



President's Newsletter

December 2021

Season's greetings to all our members of the RFA. I hope you have had a wonderful Christmas, will be able to enjoy the New Year's Eve celebrations and that we can all move back to semblance of normality in 2022.

This is the third newsletter in the quarterly series designed to update members on what's going on at the RFA. It's possible that you may have not seen the previous two in which case do please take a look [here](#).

Again it's been a busy few months with happily many more tournaments being played. The National Singles Championship held at Cambridge at the beginning of this month was of particular note with Dan Tristao securing his fifth consecutive title overcoming Will Ellison in a hard-fought final. Many congratulations to Dan and well done to all qualifiers in securing places in the tournament.



New General Secretary

I am delighted to announce that Chris Blakeley has been appointed as our new General Secretary to take over from Phil Atkinson. For those that don't know him Chris is a retired doctor living in London and runs the UCS Old Boys fives club in Hampstead.

Chris learnt his fives at Rugby, played at various clubs around the country and with Morgan Spillane is currently holder of the National Vintage Doubles. A modest chap, he states "that was entirely down to my excellent partner. I just kept out of his way!!"

He underwent three separate interviews with Board members in which he impressed us greatly with his clear passion for fives, his energy and his ideas as to what he would do in the role. He will start with effect from 1 January 2022, overlapping Phil until

the next Board meeting on 24 February, at which point Phil will formally stand down as a director and General Secretary. This will give Chris ample time to have a decent handover and see the Board in action before he assumes full responsibility for the role. Chris' email will be chris.blakeley@rugbyfives.com

Strategy update

Further below is the strategy update slide reviewed by the Board at its meeting of 25 November. In case readers still have not familiarised themselves with our strategy please check it out on our website [here](#).

Reducing dropout rate

We have reviewed the Young RFA initiative and concluded that, while its aims and objectives are still valid, we have not quite got it right in terms of resourcing. We therefore need to find another way of ensuring that the younger members of the RFA have the right framework in which to communicate, play and socialise together. The new post-school/first year university tournament to be held in August 2022 will form the keystone for the initiative with additional co-ordination activities being provided by Chris Blakeley.

Protect existing courts

Following further discussions with the Bursar and Director of Development at St Dunstons', the Board agreed to make a grant offer of £5,000 on a match funded basis to help pump prime the project to build three or four new glass backed courts. These will replace those recently demolished to make way for new classrooms. The grant will help to pay for items such as architects design fees and planning application fees. Stuart Kirby will be involved in the design process to ensure that the courts are fully fit for purpose from a playing perspective.

Through an intervention from the RFA, the Deep West Club is back in action at Mount Kelly, Tavistock after an absence of some two years. The school has three courts, one of which would need very extensive repairs to bring it back in action while the other two were being used for storage purposes. We have managed to negotiate the emptying of one of these so that fives can once again be played. The next step is to work with the school to provide kit and coaching so that fives can resume for pupils as well.

Conversations are being had with Simon Beale from Eastbourne College where their four courts are suffering from, as insurance companies so delicately put it, "ingresses of water". Much work needs to be done including a new roof, a new floor and enclosure of the courts. We are working with Simon to help put the strongest case possible to the powers that be at the College to ensure that the courts are restored to their former glory.

RFA Strategy Update

Issue Three: 25th November 2021

OVERALL STATUS

Last Board Meeting

- Website membership joining function
- Membership starter pack

This Board Meeting

- St Dunstans’ funding
- Membership targets
- Membership benefits

Issues/Challenges and discussion items

- Lack of progress on Young RFA & Alumni bursaries
- Coaching courses

Workstream	Key Activities
1 Reduce dropout rate after school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young RFA – fold in to new Gen Sec role • Alumni bursaries – continue?
2 Protect existing courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Dunstan’s follow up – pump prime funding • Deep West restart at Mount Kelly
3 Encourage new players to the game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stoke Newington - January programme • Squash fives - integrated launch plan
4 Effective Fundraising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PR about the game • Club KO Dinner

New players

Continued efforts by Tom Maconie mean that, Covid-permitting, we are very close to starting fives at Stoke Newington School in the Spring Term. Tom has been working with the Assistant Head Amar Bailey to agree a programme of fives for Years 7, 8 and 9 at lunchtimes, during PE lessons and at after-school clubs.

We have provided a number of gloves and balls to the school and have commissioned Howard Wiseman and his team to coach staff and teachers from our own funds. If this project works we have the wonderful prospect of some 200 new pupils a year being introduced to fives which would be a real fillip for the game. To capitalise on this opportunity we are in discussions with a sports journalist to commission a series of articles to promote the game more widely.



Amar Bailey and his new gloves alongside Hamish Buchanan, Tom Maconie and Julie McIntyre at Stoke Newington

Fundraising

The main fundraising activity currently is planning for the RFA Dinner to be held, Covid and other factors permitting, on **Saturday 23 April 2022 at St Paul's School, London.** So, if you haven't done so already please put this date in your diary which, deliberately, coincides with the National Clubs KO Weekend.

The dinner organising committee is meeting with the St Paul's catering management in mid-January to sort out the final details after which you can expect a flurry of announcements regarding booking, pricing, menus and logistics.

The second fundraising activity is to increase our membership – and hence the RFA's membership subscription income - through a formal programme and institutionalised process of membership recruitment. Historically we have placed undue reliance on volunteers such as Bob Dolby who, despite the odds, has been remarkably successful in recruiting over 150 members in recent years. However, we need to become much more professional in our approach and ensure that the RFA's presence is highly visible at all fives events, that all fives players are fully aware of the important work that the RFA does and that no opportunity to recruit a new member is missed. Because of the importance of membership to the future of the game, the Board has agreed that Membership should be upgraded to be our fifth crucial activity in the strategy and will be reported upon at each Board meeting accordingly

I'm sure that many readers will have their own views as to how we should recruit more effectively and I would love to hear them. Just email me your thoughts at david.parlby@rugbyfives.com

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Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter.

Happy New Year, stay safe and play well.

David Parlby
RFA President