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All subsequent events in the Rugby Fives calendar were postponed or cancelled from mid-March, including

RFA VI v. Universities VI
 North of England Open
 Scottish Schools U18 Singles
 Scottish Schoolgirls' Doubles
 Colquhoun Trophy
 Ladies Winchester Fives Championships
 National Vintage Championships
 National U13, U14, U16 and U18 Schools Championships
 National Veterans Championships
 National Masters and Grand Masters
 National Doubles: Cyriax Cup
 National Rugby Fives Mixed Doubles
 Club Knock-out: Wood Cup
 National Schoolgirls' U13, U14 and U16 Championships
 Scottish Open Championships
 National Winchester Fives Mixed Doubles
 Derby Moor Invitation Doubles

South West Open Championships

Blundell's School, Tiverton, 8/9th July 2018

Organiser Wayne Enstone writes: This year's Championship began with the very unfortunate and understandable withdrawal of Will Ellison, whose wife Nicky, had an accident the day of the draw, we all wish her a speedy recovery. Will was the defending Singles and Doubles winner and had won the singles 7 times and doubles 8 times in the last decade — a fantastic record. We look forward to seeing him next year.

This year's entries contained 12 of the top 15 top ranked men's singles players and Ladies Singles National Champion Louise Mathias and top-ranked Alexandra Steel, which made for a high quality of play.

In the first round of the Singles one of the young standout players, Cameron Low, beat local John Savery in two games to proceed to give National Singles Champion Dan Tristao an extremely hard first game, eventually losing in two. Alex Rew and Matt Shaw produced the first three-game match, Alex taking the first and Matt eventually using his own attacking shots to great effect to win the next two.

In that lower half of the draw Ollie Arnold beat seeded player Julian Aquilina in two games to move through to the quarters, playing some wonderful left-hand power shots. In the top half, Sam Russell beat seeded Theo Parker in a three-game thriller. The power match of the second round was between Ben Beltrami and Tom Watkinson, with Ben edging the this match. That then set us up for the one seeding upset in the quarters, with Ben Beltrami beating the very experienced and wonderfully deceptive Dan Grant in another gripping three-gamer, Ben just winning the third 11 – 9. In the lower half Dave Butler managed to limit the winning shots of an in-form Ollie Arnold to a minimum, which proved essential in the second game, with Dave just winning 12-10.

These excellent quarters set us up for the enthralling semi-finals, with Ben and Ed setting the scene with a first game 12-11 gladiatorial epic, Ben just winning. As seen in previous tournaments Ed then produced some of his brilliant front-court shots and won the next two games to seal his place in the final, without injury this year. The quality and variety of shot play from both players indicates a definite improvement in each player since last year — wonderful to watch.

In the other semi-final Dan Tristao dominated the early exchanges with Dave Butler, playing the front-court shots that have made him the exceptional player he is. However, the ever resilient Dave slowly returned more of the fabulous shots and tested Dan with his own to level at 7-all. This recovery from Dave was, unfortunately, short-lived, as Dan took off again to win the first 11-8. In the second Dave's attacking play paid off and he took an early 5-0 lead, only to see Dan go up the gears and, after several terrific rallies, at 8-all Dan managed to produce the winners again to finish this wonderful match. Dave appears to be reading Dan better than ever, which bodes well to the rest of the season, but this result set up a very interesting final for Sunday morning between Ed and Dan.

As we do at the South West Open the Doubles was also played on the Saturday. The youngsters and Bristol University students Cameron Low and Archie McCreath stormed past locals Nick Geere and Dan Hill. Their reward was to then play the number one seeds, Ollie Arnold and Ed Kay, in the quarter-finals, giving as good as they took, losing in two very energetic games — just not quite having the guile and ability of their opponents yet, but great experience for the future.

All the other quarters were hard fought due to the high level of play that all pairs produced. This was seen with Sam Russell & Tom Watkinson pushing number three seeds Theo Parker & Dan Tristao to a three-gamer, the seeds just finding enough winners to win the third to 7. The veterans Jim Hughes & Alex Rew turned the clock back, producing some fine angles and early return shots to put pressure on Dave Butler & Dan Grant throughout their match. It was most entertaining to watch, with Dave and Dan managing to counter with their array of great shots, and winning in two games. Julian Aquilina & James Tilston raised their performance after losing the first game against Ben Beltrami & Matt Shaw taking the second to 9-all, with Ben and Matt just winning the third 11-9.

So, the semi-final places had gone according to the seeding. They began at 7pm and — all credit to all the pairs — the standard of play they produced at that time of night was top notch. Ollie & Ed proved too strong for Ben & Matt in both their games and went through to the Sunday final, while Dave & Dan just concluded their second game win with a series of winners to join Ollie & Ed.

At the same time as the main competition, the Plate singles and doubles were taking place. Louise Mathias & Keith Kennerley had a superb match, Keith going 8-3 up only to see Louise produce her Ladies National Champion form and cover every inch of the court to come out 11-8 winner — Well done, Ladies National Champion! Both the finals produced really entertaining matches, with young local Addie Chai beating fellow Club player John Savery in the singles final. Addie then partnered local Keith Kennerley to play Jim Hughes & Alex Rew, but the latter pair yet again produced superior fire power and variety of shot to win that final.

An excellent day's play with much energy expended by all, spectators included. It was now time to retire to The Butterleigh Inn to aid recovery for the Sunday finals.

In the Singles final Dan Tristao, who had won this championship twice before, took an early lead, 3-1 up. However, Ed Kay began to defend Dan's marvellous front-court shots and match them with his own variety of shots — wonderful to watch. Ed slowly levelled at 3-all and then, after several changes of serve at 4-3, moved very quickly to an 11-3 win. The quality of the rallies was exceptional. Dan continued to go for his high-risk shots and started the second well, getting the better of the exchanges to go 2 up; and although Ed came back, it appeared Dan had found his touch and raced off to a 7-2 lead, at which point one would have thought this match would go to three games.

Ed obviously had nothing to lose and seemed to relax, which helped him produce a miraculous recovery to level at 7-all. Dan moved ahead to 8-7, but Ed just seemed capable of covering all areas of the court returning anything Dan produced and again matching Dan's front-court shots. Ed went on to win the last four rallies in a row for a well earned 11-8 win and his first South West Open Singles Championship title.

In the Doubles final both pairs attacked each other from the start, producing some spectacular and breathtaking rallies. Ed & Ollie looked favourites to win at 10-8, but as we had seen throughout the game, both pairs were producing phenomenal play and capable of surprising us. At 10-all, it was difficult for us spectators to know who would win, but Dan's hand in had started this remarkable recovery and Dave's hand in concluded it, the pair hitting two winning shots to quickly finish the game 12-10 winners.

At the start of the second game, Dan & Dave kept the momentum going and took a 4-1 lead, however, this seemed to produce another level of power from Ollie Arnold, which helped him to hit more back wall-nick winners and keep both Dave & Dan down. There were many high-level rallies throughout, but Ollie & Ed were on their way to level the match. In the third, a similar pattern emerged, with Ollie eventually finding the power winner, which meant a very emphatic win for Ollie & Ed, their first South West Doubles Championship victory.

At the same time as the finals we had four pairs playing for the American Doubles. All the pairs were evenly matched, with two of the younger players, Addie Chai & Cameron Low, winning by four points.

To conclude proceedings, the usual prize-giving of the local Devon Dartington Glassware and trophies to the winners took place.

Also, our thanks go to: Blundell's School and the school's continuing support of Fives in general; to Tim Lewis for booking the Saturday meal and his on-the-day support in general; and to Lesley on the catering side.

Do think about joining us next year, same weekend, for a fun weekend of fives.

RESULTS

SINGLES

1st round: A McCreath bt N Geere 11-3, 11-2; S Russell bt A Chai 11-2, 11-2; T Watkinson bt K Kennerley 11-1, 11-7; J Tilston bt L Mathias 11-4, 11-5; J Hughes bt B Ames 11-7, 11-1; O Arnold bt S Watson 11-2, 11-0; A Rew bt S Johnson w.o; C Low bt J Savery 11-0, 11-5

2nd round: E Kay bt McCreath 11-1, 11-1; Russell bt T Parker 11-3, 5-11, 11-4; B Beltrami bt Watkinson 8-11, 11-4, 11-9; D Grant bt Tilston 11-3, 11-5; D Butler bt Hughes 11-3, 11-0; Arnold bt J Aquilina 11-4, 11-2; M Shaw bt Rew 4-11, 11-4, 11-1; D Tristao bt Low 11-7, 11-1

Quarter-finals: Kay bt Russell 11-2, 11-2; Beltrami bt Grant 8-11, 11-4, 11-9; Butler bt Arnold 11-5, 12-10; Tristao bt Shaw 11-7, 11-8

Semi-finals: Kay bt Beltrami 11-12, 11-4, 11-6; Tristao bt Butler 11-8, 11-8

Final: Kay bt Tristao 11-3, 11-8

Plate: Chai

DOUBLES

1st round: Low & McCreath bt Geere & Hill 11-3, 11-0; Aquilina & Tilston bt Ames & Mathias 11-3, 11-3; Beltrami & Shaw bt Lewis & Watson 11-5, 11-2; Parker & Tristao bt Chai & Kennerley 11-5, 11-4; Russell & Watkinson bt Savery & A Steel 11-0, 11-7; Hughes & Rew bt W Enstone & Johnson w/o; Butler & Grant bt

Quarter-finals: Arnold & Kay bt Low & McCreath 11-2, 11-3; Beltrami & Shaw bt Aquilina & Tilston 11-3, 11-9; Parker & Tristao bt Russell & Watkinson 5-11, 11-7, 11-7; Butler & Grant bt Hughes & Rew 11-4, 11-7

Semi-finals: Arnold & Kay bt Beltrami & Shaw 11-4, 11-5; Butler & Grant bt Parker & Tristao 11-5, 11-9

Final: Arnold & Kay bt Butler & Grant 10-12, 11-5, 11-2

Plate: Hughes & Rew

South East Open Championships

Christ's Hospital, Horsham

Saturday/Sunday, 17-18 August 2019

Organiser Ed Hatton reports: A record entry of 21 for Singles and 16 for Doubles turned out for the 2019 South East Open — or they would have done if not for a high-ranking player's unfortunate car breakdown. Still, 20 was a good haul!

Highlights of the 1st and 2nd rounds of the Singles included a solid win for James Tilston against 8th seed Christian Blackaby, Durham's George Marshall's battling win in 3 against local favourite Morgan Spillane and Sam Russell's close first game against Ben Jourdan.

The quarter-finals proceeded according to seeding except a knock-down drag-out sweat-fest between Tom Watkinson and David Butler. After two and a half very tight games, the outcome was only decided by David having to retire hurt whilst 9-7 up in the third.

Whilst Tom then proceeded to an almost equally tight semi-final against next generation hero Sam Russell, top seed Ed Kay's progress to the final remained imperious despite the challenge of Julian Aquilina in the other match. The final seemed a foregone conclusion, but Tom did himself proud in his first open final but, after a battling first game, could not quite keep it up in the second. Ed regains the champion title he has not held since his victory in the inaugural tournament in 2014.

The main Plate tournament was joined by a 2nd Plate open to those 1st round winners and 2nd round losers who would otherwise be denied further games. In the main Plate, stand-out performances came from the aggression of Ben Jourdan and the dependability of Chris Davey. The former won a very

tight see-saw final. In the 2nd Plate the energetic Lewis Keates won a close event, separated by only 2 points from Michael Suddaby.

The Doubles enjoyed the perfect entry of 16. This created some tasty pairings — in the view of the organiser, Davey & Woolfenden and Hebblethwaite & Sumner looking like early prospects. So it turned out only partially — after the round-robin stage, Keates & Spillane and Mathieu & Tilston topped their groups. Ultimately it was the latter who triumphed in the final against the former, excelling in communication and consistency. In the Plate, Davey & Woolfenden had two close games against Kay & schoolboy Nsenga and eventually found top gear to win the deciding game.

Thanks to all who participated and supported.

Results

Singles

1st round: M Suddaby bt G Nsenga 11-1, 11-5; N Woolfenden bt C Davey 9-11,11-6, 11-3; G Marshall bt M Spillane 11-7, 2-11, 11-4; L Keates bt L Mathias 11-2, 11-3; C Low bt J Sumner 12-10, 11-5

2nd round: E Kay bt Suddaby 11-1, 11-0; J Tilston bt C Blackaby 11-3, 11-2; T Parker bt Woolfenden 11-1, 11-2; J Aquilina bt Marshall 11-0, 11-1; D Butler bt Keates 11-5, 11-0; T Watkinson bt E Hatton 11-6, 11-5; S Russell bt B Jourdan 11-8, 11-1; C Low w/o D Tristao

Quarter-finals: Kay bt Tilston 11-4, 11-2; Aquilina bt Parker 11-3, 11-2; Watkinson bt Butler 7-11, 12-10 7-9 ret.; Russell bt Low 11-1, 11-2

Semi-finals: Kay bt Aquilina 11-0, 11-4; Watkinson bt Russell 11-9, 11-4

Final: Kay bt Watkinson 11-8, 11-0

Plate: Jourdan bt Davey 15-13

2nd Plate: 1st Keates; 2nd Suddaby

Doubles

Group 1: 1st Keates & Spillane 45 pts; 2nd Jourdan & Mathias 37 pts; 3rd Davey & Woolfenden 31 pts; 4th Kay & Nsenga 21 pts

Group 2: 1st Mathieu & Tilston 41 pts; 2nd Hebblethwaite & Sumner 41 pts; 3rd Hatton & Suddaby 40 pts; 4th Aquilina & Thornhill 24 pts

Semi-finals: Keates & Spillane bt Hebblethwaite & Sumner 12-11, 11-9; Mathieu & Tilston bt Jourdan & Mathias 12-10, 9-11, 11-7

Final: Mathieu & Tilston bt Keates & Spillane 11-5, 11-12 11-6

Plate: Davey & Woolfenden bt Kay & Nsenga 11-4, 7-11, 11-0

The Owers Trophy

Sunday, 15th September 2019

St. Paul's School, Barnes

Ben Hale and Alex Smith report: The 'Old Boys and Girls' Tournament proved, as ever, to include a fantastic range of players from a number of current schoolboys – and girls – playing alongside and against alumni from many generations. Last year just 4 teams made it to the tournament, this time we had 9 teams competing, the tenth team of Old Eastbournians having unavoidably pulled out overnight due to child illness (the remainder of the draw were perfectly happy not to be exposed to the pathogens, Andy!)

Group A

Alleyn Old Boys (Hamish Buchanan, Julian Hanton, Gwydion Wiseman)

Old Bedford Modernians 1 (George Larrington, Nishant Pradhan, Joe Sumner)

Old Derby Moor 2 (Bally Singh, Vishal Singh, Rob Whitehorn)

Old Paulines (Julian Aquilina, Theo Parker, James Tilston)

Old Rugbeians (from Chris Blakeley, Conrad Davies, Jeremy Ensor, Dick Warner)

Group B

Old Bedford Modernians 2 (Mark Kiteley, Matt Leydon, Katie Sumner)

Old Bradfieldians (James Birch, Dave Butler, Tim Hebblethwaite)

Old Derby Moor 1 (Antony Goodwin, Lewis Keates, Raheem)

Old Oundelians (Jeremy Manger, Charlie Rogers, Alex Smith)

Games were played to 11 in Group A, with the Paulines and the Alleyn Old Boys progressing to the semi-finals. Games were played to 15 in Group B, with Old Bradfieldians and Old Derby Moor I making it into the semis.

Winners: Old Paulines

Runners-up: Old Bradfieldians

Plate: Old Derby Moor II

Timing of the day's play went almost perfectly. Play started at 9:45 am, only a fifteen-minute delay as the first organiser was some ten minutes late. Said organiser then left at 10am to go to the Oval but was able to keep abreast of developments via texts from the second organiser, who arrived after many train delays at 11am. The Group games were complete by 2 pm and the final game of the main final was wrapped up by 4:45 pm.

As ever, the unique format was very popular and led to much debate about tactics and progress as the games ebbed and flowed. The team epithet 'Old' was belied by some teams including young undergraduates, school boys and girls, but young and old alike mingled happily on and off court, with Dickie Warner in particular vocal in the gallery – and everywhere else.

Ben Hale and Alex Smith would like to thank all the teams that participated, especially those from Bedford and Derby, who each fielded 2 teams, but also Rugby and Oundle for entering after a few years away!

Scores

Group Rounds

Group A: 1st Old Paulines, 2nd Alleyn Old Boys, 3rd Old Derby Moor II, 4th Old Bedford Modern I, 5th Old Rugby

Group B: 1st Old Bradfield, 2nd Old Derby Moor I, 3rd Old Oundelians, 4th Old Bedford Modern II,

Main Knockout

Semi-finals: Old Paulines bt Old Derby Moor I 11-3, 11-2, 11-9; Old Bradfieldians bt Alleyn Old Boys 11-2, 11-6, 11-7.

Final: Old Paulines bt Old Bradfieldians 11-9, 11-1, 12-10.

Plate Competition

Preliminary Round – O. Rugby bt O. Bedford Modern II. Semi-finals – O. Derby Moor II bt O. Rugby 11-2, 11-4, O. Oundelians bt O. Bedford Modern I 11-0, 11-1.

Final: Old Derby Moor II bt Old Oundelians 11-4, 11-6.

Update on the way National Rankings are calculated

September 2019

Dave Hebden writes ...

When people ask me about how the rankings are calculated, they normally soon regret having asked the question. The system has evolved over the years and does contain some complexity, but I think

overall the end result does seem to reflect pretty well a player's success in tournaments. Anomalies will always exist in the tables, but each of these tends to get corrected as further results get included. When I started the rankings in 1981 the fives calendar looked very different from today. At that time we had just five open singles events plus the University competition. The first singles event of the season was the West of England held in November, and the last was the Scottish usually held in May. So we had a summer break from competitive fives of 5 months or so. Today's fives player is luckier (or unluckier depending on how you look at it) in having plenty of fives options for the summer months, with the South West, South East, London, and Yorkshire events having been added to the singles calendar.

Understandably, in 1981, the process I implemented was very much based on a season by season perspective. The current season's results are given 100% weighting, with the previous season and season-2 results being gradually "aged" to give them less impact. This concept of "season" does not now make so much sense. The fives calendar is now more a continuous sequence of events, with the new season start (South West) being a rather arbitrary point in time.

In particular, there are some issues evident with the current approach. For example:

- a) The early season events (South West, etc.) carry rather more weight than perhaps they should (100% weighting) compared to those from the previous season, with some of those events being only very recently played.
- b) The number of events that count in the rankings spans a varying period of time ranging from 2 to 3 years as we progress through the current season. There is no real justification for this.

To address these issues a new approach is being implemented. The system will now always include 3 years of results. At any point in time the "current" year (at 100% weighting) will be the previous 12 months from that point, with Year-1 and Year-2 spanning the prior yearly periods. Year-1 and Year-2 will roll forward in line with the "current" year, with the results from each carrying a reduced weighting. So, as we complete a new tournament, the previous year's running of that event will drop down to a lower weighting category, before eventually disappearing off the rankings radar after 3 years.

I plan to issue a new rankings update quite soon (reflecting the recent SW and SE events), and the new approach will initially be adopted for the Doubles only. I will bring the Singles into line at a later point (there is more work involved in that). I've compared the new system against the current approach and for the top 30 players there turns out to be very little difference in the doubles rankings order. Lower down the list there is increasingly more impact as the additional (low weighting) results from Year-2 come into play. One result of the new process is that the number of players in the rankings will be greater, because a longer period of time is normally included, some might say no bad thing.

Note that for the forthcoming update some players might be surprised to see that they have just entered the new doubles rankings despite having last had success way back in the 2016-17 season! Anyway, please bear with me as we make the transition. Things will settle down in due course. My thanks to Chris Burrows and in particular Will Ellison, who have both provided very useful input to help with these changes.

And if you have managed to continue reading this far, my congratulations!

The London Open

Whitgift School, Croydon

Saturday/Sunday, 27-28 September 2019

STOP PRESS Yes, Will Ellison is back -- with a vengeance -- doing the double in this year's London Open. On Sunday morning Will defeated National Nr. 1, Ed Kay, in the Singles final, having eliminated the reigning National Singles champion Dan Tristao in the previous day's semi-final -- both times in straight games. This is Will's first open singles title since the South West Open 2018. This weekend's win was his 4th London Singles title, bringing him equal with Dan on 30 open singles titles apiece.

In the Doubles Will and Dan were reunited after a two year break to win for the 5th time, having previously clinched the title in 2013-2016. It was Will's 8th doubles title at the London Open, having also won with Matt Shaw in 2017 and twice with Hal Mohammed, in 2010 and 2011.

Organiser Will Ellison reports: Whitgift hosted the 25th London Open, in which organiser Will Ellison claimed a record fourth win in the Singles, before teaming up with Dan Tristao to take the Doubles title for a fifth time as a pair. This was Will's eighth doubles win overall, having won in 2017 with Matt Shaw and in 2010 and 2011 with Hal Mohammed.

Will's singles win moves him to 30 open singles titles, tying Dan Tristao. Dan's 20th open doubles title sees him reach a landmark 50th open title across singles and doubles.

The tournament commenced on Saturday morning, broadly as planned, although unfortunately three-time singles champion James Toop had to withdraw at the last moment due to a family illness. Of particular note in the first two rounds was Matt Shaw's match against Tom Watkinson, with Tom taking it 11-7 in the third game -- backing up his recent strong run in Scotland and the South East with another good win here. Theo Parker managed to upset the seedings to overcome Andrew Boyd 11-6 in the third game -- another fine match.

The quarter-finals all went with the seedings -- the closest match was between 5th seed Ben Beltrami and 4th seed David Butler, in which David edged the first game 12-11, before winning the second more comfortably 11-6.

Ed Kay then took on David Butler in the semi-final and continued his winning streak since the North of England Open in February, to book his place in the final. In the other semi-final, Will Ellison and Dan Tristao faced each other for the fifth time in this event, and despite not beating Dan since the 2016 West of England final, Will came through in two games. The first was a relatively comfortable 11-4, with Will playing very solidly and making fewer errors than his opponent. The second was a closer affair, with Dan taking a 5-0 lead, before Will clawed this back to 7-5 in one hand. It was nip and tuck for the rest of the game, but Will managed to edge it 12-10.

The final followed the next day, which Will won 11-6, 11-5 -- his persistent retrieval and low-error game proving effective against Ed on this day.

Anyone not making it through to the quarter-finals was permitted to enter the singles Plate, leading to a large draw of 16, including 3 of the top 15 in the National Singles rankings. After play in four pools of four players each, it was Rob Whitehorn, Oli Arnold, Andrew Boyd and Ben Kirwan who progressed to the semi-finals. Oli beat Rob 15-6 and Andrew beat Ben 15-11, before facing off in the final, which Andrew won 11-8, 11-2 to claim the prize.

The doubles tournament took place on Sunday, and again the early rounds went with the seedings. It was encouraging to see Andy Lawson and Freddie Heathcote participating in their first open tournament, and indeed they won their opening match against long-distance travellers Richard

Christie and Keith Kennerley. Elsewhere Allyn's regulars Ed Carr and Tim Hebblethwaite saw off Derby Moor's Lewis Keates and Rob Whitehorn in two games.

In the semi-finals, Arnold and Parker had a close three-game semi-final against Butler and Kay, ultimately prevailing 11-4 in the third. Ellison and Tristao took on Beltrami and Shaw in the other semi-final. It was memorable for a run of seven straight winners from Dan, which helped Will and Dan to come through by 6 and 3.

The final proved a close match – and repeat of the 2016 semi-final. In a similar manner to their previous encounter, the match went to three games, with Dan and Will again prevailing. The first game was taken by the older pair 11-8, but then some fine hitting from Ollie and Theo saw them take the second to 5. Will and Dan started well in the third, and two error serves from Ollie and Theo helped their opponents take a 7-2 lead and give them an unassailable cushion, which they maintained to take the game 11-5.

The doubles Plate was another great contest, with 5th seeds from the original tournament Julian Aquilina and James Tilston living up to their billing as top seeds in the plate by winning. They came through in the final against Keates and Whitehorn, although the young Derby Moor pair played well, losing narrowly 11-8.

Many thanks to those who had travelled from all over the UK to come and play, in particular, but not limited to, Richard Christie, Rob Whitehorn and Lewis Keates from Derby Moor, and Keith Kennerley from Devon. Your support of this tournament is greatly appreciated.

It was also great to see so many current or recent university students playing – players such as (but not limited to) Joe Sumner, Ben Kirwan, Alex McGee, Cameron Low, Charlie Mabbutt, Louise Mathias – the demographics are encouraging, with the organiser shocked to find he was the oldest player in the singles draw once James had withdrawn! Thanks also to Gwydion Wiseman for playing in the singles – great experience for the current West of England Schools' champion.

With thanks to Whitgift for hosting us this year, we look ahead to next year and what will likely be the 26th tournament returning to St Paul's School!

Results

Singles

1st round: R Whitehorn bt L Mathias 11-0, 11-3; M Shaw bt A McGee 11-2, 11-0; T Watkinson (8) bt G Wiseman 11-5, 11-0; C Blackaby w/o J Toop; J Tilston bt L Keates 11-4, 11-5; B Kirwan bt B Hale 11-0, 11-1; O Arnold bt R Mathias 11-1, 11-3; A Boyd (7) bt J Smith 11-0, 11-4; T Parker bt J Sumner 11-6, 11-1; C Low bt C Mabbutt 11-6, 11-3

2nd round: E Kay (1) bt Whitehorn 11-3, 11-4. Watkinson bt Shaw 3-11, 11-2, 11-7; B Beltrami (5) bt Blackaby 11-2, 11-1; D Butler (4) bt Tilston 11-7, 11-5; W Ellison (3) bt Kirwan 11-1, 11-3 ; J Aquilina (6) bt Arnold 11-9, 11-7; Parker bt Boyd 4-11, 11-9, 11-6; D Tristao (2) bt Low 11-5, 11-5

Quarter-finals: Kay bt Watkinson 11-6, 11-2; Butler bt Beltrami 12-11, 11-6; Ellison bt Aquilina 11-4-11-1; Tristao bt Parker 11-8, 11-6

Semi-finals: Kay bt Butler 11-5, 11-7; Ellison bt Tristao 11-4, 12-10

Final: Ellison bt Kay 11-6, 11-5

Plate: Boyd bt Arnold

Doubles

1st round: F Heathcote & A Lawson bt R Christie & K Kennerley 11-0, 11-7; A Boyd & T Watkinson bt L Mathias & R Mathias 11-1, 11-1; E Carr & T Hebblethwaite bt L Keates & R Whitehorn 11-7, 11-4

Quarter-finals: W Ellison & D Tristao (1) bt Heathcote & Lawson 11-1, 11-3; B Beltrami & M Shaw (4) bt J Aquilina & J Tilston 11-5, 11-7; O Arnold & T Parker (3) bt A Boyd & T Watkinson 11-5,

11-0; D Butler & E Kay (2) bt Carr & Hebbethwaite 11-9, 11-6

Semi-finals: Ellison & Tristao bt Beltrami & Shaw 11-6, 11-3; Arnold & Parker bt Butler & Kay 11-3, 7-11, 11-4

Final: Ellison & Tristao bt Arnold & Parker 11-8, 5-11, 11-5

Plate: Aquilina & Tilston bt Keates & Whitehorn

Yorkshire Open Championships

Giggleswick School, Yorkshire, Saturday/Sunday, 12/13 October 2019

STOP PRESS: Ed Kay had a successful trip to Giggleswick at the weekend, returning to London with both singles and doubles trophies from the Yorkshire Open. In that sense, it was a repeat of his performance in 2017, the only difference being that his doubles partner was Ben Beltrami this year, rather than Dan Tristao.

In fact, it was a weekend of doubles, with Durham University's Michael Suddaby completing a clean sweep of the Plate trophies. After teaming up with fellow student Douglas Law to win the doubles, he went on to beat Derby Moor's Lewis Keates to secure the singles Plate as well.

RESULTS

Singles

1st Round: A Raheem beat Peter Sherratt 11-2, 11-3; Michael Suddaby beat Vishal Singh 11-3, 11-6; Douglas Law beat Dean Ali 9-11, 11-3, 11-4

Quarter-finals: Ed Kay beat Raheem 11-1, 11-2; Ben Jourdan beat Lewis Keates 11-5, 11-2; Andrew Boyd beat Suddaby 11-3, 11-6; Ben Beltrami beat Law 11-0, 11-5

Semi-finals: Kay bt Jourdan 11-3, 11-5; Beltrami bt Boyd 11-4, 11-7

Final: Kay bt Beltrami 15-5, 15-8

Plate: Suddaby

Doubles

1st round: Vishal Singh & A Raheem beat Douglas Law & Michael Suddaby 15-13, 6-15, 16-14; Anthony Goodwin & Lewis Keates beat Bob Sandie & Tim Widdop 15-12, 15-3; Andrew Boyd & Ben Jourdan beat Dean Ali & Bally Singh 15-2, 15-10

Semi Finals: Ben Beltrami & Ed Kay beat Singh & Raheem 15-0, 15-3; Boyd & Jourdan beat Keates & Goodwin 12-15, 15-11, 15-1

Final: Beltrami & Kay beat Boyd & Jourdan 15-3, 15-9

Plate: Law & Suddaby

The Lady's Cup

Cambridge University Sports Centre

Saturday, 19th October 2019

Bob Dolby reports: Mrs Malt would have been delighted. 50 players entered the competition for the cup she presented to the Alleyn Old Boys Club in 1937 in memory of her recently departed husband, multiple National Champion Philip Malt. The magnificent trophy is now repurposed for an event designed primarily to promote fives for female beginners.

Of the 50 players (49 of them made the group photo!) over half fell into that category. These young ladies came from Rugby School, Bedford Modern School, Alleyn's School, the Stamford Schools and Cambridge University, and they were supported by, and paired with, a variety of young male players, coaches, parents and a small number of experienced players.

The first 3 hours were filled with pool matches galore, the results of which enabled the organiser to select 8 pairs to contest the Cup, while the remaining 16 pairs played for the Lady's Bowl. While these two competitions got going play continued in the Ball-in-the-Box-Challenge, which eventually came down to a high-scoring tie between Hugo & Freya and Joseph & Malachi. The ensuing Sudden Death play-off saw the latter pair win the Lady's Petit Pot.

The knock-out matches in the Lady's Bowl showed how much progress some of the inexperienced youngsters were making. By the time we reached the final it was clear that the winners, Zara & Chase from Stamford, were a well balanced and purposeful pairing, while Gracie and Elisabeth from Rugby had made noticeable improvement in their doubles play.

In the main competition for the Lady's Cup the ever-improving Cameron & Maddie from Stamford and the increasingly reliable Surianne & Malachi from Bedford Modern were the two pairs that lost their initial match, entered the Plate and eventually contested the final, with the latter pair winning, largely due to their greater experience. The semi-finals saw a brave effort by Rugby's brother and sister pairing, Mollie and Max, to counter the power of the favorites from Durham, while Martha & Bethan from Alleyn's gave another sibling pair, Rugbeians Freya & Claudia, a hard match.

The final saw Camille & Oscar, who had come down from Durham, take on Freya, a previous winner of this trophy, and her young sister Claudia. Claudia must go down as the Most Improved Player since Last Year, while Freya defied lack of recent practice to more than hold her own against the hard-serving Oscar, but the outstanding young lady on display during the day was Camille, two-handed, fleet of foot and consistently aiming to hit walls.

My thanks go to Holly Nugent and Ashwin Ahuja at Cambridge for their efforts in recruiting 7 new Cambridge ladies in just one week; to coaches Julie McIntyre, Trevor White, Robert Kay and Alex Smith for their efforts in bringing the bulk of the competitors on the first day of their half-term; and to a host of family and friends who came to support. My thanks, too, to our young photographer Rhys Burlton

Rugby Fives Association VIII v. Winchester Fives Association VIII

Winchester College; Sunday, 20th October 2019

The 2019 match between the Rugby Fives Association and the Winchester Fives Association was the closest so far in 9 matches. A win by 7 points sees the RFA take a 5-4 lead in the series.

WFA Team Manager Harry Akerman reports: With frequently changing lineups for both teams in the week leading up to the match there was some nervousness on both sides as to whether we would have 8 players in each team. As it turned out the WFA ended up with 9!

We had a great match and the closest game in this series of WFA vs RFA matches that we have ever had, with the RFA now leading the contest 5 matches to 4. In the end it came down to just 7 points and all the 'What if's' and 'If onlys' that come with a game like that we mentioned in the post match chat at The Queen.

Ollie and Ben played the game like they were playing with a golf ball whilst Dan and Howard battled against Giles and Tom for a 15-16, 16-15 scorecard!

Thanks to all the last minute replacements who made this fixture and who each played such an important part in the day.

RFA team

1st pair: Ollie Arnold & Ben Beltrami

2nd pair: Dan Tristao & Howard Wiseman

3rd pair: Laurence Cook & Jack Malde

4th pair: Jamie Graham & Stuart Scott

WFA team

1st pair: Dave Butler & Ed Ronan

2nd pair: Giles Munn & Tom Watkinson

3rd pair: Ben Chua & Will Kennedy

4th pair: Seb Fraser & Andy Passey

Scores

	WFA 1	WFA 2	WFA 3	WFA 4	
RFA 1	15-3 15-2	11-3 11-5	11-4 11-3	11-5 11-2	96
RFA 2	11-5 5-11	16-15 15-16	11-1 11-3	11-1 11-3	91
RFA 3	0-11 0-11	1-11 3-11	4-15 12-15	10-12 7-11	37
RFA 4	0-11 0-11	1-11 2-11	4-11 10-12	15-10 15-8	47
	65	83	64	52	

Result: RFA beat the WFA 271-264

For video from this contest go to: <https://www.wessexfivesclub.org.uk/news>

Results of the previous years:

2011 WFA win 248-217
 2012 WFA win 252-223
 2013 RFA win 237-217
 2014 RFA win 258-230
 2015 WFA win 266-257
 2016 RFA win 249-214
 2017 RFA win 289-230
 2018 WFA win 286-233

Robert's Ride 18000

Beeston, Nottingham; October 2019

Robert Cleave has now completed his bike ride around the world. After cycling 18,425 miles through 29 countries over the course of 18 months Robert enjoyed a wonderful homecoming at Bramcote Hills Park, Nottingham on October 19th. Family and friends old and new, from near and far, came to welcome him back. Many strands of his life were represented: family, work, church, university, sport and charities.

The 18,000 mile mark was passed at Osaka Castle in Japan, his final country visited.

Over £23,000 has been raised by very generous donations to the two charities: Traidcraft Exchange and Cancer Research UK.

Further details and photos can be found on Rob's website www.robertsride18000.com

West of England Open Championships

Sherborne School, Dorset

Sat/Sun, 26-27 October 2019

Organiser Ollie Arnold reports: This year the West of England Championships had another change of venue, as we were fantastically hosted by Sherborne School for the first time since the 2008 tournament. High quality play over the course of two days resulted in some spectacular matches — Dan Tristao defeated last year's champion Ed Kay in the singles final to take his fifth title here, whilst Ed teamed up with Will Ellison for their fourth consecutive doubles title.

With a draw of 16 competitors in the singles, the first round included some highly anticipated contests. Matt Shaw and Tom Watkinson played a repeat of their London Open clash; a trademark comeback from Tom in the second set proved too little, too late as Matt closed out an 11-5, 11-8 win. Elsewhere, matches were going to seeding as top players Kay, Tristao, Ellison and Butler progressed. Dan Grant came through a tight second set to beat Ollie Arnold 11-1, 11-9, whilst Ben Beltrami showed little mercy in cruising past Pete Hanton. The match of the round was Theo Parker vs. Julian Aquilina, which Julian won in three close games: 11-7, 9-11, 11-8. Julian's consistency proved just too much, although not before a purple patch saw Theo storm to the second set.

Four close quarter-finals followed: Kay saving a set point en route to beating Shaw in two and Tristao beating Aquilina 11-6, 11-8. The crowds were drawn to the other two quarters, however, with Beltrami vs. Butler and Ellison vs. Grant on court. As with many of their matches, Ben and Dave were neck and neck throughout, with Dave displaying fantastic retrieval of Ben's many nicks, though this time the crucial points went Ben's way. Meanwhile, Dan Grant unleashed a flurry of winners to take the first set versus Will 12-11, proclaiming himself the 's*** court specialist'! Unfortunately for Dan, any questionable bounces seemed to disappear from that moment on, with Will staving off a late surge to take the decider 11-7.

The Plate was well underway by this point, with Watkinson, Kirwan, Arnold and Parker progressing to the semi-finals whilst Louise Mathias and the Hantons moved into the Plate Plate, in a seemingly never-ending series of sub-tournaments. Whilst Watkinson breezed into the final, Arnold and Parker played out yet another match in a series which must be challenging 'Aquilina vs. Tilston' in length! This time it was Theo that won, although he did not have quite enough to beat Tom in the Plate final, losing 11-9, 12-10.

Back to the main draw, where Kay and Beltrami were straight into intense match-play. Onlookers were treated to awesome retrieval from Ben, though Ed remained undeterred in crashing nick after nick off both sides with inspiring accuracy. 11-6, 11-6 does not tell the full story of the match, with Ed needing the form that has taken him to the number one ranking this past year to win. Tristao vs. Ellison followed in a repeat of the London Open semi-final where Will had triumphed.

Unsurprisingly, it was another long three-gamer for the pair who had won 60 Open Singles titles between them, but it was Dan that won in the end: 11-5, 6-11, 11-4. He had to weather an almost error-free second set from Will, but perhaps Will's long match against Grant caught up with him in the end.

After the Saturday evening delights of a curry and Tom Watkinson's many controversial statements, the singles final between Ed and Dan got underway. The first set was practically a masterclass from the former number one – just three errors from Dan as he moved Ed around the court with accurate drop-shots to take it 11-2. The Sherborne courts allowed for high quality singles: retrieval was made more possible by a slightly shorter court-length, but the side-wall nicks were generous, which resulted in long, rallies at the front of the court and attacking winners when an opportunity arose. Ed used this to his advantage in the second set, grinding it out 11-7. The result was in the balance early in the third set at 3-1 to Dan, before a run of four consecutive winners from him proved decisive: this was Dan's fifth West of England Singles title, and his 31st Open Singles title — behind only Neil Roberts and the GOAT...

In the doubles, Watkinson & Butler vs. Shaw & Beltrami was the pick of the quarter-finals. Tom's hard-hitting and Dave's doubles experience had their opponents on the ropes early, though once Ben and Matt found their groove they recovered to win 11-9, 11-6. Third seeds Arnold & Parker progressed quickly past Aquilina & Hanton, whilst Ellison & Kay also moved to the semis easily. Meanwhile, the Exeter pairing of Kennerley & Savery had Dan2 in serious trouble! Savery's powerful right hand was finding left and back-wall nicks with ease, whilst Kennerley's clever dropshots and lobs kept the previous champions honest. In all of this high-quality fives the enjoyment was apparent, with grins on the faces of players and spectators alike; it was an incredible advertisement for the spirit in which the game should be played, and both pairs were applauded off court after Dan & Dan had squeaked through 11-8, 12-10.

The Plate was also an exciting affair, with pairs from Bristol and Exeter fighting it out. Steel & Rew overcame the (almost) ageless pairing of Watson & Lewis, and the Bristol pair of Mathias & Davies backed up their main draw win by beating Kennerley & Savery. Unfortunately both pairs came unstuck against Aquilina & Hanton, who beat Mathias & Davies in the final.

Back in the main draw, Shaw & Beltrami played a clever game to run Kay & Ellison close, holding back on their pace until the opportunity was clear, although in the end the quality of the top pair won out, the game finishing 11-8, 11-7. Arnold & Parker were in ruthless form in their semi-final, racing out to an 11-7, 10-7 lead with the help of the generous Sherborne nicks. However, Grant & Tristao could not be ruled out and ground down the younger pairing to take the second set 12-11, saving multiple match-points on the way. A quick start from either pair in the decider could be decisive, and it came from Arnold & Parker on their way to an 11-7, 11-12, 11-2 win and a first West of England Doubles Final.

It seems Ed & Will had a clear game-plan in place for the final, as they charged out to a 9-1 lead in the first set. In some serious trouble, Ollie & Theo could only slow the inevitable and take a break, having lost the first set 11-3. Once they had refocused, the second set was tighter; neck and neck to 6-6 before the defending champions eked out a 9-6 lead. The Bristol pair fought back to 9-9 but could not force another point, as Ed & Will sealed the win. The difference in the second set was Will's incredible consistency in hitting five winners to only three errors (+2) — of the other three only Ollie could break even.

Overall, it was a fantastic weekend which was greatly enjoyed by participants. Thanks must go to all that entered, and especially to Sherborne School for their great hospitality and the use of their courts. I hope to welcome a bigger entry back to Sherborne next year, so save the date now! Focus now moves to the National Singles — Tristao seems to be peaking at the right time to extend his three-year winning streak!

RESULTS

Singles

1st round: E Kay bt S Watson 11-2, 11-4; M Shaw bt T Watkinson 11-5, 11-8; B Beltrami bt P Hanton 11-0, 11-3; D Butler bt B Kirwan 11-5, 11-3; W Ellison bt J Hanton 11-3, 11-0; D Grant bt O

Arnold 11-1, 11-9; J Aquilina bt T Parker 11-7, 9-11, 11-8; D Tristao bt L Mathias 11-6, 11-2
Quarter-finals: Kay bt Shaw 11-3, 12, 10; Beltrami bt Butler 11-8, 11-9; Ellison bt Grant 11-12, 11-5, 11-7; Tristao bt Aquilina 11-6, 11-8
Semi-finals: Kay bt Beltrami 11-6, 11-6; Tristao bt Ellison 11-5, 6-11, 11-4
Final: Tristao bt Kay 11-2, 7-11, 11-2
Plate: Watkinson bt Parker 11-9, 12-10

Doubles

1st round: Davies & L Mathias bt T Lewis & S Watson 11-8, 2-11, 11-6; K Kennerley & J Savery bt A Rew & A Steel 11-7, 9-11, 11-2
Quarter-finals: W Ellison & E Kay bt Davies & Mathias 11-2, 11-1; B Beltrami & M Shaw bt D Butler & T Watkinson 11-9, 11-6; O Arnold & T Parker bt J Aquilina & P Hanton 11-0, 11-0; D Grant & D Tristao bt Kennerley & Savery 11-8, 12-10
Semi-finals: Ellison & Kay bt Beltrami & Shaw 11-8, 11-7; Arnold & Parker bt Grant & Tristao 11-7, 11-12, 11-2
Final: Ellison & Kay bt Arnold & Parker 11-3, 11-9
Plate: Aquilina & Hanton bt Davies & Mathias 11-2, 11-1

Kay, Tristao, and Ellison dominate the latest National Rankings

Ed Kay retains his position at the top of the new Singles Rankings, with Dan Tristao and Will Ellison following close behind at #2 and #3. The same three players share the top places in the Doubles, this time Tristao taking top spot, with Ellison and Kay sharing 2nd place. These rankings reflect the results from the London, Yorkshire, and West of England championships.

In the Singles, Ben Beltrami moves up to #4 after a strong results in the recent events. Ben Jourdan moves into the top 20 while Lewis Keates, Rob Whitehorn and Cameron Low all make good progress in the top 30. Further down, Michael Suddaby improves his position while Gwydion Wiseman is a new entry at #39.

In the Doubles, Ollie Arnold is now in 4th place following finals partnering Theo Parker in both the London and West of England events. Other risers include some young players already mentioned in the Singles credits above — Ben Jourdan, Lewis Keates and Cameron Low. There are three new entries — Vishal Singh and Raheem Yusuf from the Derby Moor Club, and Julius Davies, who plays at the Bristol Club.

These rankings will provide guidance for seeding in the forthcoming Universities and National Singles championships, after which I hope to publish a further rankings update at end of year. Good luck to all taking part in those important events!

The official RFA rankings are prepared by Dave Hebden.

City of Durham Ladies Invitation Tournament

Durham University Sports Ground
Saturday/Sunday, 2-3 November 2019

21 ladies contested the second edition of the Durham Invitation Tournament, now raised to ranking status. In addition to the main Singles and Doubles competition, organiser Tom Wakelam ran 4 separate age-group Singles competitions: Open, U18, U16 and U14. By the end of the two days 93 competitive matches had been played — and one friendly! Competitors came from Alleyn's School,

Cambridge University, Durham University, the Edinburgh Academy and, of course, the City of Durham Fives Club.

RESULTS

Singles

1st round: C Petrie bt J Hutchinson 15-4; R Tofts bt G Edwards 15-6; L Hawkins bt C Elliot 15-7; J McIntyre bt C Millar 15-3

2nd round: M Nugent bt Petrie 15-0; C Henderson bt F Millar 15-1; S Tustin bt H Brown 15-4; P Bracken bt Tofts 15-0; C Beattie bt Hawkins 15-2; S Lundie bt L Ware 15-5; P Atkinson bt A Calder 15-12; McIntyre bt H Nugent 15-13

Quarter-finals: Nugent bt Henderson 11-8, 11-2; Bracken bt Tustin 11-2, 11-0; Beattie bt Lundie 11-1, 11-3; McIntyre bt Atkinson 11-8, 11-9

Semi-finals: Nugent bt Bracken 7-11, 11-2, 11-9; Beattie bt McIntyre 11-1, 11-2

Final: Nugent bt Beattie 11-9, 11-4

Doubles (played in round robin format)

Winners: C.Beattie & S.Tustin. **Runners-up** H.Nugent & M.Nugent

Age-group Singles Tournaments

Open: Winner J.McIntyre. **Runner-up** H.Nugent

U18: Winner S.Tustin. **Runner-up** S.Lundie

U16: Winner M.Nugent. **Runner-up** C.Millar

U14: Winner C.Beattie.

Challenger Singles Tournament

Alleyn's School, Dulwich, London, 8th December 2019

The RFA is pleased to announce details of a new singles tournament to be played this December. The Challenger Tournament will take place in London — at Alleyn's School — on the same day as the final of the National Singles Championship, Sunday December 8th.

The crucial difference about this event is that is the first of its type to be held — a 'B grade' championship. It will be open to everyone except those who qualified for the last 16 of the National Singles. In other words, it's open to anyone who played in the qualifiers but did not reach the final 16, plus anyone else who fancies some singles matches in an event where the top 16 qualifiers are unable to compete.

The championship will almost certainly take place at Alleyn's, as St Paul's is hosting the Girls' U18 championship on the same day. The idea is to get as many games as possible for everyone, with each round as evenly matched as possible. Entry will cost £10, but that fee will be reduced to half price for those who entered the National Singles, but failed to reach the last 16.

Entry fees will be collected on the day of the event, which will be organised by Hamish Buchanan. Players interested in taking part in this new event should email Hamish or National Singles organiser Charlie Brooks by clicking on one of the links below.

British Universities and Student Championships

Marlborough College, Wiltshire
Sat/Sun, 16-17 November 2019

STOP PRESS Ben Beltrami, representing BPP, finally won the Singles title after three previous disappointments while at Cambridge — at the expense of the defending champion Dave Butler, who was hampered by a damaged hand. However, the double was not to be for Ben, as Bristol's Ollie Arnold & Theo Parker retained their Doubles title by defeating Ben and his new partner Tom Watkinson. There were close matches in the Plates, where Will Shardlow of Oxford won an epic Singles final against Harry Jackson from Durham. In the Doubles Plate the miscellaneous pairing of Joe Sumner & Addie Chai denied Will his double, playing with Dan Whitham. Phoebe Thornhill, though, did the business for Oxford in winning the Women's Singles Plate.

Organiser Theo Parker reports: This year, Marlborough College provided the ideal setting for the British Universities and Student Fives championships. The four enclosed courts played consistently throughout the weekend, despite the cold, with the new Wiseman ball facilitating long rallies and lots of nicks. Entries were up from last year, with 44 for the singles and 20 doubles pairs. Alongside 9 of the top 20 ranked singles players, there were many playing in their first ever competitive fives tournament, notably from Cambridge University thanks to the tireless work of captain Ashwin Ahuja. There were also healthy numbers from Oxford, Durham, Edinburgh and Bristol. As a result, the tournament was competitive throughout, with plenty of tight matches in both main and plate competitions.

The singles went to seeding until the quarter-finals, where 4th seed Tom Watkinson (London BPP) met 5th seed Theo Parker (Bristol). This resulted in the longest match of the tournament, with Theo just coming out on top 15-13 in the 3rd. In the other quarter-finals, Andrew Boyd (Edinburgh) managed to overcome Ollie Arnold (Bristol), Ben Beltrami (London BPP) beat veteran Peter Hanton (Oxford) and David Butler out-manoeuvred the youngest quarter-finalist Ben Kirwan (Oxford). In the semi-finals, late on Saturday evening, Butler managed to comfortably beat a tiring Parker, whilst Beltrami was ruthless in dispatching his former Cambridge teammate Boyd in the other. This meant that the final was, as expected, between the top 2 seeds, Butler and Beltrami. The former was defending his title from last year, whilst the latter was looking to win for the first time, having lost three finals to Ed Kay in previous years. As it was, Ben was in imperious form, dominating the court from the start and hitting countless nicks. Dave, who admittedly was a bit under par due to a hand injury sustained the day before, had little in answer to this onslaught. So Ben came out on top 15-8 15-3 to deservedly take his first BUSF title and solidify his 4th seeding for the National Singles in a couple of weeks.

This year, there were two fiercely contested plate competitions. With a record 6 women playing this year, we were able to run an inaugural women's plate competition. This was played in a round-robin format, with Phoebe Thornhill (Oxford), playing in her second BUSF championships, showing her experience in winning all four of her matches and so taking the crown. Mention must also be made of national ladies' champion Louise Mathias, who entered the main plate instead, winning a number of matches in the process. With a 50% increase of women playing from last year, women's university fives seems to be on the rise.

In the main plate, there were 23 entrants, providing something of an organisational headache. Six groups resulted in some extremely tight matches, despite the American-scoring format. In the end, Will Shardlow (Oxford) and Harry Jackson (Durham) met in the final, played on Sunday morning. The match was an epic, outlasting the main final by quite some distance, with both players exhibiting great consistency. In the end, Will came out on top in the third game, after over 90 mins on court. Luckily for Harry, he managed to get his revenge in the doubles immediately after.

Onto the doubles. In the main, it was clear that Bristol's Parker & Arnold were the pair to beat. And no one managed to, despite a strong challenge from new pairing Beltrami & Watkinson in the final. This meant that Theo and Ollie took their second BUSF doubles win, having been runners-up the three years before that. Ben and Tom had managed to overcome an Edinburgh pair of Butler & Boyd

hindered by Dave's injured finger. In the other semi-final, Theo & Ollie beat Oxford's no.1 pair Kirwan & Bhushan who had won an epic quarter-final against scratch pairing Alex McGee (Birmingham City) & Bristol's Cameron Low. McGee was especially ecstatic to have won his first ever knockout match to reach the quarter-final stage. There were 11 pairs in the doubles plate, including a number of mixed pairs from Cambridge and Bristol. Three groups resulted in two semi-finals, followed by a final between Whitham & Shardlow (Oxford), and Sumner & Chai (KCL/Warwick). This was a tight match, won by Joe Sumner and Addie Chai, playing for the first time together and going home with silverware.

The trophies were kindly presented by previous organiser and tournament creator David Gardner, who, along with David Barnes, Bernard Atkinson and Bob Dolby, provided much-needed support throughout the weekend. Thanks also to Marlborough College, and especially Tom Kiggell and Julian Beckett, for kindly hosting us and providing such excellent facilities. Until next year!

Results

Singles

1st round: P Lam (Durham) bt J Loyd (Cambridge) 11-4, 11-3; T Liu (Oxford) bt O Hay (St Andrew's) 11-0, 11-0; J Sissons (Durham) bt E Salter (Cambridge) 11-1, 11-1; P Thornhill (Oxford) bt H Nugent (Cambridge) 11-6, 11-3; I Blaksley (Cambridge) bt M Williams (Bristol) 11-1, 11-1; H Jackson (Durham) bt H Turner (Oxford) 11-4, 11-2; G Marshall (Durham) bt W Edmonds (Cambridge) 11-0, 11-8; A Ahuja (Cambridge) bt T Hanton (Oxford) 11-5, 11-8; T Wakelam (Bath Spa) bt H Collins (Durham) 11-6, 11-8; N Jerome (Durham) bt J Davies (Bristol) 11-4, 11-5; C Barnett (Edinburgh) bt A McGee (Birmingham City) 11-4, 11-2; E Thursfield (Cambridge) bt L Mathias (Bristol) 11-4, 11-4; V King Forbes (Oxford) bt S Leboff (Cambridge) bye

2nd round: D Butler (Edinburgh) bt Lam 11-2, 11-1; M Suddaby (Durham) bt C Kengeter (Oxford) 11-5, 11-2; J Hanton (Sheffield) bt Liu 11-0, 11-0; B Kirwan (Oxford) bt Sissons 11-1, 11-2; T Parker (Bristol) bt Thornhill 11-1, 11-0; S Bhushan (Oxford) bt D Law (Durham) 11-4, 11-7; J Sumner (King's College, London) bt Blaksley 11-0, 11-0; T Watkinson (BPP) bt Jackson 11-2, 11-0; A Boyd (Edinburgh) bt Marshall 11-4, 11-0; C Low (Bristol) bt Ahuja 11-0, 11-1; A Chai (Warwick) bt W Shardlow (Oxford) 11-1, 11-1; O Arnold (Bristol) bt Wakelam 11-1, 11-1; B Jourdan (Edinburgh) bt Jerome 11-2, 11-2; P Hanton (Oxford) bt Barnett 11-4, 11-1; D Whitham (Oxford) bt Thursfield 11-1, 11-2; B Beltrami (BPP) bt King Forbes 11-1, 11-1

3rd round: Butler bt Suddaby 15-1, 15-2; Kirwan bt J Hanton 15-4, 15-10; Parker bt Bhushan 15-4, 15-5; Watkinson bt Sumner 15-5, 15-6; Boyd bt Low 15-4, 15-0; Arnold bt Chai 15-1, 15-3; P Hanton bt Jourdan 15-7, 15-5; Beltrami bt Whitham 15-2, 15-6

Quarter-finals: Butler bt Kirwan 15-7, 15-2; Parker bt Watkinson 16-14, 6-15, 15-13; Boyd bt Arnold 15-11, 15-5; Beltrami bt P Hanton 15-1, 15-4

Semi-finals: Butler bt Parker 15-6, 15-9; Beltrami bt Boyd 15-2, 15-1

Final: B Beltrami (BPP) bt D Butler (Edinburgh) 15-8, 15-3

Plate: W Shardlow (Oxford) bt H Jackson (Durham)

Women's Plate: 1st P Thornhill; 2nd H Nugent; 3rd I Blaksley; 4th V King Forbes; 5th M Williams

Doubles

1st round: Marshall & Sissons (Durham) bt Davies & Mathias (Bristol) 11-3, 11-7; Collins & Lam (Durham) bt Edmonds & Nugent (Cambridge) 11-4, 11-7; Blaksley & Loyd (Cambridge) bt King Forbes & Thornhill (Oxford) 11-6, 11-4

2nd round: Arnold & Parker (Bristol) bt P Hanton & Turner (Oxford) 15-1, 15-2; Barnett & Jourdan (Edinburgh) bt Hay & Wakelam (STA/BathSpa) 15-7, 15-3; Low & McGee (Bri/BirmCity) bt Chai (Warwick) & Sumner (King's College London) 9-15, 15-8, 16-14; Bhushan & Kirwan (Oxford) bt Marshall & Sissons 15-6, 15-3; Boyd & Butler (Edinburgh) bt Collins & Lam 15-4, 15-8; Jackson & Jerome (Durham) bt Shardlow & Whitham (Oxford) 15-4, 15-11; Law & Suddaby (Durham) bt Ahuja & Thursfield (Cambridge) 15-7, 15-11; Beltrami & Watkinson (BPP) bt Blaksley & Loyd 15-1, 15-1

Quarter-finals: Arnold & Parker bt Barnett & Jourdan 15-6, 15-3; Bhushan & Kirwan bt Low & McGee 15-4, 10-15, 15-5; Boyd & Butler bt Jackson & Jerome 15-9, 15-5; Beltrami & Watkinson bt Law & Suddaby 15-2, 15-3

Semi-finals: Arnold & Parker bt Bhushan & Kirwan 15-5, 15-2; Beltrami & Watkinson bt Boyd & Butler 15-4, 15-12

Final: O Arnold & T Parker (Bristol) bt B Beltrami & T Watkinson (BPP) 15-6, 15-5

Plate: A Chai & J Sumner (War/KCL) bt W Shardlow & D Whitham (Oxford)

Schools' Winchester Fives Doubles Championship

Winchester College

Sunday, 24th November 2019

David Barnes reports: This year's competition was held two weeks later than usual, in order to avoid the clash with Remembrance Sunday. We had hoped that more schools would be able to enter; in the event the only new school was Alleyn's, but their three pairs contributed hugely to the tournament. The ten pairs who entered were separated into two pools, with the pool winners (on points) to play the main final and the runners-up the plate final.

The first pool was deservedly won by Alleyn's I (Wiseman & Puvanendiran), who settled down to Winchester Fives with aplomb and won all their games comfortably. Winchester II managed to come second in the pool, pipping the unlucky Merchant Taylors', who lost heavily to Alleyn's. Winchester I (Fraser & Percival), finalists last year, started slowly and were pushed hard in their pool game with Marlborough I, coming from 9-14 down to win 16-14. They won all the rest of their pool games, while Marlborough proved their quality by winning just enough points to get past the lively Alleyn's III.

The main final was a tense three-gamer. Alleyn's won the first game easily, but Winchester suddenly remembered the buttress and changed tactics, winning the second game and setting up a grand finale. The deciding game was eventually won by the home team, but with little to spare, 15-11. Congratulations to all four players on a good final, played in the best of spirits.

The main plate was won by Winchester II, who beat a tiring Marlborough I; and a second plate, the 'Keyring Challenge' was won by Merchant Taylors', who narrowly defeated Alleyn's III.

Thanks go as ever to Winchester College for the use of their courts and changing facilities, and specially to Dr Jamie McManus, who helped greatly with the organisation of the event.

Results

Pool A. 1st: Alleyn's I (60 pts); 2nd: Winchester II (52 pts); 3rd: Merchant Taylors' (51 pts); 4th: Winchester III (34 pts); 5th: Marlborough II (32 pts).

Pool B. 1st: Winchester I (60 pts); 2nd: Marlborough I (52 pts); 3rd: Alleyn's III (51 pts); 4th: Alleyn's II (25 pts); 5th: Radley (24 pts).

Final: Winchester I (S Fraser & D Percival) bt Alleyn's I (G Wiseman & P Puvanendiran) 7-15, 15-7, 15-11.

Plate Final: Winchester II (M Cloke-Brown & H Gudjadhur) bt Marlborough I (C Jobson & F Kottler).

2nd Plate (Keyring Challenge): Merchant Taylors' (J Graham & T Mangat) bt Alleyn's III (S Scott & H Shaw).

National Singles Championship 2019 - Preview

Qualifying – various locations, November 9/10th. Finals: St Paul’s School, Barnes, December 7th/8th

Organiser Charlie Brooks has published the draw for the last 16 of this year’s National Singles championship. This is the stage at which the qualifiers from the regional events join the top four seeds who qualify by right – and it looks as if an excellent weekend of Fives is in prospect.

If the seedings hold true, the 2019 final will be a repeat of last year’s match, when eventual champion Dan Tristao (above) faced Ed Kay. The two are the top seeds again this year, but the competition looks very open, with all four of the top seeds having already won singles titles this season. Ed won the South West Open, while Dan picked up the West of England title, but former national champion Will Ellison comes into this event after winning the London Open in September, and fourth seed Ben Beltrami won the Students’ singles championship for the first time just last month.

Mind you, given the strength of the field this year, there’s no guarantee that these will even be the four that make it through to the semis. Fifth seed Dan Grant should never be underestimated, with his individual style and audacious Wallball-influenced shot-making, while sixth seed Richie Murby is certain to be a threat.

Indeed, as you look through the draw, there are big games everywhere, with the clash between seventh seed Julian Aquilina and his fellow Old Pauline Matt Shaw looking like the pick of the first-round matches.

Perhaps the only people who might have an issue with what is a cracking draw should be the Hanton family. Messrs Hanton J and Hanton P have done well to reach the last 16, but their reward is to face top seed Ed and second seed Dan, respectively, in their first games.

National Singles finals

St Paul’s School, Barnes

Saturday/Sunday, 7-8 December 2019

STOP PRESS In yesterday’s high-quality final defending champion Dan Tristao clinched his 5th National Singles title by beating National Nr 1 Ed Kay 15-9, 16-14. Dan’s relentless retrieving and audacious drop shots from mid-court were major factors in denying Ed a first title. Ed threw everything he had at his opponent, especially in the second game, where Dan had to fight back from 10-14 with a series of game-saving serves. Ollie Arnold meanwhile won his third National Singles Plate. 31 players had entered the qualifying rounds, 12 of whom eventually joined the four players with automatic qualification for these final rounds at St Paul’s.

Organiser Charlie Brooks reports: Dan Tristao retained his National Singles title, beating Ed Kay in another final of supreme quality. For the second year in a row, Ed pushed Dan to his limits, forcing game ball in the second game, but fell agonisingly short. Dan’s ability to relentlessly move his opponents to every inch of the court was apparent throughout the tournament and he was a deserving winner of his fifth crown.

The tournament had got off to an early start on Saturday, with all 6 courts in use by 9.30. Fierce competition ensued immediately, especially the customary tense encounters in the middle of the draw. This ended with 3 of the top 8 seeds failing to reach the quarter finals, with Theo Parker, Tom Watkinson and Matt Shaw taking their places. Theo just about held on in the first game against top Scottish qualifier Richie Murby (6) before an easier second; Tom’s match against Andrew Boyd (8) was the other way round – a relatively straightforward first game with a close second; Matt was handed a far easier path when Julian Aquilina (7) was forced to withdraw after only a few minutes with a recurring back injury.

The pick of the first rounds, however, was Ollie Arnold v Dan Grant. An expectedly hard-hitting affair saw Ollie fly out of the blocks and take the first game against the 5th seed. Dan came back and stormed through the second. The decider was closer, but Dan always had the upper hand. A three-gamer in the first round, but thanks to the style of both players, a mercifully short one for the organiser!

Onto the quarters, where two matches stood out. Unsurprisingly, 4th v 5th seed was the closest, as Ben Beltrami took on Grant. Ben showed both sides of his game as he played impeccably in the first, using power, precision and his unrivalled wingspan to great effect, but let inconsistency take over in the second (Dan also played better to be fair). He was then back to his best in game 3 to reach his first ever Nationals semi-final.

The highest quality affair, though, was between Tristao and Shaw in the bottom half of the draw. Matt, fresh from his 5-minute first round, was able to match Dan for much of the contest with an appreciative crowd willing him on. In both games, he fought toe to toe with the defending champion before Dan tightened the screw to pull clear.

Elsewhere, Watkinson had a fast start against top seed Kay, but wasn't able to maintain the pressure, and Ed pulled away to a comfortable victory. In the final quarter, Will Ellison used his extensive experience to overcome Theo in convincing fashion.

As with last year, Ed dropped few points in his semi-final, while Dan was made to work much harder by Will. In a cracking first game, Will snuck through 15-13, and an upset looked on the cards. These two have had many a fine battle in the past and the spectators were being treated to another. In the second game, Dan went up a gear, dictating play and forcing Will into a huge amount of work. This continued into the third, where Will also upped his level, but in the end didn't have enough to counter Dan.

Then came the showpiece finale. As they showed in the earlier rounds, few players can live with Dan and Ed, and those on the balcony were left in awe as they raised their game to another level. Their pace of play is breathtaking and range of shots spectacular. They both have an equal willingness to take risks for the chance to sap opponents' energy, which is countered by each others' anticipation and seemingly impossible retrieval — their speed around the court is phenomenal. Dan emerged victorious, 16-14 in the second, but Ed is only a gnat's whisker behind.

The plate was robbed of two players through injury (Julian's back and Richie's bruising), but nevertheless demonstrated the strength in depth of the players. There was Hanton representation in both groups: Peter was joined by Lewis Keates, who was flying the flag for Derby, and Ollie Arnold, whilst Julian took on Andrew Boyd and James Tilston.

In this second group, there was a tantalising prospect of it having to be decided by fewest blackguards served with the players being so evenly matched. James Tilston emerged as group winner, with his unique combination of flair and power, beating both Boyd and Hanton J. Ollie met him in the final — after overcoming the disappointment of such a close first round, he topped the other group despite Keates and Hanton fighting him all the way.

Whilst James couldn't maintain his fine run of form, Ollie continued where he had left off in the group stages. He came onto court in determined mood and left with his third Plate victory in five years. The second game showed glimpses of being a classic; there were times when James' guile had Ollie stranded, but he couldn't produce the killer shots often enough and Ollie took full advantage.

For those who are interested in statistics **Dave Hebden** has sent the following observations and information: In achieving his 5th victory Dan Tristao moves into 3rd place in the list of all-time winners, with only Wayne Enstone (23) and James Toop (6) ahead of him.

St Paul's still have just the two winners of the Jesters Club Cup (Tristao and John East). Only two schools can claim more than two champions: Alleyn's (6) and St Dunstan's (4).

Over the 81 events since 1931, 27 players have won the National Singles, from 16 different schools (or Club in the case of the Manchester YM).

National Singles ages: The average age of Jesters Club Cup winners is now 29.9, with Dan's recent win at age 31 having pushed this up a fraction. However, before the Wayne Enstone era, the average age of the 34 winners was just 24. Post Wayne, the average age across the 24 events has been 33.5. People staying fitter and staying in the game for longer, I suppose. Amazingly 20 of the 22 events between 1986 and 2007 were won by a player over 35 (six distinct people).

Scores

1st round: E Kay (1) bt J Hanton 15-1, 15-1; T Watkinson bt A Boyd (8) 15-4, 15-8; D Grant (5) bt O Arnold 9-15, 15-4, 15-10; B Beltrami (4) bt L Keates 15-1, 15-3; W Ellison (3) bt J Tilston 15-4, 15-3; T Parker bt R Murby (6) 16-15, 15-7; M Shaw bt J Aquilina (7) 6-0 (retd.); D Tristao (2) bt P Hanton 15-10, 15-0

Quarter-finals: Kay bt Watkinson 15-9, 15-0; Beltrami bt Grant 15-4, 14-16, 15-4; Ellison bt Parker 15-3, 15-0; Tristao bt Shaw 15-9, 15-8

Semi-finals: Kay bt Beltrami 15-3, 15-0; Tristao bt Ellison 13-15, 15-4, 15-6

Final: Tristao bt Kay 15-9, 16-14

Plate: Arnold bt Tilston 15-3, 15-6

National Ladies' U23 Championships

St Paul's School, Barnes

Saturday, 7th December 2019

STOP PRESS In this fourth running of the Ladies' National U23 championships Louise Mathias made it a hat-trick of Singles titles and a hat-trick of Doubles crowns, but this year partnered by Martha Nugent, with whom Louise won as a scratch pair in 2017. Holly Nugent won the Singles Plate, Phoebe Thornhill & Viola King Forbes the Doubles Plate. 9 players contested this relatively new tournament: 2 players each from Cambridge University (India Blaksley and Holly) and Oxford University (Phoebe and Viola), Louise from Bristol University, Ibbey Lee from London University, Helena Tunks from the Executioners, Lena Barton from Marlborough College and Martha from Alleyn's School,

Organiser Louise Mathias reports: This year the Ladies' U23s brought players together from Oxford, Cambridge, Bristol and London. Although a small entry of 9, the day was packed full of closely contended singles and doubles matches, which concluded just as the lights were being turned off! The event was held in tandem with the National Singles Championship, which made for a very exciting day of fives.

The morning kicked off with some round-robin singles with a group of 4 and one of 5. Both Martha Nugent and Louise Mathias won all their matches within their respective groups, thus reserving the first semi-final places. They were then joined by Ibbey Lee, who, despite having a bruise which covered the entire front and back of her right hand, powered through to gain comfortable wins over Viola King Forbes and Holly Nugent. The last semi-final spot came down to a much closer margin. Lena Barton, Helena Tunks and Phoebe Thornhill all won two out of their four group games. In particular, the battle between Helena and Lena was fantastic to watch and by far the longest singles game of the day. Although Helena pulled away to win 15-9, it was Lena who had the next greatest points total within the group and so became the 4th semi-finalist.

After a short lunch break, the doubles got underway. With just four pairs, another round-robin ensued. This started with a battle between the Oxford and Cambridge pairs. Some long rallies and good hitting from both sides meant it was neck and neck throughout. After multiple changes of hand at 12-all, Holly & India finally broke away to win 15-13. In the other games Ibby & Helena played consistently and won two out of three games, losing only to previous doubles winners Louise & Martha, who came out on top. A final and a 3rd/4th play-off for the Plate then followed. The re-match between Cambridge and Oxford for 3rd place was another tight game. This time, however, Phoebe and Viola came back stronger to claim a 15-9 win and secure the bronze medals. In the final, Ibby & Helena went into an early lead against Louise & Martha but unfortunately could not maintain it. The final score was 15-4 to Louise & Martha.

And the day was not over yet! Back to singles, and the plate games and semi-finals were next to go on. The first semi-final was between Louise and Lena. Despite some great movement and variety of shots from Lena, the game was won by Louise 15-0. On the other court, a much closer match was being fought between Ibby and Martha. Excellent hitting was seen by both players but Martha's serve proved particularly difficult to return, flying straight off the back wall. This undoubtedly helped her to maintain her lead and finally win 15-7.

While the semis were in action, another round-robin plate was taking place: this time just one game to 11. The stand-out match here, and the decider of the plate, was between Holly Nugent and Phoebe Thornhill. Both ladies played fantastically, and with neither player giving up, it came down to the very last point. Congratulations to Holly, who managed to claim the win, the final score being 11-10. The last game of the day was the Singles final between the defending champion, Louise Mathias and her partner, Martha Nugent. This was Martha's first appearance in a senior Singles final and, aged just 15, this is a very impressive achievement indeed. Despite some excellent movement and retrieving from Martha, Louise made it a hat-trick of U23 titles, the final score 15-0, 15-1.

A huge thank you to all players and everyone who came to support. It was fantastic day of high-quality fives. The next ladies' event will be the National Ladies' Rugby Fives Championships on 25th/26th January in Manchester – one not to miss!

Scores

Singles

Semi-finals: L Mathias bt L Barton 15-0; M Nugent bt I Lee 15-7

Final: Mathias bt M Nugent 15-0, 15-1

Plate: 1st H Nugent; 2nd P Thornhill

Doubles

Final: Mathias & M Nugent bt Lee & Tunks 15-4

Plate: Thornhill & King Forbes bt H Nugent & Blaksley 15-9

National U18 Girls' Championships

St Paul's School, Barnes

Sunday, 8th December 2019

STOP PRESS Eleven girls competed in this year's championships from 5 different schools or club. In the Singles the National U16 champion, Martha Nugent from Alleyn's, defeated the defending U18 champion, Katie Sumner from Bedford Modern School. In the Doubles, however, Katie and her partner Maddie Kent, runners-up last year, had the satisfaction of reversing their fortunes by beating Martha and her partner Katie Innes in the final, undoubtedly the best game of the day. A squad of 4 players from Eastbourne College made huge efforts to raise their game to the necessary standard,

while Lena Barton (Marlborough College) and Camille Beattie from the City of Durham Club confirmed their talent while playing as a scratch pair in the Doubles.

Organiser Alex Smith writes: The December date for the senior schoolgirls was an innovation this year, designed to coincide with the weekend of the National Ladies U23 Championships and to make attendance easier for the Sixth Form girls, who have important exams starting early in the summer term.

I was very pleased with the number and range of entries, with a good mix of ability and schools among the entrants. It was particularly pleasing to see not just the stalwarts of previous competitions playing at an exceptionally good standard in the final rounds, but also the girls from Eastbourne College joining in despite less tournament experience, having fun and improving massively during the day. Many of the girls were playing before their final year at school, and so we look forward to seeing them again next year.

Singles

Pool A: 1st C Beattie (City of Durham); 2nd M Kent (Bedford Modern); 3rd L Thwaites (Eastbourne)

Pool B: 1st M Nugent (Alleyn's); 2nd L Arie (Alleyn's); 3rd L Barton (Marlborough); 4th B Park (Eastbourne)

Pool C: 1st K Sumner (Bedford Modern); 2nd K Innes (Alleyn's); 3rd A Dipper (Eastbourne); 4th C Stanworth (Eastbourne)

Knock-out

1st round: Beattie bt Arie 15-9; Kent bt Innes 15-3

Semi-finals: Nugent bt Beattie 15-5; Sumner bt Kent 15-6

Final: Nugent bt Sumner 11-8, 11-5

Plate

Preliminary round: Thwaites bt Stanworth 15-10

Semi-finals: Barton bt Thwaites 15-0; Park bt Dipper 15-9

Final: Barton bt Park 11-2, 11-3

Doubles

Preliminary round: Marlborough/Durham Scratch Pair (Barton & Beattie) bt Eastbourne II (Stanworth & Thwaites)

Semi-finals: Bedford Modern (Kent & Sumner) bt Scratch Pair 15-6; Alleyn's (Innes & Nugent) bt Eastbourne I (Dipper & Park) 15-0

Final: Bedford Modern bt Alleyn's 15-12

Plate final: Eastbourne I bt Eastbourne II 15-3

Challenger Singles Tournament

Alleyn's School, Dulwich

Sunday, 8th December 2019

This new tournament was played on the same weekend as the National Singles finals and hosted by Alleyn's School. It was open to those players who failed to qualify for the last 16 of the National finals and to anyone else looking for some competitive singles without the elite group participating.

It is hoped that this trial 'Challenger' tournament will be the first of a series of second-tier events held in conjunction with regional and national tournaments where the entry numbers are sufficient and the

facilities allow. It is also possible that there will be a stand-alone tournament if there is sufficient interest.

The general idea is that the top-ranked players will be excluded, allowing a more even contest for lower-ranked players and up and coming youngsters.

To accommodate the principle of as many close games as possible for all, the chosen format was not the usual single-elimination-plus-plate style that is generally used. Instead the 12 entrants, which included five schoolboys from Alleyn's, Bradfield and Winchester, were placed in a 'Swiss draw'. This system has a set number of rounds for every player, with a point awarded for every match won; and, after each round, those players on a similar number of points are drawn against each other.

In effect the pool of players is streamlined into a ranked order based on number of matches won and points difference. With a little tweaking, any strong players can be kept apart in the early rounds and a 'final' may possibly be created in the last round if two unbeaten players are left. There may be some drawing of lots to determine opponents at various stages, but with a rule of no repeat matches and a desire for club mates to be kept apart, this is at a minimum.

Anyway, enough of the theory – onto the actual Fives. With 30 games played to 15, the action was pretty continuous and there were close games in every round. Ultimately Christian Blackaby was the only player unbeaten and he took the title. His vanquished opponents decried the impossibility of getting the ball past his enormous reach at the front of the court; in terms of wingspan, Christian is in the albatross bracket! That, allied to some easy power with his right hand, was too strong for the field. His closest match was the opener with Max Layton from Bradfield, who also possesses a powerful right hand and emerged as the strongest of the school contingent with three wins.

James Smith came second by one point difference over Joe Sumner, both with four wins. Chris Davey also had four wins and was a little unlucky in the draw after losing a crucial early match with Joe. Zac Taylor-Schindler from Alleyn's was the close-game specialist; four of his matches were decided by three points or less, and he won two.

All in all, there was plenty of Fives for everyone and some crunch games in the final round to determine the final standings. Get your name down for the next Challenger event.

Thanks to Alleyn's School for the use of their facilities at short notice.

Final Standings

1st C Blackaby +37 pts; 2nd J Smith +28 pts; 3rd J Sumner +27 pts;
4th C Davey; 5th M Layton; 6th B Hale; 7th L Cook; 8th P Puvanendiran;
9th Z Taylor-Schindler; 10th S Fraser; 11th T Brimacombe; 12th D Sorensen

The RFA President's Cup

Marlborough College, Wiltshire

Sunday, 15th December 2019

STOP PRESS A full day's fives in the finest tradition of the President's Cup ended with a deserved victory in the main competition for Tom Kiggell and Stuart Scott, both first-time winners of the trophy.

David Barnes reports: It's not just the policemen that are looking younger these days – it's the players in the President's Cup, too. That's not to say that the 2019 draw didn't contain some venerable names as well: Hamish Buchanan, Bruce Hanton and Phil Atkinson have each got their names on all four trophies over the years and have between them shared in ten wins of the President's Cup itself. But the presence this year of school players from Alleyn's, Merchant Taylors', Derby Moor and

Marlborough, plus several university members, brought the average age down with a bump. It was good to see players from the Marlborough Town Club adding to the mix as well.

The first round took a long time to complete, as four of the eight matches went to three games. This was a tribute to the general standard of play and the balance of the draw. The second round was more straightforward, as all four matches were won in straight games, although many of the games were close.

The semis were both hard-fought three-gamers. In the first, Ben Hale and Derby Moor's Raheem emerged victorious over Louise Mathias and Robin Perry, winning the third game comfortably after surviving a match point in the second. The second semi-final saw Tom Kiggell (Marlborough master-in-charge) and his young partner Stuart Scott from Alleyn's come through in the third game against Theo Parker and Giles Williams.

The final resulted in a clear-cut victory for Tom and Stuart over Ben and Raheem, who had exhausted themselves in reaching the final. The victors were a thoroughly effective pair, combining mature court-craft and youthful energy, and they deserved to win the prize. This is the third year running that a young player from Alleyn's has been in the winning pair.

The subsidiary competitions produced some massive battles, again showing how balanced the pairs were. The Love Mug was won by Tom Watkinson and Rupert Thompson, the Mate's Plate by Louise Mathias and Robin Perry, and the T-Pot by Gareth Price (replacing an indisposed Giles Gordon-Smith) and Alec Younger.

Huge credit goes to Gareth Price for organising the whole competition and for providing large quantities of food and drink to last through a long day's fives. This was the second year that Marlborough College has hosted the President's Cup on its fine courts, and we thank Tom Kiggell and the College authorities most warmly for their hospitality.

Main Competition

1st Round: B Hale & Raheem bt H Nugent & G Wiseman 15-8, 15-4; G Gordon-Smith & A Younger bt R Thompson & T Watkinson 15-8, 15-13; L Mathias & R Perry bt A Ahuja & C Davey 15-5, 15-11; O Arnold & H Tunks bt J Graham & R Warner 5-15, 15-9, 15-3; J Sanders & E Townshend bt L Keates & M Nugent 15-12, 9-15, 15-9; T Parker & G Williams bt P Atkinson & B Hanton 12-15, 16-14, 15-9; H Buchanan & T Mangat bt T Hebblethwaite & A Kiggell 8-15, 15-13, 15-1; T Kiggell & S Scott bt P Folland & H Wiseman 15-4, 15-3.

Quarter-finals: Hale & Raheem bt G-Smith & Younger 15-6, 15-1; Mathias & Perry bt Arnold & Tunks 15-11, 15-9; Parker & Williams bt Sanders & Townshend 15-4, 15-13; Kiggell & Scott bt Buchanan & Mangat 15-11, 15-10.

Semi-finals: Hale & Raheem bt Mathias & Perry 12-15, 16-15, 15-1; Kiggell & Scott bt Parker & Williams 15-2, 10-15, 15-5.

Final: Tom Kiggell & Stuart Scott bt Ben Hale & Raheem 15-4, 15-6.

Other Results

Love Mug final: Rupert Thompson & Tom Watkinson bt Ashwin Ahuja & Chris Davey 15-12, 15-8.

T-Pot final: Gareth Price (sub. for Giles Gordon-Smith) & Alec Younger bt John Sanders & Ewan Townshend 15-4, 15-8.

Mate's Plate final: Louise Mathias & Robin Perry bt Jamie Graham & Dick Warner 15-11, 15-6.

Also played: Gwydion Wiseman & Holly Nugent, Ollie Arnold & Helena Tunks, Lewis Keates & Martha Nugent, Theo Parker & Giles Williams, Bruce Hanton & Philip Atkinson, Hamish Buchanan & Tunny Mangat, Tim Hebblethwaite & Adam Kiggell, Paul Folland & Howard Wiseman.

End-of-year rankings 2019 – Tristao returns to the top of the Singles rankings

This end-of-2019 rankings update reflects results from the University Championships held in November and the National Singles events (including the Regional Qualifier events) which took place over Nov/Dec. Also included is the new 'RFA Challenger' singles event held for the first time in parallel with the National Singles finals, but more of that later.

The main interest in this update is in the Singles since the National Singles, not surprisingly, carries more ranking points than any other event. We see Dan Tristao return to the top following his win in the Nationals where he narrowly defeated Ed Kay in the final. Although the entry for this year's Singles was by no means the largest on record, it was remarkable in that nearly all the top 20 players took part. This resulted in some very hard fought competition throughout, culminating in the exhilarating battle between the top two seeds to decide the title. Although there were some minor seeding upsets in the earlier rounds, these did not have significant impact on the top 20 positions — the order is by and large maintained. Will Ellison who pushed Dan Tristao very hard in the semi-final remains at #3, Dan Grant moves up a place to #6, while further down Ben Kirwan and Lewis Keates also rise a place in the top 20. Lower down, Julian Hanton moves up to #25, and a good win in the Scottish Qualifier for Charlie Barnett sees him move up to #57.

In the University Singles, Ben Beltrami's win helped to consolidate his position at #4, while his opponent in the final, David Butler, remains at #5. Fewer points are allocated to the University Championships since it is not an open event, but there is no doubting its strength, with 8 players from the top 20 taking part this year. This year's Plate winner Will Shardlow is a new entry at #36. Other risers are Sid Bhushan who had a good win in the main event to move him up to #46, and success in the Plate for Julius Davies sees him enter the rankings at #62.

Some of the more significant moves in these rankings come lower down the table and result from the RFA Challenger event. This new tournament was open to players who failed to qualify for the last 16 of the National finals and to anyone else looking for some competitive singles without the elite group participating. As such it did not carry a large haul of ranking points, but there was sufficient there to benefit Christian Blackaby, James Smith, Joe Sumner, Chris Davey and Max Layton, the latter being a new entry in the Singles rankings.

The new Doubles rankings just takes account of the University event, so there is little movement in the upper reaches of the table. The Oxford pair of Ben Kirwan and Sid Bhushan rise to #21 and #31 respectively as a result of reaching the semi-finals, while Douglas Law and Michael Suddaby benefit from reaching the quarter-finals. Addie Chai and Joe Sumner won the Plate and move up a few places, and there are also five new entries resulting from either quarter-final appearances or Plate success — Charlie Barnett, Harry Jackson, Nathan Jerome, Alex McGee and Will Shardlow.

The official RFA rankings are prepared by Dave Hebden.

West of England Schools Championships

Sherborne School, Dorset
Sat/Sun, 4-5 January 2020

STOP PRESS: This year's West of England Schools Championships at Sherborne School were very closely fought, with no single player dominating in either age group and both singles finals going to three games. The Senior Singles was won by Raheem from Derby Moor Fives club, who played with impressive maturity and discipline to defeat the first, fourth and third seeds to claim the title. In the

Senior doubles, Gwydion Wiseman (still an U16) and Pruthik Puvanendiran of Alleyn's managed to close out the final in two games against Teddy Monro-Davies and Louis Odgers of St Paul's. In the U16 Singles, Shiloh Wu of Winchester edged past Stuart Scott of Alleyn's in a marathon three-game final. In the U16 Doubles, it was again a Winchester v. Alleyn's final, after two marathon semi-finals against the St Paul's top two pairs. Wu and his partner Marcus Cloke-Browne managed to sustain enough hard hitting to defeat Scott and his partner Martha Nugent – last year's winners – creating a clean sweep at U16 for Winchester.

Tournament organiser Sam Roberts writes: The 2020 school Fives season got underway with the West of England championships at Sherborne School on 4th and 5th January. There was a healthy entry of 50 players across the Senior and U16 groups, with 8 schools involved altogether. In the Senior Singles, Seb Fraser was the only one of the top eight seeded players not to reach the quarter-finals – narrowly losing out to Freddie Kottler of Marlborough. The biggest upset came in the match between last year's winner, top seed Gwydion Wiseman, and Raheem of Derby Moor. The first game was won easily by Gwydion, with an impressive mix of power, finesse and varied shot play, but Raheem fought hard to stay in the match, saving match point and then taking the second game with some superb retrieving and ruthless precision with his right hand whenever he was given the chance. Gwydion was clearly tiring in the third and Raheem kept finding the perfect length, emerging the winner. In the semis, Raheem maintained his focus and accuracy against Dom Percival of Winchester, whilst in the other half of the draw Louis Odgers and Teddy Monro-Davies of St Paul's battled through a gruelling high quality three-gamer, with Teddy eventually the winner. In the final, Raheem was flawless in the first game against Teddy, hitting the ball crisply and cleanly. In the second, Teddy started moving well enough to chase down Raheem's shots and hit with more aggression, finding vital nicks on the side wall, but the effort took its toll and Raheem won the third game comfortably to claim the title. The plate was won by Will Redgate of Tonbridge, who defeated his team-mate Ollie Knight in the final.

The semi-finals of the Senior Doubles involved four strong pairs from four different schools. Teddy Monro-Davies & Louis Odgers of St Paul's won a marathon match against Dom Percival & Seb Fraser of Winchester, after losing the first game. The Alleyn's pair of Gwydion Wiseman & Pratik Puvanendiran had an easier win against Dean Ali & Raheem from Derby Moor. The final began as a one-sided affair, with the top seeds bombarding St Paul's with hard, accurate hitting around the walls and some tremendous serving. The second game was a classic, as Teddy and Louis soaked up the pressure, and Louis in particular started to find his range – with disciplined defence tight into the left corner and powerful winners into the back wall to get to game ball. Alleyn's held their nerve and closed out the second game by the narrowest margin, taking the title. In the plate, the St Paul's second pair of Ben Pymont & Shrey Bavisha won the final against the third pair of Nick Stanger & Guy Ward-Jackson – making fewer mistakes in the third game.

In the U16 singles, there were two tremendous three-game quarter-finals: Ben Harrison too accurate in the end for Ben Roberts, both from St Paul's, and Shiloh Wu of Winchester surviving a fantastic fightback from Aiden Whitham of St Paul's. The final was another high quality three-gamer involving Stuart Scott of Alleyn's, who had relatively fresh legs and too much power and precision for Ben Harrison in his semi-final, and Shiloh Wu, who ran down everything his team-mate Marcus Cloke-Browne threw at him in his semi. Stuart started the final well and it looked as though Shiloh might have run out of steam at 5-1 down in the second, but he dug in and showed great composure despite being an U15, to take the second game. The third game could have gone either way, but Shiloh managed to find a few more winners with his low penetrating hitting, to claim the title. In the plate, Monty Brown of St Paul's was too steady for Henry Akerman of Winchester in the semi, but could not find a way to combat Kaito Bremner's clean hitting in the final, which went Winchester's way.

The U16 Doubles, the semi-finals featured four strong pairs capable of sustained hard hitting, with both matches going to three games. Stuart Scott & Martha Nugent of Alleyn's recovered from losing the first game to the St Paul's pair of Ben Roberts & Aiden Whitham, leading to a fantastic decider

which culminated in a series of long rallies with Martha returning whatever St Paul's threw at her with interest, to take the match. In the other semi, Ben Harrison & Alex Ridley of St Paul's pushed Winchester's Wu & Cloke-Browne all the way. After some loose shots from St Paul's in the first game allowed Winchester to dominate, St Paul's played a far more precise and tactical second game, leading to a see-saw third game which was clinched by Wu & Cloke-Browne. After such tremendous semi-finals, the final was relatively one-sided, with Winchester's relentless power and precision too much for Alleyn's. Winchester's second pair of Henry Akerman & Kaito Bremner were unbeaten in the Plate and were worthy winners.

As always we are indebted to Nick Scorer and Sherborne School for their generous and warm hospitality, and I thank also Alex Wilson for running the U16 tournaments, and Ian Jackson and Rob Ody for helping out at critical moments.

Scores

Key: All = Alleyn's; Blun = Blundell's; DM = Derby Moor; Marl = Marlborough; Sher = Sherborne; SPS = St Paul's; Ton = Tonbridge; Win = Winchester

U18 Singles

1st round: G Ward-Jackson (SPS) bt C Peck (Marl) 15-13 ; P Puvanendiran (All) bt W Bucknall (Blun) 15-4; A Raheem (DM) bt O Knight (Ton) 15-4; B Ames (Blun) bt T Brimacombe (All) 15-0; N Stanger (SPS) bt H Rackham (Blun) 15-13; B Burgess (Ton) bt C Jobson (Marl) 15-13; Z Taylor-Schindler (All) bt J Mumford (Blun) 15-0; D Ali (DM) bt C Croke (Ton) 15-0; B Pymont (SPS) bt H Harvey (Sher) 15-9; S Fraser (Win) bt A Grubb (Blun) 15-0; F Kottler (Marl) bt S Bavisha (SPS) 15-9
2nd round: G Wiseman (All) bt Ward-Jackson 15-2; Raheem bt Puvanendiran 15-8; Ames bt Stanger 15-3; D Percival (Win) bt Burgess 15-6; T Monro-Davies (SPS) bt Taylor-Schindler 15-12; Pymont bt Ali 15-7; ; Kottler bt Fraser 15-13; L Odgers (SPS) bt W Redgate (Ton) 15-4
Quarter-finals: Raheem bt Wiseman 11-11, 12-10, 11-7; Percival bt Ames 11-11, 11-4, 11-6; Monro-Davies bt Pymont 11-7, 11-4; Odgers bt Kottler 11-8, 11-6
Semi-finals: Raheem bt Percival 11-1, 11-8 ; Monro-Davies bt Odgers 9-11, 11-4, 11-3
Final: Raheem (Derby Moor) bt Monro-Davies (St Paul's) 11-3, 8-11, 11-1
Plate: Redgate (Tonbridge) bt Knight (Tonbridge) 15-10

U18 Doubles

1st round: Marlborough I bt St Paul's II 15-11; Blundell's I bt Tonbridge II 15-1; Winchester bt Marlborough II 15-4; Alleyn's II bt St Paul's III 15-2 ; Tonbridge I bt Blundell's II 15-6
Quarter-finals: Alleyn's I bt Marlborough I 11-7, 11-5; Derby Moor bt Blundell's I 11-6, 8-11, 11-8; Winchester bt Alleyn's II 3-11, 11-9, 12-10; St Paul's I bt Tonbridge I 11-6, 11-3
Semi-finals: Alleyn's I bt Derby Moor 11-8, 11-2; St Paul's I bt Winchester 10-12, 11-8, 12-10
Final: Alleyn's I (Puvanendiran & Wiseman) bt St Paul's I (Monro-Davies & Odgers) 11-1, 12-11
Plate: St Paul's II bt St Paul's III 11-3, 6-11, 11-9

U16 Singles

1st round: A Ridley (SPS) bt F Stone (Ton) 15-0; M Freudenheim (Ton) bt B Jacob (SPS) 15-10; E Swarbrick (Blun) bt J Johnson (All) 15-13; K Bremner (Win) bt K McElroy (Ton) 15-0; H Shaw (All) bt H Akerman (Win) 15-11; M Brown (SPS) bt W Cole (Blun) 15-0
2nd round: S Scott (All) bt O Wallace-Vorberg (All) 15-1; Ridley bt C Yates (DM) 15-4; B Harrison (SPS) bt Freudenheim 15-4; B Roberts (SPS) bt Swarbrick 15-4; S Wu (Win) bt M Bolt (All) 15-2; A Whitham (SPS) bt Bremner 15-2; Shaw bt K Mahmood (DM) 15-5; M Cloke-Browne (Win) bt Brown 15-2
Quarter-finals: Scott bt Ridley 11-5, 11-3; Harrison bt Roberts 11-3, 9-11, 11-6; Wu bt Whitham 11-7, 4-11, 11-5; Cloke-Brown bt Shaw 11-3, 11-5
Semi-finals: Scott bt Harrison 12-10, 11-4; Wu bt Cloke-Browne 11-9, 11-4

Final: Wu (Winchester) bt Scott (Alleyn's) 9-11, 11-6, 11-9

Plate: Bremner (Winchester) bt Brown (St Paul's) 15-4

U16 Doubles

1st round: St Paul's III bt Alleyn's III 15-4; Tonbridge bt Derby Moor 15-11; Alleyn's II Blundell's 15-1

Quarter-finals: Winchester I bt St Paul's III 11-0, 11-0; St Paul's II bt Tonbridge 11-1, 11-2; St Paul's I bt Alleyn's II 11-6, 8-11, 11-5; Alleyn's I bt Winchester II 11-8, 11-1

Semi-finals: Winchester I bt St Paul's II 11-4, 9-11, 12-10; Alleyn's I bt St Paul's I 3-11, 11-9, 11-4

Final: Winchester I (Cloke-Browne & Wu) bt Alleyn's I (Nugent & Scott) 11-4, 11-2

Plate: Winchester II (Akerman & Bremner)

North West Open Championships

Y Club, Manchester

Sat/Sun, 11-12 January 2020

STOP PRESS In the first regional tournament of the decade Ed Kay won his first North West Singles title, becoming the 13th player to do so since its inauguration in 1968. Previous winners are David Gardner (1), John Howe (1), Wayne Enstone (27), Neil Roberts (3), Ian Fuller (1), Hamish Buchanan (1), John Beswick (3), Phil Bishop (2), Ed Fuller (2), John Minta (2), Dan Tristao (6) and Will Ellison (3).

In the Doubles Will Ellison notched up his seventh North West title, this time with Dan Grant, with whom he won once before in 2016. He has also won with Charlie Brooks twice, John Minta twice and Hal Mohammed once.

Fives was not the only game at which some 20 or so players excelled. Full report to come, including news of the new playing surface on the courts at the Y Club!

Scores

Singles

1st round: D Fox bt T Wakelam 11-2, 12-11; J Sumner bt G Marshall 11-2, 11-1; A McCreath bt J Smith 11-12, 11-1, 11-3; M Suddaby w/o N O'Connor; T Walker bt K Brice 12-11, 1-11, 11-8

2nd round: E Kay bt Fox 11-9, 11-2; P Hanton bt H Jefferies 11-9, 11-6; M Shaw bt Sumner 11-6, 11-1; J Aquilina bt McCreath 11-0, 11-3; D Grant bt Suddaby 11-5, 11-6; R Whitehorn bt O Arnold, 11-8, 12-10; J Tilston bt L Keates 11-5, 11-6; W Ellison bt Walker 11-1, 11-3

Quarter-finals: Kay bt Hanton 11-0, 11-3; Aquilina bt Shaw 4-11, 11-2, 11-1; Grant bt Whitehorn 11-2, 11-0; Ellison bt Tilston 11-3, 11-2

Semi-finals: Kay bt Aquilina 11-0, 11-4; Ellison bt Grant 11-3, 11-3

Final: Kay bt Ellison 11-4, 10-12, 11-9

Plate: Arnold bt Keates 15-5

Doubles

1st round: Fox & Minta bt Brice & McCreath 11-4, 11-6; Hanton & Jefferies bt Darlington & McCreath 11-5, 11-7; Smith & Suddaby bt Keates & Whitehorn 11-4, 11-7; Guthrie & Page bt Martin & Harrison 11-4, 11-6

Quarter-finals: Ellison & Grant bt Fox & Minta 12-11, 11-1; Aquilina & Tilston bt Hanton & Jefferies 11-6, 11-1; Arnold & Beltrami bt Smith & Suddaby 11-4, 11-2; Kay & Shaw bt Guthrie & Page 11-2, 11-0

Semi-finals: Ellison & Grant bt Aquilina & Tilston 11-4, 11-6; Beltrami & Arnold bt Kay & Shaw 11-6, 11-6

Final: Ellison & Grant bt Arnold & Beltrami 11-0, 3-11, 11-5

Plate: Brice & McCreath bt Keates & Whitehorn 15-13

New Women's Rankings for Singles and Doubles

The Rugby Fives Association
24th January 2020

The RFA is pleased to publish, for the first time, separate Women's Rankings for Singles and Doubles. These provisional rankings, which will be revised after the National Ladies Championships in Manchester on the weekend of January 25-26, are prepared by a director of the RFA, Chris Burrows, and are based on performances over the past two years in the following ranking events: The Durham Ladies Singles and Doubles in November; the National Girls' Open Singles and Doubles in December; the National Ladies Singles and Doubles in January; the Ladies Winchester Fives Singles and Doubles in March; the Mixed Rugby Fives Doubles in April; and the Mixed Winchester Doubles in May.

There is no age limit on inclusion in these rankings.

Ladies' National Championships

Y Club, Manchester
Sat/Sun, 25-26 January 2020

STOP PRESS For the second year running the Ladies' National Championships were played at Manchester, where the Y Club courts, currently in the process of refurbishment, once more proved a convivial home for this event. And once more it was Louise Mathias from Bristol University who dominated a young field of 16 players, winning the Singles final against the current Girls' champion, Martha Nugent from Alleyn's. In the Plate it was final-year Edinburgh Academy pupil Sophie Lundie who resisted a mid-game comeback by the Eton Fives convert from the City of Durham Club, Lizzie Ware. Both were hard fought matches.

In the Doubles the defending champions, Louise Mathias & Shinan Zhang from Southampton University proved too strong for the Oxford first pair Phoebe Thornhill & Viola King Forbes at the semi-final stage but were pushed all the way in the final by a new pair, both schoolgirls: Martha Nugent & Katie Sumner. In the Plate an all-Edinburgh Academy tussle left Sophie Lundie and her partner Flora Millar bitterly disappointed, losing in three games to the improving Louise Hawkins & Ailsa Calder after having beaten them in their pool match.

Organiser Louise Mathias reports: Establishing a new tradition, the Ladies' Nationals was once again held at the Y Club in Manchester over two days. The event brought together ladies and schoolgirls from all over the country, with many new players on the scene too. It was hugely fun weekend packed full of competitive, enthusiastic and very high quality fives.

The excitement and enthusiasm for the day of Singles was apparent right from the beginning, with the Durham girls ready and warming up 20 minutes before the 1st round matches were due to start — an organiser's dream! So with no hanging around, the singles got going, with all main draw matches best of 3 to 15. Some close games were seen here, with two ladies beating their higher ranked opponents. Sian Tustin played some great deep shots to beat Sophie Lundie 15-7 15-9, whilst on the court next door Ailsa Calder had some very long rallies against Julie McIntyre, the final score being 15-4, 15-7. Sian and Ailsa then joined the other top six seeds in the quarter-finals.

The stand-out game in the quarters was without a doubt that between Camille Beattie and Shinan Zhang. Playing for over an hour and a half, Shinan and Camille battled it out with long rallies and excellent retrieval, neither player getting ahead by more than two points throughout. Shinan managed to push ahead, taking the first game 15-13 but Camille was ready to fight back and led the way in the second game. Unfortunately for her though, a few down serves in a row meant she could not quite

hold on to her head start and eventually Shinan took the second game, again by a close 15-13 to make the semi-finals. Fantastic play by both! In the other quarter-final games, Katie Sumner played some great winners in her game against Phoebe Thornhill. Despite some solid defence by Phoebe, she found herself struggling with sliding around on the particularly shiny courts. The final score was 15-7,15-0 to Katie. Louise Mathias and Martha Nugent also comfortably won their games to join Shinan and Katie in the semis.

Attention then moved on to the Plate games which was in the format of two round-robin groups. This produced some really close, competitive games. Particularly, Alley Scott played a great game against Jan Hutchinson, winning 15-11. Sophie Lundie and Lizzie Ware were also very evenly matched. Battling it out in a very long game, Lizzie eventually had the edge to win 15-13. In the second group, Julie McIntyre beat Louise Hawkins in another close game by 15-14 but just lost out to the winner of the group, Viola King Forbes 15-8. The top two players from each group then went through to the plate semis; Lizzie Ware vs Julie McIntyre and Sophie Lundie vs Viola King Forbes. Wins from Lizzie and Sophie in the semis led to a spectacular rematch for the final, which took place the following morning. This proved just as long and competitive as their first game, but this time it was Sophie who came out victorious to win the Plate. Well done, Sophie!

Back to the main draw semis, Louise Mathias secured a win against Katie Sumner 15-2, 15-0 despite some great retrieving and movement by Katie. Shinan, after some recovery time from her epic quarter-final, took on Martha Nugent. This was another fantastic game to watch with both players moving each other round the court really well. Martha remained very consistent and found some lovely nicks to take the win 15-7, 15-7. A great way to conclude the first day.

A lovely evening with all the players was then spent at Tampopo, with everyone having a chance to relax and recuperate after a busy day. The next morning started with the Singles final between defending champion Louise Mathias and first-time finalist Martha Nugent. With strong hitting from both players, this was a very exciting game indeed. Since meeting Louise just a few months before in the U23s final, Martha had upped her game and showed some fantastic volleying at the front of the court. Despite this, the experience of Louise paid off, and managing to keep the ball tight to the side walls, she defended her Singles title, winning 15-4, 15-5.

The Doubles then got underway with two round-robin groups. Defending champions Louise & Shinan came out top of their group followed by Durham pair, Sian & Camille. In the second group, it was the new partnership of Martha & Katie who comfortably won all their games, followed by Oxford pair Phoebe & Viola. Into the semis, the top seeded pairs showed their dominance on court and found themselves easily into the final: Louise & Shinan beat Phoebe & Viola 15-2 15-0, whilst Martha & Katie secured a 15-2 15-5 win over Camille & Sian.

Over to the Doubles Plate, where Edinburgh Academy pairs Sophie & Flora had a highly competitive group game beating Ailsa and Louise Hawkins 16-14. Both pairs showed great determination but at times disagreements over lets resulted in tension building between them. This followed into the Doubles final where the two pairs met again. Playing best of 3 to 11, Alisa & Louise took the first game 11-5. Sophie & Flora then came back with even more fight to take the second 9-11. Down to the final game, it was evident just how much both pairs wanted to win. In the end, it was Ailsa & Louise who came through to win the plate the final score, 11-5, 9-11, 11-9.

For the main draw final, Louise & Shinan looked to defend their title against the new partnership of Martha & Katie. Some lovely play by Shinan, jumping in with volleys and finding some nicks, helped the defending champions secure the first game 15-8. In the second, Martha provided strong, consistent shots and this combined with some great retrieval from Katie they pushed Louise & Shinan to look for new tactics in their game. However, Shinan & Louise held on well to take the match and the National Ladies Doubles title for the second year in a row, the final score 15-8, 15-11.

Many thanks to all players! It's fantastic to see such a high standard of ladies fives. I very much hope to see many of you in the open tournaments coming up, as well as the ladies events! Thanks also to Julie McIntyre, who helped with organising the day and to Gareth Price for the facebook live streams!

Scores

Singles

1st round: L Mathias bt A Scott 15-0, 15-0; S Tustin bt S Lundie 15-7, 15-9; P Thornhill bt J Hutchinson 15-1, 15-0; K Sumner bt L Ware 15-1, 15-6; S Zhang bt F Millar 15-0, 15-1; C Beattie bt V King Forbes 15-0, 15-0; A Calder bt J McIntyre 15-4, 15-7; M Nugent bt L Hawkins 15-0, 15-0

Quarter-finals: Mathias bt Tustin 15-3, 15-0; Sumner bt Thornhill 15-7, 15-0; Zhang bt Beattie 15-13, 15-13; Nugent bt Calder 15-0, 15-1

Semi-finals: Mathias bt Sumner 15-2, 15-0; Nugent bt Zhang 15-7, 15-7

Final: Mathias bt Nugent 15-4, 15-5

Plate

Semi-finals: Ware bt McIntyre 15-5; Lundie bt King Forbes 15-6

Final: Lundie bt Ware 15-9

Doubles

Group 1: 1st 45 pts Mathias & Zhang; **2nd** 35 pts Beattie & Tustin; **3rd** Lundie & Millar 16 pts; **4th** W Nicholl & D Wilson 8 pts

Group 2: 1st Nugent & Sumner 30 pts; **2nd** King Forbes & Thornhill 22 pts; **3rd** Calder & Hawkins 12 pts

Semi-finals: Mathias & Zhang bt King Forbes & Thornhill 15-2, 15-0; Nugent & Sumner bt Beattie & Tustin 15-2, 15-5

Final: Mathias & Zhang bt Nugent & Sumner 15-8, 15-11

Plate Final: Calder & Hawkins bt Lundie & Millar 11-5, 9-11, 11-9

RFA versus Alleyn's School Mixed Doubles Match

Alleyn's School, Dulwich
Tuesday, 28th January 2020

STOP PRESS History was made this evening as the RFA played its first known Mixed Doubles match — against Alleyn's School.

Playing for the RFA were Helena Tunks & Hamish Buchanan and Dominique Redmond & Bruce Hanton. Representing the School were Katie Innes & Zac Taylor-Schindler and Lucy Arie & Gwydion Wiseman.

However, we are happy to record that the Jesters have previously played Mixed Doubles matches on their annual Scottish tour.

Match manager Angus Hanton reports: Donald Trump announced that 28th January was an historic day but he had his eye on the wrong ball — instead of dividing up the Middle East this was about finding an ideal gender split for club fives. In this historic contest two women and two men played in each team.

Alleyn's fives is flourishing for both boys and girls and they have at least three coaches — Rob Ody, Howard Wiseman, and Dominique Redmond, who in this particular case played for the RFA and was probably mainly responsible for their victory. Our thanks to one parent who came to support — Katie's mum, Jo.

The overall result was a win for the RFA by 147-102 with the RFA pulling away in the Doubles after a close start in the Singles.

Scores

Singles

Bruce vs Zac 14-16

Hamish vs Gwydion 14-16

Dominique vs Katie 15-4

Helena vs Lucy 15-3

Doubles

Dominique & Bruce vs Katie & Zac 11-3, 11-4

Helena & Hamish vs Lucy & Gwydion 11-12, 11-7

Dominique & Bruce vs Lucy & Gwydion 11-7, 12-11

Helena & Hamish vs Katie & Zac 11-12, 11-7

The Jesters Tour to Edinburgh

Sat/Sun 18-19 January 2020

Co-organiser Ben Hale reports: First of all, let it be recorded that, while the RFA recently registered its first known Mixed Doubles club match at Almeyn's, the Jesters have certainly staged such matches in the past on their annual tour to Scotland. Last year, for example, Sinton & Thornhill alongside Mathieu & Lee took on Hale & Laakkonen with Lebon & Crinnion.

This year's tour started as they always do with late withdrawals and injuries but mainly lunch in The Cumberland. Unfortunately one of the losses was use of the Loretto courts, but we look forward to playing on the renovated floors and under the refurbished roof next year.

After a slight rejig of the fixture list some of us headed to The Edinburgh Academy to take on their Junior Boys and Girls teams. Fives was the winner here, but the Academy certainly had numerical supremacy — a wonderful sight! Meanwhile over at Fettes the Jesters took on Edinburgh University. In a bad start to the tour for the Jesters, but not for Dave Butler, the University secured a comfortable victory. Over at the Academy the crack team of Jesters were now on to the third set of opposition: the U16 Boys. An opening round wobble saw two Jesters losses before the ship was steadied. The Academy squad rotation system kicked in once again with the U16 Girls turning up for a "quick" game before the Select tournaments got under way.

A massive thank you to the Jesters; Dan Murray, Ian Mettam, Dom Shepherd, Martin Patterson and Anna Laakkenon, who spent the best part of four hours playing against twenty-six children with only occasional assistance from this organiser and brief stints at the beginning or end from Jez Sinton, Giles Constantine and Laurence Cook.

Two Jesters teams also headed to Merchiston to take on their Junior Colts and Colts teams — which gave two victories for the Jesters, but there were some wins in there for some promising young pairs. Whilst there was no Fives played at Musselburgh I'm delighted to report that there was Jesters success at the races!

This year's Select Tournaments were a further departure from the norm. Once again six schoolboys each paired with a Jester but this year at the Academy. Congratulations to Ben from Merchiston, who won alongside Laurence Cook, and to Nathan from Loretto, who came second partnering James Birch. The girls' tournament was a bumper affair at Fettes. A midweek mishap meant that new tourist Savanna was a non playing member but fortunately the Academy were, once again, able to provide an additional player and we had a ten-pair, two-pool tournament. The group stage was a hectic and closely fought affair with a number of 9-8 and 9-7 victories but eventually, when it was already gone dinner time, two pairs emerged undefeated to contest the final. Naturally this went to seven-all before Sophie from the Academy and her Jesters partner India Blaksley triumphed. Hard luck to the beaten finalists Cecily, also of the Academy, and Phoebe Thornhill. We rapidly decamped

to the glorious Fettes curry reception, hoping there would still be some food left This truly is a wonderful event and our thanks, as always, go to the Fettes staff, who provided a delicious meal for a hundred odd Jesters, schoolchildren, parents and guests including teachers and headmasters. Once the prizes had been given the Jesters drifted to bed via various old haunts on Rose Street, some showing more stamina than others.

This year's touring party was 53 strong with the Jesters providing 184 players in 25 fixtures across the weekend. Much of this takes place on Saturday, with the morning especially busy. At Merchiston we played an eight-a-side match against the Caledonian club, which resulted in a good win for the Jesters despite the dominant performance of the Cali's first pair, Boyd & Murby. Fettes played host to a match between the Jesters and London's Executioners club followed by a mixed doubles match with the RFA. This was an incredibly close affair which the RFA edged by six points. The Academy was the University venue for the morning. To start, the present Cambridge team combined with some of our recently past tourists to produce a completely incomprehensible scorecard that Matt Shaw tells me means, "On a crisp morning in Edinburgh Academy the Cambridge Past, consisting of members of Cambridge Past and Present, took on the Cambridge Present, consisting of Present and Past, in both a team match of Past vs. Present and a round robin tournament for each of the pairs. The Present triumphed and the winning pair was Sarthak & Emrys." Attempting to follow this was a Jesters IV taking on Durham University. The Jesters edged the first round by six points but then lost the second by twelve, to go down by six points — the Durham alumni pairing of Cranstoun and Patterson Jnr not quite matching the current vintage... Well played, Durham! The final match of the morning session saw the Jesters taking on a IV representing Hampshire's Wessex club — a win for the Jesters!

Lunch was taken at The Antiquary, a fantastic find in recent years — our thanks to them for their continued hospitality. The fives continued with Russell, Tristao and Shaw putting on a coaching session up at Fettes for their U13s in the traditional James Pinder slot before a fixture with their U16 girls. Saturday afternoon at Academy is one of rivalries. The traditional appetiser being the clash between Christ's Hospital and Bradfield for the Sinton-Matthews Cup(s). The fives was complicated as Birch of Bradfield appeared to be playing alongside three Old Blues and similarly Peterson of Christ's Hospital was teamed up with three from Bradfield. Matthews did report on the result at Saturday's dinner but I have to confess to not being quite as engaged with his speech as I ought to have been... Following this was our third annual game with the Edinburgh Academy Old Boys — hard to call this a rivalry, they've won both of the previous two matches for the silver tea pot we purchased last year. However, a Jesters VI, including our dynamic coaching trio from earlier, pulled off an eighteen point victory by 118-100. The final set of fixtures had a young vs old feel to it. In the Six Jester Rotation up at Merchiston I hear there was even some singles played with a more senior victor? This was followed by matches against the combined students teams at both Fettes and Merchiston. The students edged it by four at Fettes and by five at Merchiston — an exceptionally close afternoon of Fives.

We returned to La P'tite Folie for Saturday's dinner and speeches. Also returning this year after a couple of year's absence was former organiser Frank Akerman. His name having been spotted on the guest list there was much excitement among the staff and owner. Following a fashionably late entry accompanied by further Fives glitterati, in particular David Barnes, we enjoyed a fantastic meal and heard some speeches.

Sunday saw the conclusion of our fixtures with the Fettes and Academy schoolchildren. Games with the Fettes Junior Colts, Colts and 1st IV resulted in some tight games and a lot of excitement on the balcony as well as on court. Over at the Academy we started with the Jesters Ladies against their Senior Girls VIII. In an epic fixture the Jesters eventually succumbed 122 to 111. Well played to the Academy! This was followed by the Senior Boys VI which this time produced a victory for the Jesters. Over at Merchiston we finished off the weekend with a triple threat match between the Merchistonians, the Executioners and Wessex. All Alex Cranstoun can tell me is that Fives was the winner — I assume this means that Merchiston were not

Our thanks as ever to the schools for hosting us, the teachers and coaches for their work throughout the year and over the weekend, and of course to all our tourists, especially the long-suffering drivers — just the one parking ticket this year!

And for the fans of stats: We had 54 tourists (including Frank and David). Played 30 matches, providing 184 Jesters across the weekend; 60 at dinner on Saturday; 10 girls on tour; 27 tourists under the age of 30; about 75 pupils played against the Jesters over the weekend.

Until next year,
Ben and Dave

National U25 Championships

Oundle School

Sat/Sun, 1-2 February 2020

STOP PRESS It was a double for Ben Beltrami as he added the U25 Singles title to the British Universities crown he won in November. And it was a second Doubles title for Ben and his partner Ollie Arnold as they made a successful defence of the title they won together last year. Other notable successes were Tom Watkinson reaching the Singles final of this event for the first time, after a victory over last year's runner-up, Andrew Boyd, in the semi-final. And organiser James Smith finally won the Singles Plate after a number of near misses. Archie McCreath and Jeremy Manger got their name on the Doubles Plate after a display of mighty hard-hitting in their final. And, in this ever inventive tournament, — brilliantly organised and expertly managed by James — Joe Sumner won the extra Third Round Losers Plate. Sadly we say goodbye to Theo Parker and Matt Shaw, among others, after nearly a decade of participation.

Organiser James Smith reports: Once more, the great and the good of the next generation of fives players descended upon Oundle School for another action-packed weekend of fives. With a much larger entry than in 2019 and early start times (and late finishes) scheduled for both days, there were a lot of matches to be played.

The first round of the Singles was an opportunity for some of the unseeded players to get on court early and prove themselves, with most of those progressing making light work of their opponents. The second round had more capacity for shocks, as the seeded players were all in action. Addie Chai was narrowly edged out in three games by Jack Sissons for the biggest upset to the seedings, while Dan Whitham, having missed the tournament in 2019 with the rest of the Oxford contingent, marked his return with a good win over organiser James Smith. The rest of the draw progressed as expected, with the top seeds cruising through comfortably.

Round three proceeded per seedings, as the top eight seeds duly progressed, with the pick of the games being Ben Jourdan's three-game comeback against Lewis Keates. The quarter-finals also proceeded according to seeding, with the top four seeds all winning in straight games.

Ben Beltrami progressed past Matt Shaw with relative ease on the Saturday evening; however, due to time constraints Tom Watkinson and Andrew Boyd had to return on the Sunday morning having played just one game; Watkinson eventually upset the seedings in straight games, having battled in the morning to win the second 16-14 from 5-0 down. Unfortunately for him, the exertions involved in doing this proved too much, with the final going comfortably Beltrami's way to hand him a first U25s Singles title.

While the main draw was occurring on the Saturday afternoon, the 22-strong Plate competition was progressing in time-honoured fashion of best-of-three to 6. Smith progressed through one half of the straight knock-out comfortably, while the other half of the draw also took longer than expected, with the other semi-final between Chai and Naum having to come off court at one game apiece, to return

on Sunday morning as well. Unfortunately, Chai had to progress after Naum was let down by the Oxford teammate who was meant to drive him. This gave a final match-up between Smith and Chai, with the former battling back from 9-5 down in the first to win the Singles Plate after multiple near misses.

This then brought on the Doubles. As before, the first round provided the opportunity for some tight games, for example Manger & Thornhill narrowly edging out Oundle schoolboys Crawley & Hollund 15-13. The second round was more chaotic than predicted – Law & Suddaby beating Keates & Raheem in questionable circumstances; while Sissons & Marshall managed to shock the seeded Oxford pair of Kirwean & Whitham 14-16 15-11 16-14. This then precipitated the predictable Oxford exodus, as none of their pairs progressed past the second round and then elected not to enter the Plate – proving that some things never change when it comes to the less important universities! As McCreath had lost his partner at the last minute the previous day, he stepped in the partner Manger in the Plate.

The quarter-finals and semi-finals provided an opportunity for some hard-hitting fives to be put on display and the games certainly didn't disappoint, with high quality doubles played throughout the draw to give a repeat of last year's final. Unfortunately Parker & Shaw were unable to give themselves a triumphant swansong in their last year of the U25s, as they came up against a brutal display of power and control from defending champions Arnold & Beltrami, who thus gained their second win in this event.

The Doubles Plate consisted of two round robin groups, playing one game to 11 in some fast and furious fives. This produced a final of Manger & McCreath versus Keates & Raheem. The former pair won out in a tense three-game final to give McCreath his second plate and Manger his first. As it happens these two played each other for the Singles Plate last year!

I would like to thank Oundle School for once again allowing the RFA to stage the U25s tournament on their spectacular courts, and I'd also like to thank each of the 39 singles entrants and 21 doubles pairs for taking the time to enter and play some high quality fives.

Scores

Singles

1st round: A McGee bt A Hutchinson 15-5; A Naum bt L Mathias 15-4; N Jerome bt T Hanton 15-3; G Crawley bt C Rogers 15-2; H Hollund bt J Malton 15-4; C Kengeter bt H Dickinson 15-6; H Jackson bt P Thornhill 15-0

2nd round: B Beltrami bt McGee 15-1, 15-0; J Sumner bt D Law 16-14, 15-9; L Keates bt T Liu 15-1, 15-2; B Jourdan bt K Sumner 15-4, 15-1; T Parker bt Naum 15-1, 15-0; J Sissons bt A Chai 10-15, 15-12, 15-3; D Whitham bt J Smith 15-11, 15-12; M Shaw bt Jerome 15-1, 15-1; T Watkinson bt Crawley 15-0, 15-0; C Davey bt J Manger 15-2, 15-4; A McCreath bt J Dare 15-0, 15-2; O Arnold bt Hollund 15-0, 15-1; B Kirwan bt Kengeter 15-4, 15-6; C Blackaby bt A Raheem 15-4, 15-8; M Suddaby bt G Marshall 15-9, 15-9; A Boyd bt Jackson 15-1, 15-0

3rd round: Beltrami bt Sumner 15-6, 15-1; Jourdan bt Keates 10-15, 15-8, 15-5; Parker bt Sissons 15-4, 15-10; Shaw bt Whitham 15-4, 15-0; Watkinson bt Davey 15-4, 15-5; Arnold bt McCreath 15-3, 15-6; Kirwan bt Blackaby 15-0, 15-6; Boyd bt Suddaby 15-1, 15-0

Quarter-finals: Beltrami bt Jourdan 15-6, 15-1; Shaw bt Parker 15-10, 15-8; Watkinson bt Arnold 15-6, 15-13; Boyd bt Kirwan 15-9, 15-1

Semi-finals: Beltrami bt Shaw 15-5, 15-5; Watkinson bt Boyd 15-11, 16-14

Final: Beltrami bt Watkinson 15-4, 15-0

Plate: Smith bt Chai 12-10, 11-2

Extra Plate: Sumner bt Keates 15-10

Doubles

1st round: C Kengeter & A Naum bt H Dickinson & A Hutchinson 15-2; T Hanton & J Malton bt J Loyd & C Roker 15-5; J Manger & P Thornhill bt G Crawley & H Hollund 15-13 J Dare & C Rogers bt W Edmonds & S Leboff 15-3

2nd round: O Arnold & B Beltrami bt Kengeter & Naum 15-1, 15-1; D Law & M Suddaby bt L Keates & A Raheem 13-15, 15-13, 15-0; B Chua & J Smith bt Hanton & Malton 15-0, 15-0; C Blackaby & B Jourdan bt A Ahuja & L Mathias 15-5, 15-6; A Boyd & T Watkinson bt Manger & Thornhill 15-2, 15-4; G Marshall & J Sissons bt B Kirwan & D Whitham 14-16, 15-11, 16-14; A Chai & J Sumner bt C Davey & A McGee 15-7, 15-8; T Parker & M Shaw w/o Dare & Rogers

Quarter-finals: Arnold & Beltrami bt Law & Suddaby 15-1, 15-1; Blackaby & Jourdan bt Chua & Smith 15-5, 15-7; Boyd & Watkinson bt Marshall & Sissons 15-0, 15-8; Parker & Shaw bt Chai & Sumner 15-1, 15-3

Semi-finals: Arnold & Beltrami bt Blackaby & Jourdan 15-4, 15-4; Parker & Shaw bt Boyd & Watkinson 15-10, 15-12

Final: Arnold & Beltrami bt Parker & Shaw 15-12, 15-4

Plate: Manger & McCreath bt Keates & Raheem 10-12, 11-4, 11-2

South East Regional Schools' Championships

Tonbridge School

Saturday, 8th February 2020

Host Ian Jackson reports: The South East Regional Schools' Championships took place at Tonbridge School this year. Slightly sweating courts at 10.30am soon dried and a full day of Fives followed in some glorious early spring sunshine in the afternoon. As well as the usual entries from Tonbridge, Christ's Hospital, Whitgift and Eastbourne, it was great to welcome a first player from St. Olave's. Under the new leadership of Mat Francis, we hope to welcome St. Dunstan's College back again for the 2021 championship. In total 51 singles matches and 18 doubles matches were played.

All groups in the singles went to seeding, leaving three Tonbridgians and Murray Dare from Christ's Hospital in the senior semi-finals and Tonbridge, St. Olave's and Christ's Hospital in the Colts. Dare gradually saw off the Tonbridge threat in the seniors, returning everything and keeping up the pressure with both hands. In the Juniors there was a tight semi-final between the two top U15 players, with Freudenheim coming out on top against Nsenga from St. Olave's. Freudenheim pushed his doubles partner Hudson hard in the final and, although both players got nervous at the end, it was a very competitive match. The seven courts at Tonbridge allowed for both a first and second plate and these were well contested at both age groups, with worthy winners in all cases.

The doubles saw some superbly competitive games and five out of the twelve matches at both levels in the main competitions went to three games. Tonbridge II, having been taken to three games by Whitgift in the first round, then caused the biggest upset of the day in the semi-finals, knocking out number one seeds and defending champions from Christ's Hospital. Sadly, they could not quite sustain that form in the final, losing to the top Tonbridge pair. In the juniors the scratch pair of Nsenga from St. Olave's and the Tonbridge number five nearly caused an even bigger upset when they took a game off Tonbridge I in the semi-final but then faded in the final game. The final saw some good resistance from Christ's Hospital but they could not match Tonbridge's fire power from both sides of the court.

Scores

Senior Singles

Semi-finals: Murray Dare (Christ's Hospital) beat Massimo Campanale (Tonbridge) 15-11; Ben Burgess (Tonbridge) beat Will Redgate (Tonbridge) 15-6

Final: Dare beat Burgess 15-3

First Plate: Ollie Knight (Tonbridge) beat Ollie Heath (Christ's Hospital) 15-13
Second Plate: Will Harris (Christ's Hospital) beat Theo Sze (Christ's Hospital) 15-9

Senior Doubles

Final: Massimo Campanale & Ollie Knight (Tonbridge) beat Will Redgate & Ben Burgess (Tonbridge) 11-5, 11-6
Plate: Murray Dare & Ollie Heath (Christ's Hospital) beat Luke Townsend & Lucas Sayers (Whitgift) 15-9

U16 Singles

Semi-finals: Neil Hudson (Tonbridge) beat Tommy Worth (Christ's Hospital) 15-5; Max Freudenheim (Tonbridge) beat Genesis Nsenga (St. Olave's) 15-10
Final: Hudson beat Freudenheim 16-14
First Plate: John Sergeant (Christ's Hospital) beat Kenneth Lee (Tonbridge) 15-9
Second Plate: Alikhan Murat (Tonbridge) beat Beatton (Eastbourne) 15-9

U16 Doubles

Final: Neil Hudson & Max Freudenheim (Tonbridge) beat Tommy Worth & Max Hughes (Christ's Hospital) 11-1, 11-3
Plate: Alikhan Murat & Kenneth Lee (Tonbridge) beat Matthew Harvey Gay & John Sergeant (Christ's Hospital) 15-1

Northern Schools Singles Championship

Durham University Courts
Saturday, 8th February 2020

Co-organiser Julie McIntyre reports: With the excitement of storm Ciara building, players from east and west of the Pennines met for the first time at the inaugural North of England Schools tournament. Minibuses were wedged in amongst the cars of football players using the pitches outside, tea and coffee was dispensed and we got down to the business of Fives.

Four young players from Rossall, six from Sedbergh, and seven from the City of Durham club battled it out for gold, silver and bronze medals in the U16 and U18 categories (and proper medals they were). All but four players were U16s, so this category was highly contested.

For the Rossall players, this was their first time away from their own courts, so they had a new back wall to contend with. They picked this up in no time and threw themselves into their matches with gusto. Sedbergh also suffered the disadvantage of having no buttress to aim at, but were soon firing the new Wisemans into the corners very skilfully.

It was a chance for everyone to improve, play new people, and meet up with our nearest Fives schools. Contacts were made for future meetings, and there was plenty of chat.

Many thanks go to Tom Wakelam for the draw, and to masters -in-charge Jon and Lee for their enthusiasm and help throughout the day. Thanks to Durham University for being so accommodating, on a particularly busy sporting day at the Racecourse Ground.

Singles only at this meeting, as we couldn't fit in doubles too, with the number of players and just two courts, but we look forward to another round soon.

Scores

U18 Singles

Round Robin: 1st A Tamakuwala (Rossall) 45 pts; 2nd F Cade (Sedbergh) 40 pts; 3rd T Young (Sedbergh) 38 pts; 4th S Tustin (City of Durham) 13 pts

Gold match: Tamakuwala bt Cade 11-5, 8-11, 11-2

Bronze Match: Young bt Tustin 12-10, 11-0

U16 Singles

1st round: H Gordon (Rossall) bt A Hogarth (City of Durham) 15-0; J Taylor (Sedbergh) bt J Davis (Rossall); E Wardle (City of Durham) bt R Barnes (Sedbergh) 15-6; C Beattie (City of Durham) bt L Weiker (Sedbergh) 15-1; P Atkinson (City of Durham) bt F Purnell (Rossall) 15-3;

Quarter-finals: S Beattie (City of Durham) bt Gordon 15-0; Taylor bt Wardle 15-2; C Beattie bt A Glover (Sedbergh) 15-5; O McIntyre (City of Durham) bt Atkinson 15-0

Semi-finals: S Beattie bt Taylor 11-0, 11-0; McIntyre bt C Beattie 11-3, 11-2;

Final: S Beattie bt McIntyre 12-11, 8-4 retd.

Plate: 1st Glover 55 pts; 2nd Weiker 48 pts; 3rd Barnes 40 pts.

The 90th Varsity Match

St Paul's School, Barnes

Saturday, 22nd February 2020

STOP PRESS Oxford Men, led by Dan Whitham, secured their third victory in a row and with it the Pol Roger champagne. After winning all 8 Singles matches they were prevented from achieving a maximum score by a determined Cambridge effort in the lower Doubles. The Oxford reserves, the Beavers, did however score a maximum in defeating the inexperienced Cambridge Sparrows by 180-60. Meanwhile, in the best Ladies Match since its inception 6 years ago Cambridge scored their fifth victory in a row under the leadership of Holly Nugent.

(Full report from umpire Marcus Bate to come)

Scores

90th CAMBRIDGE v. OXFORD

St. Paul's, Saturday, 22nd February 2020

Cambridge

Oxford

Singles

ED Thursfield (Merchant Taylors' & Fitzwilliam)	JB Brubert (Alleyn's & St Peter's)	2-15
WL Wells (St Paul's & St John's)	PA Hanton (Alleyn's & St Hugh's)	1-15
S Garella (<i>Hon.Sec.</i>) (Merchant Taylors' & St John's)	S Bhushan (St. Paul's & Nuffield)	2-15
ERB Hyde (Tonbridge & Jesus)	DS Whitham (<i>Captain.</i>) (St Paul's & St. Benet's Hall)	3-15
A Ahuja (<i>Captain</i>)	WJR Shardlow	6-15

(St Paul's & Caius)	(Sherborne & New)	
BS Yass (St Paul's & Downing)	CDJ Kengeter (St Paul's & St John's) (<i>Hon. Sec.</i>)	12-15
WA Edmonds (St Olave's & Caius)	CE Rogers (Oundle & Lincoln)	10-15
ECS Pyman (Sherborne & Corpus Christi)	BB Kirwan (Alleyn's & Magdalen)	11-15
		47-120

Doubles

Hyde & Pyman	v. Bhushan & Hanton	0-15
		6-15
	v. Brubert & Kirwan	3-15
		3-15
Ahuja & Wells	v. Brubert & Kirwan	4-15
		7-15
	v. Bhushan & Hanton	3-15
		8-15
Edmonds & Thursfield	v. Kengeter & Whitham	0-15
		2-15
	v. Rogers & Shardlow	11-15
		15-13
Garella & Yass	v. Rogers & Shardlow	15-13
		8-15
	v. Kengeter & Whitham	6-15
		7-15
		98-236

Oxford won by 356-145

Cambridge now counts 57 wins against 33 by Oxford.

In the Sparrows versus Beavers match **Oxford won by 180-60.**

Singles: JH Loyd (Tiffin & Sidney Sussex) (*Captain*) lost to A Naumenko (Alleyn's & St Edmund Hall) (*Captain*) 4-15; EJ Salter (St Cyres CS & St John's) lost to TA Hanton (Westminster & Harris Manchester) 6-15; SA Malik (King Edward VI Camp Hill & St John's) lost to J Dare (Tonbridge & St Anne's) 4-15; MAE von Lany (Colyton GS & Fitzwilliam) lost to JH Malton (Tonbridge & St Hugh's) 3-15 [=17-60]

Doubles: Loyd & Salter lost to Dare & Naumenko 8-15, 6-15; lost to Hanton & Malton 9-15, 6-15; Malik & von Lany lost to Hanton & Malton 3-15, 10-15; lost to Dare & Naumenko 0-15, 1-15 [= 43-120]

6th CAMBRIDGE LADIES v. OXFORD LADIES

St. Paul's, Saturday, 22nd February 2020

Cambridge

Oxford

Singles

HCM Nugent (<i>Captain</i>) (Alleyn's & Selwyn)	v. PS Thornhill (<i>Captain</i>) (Christ's Hospital & Somerville)	4-15
ILD Blaksley (Cranbrook & Homerton)	v. VA King Forbes (Alleyn's & Jesus)	16-14
SA Leboff (Jewish Free School & Clare)	v. G van Bergen (British School of Brussels & Jesus)	15-0
RCW Taylor (King's, Canterbury & St Edmund's)	v. C Hanna (Channing & Somerville)	15-0
		50-29

Doubles

Nugent & Taylor	v. King Forbes & Thornhill	9-15
		5-15
	v. Hanna & van Bergen	15-1
		15-0
Blaksley & Leboff	v. Hanna & van Bergen	15-0
		15-1
	v. King Forbes & Thornhill	5-15
		8-15
		87-62

Cambridge Ladies won 137-91

Ladies' Reserves: Cambridge won 60-15. CL Roker (Latymer US & Robinson) and EC Marr (Cardiff HS & Sidney Sussex) bt M Flynn (Charter School & Somerville) and K Hatchley (Cheltenham Ladies & University)

February National Rankings

This rankings update includes the results from the North West Open and the Under 25 Championships held in January and February. As always, the U25s carries fewer ranking points because it is not an Open event, but I should say that the strength of entry in this year's event was impressive, high in both quality and in numbers. In fact it was the highest entry for both the Singles and Doubles since the event's inception in 1988. Great news to see this, although a logistical challenge for the organiser — well done, James Smith!

Despite not participating in either event, Dan Tristao retains his top position in both the Singles and Doubles rankings.

In the Singles we see Dan Tristao, Ed Kay and Will Ellison occupying the top three places, and we need to look further down for changes. North West semi-finalist Julian Aquilina moves up to #7, while U25 finalist Tom Watkinson enters the top 10 at #8. Rob Whitehorn, who had a good win in the NW, moves into the top 20 at #18, while U25 Plate winner James Smith moves into the top 30 at #29.

Lower down, other good advances are made by Joe Sumner, Dan Whitham and Jack Sissons. We also have two new entries, Harry Jackson from St Paul's & Durham University, and Artem Naumenko from Albyn's & Oxford University, following good wins by both in the U25s.

Dan Tristao tops the Doubles rankings, while NW Doubles champion Will Ellison moves ahead of Ed Kay into 2nd position. Will's partner in Manchester, Dan Grant, moves up to #4, and Ben Beltrami and Theo Parker also make progress in the top 10. Christian Blackaby moves up into the top 20 at #19 following his semi-final appearance with Ben Jourdan in the U25s. James Smith, Michael Suddaby, Raheem, and Jack Sissons all did well in the U25s and move up, with Smith & Suddaby also reaching the North West quarter-finals. We see five new entries in this update. Dave Fox and John Minta make a welcome return while Richard Guthrie and George Page (from Sedbergh) also reached the last eight of the North West Open. Finally, Bristol-based Kevin Brice joins the other new entries at #63 after winning the North West Plate with Archie McCreath.

The next rankings update will be in early May at end of season and will include the North of England Open, the National Doubles and the Scottish Open as well as the second Challenger Singles to be held in Derby at the end of March. There may well be some more significant rankings changes in store!

I announced earlier this season the plan to base future rankings on a rolling 3-year approach, rather than using results from "this season" and the previous two seasons, and I implemented this for Doubles in the September 2019 rankings update. I plan to introduce this idea for the Singles (a little more difficult) at the start of next season.

The official RFA rankings are prepared by Dave Hebden.

Midlands Schools' Regional Championships

Oundle School

Sunday, 1st March 2020

Bob Dolby reports: Four schools each entered four players, which made for a very neat draw in Singles and Doubles and one which host Tony Burrows operated with great expertise throughout the day.

In the Singles four pools produced a knockout competition which was dominated ultimately by Derby Moor's Raheem, the winner, and his partner Dean Ali. Oundle's George Crawley won the Plate in his shoot-out with the other losing semi-finalist, Xav Christopher from Rugby. Meanwhile Bedford Number 1, Will Cliffe, ran out a comfortable winner of the Plate competition, for which he was awarded a much coveted RFA Mug!

In the Doubles, run as a straight knockout, the first pairs from Derby Moor and Oundle won through to the final, which was not only the final match of the day but unquestionably the best. Raheem and Dean won the first game predictably, but then very quickly found themselves down by several points as George and his partner Henry Hollund blasted their way into a lead which they did not relinquish in the second game. The third game went precisely the other way as Raheem and Dean got off to a rapid start and managed to hold off the Oundle challenge, largely by making fewer mistakes in a game where all four players were visibly tiring. "I'd pay money to watch a fives match that exciting!" said one spectator. Oundle had the consolation of their second pair winning the Doubles Plate by demolishing a young and very weary Derby Moor II.

Scores

Singles

Pool A: 1st A Raheem (Derby Moor); 2nd H Hollund (Oundle); 3rd T Mosvold (Rugby); 4th Karavaggeus (Bedford)

Pool B: 1st X Christopher (Rugby); 2nd H Dickinson (Oundle); 3rd W Cliffe (Bedford); 4th C Yates (Derby Moor)

Pool C: D Ali (Derby Moor); 2nd G Crawley (Oundle); 3rd L Wandless (Rugby); 4th R Menhart (Bedford)

Pool D: 1st A Hutchinson (Oundle); 2nd T Hortop (Rugby); 3rd H Halsey (Bedford); 4th A Zulfqar (Derby Moor)

Quarter-finals: Raheem bt Dickinson 11-1; Crawley bt Hutchinson 11-6; Ali bt Hollund 11-3; Christopher bt Hortop 11-2

Semi-finals: Raheem bt Crawley 11-2; Ali bt Christopher 11-1

Final: Raheem bt Ali 11-0, 11-4

Plate for losing semi-finalists: Crawley bt Christopher 11-3

Plate: Cliffe bt Yates 9-6

Doubles

Quarter-finals: Derby Moor I bt Oundle II 15-3; Bedford I bt Rugby II 15-5; Oundle I bt Bedford II 15-1; Rugby I bt Derby Moor II 15-7

Semi-finals: Derby Moor I bt Bedford I 15-4; Oundle I bt Rugby I 15-3

Final: Derby Moor I (Ali & Raheem) bt Oundle I (Crawley & Hollund) 11-1, 6-11, 11-6

Plate: Oundle II (Dickinson & Hutchinson) bt Derby Moor II (Yates & Zulfqar) 15-0

National Winchester Fives Doubles Championship for the Barnes Bridge

Malvern College

Sunday, 8th March 2020

Organiser Harry Akerman reports: From the moment Will Ellison and Ed Kay were the first people to enter this year's Barnes Bridge we realised it was likely that other entrants were playing for the minor medals, and so it turned out, as Will won his 10th title and with him Ed won his 4th. Not significantly tested till the final, they won a hard-hitting contest against Ollie Arnold and Ben Beltrami in two entertaining and high quality games. There is no doubt that Ollie and Ben would have won a few of these tournaments if Will and Ed were not around but sadly for them Will shows no sign of slowing down at least not until he has overtaken Dave Hebden's 14 titles!

For the rest of the players, we enjoyed an excellent day of Winchester fives on the newly refurbished Malvern College courts. The school have done an excellent job with new roofs, fresh paint and bright lights to make them an attractive place to play over the coming years.

Once the semi-finalists were decided via 4 groups of round robin matches the Plate then consisted of 7 pairs each playing against each other. There was little to choose between most of the pairs and indeed no pair went through unbeaten. Louise and Cameron beat Chris and Joe, Chris and Joe beat Steve and Ben, Steve and Ben beat Will and Harry and Will and Harry beat Louise and Cameron! At the end of an exhausting round of matches it was Ben and Steve that took on Chris and Joe in a best-of-3 games final, with Steve and Ben winning the plate that they won two years ago.

Next year we plan to be in Sedbergh School to see how their refurbished courts are looking and we hope to get a decent entry. It is likely there will be Saturday rugby-watching and evening fives, followed by the tournament on the Sunday and a possible walk on the Monday, so why not make a

long weekend of it! Meanwhile thanks very much to Malvern College this year for the generous use of the courts and facilities.

Semi-final: W. Ellison & E. Kay bt G. Munn & S. Roberts 15-3, 15-3; O. Arnold & B. Beltrami bt D. Butler & T. Watkinson 15-7, 15-11

Final: Ellison & Kay bt Arnold & Beltrami 15-8, 15-7

Plate Final: Coffey & Hale bt Davey & Sumner 11-9, 11-7

Women's Rankings

March 2020

This second set of individual rankings for Singles and Doubles, prepared for the RFA by Chris Burrows, are based on performances over the past two years in the following ranking events:

The Durham Ladies Singles and Doubles in November; the National Girls' Open Singles and Doubles in December; the National Ladies Singles and Doubles in January; the Ladies Winchester Fives Singles and Doubles in March; the Mixed Rugby Fives Doubles in April; and the Mixed Winchester Doubles in May.

There is no age limit on inclusion in these rankings.

Movement up or down in these rankings reflects performances at the recent Ladies' National Championships held in Manchester in January of this year.

Coronavirus: RFA TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE

London, March 15th

It is with a heavy heart that we publish this statement from RFA President David Bawtree, sent in response to the current global pandemic.

“The purpose of this communication is to clarify the RFA’s position regarding the above [tournament schedule] in the light of the Coronavirus outbreak.

The RFA’s priority is the health, safety and wellbeing of its members and those with whom we come into contact either as players or spectators. At the same time, the playing of the game is dependent on the policies of the host locations, primarily schools. As of today, we have been informed that St Paul’s School and Bradfield College will be unavailable until further notice. This means that the National Schools Championships and the Winchester Mixed Doubles will have to be postponed. Additionally, there is no access to the Marlborough College courts at present, which puts the National Veterans/Masters/Grand Masters and the National Girls’ Championships (U13-16) in jeopardy.

Given that the outbreak is forecast to get worse over the next few months, the only sensible course of action is to postpone all tournaments until the situation eases and facilities become available again. Tournament organisers are encouraged to re-arrange their event at that stage but it is recognised that this may be very difficult to achieve, not least if current restrictions continue over the summer.

This will come as a disappointment to all those who look forward to and derive great enjoyment from playing in tournaments, but I’m sure you will understand the necessity of taking these steps.”

The RFA will continue to update its members with the latest news as events develop, so please do keep an eye on the Association’s website and social media feeds over the coming months.

We look forward to being able to resume our championship activities in due course, but in the meantime, we send our best wishes for good health to all Fives players and their loved ones in these difficult times.

Rugby Fives Pub Quiz Report

30th April 2020

Question One: Who wrote this Report?

There's been huge speculation over the past decade about what happened to tournament organiser Daniel Grant. Last seen organising the National Under 25s in 2011, he had successfully turned what was previously seen as a well run, pleasant and inoffensive competition into a debauched affair, full of epic encounters of games to 1, reduced food produce, entry music and a focus on flair. In his last event he famously managed to "do the double" and then...nothing. Dan dropped off the tournament organiser map and tournaments became safe once again. What happened to Dan?

Some say he quit fives altogether, but this is not true, as we have video evidence of him and his partner Tristao looking like they're winning the National Doubles in 2017. It's very difficult to fathom how they could have lost after viewing such a spectacular compilation of talent, so we presume they won. Others say he defected to another sport where slapping balls against walls is high on the agenda, only this time, spectators actually care. A minority, however, know the truth. Dan left tournament organisation to study medicine and train in infectious disease at the world renowned London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. For Dan knew that the biggest threat facing humanity in the 21st century wasn't war; wasn't famine; wasn't peri-peri vusa sauce, but was a respiratory pandemic. He trained night and day to learn how to stop an infection in its tracks through contact tracing, early PCR testing and immediate personal protective deployment.

In December 2019 the Covid-19 virus took seed in Wuhan, China. Dan had put aside the best years of his life to deal with this and had been on call 24/7 for several years for just such an event. However, disaster struck. For unknown reasons, Dan had decided to go through some RFA archives — perhaps he was nostalgic over the Christmas period. Either way he endured a disastrous cocktail of watching a Fuller vs Toop match, followed by reliving Alex Smith's Wood Cup speech from the 2011 RFA dinner and finally an attempted download of John Beswick's RTF singles draw on an android phone. He was in a coma for a month.

When he awoke and realised the world was in lockdown and that he couldn't help anymore, he organised a Pub Quiz instead!

And so, on the 30th April 2020, approximately 90 fives players from all across the country, of all ages, all genders, all races and also Guy Matthews, who doesn't fit neatly into any of these boxes, came together to take part in the Pub Quiz of Pub Quizzes, virtually and in isolation.

With production values not seen since Avengers: Endgame, 19 teams gathered round their various screen devices to eagerly take part in the competition whilst simultaneously destroying their sleep hygiene. Young bloods such as the Accies, Fives Pod, Scratch Pairing and All You Need Is Glove set their battle lines against old stalwarts like The Allyn's Originals, Wessex Team and Team Gaz (featuring Hal Mohammed, who was probably late). Alcohol was high on many a team's agenda and it was either this, or poor internet connections, which undid the likes of Mathieu, Ahuja and Beswick early on. But for everyone else, the board was set and the pieces were moving.

After a jolly good clap for our NHS heroes everyone settled down with bated breath (a tactic which normal circumstances results in a plate win). The first round was **Fives General Knowledge** and it's fair to say there isn't very much of that around anymore. Mercifully no-

one knew what “Dapping” was, but enough teams knew how much Richie Murby likes using his weaker hand to make things interesting. Notable zero points were scored on Manchester curry knowledge (where’s Alex Rew when you need him?), but kudos to the team who wanted to eat a Chicken Enstone.

We must also take a moment here to thank the venerable David Barnes, who had contributed a few of the more cerebral questions. Of course, he had called this pub quiz organiser a “f*****g disgrace” at one time, though many thought that he had been talking about Butler, and who can blame them?

Round 2 is where things got interesting. **The Picture Round.** Predominantly faces were blurred out and could our intrepid teams work out who was who? Early foul-ups included Hamish Buchanan’s team thinking that Alexandra Steel was Dave Butler and the guys from Derby recalling that Tim Hebblethwaite had starred in Harry Potter. Disappointment all round was had when no team successfully identified Grant Mitchell, though it was amusing to see how many people thought a pussy with some Maltesers was Julian Aquilina. Crucially, we must put out an appeal to Clinique’s anti-ageing cream department to gift some samples to Bob Dolby, whom an alarming number of teams had confused with the very old and very dead Dr Edgar Cyriax.

Round 3 was a **Music Round** and less said about that the better. Everyone was rubbish.

But it was Round 4 where the sharper teams began to consolidate their leads. The **Video Round** saw everyone play close attention to a BAFTA-winning edited montage of exceptional fives clips. After a nerve-wracking intro the teams were met with what is still, to this day, the best fives video of all time. Thomo’s Tekkers. In a classy and scarily realistic video, Luke Thomson – a true star of the game, sadly retired far too early at the age of 19 after losing a BUCS match in tragic yet hilarious circumstances – is seen savagely destroying Ed Hatton with exceptional shottage. Hatton is seen trying to return Luke’s shots and neither his lunges nor his fashion help him out. What happened to Luke Thomson? That, ladies and gentlemen, is a story for another day...

Following this we’re greeted with the dulcet tones of Dick Warner’s laugh as he takes great pleasure in Dan Tristao being hit full pelt with a ball. It was Dan’s fault though, so don’t feel sorry for him. Tim Lewis and Stu Watson are seen being Tim Lewis and Stu Watson, and then we close out on a beautiful still of our wonderful website.

Of course, you want to see the video, don’t you? Well, your wish is our command. On this occasion, anyway...

Teams fared well in this round and so we went into the final, where double points were up for grabs. The title was anyone’s. Except Team Wessex, who had been undone by having too many people in their group chat.

Tension was mounting and we all knew stress levels were high, evidenced by Will Ellison’s disastrous data entry error for which he is still self-flagellating. Errors that would cost his team dearly. A momentary lift of spirits came with the award of best John Minta impression to Richie Murby, who dedicated himself well with permanent marker pen.

And so it was that we entered the final round. As is tradition in the Rugby Fives pub quiz, we focus on a **LEGEND OF THE GAME.** Remember, you don’t need to be a member of the Association to be a legend, you just need to have made an unassailable impact on the game. This criterion immediately rules out almost all of you.

This month our Legend was none other than the **Mancunian Marathon Madman himself, John Minta**. Questions were set, although it was not an easy task as John couldn't remember much about his own career. However, an intrepid quizmaster set the deathly hard questions, whether the answers were right or not. This round pushed people to the limit and it was tragic that Team RTF were no longer playing, as surely they would have cleaned up here. Oh well! Turns out no-one really knows John, not even John himself.

And that was it. Smooth background music played as everyone waited on tenterhooks for the points to be tallied. It's rumoured that an anxious Dave Butler even washed his hands. And then the announcement came.

Marlborough Town Fives Club successfully came last with 28 points out of a possible 101. There was then a steady gradient of ability up to the top three. In joint second place, with 62 points, were the Scratch Pairing of Aquilina & Tilston proving they can do in a quiz what they can't do on a court. They were joined by Team Gaz, featuring Price, Tristao, Ellison, Griff and Hal Mohammed, who had finally arrived. But the winners, with a phenomenal and record-breaking 65 points, were the team who'd been practising all week on their podcast. Practising — that's what helps you win. I'll take note of that. Anyway, team The Fives Pod scored a whopping 65 points.

So, congratulations to Theo, Sam, Dave, Alex and Matt who walk away with this month's incredible prize of emptied birthday champagne bottles.

Thanks to everyone who took part in the quiz. It's tough in lockdown and it's really pleasing to see so many awesome friends coming together across the country to take part in a night of stupid entertainment. The giant zoom call, after all was said and done, was more fun than going out for a chicken dhansak in Manchester. So thank you everyone for taking part and if this lockdown goes on, we'll probably do another quiz in a month or so.

Oh, and we raised £1085 for the RFA, so that's nice.

Rugby Fives Association

7th August 2020

Statement from the President, David Bawtree

Dear Colleagues,

As you are only too aware, the Covid-19 pandemic necessitated the suspension of fives playing due to the closure of schools in the middle of March.

On 25th July, the Government permitted some lifting of lockdown rules including those that applied to sporting facilities. In anticipation of this a sub committee led by Stuart Kirby had been set up by the RFA Board to establish guidelines that would allow for fives playing to resume once schools reopened in September.

This proved to be a difficult task as the game had to be analysed very carefully to include both on and off court practices and it is a tribute to the hard work and commitment of Stuart's group that a set of guidelines was produced within a very tight timescale. These have now been agreed by the Board and submitted to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport for approval. The Department had previously advised us that this last step was not strictly necessary as Government consent was only required for "team" sports. Nevertheless they agreed to review our proposals which we welcomed as it

will give a formal seal of approval and may help satisfy schools and other court owners that fives can safely resume on their premises.

We will of course press for an early response and will communicate the outcome widely. We are hopeful that approval will be given although it must be borne in mind that fives can only restart if and when the schools give their permission.

Kind regards,

David Bawtree

For subsequent statements and guidance please see
Results and Reports from the RFA Website 2020-2021

**This marks the end of the Rugby Fives Season 2019-2020, curtailed by the
Coronavirus Pandemic**