



RUGBY FIVES ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REVIEW 2022-23



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The Rugby Fives Association 2022-23



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A welcome from the President

Welcome to the 2022-2023 Annual Review.

It has been the season where we got on with playing the game at schools, universities and clubs, free of the pandemic and able to enjoy the excitement of the sport and the friendships that go with it.

The main function of this publication is to report on what has happened over the past 12 months, principally as a source of information to our members but also as a record for posterity. On the final pages you will be able to see the rankings and the names of the winners of all tournaments played throughout the season. Both sections have increased in content. We have new and extensive rankings compiled by Will Ellison with the aid of Charlie Brooks, with many more names than ever before, so on page 29 we list the top 75 players in singles and doubles and challenge the other 150 players or so who are ranked lower to enter as many tournaments as they can and get themselves into those higher echelons. Full rankings are available on the RFA website, therfa.uk.

On pages 30 and 31 we list all those who carried off cups, plates, medals and other trophies in the many events which our tournament organisers so kindly run for us. The list has grown this year with the introduction of two new mixed doubles championships, one for schools and one open to all. Entry to these various events fluctuates from season to season but generally playing numbers are good and competition fierce.

Schools Fives is in much better shape than one might have feared when courts were closed for many months and tournaments cancelled because of Covid. Some schools have gaps in their ranks as a result of the pandemic, but the turn-out for National and Regional Schools tournaments in the various age groups was good. We thank warmly all those teachers and coaches who organised these championships for us and gave young players the chance to test themselves against others and to achieve success where it was due.

Either the RFA General Secretary, Chris Blakeley, or I have gone to as many events



as we could throughout the season, enjoying the company of players, parents, teachers and supporters, watching those who will in due course move on into the senior game. At every senior tournament we see young players who have gone through the ranks of school, club and university Fives and are now thriving and making their mark. Andy Pringle in his Review of the Season remarks on the number of young players who are now looking to challenge the Big Three who have set the benchmark for competitive Fives in recent years. We do all we can to keep our school players in the game at university and thereafter, and once again my heartfelt thanks to club secretaries who welcome players into their ranks, as in London, Winchester, Derby, Edinburgh, Bristol, Tiverton, Durham and Manchester, not to mention those university clubs who introduce so many new players to Fives. How much we owe to Oxford, Cambridge, Durham and Bristol in particular in that regard!

There is an element of looking forward in this publication, too. Chris Blakeley's account of making a promotional video at the inaugural Open Mixed Doubles at Cambridge shows the efforts the RFA is making to boost familiarity with the sport beyond the confines of the traditional Fives-playing institutions. Our social media team is working hard to use the various popular platforms to boost the game, achieving some high numbers of rallying from players and those who would know nothing about Fives.

There is also an account of the work Stuart Kirby and Howard Wiseman have done to produce a ball suitable for Squash Court Fives on the centre pages, along with an explanation of the small adjustment to the rules necessary to avoid what Stuart calls an 'ungettable service'. We know from the growing success of players at Stamford and Strathallan Schools that there is much to be gained from promoting this variant of our sport.

So, I wish you pleasure in reading this upbeat edition of the Review as the 2023-24 season gets underway.

The 2022-23 Season in Review

Andy Pringle reviews the season when the Big Three did not have it entirely their own way



ABOVE: Dan Tristao celebrates his seventh National Singles title

LEFT: Ollie Arnold wins the West of England Open Doubles with Ben Beltrami

If you'll forgive the slightly laboured analogy, the past season has been like a swan on water: apparently calm on the top, but with frantic activity going on below. Which, being translated means that while the Big Three – Dan Tristao, Ed Kay and Will Ellison – continue their domination of the upper reaches of our game, there are plenty of others below working hard to make their mark.

With hindsight, that much was obvious as soon as the season started. July's South West Open saw the establishment in imperious form: Will Ellison beat Ed Kay in the singles final, while Will teamed up with Dan Grant to take the doubles title. But, when the circus moved on to Christ's Hospital the following month, it was Ollie Arnold who took the singles title, while Joe Sumner partnered Nick Woolfenden to victory in the doubles.

The pattern continued over the next three tournaments: the Yorkshire, London and West

of England Opens. Kay beat Tristao in Derby (temporarily annexed by Yorkshire), Tristao beat Ellison in London, and Kay beat Tristao again in Sherborne. Not much change there over 2021-22, the casual observer might conclude.

But look deeper and the semis show some equally consistent performances from challengers: Ben Beltrami made the semis in all three events; Julian Aquilina reached the same stage in two; and Ollie followed his South East win with a semi-final spot in London.

So, we again went into the National Singles finals with no clear favourite – although it would have been brave to bet on anyone outside the Big Three taking the ultimate prize.

And indeed, the Big Three duly reached the semis, with fourth seed Ben Beltrami completing the line-up. But then he produced a major upset by taking down top seed Ed Kay. This was the first time in more than 10 years that there had been a finalist from outside the top three seeds in this event.

Indeed, at 9-3 up in the third game of an enthralling final, Ben looked to be on the brink of a memorable victory – only for defending champion Tristao to find his A-game. He drew level and then closed out the game 15-9 to clinch his seventh title in what the organiser described as 'an almighty tussle'.

Ben also finished as runner-up in the North West Open – losing a three-gamer to Will – and while 'normal service' was resumed in the North of England Championship, with Ed beating Dan in another that went the distance, there is a real prospect of the Big Three expanding next season. Ben will surely be itching to secure titles, while the likes of Ollie and Julian are not far behind.

Likewise, the U25 championships showed that the future of our game is in safe hands. Lewis Keates scored a notable double, taking both singles and doubles titles, but with the likes of Gwydion Wiseman, Cameron Low and Addie Chai all starting to make their mark at open level, we could be set for a vintage few years in the singles game. And never rule out Richie Murby, winner in Scotland of his first Open Singles title.

Happily, the doubles game looks set to continue the theme. As in singles, Ellison, Tristao and Kay take the top three rankings positions at the end of the season – but the chasing pack are closer to them than in the singles.

Leading the way are Ollie Arnold and Ben Beltrami – who paired up to win the West of England championship. Impressively, this was Ollie's third

doubles title of the season, following wins at the Yorkshire and London Opens.

As has so often been the case in recent years, the top players don't have regular partners, and Ollie is the perfect demonstration: his three titles came with Ed Kay in Yorkshire, Will Ellison in London, and Ben in the West of England Open. Will Ellison, too, showed his versatility by winning the South West Open with Dan Grant, and followed his London win by taking the doubles title at the North West Open with Theo Parker.

All this meant that the National Doubles Championship also started with no clear favourite. Will Ellison and Charlie Brooks were top seeds, but once more Ben Beltrami showed scant regard for the seedings. He and Theo Parker took out the multiple winners in a three-game semi-final, going on to face another previous championship-winning pair, Ed Kay and Dan Tristao, in the final.

It was here that their run came to an end, with Ed and Dan getting their hands on the Cyriax Trophy for a second time. But again, we can look back on an event that demonstrated the game's strength in depth. Young players like Cameron Low and Archie McCreath, not to mention Plate winners James Smith and Ben Chua, could force their way up the rankings in the coming years.

THERE'S A REAL PROSPECT OF THE BIG THREE EXPANDING

With the open game still dominated by the Big Three for now, it was left to more mature players to provide some fresh names for the trophy engravers this year. At the Veterans Championships, Dave Fox took the singles title for the first time, while local pair Harvey Bishop and Jim Hughes took the doubles title – the first ever title for both. Many of the same players then regrouped for the Vintage championships just four weeks later, and one result was a repeat: Dave Fox won the singles, making him only the second player (after Dave Hebden almost 20 years ago) to win the Veterans and Vintage singles title in the same season.

Dave F was also looking for another double on the day, hoping to successfully defend the doubles title with Sam Roberts. However, Morgan Spillane and first-timer (at this level) Andy Pringle bounced back from finishing as runners-up at the Vets to take the Vintage title.

By contrast, the Masters (over 65s) provided some continuity, with Tony Hamilton and Spencer Beal clinching their fifth consecutive title, while Bernard Atkinson took his second Grand Masters (over 75s) doubles title, this time with 'new boy' John East.

Unsurprisingly, there were also some very familiar



ABOVE: Richie Murby wins his first Singles title at the Scottish Open

RIGHT: Dave Fox does the Veterans and Vintage double



names in the season's team events, the Owers Trophy and the National Club Championship. The former was blessed with the closest final ever in the tournament's history, where Derby Moor scored a far-from-comprehensive win over the Old Wykehamists – by just two points. Meanwhile, in the Club Championship, the West of England club was denied a third successive title by the Old Paulines, whose successful squad rotation took them to their first title in the event since 2017.

All in all, we can look back on another fine season of competition, with fresh faces emerging to challenge the establishment. You might even say it had gone swimmingly – or maybe that's pushing the swan analogy a bit too far.



Singles medallists at the U23s

Ladies' Season Review

Bob Dolby reviews a remarkable year where mixed Fives and young players featured strongly

It has been a quite remarkable year for Women's Fives, with a marked growth in the participation of female players in various tournaments around the country. Despite all RFA and Club tournaments having long been open to both sexes we have rarely seen even the best of our lady players in action against the men. That is no longer the case, as we regularly see a wide range of players in action at tournaments, including our National Ladies champion, Louise Mathias, Cambridge University players past and present Holly Nugent, Helena Tunks and Savanna Leboff, plus Executioners Shinan Zhang and Ibby Lee, and sometimes schoolgirls Camille Beattie and Imogen Wright.

There have been some notable results, too - Louise was runner-up in the Challenger Singles at Oundle; Helena became the second woman after Martha Nugent in 2019 to win the President's Cup, partnering Gwydion Wiseman; Karen Hird, the multiple Eton Fives National Champion now playing her Fives at Derby Moor, won the Derby Moor Invitation Doubles with Anthony

Goodwin this year, after Camille Beattie won it last season with Lewis Keates. In a history-making performance, RFA President Julie McIntyre won the Scottish Open Doubles with Richie Murby. Added to that list are the frequent appearances of lady players in the Doubles Plate finals at regional tournaments, more often than not Helena.

In fact Mixed Doubles is now very much on the up. The Winchester Fives Mixed Doubles has existed since 1997- currently dominated by Louise Mathias and Ollie Arnold - but it wasn't until 2019 that Louise started the Rugby Fives Mixed Doubles at Alleyn's. Now run by Ashwin Ahuja in a President's Cup-style format, the event was won by Holly



Play at the Ladies Nationals



Ladies Winchester Doubles champions Louise and Savanna

Nugent and Nick Whitney and has proved so successful that Helena and Savanna have this year pioneered a Rugby Fives Open Mixed Doubles Championship at Cambridge, which attracted a strong field and was won by Louise and Ollie.

The Lady's Cup, started in 2014 by Bob Dolby to encourage female undergraduate Fives on the new Cambridge courts and which has developed into a mostly mixed tournament, features schoolgirls, undergraduates and parents and was won this year by a rising star of the City of Durham Club, Eleanora Vallasca, playing with Simon Beattie. Alex Smith, who is coaching a promising and enthusiastic group of girls at Stamford School, was inspired to start a Schools Mixed Doubles Championship this year, won at U18 and U15 level by Alleyn's School.

We don't yet have a Mixed Varsity Match or a Mixed Universities Championship, but it was good to see a Women's Varsity Match this year where Oxford scored their highest points total since the inception of the fixture in 2015. We look forward to further progress at Oxford under their captain Lena Barton, and will watch with interest how Cambridge develop their squad next season without Holly Nugent.

Schoolgirl Fives is strong, too. There is a well-attended annual South East Regional tournament currently dominated by players from Alleyn's School and Eastbourne College, and in most years we'd expect to see a Scottish Girls competition, though this year there was none - the pandemic is still affecting the resurgence of school sports.

Edinburgh Academy's girls are a formidable force under the guidance of Hector McFarlane and Richie Murby, though, and made their presence felt in the Durham Ladies Championships, the National Schools Girls' Championships and in the Ladies U23 Championships, with their pair of Rosa Ogilvie and Olivia Smart beating Durham's Camille Beattie and Imogen Wright to win the Doubles title, the first time this honour has gone to players of school age.

Which takes us on to another first: Camille Beattie, still in her teens, won not only the Durham Ladies Singles title but also the National Ladies U23 Singles title and now stands at Number 2 in the rankings. Camille has also won the National U18 title two years in a row and the Doubles too, with Imogen Wright, and has another year left at school.

At the top of the tree, though, is still Louise Mathias, four times National Singles Champion and Doubles champion with Shinan Zhang since 2019. Her outstanding footwork and speed around the court, her powerful strokeplay and her court craft are exceptional. Louise has set the standard to which the other players aspire; we shall miss her next season while she is away in Australia, as we have missed Kathleen Briedenhann during her absence working abroad and Martha Nugent during her studies in the United States. Next year will offer several young players the chance to make more progress and achieve more success. It is an exciting time in the Fives community.



Julie wins the Scottish Doubles, her first victory

Women's Top 10 End of Season 2022-23

Singles

Current	Season start	Name	Points
1	1	Louise Mathias	90.3
2	2	Camille Beattie	84.1
3	3	Martha Nugent	76.7
4	4	Shinan Zhang	73.8
5	6	Rosa Ogilvie	72.0
6	5	Ibby Lee	66.2
7	9	Imogen Wright	64.9
8	7	Helena Tunks	62.6
9	14	Olivia Smart	62.4
10	10	Holly Brown	60.7

Doubles

Current	Season start	Name	Points
1	1	Louise Mathias	87.7
2	3	Shinan Zhang	71.0
3	2	Martha Nugent	68.2
4	5	Savanna Leboff	66.7
5	5	Camille Beattie	65.9
6	6	Helena Tunks	59.5
7	7	Rosa Ogilvie	54.5
8	8	Lena Barton	50.0
9	9	Olivia Smart	49.1
10	10	Kirsten Bell	48.2



Schools Season Review 2022-23

Bob Dolby reviews a season in which numerous schools made their mark in competitive Fives

For the majority of our 20-plus schools who run a regular Fives activity, the autumn term is one of preparation and introduction rather than competition. Some young players will start to learn the game and may eventually compete in the National U13 and U14 championships in the spring; others will be building on their previous experience of the sport, possibly playing friendly matches against RFA sides or Old Boys' teams. The only tournament before Christmas for the majority of school players will be the Winchester Fives Doubles Championship held each November at Winchester College and contested largely by older pupils.

Over the 21 years of its existence this event has been won by players from several schools, not always ones with Winchester Fives courts. This year, however, it was dominated by pairs from Winchester College itself, taking Gold, Silver and Bronze, with only the pair from Tonbridge School threatening the home players. Winners Shiloh Wu and Chris Lee had put down a marker for the rest of the season.

It is the spring term when school events take off, with the first held at Sherborne: the West of England Schools Championships, with U18 and U16

ABOVE: Caleb and Genesis, National U18 Doubles champions

RIGHT: Winchester's pair win the Schools Winchester Fives Doubles



ABOVE: The end of the U14 Singles final



LEFT: Action from the Scottish Schools Singles

categories. 64 players from nine schools competed, but again it was Winchester who enjoyed success, a clean sweep, with all four Singles finalists. Wu won the U18s and then the Doubles with Lee again; in the U16s Jeffrey Chan did the same, winning the Singles and partnering Anthony Cloke Browne to success in the Doubles. Players from Derby Moor, Alleyn's, Blundell's and Winchester picked up the Plates.

During the following weeks the various regional events took place, usually with an U18 and an U16 section. The Northern Schools tournament brought success for Sedbergh and the Manchester Y Club; the South East tournament saw players from Tonbridge and Christ's Hospital pick up silverware. In Scotland, Merchiston Castle and the Edinburgh Academy battled as ever for supremacy while in the Midlands Championships, with its U18, U15 and U14 format, Rugby and Stamford enjoyed welcome success. The Colquhoun Trophy for South West Schools was dominated by young players from Winchester. St Paul's and Alleyn's, traditionally strong schools in junior Fives, are not involved in these regional events, concentrating on their inter-school fixtures, but Alleyn's did seize the opportunity to enter a new

tournament, the Schools Mixed Doubles, initiated by Alex Smith and played at Oundle. 19 pairs from Alleyn's, Marlborough, Oundle, Rugby and Stamford played in the U18 and U15 competitions, Alleyn's winning both, with stiff opposition from Rugby and Stamford respectively. Mixed Doubles has been popular in the senior ranks this year – it is great to see the first junior event take off successfully.

It is good to see how welcome school-age players are in senior competitions, such as the Challenger events, the President's Cup, the U25s and Ladies U23s among others. This inclusiveness is reflected in players' appearances in the rankings, especially the Women's Rankings. We have seen young players from clubs including Christ's Hospital, Derby Moor, City of Durham, Manchester Y Club, Alleyn's and Oundle enjoying the experience of adult Fives.

The season culminates in the National Schools Championships in April. The U13s Singles and Doubles were won by players from Berkhamsted, who showed their superior courtcraft in close contests with players from a promising Edinburgh Academy squad. 54 players from nine schools contested this intense day of Fives, among them for the first time recently players from Stoke Newington School.

The U14, U16 and U18 championships two weeks later produced some memorable contests. In the U14s Val Fikhter from the Manchester Y Club held off a tough challenge from Hari Jones of Stamford, who then had the compensation of winning the Doubles with Euan Hunter. In the U16 Doubles there was no great surprise in Chan and Cloke Browne winning the Doubles, but the victory of one-year-young Freddie Hammond Giles from St Paul's in the U16 Singles came as a surprise to some, though not to his master i/c, Sam Roberts. In the U18 Singles defending champion Wu was too strong for Genesis Nsenga from St Olave's but, as was the case in the U14s, the Doubles final brought a more than welcome consolation for Genesis. Paired with the hard-hitting left-hander Caleb Boy, Genesis achieved the unique distinction of winning the U18 Doubles just a week after the Eton Fives Schools Doubles. Not

PLAYERS ARE WELCOMED IN SENIOR COMPETITIONS

even James Toop could claim that. Wu and Lee didn't quite manage to record the treble of schools Doubles titles, but we look forward to seeing them and their opponents in senior Fives next season.

There are so many fine young players in the game now. We are grateful to the various coaches and parents for their support, remembering particularly Nick Morgan's retirement after 31 years of running Whitgift Fives and Trevor White's service to Fives at Rugby for more than a decade.

Around the schools 2022-23

Individual schools report on a season full of matches and tournaments

ALLEYN'S SCHOOL

Rob Ody reports: The season started at the Schools Winchester Doubles, where Theo Vernacchio and Laurie Milner finished in fifth place. This was followed in January by the West of England Championships at Sherborne, a most enjoyable weekend, with Yarin Negyal winning silver in the U16 Singles and Eli Arie a share of the Doubles Plate. Next came the SE Regional Girls' tournament at Christ's Hospital. Annabel Brown won the U14 Singles and, with Frieda Hebblethwaite, the Doubles. At U16 Taylor-Rose Foo won the Singles and Emily Erdmeier and Annie Guo took the Doubles. Next came the National U13s, where Rumi Kohashi-Khan reached the semi-final of the Singles and Arthur O'Byrne and Noah Buck won the Doubles Plate. There was more success at the inaugural Schools Mixed Doubles: In the junior event Milo Arie and Annabel McAllister won the main competition while James Dorokhov and Taylor-Rose Foo won the Plate. In the senior event Negyal and Guo won the main competition.

Next up were the National Championships where we entered 17 players. Negyal and Dorokhov won silver in the U16 Doubles, and others figured successfully in the traditional Plates. The final event of the year was the National Girls' Championships, where our girls excelled themselves: Annabel Brown became U13 Singles champion, then Brown & Hebblethwaite won the Doubles; meanwhile at U14 Taylor-Rose Foo won the U14 Singles title and then partnered Scarlett Wigley

to win gold in the Doubles. Finally, Erdmeier and Guo made it a hat-trick by winning the U16 Doubles.

Finally mention should be made of a wonderful morning in March when Alleyn's Fives communities past and present came together: students, AOBs and AOGs, members of the RFA and present staff played and watched Fives, then – over lunch – socialized, reminisced and looked ahead. We hope this gathering will become an annual event.



Alleyn's at the Schools Mixed Doubles

BEDFORD SCHOOL

Henry Vann writes: Fixtures were back to full strength this year, with matches against Oundle, Derby Moor, Bedford Modern, Berkhamsted (twice), Bedford Modern, the Old Bedfordians and Rugby.

We hosted the Midlands Tournament, where Sachin Kambli and Fraser Morgan made the final of the U18 Doubles, with Sachin doing the same in the Singles, losing in both to players from Rugby. Our 1st IV finished the season with a flourish, beating Rugby 107-99.

Co-curricular Fives has grown and is regularly attended by a small number of boys, while Fives in the Summer term has expanded from just a handful of boys signing up to 35 this summer. In the internal competitions, the Mellor Cup was won by Sam McMurran and Junior House Fives by Crescent, Senior House Fives by Paulo Pontine.

BEDFORD MODERN SCHOOL

Katherine Adams reports: With the introduction of a Junior and Senior Fives Captain, the team has become more united and play has improved considerably. We have been able to attend a wider range of fixtures this year, including tournaments and local fixtures against Bedford School and Berkhamsted. Junior captain, Ted Robertshaw, writes: 'Though our Junior team haven't won many games this season, we have massively improved our technique and have made steps forward in terms of power and tactics. Also, our Seniors have been giving us tips, working on hitting technique to play flatter shots, more difficult to defend in match play.' Senior captain, Henry Gibb, writes: 'The Senior team played at the Nationals this year, which we all found an incredible learning experience. The team know that

next year they will need to hone their skills and hopefully rack up a few more wins. The team would also like to extend a special thanks to Miss Ginns, who generously volunteered her weekend to allow us to take part in the event. This year has been an exceptional year for us with several fixtures against other schools allowing us the chance to learn from the experience.' We look forward to introducing Fives as an option for the seniors, and the addition of a coach.



BMS at the Nationals

BLOXHAM SCHOOL

Bertie Matthew reports: This was a historic season for us as we fielded a girls' team for the first time. An U14 IV travelled to Marlborough in March for a first ever fixture, in which the team of Nina Brown, Phoebe Simons, Emilia Killonback and Holly Martinson came from behind to win 95-92 after being narrowly down after the Singles and first Doubles – they squeezed home with a 16-14 win in the last game. Nina and Phoebe then returned to Marlborough in April for the National Championships, both reaching the quarter-finals of the Singles, with Phoebe going on to finish runner-up in the Plate. Together they then combined to reach the semi-finals of the Doubles.

The U16 boys enjoyed two competitive fixtures against Radley College; the first a narrow defeat as they got used to Radley's unfamiliar buttress. In the return match on our cavernous courts Bloxham won 89-74. This match was the inaugural fixture for the Davenport Cup, a new trophy named after Ian Davenport, who was a pupil at Bloxham and a housemaster at Radley. There was also a mixed fixture against Rugby

School, which was well contested and featured good individual performances, especially from Luke Oehlers and Phoebe. Mr Selby-Lowndes has joined us from Stowe, assisting with the activity programme where there are consistently healthy numbers on court each week. From September, we hope to introduce a weekly Fives evening for parents and staff. This was a season of real progress for Bloxham Fives. It would be right to conclude this report with an expression of deep gratitude to Simon Batten, who has held the torch, and gloves, for Fives at Bloxham for many years with such commitment, introducing hundreds of pupils to the sport, now concentrating on his role as school archivist.



Bloxham's ground-breaking girls

BRADFELD COLLEGE

Jeremy Ball reports: If anything, this has been a more difficult year than last, and it is sad to report that Fives is struggling currently. The knock-on effects of covid have denuded the Sixth Form of any players and those who wish to carry on playing after the first year are often pulled in multiple directions. They are wanted by (and want to play) the major sports and then, later in the afternoon, other co-curricular activities from plays and concerts to academic boosters and clubs mean that their time on court is both restricted and difficult to guarantee. A new Year 9 activities options system means that only about a third of the year group (boys and girls) saw the inside of a court, which is sad, to say the least. However, in spite of all this, there remains a small core of keen players in Year 10 and many of those in the first year who tried the sport out enjoyed it, and so we were able to play fixtures against Marlborough, Malvern, Tonbridge and Winchester. Whilst the quality was not necessarily high, the enjoyment levels were and my thanks to colleagues for adapting their teams to meet our needs.

CHRIST'S HOSPITAL

Bart Callaghan reports: Numbers in the juniors at Christ's Hospital are healthier than ever and this was reflected in the junior house competitions, which were well-attended and hotly contested. Both boys' and girls' competitions had a positive buzz about them and attracted great support from spectators. There are some exciting prospects in our lower years, notably Thor Hudson, U13, who has represented the school at U15 level and fought off some tough competition.

Looking to our senior players, the 1st IV have developed into a cohesive unit, with some excellent promise for next year. Charlie Lacewing has made considerable progress this year and took the U16 singles title; and partnered by Tristan Pender, just missed out on the doubles title, too.

Once again, we hosted the Girls' South East Regionals. Special mention must go to our captain Alicia Beadle, who came first in her group in U18 singles, narrowly missing out in the finals. Alicia and Eliza Roche performed admirably in U18 Doubles, only to be beaten by a strong Eastbourne pair in the final.

It was a pleasure to end the season on a high by welcoming a group of Old Blues who donated to the conversion of the new Fives court for its grand opening. The afternoon was played in good spirit and was enjoyed by all. This being my final report as Head of Fives at Christ's Hospital, my special thanks go to Mr Walsh, Dr Lacewing, Mr Hatton and Mr Hawkins, all of whom have made this season, and the past four years, so enjoyable.



Mr Walsh and Asher win the doubles

CITY OF DURHAM JUNIORS

Julie McIntyre reports: For the moment we are thin on boys playing, but Camille and Imogen have been storming the Girls' and Women's competitions, with Camille successfully defending the U18 Girls' Singles title and the Doubles with Imogen. One of our younger girls, Eleanor, won the Lady's Cup with Simon Beattie at Cambridge and has been entering competitions whenever possible, winning double Bronze in the Northern Schools. All three girls did well in their age groups at the Durham Ladies competition, against stiff opposition. A new group of girls are now coming through, so in June we took a trip up to Edinburgh to play some friendlies at the Academy, in order to introduce them to some other Fives players and courts.

Camille and Imogen have been active in other senior tournaments this year, the highlights being Camille's victory in the Ladies' U23 Singles and playing Louise Mathias in the final of the Ladies' Nationals, edging closer as she builds her strength playing regularly against Durham University students. The season finished off with two exciting events: the Open Mixed Doubles at Cambridge, where Camille was runner-up with Tom Watkinson and Imogen played with Lewis Keates, and the Derby Moor Invitation Doubles where Imogen enjoyed playing with Ed Hodges and Camille with Vishal Singh. We now say goodbye to Imogen as she moves off to university.



City of Durham girls in Edinburgh



Derby Moor's Kristians at Sherborne

DERBY MOOR JUNIORS

Stuart Kirby reports: We have been lucky to have a keen bunch of older boys – Burt, Cody, Dylan and Kristians in particular – who have played regularly throughout the year and have been willing to take part in schools tournaments and even in senior events. Kristians, for example, represented the Club in the Owers Trophy 2nd IV, then each time four have been chosen from Burt, Kristians, Cody, Dylan, Ethan and Adam to enter the various schools tournaments. It has been more difficult to recruit younger players, though it was good to have the support of a Derby University student on a Sports Management course on a temporary basis, and I have continued to run taster sessions in PE time. Saturday mornings have not been as well frequented as we would have liked, but we persist and now have Daanyaal returning to run a Sunday group. The boys have had small successes: winning an enjoyable match against a touring Sedbergh side, Kristians winning the U18 Plate at the West of England Schools and Cody winning his first Plate at the Derby Doubles. Burt, who has been a fine role model for the younger players, now moves to the senior ranks.

EASTBOURNE COLLEGE

Simon Beal writes: Unfortunately Fives at Eastbourne College was somewhat hampered this year, with a lengthy project to replaster and repaint the walls reducing us to two courts for most of the year. Despite this, boys and girls in all year groups played across three terms, with some success enjoyed in school matches and competitions.

The boys won three out of four school matches at U14 and U16 level, although the U16s were unable to mount any real challenge at the South East Regionals this year. The girls had similar success in their one match against Christ's Hospital with the U16s and under U18s both winning, the U16s only by the narrowest of margins – one point! They also had a strong showing at the South East Regionals, with Fiona Swann winning the U18 Singles and then the Doubles with Rosa Beazleigh, while Daisy Dunkley won silver in the U16 Singles. The highlight of the season would have to be at the Girls Nationals in April, where both our U18 pairs (Swann and Beazleigh, Spencer and Krieger) battled it out in the Doubles Plate final, Swann and Beazleigh emerging victorious, while our U16 pair of Dunkley and Bathard-Smith won their Doubles Plate also.

Meanwhile the adults club has enjoyed good attendance on Tuesday evenings throughout the year, with the usual handful of regulars, current pupils and some recent leavers. Plans for major court refurbishment, possibly even new courts, are ongoing and we look forward to seeing progress in this area.

Eastbourne's squad at the Nationals**EDINBURGH ACADEMY**

Hector McFarlane reports: We had another very positive year of Fives at the Academy with multiple matches in Scotland and trips to Durham, Manchester, Marlborough and London. Notable achievements included picking up the Scottish Schools Boys' U16 (James T and Tom J) and U18 Doubles titles (Hugo R and Calum S). A record 18 boys attended the National Championships in April with several final and semi-final runs and three Plate victories – U14 Doubles (Weems H and Freddie M), U16 Doubles (James and Tom) and U18 Singles (Thomas W). Six boys also attended the U13 Championships and performed impressively. Successes were also achieved in the girls side of things, with Rosa O picking-up silver medals in the Durham Invitational, the U23s and National Schools Girls. The highlight was Rosa and Olivia S winning the U23 National Doubles title in December, while Olivia picked up the National Ladies' Singles Plate in January.

The playing season ended with Hugo beating Ronnie B in a high quality three-game final of the Challenge Cup. The inaugural end-of-year Fives barbecue was a great success with over 80 attending. Current students were joined on court by former pupils and some adventurous parents, too. Here's to more of the same next year.



Olivia and Rosa win the U23 Doubles title

FETTES COLLEGE

Peter Worlledge reports: The Spring term kicked off with the annual joust with the Jesters. Highlights include success by Toby C in the Select VI tournament, made all the sweeter as his pair was all-Fettes – he was partnered with Jester and OF Archie McCreath. There was also an impromptu Battle of the Fettesian Siblings with a round robin tournament between the Chais, the Chans and the McCreaths, with a tight overall win for Wyman and Toby C and nothing to choose between the other pairs.

Regular fixtures against other schools throughout the term made for opportunities for the teams, including the brilliant Mixed 1st IV and the up-and-coming Junior Colts, to develop their game. In the Senior House cup, Moredun were emphatic in victory with Glencorse strong runners-up. Not many trophies can boast winners recorded every year but one since 1889. The Fettes 'Fives Matches House Challenge Cup' can.

When it came to the Scottish Schools Championships Toby

C just missed out in the Singles, losing a nail-biting final. Both the Senior and U16 competitions were very tight this year, with Fettes securing the overall win in the U16 Plate – many congratulations to Jonty W and Olly P – and runners-up in both Senior Cup and Senior Plate. There continues to be much to be proud of and I am so very grateful to all the players for their commitment, effort and good humour over the term. Fives at Fettes remains in good heart.



Fettes' extraordinary House trophy

LORETTO SCHOOL

Jason White writes: There are two main highlights for us this year. The first was hosting the Jesters on their annual trip where our players enjoyed mixing with our older and more experienced opponents. The second saw our pupils taking the opportunity to travel South to take part in the National Schools competition in London, an event they enjoyed and performed well in. Hattie W deserves credit for her efforts: she was in the thick of things at the National Schools at St Paul's as well as in the Jesters Select 8 and will hopefully make it to more tournaments during her university career. Findlay S. too

has made a significant contribution to Loretto fives, taking part in the Jesters Select, the Scottish Schools Singles, the National Schools and the Scottish Open this year, but also running weekly training sessions at Loretto and setting up a school Fives ladder. There has been a paucity of school matches at U14 and U16 this season because of a lack of players in that age group. However, the positive news is that we plan to incorporate fives into the PE calendar for some of the younger years; and, based on training sessions this summer term, it looks as if we may have the nucleus of an U16 girls' team for next year.

MALVERN COLLEGE

Chris Thomas reports: This has been another season of rebuilding and the College has played several matches against local schools with U14, U15 and Year 12 teams. The other members of staff are superb at tailoring the team to get a decent match together and several matches were decided on a few points. There has been an excellent interest in the House Competition, which produced the best all-round level of Fives ever and was hotly contested. For the first time in a few years, we entered the Colquhoun Trophy and saw the level that the top schools are playing at. Our girls also attended the National Girls' Singles at Marlborough.

Fives continues through the year and I hope to get more of the pupils playing with the OMs who occasionally grace the courts. We were pleased that OM Shinan Zhang – our Ladies National Doubles champion – recently reached the final of the Winchester Fives Mixed Doubles held here at the College.

MARLBOROUGH COLLEGE

Tom Kiggell reports: Things looked up somewhat after a rather barren season last year. This was due in no small measure to the enthusiasm of the U14s. Leading the way was Isaac Bradbury, who won the Singles Plate at the National Championships: he put to good use the experience gained in fixtures and

tournaments earlier in the season. We bowed out at the semi-final stages of a number of events – Ivo Corrie at the U16 Colquhoun Trophy was one; both our pairs at the National Mixed Doubles. Hally Barton did get a medal round her neck, by winning the Doubles Plate at the U23 championships with her sister Lena.

Our annual tussles with Bradfield, Malvern, Sherborne, Winchester and Radley were highly enjoyable. It was a particular pleasure to hold a first fixture against Bloxham, and to pull off a girls' fixture with Rugby by meeting halfway on the courts of Oxford University.

While it was good to see several players graduating from their weekday games option to representing the College in school matches, there was no denying that the pool of really competent players is extremely shallow. The Year 9 boys offer the most encouraging depth for some years, though, and the zest with which the internal house competitions were contested showed that there is passion there to be tapped.

The climax to the season came in April with the Girls Nationals, held on our home courts. A weakened team in a strong field meant no big trophies this year, but Maya Hayeem and Chloe Newington won the U14 Doubles Plate. Erin Butler and Phoenix Fleming both played well to reach the quarter-finals of the U18 Singles.



Doubles Plate for sisters at the U23s

MERCHISTON CASTLE SCHOOL

Matt Hillier reports: It has been another excellent year for Merchiston Fives, with some strong performances at senior level and some very promising younger players coming through. In the U18 Scottish Schools Singles, Sam Park was in fine form, progressing through the rounds before winning a hard fought final 11-6, 11-8 to secure the Cup. Lucas Fiddes, still only U15, played extremely well against older opposition in order to win the Plate. In the U18 Edinburgh Schools Doubles, William Gale and Thomas Robertson partnered and lost a really tough game in the semi-final of the Cup 16-14, after having several match points. Fergus Foley and Nick de Villiers, both U15, played exceptionally well to win the Plate. A change in the school's timetable this year gave the U13 boys the opportunity to start playing Fives properly with a weekly activity session. Their progress has been outstanding and their dedication was rewarded with a trip down to London to play in the U13 Nationals at St Paul's. James Robertson played particularly well and lost in the semi-final of the Singles by an agonising 12-11. He then partnered Hamish Foley to reach the semi-final of the Doubles, but again lost by the narrowest of margins 12-11. A really tough one to take, but a great learning experience and an impressive achievement to reach the top four in the UK. Angus Rankin and Adam Walker also played very well in London and reached the semi-finals of the Singles Plate, which Hamish went on to win. They are all looking forward to the U14 Nationals next year.



Merchiston at the National U13s

RADLEY COLLEGE

David Robinson reports: Radley's top two seniors, Inha Choi and Hector Cowen, maintained a healthy competition throughout the year and can take a lot of credit for improving their master-in-charge's game! They played several fixtures during the year, with a close match at Malvern having a noticeably positive influence on their play thereafter. We had the luxury of a half-dozen or so very keen U14 players this year, whose play was a little rough around the edges, but who were eager to learn and ferociously competitive, Leo Vigers and Felix Mason prominent among them.

The highlight was undoubtedly our home and away U16 matches against Bloxham School, competing for the inaugural Ian Davenport Cup. The creation of the cup happily enabled a fixture for a small group of enthusiastic boys who were too good at major sports to able to choose Fives as their regular sport option, but played very

regularly in their free time, the courts being conveniently placed next to their boarding house.

We were also lucky to have our year book-ended by two friendly matches against the Old Radleians and the RFA. Duncan Neale and his teams did a lot to motivate and coach our players. The boys came away from both matches humbled, but improved, and the RFA and I had positive conversations about encouraging the game at Radley.

RUGBY SCHOOL

Trevor White reports: Another successful year for the Fives club, with a strong group that developed well. David Leng captained the club superbly, leading by example in all competitive fixtures, supported by Arthur Noble, Jan Butruk and William Milne. Girls' captain of Fives Yvonne Tang was able to hold her own amongst these senior boys and not surprisingly enjoyed success at the inaugural Schools Mixed Doubles tournament where she and

David came back strongly against the Marlborough pair to earn a place in the final. At the Girls' Nationals Yvonne lost narrowly at the quarter-final stage but then went on to win the Plate. Yvonne and her partner Eleanor Newbould, who is showing great potential, also went deep into the U18 Doubles at the tournament. The U14 girls paid a visit to the glass-back courts at Oxford where they held their own against the Marlborough girls. Sadly, this team of six were unable to make the girls' Nationals, where they might have had some success.

Perhaps the highlight of the year was at the Midlands Championships, where Rugby retained the senior Singles and Doubles cups. David won the Singles and partnered with Arthur to take the Doubles. Their development was accelerated by the competitive play with Mr Evans and in particular Mr Lane each week, and under the new direction of Mr Lane Fives at Rugby is likely to go from strength to strength.

ST PAUL'S SCHOOL

Sam Roberts reports: This year St Paul's finally had a national champion, after a five year drought. After a fantastic semi-final against Anthony Cloke Browne from Winchester at the West of England U16 Singles in January, Freddie Hammond Giles won the U16 National Singles, without dropping a game, despite still being an U15. He and his left-handed doubles partner, Josh Ferro, should be a tough pair to beat next year, if they keep putting in the hours on court.

Our seniors were led by Charles Calzia and Will Sauvel-Porter, who made great progress but couldn't quite match the power and consistency of the top seeds. Freddie, Charles and his younger brother, Edward, gave up a considerable amount of their time to help coach the younger players – including some U12s and U13s from St Paul's Juniors, who were happy to come into school early in order to get court time. Our U14s were exceptionally keen, and showed great promise – although they were frustrated by having to battle against many players who had started their Fives in Year 9. Finally,

in an exciting development, we had our first fixture on Eton Fives courts. Berkhamsted hosted our U15s in a triangular meeting with Tonbridge, being coached by the Berkhamsted players for a couple of hours, before

then playing against Tonbridge. Perhaps this will be the start of many more mixed code fixtures for us with Eton Fives schools around London.

The National U16 Singles Champion



SEDBERGH SCHOOL

Rupert Follett reports: Sedbergh Fives has enjoyed another good season. A healthy crop of beginners have been on the courts most afternoons during the Lent term. The season opened with a match at Derby Moor. As ever we were fantastically hosted and played some competitive singles and doubles matches. Sedbergh took six players to the Northern Schools Championships in Durham. All six won medals, with Archie G winning the U18 Singles competition,

then pairing with Sam F to win the U18s Doubles, while Ollie G and Evan W won the U16 Doubles.

As part of their North of England tour, Strathallan travelled to Durham and then on to Sedbergh. The match took place on Sunday morning and in the singles matches there were good wins for the top three Sedbergh players, Archie, Ollie and Sam. The lower seeded players, Phoenix O, Charles C and Nico S, lost their singles matches; however, the margin of their loss was narrow, which made the

overall aggregate singles score 73-57 to Sedbergh. In the doubles there were good wins for Archie and Ollie, while the middle pairing of Sam and Phoenix held off a strong Strathallan pair to win their match, so that Sedbergh won the doubles 79-67. After a terrific morning of Fives Sedbergh came out overall winners by 152-124. We say goodbye to several stalwarts of the club this summer and look to build again as the next generation take their place.

SHERBORNE SCHOOL

Nick Scorer reports: The Fives team enjoyed plenty of matches and competitions this season. In the West of England Schools Championships Max F came second in the Plate Singles and then did one better to win the Plate in the Colquhoun Trophy later in the season. Also in the West of England tournament Gareth K won the Plate Doubles with his partner from Alleyn's in a thrilling final while Alex U reached the semi-finals of the Colquhoun. In our routine fixtures a victory against the RFA IV was a particular highlight, but the players relished all of their matches. Benedict R and Jasper P played in numerous fixtures, as did Johnny M, who led the way in the Junior Squad, but there were a healthy number of other boys representing the School at a variety of levels.

STAMFORD SCHOOL

Alex Smith reports: We have had another exciting and successful year of Fives at Stamford, practising on the squash courts regularly. Both boys and girls have had success in the regional and national tournaments, firstly in the Midlands Regional at Bedford and then particularly in the National Schools Championships, where Hari Jones and Euan Hunter won the U14 National Doubles, the second time Stamford have won this in three years. Hari was also runner-up in a very close U14 Singles final.

In the National Schools Girls' Tournament (held at Marlborough College), Bea Grindal and Tilly Stevens were runners-up in the U14 Doubles and Emily Tyler in the U14 Singles. Sophie Dobson also finished runner-up in the U13 Singles. I'm delighted with the way players from Stamford have

reached the later stages of all the events they have entered, from the Lady's Cup through to both National Championships, with a substantial collection of gold, silver and bronze medals to show for their efforts. Given the disadvantage of playing their home Fives on squash courts, their success is inspiring. I'm sure there's more to come.



STRATHALLAN SCHOOL

Ewan Lee writes: I am very pleased to report that our Junior and Senior boys have been enjoying their Fives this season, playing both doubles and singles, up to five times per week. Our sessions have witnessed many great matches, full of engaging rallies and great fun, with the standard of play steadily improving.

As part of our gradual involvement in the Fives community, we were visited twice by the Jesters and players from Durham University in both 2022 and 2023. In March, we went on tour to play fixtures in Durham and at Sedbergh School, with its challenging mix of the Rugby and Winchester game. At Sedbergh, our first pair had a great encounter with two experienced Sedberghians, losing 14-16. Upon our return, and back on court, the boys concluded that: "Fives on a squash court is simply not the same!" Readers at this point may be interested to know that Strathallan, in two phases of its comparatively brief history, once had three Eton courts, one Bat Fives court and then three Rugby courts during the period from the 1920s to the mid-1960s.

Our most recent outing was to Fettes College, where we took part in

the Scottish Open. Two Junior players returned with medals, after having played some challenging games. My thanks go to all players in schools and in clubs around the country who have hosted us, offered encouragement and, above all, shown patience and great kindness on and off the court.

TONBRIDGE SCHOOL

Ian Jackson reports: This year Fives at Tonbridge was busy once again, with over 60 boys playing in the Lent Term and over 50 of those representing the school in a fixture against another school. We were blessed with a strong senior team and an exceptional group of U14 players. The U14s were unbeaten at A, B, C and D level and were not pushed close in any match, including taking on and beating both the Winchester top six and the St. Paul's top 12 in the same afternoon, an achievement probably never equalled.

In the South East Regionals Max Freudenheim and Greg Slater easily defended the Senior Doubles while Oliver Woolf and Oliver Wilson won a very tight game against Christ's Hospital to win the U16 Doubles. Alex Woolf won the Senior Singles plate, but in both singles competitions, Tonbridge had to be



WINCHESTER COLLEGE

Jamie McManus writes: The Winchester Fives club enjoyed another successful season. In tournaments, the team squad enjoyed a clean sweep of all four trophies at the West of England tournament, more success at the Winchester Doubles tournament and the Colquhoun Trophy. We took two titles at Nationals: Shiloh Wu winning the U18 Singles once more, while Jeffrey Chan teamed up with Anthony Cloke Browne to win the U16 Doubles. There were also a number of keenly fought fixtures against Alleyn's, Marlborough, Sherborne and Tonbridge. A notable highlight for the master-

in-charge was an excellent Sunday morning of Fives when a 1st VIII took on a relatively youthful OW VIII and brought back some happy memories. The convincing win served up by the OWs provided a marvellous pre-Nationals tonic for the current generation and hopefully the inspiration to keep playing the game beyond school.

Future projects remain moving into the new sports centre (now pushed back into early 2024) and the development of a girls' squad. Many thanks meanwhile go to a particularly enthusiastic trio of top years Chris, Shiloh and Henry for their considerable contribution over the last

content with being runner-up.

Max Freudenheim, the captain, led from the front in the West of England Schools and the Nationals, reaching the semi-finals of the U18 Singles in both – a first for Tonbridge for at least 80 years. He and Greg Slater had match points to make the doubles final at the West of England but couldn't convert any of them. At the Nationals, as well as Max, four U16 players and both our U14 players made the last sixteen of the singles. Oliver Woolf and Lucas Saunders-Aroma reached the semi-final of the U16 Doubles.

By the time you are reading this, I will be in my 100th term in charge of Fives at Tonbridge, and every one of them a pleasure.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE SCHOOL

Chris Blakeley writes: Following the departure of Kell Blyth from UCS at the end of the last school year and in the absence of anyone else able to coach Fives, the game was about to disappear off the sports curriculum altogether. The RFA General Secretary, who lives locally, contacted the Director of Sport and now provides one afternoon a week coaching for eight sixth form students. At the moment Fives is not on offer for younger pupils, as this would require another session. We have not been able to play any matches yet, and these would have to be away, but if some of the same pupils return next year this may be possible, and at least one or two might be persuaded to enter the National Schools. Despite these limitations the attitude of the Sports Department has been positive, and I'm hopeful that Fives will remain an option.

five years and, as ever, to Giles Munn and the Wessex Club for all their support, too.

A clean sweep at the West of England Schools



Squash courts - the future of Fives?

Developments in the promotion of Squash Court Fives



Squash Court ball alongside Rugby Fives ball

This year has seen the RFA take active steps to promote the game of Squash Court Fives as part of its campaign to boost the game of Fives. There are a large number of squash courts that exist at universities and in city sports centres, all of which are there to be taken advantage of.

This is not a new idea though. In the 2000-2001 RFA Handbook Howard Wiseman sung the praises of Squash Court Fives for improving the skills of his Eton Fives players at St Olave's School, going on to look at the wider gains to be made for Rugby Fives. There are notable differences between a standard Rugby Fives court and a squash court – the latter is larger and has a sprung wooden floor rather than a solid concrete one. Howard set about making a ball that would deal with these differences and be suitable for play on a squash court.

The result was an Eton Fives ball, covered and stitched in red leather, and approved by the Squash Rackets Association. This ball was adopted by a number of clubs, most prominently the club at Warwick University that flourished in the early 2000s. Though this ball bounced better on a wooden

and over the past two years Howard and Stuart Kirby have looked afresh at creating a ball which could provide something of the bounce and pace needed on a squash court, not to mention a slightly less clonky sound when striking walls and floor.

Initially Stuart purchased a batch of 10 Eton Fives balls and machined them down by varying amounts, much as Clive Butler had done for the players of Derby Moor in the early 2000s when they were between courts – using a chisel. Stuart had these 10 modified balls recovered by Howard, who returned them for testing along with 16 of his own design. This design was based on his process of manufacturing standard Rugby Fives balls, with a small plastic ball at its core and various types of thread wrapped around the core to provide bounce and 'give'.

Testing process

Stuart then arranged a process of testing these balls on various courts around the Fives-playing circuit to see which worked best in terms of weight and speed. The best was deemed to be the Wiseman

design using what Howard refers to as 'knicker elastic'.

Stuart had meanwhile discovered the process of coating a standard Rugby Fives ball minus its leather cover with a layer of rubberised plastic. This idea had been prompted by the need to find a way of lengthening the life of the new Wiseman ball on the slightly rough surface of the Derby Moor courts. Stuart's plastic coating of balls has been such a success that the club now use yellow coated balls for all club Fives, reserving the leather-coated white ball for tournaments.

Finally then two processes came together: a modified rubberised core to give bounce, a surrounding layer of thread to provide give and a hard-wearing but non-marking, seamless plastic coating of potentially any colour but, as per tradition, red. These are now made and marketed by Howard from his company Gloves and Balls.

Stuart sums it all up nicely: "The new ball came out of a scattergun development approach in which various ball designs, with small differences, were produced and tried out at Derby, Durham, Stamford and London. Most of the balls were rubbish but several were good and a couple provided a great game.

"The challenge was not to provide a ball that bounced the same as a traditional Rugby Fives ball but one that allowed a good game despite the different

court. The bounce on the wooden floor is a little higher and significantly bouncier off the walls. Also, the ball has a smaller diameter, which makes it lighter and zippier – it continues to the back wall rather than slowing after contact with the floor.

"Instead of being wound with just the traditional string, it contains elastic. Initially, they had leather coverings but it

THE BEST WAS THE WISEMAN DESIGN USING KNICKER ELASTIC

was found that these marked the walls. Some experimentation with a plastic/rubber paint called plastidip solved the problem."

Tin problems

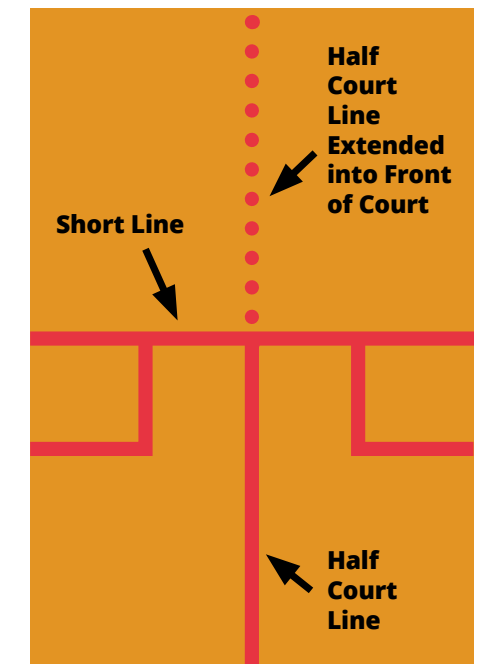
The other issue which arises with Squash Court Fives is the height of the 'tin' at the front of the court. At 19 inches on a squash court the tin is considerably lower than the 30 inch-high board on a Rugby Fives court. It is unlikely that the owners or managers of public or private squash courts would allow a line of coloured sticky tape to be fixed to the wall of their courts, nor a temporary, removable board be installed.

Stuart was asked to come up with a service rule that would accept the 'tin' as the de facto board but avoid what one of his colleagues at Derby Moor was wont to call 'an annoying dinky little serve' (or words to that effect!)

After much head-scratching over the wording, Stuart came up with the following approved rule under the heading of 'Blackguard':

"On a squash court, the server has an obligation to serve such that the ball would land on its second bounce either beyond the half-court line or beyond the short line (see illustration above). In the event that the serve is 'short', then it is deemed to be a blackguard. Clearly, the half-court line does not extend into the front of the court and so a judgement must be made and if there is disagreement as to whether it crossed

Playing Rugby Fives on a Squash Court



the line then the serve shall be retaken with no penalty."

As Stuart says: "We are much relieved that we have not had to change the height of the tin in order to have a good game. This would have been fiddly, requiring the fitting of special equipment. The one vital change to the Rules was to counter an ungettable short serve: the second bounce has to be outside the quadrant from which the ball was served or else a blackguard is counted."

It is no surprise that this logical and pragmatic approach taken by Stuart matched more or less exactly what was instinctively played at Strathallan and Stamford Schools. The newly developed ball is in use there, with pupils doing well in competitions on Rugby Fives courts. A number of adult Eton Fives clubs including the North Oxford Club at Summer Fields School and at Ipswich School are playing on adjacent squash courts when their Eton courts are busy, and some White Rose players are playing again after the closure of their two courts in Halifax. We hope to establish and encourage university clubs at Warwick, Sheffield and Derby this year. Players in the Basque Country have instigated annual singles and doubles competitions in Bilbao. A promising start with all of the above representing 'organic growth'.



Stamford School's first players...



...become National U14 Doubles champions 2021

The small court on the big screen

Chris Blakeley goes behind the scenes of the first professional filming of a major Fives final



The 2023 Open Mixed Doubles Tournament was a first in more ways than one. Not only was it the inaugural playing of the competition, it was also the first time an RFA tournament was recorded by a professional photographer.

The venue was as important as the event. The glass-backed Cambridge courts provide much easier access for the photographer, with a far wider variety of viewing options than the solid-backed courts that are commonplace in the game. There is room to place cameras in a raised position behind the court allowing a clear view of the entire playing area, including the back corners. This was sadly lacking, for instance, in the recording of the widely admired 2018

National Doubles Final that took place at Alleyn's.

In addition to the standard view from the centre rear, a camera was placed at the front of the court, below the bar, to capture the serve, one back left to better see the shots coming out of the corners. Finally, a 360-degree camera was held on a long pole above the players to show the movement of the players around the court. From the results, this view should help solve the difficulty we have in obtaining a good view of play at the back of courts with a solid back wall. All these cameras were synchronised – the players helped here by clapping their hands just before play started so the sound and various feeds could be matched up during the editing. This should mean that a long rally can be shown from different angles

without losing continuity.

By the time you read this article, I hope that the result, complete with the score and commentary included, will be available online and on the various RFA social feeds. Having already seen the 'rushes' I can attest that, while it will work wonderfully on social media, it looks fantastic on a large screen.

The filming was not without its challenges, though. An RFA logo placed under the bar fell off at one point, but a better version is being produced and we are hoping, with the agreement of the schools, that this will become a permanent feature in all Rugby Fives courts. A request for members of the same pair to wear shirts of the same colour worked beautifully until the final when all four players were in dark colours, so the pairing is not so obvious to the viewer.

The camera under the bar got hit a couple of times, but didn't sustain serious damage. Despite these relatively minor irritations, a very good, close match between Ollie Arnold and Louise Mathias and Tom Watkinson and Camille Beattie has been recorded for posterity. We also recorded earlier rounds, and some men's and women's singles and doubles to provide footage for future short clips for distribution on social media. The skill and determination is more clearly visible than with a single camera angle and the recordings should prove both an excellent advertisement for the game and a motivation for players for some time to come.



RFA Club Report

Hamish Buchanan reports on a difficult year for club fixtures but highlights nevertheless



The RFA Club's season started with a match against the Jesters

It was quality rather than quantity in 2022-23, with a comparatively small number of fixtures completed. It appears to be a rather long hangover from covid times and the ability to get two teams of four on court on a given date is proving beyond many match managers, club captains or masters/mistresses in charge. Often the fixture will be postponed with a commitment to reschedule that invariably fizzles out after one or two attempts to find a new date. Although these matches are not crucial in keeping the great game alive they do offer the chance to help promote the game in a struggling school or club, they can help reconnect with players who have drifted away from the game and in general show what fun a social match can be, especially with a school tea or a beer or two afterwards.

Thankfully most of the 11 matches that were played were school or university fixtures with the pick of the bunch being Rugby School's two point victory over Jeremy Ensor's Club IV and Tim Hebblethwaite's win over the Edward Alleyn Fives Club in a five-a-side game of Fives, with five singles and five ever-changing pairings in the doubles. Surely

that's enough Fives for anyone, and a bit of a headache for the non-playing EAFC Captain.

Tournament triumphs

Thanks to Bens Jordan and Hale for managing the RFA match versus the British Universities during the hectic Jesters Tour of Edinburgh, with a narrow victory for the RFA. And warmest thanks to Tom Watkinson for running the Club Knock-out competition, the Wood Cup, which also saw a disappointing entry of just seven teams. There was a high

standard of play regardless, with the Old Paulines beating the defending champions from the West of England Club in the final, while two teams from the Executioners fought out the Plate.

The President's Cup returned to Marlborough School and, in keeping with its past times at Merchant Taylors', on a traditionally cold and snowy December Sunday. Two players bailed on the morning of the tournament and three more were held up in M4 blizzards, but, as ever with the Cup, replacements were found, including one local who told his family he was 'just popping out for a bit of Fives' before returning seven hours later. Those battling the blizzard simply jumped straight on court upon their eventual arrival.

The final was contested by the youngest four in its history with an average age of 20; a close and fluctuating match saw Helena Tunks and Gwydion Wiseman narrowly beating Martha Nugent and Marcus Cloke Browne. It was Gwydion's second win and Helena's first and their win captured the tone for this year's tournament. Six of the eight finalists and all four winning teams of the major trophies were mixed pairs. The late Joan Wood would have been thrilled that the Mate's Plate she donated in 1978 is now seemingly won by Louise Mathias every time she enters the tournament! Please get your entries in early for this year and get out and play at least one Club match in the coming season.



Final fixture – RFA versus Old Bedford Modernians

Around the clubs in 2022-23

A season where much of the damage done by Covid-19 has been overcome

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY

Ben Burgess reports: This season felt like a changing of the guard for CURFC, with lots of fresh faces coming in to replace last year's graduates. Injury and illness limited our turnout for matches and tournaments in the Michaelmas Term. Nevertheless, some good results were had, starting with Freddie Kottler's strong run to the semi-finals at BUSF, before losing to the eventual winner and fellow fresher Robert Menhart putting in a similarly good performance at the RFA Challenger in December. Marcus Cloke Browne then followed suit at the President's Cup, unfortunately coming up just short in the final.

Marcus continued his strong form in the Lent Term at the National U25s, with runs to the quarters of the Singles and the semis of the Doubles. Meanwhile, Emrys Thursfield and

Savanna Leboff, and Holly Nugent and Ben Yass also competed in the Doubles, with the former runners-up in the Plate. This was followed by the Past vs Present, which was hugely enjoyable as ever and featured some closely fought games. As usual, however, the skill and experience of the Past proved superior to the younger legs of the Present.

The Varsity Match followed: the Men's Match was gratifyingly close, but unfortunately we ended up on the wrong side of the 30 point margin. The ladies continued their fantastic run, winning for the eighth successive year. With so many strong freshers, we're optimistic of a win in both matches next year.

Deadlines and exams began dominating everybody's schedules shortly after, but Marcus managed to head up to Durham for the North of



Eight victories in a row for the Cambridge Women

England Open. He again played well against strong opposition, rounding off a super first season for the club; we're all excited to see what he can achieve next year and beyond.



Proud City of Durham Ladies

CITY OF DURHAM CLUB

Julie McIntyre writes: City of Durham Fives has had a major change this year as the majority of our original group of juniors left for universities across the land. I'm pleased to report that they are still playing wherever possible, in Derby (Simon Beattie and Dan Swinbank), Manchester (Oscar McIntyre) and Bristol (Poppy Atkinson), with some still entering competitions, including the National Singles. Simon Beattie had a great season, winning the Lady's Cup with Eleanora Vallascas at Cambridge and the RFA Challenger Singles at Oundle

School, and developing a keen rivalry with Lewis Keates on a Thursday evening at Derby Moor. As ever we play frequently with students from the University Club, in particular Stuart Scott and Matias Morgan, and have been delighted to have Tom Wakelam back playing regularly with us. Adam Hicks and Leah Hogarth have been entering tournaments, really enjoying being part of the Fives community. We entered eight players in the end-of-season Derby Moor Doubles. It is very pleasing to see our players moving up the rankings, and it was a wonderful surprise when Julie McIntyre and our good friend Richie Murby won the Scottish Open Doubles, following on from Oscar and Enrique's win last year. We're still running introductory sessions for local Scouts, Brownies, etc, plus some for the University holiday club, and prospective students, with more scheduled for the summer.

DEEP WEST CLUB

Charles Hattersley writes: Rugby Fives continues on most Thursday or Friday evenings on the one available court at Kelly College, Tavistock. There remains a core of regulars organised by the Professor (David Dance) or local entrepreneur (Luke Newman Taylor); other regular attendees include the Head (Guy Ayling), Gary 'bikecrash' McCaulay, John 'the Chairman' Ogle and Hatt (Charles Hattersley). A new member – Kevin Shadrack – also assists in making up a four that can play robust Fives for at least three games a session.

With the big hitters (Luke and Gary) on form there is usually a close match with the Professor dictating play from both sides of the court. Games always conclude with suitable refreshments at a choice of local pubs and it has to be hoped that the very inclusive atmosphere generated by current members will encourage new – and preferably younger – players to participate. The club aims to be very active throughout 2023 and 2024.



Old Derby Moor retain the Owers Trophy

DERBY MOOR FIVES

Bob Dolby writes: This has been perhaps the busiest and most successful season since the Derby Moor courts were brought back into full use in September 2003. Three nights a week the courts are full of games of singles (Mondays) and doubles (Tuesdays and Thursdays) and at the weekend Stuart, Lewis and now Daanyaal are to be found running coaching and practice sessions for the Juniors. Frequently on a Wednesday evening a group decamps to Repton School to play Eton Fives.

Numbers of regular players are high, boosted by three newcomers: Dan Swinbank and Simon Beattie from Nottingham University via the City of Durham Club, and Karen Hird, our multiple Eton Fives champion now working at Repton, who is developing into a formidable doubles partner. Indeed, in June, she won the Derby Moor Doubles with Anthony Goodwin (his

fifth victory in this event). Simon, who now regularly takes on Lewis at singles on a Thursday evening, has had a splendid year, winning the Lady's Cup in October and the Challenger Singles at Oundle School in December. Our older players enter a variety of regional and national tournaments, regularly reaching main and plate finals and semi-finals in their age-group, including Richard Christie's

victory in the Rugby and Eton

Fives Medley in June. Our younger players – Lewis, Bally and Anthony – retained the Owers Trophy in September. The highlight, though, was Lewis winning the National U25 Singles title in February and then completing the double with Bally Singh in the Doubles. We have had reason to be immensely proud of our young players over the past 20 years.

DURHAM UNIVERSITY

Isaac Weaver writes: This year was set to be a year of rebuilding, DURVSC having lost both the men's and women's captains to the endless turnstiles of university graduation, along with several other influential players at the end of last season. However, the start of the year saw a larger than expected influx, ranging from experienced school players to total

beginners, and all took to the sport (or back to it) with great enthusiasm. The result was Durham took a team of six down to BUSF in November and in an unexpected, but not undeserved, turn of events came home with both the Singles and Doubles trophies, won by captain Isaac Weaver and partner Stuart Scott.

Trophies were not our only success, though, as the Club took its annual part in the North of England Open in February, contributing a double-digit entry. No small feat for a club which in the past has sometimes struggled to fill more than one court.

The rest of the year saw little participation in tournaments as exams fast approached, but players still continued to push to improve their game at the weekly sessions. I can say with confidence that each and every member of the club has shown significant progress over the course of this year. Notable players include Matias Morgan, James Stevenson, Alex Kessel-Holland and Kirsten Bell, along, of course, with Isaac Weaver and Stuart Scott.



Durham University at BUSF

EASTBOURNE COLLEGE CLUB

Spencer Beal writes: Headline news! Significant contributions from the Friends of St. Andrew's and the RFA have secured funding for the installation of a glass back wall in the court at St. Andrew's. Along with plans for re-roofing the court and resurfacing the floor, this will ensure a first-class Fives facility at the school for years to come. James Holman-Dine and I have been running a weekly Fives activity there this past year and such has been the demand for places that the number of activity sessions will be doubled in September. This growing enthusiasm for Fives has been seen

in the College too, most notably with the senior girls team (all four girls continuing to play on Tuesday evenings despite heavy involvement in A-Level exams) achieving success in the Girls' Schools Nationals. As a result of all this positive activity, Eastbourne College is now looking for ways to support the increased interest, including the provision of better playing facilities – perhaps significant upgrading of the present courts, or even new courts!? Meanwhile ECFC continues to flourish, playing every Tuesday evening throughout the year (weather permitting). New members are always welcome – no charge.

Spencer and Tony retain their Masters title, making it five in a row



EDWARD ALLEYN CLUB

Hamish Buchanan writes: Another year and a big transition as our regular Allyn's school players from the last two or three years including Gwydion Wiseman, Stuart Scott, Patrick Harrison, Max Bolt and Oli Wallace-Volberg have all moved on to university or work. They've been superseded by Yarin, Alex, Skye, Eli, Laurie and Theo, with Genesis bridging both groups. Of course the old guard return during the holidays and when you add in a few national and regional champions there is always an opportunity for some great Fives and inspirational coaching for the next generation.

In the Owers Trophy the Allyn's team consisted of Inigo Ackland (proving that you never really lose it), Artem Naum and honorary AOB Alex Smith, who qualifies by proxy as virtually everyone else in his family attended Allyn's) lost in the semis to

the eventual winners, Derby Moor. For the Wood Cup Artem was joined by Gwydion, Ben Kirwan and Archie McCreath and made it out of the group stage to lose in the semis to the West of England Club.

EAFc players Holly Nugent and Nick Whitney were paired in the National Mixed Doubles and came away with the trophy. Stuart Scott won the Universities Doubles at the first attempt with his Durham captain Isaac Weaver, and Genesis became the first ever winner of the Rugby and Eton Fives U18 Doubles.



Holly and Nick win the Mixed Doubles



Dick and Terry triumphant in July

EXECUTIONERS

Andy Pringle writes: This feels like a year when the club has been rejuvenated. Spearheaded by relative youngsters, such as Penn Chai, Ben Hale, Shinan Zhang and Helena Tunks, the Executioners can look back on a season when we became better-looking, better rewarded and simply better players. In the first instance, thanks to the smart new club T-shirts, but Penn's resurrection of our singles ladder helped to drive an improvement among our players that led to lots of silverware. Penn ended up as the deserved Ladder champion, but

the levels of competition were also helped by a new internal competition instigated by Bob Dolby, who kindly donated the Maifest Trophäe to be played for on annual(ish!) basis.

We can now boast two national champions in our ranks – Shinan retained her National Ladies Doubles title with Louise Mathias, while Andy Pringle won the Vintage Doubles crown with Morgan Spillane. Other highlights include Helena winning the President's Cup, a tied match against the Jesters, beating the Wessex Club in an eight-a-side friendly match and picking up the Plate in the Wood Cup.

Our regular Wednesday evening sessions have been well attended, with several regulars and new faces like seasoned 1-Wall campaigners Colm Grace and Terry McElvaney. Terry took to our four-wall game like a duck to water and improved at such a rate that he won the club's end-of-season doubles tournament in July with Dick Warner. Theirs was not the only award; there were several more to be won in the pub afterwards: Dick Warner the Top Sledging award, Terry The Most Likely to be Injured, Duncan Neale Most likely to get in the way, Wyman Chan Rookie of the year, Edd Horder Most likely to serve into himself, and Andy Pringle was

voted Player of the year. So many award-winners in our ranks must surely make us the most decorated squad in Fives.

EXETER AND TIVERTON CLUB

Alex Rew reports: The Exeter and Tiverton clubs are effectively combined and play together on a Tuesday evening. We are often joined by some of the schoolboys and schoolgirls, too. There is a solid group of players and a mix of singles and doubles available.

We have had a few matches this year, including playing against the touring Old Whitgiftians, the Jesters, the Old Blundellians and the School. It is basically social fives, but Ollie Arnold and Louise Mathias have joined our ranks and are recent winners of both the National Mixed Doubles in Rugby and Winchester forms, not to mention other national and regional titles in singles and doubles. Together they have definitely improved our club's trophy cabinet.

As for the stalwarts, Alex Rew regretted coming out of Fives retirement to make runner-up in the National Veterans Singles, while Stuart Watson completed his national tour with an appearance at the North West Open, much to the concern of the top 20. All are welcome to join us on a Tuesday – just try to let us know in advance, so we can sign you in.



Jesters back on tour

JESTERS

Ben Hale writes: The highlight of the Jesters Rugby Fives season is the annual tour to Edinburgh which returned to the usual January slot after covid disruption. We took 50 tourists up to Edinburgh to play in 32 matches over the weekend, primarily using the courts at the Edinburgh Academy, Fettes College, Loretto School and Merchiston Castle School. However, we also sent a IV up the road to Strathallan for a game there.

We estimated that we had as many 100 people at the Friday night reception encompassing staff, coaches, school players and parents, opposition and, of course, tourists. It proved a great weekend of Fives for ages all the way from 13 to 70.

We continue to rebuild the match schedule after the pandemic. My thanks to the match managers involved in matches that took place. I would ask all potential match managers to do what they can to get fixtures played and urge all Jesters to volunteer to play.

MANCHESTER Y CLUB

Wendy Nicholls reports: Wow, what a year it's been for the Manchester Y Club. Firstly, Val Fikhter winning the National Schools U14 title, in only his second championship appearance. Secondly, Dave Fox winning both the Veterans and Vintage Singles titles, only the second player ever to do so.

Our two courts are in great demand – every night we have players down, including university students, which is

super for the club. We are particularly busy with Beginners' Night, when we sometimes have as many as 14 players on court. We have approached a local Scout/Cub group, suggesting they participate to achieve their Physical Recreation badge and thereby introduce them to the game of Fives – one to watch. And Junior Y on Saturdays is still going, though we always need to encourage more children to come down and take part.



Manchester's National U14 Singles Champion

MARLBOROUGH TOWN

Neil Witcombe reports: Another great year for the Club, with an influx of new players, a busy social calendar, and good participation across a range of matches and competitions. On our three club nights we often have all four Rugby Fives courts in use as well as both Eton courts. Our targets of higher club numbers and greater competition attendance have been met; we are working on enabling more diversity within the club.

Our healthy numbers have enabled us to support various competitive events this year including our own Doubles Cup. We have hosted other clubs, playing friendlies against the visiting Old Whitgiftians and the North Oxford Club; and we have organised our own friendly 'away' fixture against

Sherborne School. We entered a team in the Wood Cup for the first time, including the father and son pairing of Harvey and Will Bishop. Marlborough also successfully hosted the Veterans Tournament, with a number of our own players competing across the two days; and this year saw Marlborough pairs winning both the Cup and Plate, with Bishop and Hughes our first-time champions.

The enthusiasm for the sport is mirrored in our social calendar where 'partners of the club' have joined us for a highly entertaining black-tie dinner and summer BBQ. These formal events are supported by our regular weekly pub meets, making the club vibrant and inclusive. We are very fortunate to have access to the College courts, playing Wednesday, Friday and Sunday

evenings at 6pm. Please do contact us or simply come along and play.

Gold and Bronze for the Town at the Veterans Doubles



OLD BLUNDELLIANS

Alexandra Steel reports: It's been a good year for the OBs. We've played several club matches with the Exeter Club alongside matches with the current pupils of Blundell's. The OBs weekend was highly successful, with former pupils playing against current pupils, giving them a good warm up before their participation in the Schools Nationals. Fives is still going strong within the younger years taught by OB Alexandra Steel at the Prep School and it's good to see many children carry on Fives in the Senior School.

Alex Rew represented us at the Veterans Championships this year; he reached the final of the Singles where he lost to Dave Fox after a sterling effort. James Hughes also represented the OBs in that same tournament and won the Doubles title with a partner from the Marlborough Town Club. We were very pleased for these two highly respected players within the OB community. Injuries and other events permitting we are hoping as ever to have more matches next year, particularly against current pupils.

OLD PAULINES

Julian Aquilina writes: This season got underway late for the OP club, having failed to enter a trio for the Owers Trophy. However, things kicked off in March with a closely contested match versus the RFA involving six quality players. We'll say the OPs won this, as for some reason the four OPs were split evenly across the two teams. The Wood Cup swiftly followed, with the trophy returning to the hands of the OPs for the first time since 2017. In the final, it was sweet revenge over a strong West of England side, following a few years finishing second best to them. The team over the weekend consisted of father-son duo Sam and Ben Roberts, plus messrs Aquilina, Brooks, Parker, Russell and Tristao, but it should be mentioned that several OPs featured across different teams at the event.

Finally, in June we revived our internal handicap singles tournament, the Cunis Cup. Seven players battled it out, with enticing variety across the field in the form of some regulars at open tournaments, as well as a couple of current Paulines. Special mention goes to Zac Jopling, absent from the sport

OLD TONBRIDGIANS

Rupert Mathieu reports: OT Fives has had another busy year, with a number of new players making an appearance and several good matches, including another epic against the Jesters, this time a very narrow (98-95) loss for the OTs. The match against the school, albeit without the boys' top pair, which certainly helped us, resulted in a more comfortable win. We also had the pleasure of fielding two 'new' (to the match) OTs in the side, Nick Whitney and Ed Hyde, alongside Rupert Mathieu and Guy Harman. Elsewhere, Martin Wilkinson was not quite able to retain his Grandmasters' National title, given increased competition in the Over 75s category, although he remains an astonishing force on court; while Ian

Jackson, Rod Oscroft and Rupert Mathieu all made it to the semi-finals of the Vintage (Over 55's) National Doubles, with Rod and Rupert losing to the eventual winners. Alas, we lost David Lewis to injury this year, but doubtless he'll be back and, along with John Keyes – our stand-out player – and Michael Studdard, we all look forward to the return from New Zealand of Neil Arnott, so he can resume his weekly masterclasses in the art of the drop-shot.

OTs with Neil returned from NZ



for some years, who came through his group on points difference – pipping Charlie Brooks and Sam Russell, who had unintentionally punished themselves with adjustments to the handicapping. In the other group, Julian Aquilina edged out 16-14 wins against Theo Parker and Josh Ferro,

before knuckling down to a 15-12 victory over Zac in the final to reclaim the cup he previously won in 2015. So there are encouraging signs for the years ahead. We continue to run our regular Thursday evening sessions during term time and encourage players of all standards to get involved.

Old Paulines triumphant at the Wood Cup



OW5s on tour in the West Country

OLD WHITGIFTIANS

Nick Woolfenden reports: An annual highlight of the Old Whitgiftians Fives Club is the annual Spring tour to the West Country, enjoyed by a 14-strong party in late February 2023. Matches

were played against Sherborne School, the Tiverton club (at Blundell's School) and the Marlborough club (at Marlborough College). Six of the touring party were there to compete – Ed Andrews, Tony Hamilton, Jon

Higgins, Chris Jones, Peter Ross, Nick Woolfenden – with an eight-strong band of supporters along for the fun. As ever, alongside the entertainment on court, there was equal entertainment in local hosteleries.

Old Whits were also active this year in RFA competitions, including Tony Hamilton (and partner Spencer Beal) retaining the National Masters (over-65s) Doubles crown, and Nick Woolfenden (with partner Joe Sumner) winning the South East Open Doubles. It's also great to see Cameron Low in this year's top 20 national Singles and Doubles rankings.

We play Fives most Thursday evenings at the Whigft courts in Croydon and would very much welcome new members – all ages and abilities catered for! Please contact our secretary, Nick Woolfenden on nickw5s@hotmail.com.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY

Teddy Monro-Davies writes: A great year for the Oxford University Fives, with plenty of silverware and high levels of participation for both the men's and women's teams. It has been very exciting to see the women's team continue to grow and thrive with the official addition of a women's second team, 'the Otters', playing their second Varsity fixture.

Notable results for the club include Aiden Whitham reaching the semi-finals of the singles at BUSF, with Michael Hawkey winning the Singles plate in an all-Oxford final; plus Lena Barton and Aaditya Deshmukh winning a thrilling BUSF Doubles Plate final, Louis Odgers picking up the Singles Plate at the U25s, and Harry Turner and Vivek Thakrar winning the Doubles Plate at the same event. We enjoyed fixtures against the Jesters, St Paul's, Winchester and Marlborough and look forward to more club fixtures next year. Past v. Present was a highlight for all – great Fives followed by dinner, the perfect warm-up for the Varsity Match. Varsity was a fantastic day of Fives with the Men's VIII winning the Jock Burnet Trophy, the Beavers winning their fixture, the Women's first team

achieving their highest points total yet and the Otters picking up a win. Many thanks to women's captain Antonia Murphy and the whole committee for such a successful year.

STOKE NEWINGTON SWIFTS

Matt Hale writes: The Stoke Newington Swifts first played on 11 November 2022 and Fives players were quickly darting around the court like their namesakes. The new club drew returning faces to the game, most notably Tom Etherton after a 25-year recovery period: he and Tom Maconie promptly reunited to overcome the Hale brothers in a fiery 15-11(ish) game on a frosty winter night. Meanwhile established London Fives players have gained an extra club option, with regular appearances from Chris Blakeley, Richard Bridge and Ben and Matt Hale. The balance of coaching and playing is a thoroughly rewarding one which I would recommend: gritty analysis of Fives strategy is discussed over the Rose and Crown's left-right combo of bavette and cold drink. The Club is open to experts, beginners, and anyone inbetween.

The current school players are very welcome additions and constantly

impress with their rate of improvement. Tom Kininmonth has attended regularly, one to watch in the future. Dylan Gilbody entered the U13 and U14 Schools competitions and Gabriel Harrison the U14s. Both acquitted themselves well individually and as a doubles pair, with the latter giving a strong Wykehamist a run for his money. School time coaching by Dom Robson is generating results, and as Fives is slowly reintroduced to the school, we hope that they continue to go from strength to strength. The School has been very helpful in establishing the club as have Tom Maconie, Chris Blakeley, and Hamish Buchanan. Come along Tuesday nights (7-9pm – matthale235@gmail.com for more info).



Every club should have a logo

UCS OLD BOYS

Chris Blakeley writes: We continue to run sessions on Monday and Wednesday evening for any locally based players wanting a game. Over the year some 25 different players have appeared at least once. With just the one court available for play we have to limit numbers to six on any one evening to ensure that those attending get a decent amount of Fives. Despite this we have had some very enjoyable sessions and, as the School continues to allow access throughout the year, we are also able to provide an alternative venue for some Executioners who can't survive the school holidays without a game.

WESSEX FIVES CLUB

Harry Akerman reports: Wessex Fives Club enjoyed another good season albeit with a few regulars missing extended periods due to injuries that don't heal as fast as they used to. We were half expecting to move to the new courts this season, but this did not materialise and I maybe writing the same words in 12 months' time, but whilst we wait we are lucky enough to play on the fabulous 'old' courts every Tuesday night. This year we welcomed a very regular newbie in Ross Wilson, brand new to the game



Wessex Club's post-match Fives, Food and Fellowship

and relatively new to Winchester. Ross got stuck in from the first, enjoyed his first Jesters Tour and now looks set to also be a regular in Winchester on Tuesdays and in Edinburgh each January. It was good to see some juniors on court at the start of the evenings and we also benefitted from the very strong Winchester College school boys joining us as well most weeks. A very enjoyable

match against the Executioners (most of whom were ex-Wessex) was enjoyed immensely and we had a good turnout in the Barnes Bridge. Our own Letchworth Bowl was won by Ed Hawke and Jonathan Jesty, bringing the curtain down on another year of Fives. We look forward to September and wait for news of the opening of the new courts and Sports Centre.

WEST OF ENGLAND CLUB

Kevin Brice reports: We've had a strong year, in very testing circumstances, with just one court available to us. So, one court, one evening, and 12 active members: a logistical challenge, but club nights have been really successful, and only two Wednesdays in a full calendar year cancelled. We've had sons playing with dads, a strong female contingent, and no less than three players now in their sixth decade. No club fixtures or touring visits, but we did hold our annual Christmas Doubles, where Stephen Brooke and Kevin Brice beat the left/right combo of Sam Dansie and Andy Landon.

Club players Julius Davies and Cameron Low were runners-up at the Universities Championships. Our defending West of England IV went to the Wood Cup Finals where they graciously lent Theo Parker to Old Paulines - a goodwill gesture too much perhaps, but made the event

more competitive. Our IV of Arnold, Low, Maconie and Watkinson narrowly lost the final to the OPs 150-138 - a magnificent effort. And we are hugely proud of another recent club member, Louise Mathias, who currently tops the Women's Rankings by some way. We wish Ollie and Louise joy in their Australian adventure and hope to see

them back and gloved up soon.

The last word goes to two people: Cameron Low is the standout player at the club, who each week plays, supports and encourages everyone old and young, new to the game or an old hand. And, of course, Lionel Lawson as Club Chairman, actively supporting the club in so many ways.



West of England at the Wood Cup

End-of-Season Rankings - Top 75

The National Rugby Fives Rankings summer 2023 as compiled by **Will Ellison**

Singles rankings: As at end of the 2022-23 season. Previous = start of season

Current	Previous	Name	Points	Current	Previous	Name	Points	Current	Previous	Name	Points
1	1	Dan Tristao	102.5	26	19	James Tilston	22.4	51	New	Will Bucknell	10.2
2	2	Ed Kay	99.8	27	32	Gwydion Wiseman	21.2	52	New	Harry Turner	10.1
3	3	Will Ellison	90.0	28	17	Rob Whitehorn	20.9	53	27	Peter Hanton	10.0
4	4	Ben Beltrami	77.1	29	55	Simon Beattie	20.2	53	New	Alec Springford	10.0
5	7	Julian Aquilina	57.0	30	30	Douglas Law	19.5	55	22	Marco Skogh	9.8
6	6	Tom Watkinson	54.5	31	63	Aiden Whitham	19.4	56	New	Adam Hutchinson	9.8
7	15	Ollie Arnold	51.2	32	24	James Smith	19.3	57	New	Callum Yates	9.7
8	8	Charlie Brooks	47.6	33	28	Michael Suddaby	19.2	58	New	Richard Christie	9.5
9	10	Richie Murby	47.2	34	63	Stuart Scott	17.3	59	48	Genesis Nsenga	9.5
10	12	Dan Grant	44.1	35	47	Marcus Cloke Browne	17.1	60	34	Sam Park	9.5
11	11	Sam Russell	41.8	36	53	Emrys Thursfield	16.5	61	New	Dan Sorensen	9.1
12	23	Lewis Keates	39.3	37	New	Freddie Kottler	15.8	62	New	Toby Chan	9.0
13	21	Joe Sumner	38.0	38	New	Max Bolt	14.1	63	72	Louis Odgers	8.7
14	13	Ben Jourdan	37.3	39	29	Anthony Goodwin	13.9	64	New	Hamish Macpherson	8.7
15	5	David Butler	36.8	40	New	Matias Morgan	13.6	64	New	James Milburn	8.7
16	18	Cameron Low	35.8	41	81	Louise Mathias	13.1	66	New	Vishal Singh	8.5
17	16	Theo Parker	35.2	42	New	Doug Tidy	12.2	67	New	Raheem Yusuf	8.4
18	9	Andrew Boyd	34.6	42	New	Enrique Carbonell	12.2	68	35	Christian Blackaby	8.3
19	33	Oscar McIntyre	33.9	44	New	Valentine Fikhter	12.1	69	New	Charlie Lacewing	8.2
20	20	Ben Kirwan	33.5	45	New	Vikram Thakrar	12.0	70	New	Dan Swinbank	8.2
21	New	Isaac Weaver	33.4	46	New	Alex Kessell-Holland	11.8	71	New	Nick Geere	8.1
22	25	Chris Davey	30.0	47	New	Alikhan Murat	11.7	72	51	Ben Yass	7.7
23	14	Matt Shaw	26.5	48	New	Teddy Monro-Davies	11.4	72	39	Lennie Wells	7.7
24	31	Addie Chai	25.9	49	New	Boris Ames	10.6	72	New	Penn Chai	7.7
25	26	Archie McCreath	22.7	50	New	Michael Hawkey	10.3	75	74	Ed Hatton	7.6

Doubles rankings: As at end of the 2022-23 season. Previous = start of season

Current	Previous	Name	Points	Current	Previous	Name	Points	Current	Previous	Name	Points
1	1	Will Ellison	100.7	26	25	Chris Davey	30.6	51	84	Adam Hutchinson	16.2
2	3	Dan Tristao	98.0	27	New	Isaac Weaver	30.5	51	116	Stuart Kirby	16.2
3	2	Ed Kay	97.3	28	39	Ashwin Ahuja	29.8	53	New	Jamie Dare	16.0
4	4	Ollie Arnold	88.8	29	31	James Smith	28.7	54	23	Bart Callaghan	15.8
5	6	Ben Beltrami	86.8	30	32	Emrys Thursfield	27.0	54	New	Ed Lawrence	15.8
6	7	Theo Parker	82.6	31	New	Stuart Scott	24.7	54	New	Ian Purvis	15.8
7	5	Charlie Brooks	77.3	32	38	Addie Chai	24.4	54	New	Magnus Moody	15.8
8	9	Dan Grant	70.4	33	43	Ben Kirwan	23.9	54	New	Oliver Dean-Hart	15.8
9	11	Julian Aquilina	57.9	34	20	Rob Whitehorn	23.3	59	26	Anthony Goodwin	15.7
10	14	Sam Russell	53.9	35	68	Richie Murby	23.2	60	46	Michael Suddaby	15.7
11	10	Tom Watkinson	52.4	36	22	Douglas Law	22.5	61	62	Savanna Leboff	15.6
12	18	Lewis Keates	51.2	37	62	Helena Tunks	22.3	62	62	Ben Hale	15.5
13	17	Cameron Low	49.1	38	84	Marcus Cloke Browne	22.2	63	58	Richard Christie	15.4
14	19	Archie McCreath	46.5	39	New	Julius Davies	21.7	64	57	Ben Yass	15.2
15	16	James Tilston	44.6	40	New	Julie McIntyre	20.4	65	74	David Fox	15.0
16	27	Gwydion Wiseman	43.1	41	84	Nick Woolfenden	20.2	66	45	Simon Beattie	14.8
17	15	Matt Shaw	41.2	42	New	Eric Moody	20.0	67	62	Dan Sorensen	14.5
18	32	Bally Singh	41.0	43	61	Tim Hebblethwaite	19.8	68	New	Seb Fraser	14.1
19	8	David Butler	40.9	44	24	Enrique Carbonell	19.7	69	29	Max Frost	13.6
20	27	James Toop	40.1	45	51	Vishal Singh	19.5	70	New	Harry Turner	13.5
21	34	Joe Sumner	39.2	46	New	John Savery	18.6	71	62	Boris Ames	13.2
22	13	Ben Jourdan	36.5	47	52	Ben Chua	18.3	72	New	Marco Skogh	13.0
23	12	Andrew Boyd	34.6	48	84	Teddy Monro-Davies	17.8	73	84	Louis Odgers	12.9
24	21	Oscar McIntyre	33.4	49	52	Adam Hicks	17.4	74	48	Nathan Jerome	12.8
25	44	Louise Mathias	32.5	50	New	Elliot Wardle	16.8	75	62	Will Bucknell	12.8

2022-23 RESULTS ROUND-UP

Full reports on these events can be found on www.therfa.uk



A first regional title at Horsham for Nick and Joe

SOUTH WEST OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2022

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

SOUTH EAST OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2022

Singles: O.Arnold
Doubles: J.Sumner & N.Woolfenden

CHALLENGER SINGLES Christ's Hospital 8/2022

E.Hatton

YORKSHIRE OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2022

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

LONDON OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2022

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

OWERS TROPHY 2022

Old Derby Moor

THE LADY'S CUP 2022

Eleanora Vallascas & Simon Beattie



Simon versus Louise in the Oundle Challenger

WEST OF ENGLAND OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2022

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

DURHAM LADIES CHAMPIONSHIPS 2022

Singles: C.Beattie
Doubles: C.Beattie & I.Wright

NATIONAL STUDENTS' (BUSF) CHAMPIONSHIPS 2022

Singles: I.Weaver (Durham)
Doubles: S.Scott & I.Weaver (Durham)

SCHOOLS WINCHESTER FIVES DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2022

Winchester College (C.Lee & S.Wu)

LADIES U23 CHAMPIONSHIPS 2022

Singles: C.Beattie
Doubles: R.Ogilvie & O.Smart

CHALLENGER SINGLES Oundle 12/2022

S.Beattie

NATIONAL SINGLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2022

D.Tristao

RFA PRESIDENT'S CUP 2022

H.Tunks & G.Wiseman

WEST OF ENGLAND SCHOOLS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2023

U18 Singles: S.Wu (Winchester College)
U18 Doubles: Winchester (C.Lee & S.Wu)
U16 Singles: J.Chan (Winchester College)
U16 Doubles: Winchester (J.Chan & A.Cloke Browne)

NATIONAL LADIES CHAMPIONSHIPS 2023

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

NATIONAL U25 CHAMPIONSHIPS 2023

Singles: L.Keates
Doubles: L.Keates & B.Singh

NORTHERN SCHOOLS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2023

U18 Singles: A.Glover (Sedbergh School)
U18 Doubles: A.Glover & S.Follett

(Sedbergh School)

U16 Singles: V.Fikhter (Manchester Y Club)
U16 Doubles: O.Griffin & E.Williams (Sedbergh School)

SOUTH EAST SCHOOLS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2023

U18 Singles: M.Freudenheim (Tonbridge School)
U18 Doubles: M.Freudenheim & G.Slater (Tonbridge School)
U16 Singles: C.Lacewing (Christ's Hospital)
U16 Doubles: O.Wilson & O.Woolf (Tonbridge School)



The final of the National U25 Doubles

MIDLANDS SCHOOLS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2023

U18 Singles: D.Leng (Rugby School)
U18 Doubles: Rugby School (D.Leng & A.Noble)
U15 Singles: C.McNaughton (Stamford School)
U15 Doubles: Stamford School (C.McNaughton & C.Sharpe)
U14 Singles: H.Jones (Stamford School)
U14 Doubles: Stamford School (E.Hunter & H.Jones)

NORTH WEST OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2023

Singles: W.Ellison
Doubles: W.Ellison & T.Parker

THE VARSITY MATCH 2023

Men's: Oxford
Women's: Cambridge

NORTH OF ENGLAND CHAMPIONSHIPS 2023

Singles: E.Kay
Doubles: D.Grant & D.Tristao



The battle for the Scottish Open title

WINCHESTER FIVES OPEN DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2023

D.Grant & D.Tristao

COLQUHOUN TROPHY 2023

U18 Singles: H.Akerman (Winchester College)
U16 Singles: A.James-Duff (Winchester College)

SCOTTISH SCHOOLS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2023

U18 Singles: S.Park (Merchiston Castle)
U18 Doubles: Edinburgh Academy (H.Rintoul & C.Swanson)
U16 Doubles: Edinburgh Academy (T.Jarrold & J.Toner)

NATIONAL SCHOOLS MIXED DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2023

U18: Allyn's School (A.Guo & Y.Negyal)
U15: Allyn's School (A.McAllister & M.Arie)

NATIONAL SCHOOLS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2023

U18 Singles: S.Wu (Winchester College)
U18 Doubles: St Olave's School (C.Boy & G.Nsenga)
U16 Singles: F.Hammond Giles (St Paul's School)
U16 Doubles: Winchester College (J.Chan & A.Cloke Browne)
U14 Singles: V.Fikhter (Manchester Y Club)
U14 Doubles: Stamford School (E.Hunter & H.Jones)
U13 Singles: B.Copeland (Berkhamsted School)
U13 Doubles: Berkhamsted School (B.Copeland & R.Higgs)

NATIONAL DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2023 (Cyriax Cup)

E.Kay & D.Tristao

RUGBY FIVES MIXED DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2023

H.Nugent & N.Whitney

SOUTH EAST SCHOOLS GIRLS' CHAMPIONSHIPS 2023

U18 Singles: F.Swann (Eastbourne College)
U18 Doubles: Eastbourne College (R.Beazleigh & F.Swann)
U16 Singles: T-R.Foo (Allyn's School)
U16 Doubles: Allyn's School (E.Erdmeier & A.Guo)
U14 Singles: A.Brown (Allyn's School)
U14 Doubles: Allyn's School (A.Brown & F.Hebblethwaite)

NATIONAL GIRLS' CHAMPIONSHIPS 2023

U18 Singles: C.Beattie (City of Durham)
U18 Doubles: City of Durham (C.Beattie & I.Wright)
U16 Singles: J.Mitchell (Blundell's School)
U16 Doubles: Allyn's School (E.Erdmeier & A.Guo)
U14 Singles: T-R.Foo (Allyn's School)
U14 Doubles: Allyn's School (T-R.Foo & S.Wigley)
U13 Singles: A.Brown (Allyn's School)
U13 Doubles: Allyn's School (A.Brown & F.Hebblethwaite)

NATIONAL VETERANS' CHAMPIONSHIPS 2023

Singles: D.Fox
Doubles: H.Bishop & J.Hughes

NATIONAL VINTAGE CHAMPIONSHIPS 2023

Singles: D.Fox
Doubles: A.Pringle & M.Spillane

NATIONAL MASTERS' DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2023

S.Beal & A.Hamilton



Helena and Savanna organise the Open Mixed Doubles at Cambridge

NATIONAL GRAND MASTERS' DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2023

B.Atkinson & J.East

NATIONAL CLUB KNOCK-OUT 2023 (Wood Cup)

Old Paulines

SCOTTISH OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2023

Singles: R.Murby
Doubles: J.McIntyre & R.Murby

WINCHESTER FIVES MIXED DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2023

L.Mathias & O.Arnold

LADIES WINCHESTER FIVES CHAMPIONSHIPS 2023

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

RUGBY & ETON FIVES MEDLEY 2023

R.Christie & T.Kiggell

DERBY MOOR INVITATION DOUBLES 2023

Anthony Goodwin & Karen Hird



The players at the Derby Moor Doubles

