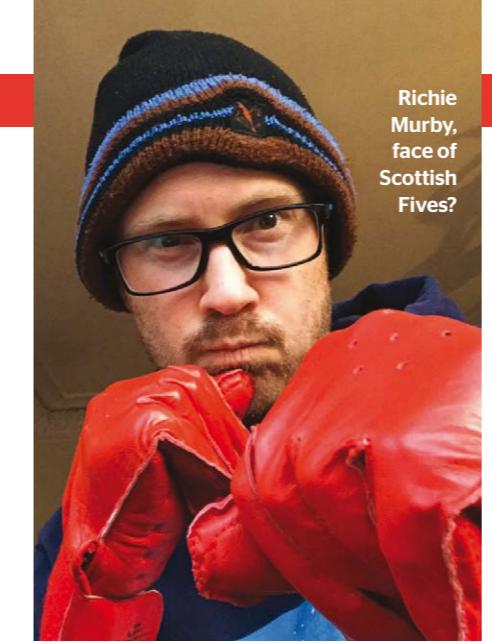
Fives gloves, essential quiz attire



For Fox sake - Dave talked Y Fives

Fives' social distancing goes online

How the Fives community stayed social in lockdown



The Fives Pod



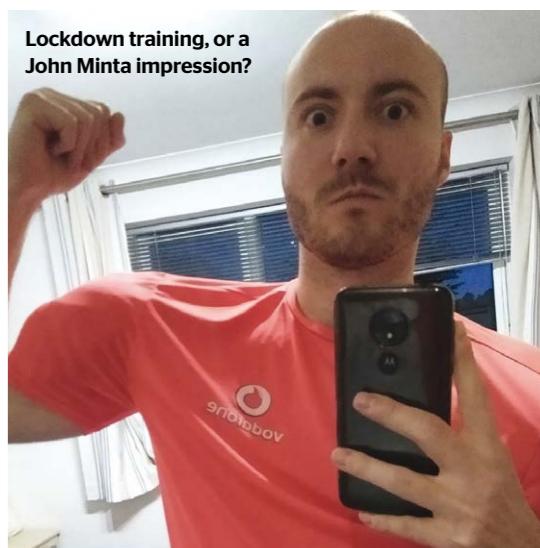
The Covid-lockdown might have brought a halt to on-court action, but there was no way that the Fives community was going to let that stop them having fun.

Out of the adversity came two popular new online initiatives. The first saw Rugby Fives take its first steps into podcasting, with hosts Dave Butler, Matt Shaw, Sam Russell and Theo Parker chatting to a selection of guests from the game.

The episodes were all recorded remotely and featured chats with local clubs, news of a new international England v Scotland fixture, interviews with notable names such as Hamish

Buchanan and Dave Fox and more. Search for 'The Fives Pod' on Spotify, Apple Podcasts or Buzzsprout.

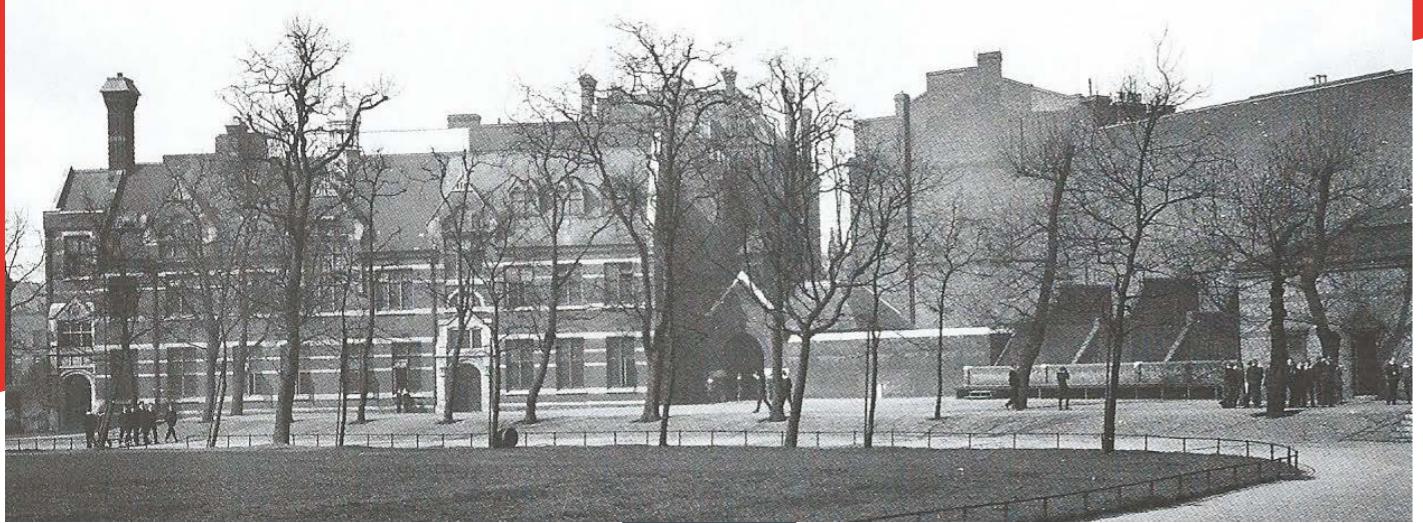
Lockdown also saw the first ever Rugby Fives quiz on 30 April, hosted by Dan Grant. More than 90 quizzers took part, managing to raise more than £1,300 for the RFA in the process. Each round was linked to the game of Fives, with pictures, music and challenges all featuring. Given their dedication to the game, it was perhaps no surprise that the Fives Pod hosts emerged as the winners. However, they couldn't defend their title in the second quiz, on 28 May, when Team Gaz took the win.



No capitals, no Googling and no Eton Fives allowed

The history of Fives at Merchant Taylors' School

Owen Toller reports on a school that's enjoyed success despite court challenges



It took just a few short years for the game of Fives to become established at Merchant Taylors' School. The new school buildings opened at Charterhouse Square in 1875 by the Merchant Taylors' Company included some open courts on the north side of the quadrangle. By the time of the first volume of *The Taylorian*, published in 1878, the game had taken off: "The reaction in favour of Fives has been so strong that our wildest hopes have been more than fulfilled... The number of scratch Fives gangs going on is bewildering in the extreme."

The first mention of matches came just a couple of years later in 1880, with encounters home and away against Christ's College, Finchley. 1881 saw a schools' Fives Championship, contested by Epsom, Mill Hill, Godolphin, UCS and Merchant Taylors' School (MTS), also on the basis of matches home and away. MTS fought out an epic final against Epsom, taking a one-point lead after the home leg only to lose by the same margin in the return match: the championship was shared. Epsom and UCS remained on the Taylors' fixture list for many years. They were soon joined by what was then Bedford Grammar School, a fixture which continues to this day. Almost as long-standing is the rivalry with St Paul's, which began in 1891 with an MTS two-point victory at Charterhouse Square.

A second set of covered courts at Charterhouse Square were brought into use in 1898, commemorating Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, the first match being against St John's Hall, Highbury. The old 1875 courts, unroofed and unlit, continued in use and in subsequent years there

ABOVE
The unroofed
1875 courts

were several examples of matches being abandoned because of rain or bad light.

GOOD RESULTS AND A BIG MOVE

The early years of the 20th century were good ones for the game at Charterhouse Square. OC White (1897-1900) and CL Parker (1902-06) were outstanding players. 1905 was "the third year in which no matches were lost, even against the OMTs, who included the last three school captains". Then, between 1906 and 1909, few matches were played and the results were poor – all four 1909 matches were lost. Nevertheless 1911 was an unbeaten season for both 1st and 2nd IVs, with St Paul's defeated both at home and away.

The First World War years saw a lack of practice time due to the demands of the Officers' Training Corps, but otherwise sport seemed to continue at school much as usual. 1919 was a very satisfactory season (played six, won five) but issues about practice time remained. In 1921 there was "no interval between Football and Fives"; no Wednesday or Saturday practices could be arranged either, "all half holidays being taken up with house games".

In 1926 the old open courts were demolished to make way for a new science building and were replaced by covered ones notable for their excellent artificial lighting. A typical fixture list at this time would include matches with Dulwich, St Paul's, Haileybury, Bedford and Christ's Hospital and often with the Universities.

1933 saw the move of the school from the City to Sandy Lodge, with "increased facilities, in the

shape of four excellent courts". That year DJ Mallagh and D Mitchell became the first Merchant Taylors' pair to reach the semi-finals of the doubles in the National Schools' Championships. In the 1930s there were notably many good players among the masters, but the school teams were adequate rather than strong, as rugby prevented younger boys attending coaching sessions. In 1936 "the lack of young players has been more apparent each season".

On another note, captain's reports were often critical of individuals: "lobs too much, doesn't hit the ball hard enough, tries to push it"; "would gain many points by using his brains more"; and "is eight or nine points down before he has warmed up". However, of one outstanding player in the 1930s it was noted that he did well at Christ's Hospital "once he discovered how to hit the light switches and irregularities on the doors".

POST-WAR HALCYON DAYS

The Second World War, like its predecessor, seems not to have affected the game much; the 1941 season was "one of the most successful of recent years". 1942 also was a good year, but in 1943 fewer boys appeared to be playing, and in 1944 there was difficulty in finding time for practice. A problem emerged after the war, as for all schools and clubs: the ball supply. Only by 1948 was this resolved.

As post-war normality set in, Fives flourished under the care of Mr Hodgetts. JGK Ingram was unbeaten in school matches in 1949 and 1950. Although an outbreak of measles curtailed the 1951 season, the identical Whatmoor twins caused problems for their opponents, being distinguishable only by one being left-handed. PM Smith won six matches out of seven at home in 1954 and was to be a National Singles finalist in 1956. In 1957 the fixture list for the 1st IV again stood at 13 matches, and in 1959 RT Bulgin, in the first of his four seasons, was unbeaten in school matches. He, PM Whitcombe and DA Sharp were



ABOVE
1st IV in 1929

'THE EARLY YEARS OF THE 20TH CENTURY WERE GOOD ONES FOR THE GAME'

the nucleus of a most successful team in 1961. Mr Beynon took over as master-in-charge in 1964; this was the time of the excellent Cameron brothers, David and Peter (captains in 1963 and 1964 respectively).

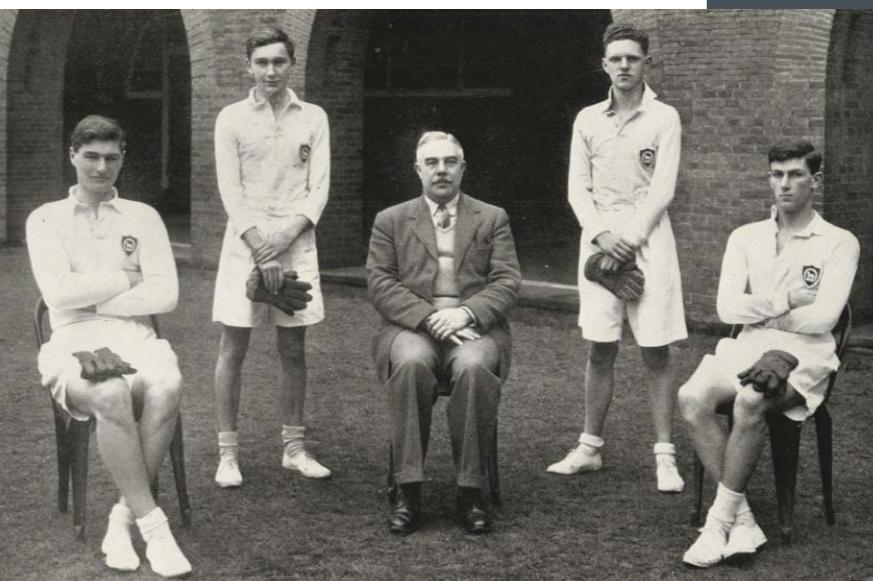
When by 1967 standards had fallen somewhat, the Captain was referring to the "halcyon days of Bulgin, Whitcombe and Cameron". Nevertheless in 1968 no fewer than 16 matches were played.

As the quality of Fives at the school improved in the two decades after the war, so the Old Merchant Taylors' Fives Club grew in numbers and became one of the most active clubs in the country. In 1964/65, the OMTs played 23 matches and won 20 of them; and in 1967/68, 21 matches were played and 17 won. The "halcyon days" referred to in the School report of 1967 carried on into OMT Fives. Apart from those who went on to distinguish themselves at University, there were several older local players of talent such as Graham Prodger, Paul Coker, Ted and Richard Wiles, and Paul Smith.

Dick Bulgin's stunning victory in the British Universities singles in 1961, fresh from school, was a sign that the standard of OMT Fives was on the up. Several OMTs played in the Varsity Match, mainly for Cambridge, during the 1960s and 1970s; in 1972 David Cameron and Dick Bulgin were runners-up in the National Doubles; Guy Whiting twice won the British Universities Doubles; and in 1975 the Club won the National Club Knock-out. The Club remained strong, and its members were present in competitions right through until the demolition of the courts at the end of the 2016-17 season, which has temporarily ended activities.

PLAYING HOST TO THE PRESIDENT

The school courts at Sandy Lodge have also played an important part in the RFA Club's story. >



BELOW
The 1950 1st
IV with Mr
Hodgetts and
John Ingram
(front row, left)



In December 1969, the Club's pre-Christmas President's Cup competition first came to Merchant Taylors'. It soon established itself as a model "draw-for-partners" doubles tournament. For players of all ages, it has become a highlight of the season. Six OMTs have shared in a President's Cup win: Bob Peters, Neil Eckert, James Harrison, Prashant Chopra, Gareth Price and Dan Grant.

In 1970 Peter Ingram took over as master-in-charge, and for many during the next 25 years he embodied Merchant Taylors' Fives. He brought an unflappable mixture of down-to-earth sense and plain niceness to the game. He was fortunate to start with some outstanding players, such as Guy Whiting, Geoff Bunting, and Simon Brown, the latter pair winning the West of England Doubles in 1973 and twice reaching the final of the Schools' Doubles. In 1970 the Colts and Under-15 were unbeaten; in 1971 the 1st IV beat Oxford University, the RFA and the very strong St Dunstan's, and in 1972 both Oxford and Cambridge were defeated.

The early 1980s represent a peak in the history of Merchant Taylors' Fives. 1980 was the most successful season ever, the 1st IV beating all the leading Fives schools, and Simon Burrows and Neil Eckert winning the National Schools' Doubles. This achievement was repeated by Tony Morris and Howard Thompson in 1984. A further highlight was the tour to the USA by a squad of eight in 1986 where John Hampel became Massachusetts Open Singles and Doubles, and Connecticut Open Singles, Champion. However, the rise of hockey as a major Spring term sport meant that Fives began to rely on scraps. The fact that Taylors' continued to produce good players and to compete at national level is testimony to Peter's coaching.

'THE EARLY 1980S REPRESENT A PEAK IN THE HISTORY OF MERCHANT TAYLORS' FIVES'

ABOVE
The OMTs - David Cameron, Guy Whiting, Dick Bulgin and Bob Peters - win the Wood Cup in 1975



LEFT
Photograph of Peter Ingram hanging in the old courts

BETWEEN
The 1986 squad for the tour of the USA, including future Oxford players John Hayes and John Hampel



CHASING MAJOR TROPHIES

There were many occasions on which plate trophies came to Sandy Lodge, but the disadvantages under which the sport laboured meant that, though the school continued to produce good individual players and some very effective pairs, the cupboard remained bare of major trophies until 1997, when Steffan James won the National U13 singles, and, with Asheesh Kaul, the doubles. Peter Ingram's retirement in 1996 was marked by a dinner at which many former pupils and colleagues from the world of Fives paid tribute to his achievements and personality.

Owen Toller took over as master-in-charge from 1996; he was an experienced coach but was unable to devote as much time to the game as he would have liked. Essential assistance was provided by Simon Stott and Crispin Collier. It was Crispin who taught James and Kaul the game and did so with great success: they won the National U14 Doubles in 1998 and ended their school career by winning the Open Doubles Plate in 2002.

That year, 2002, the National Schools' Championships were played at Sandy Lodge, but the four courts meant timings were too compressed and the championships subsequently returned to St Paul's six courts. However, there was an omen in that Daniel Grant, in the Lower Sixth, was the only non-Pauline to make the last four of the Open Singles, and the next year he fulfilled the huge promise he had long shown by becoming the first, and so far only, Taylorian to win the National Schools' Singles Championship.

EXPERTISE AT THE HELM

Owen Toller handed over to James Clifford in 2003, and when James left, the appointment of former Oxford captain Nick Hillier in 2005 was a welcome injection of new blood and expertise. Nick was to run Fives until Simon Hardman took over in 2015.

Nick Hillier's 10 years in charge marked a successful continuation of the work done by his predecessors. Nick's own background in the game gave him a keen understanding of the issues in



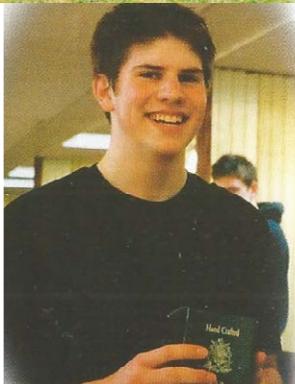
promoting a minor sport. Nick was deeply committed to coaching his charges, setting up extra after-school clubs and promoting Fives as a three-term games option. He entered his players in national and regional competitions, where they consistently reached the latter stages of the main draws and figured prominently in Plate competitions in all age-groups. He also ensured MTS generally won the Centenary Cup against Bedford School.

Nick wrote appreciatively of his young players each year in his report for the RFA Annual Review. Names that recur are Elliott Tebboth who went from success in the Colts Doubles Plate in 2012 to playing for Cambridge in the Varsity Match in 2017; U18 Plate winners Ethan Taberham and Joe Savage; Emrys Thursfield and Sarthak Garella, respectively secretary and captain of Cambridge University 2020-21; and Charlie Barnett, who won the Love Mug at the President's Cup in 2016.

Simon Hardman inherited some very promising young players in 2015. In his first report for the RFA Simon was able to say that he was "immensely impressed with the... dedication and commitment of all players." He had in his squad some able youngsters in Taberham, Savage and Garella, plus Anikait Garella, Jamie Graham, and Ewan Townshend, a left-handed Colt, who reached the quarter-final of the Colts Singles in 2017. Ironically, in the same season as a potentially title-winning group of players was coming together the School took the decision to demolish the block of four Fives courts to redevelop the site as a Geography teaching block.

FIVES CONTINUES REGARDLESS

Fives did not come to an end with the demise of the courts. The boys took to playing on squash courts, coached by OMT Gareth Price. Simon Hardman declared himself hopeful of success to



ABOVE
1st IV 1997 with Messrs Stott and Toller

LEFT
Daniel Grant wins the National Schools Singles in 2003

BETWEEN
Jamie Graham and Ewan Townshend holding the Mappin Cup with Daniel Tristao



'FIVES DID NOT COME TO AN END WITH THE DEMISE OF THE COURTS'

come. He had reason to express such hopes.

For the 2018-19 season Jamie Graham and Ewan Townshend paired up to win the National Schools Winchester Fives Doubles Championship in November, beating the Winchester 1st pair in the final, a striking achievement for players brought up on a Rugby Fives court. Two months later they reached the final of the West of England Schools' U18 Doubles but lost to the Alleyn's 1st pair. With pairs from Alleyn's, St Paul's, Winchester and Merchant Taylors' in contention there was great interest to see who could win the U18 Doubles at the National Schools Championships in April 2019. Once more Graham and Townshend faced Alleyn's in the final and the result from January was reversed, just the third time a pair from the School had won this title. It was an achievement hailed by National Singles champion, Daniel Tristao, presenting the trophy, as astonishing for a pair who had practised all season on squash courts.

The most recent season has been the one affected by the coronavirus. Until all schools were closed the MTS Fives players continued to practise on squash courts in Watford and to play their matches on away courts. The Club, together with the rest of the Fives-playing community, now waits to see what plans the school has to replace its former courts and to take forward the long and proud tradition of Fives at Merchant Taylors'.

Thanks to Geoffrey Brown, David Cameron, Daniel Grant and Graham Prodger, and previous research by Peter Ingram, and to Bob Dolby and David Barnes for updating and illustrating the 2010 version.

■ A longer, fully illustrated version of this history, can be found on the RFA website at rugbyfives.com

RFA Club Report

Hamish Buchanan reports on RFA Club matches and looks to an experimental future



What with one thing and another this has been a strange year for the Club.

There were 23 matches played with 14 won, one drawn and, in keeping with current progressive sporting terminology, eight missed opportunities for wins. There were some great matches, with Angus Hanton instigating the first ever Club mixed doubles match against Alleyn's School, Tom Wakelam managed to forge a team of six, drawn from Derby to Edinburgh, to play against Durham University, and Dave Butler, in his first outing as manager against the mighty Old Paulines, went the extra mile in creating an VIII assembled from Tonbridge to Singapore. They lost though, so he clearly needs to try harder.

Elsewhere, Tony Hamilton's record-breaking venerable IV, including two former RFA Presidents, suffered a surprise loss to Tonbridge School. Clearly experience isn't everything and some fitness training may well be required.

The annual RFA v WFA match was the closest yet, with a seven point victory for the Club, played as ever in great spirit and with special mention to the scratch schoolboy pairing of Jamie Graham and Stuart Scott, also the rather unorthodox and highly entertaining pair of team captain Dan Tristao and Howard Wiseman, who were very effective and a joy to watch.

The President's Cup, at its new Marlborough home, was again a roaring success. Masterminded as ever by RFA Development Officer Gareth Price, there were many close three-game battles, a testament to the skilled draw and format of the cup. With school players from Alleyn's, Derby Moor, Marlborough and Merchant Taylors' the average age of the players was somewhat lower than in recent years and the energy levels somewhat higher. The final between Ben Hale and Raheem from Derby Moor and Tom Kiggell and Stuart Scott from



RFA versus the mighty Old Bradfieldians

Alleyn's was not as close as either of their respective three-game semis, Ben and Raheem were noticeably tired, whereas Tom and Stuart seemed to grow stronger with every round and won in two games.

I AM HOPING TO CHANGE THE FORMAT OF SOME OF THE FIXTURES'

Thanks go to all the match managers and club secretaries in these difficult times where we are unsure when we will be able to resume playing. The calendar for the next season will be set out as normal, but clearly there will be many alterations as we go forward. I hope that we can get as many matches played as possible and ask that all managers and secretaries/masters-in-charge keep in contact and look to rearrange matches where possible.

Looking further into the future I am hoping to change the format of some of the fixtures. The school and university games will remain the same and some of the senior club games can

also remain, but I hope to introduce a three- or four-way match format that has been developed by the Exeter Town Club, who have an annual match at Malvern and invite a Derby Moor team along for the day. Clearly this type of match has to take place on a Saturday or Sunday, and by having three or four teams the format of the matches will change, perhaps one game against each pair and no singles, or singles for two players and doubles for the other two. The exact format can be decided by the participating teams.

These match days can include an RFA Club side or not, where and when necessary: the objective is to get as many players playing matches as possible. Teams that do not have a regular club night (Old Bradfieldians, White Rose etc) can create a day's Fives with two other clubs, making it much more of an event, with the chance to socialise afterwards and have a great day.

This is food for thought for the year after next and I invite any clubs or match managers to contact me with suggestions.

Around the clubs in 2019-20

What did the various clubs around the country get up to in the last year?

BRISTOL UNIVERSITY

Ollie Arnold writes: Albeit in a shortened season, the University of Bristol Fives Club still saw successes at tournament level, as well as more players than ever on our (one!) court. Training sessions with the West of England Club has led to great development of some of our players, particularly Julius Davies and Mariella Williams, who have both played in senior tournaments for the first time.

BUSF saw success for Bristol, as Theo Parker and Ollie Arnold retained their Doubles title. At the U25s, Ollie retained his doubles title (with Ben Beltrami), and Archie McCreath took the Doubles Plate; perhaps he and partner Cameron Low will have more success making it to tournaments together next year! In a curtailed Open season there has also been success, with Ollie and Theo reaching doubles finals in London and Sherborne and Archie winning the North West Doubles Plate.

Louise Mathias has once again dominated the ladies' game. She defended her double double of the U23s and National Championships, cemented her number one ranking, and continues to threaten at open tournaments. We have also seen six ladies join the Club this year, who enjoyed West of England Club tournaments as well as the Jesters Tour in Edinburgh.



Archie McCreath wins the U25 Doubles Plate with Jeremy Manger

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY

Ashwin Ahuja writes: On paper, this season was always going to be a tough one, with the loss of the top three players on the Men's team and three of the first IV in the Women's team. Not surprisingly the Varsity Match was largely one-sided but there were still lots of close games, as we ensured Oxford didn't get the maximum points. However, the Women's team, led and recruited by Holly Nugent, wrapped up another comfortable win against Oxford to make it five in a row. Holly was also successful nationally, winning the Plate at the Ladies U23s Nationals. Beyond Varsity, there were many fixtures, with around 20 players involved in a number of close games against various clubs and schools.

The season's success was ultimately represented by the large number of active players. We recruited over 20 novices, ensuring our courts were



The Cambridge Varsity Squad

always full and even doubling the number of practice sessions. With eight of these novices making the Varsity team and major improvements across the board, this is very promising for the future. Cambridge Women's Fives was also rewarded with Half-Blue status for those playing in the first team. This should help us keep up recruitment momentum for next year.



The Ladies Invitation competitors 2019

CITY OF DURHAM CLUB

Tom Wakelam writes: City of Durham Club has remained strong this year, playing three to four times a week. Our adult section has continued to grow, and we have even attracted old players back to the sport, which has improved the quality of our rallies. Our youth section is still strong and playing at a high level. We hosted the inaugural Rugby Fives Northern Schools tournament, which was a huge success. Whilst this year it was only singles, Durham players made up three of the four semi-final spots, and

had both finalists at U16 level.

The women's game has continued to be a focus for us, as our club is equally split regards gender. This season we expanded our October Women's tournament to include doubles, with a very tightly fought competition at a high standard. Two of our players also made it to the National Women's quarter-finals, and a pair reached the semi-finals of the doubles.

We are still forging close links with our local clubs, with a planned trip to Edinburgh in January, and further visits to and from Derby Moor.

DEEP WEST CLUB

Charles Hattersley writes: The Club was very active during the latter half of 2019. There were regular Friday evening sessions with a good turn-out from six to seven established local members and occasional input from visitors; this helped improve the standard and attention to detail, particularly in the service department. Over Christmas and New Year the length of rallies increased and the more regular appearance of our ex-

Laos member, Dr David Dance, assisted in maintaining momentum. In partnership with Luke Newman Taylor or Gary Macaulay there was formidable opposition for other members. We were spared NHS operation details from our chairman, Dr John Ogle, but along with the rest of the world we were hit by the Covid-19 curveball in mid-March. Not only did the virus suspend play but it delayed operations to two senior players – Nick Geere (hip op) and Richard Bury

(neuro-surgery). The latter has now taken place successfully but the recovery period will extend into 2021 – the most likely re-start date in light of all developments.

So, for the first time since 1884, the ball has not zipped around the Kelly courts on a regular basis. It is also the first time in about 1,000 years that church bells have been silent. However, as with our churches, the Deep West Club will survive and continue to flourish into the second quarter of the 21st century, and those damp Kelly walls will host once more the eternal spirit of sportsmanship.

DURHAM UNIVERSITY

George Marshall writes: Although the club perhaps hasn't lived up to the 'outlandish expectations' promised last year by Douglas Law it has, nevertheless, been a good year for the Durham University Fives club, buoyed by a strong intake of keen freshers. The year started off well at the Yorkshire Open with Michael Suddaby winning the Singles Plate and then the Doubles Plate, too, in combination with Douglas Law, who continues to back up his claims to be a doubles specialist. This was swiftly followed up by a good performance all round for the club at BUSF with, unusually in recent times, almost every player making it through the first round. A particular mention must go to Harry Jackson as runner-up in the Singles Plate in his first year at the tournament.

The Michaelmas term ended with a great fixture against the RFA, which unfortunately resulted in a loss for Durham but was of high quality despite the court conditions being less than ideal. Finally, in February, the U25s tournament at Oundle was another success for Team Durham. Of particular note was Jack Sissons' marathon first round victory in the Singles and two pairs making it to the quarter-finals of the Doubles: Law and Suddaby along with Marshall and the indefatigable Sissons. Unfortunately, the club did not have the opportunity this year to push on at the North of England and the Scottish Open. However, on the evidence of this year, I am sure the club will continue to grow in strength next year and continue to exceed expectations.



DERBY MOOR FIVES

Bob Dolby writes: This has been an extraordinarily busy year for the Club. Not only do we have several schoolboys good enough to play with the adults on a Tuesday and Thursday evening but four students have swelled our numbers – three from Nottingham University and one from Loughborough. With so many players we have been able to play matches of various sorts – at home (Sedbergh School, the White Rose Club and the RFA) and away (OBMs, Durham University and the Old Rugbeians), visit other clubs for coaching purposes (Rugby School and the City of Durham Club) and enter players into several competitions (from the South West

Open to the National U25s). Doubtless we would have played even more such events but for the virus. Lewis Keates has had a great season, with an appearance in the SE Doubles final and a number of plate finals – not to mention qualifying for the last 16 of the National Singles. We entered two teams for the Owers Trophy and won the Plate; Anthony Goodwin, Rob Whitehorn and Bally Singh have had their moments; Stuart Kirby has, as usual, devoted himself to court improvements (inc. two welcome heaters) and he and Lewis have upgraded the website with a dynamic video; and Richard Christie and Brian Kirk have done much helpful driving. What wouldn't we give for two more courts!

EDWARD ALLEYN FIVES CLUB

Hamish Buchanan writes: The Alleyn Old Boys have played their last match and completed (although as with everything, not actually completed) their final season. Which is to say, please note the club's new name – the Edward Alleyn Fives Club.

Alleyn's School went coeducational in 1976 and has been so to the present day; therefore 37 years since that first intake left the school to become Old Girls, the AOB Fives Club has moved with the times and embraced them into the fold. Although not literally –

EXECUTIONERS

Andy Pringle writes: We're happy to report another successful season for the Executioners. Not least because we continued to see the strong numbers we enjoyed last season. Stalwarts like Messrs Pringle, Hale, Cook, Bridge, Webster, Horder and Julius were joined by the likes of Simon Stokes, Jon Peterson, Conrad Davies and the dulcet tones of Guy Matthews and Dick Warner. And it

was two of those more recently joined members, Helena Tunks and Ibby Lee, who did the club most proud in competition – finishing as runners-up in the Doubles at the Ladies U23 Championships.

Through Helena and fellow Cambridge Half Blue Laurence Cook, we'll also lay claim to more silverware: the Men's and Ladies' trophies from the annual Cambridge Past v Present match. While the teams also included club members Andy Pringle, Steve Platts, Charles Compton and Charlie Mabbott, Helena and Laurence were nominated as captains on the day and duly collected the trophies.

Sadly, we only had one club match this year – our annual encounter masquerading as the RFA against the Old Bradfieldians. It was a great match, especially as the opposition included

that would still be inappropriate.

This momentous decision has been made not a moment too soon as many of the up-and-coming players that regularly join in on a Tuesday evening are schoolgirls. In fact the truncated season was lifted by the regular involvement of four or five young players each week who also had some great success in competitions: notably, Martha Nugent in the U18 Girls' Singles and Ladies' U23 Doubles and Stuart Scott in the President's Cup.

We look forward to resuming playing when possible and to continued enjoyment and success.



Ibby and Helena at the U23s

three current or former Executioners, although the OBs emerged as narrow winners in the end. As ever, the Executioners proved to be the go-to club for the big occasion, with a big presence from members at the Strawson Vaughan match and annual Jesters tour to Edinburgh. Post-lockdown, several members enjoyed the RFA Pub Quizzes; and, naturally, when the RFA Podcast was looking for suitable interviewees, the presenters turned to Executioners, with Guy and Ibby both taking part in the 'Fighting Talk' episode. These great initiatives helped us through some dark months away from the courts. But, like Fives players up and down the country, we look forward to getting back to our beloved game as soon as possible.

JESTERS CLUB

Ben Hale writes: Despite many of the club's regular fixtures being cancelled, both of the two main Jesters Rugby Fives events of the season – the Strawson Vaughan fixture and the annual Edinburgh Tour – took place unhindered.

On balance the Jesters appear to have had a winning season. Match reports generally reflect triumphs of experience over youth. Whilst the result is immaterial, the combination of experience and youth has been a great success over the past few years (the majority of our fixtures continue to be against schools and universities), with the older players passing on their wealth of knowledge and embodiment of the Jesterly spirit.

This year's Strawson Vaughan match was, as ever, a fiercely contested encounter with the RFA, expertly organised by the indefatigable Dick Warner and resulting in an honourable tie.

The Edinburgh Tour goes from strength to strength with more tourists than ever at 54. It also saw 90 Jesters, opposition and guests attending the annual event with Fettes. There was the customary packed itinerary, with 30 matches played at schools, universities, clubs plus mini-tournaments and grudge matches. Highlights included playing on the refurbished courts at Edinburgh Academy, the presence of Frank Akerman and David Barnes, the participation of the Cambridge University team, and the increase in the number of female tourists to a record 10.



Jeremy Sinton with silverware at Merchiston

MARLBOROUGH TOWN

Harvey Bishop writes: Our season started well, with good numbers and regular play, often as many as 12 players playing three times a week. In November we hosted a well-attended and convivial fine-dining evening, with after-dinner speeches from, among others, the new Club Captain and Chairman and our most seasoned veteran who still plays competitively in the grand-master category and has the honorary title of 'Father of the Fives Club'. Melissa Cole, one-time Eton Fives Cup organiser and fulltime ironmonger, made a trophy for outgoing Chairman, Richard Clark.

The day after the dinner, Marlborough Town held its annual Doubles Cup, with 10 pairs competing for Cup and Plate. It was amusing to see how the indulgences of the night before took their toll in a few cases.

Marlborough College hosted the President's Cup in December and we had two Town players amongst the winners, Tom Kiggell and Rupert 'the Octopus' Thompson. The College moved swiftly in response to Covid-19 that sadly prevented Marlborough from hosting the Veterans Championship; however, the Town Club's Light Entertainment Department jumped into action, posting humorous videos on our 'Friendly Fives' WhatsApp group. The Club has held Zoom beer evenings, competed in the RFA Pub Quiz (winning the Wooden Spoon!) and held a Club quiz with questions that we could answer.



Artwork from Melissa Cole

OLD BEDFORD MODERNIANS

Philip Atkinson writes: Last season was certainly eventful, but not always for the right reasons. On a sombre note, the unexpected death of Stuart Endersby came as a shock to us all. Apart from being one of the most naturally gifted players of his generation, Stuart was first and foremost a lovely, gentle person, as was reflected in the eulogies given to a packed funeral service.

A decision was made to compete in the Owers Trophy for the first time. Indeed, interest was keen enough for the club to enter two teams, who thoroughly enjoyed themselves in the face of strong opposition. Other tournament entries were necessarily curtailed by external events, although Phil Atkinson managed a (brief) attempt to recapture former glories in the President's Cup. Club matches were limited to the annual fixture against the RFA, who fielded three players from Derby and one from Stamford.

As in the previous two or three

OLD PAULINES

Matt Shaw writes: The unprecedented events that occurred at the back half of the season impacted the whole of the UK and for OP Fives it meant the cancellation of the remaining tournaments and fixtures.

Prior to that the club enjoyed a great season, kicking off with the Owers Trophy, which the OPs were looking to retain after last year. The team, comprising Aquilina, Tilston and Parker, pulled through against tough opposition to keep the trophy for another year. Out of the club fixtures, the pick of the bunch was the one against the RFA, which the OPs took by 12 points, helped by strong performances from Russell, Roberts, Malde, Malone and Parsapour.

In handicap tournaments Tilston managed to win the South East Doubles again, showing that he truly is an underrated player. The Cunis Cup returned this year and was won by Beltrami, perhaps indicating that the handicapping needs to be strengthened next year.

At an individual level, OPs Kay and Tristao shared the majority of the



Jolly OBM's

seasons, numbers attending Monday club nights were augmented by BMS pupils Katie Sumner and Maddie Kent. Sadly, this was their final year and they leave with our best wishes and the hope that they will continue playing fives. Also departing is Rob Kay, who as master-in-charge has played an important role in maintaining the profile of the game in the face of stiff competition from the major sports. Doubtless his enthusiasm will be a boost for Fives wherever his career next takes him and we hope to see him back on our courts soon.



OPs retain the Owers Trophy

open singles titles, with Tristao claiming his fifth National Singles title. The Universities Championships and U25 doubles competitions went to Parker and Arnold and Beltrami and Arnold respectively, with Beltrami claiming both singles titles.

We welcome players of all levels and particularly encourage those of you who haven't played for a while to join us on Thursday evenings during term time. In light of the current situation it may be best to wait to contact us until things are up and running again!

OLD TONBRIDGIANS

Rupert Mathieu writes: Old Tonbridgian Fives proceeds in rude health with a regular group of six to 10 players doing battle on Tuesday evenings.

The courts continue to play extremely well, even with some gentle teasing about the efficacy of our Winchester courts from those more devoted to the Rugby version. Alas, the OTs managed to play only two matches this season: a narrow loss against the RFA and a thrilling draw against the Jesters.

The pandemic put paid to others, including the annual fixture against the School, although a couple of OTs (David Lewis and Rupert Mathieu) did battle with two of the 1st IV, managing a singles win apiece, but the OTs lost the decider in the doubles.

Notable other highlights included a very strong showing of OTs in the Cambridge Past v. Present fixture,

with no less than four on court (Jackson, Mathieu and Wilkinson for the Past, and Ed Hyde for the Present), while Rupert Mathieu (paired with the

very talented James Tilston) won the South East Open Doubles at Christ's Hospital. Let's hope that we will all be back on court soon!



Rupert wins the SE Open with James Tilston

OLD WHITGIFTIANS

Nick Woolfenden writes: I, along with other contributors in this edition, write in strange times. My usual opening gambit i.e. "the Old Whitgiftian Fives Club meets regularly on Thursday evenings" remains true for part of this last year, but not at the time of writing. We all hope it will be true again by the time of publication (or very soon after?)

We were extremely fortunate in holding our annual tour just before lockdown, with a good range of touring players and supporters. It was great to play against familiar faces at Sherborne and to make new friends in a mix-and-match game at Marlborough (see photo) – a welcome addition to the tour itinerary.

Any hopes for other matches against clubs and RFA this spring and summer were obviously put on hold due to the coronavirus situation. Prior to lockdown, the Club enjoyed good turnouts for regular Thursday evening social Fives sessions, including a range of Old Whits, other Fives-playing friends, and occasionally a few current Whitgiftians. We're very pleased that

the school's master-in-charge of Fives, Nick Morgan, is an active member, which is good for links with the school.

We wish well to all involved in the OW5s Club and the wider Rugby Fives Association family during these unprecedented times; and we look



OWs on tour at Marlborough

forward to when we can return to the school courts to play again.

If you'd like to play with us, or want any other information – including latest situation with our social Fives sessions – please contact Nick Woolfenden (nickw5s@hotmail.com).

OXFORD UNIVERSITY

Dan Whitham writes: The 2019-20 season proved very successful, beginning with the Blues Committee deciding to retain the Half Blue Status for both the Men and Ladies. This reflects the progress we have made in the last few years, both in improving the quality of training and increasing the number of regular players.

We had some great matches against schools and clubs, and were able to field strong squads in several national tournaments. As always, however, the highlight of the year came with the Varsity Match. After a very enjoyable and competitive fixture against the Past, we were able to follow up with a very strong performance against Cambridge. The Men's VIII completed the hat-trick and the Beavers extended their run of consecutive victories to four – with maximum points. The Ladies' fixture proved to be very close, and although Cambridge won, we were able to reduce the gap quite significantly from last year, which is a testament to our ladies' hard work and enthusiasm throughout the year. I am pleased to announce that Half Blues were awarded this year to Will Shardlow, Caspar Keneter, Charlie Rogers and Viola King Forbes.

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to be captaining the Club this year. I would like to thank Phoebe Thornhill for captaining the Ladies team again, and Caspar Keneter and Ben Kirwan for their work as Secretary and Treasurer respectively.



The Oxford Varsity Match squad

UCS OLD BOYS

Chris Blakeley writes: The Club continues to run on the one remaining court at UCS, with sessions twice a week to try to ensure we can give everyone who wants to play a game. We have a small group of regulars who, I am pleased to say, includes some pupils from the school, which therefore represents an age span from youngest to oldest of approximately 60 years. We have a number of other occasional players who we are always pleased to welcome. Having a single court essentially rules out any matches. Like everyone we have been out of action since March, but hope to begin some limited activity as safely as possible in due course.

WESSEX CLUB

Harry Akerman writes: We have had another enjoyable season on the Winchester Courts, although sadly cut short. We enjoyed playing the next generation of boys from the Winchester College Fives factory as we make the most of these fabulous courts before they are turned into classrooms. Luckily, new courts are being built in a new Sports Centre.

We welcomed some faces returning to Fives after a long absence – Charlie Milton had not played since leaving school in the 1990s but quickly rolled back the years. Julian Kingsbury was over visiting from China in early February when Covid-19 was still just a problem over there, but when the flights stopped his inability to return home was our gain – six more weeks of Fives than he originally planned! The Kennedy brothers (Will and Charlie) were regular attendees this season, some 15 years or so after leaving school. Neil Sherriff became a regular once again and a further eight newcomers came frequently enough to ensure that all courts were busy for the whole evening throughout the season.

The club was well represented in the RFA vs WFA match, which was a fantastic affair (271-264 to the RFA) and also on the Jesters Tour. Sadly, Covid-19 and the early close to the season meant that for the first time since the 1980s we weren't able to have our annual Letchworth Bowl doubles tournament but we look forward to returning once circumstances permit.

WEST OF ENGLAND CLUB

Lionel Lawson writes: The club continued to operate with the disadvantage of having only one court to play on – nevertheless there was good support for our traditional Club night on Wednesday evenings under the enthusiastic leadership of Club Captain, Ollie Arnold. One bright spot in the season was our traditional Christmas Doubles competition, which for various reasons was played in February rather than shortly before the Festive Season. We had five pairs competing for the famous trophy and the convincing winners were the evergreen Neil Butterfield and his partner Ben Smithson, who beat Ben Dunscombe and Louise Mathias 11-2 11-1 in the final.

Sadly two traditional fixtures were cancelled by the opposition and before we could re-arrange, all Fives was cancelled by the arrival of the well-documented pandemic.

We very much hope the current difficulties will have passed to allow us to start our new season in September. One bit of good news – Ollie Arnold has confirmed he will be in Bristol next season and is happy to continue his excellent work as Club Captain.

WHITE ROSE CLUB

John Hawke writes: With no courts of our own available to us, very little Fives has been played this year. We have managed to make the trip to Giggleswick a few times to play there, but have otherwise had to rely on matches and tournaments for our court time.

As has become customary, some of us made the trip to Derby for their magnificent Invitation Tournament, which was greatly enjoyed. We also managed to have another successful Yorkshire Open tournament; many thanks to all who made the journey to Giggleswick, where the school always makes us very welcome.

In January we were entertained by Jonathan Lidiard and the boys at Sedbergh to an excellent afternoon of Winchester Fives and in February Tim Widdop and Bob Sandie played for the RFA against Derby Moor.

Sadly our usual outing to the Veterans' and Masters' tournaments was prevented by Covid-19.

End-of-Season Rankings

The official UK Rugby Fives rankings in 2020, as compiled by **Dave Hebden**



ABOVE (top to bottom):
Lewis Keates attacks at Cambridge;
Louise Mathias serving in the Ladies U23s; Matt Shaw in the U25s final

SINGLES

Current	Previous	Name	Points
1	2	D Tristao	99.3
2	1	E Kay	94.6
3	3	W Ellison	88.0
4	7	B Beltrami	62.4
5	5	D Butler	56.1
6	6	D Grant	48.5
7	10	J Aquilina	41.0
8	13	T Watkinson	39.5
9	4	C Brooks	38.4
10	9	A Boyd	38.0
11	7	R Murby	37.6
12	11	M Shaw	37.0
13	12	T Parker	33.9
14	15	S Russell	28.5
15	14	O Arnold	27.6
16	18	J Tilton	23.8
17	20	B Kirwan	23.2
18	25	R Whitehorn	22.7
19	27	B Jourdan	20.4
20	17	P Hanton	19.4
21	44	L Keates	17.5
22	16	C Blackaby	14.8
23	27	J Hanton	13.5
24	22	A McCreath	13.0
25	21	A Rew	12.1
26	19	H Jefferies	11.9
27	46	C Low	11.4
28	23	N G-Westacott	10.9
29	32	J Smith	10.7
30	24	D Fox	10.4
31	55	C Davey	9.6
32	52	M Suddaby	9.5
31	N Woolfenden	9.5	
34	-	W Shardlow	8.0

DOUBLES

Current	Previous	Name	Points
1	1	D Tristao	101.4
2	1	W Ellison	100.4
3	3	E Kay	98.2
4	4	D Grant	89.4
5	6	O Arnold	85.3
6	9	B Beltrami	75.6
7	7	D Butler	75.4
8	5	C Brooks	74.8
9	10	T Parker	68.4
10	8	M Shaw	64.3
11	12	J Tilton	54.8
12	11	J Aquilina	53.7
13	14	A Boyd	48.3
14	15	T Watkinson	46.9
15	13	S Russell	39.7
16	21	B Jourdan	36.9
17	16	P Hanton	31.0
18	18	A McCreath	29.7
19	27	C Blackaby	28.8
20	16	H Buchanan	28.3
21	22	R Murby	26.3
22	29	B Kirwan	25.1
23	22	J Ferguson	24.5
24	-	S Hodgson	24.5
25	-	R Mathieu	24.5
26	29	C Low	23.9
27	38	L Keates	23.7
28	26	J Hanton	22.4
29	19	H Jefferies	21.9
30	22	B Chua	20.2
31	48	M Spillane	19.0
32	28	R Whitehorn	19.0
33	56	S Bhushan	18.7
34	38	L Mathias	17.9
35	40	J Sumner	17.9
36	37	J Smith	17.6
37	35	J Cunningham	17.3
35	35	M Kemp	17.3
39	48	A George	16.7
40	29	E Hatton	16.1
41	20	G Price	16.1
42	56	M Suddaby	15.8
43	40	S Fraser	15.5
45	33	T Hebbethwaite	15.5
48	32	A Chai	15.2
47	34	N Woolfenden	15.2
48	34	N Geere	14.5
49	56	D Law	14.1
50	48	T Dean	13.4
51	56	E Castillo Carbonell	13.0
52	40	J Hughes	12.6
53	40	J Manger	12.6
54	56	A Rew	12.6
55	40	N Roberts	12.6
56	48	P Kulavanijaya	11.4
57	47	A Raheem	11.2
58	40	D Whitham	11.2
59	73	R Dyke	11.0
60	73	A Goodwin	11.0
61	40	A Steel	11.0

'Current' shows position following the end of the season as of May 2020. 'Previous' shows position at the start of the 2019/20 season

The Treasurer's Report

RFA Treasurer **David Parlby** reports on an interesting yet positive year financially



Fives is a unique sport. The coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated this to be true, as we must be one of the very few organisations in the world so far left relatively unscathed by the associated economic downturn. This is by accident rather than design and is because the great majority of our subscriptions were paid in the autumn of 2019, well before the pandemic struck.

This has meant that we've not had to make too many cut-backs on our spend this financial year, although we have lost income from tournaments through the lockdown. We have stuck to our commitment to part-fund various court improvements at the Edinburgh Academy (court enclosure), Merchiston Castle (floors), Loretto (roof), the Y Club (lighting) and Stoke Newington (viewing gallery.) By the time all these works have been completed we will have channelled £26,000 into court infrastructure.

This will be of immense help in ensuring that Fives continues to be played at each venue, both by pupils and by members of the local community. The latter target audience is of particular importance to the sport's growth: we need to get Fives being played by more people who've typically never heard of the game.

The initiative at Stoke Newington deserves special mention. This is possibly the first instance in recent years of work being done to courts at a maintained sector school and could make a huge difference in bringing newcomers to the game. The project is not just about physical infrastructure – as part of the agreement with the school we've ensured that regular coaching will take place there to generate interest, enthusiasm and the development of basic Fives skills. We now need resumption of play following the loosening of pandemic restrictions. I am delighted to say that the project came about as a direct result of Gareth Price's Development Officer activities.

Related to the strategy of reaching out to people who've not come across Fives before is the piece of marketing work being carried out by Dan Grant. Using his experience in marketing Wallball, one of the project objectives is to upgrade the RFA website so that it has greater appeal to those that have not encountered the game before while also offering better facilities for existing players. Examples of the former are video highlights of national



ABOVE (L-R)
Stoke
Newington,
where the RFA
has a major
project;

New lighting
at the
Manchester
courts

RIGHT
Work
continues
on the
Merchiston
courts



'WE HAVE STUCK TO OUR COMMITMENT TO PART-FUND COURT IMPROVEMENTS'

tournaments and showing how and where newcomers can play. For existing members we'll be introducing online entry and payment for all kinds of tournaments and facilities for clubs to have their own micro-websites.

I'll conclude with repeating my annual plea for all RFA members to ensure that they've signed up to the Gift Aid scheme and the 100 Club. These are valuable sources of extra funds for the RFA without members having to do very much. To obtain the forms please contact me through the website.

2019-20 RESULTS ROUND-UP

Full details of all these events on www.rugbyfives.com

SOUTH WEST OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2019

Singles: E.Kay
Doubles: O.Arnold & E.Kay

SOUTH EAST OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2019

Singles: E.Kay
Doubles: R.Mathieu & J.Tilston

OWERS TROPHY 2019

Old Paulines

LONDON OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2019

Singles: W.Ellison
Doubles: W.Ellison & D.Tristao

YORKSHIRE OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2019

Singles: E.Kay
Doubles: B.Beltrami & E.Kay

THE LADY'S CUP 2019

C.Battie & O.McIntyre

WEST OF ENGLAND OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2019

Singles: D.Tristao
Doubles: W.Ellison & E.Kay

NATIONAL STUDENTS (BUSF) CHAMPIONSHIPS 2019

Singles: B.Beltrami
Doubles: O.Arnold & T.Parker

SCHOOLS WINCHESTER FIVES DOUBLES 2019

Winchester College (S.Fraser & D.Percival)

NATIONAL GIRLS' CHAMPIONSHIPS 2019-20

U18 Singles: M.Nugent (Alleyn's)
U18 Doubles: Bedford Modern (M.Kent & K.Sumner)
U13/U14/U16 Singles and Doubles: Cancelled due to coronavirus

LADIES U23 CHAMPIONSHIPS 2019

Singles: L.Mathias
Doubles: L.Mathias & M.Nugent

NATIONAL SINGLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2019

D.Tristao

RFA PRESIDENT'S CUP 2019

T.Kiggell & S.Scott

WEST OF ENGLAND SCHOOLS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2020

U18 Singles: A.Raheem (Derby Moor)
U18 Doubles: Alleyn's School (P.Puvanendiran & G.Wiseman)
U16 Singles: S.Wu (Winchester)
U16 Doubles: Winchester College (M.Cloke Browne & S.Wu)

NORTH WEST OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2020

Singles: E.Kay
Doubles: W.Ellison & D.Grant

NATIONAL LADIES CHAMPIONSHIPS 2020

Singles: L.Mathias
Doubles: L.Mathias & S.Zhang

NATIONAL U25 CHAMPIONSHIPS 2020

Singles: B.Beltrami
Doubles: O.Arnold & B.Beltrami

THE VARSITY MATCH 2020

Men's: Oxford beat Cambridge 356-145
Women's: Cambridge beat Oxford 137-91

WINCHESTER FIVES OPEN DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2020

W.Ellison & E.Kay

COLQUHOUN TROPHY 2020

Open Singles and Doubles: Coronavirus

LADIES WINCHESTER FIVES CHAMPIONSHIPS 2020

Singles and Doubles: Coronavirus

NORTH OF ENGLAND CHAMPIONSHIPS 2020

Singles and Doubles: Coronavirus

NATIONAL VINTAGE CHAMPIONSHIPS 2020

Singles and Doubles: Coronavirus

NATIONAL SCHOOLS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2020

U13/U14/U16/U18 Single and Doubles: Coronavirus

NATIONAL VETERANS' CHAMPIONSHIPS 2020

Singles and Doubles: Coronavirus

NATIONAL MASTERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 2020

Doubles: Coronavirus

NATIONAL GRAND MASTERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 2020

Doubles: Coronavirus

NATIONAL DOUBLES 2020 (CYRIAX CUP)

Coronavirus

NATIONAL CLUB KNOCK-OUT 2020 (WOOD CUP)

Coronavirus

SCOTTISH OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2020

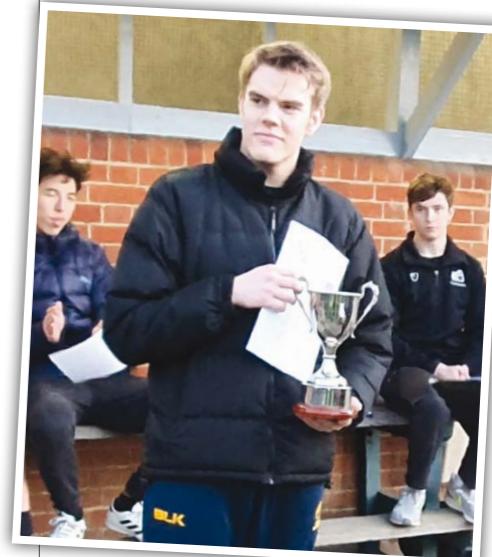
Singles and Doubles: Coronavirus

WINCHESTER FIVES MIXED DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2020

Coronavirus

DERBY MOOR INVITATION DOUBLES 2020

Coronavirus



Murray Dare wins the Hamilton Cup for Christ's Hospital



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Rugby Fives
Association
2020