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South West Open Championships 2022

Blundell's School, Tiverton,
Saturday/Sunday, 2-3 July 2022

STOP PRESS Will Ellison recorded his 8th South West Singles title and his 10th Doubles title, the fifth he has won with his partner Dan Grant. Ben Hale did the double in the Plate competitions, partnering Helena Tunks in the Doubles. Keith Kennerley paired up with Richard Christie to win the American Doubles.

Scores

Singles

1st round: J Tilston bt R Christie 11-4, 11-5; O Arnold bt B Hale 11-6, 11-0; D Grant bt S Watson 11-3, 11-8; J Aquilina bt H Tunks 11-0, 11-0; L Keates bt N Geere 11-0, 11-1; J Sumner bt L Newton-Taylor 11-1, 11-1

Quarter-finals: E Kay bt Tilston 11-1, 11-1; Grant bt Arnold 12-10, 11-4; Aquilina bt Keates 11-8, 11-7; W Ellison bt Sumner 11-1; 11-1

Semi-finals: Kay bt Grant 11-3, 11-2; Ellison bt Aquilina 11-5, 11-4

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

Plate: 1st Hale 41 pts; 2nd Geere 39 pts; 3rd Christie 37 pts; 4th Newton Taylor 14pts

Doubles

Quarter-finals: O Arnold & E Kay bt B Hale & H Tunks 11-1, 11-2; L Keates & J Sumner bt C Blakeley & R Christie 11-0, 11-3; J Aquilina & J Tilston bt N Geere & L Newton-Taylor 11-0, 11-3; W Ellison & D Grant bt A Steel & S Watson 11-2, 11-2

Semi-finals: Arnold & Kay bt Keates & Sumner 11-0, 11-6; Ellison & Grant bt Aquilina & Tilston 11-2, 11-7

Final: Ellison & Grant bt Arnold & Kay 5-11, 11-9, 11-9

Plate: 1st Hale & Tunks 45 pts; 2nd Blakeley & Christie 36 pts; 3rd Geere & Newton-Taylor 32 pts; A Steel & Watson 25 pts pts

American Doubles: R Christie & K Kennerley

Wayne Enstone reports: Even a wet start to the day didn't dampen the players' spirits, as they produced some entertaining first round matches in the singles draw. Stuart Watson at the age of seventy played some of his best angle shots to give Dan Grant a very good warm up match; however, Dan's mesmeric spin was just too much for Stuart, but most entertaining for us spectators.

In the quarter-finals Ed Kay gave nothing away and whilst James Tilston played some fine power shots Ed's defence and attacks were just too strong, with Ed winning in two games. Similarly, Joe Sumner was in many of the rallies in his match with Will Ellison; however, Will produced his usual killer shots after many long rallies, the score not representing the quality of the play, so well played, Joe. The closest game of the day was Ollie Arnold and Dan Grant's first game thriller, where Ollie at 10-9 up just couldn't quite get over the line. Dan fought back to take it 12-10 after several changes of service and then take the second relatively comfortably by comparison. Lewis Keates and Julian Aquilina had two 'blasting' games, with the ball flying around the court. Julian just controlled the ball that little better than Lewis, edging both games to win through to the semis.

The questions to be answered for the semis were: Could an injury-free and revitalised Dan Grant produce his best shots to break through Ed's defence and hold off his attacks, and would Julian be able to produce his best shots in every rally to defeat Will? Both Ed and Will had obviously saved their best performances of the day; whilst there were many very hard fought rallies, both looked comfortable throughout both matches to set up a repeat of last year's final for Sunday morning.

The Doubles draw first-round matches were actually quarter-finals and as expected didn't produce any surprise upsets as all the seeds won through comfortably. The number one seeds, Ed Kay & Ollie Arnold, wasted no time in establishing a very quick first game win, not losing a point against a shell-shocked Lewis Keates & Joe Sumner. Fortunately, in the second Lewis and Joe raised their game and competed in most rallies, unfortunately, Ollie's power from the left and Ed's wonderful shot selection won the second and that was one pair through to Sunday's final. Similarly, Julian & James had their moments in many of the rallies, however, Dan & Will just had to much court craft for them and they won through to the final too.

During these matches in the main draw, the Plate finals were also taking place. In the Singles Plate it was decided to play a round robin to 15 points, which produced many close games. At the end of all the games there were three players having won the same number of games, so it went to a most-points-won situation to decide that Ben Hale won by two points from local player Nick Geere.

In the Doubles Plate, whilst the pairs looked evenly matched during play, Ben Hale & Helena Tunks were the dominant partnership, winning all their matches and winning this year's Doubles Plate in style.

After play and before leaving the courts, there was a Congratulations to Ed Kay and the singing of Happy Birthday — that's dedication to fives, turning up on your Birthday Weekend! Well done, Ed. Needless to say it was a significant one too!!

As is tradition at the South West Championships there was a social meal at the usual local Butterleigh Inn. The Plate prizes were awarded during the evening to Ben for the Singles and Helena & Ben for the Doubles. A great time was had by all.

Sunday morning finals began with the Singles, where Will went 2 points up; however, such is the quality of Ed's defence and shots that he quickly recovered to move to 5-3 ahead, then at 6-5 to Ed he injected another of what I will describe as 'energy' that took him into a 9-6 lead. As well as Will was playing it looked inevitable that as much as he tried and upped his intensity of hitting power he couldn't improve his score line. However, after 11 changes of service Will broke through and after another 14 service changes he had game ball; at 10-9 there were another 5 changes of service before Will served out to win the first. Marvellous to watch.

In the second, with Will at 6-0 up no one had their money on Ed; needless to say Ed had other ideas and once again produced that 'energy surge that changed our minds and at 6-3 down Ed still looked well capable of getting back level. In response Will injected his own 'energy' and killer shots to yet again move ahead to 8-3 up and looked good to close this game out; however, with only one change of serve Ed completely took control of the rallies and moved to 9-8 up and after 6 changes of serve won the game 11-9. Talk about fine margins, what a sensational game and still the decider to come.

At the start of the third it was obvious that both players were equally fired up for winning this game. Ed had the early success, which was short lived as Will came straight back with a series of brilliant shots and slowly moved into a 9-2 lead. Even so we spectators had all learned our lesson of trying to predict the outcome and rightly so, as again there were 11 changes of serve and then Ed began his revival, until at 10-4 and 4 changes of serve Will finally found the shot to finish it and win his 8th South West Singles title. A magical final where both players showed us what extraordinary talents they possess. It was a privilege and pleasure to score and watch.

After a brief break Will and Ed were back on court for the Doubles final, Ed partnering Ollie Arnold who was raring to go and Will partnering Dan Grant, the most consistent winning server of the tournament. The first game was over very quickly with Ollie's left-hand fire power producing many winners and helping to overcome the defences of Will and Dan, Ed and himself winning the first 11-4.

In the second game both partnerships held the lead at various points in the game up to 9-9. Will and Dan, after six changes of serve, went 10-9 up and after another six changes of serve won 11-9. All players produced some exceptional attacking shots, making for one of the best ever games played on these courts.

In the third, Ed & Ollie started well; however, Will & Dan began to increase the pressure and moved into a 6-1 lead. It looked ominous for Ed & Ollie; however, they weren't to be deterred and slowly worked their way back to 6-4. Again, as with the second game, at 9-9 not one spectator knew who would win. Unlike the second Will at first hand in from being 8-9 down kept in and Will & Dan won their 5th South West Doubles Championship together, and Will's 10th in total.

As usual, Trophy Presentations took place for the winners and runners-up in both finals, plus Plate winners and the American Doubles winners of the Sunday morning fun Doubles, Richard Christie (Derby Moor) and Keith Kennerly (E&TRFC). All players had had plenty of fives over the two days and we spectators were left with no fingernails! Exceptional performances by all the players, so well done to all.

Thanks go to: Alexandra Steel, for her multi-organisational roles and to Lesley Enstone, our Catering Manager supremo; to Blundell's staff for opening doors, cleaning courts and general administration; to Lewis Keates for his multi-media role which kept those not in attendance informed throughout.

Another great Championships on and off court.

South East Open Championships

Horsham; Saturday, 27th August 2022

STOP PRESS Organiser Ed Hatton managed to break new ground at this year's South East Open on the FIVE COURTS at Christ's Hospital by fitting in both Singles and Doubles in one day's play and coming up with a first time Singles Champion in Ollie Arnold and a first time Doubles Champion in Joe Sumner. For Joe's partner, Nick Woolfenden, it was a second win in this event. Joe reached the singles final as well, also a first for him. Stuart Kirby and Chris Davey also experienced a first by reaching the final of the Doubles, and Helena Tunks is possibly the first woman player to win a 3rd place play-off at a regional event, partnering Emrys Thursfield.

Ed Hatton reports: An interestingly sized entry originally of ten stimulated new possibilities for playing formats. Initially the organiser was determined to go with an unprecedented 'league' group of ten with all playing all – this would have meant 45 games overall which with the addition of the excellent glass-backed new fifth court was feasible, if tough on the players. In the end twelve entered the singles, so two round-robin groups of six were drawn up, which produced semi-finalists. Ollie Arnold secured early and steady progress against all comers, but Chris Davey also produced four impressive wins to head off other contenders for the other semi-final spot. In the other group Joe Sumner produced solid wins against all and continued a remarkable evolution in this tournament over the years from recent school leaver to title contender. Cameron Low also won through in some hard-fought games. Both Ollie and Joe had too much for their opponents in the semi-finals, despite some long rallies and keen movement. In the bronze medal match Davey edged a very tight one against Low 16-14. It was left for Ollie to clinch his first open singles title with a strong win against a determined but tiring Joe in his first open singles final. Well played to all.

A doubles event of eight pairs started with round-robin groups. Very close competition took place throughout all games. Joe Sumner and Nick Woolfenden just pipped Chris Davey & Stuart Kirby to the post with slightly greater consistency. In the other group Cameron Low and Tony Hamilton were the stand-out pair, with Emrys Thursfield and Helena Tunks a close and deserving second. The semi-finals were comfortable for Sumner & Woolfenden but in the other match Davey & Kirby held their nerve to edge past Low & Hamilton. This took them to their first final and there they gave an heroic account of themselves but the deeply steady and reliable Sumner & Woolfenden were too much for them. Congratulations to all.

Results

Singles

Group 1: 1st O Arnold W5 Pts 55; 2nd C Davey W4 Pts 45; 3rd L Keates W3 Pts 37; 4th E Thursfield W2 Pts 39; 5th E Hatton W1 Pts 29; 6th S Leboff W0 Pts 11

Group 2: 1st J Sumner W5 Pts 55; 2nd C Low W4 Pts 49; 3rd A Chai W3 Pts 45; 4th N Woolfenden W2 Pts 34; 5th H Tunks W1 Pts 23; 6th H Nugent W0 Pts 6

Semi-finals: Arnold bt Low 11-5, 11-4; Sumner bt Davey 11-4, 11-0

Final: Arnold bt Sumner 11-3, 11-2

3rd Place: Davey bt Low 16-14

Doubles

Group 1: 1st Sumner & Woolfenden W3 Pts 33; 2nd Davey & S Kirby W2 Pts 32; 3rd Arnold & C Lacewing W1 Pts 25; 4th Keates & Nugent W0 Pts 19

Group 2: 1st A Hamilton & Low W3 Pts 29; 2nd Thursfield & Tunks W2 Pts 28; 3rd B Callaghan & B Kirk W1 Pts 26; 4th A Chai & Leboff W 0 Pts 9

Semi-finals: Davey & Kirby bt Hamilton & Low 12-10, 11-6; Sumner & Woolfenden bt Thursfield & Tunks 11-4, 11-2

Final: Sumner & Woolfenden bt Davey & Kirby 11-5, 11-9

3rd Place: Thursfield & Tunks bt Hamilton & Low 15-12

Challenger at Christ's Hospital

Sunday, 28th August 2022

STOP PRESS After a mammoth round robin involving ten players aspiring to win the fourth Challenger Singles title, Ed Hatton, the organiser of the event, emerged as the winner, with Lewis Keates runner-up.

What a good way to christen the new, fifth court at CH!

Ed Hatton reports: On the Sunday ten daring players gathered for a Fives world first – an all-play-all league challenger tournament, 45 games in total. Whilst some high-quality and endurance Fives took place from all comers, perhaps the most notable aspect was the various withdrawals. It appeared very quickly that simply finishing the event was going to be the surest mark of honour, so congratulations are due to the final six players of Bhattacharya, Callaghan, Hatton, Keates, Lacewing and Woolfenden for doing so. As the only school player Charlie Lacewing deserves huge credit for his endurance and consistently high-quality play. He has a bright Fives future ahead of him. As a relative newcomer to the Rugby code Abhishek Bhattacharya brought Eton wisdom and volleying into some tight games. Nick Woolfenden brought local knowledge and great experience to his games, making them highly competitive even when not much was left in the tank! Hosting Fives master Bart Callaghan verified his quality with some solid wins and typically energetic play. Lewis Keates, probably the favourite in this event, made serene progress with clinical wins against most and the best points difference in the group. For some reason, however, the organiser found an extra gear when they met and so it was he who ended up topping the group and winning the event.

Scores

1st Hatton W5 55pts; **2nd** Keates W4 49pts; **3rd** Callaghan W3 41pts; **4th** Woolfenden W2 33pts; **5th** Bhattacharya W1 28pts; **6th** Lacewing W0 20pts

Yorkshire Open Championships

Derby Moor Academy, Littleover

Saturday/Sunday, 10-11 September 2022

STOP PRESS: It was a successful defence of their titles for Ed Kay (Singles) and Ed & Ollie Arnold in the Doubles as the Yorkshire Open was played out for a second year at the Derby Moor Fives Club in Littleover, Derbyshire. Warm thanks go to co-organisers John Hawke and Lewis Keates as they organised and victualled a small but neat entry of 18 players over the course of the weekend.

John Hawke reports: Once again Yorkshire annexed a small part of Derby for their eponymous Fives tournament. Sadly, this year the only tenuous link with Yorkshire was that of the organiser, who is a member of the Halifax club, but now lives in Anglesey. No players from Yorkshire took part.

The organiser and tournament entrants are hugely grateful for the use of the superb Derby Moor courts and for the unstinting support provided by the club members. Special thanks go to Lewis Keates, who cajoled many participants into entering, especially those Fives 'big names' who showed us all how the game should be played. In a way, Lewis got his just rewards on the first day -- more of that later.

Play actually got underway very close to the allotted time, with the early matches proceeding quickly. As is traditional, a call was received later in the morning announcing the lateness of Dan Tristao and Dan Grant. They arrived in time to avoid the organiser having apoplexy; the first round matches were barely delayed.

The first round progressed as predicted, except that Lewis Keates beat Cameron Low against the seeding. In the second round, three of the matches were completed without mishap for the seeds. Only the fourth match, between Keates and Tristao went to three games, with Lewis threatening to upset the tournament in both the first two games. Dan finally overcame this most tenacious of opponents 12-10, 11-12, 11-4. Semi-final matches went to plan, setting up a Kay-Tristao final to be played on Sunday morning due to the timing constraints of the tournament restaurant.

Plate matches took place as courts came free from Cup games. Knockouts were played for both plate competitions, with those knocked out of the cup in the preliminary and first round eligible for the first plate, and those knocked out in the

preliminary and first round of the first plate qualifying for the second plate. This ensured that all entrants got a good number of games regardless of how they fared. Cameron Low avenged his first round cup defeat by winning the first plate, beating Oscar McIntyre in the final, with the ever enthusiastic Nick Geere overcoming Callum Yates to win the second plate.

So, off to the pub. A great meal in pleasant company rounding off an enjoyable day.

Sunday started somewhere around 9:45 with some first round doubles as the singles finalists stretched, tied their shoe laces and assembled their gloves. Once on court, Ed Kay gave a good impression of dominating Dan Tristao, who appeared less animated than normal. Whether it was the meal, the demon drink, or the long battle with the equally demonic Keates, Dan couldn't match the play of an obviously cleaner living Ed, who retained his title with a convincing 11-5, 11-3 win.

Once the singles final was out of the way, the doubles competition picked up pace. There was only one match which threatened never to finish, with Keates (yes, him again) & Bally Singh taking three long games to see off Low & Vishal Singh 13-15, 16-15, 16-14. Every round honoured the seeding, with Ollie Arnold & Ed Kay retaining their Yorkshire Doubles crown in a thrilling final.

The plate was played as a round-robin of four pairs until the last round, when the top two played for the plate and the bottom 2 played for the second plate. Richie Murby & Oscar McIntyre beat Cameron Low & Vishal Singh to the first plate while Brian Kirk & Callum Yates eked out a win in the second plate, 16-14.

To end a most enjoyable weekend, RFA President elect Julie McIntyre presented the trophies and medals.

The organiser owes a debt of gratitude to all those who competed, to the Derby Moor club for the use of their superb facilities, to Lewis Keates for drumming up entrants of the highest quality and for his assistance running the event and posting pictures, results etc., and to Callum Yates for his organisation and scoring efforts for the doubles plate. The only downsides were the absence of Bob Dolby, who was otherwise engaged, and that of Stuart Kirby. We hope to see them both next year.

Results

Singles

Preliminary round: V Fikhter bt B Cundy 15-7

1st round: D Tristao bt Fikhter 11-2, 11-0; L Keates bt C Low 11-6, 11-1; R Murby bt O McIntyre 11-0, 11-8; J Aquilina bt V Singh 11-4, 11-1; B Beltrami bt K Davins 11-0, 11-0; D Grant bt N Geere 11-2, 11-0; O Arnold bt A Goodwin 11-4, 11-4; E Kay bt C Yates 11-0, 11-1

Quarter-finals: Tristao bt Keates 12-10, 11-12, 11-4; Aquilina bt Murby 11-9, 11-0; Beltrami bt Grant 11-8, 11-9; Kay bt Arnold 11-9, 11-2

Semi-finals: Tristao bt Aquilina 11-4, 11-1; Kay bt Beltrami 11-2, 11-2

Final: Kay bt Tristao 11-5, 11-3

Plate: Low bt McIntyre 16-14

2nd Plate: Geere bt Yates

Doubles

Quarter-finals: Arnold & Kay bt Cundy & Davins 11-0, 11-1; Keates & B Singh bt Low & V Singh 13-15, 16-15, 16-14; Aquilina & Grant bt McIntyre & Murby 11-2, 11-6; Beltrami & Tristao bt B Kirk & Yates 11-8, 11-4

Semi-finals: Arnold & Kay bt Keates & B Singh 12-11, 11-9; Beltrami & Tristao bt Aquilina & Grant 11-7, 11-2

Final: Arnold & Kay bt Beltrami & Tristao 11-7, 11-7

Plate: McIntyre & Murby bt Low & V Singh 15-6

2nd Plate: Kirk & Yates bt Cundy & Davins 16-14

Change at the top of the RFA

History was made at this year's RFA Annual General Meeting with the election of the first woman President in the RFA's nearly 100 year history. **Julie McIntyre** has now taken over the role from the retiring President of the last two years, David Parlbly. We also welcomed a new Deputy President of the Association, **Andy Passey**. For those of you who have been players and members for some time, neither Julie or Andy will need any introduction, but if you haven't met them before, have a look at their personal statements in the "About Us" section. Unusually, both originally learned their Fives on Winchester courts, Julie at Bradfield College and Andy at Malvern College.

The London Open

Alleyn's School, Dulwich
Saturday/Sunday, 1-2 October 2022

STOP PRESS Honours were shared at the London Open as Dan Tristao won his third Singles title at this event, beating Will Ellison in the final, while Will then got his revenge in the Doubles, playing for the first time with Ollie Arnold against Dan and his new partner Ben Beltrami. In the two fiercely contested Plates Cameron Low got the better of City of Durham's Oscar McIntyre in the Singles, only to be beaten, playing with Louise Mathias, by Oscar & Lewis Keates in an extraordinarily close Doubles final. Special mention should be made of Ben Beltrami, who hit the ball in his Doubles match as well as any player on the fast front courts at Alleyn's, and of Louise, fully recovered from her wrist injury in the spring, who now forms an impressive mixed doubles partnership with Cameron.

Report to come

Results

Singles

1st round: J Sumner bt J Smith 11-5, 3-11, 12-10; P Chai bt J Garratt w/o; J Tilston bt O McIntyre 11-6, 11-3

2nd round: D Tristao bt Sumner 11-2, 11-6; T Parker bt L Keates 11-3, 11-1; O Arnold bt B Kirwan w/o; J Aquilina bt Penn 11-1, 11-3; B Beltrami bt Mathias 11-0, 11-1; S Russell bt C Low 12-10, 11-4; C Brooks bt P Hanton 11-3, 11-6; W Ellison bt Tilston 11-3, 11-1

Quarter-finals: Tristao bt Parker 11-3, 11-5; Arnold bt Aquilina 11-6, 11-7; Beltrami bt Russell 11-3, 11-4; Ellison bt Brooks 11-8, 11-4

Semi-finals: Tristao bt Arnold 11-7, 11-4; Ellison bt Beltrami 9-11, 11-6, 11-6

Final: Tristao bt Ellison 11-5, 11-8

Plate: Low bt McIntyre 15-6.

Doubles

1st round: T Hebblethwaite & J Smith bt P Chai & H Tunks 11-4, 11-0; J Toop & G Wiseman bt G Fox-Edwards & J Garratt 11-1, 11-1; C Low & L Mathias bt H Nugent & E Thursfield 11-3, 12-10; A Ahuja & J Sumner bt Y Negyal & S Richarz 11-0, 11-8

Quarter-finals: O Arnold & W Ellison bt Hebblethwaite & Smith 11-5, 11-3; J Toop & Wiseman bt L Keates & O McIntyre 11-7, 12-10; J Aquilina & C Brooks bt Low & Mathias 11-4, 11-6; B Beltrami & D Tristao bt Ahuja & Sumner 11-0, 11-4

Semi-finals: Arnold & Ellison bt Toop & Wiseman 11-2, 11-1; Beltrami & Tristao bt Aquilina & Brooks 11-8, 11-6

Final: Arnold & Ellison bt Beltrami & Tristao 7-11, 11-4, 11-4

Plate: Keates & McIntyre bt Low & Mathias 16-15

The Owers Trophy

Stoke Newington School, London
Sunday, 9th October 2022

Organiser Alex Smith reports: It was a cracking day, of fine weather and fine Fives, and the first RFA National Tournament to be held at Stoke Newington School. Seasoned and regular players joined some veterans, young players and recent school leavers in this festival of Fives.

With a small entry there was just one first round match, between the Old Wykehamists 2 and Old Derby Moor 1, won by the latter. In the semi-finals the Old Wykehamists 1 then beat Derby Moor 2 by 45-12, while Derby Moor 1 saw off the Edward Alleyn side by the same score.

The tournament ended with a nail-biter, which was also a great testament to the unique format of the tournament, where squads of 3 play three doubles matches, switching pairings for each game: 1&2 pair v. 1&2, 2&3 v. 2&3, then 1&3 v. 1&3, with each match won on total points.

The final between Old Wykehamists 1 and Derby Moor 1 was incredibly close: the Wykehamist 1st & 3rd players took the first game 15-9, but Derby Moor came back fighting and their 1&2 pair won 15-11. So it was one game each before the final encounter, but with the OWs 2 points ahead, which might prove crucial Derby Moor would need to win 15-13.

So, the third game began between the 2nd and 3rd players of each team. The game had a full crowd and saw a very high standard of play, with spectators finding it very hard to call who would eventually prevail. But in the end it was the Derby Moor 2&3 who managed to come through 15-11, meaning Derby won the match 39-37. This was certainly the closest final so far in the tournament.

So Old Derby Moor retain the Trophy which they won last year by 7 points, the first team since the Old Paulines to retain it. Meanwhile Derby Moor 2 won the Plate in a series of group games.

Finally, many thanks to Stoke Newington School for hosting us on their suite of courts. We will be back.

Results

Semi-finals: Old Derby Moor 1 bt Edward Alleyns Club 45-12; Old Wykehamists 1 bt Old Derby Moor 2 45-12

Final: Old Derby Moor 1 bt Old Wykehamists 1 39-37

Plate: 1st Old Derby Moor 2; 2nd Edward Alleyn Club; 3rd Old Wykehamists 2; 4th Old Oundelians

Teams

Edward Alleyn Club: Inigo Ackland, Artem Naum, Alex Smith

Old Derby Moor 1: Lewis Keates, Anthony Goodwin, Bally Singh

Old Derby Moor 2: Vishal Singh, Richard Christie, Kristians Davins

Old Wykehamists 1: Tom Watkinson, Marcus Cloke Browne, Ben Chua

Old Wykehamists 2: Matt Hale, Alec Younger, Louis O'Connor

Old Oundelians: Alex Smith, Louis O'Connor

The West of England Open

Sherborne School, Dorset

Saturday/Sunday, 22-23 October 2022

STOP PRESS The wrong kind of weather = sweating courts, the organiser's nightmare. But they got through it with the help of heaters and dehumidifiers and the customary sawdust. Ed Kay eventually beat Dan Tristao to retain his Singles title, while the long-standing pairing of Ollie Arnold & Ben Beltrami notched up another win, beating the two Singles finalists. The Singles Plate featured two recent school leavers, with Gwydion Wiseman beating Oscar McIntyre. Daniel Brooke & James Smith won out in the Doubles Plate proper, while the contest between the losing quarter-finalists featured two up-and-coming pairings, with Cameron Low & Archie McCreath beating Lewis Keates & Oscar McIntyre in a predictably close decider.

Organiser Ollie Arnold reports: This year the West of England Championships returned to Sherborne School, who have hosted the tournament since 2019. Once again we were treated to two high quality draws, though players had to battle through slippery court conditions on the Saturday to complete their matches. In the end it was Ed Kay who came out on top in the singles (his third singles title at the West), and the pairing of Ollie Arnold & Ben Beltrami who won their first doubles title here.

Unfortunately, for a long period on Saturday the main story was not of the fives being played but of the sweating courts. Whilst the last-16 matches were completed relatively easily, the rest of the day was split between a truncated plate singles

and the main draw quarter-finals, played one-at-a-time to allow for court changes when each became unplayable. As often happens, the closest games came from the 8th vs 9th seeds contest, where Cameron Low upset the seeding to beat Lewis Keates, and the 4th vs 5th seeds match between Julian Aquilina and Tom Watkinson. Playing over three hours on an endless rotation of four courts, in between copious applications of sawdust, Julian finally came through 11-4, 8-11, 11-4 to reach the safety of close of play.

Sunday morning began inconceivably early for a fives tournament, with the semi-finalists convinced to be on court and warming up prior to 9am. Ed Kay wasted no time in dispatching Ben Beltrami, whilst Dan Tristao came through a tougher semi-final against Julian; aside from one brief slippery moment, the courts were behaving and the tournament was back on track. The Plate singles final was contested by two of the newest players on the open fives circuit, with Gwydion Wiseman racing into an unassailable lead against Oscar McIntyre, and holding on to win 15-5.

The singles final was a story of two halves, with Dan dictating throughout the first game with trademark drop-shots and tight width to open his scoring with an 11-6 set. Ed persevered, however, and having taken the second set 11-4 he proceeded to win the decider to love, pressing high and taking all the time away from Dan. Ed has been in this winning position before as the National Singles Championship looms closer; perhaps this is his year.....?

Doubles progressed smoothly, with the top three seeds advancing easily to the semi-finals. The match of the day was fought out between Cameron Low & Archie McCreath and Tom Watkinson & Sam Russell; in both their previous meetings at the West of England this match had gone the distance. Cameron and Archie recovered from losing a tight first game to force the match to a decider, but it was not to be their 'third time lucky'. Final score 12-10, 5-11, 11-6 to the fourth seeds.

Meanwhile, two doubles plates were taking place: the main plate and an additional plate for quarter-final losers. In the main plate the pairing of James Smith & Daniel Brooke (of the West of England Club) won out, a fantastic result for Dan at his first tournament. Following their disappointment at losing out in the main draw, Archie & Cameron eased past their opponents to win the additional plate.

Having progressed through high quality semi-finals, the top seeds Ed Kay & Dan Tristao and second seeds Ollie Arnold & Ben Beltrami contested the final. As always there was fantastic retrieval and hard-hitting on show, with most rallies ending with nick winners or errors forced by serious pressure. The key moment of the final came at the start of the second set where, having edged the first 11-9, Ben & Ollie raced into a 5-0 lead on the first hand. Despite some nervy moments as the top seeds reduced their deficit, Ben & Ollie held on with some crucial late winners to take their first title at the West.

As always, massive thanks must go to Sherborne School for hosting us, and to the players for persevering through some dismal conditions on the Saturday, all whilst taking turns in brushing and de-sweating the courts. Heads now turn to the National Singles Regional Qualifiers around the country, before the main prize is up for grabs in early December.

Results

Singles

1st round: J Smith bt K Kennerley 11-7, 11-1; G Wiseman bt S Watson 11-5, 11-6

2nd round: D Tristao bt L Mathias 11-7, 11-7; C Low bt L Keates 11-6, 11-6; J Aquilina bt Smith 11-4, 11-1; T Watkinson bt J Sumner 11-4, 11-5; B Beltrami bt N Geere 11-2, 11-1; O Arnold bt O McIntyre 11-6, 11-2; T Parker bt A McCreath 11-4, 11-4; E Kay bt G Wiseman 11-1, 11-1

Quarter-finals: Tristao bt Low 11-3, 11-1; Aquilina bt Watkinson 11-4, 8-11, 11-4; Beltrami bt Arnold 11-3, 11-3; Kay bt Parker 11-6, 11-5

Semi-finals: Tristao bt Aquilina 11-3, 11-5; Kay bt Beltrami 11-1, 11-3

Final: Kay bt Tristao 6-11, 11-4, 11-0

Plate: Wiseman bt McIntyre 15-5

Doubles

1st round: L Mathias & J Savery bt D Brooke & J Smith 15-5; C Low & A McCreath bt N Geere & A Landon 15-5; J Sumner & G Wiseman bt C Blakeley & R Christie w/o; L Keates & O McIntyre bt K Kennerley & S Watson 15-6

Quarter-finals: E Kay & D Tristao bt Mathias & Savery 11-7, 11-7; S Russell & T Watkinson bt Low & McCreath 12-

10, 5-11, 11-6; J Aquilina & T Parker bt Sumner & Wiseman 11-2, 11-4; O Arnold & B Beltrami bt Keates & McIntyre 11-0, 11-3

Semi-finals: Kay & Tristao bt Russell & Watkinson 11-7, 11-3; Arnold & Beltrami bt Aquilina & Parker 11-4, 11-7

Final: Arnold & Beltrami bt Kay & Tristao 11-9, 11-6

1st Plate: Brooke & Smith

Quarter-final losers' Plate: Low & McCreath bt Keates & McIntyre 15-13

Roger Freebairn 1936-2022

The Rugby Fives Association is sad to report the death at the age of 86 of Old Oundelian Roger Freebairn. A long-standing member of the RFA and a life-long Jester, Roger was National Schools Singles and Doubles champion in 1954 and, 30 years later, National Veterans Champion with Alastair Mackenzie in 1984. He attended Oxford University, where, as a freshman in 1959, he played at Number One in the Varsity Match side beating Cambridge captain Simon Langdale in his Singles. He played again in 1961. Injury prevented him playing for Oxford in 1960 as it had prevented him successfully defending his Schools title in 1955.

Schoolmaster, poet, motorcyclist and fitness fanatic Roger was known to generations of players as skilled, powerful, durable and remarkably nimble for a big man. It was his impressive fitness — he spoke of doing a thousand skips a day — that enabled him to win the Vintage Singles in 1992. He was the last of that generation of great Oundle schoolboy players of the 40s and 50s — Chris Reichwald, John Holroyd, Mike Allen, Mike Skliros, among others — and an inspiration to countless players at his old school where he taught for over 30 years as Head of English and Housemaster. Previous to his arrival at Oundle to teach in 1966 Roger had had a stint at St Andrew's College, Grahamstown, making him one of that small band of UK Fives-players to have played the game in South Africa.

President of Oxford, Dick Warner, remembers him as “a super, hard hitting, intelligent player; a lot of fun to be on court with. And a lovely, gentle, thoughtful man, off-court, absolutely adored by all the Oundelians I ever talked to. Not just Oundelians – all Fives players enjoyed his company, his insights, his wisdom.”

David Barnes writes: “Roger was a great schoolmaster. It was typical of him to play down his own achievements in Fives, which he played with great skill and tenacity. He kindly agreed to write an article about Oundle's Fives history for the RFA Handbook in 2003/04; and the few lines describing his singles and doubles wins as a schoolboy – and, much later, in the Veteran and Vintage arenas – are full of modesty and perceptive humour.”

David Parlby remembers: “Roger was house tutor at Laundimer when I was at school in the late 60s. Laundimer was one of the furthest houses from the Fives courts, so was never renowned for being good at Fives. Roger, however used to give us lifts up to the courts in his, I think, old Ford Escort, to encourage us to play. In time not only did our House IV win the House Fives trophy for several years on the trot, but it also provided the School 1st IV in its entirety.

I remember him hitting the ball with a tennis racket in the already fast old Oundle courts to help me deal with fast shots coming out of the back left hand corner. Not something Fives coaches can do in these days perhaps, but highly effective! Roger was an classic example of how a passionately enthusiastic Fives teacher can raise the standard of schoolboy Fives to very high levels. I owe him a huge amount, as do many other generations of Oundle Fives players.”

The following words from the Old Oundelian Society give an idea of Roger's huge contribution to Oundle: “Roger's time at Oundle as a pupil, prefect, schoolmaster, Housemaster, Head of English and fundraiser was nothing short of remarkable, and he is remembered with great fondness. During his time at School he was captain of Fives, becoming National Schools singles and doubles champion, captain of swimming, and he took on a prominent role instructing others in the CCF, the latter of which inspired him to teach. Roger returned to Oundle in 1966 as a teacher of English, which he taught with passion until his retirement in 1999, also later serving as Head of Department and running the Clare Society through his love of poetry. In addition to this, Roger was Housemaster of New House between 1970 and 1985; running the House with total commitment to those in his care. Roger's dedication to the School extends even further to include fundraising for the 1986 Appeal which raised £1,250,000 and enabled the building of the Sports Hall (now named The Acre) and the Needham building, as well as the conversion of the old gym into the Cripps Library — a truly lasting legacy to all Oundelians.”

The Lady's Cup

Cambridge University Sports Centre
Saturday, 15th October 2022

Bob Dolby reports: 13 pairs contested the Lady's Cup, with competitors from Durham, London, Stamford and Cambridge in this event designed to encourage young or inexperienced female players. Among those players we had three mums, three Cambridge students, 7 schoolgirls ranging from 14 to 18, and two ladies from Durham including our RFA President Julie McIntyre, some of them playing for the first time. Male partners included 7 schoolboys from Stamford and Alleyn's, one undergraduate from Nottingham University, and Alex Smith, the master i/c from Stamford. Numbers were ideal for an introductory stage of three round robins, each played out on one of the superb glass-backed courts.

From those round robins an 8-pair knock-out draw was drawn up to play for the Lady's Cup and the Lady's Bowl, while the remaining 5 pairs contested the Lady's Petit Pot in a further round robin. This was won by Bea & Alex from Stamford School, narrowly beating Marcos and his mother, who was playing for the very first time.

In the knock-out 4 pairs progressed to the semi-finals of the Cup, while the 4 losing pairs went into a further knock-out for the Bowl. The players mastered the complexities of the three mini-competitions brilliantly — courts were seldom empty for more than a minute! Not once was the organiser asked "When am I playing?"

In the Bowl Annabel & Conor had the satisfaction of beating their coach and his adult partner in a close semi-final and went on to beat Charlie and his mother, another total beginner, in the all-Stamford final.

In the main competition for the Cup Stamford's Emily & Teddy were a strong pair but not quite steady enough to beat Eleanora & Simon in a close semi-final, though they had success in the Ball-in-the-Box Challenge! In the other semi-final Anna & Skye from Alleyn's were too powerful for another promising combination from Stamford, Issy & Rory. It is only a matter of time before Stamford carry off this trophy.

The day ended with the final of the Cup. Anna & Skye, Year 13 and 11 respectively, hit the ball hard on both wings, as you would expect from an Alleyn's pair, and covered the court unstintingly as they tried to break down Simon's defence and direct their attack upon his young partner Eleanora, who was playing in her first ever tournament after just a few months experience of the game at the City of Durham Club. The final score of 11-7 to Eleanora & Simon truly reflected the quality of the contest. Simon, now at Nottingham University and playing his Fives at Derby Moor, was particularly pleased to get his name on the trophy as his younger sister Camille won it 3 years ago! The RFA President was even more delighted to award the Cup to members of her Durham Club.

Many thanks to those parents who came and supported their children, to our players from Durham and London for making the trip to Cambridge, to Lucy Richman for drumming up interest among the students, to Alex Smith for his unfailing support of this event, and to the ever reliable staff at the Sports Centre for their help in setting up the facilities.

Cup Final: Eleanora Vallascas & Simon Beattie bt Anna Chance & Skye Richarz 11-7

Updated National Rankings, October 2022

Following the West of England Open Championships we publish the newly updated rankings, compiled by Will Ellison, who has kindly taken on this task following the retirement of David Hebden. David had done the job for some 40 years. In recognition of these many years of service to the game, as a player and as a former President of the Association, the RFA was delighted to make David an Honorary Life Member at its recent AGM.

So what else has changed? The Number One Singles spot has gone this time to Ed Kay, who has won the Yorkshire and the West of England Open titles since publication of the end-of-season rankings in July. Ollie Arnold enters the top 10, while Lewis Keates, Chris Davey and Joe Sumner progress into the top 20. There are some rapid rises lower down the rankings, with several players entering the top 40 for the first time. In all there are 193 players registered in these newly constructed Singles rankings.

In the Doubles rankings Will Ellison, with titles this season in the South West and London Opens, remains comfortably at Number One, and it is Ollie Arnold again who makes the most eye-catching jump in the top 10, with Julian Aquilina and Sam Russell also entering that select group. Joe Sumner and Gwydion Wiseman enter the top 20 for the first time, while we find several new names in the top 40, including Louise Mathias and Helena Tunks. There are 215 names in these Doubles rankings.

		SINGLES Top 10					DOUBLES Top 10	
Current	Previous	Name	Points		Current	Previous	Name	Points
1	1	E Kay	96.1		1	1	W Ellison	101.2
2	2	D Tristao	95.7		2	2	O Arnold	90.6
3	3	W Ellison	88.8		3	3	E Kay	87.7
4	4	B Beltrami	69.7		4	4	B Beltrami	84.1
5	5	T Watkinson	53.5		5	5	D Tristao	83.4
6	6	J Aquilina	52.8		6	6	C Brooks	79.0
7	8	O Arnold	50.1		7	7	T Parker	68.0
8	7	A Boyd	49.7		8	8	J Aquilina	63.3
9	11	S Russell	42.9		9	9	T Watkinson	60.4
10	9	C Brooks	40.7		10	10	S Russell	53.2

Note on the new system

A new ranking system has been implemented for the 2022-23 season onwards, following the retirement of David Hebden from updating the rankings.

Some notes on the methodology:

- The ranking calculation and methodology broadly follow what was done previously, with a few noteworthy changes.
- As before, the best three results from the last year are counted with 100% credit, the best three from the previous year with 60% credit and the best three from the year before that with 20% credit.
- There is no longer any adjustment in singles for beating players with more tournament points than you, or losing to players with fewer points.
- Points are awarded for reaching different rounds in tournaments. As well as the round reached, the points awarded depend on the tournament classification (National, Regional A-C, Challenger, etc.). This is consistent with before, but the points tables and rules have been revised.
 - The regional letter (A-C) classification in turn depends on the entry size and strength of entry (proportion of total ranking points entering the tournament).
 - U25, University, Handicap Doubles, Challenger and Plate tournaments all have reduced points compared to the equivalent regional tournament classification.
 - As before you need to win a match to gain points related to reaching a certain round – e.g. points for reaching a semi-final points require at least one match win.
 - A notional number of points are awarded for entering a tournament.
- Final ranking points are scaled, in the same manner as in the previous system.

Please note we now show both the first name and surnames of players. We have a few gaps – so do let us know if you can help fill any of them.

A template will be circulated for organisers to complete – the results can then be copied into the database, which can then be updated very quickly. This also allows the collation of match data over time, as well as automated result output for use on the website.

The Stoke Newington Swifts: New Community Club

4th November 2022

In exciting news the RFA is delighted to announce the opening of a new weekly Community Fives club: The Stoke Newington Swifts, hosted by Stoke Newington School from **7pm to 9pm on Tuesdays**.

The first session will take place on **Tuesday 8th November from 7pm to 9pm**. Access will be through the school's reception on **Clissold Road London N16 9EX**. Gloves and balls provided (but please bring your own if you have them). Beginners and experienced players alike are very welcome — all you need are trainers and enthusiasm!

General Secretary Chris Blakeley reports: From the RFA perspective the first evening was a great start. We had several established players come to play, plus some newcomers (for now, all connected through SNS). The arrangements worked perfectly, nobody had any difficulty getting in and in particular our thanks to the School for allowing access to the facilities. Some of us came a long way and had a long way home! A special "call out" to Paul, the caretaker, who was very helpful and welcoming. Thanks to all at the School and to Matt Hale for making the arrangements. Please do keep encouraging pupils, parents and staff from SNS to come and give it a try!

Durham Ladies Championships

Durham University Fives Courts

Saturday/Sunday, 6-7 November 2022

STOP PRESS Players from Durham University, the City of Durham Fives Club and the Edinburgh Academy came together for the 4th staging of this ranking women's tournament, played at the University Fives courts. With a small entry and a range of ages it was possible as usual to run a number of separate Singles competitions on the first day to give all the competitors plenty of opportunity to progress, while the main draw proceeded to the expected final between Camille Beattie of the City of Durham Club and Rosa Ogilvie of the Edinburgh Academy. On the second day there was plenty of Doubles in the group stage, which then led to further medal matches. Several of these players will now go on next month to play in the Ladies' U23 championships at St Paul's School.

Results

Championship Singles

1st round: R McNaught-Davis bt J McIntyre 11-7, 11-9; O Smart bt E Vallascas 11-1, 11-0; K Bell bt A Bailey 11-3, 11-3; R Ogilvie bt C Davidson 11-0; P Atkinson bt M Smart 11-0, 11-0; C Clark bt M Wells 11-1, 11-0

Quarter-finals: C Beattie bt R McNaught-Davis 11-2, 11-0; K Bell bt O Smart 11-6, 11-2; R Ogilvie bt P Atkinson 11-0, 11-2; I Wright bt C Clark 11-1, 11-7

Semi-finals: C Beattie bt K Bell 11-1, 11-1; R Ogilvie bt I Wright 11-4, 11-5

Final: C Beattie bt R Ogilvie 15-9, 15-5

Championship Doubles

Group stage

1st R Ogilvie & O Smart 60 pts; **2nd** C Beattie & I Wright 57 pts; **3rd** C Clark & R McNaught-Davis 38 pts; **4th** C Davidson & E Vallascas 18 pts; **5th** A Bailey & M Smart 12 pts

Final: Beattie & Wright bt Ogilvie & Smart 11-7, 12-11

3rd Place match: Clark & McNaught-Davis bt Davidson & Vallascas 11-8, 11-1

Age Group Competitions

Open (Over 18) Singles

Gold/Silver match: K Bell bt P Atkinson 15-1

Bronze medal match: J McIntyre bt M Wells 15-3

U18 Singles

1st C Beattie 55 pts; **2nd** I Wright 39 pts; **3rd** C Clark 38pts

U16 Singles

Gold/Silver match: R Ogilvie bt A Bailey 15-1

Bronze medal match: E Vallascas bt M Smart 15-7

National Schools Winchester Fives Doubles Championship

Winchester College

Sunday, 29th November 2022

Jamie McManus reports: Unfortunately two pairs had to pull out at short notice but the 7-team round-robin worked well: of the 21 games played in the round robin 5 finished with a score of 15-14...!

Winchester I had too much experience and guile for the other teams but, more by good fortune than plan, the organiser's order of play allowed him to tell three other pairs that they all had a chance of making the final as the last round of games got underway. Indeed, the pairs from Alleyn's, St. Paul's and Tonbridge deserve much credit for the speed with which they got used to the "pesky buttress thing".

Particular thanks go to Dr Jackson, Mr Ody, and Mr Roberts for their support of the event. Next year it will be 20 years since David Barnes created the tournament and brand new courts being built as part of Winchester's Sports Centre development should be in use: it would be great to see a record entry.

Group stage

1st Winchester I 90pts; **2nd**= Winchester II and Winchester III 79 pts; **4th** Tonbridge 77 pts; **5th** Alleyn's 71 pts; **6th** St Paul's I 43 pts; **7th** St Paul's II 33 pts

Final: Winchester I (C Lee & S Wu) bt Winchester II (H Akerman & J Cheng) 11-0, 11-2

3rd Place play-off: Winchester III (J Chan & A Cloke Browne) bt Tonbridge (M Freudenheim & G Slater) 15-7

The National Singles Qualifiers

The RFA is delighted to announce that the players who will contest the National Singles finals are: Kay, Tristao, Ellison and Beltrami by right; plus those 12 who have qualified at regional events — Arnold, Brooks, Grant, Jourdan, Keates, McIntyre, Murby, Parker, Russell, Shaw, Watkinson, Wiseman. Reserves Ben Kirwan and Penn Chai replace injury-hit Murby and Parker.

The revised draw for the championship, which will be held at Oundle School, is to be seen **here**.

Results from the Qualifiers in November

London

Semi-finals: C Brooks bt S Russell 11-4, 11-7; T Watkinson bt D Grant 11-2, 11-2

Final: Brooks bt Watkinson 11-4, 9-11, 11-3

Midlands

Semi-finals: L Keates bt S Beattie 11-8, 6-11, 12-11; O McIntyre bt C Davey 11-9, 12-10

Final: McIntyre bt Keates 11-2, 9-11, 12-10

South West

Final: O Arnold bt A Chai 11-3 11-3

Scotland

Semi-finals: R Murby bt E Carbonell 11-0, 11-1; B Jourdan bt A McCreath 11-2, 11-8

Final: Murby bt Jourdan 11-6, 11-3

British Universities Championships (BUSF)

Marlborough College, Wiltshire

Saturday/Sunday 19-20 November 2022

Bob Dolby reports: With Andrew Boyd unable to defend his Singles title and Theo Parker no longer eligible we expected new champions to emerge from this year's British Universities Championships. Injury prevented organiser Ben Jourdan (Edinburgh University) from competing in the Singles and illness robbed us of some of the Cambridge squad. We were

delighted to have a strong group from Durham and a commendably large contingent of 14 from Oxford, several of them relatively new to the game. Three Marlburians returned to enjoy their home courts.

The Singles went according to seeding and produced the eagerly awaited clash of Durham Captain Isaac Weaver and top 20 player Joe Sumner in the final. The contest was spoiled for both by the cramp that afflicted Joe, but Isaac emerged a deserving winner in two straight games after surviving Joe's comeback from 6-14 to 12-15 in the first game. In the Singles Plate the organiser had to sort out a tricky arithmetical issue which eliminated Durham's Archie Leask, leaving four Oxford players to fight it out once the round robins had been completed. Michael Hawkey eventually won the final 16-15!

13 pairs contested the Doubles (7 of them from Oxford – bravo!) and in due course 6 pairs the Plate. Matches were rattled through at a pleasing rate, with no 3-gamers though several close encounters. The Durham 1st pair of Stuart Scott and Isaac Weaver looked to be likely winners but defending champion Cameron Low and his new partner from Bristol, Julius Davies, were always going to push hard and so it was, with long rallies and ever changing hands. Scott & Weaver did indeed win, to make it a double for Durham. The big crowds were drawn to the Plate matches, where Oxford's Lena Barton & Aaditya Deshmukh reached the final against the scratch pair of Ben Jourdan (with a very sore back) and Katie Oswald, a top-flight Eton Fives player at Bristol University. Lena and Aaditya exited the court at the end of the match in a state of rapturous disbelief having pegged their opponents back from 0-8 down to win 12-10.

Huge thanks to all competitors for coming, in many cases, considerable distances to compete, especially to organiser Ben Jourdan who ran the event, founded in 1960 by David Gardner, with a delightfully light touch and a permanent smile.

Results

Singles

1st round: Andrew Shaw (Edin) bt Alex Kessell-Holland (Dur) 15-12, 15-9; Michael Hawkey (Oxf) bt Matias Morgan (Oxf) 15-11, 15-6; Stuart Scott (Dur) bt Abbie Evans (Oxf) 15-2, 15-4; Alikhan Murat (Oxf) bt Antonia Murphy (Oxf) 15-0, 15-1; Archie Leask (Dur) bt Pablo Ortuño (Edin) 15-0, 15-0; Aaditya Deshmukh (Oxf) bt Lena Barton (Oxf) w/o; Adam Hutchinson (Oxf) bt Enkhtamir Erdenebulgan (Oxf) 15-0, 15-0; Vivek Thakrar (Oxf) bt Juliana Murphy (Cam) 15-0, 15-1; Tyler Crowley (Oxf) bt Robert-Antonio Menhart (Cam) w/o; Harry Turner (Oxf) bt James Stevenson (Dur) 15-0, 15-2.

2nd round: Joe Sumner (KCL) bt Shaw 15-0, 15-3; Scott bt Hawkey 15-2, 15-3; Murat bt Marcus Cloke Browne (Cam) w/o; Freddie Kottler (Cam) bt Leask 15-1, 15-3; Isaac Weaver (Dur) bt Deshmukh 15-1, 15-0; Thakrar bt Hutchinson 15-3, 15-7; Aiden Whitham (Oxf) bt Crowley 15-0, 15-0; Teddy Monro-Davies (Oxf) bt Turner 15-4, 15-3.

Quarter-finals: Sumner bt Scott 15-5, 15-8; Kottler bt Murat 15-0, 15-1; Weaver bt Thakrar 15-5, 15-0; Whitham bt Monro-Davies 15-3, 15-1.

Semi-finals: Sumner bt Kottler 15-3, 15-2; Weaver bt Whitham 15-2, 15-5.

Final: Weaver (Dur) bt Sumner (KCL) 15-12, 15-6.

Plate semi-finals: Hawkey bt Deshmukh 15-3; Turner bt Hutchinson 16-15.

Plate Final: Hawkey (Oxf) bt Turner (Oxf) 16-15.

Doubles

1st round: A Hutchinson & A Whitham (Oxf) bt A Evans & E Erdenebulgan 15-0, 15-0; A Murat & V Thakrar (Oxf) bt A Kessell-Holland & M Morgan (Dur) 15-4, 15-2; M Hawkey & H Turner (Oxf) bt Ortuño & A Shaw (Edin) 15-7, 15-3; J Dare & T Monro-Davies (Oxf) bt B Jourdan (Edin) & K Oswald (Bri) 15-13, 16-15; A Leask & J Stevenson (Dur) bt T Crowley & A Murphy (Oxf) 15-0, 15-0.

Quarter-finals: J Davies & C Low (Bri) bt L Barton & A Deshmukh (Oxf) 15-3, 15-1; Hutchinson & Whitham bt Thakrar & Murat 15-10, 15-7; S Scott & I Weaver (Dur) bt Hawkey & Turner 15-1, 15-3; Dare & Monro-Davies bt Leask & Stevenson 15-7, 15-3

Semi-finals: Davies & Low bt Hutchinson & Whitham 15-2, 16-14; Scott & Weaver bt Dare & Monro-Davies 15-5, 15-1.

Final: Scott & Weaver (Dur) bt Davies & Low (Bri) 15-8, 15-9.

Plate semi-finals: Barton & Deshmukh bt Shaw & Ortuño 12-10; Jourdan & Oswald bt Kessell-Holland & Morgan 11-7.

Plate final: Barton & Deshmukh (Oxf) bt Jourdan (Edin) & Oswald (Bri) 12-10.

National Singles finals

Oundle School

Saturday/Sunday, 3-4 December 2022

STOP PRESS No three-gamers until the final, but two upsets of the seeding in the round of 16, with Dan Grant beating 8th seed Sam Russell and Ben Kirwan defeating 6th seed Ollie Arnold. The four top seeds then duly reached the semi-finals where number 1 seed Ed Kay was unexpectedly knocked out by Ben Beltrami. Dan Tristao beat Will Ellison in his semi-final, so unusually the final consisted of number 2 seed versus number 4, which turned out to be a battle royal. In his first National Singles final Ben Beltrami put up a magnificent display of clean hitting to narrowly win the second game after losing the first easily, then took a 9-3 lead in the third game, only to be pegged back in an extraordinary display of consistency by Dan Tristao, who thus won his seventh National Singles title, and his sixth in a row. Sam Russell meanwhile won the Plate for a second consecutive year.

Organiser Charlie Brooks reports: Dan Tristao retained the National Singles, winning his 7th title and 6th in a row. He now hasn't lost in the tournament since the 2015 final, a remarkable achievement that puts him right up with the very best that have played the game. Having reached the final with relative comfort, it looked like he would be untouchable. Ben Beltrami had other ideas and gave him a real run for his money, and looked to be the favourite at 9-3 ahead in the decider, before Dan eked out the victory.

As a reminder, players have to enter qualifying events to even reach the finals weekend, with over 50 players entering. The top four ranked players in the country were joined by entrants from London (8), Derby (2), and Tiverton (2). Illness and injury prevented the two Edinburgh qualifiers from being at the tournament.

The tournament kicked off at the fantastic Oundle courts with an upset in the very first game. Dan Grant, using his shot-making skills, over-powered 8th seed Sam Russell to book his spot against number one seed Ed Kay in the quarters. In the bottom half of the draw there was another shock. Ben Kirwan was a late replacement after Theo Parker's injury just a few days before the tournament, but looked very much at home in his first ever National Singles finals. He beat Ollie Arnold, this year's South East Open champion, in straight sets, negating that powerful left hand with some precise line and length.

The rest of the last 16 matches went according to seedings, although notable mentions for the three other debutants - Oscar McIntyre, Penn Chai and Addie Chai - who acquitted themselves well in what will undoubtedly be the first of many finals appearances.

The quarter-finals showed glimpses of tight battles, but in the end went the way of the higher seeds, with none of them being put under significant pressure. As is often the case in the longer format of playing to 15, the scores don't always reflect the high quality on show. Many of the quarters had scintillating rallies, with exceptional skill on show from both victors and vanquished.

The tournament was then lit up in the semis by the fourth seed. In the first game, an inspired Ben Beltrami caused the biggest shock of the weekend and became the first finalist outside the top three seeds for over 10 years. His power and shot-making are well known, but it was his speed and anticipation around the court that was as much in evidence against Ed. He was onto everything in a flash and rarely gave his opponent any rest.

In the other half of the draw, a lightning start from Dan never allowed Will to get a foothold. It wasn't until well into the second game, with Dan almost over the line, that the match turned into a classic. All of a sudden, the intensity of the rallies ratcheted up with Will raising his game to, and for a while above, Dan's. Unfortunately for Will, and everyone watching, it was slightly too late and Dan was able to progress to Sunday's denouement.

And so to the final, where Dan once again shot out of the blocks - 15-3 in the first game, experience shining through, and the crowd wondering whether the final would be a damp squib. With nothing to lose, Ben turned the match on its head, wrestled the initiative and smashed his way to the second game 15-13. It was the first

time Dan was under this much pressure, and Ben had all the momentum. This continued when some truly incredible hitting from Ben put him 9-3 up in the decider. At that point, it didn't seem like Ben could lose, such was the range of winners he was producing so consistently - over and over again he found the nicks. But cometh the hour and it was over to Dan to demonstrate why he has won this tournament so many times. He found his top level, tightened the screw and gradually dragged himself level and eventually ahead as Ben couldn't respond. Title number seven, but not without a almighty tussle between two players of very contrasting styles.

The Plate was unsurprisingly a high quality affair, with two top-ten players joined by a variety of youth and different playing styles. Pick of the group stages was Sam Russell's victory over Gwydion Wiseman, 15-14, having saved many match points. That meant he topped the group to set up a juicy encounter with Ollie Arnold in the Plate final. Sam's energy levels seemed to increase after every match and he duly saved his best for last, defending the title taking the trophy back home.

Scores

Round of 16: E Kay (1) bt G Wiseman 15-4, 15-2; D Grant bt S Russell (8) 15-7, 15-4; T Watkinson (5) bt L Keates 15-8, 15-2; B Beltrami (4) bt O McIntyre 15-3, 15-4; W Ellison (3) bt A Chai 15-5, 15-3; B Kirwan bt O Arnold (6) 15-8, 15-8; C Brooks (7) bt P Chai 15-5, 15-4; D Tristao (2) bt J Smith 15-1, 15-4.

Quarter-finals: Kay bt Grant 15-6, 15-5; Beltrami bt Watkinson 15-1,15-7; Ellison bt Kirwan 15-9,15-6; Tristao bt Brooks 15-7, 15-10

Semi-finals: Beltrami bt Kay 15-9, 15-8; Tristao bt Ellison 15-6,15-9

Final: Tristao bt Beltrami 15-3, 13-15, 15-9

Plate: Russell bt Arnold 15-9, 15-3

Challenger at Oundle School

Sunday, 4th December 2022

Bob Dolby reports: 12 players contested the Challenger at Oundle School, forming four groups of 3 from which eight players emerged to contest the title, while the remaining four played for the Plate along with quarter-final losers. There were six players from Stamford School, whose most experienced player, Chase Burgess, reached the semi-final; Oundle School, Christ's Hospital and Cambridge University were represented by one player each, Nottingham University by two. Eventually it was our National Ladies Champion, Louise Mathias, who reached the final after a very close semi-final against Chase, while in the other half of the draw Simon Beattie came through. Simon, who is a member of the City of Durham Fives Club, currently playing his Fives with the Derby Moor Club while a student at Nottingham University, proved too strong for Louise in a match that lasted longer and was closer than the eventual score suggests.

The RFA's thanks go to Ollie Arnold for livestreaming the final, to Alex Smith for running the event, and to Oundle School for hosting us on their immaculate courts.

Scores

Quarter-finals: S Beattie bt L O'Connor 11-0; R Menhart bt C McNaughton 11-8; C Burgess bt C Lacewing 12-10; L Mathias bt H Jones 11-3

Semi-finals: S Beattie bt R Menhart 15-4; L Mathias bt C Burgess 16-14

Final: S Beattie bt L Mathias 15-6

Plate: C Lacewing bt C McNaughton 15-2

Updated National Singles Rankings

December 2022

Following his sixth consecutive National Singles title, Dan Tristao has returned to the top of the newly updated rankings, compiled by Will Ellison. Dan does just enough to overtake Ed Kay, who lost in the semi-finals at Oundle. There was some speculation about whether Ed's conqueror, Ben Beltrami, could break into the top three on the back of his

appearance in the final of the National Singles. But, while he did close the gap to third-placed Will, he hasn't yet done enough to overtake him.

Otherwise, with the last 16 of the nationals broadly following the seedings, there was little movement elsewhere in the top 10. However, lower down, Oscar McIntyre moves into the top 20 for the first time, while Ben Kirwan climbs eight places to 21st, and Penn Chai jumps 30 places to 38th.

The new rankings also take into account the Challenger tournament that was held on the same day as the final of the National Singles – and the two finalists, Simon Beattie and Louise Mathias, climb up the rankings, to 30th and 37th respectively. However, given that the latest tournaments included singles events only, there has been no change in the Doubles rankings, where Will Ellison remains comfortably at Number One.

		SINGLES Top 10					DOUBLES Top 10		
Current	Previous	Name	Points		Current	Previous	Name	Points	
1	2	D Tristao	95.7		1	1	W Ellison	101.2	
2	1	E Kay	94.2		2	4	O Arnold	90.6	
3	3	W Ellison	86.5		3	2	E Kay	87.7	
4	4	B Beltrami	79.9		4	6	B Beltrami	84.1	
5	5	T Watkinson	53.9		5	3	D Tristao	83.4	
6	6	J Aquilina	52.5		6	5	C Brooks	79.0	
7	7	O Arnold	50.7		7	7	T Parker	68.0	
8	8	A Boyd	48.2		8	11	J Aquilina	63.3	
9	10	C Brooks	43.7		9	10	T Watkinson	60.4	
10	9	S Russell	43.6		10	14	S Russell	53.2	

The National Ladies U23 Championships

St Paul's School; Saturday, 11th December 2022

STOP PRESS St Paul's witnessed a superb Ladies U23 tournament this weekend, with players from all over the UK converging on London in possibly the strongest entry in this event's short history. No less than 13 players took part in the Singles, and there were six pairs in the Doubles, all superbly organised by Ibbey Lee.

The Singles championship was won in imperious fashion by National Schoolgirls U18 champion Camille Beattie from the City of Durham club, who conceded just 7 points on her way to the title. However, losing finalist Rosa Ogilvie had her revenge in the Doubles, teaming up with fellow Edinburgh Academy pupil Olivia Smart to record a win over Camille and Imogen Wright — albeit by the narrowest of margins: 16-15.

This is the first time since the inception of the event in 2016 that both titles have been won by players of school age. And surely the first time in any championship where the two plates have been won by sisters!

More than anything, the tournament was a demonstration of the strength of the ladies game at the moment, with entries from past and present Oxford and Cambridge students, as well as girls from Durham and Edinburgh. The big question is how will this talented crop of youngsters fare in the Ladies Nationals, and we'll find out the answer in Manchester next month.

Finally, we say goodbye to Ibbey Lee, who has organised the event for the past two years with a delightfully light touch. Our thanks go to her, to the several family members and friends who came to support the players, to the teams from Edinburgh and Durham who made the long journey to participate, and of course to St Paul's for their customary hospitality.

Scores

Singles

1st round: Olivia Smart bt Lena Barton 15-9; Holly Brown bt Roseanne McNaught-Davies 15-4; Savanna Leboff bt Haulwen Goldie-Jones 15-0; Rosa Ogilvie bt Hally Barton 15-2; Imogen Wright w/o Abbie Evans; Viola King Forbes bt Antonia Murphy 15-0

Quarter-finals: Camille Beattie bt Smart 15-0; Brown bt Leboff 15-10; Ogilvie bt Ibbey Lee 15-6; Wright bt King Forbes 15-2

Semi-finals: Beattie bt Brown 15-1; Ogilvie bt Wright 15-1

Final: Beattie bt Ogilvie 15-6

Plate: 1st Lena Barton 44 pts; **2nd** Hally Barton 38 pts; **3rd** Roseanne McNaught-Davies 33 pts; **4th** Antonia Murphy 12 pts; **5th** Haulwen Goldie-Jones 3 pts

2nd Plate: 1st Ibbey Lee 22 pts; **2nd** Viola King Forbes and Olivia Smart 16 pts. Savanna Leboff withdrew

Doubles

Quarter-finals: Holly Brown & Roseanne McNaught-Davies bt Hally Barton & Lena Barton 15-10; Rosa Ogilvie & Olivia Smart bt Haulwen Goldie-Jones & Antonia Murphy 15-0

Semi-finals: Camille Beattie & Imogen Wright bt Brown & McNaught-Davies 15-0; Ogilvie & Smart bt Viola King Forbes & Savanna Leboff 15-4

Final: Ogilvie & Smart bt Beattie & Wright 16-15

Plate: 1st: Barton & Barton 33 pts; **2nd** King Forbes & Leboff 30 pts; **3rd** Brown & McNaught-Davies 23 pts; **4th** Goldie-Jones & Murphy 1 pt

The President's Cup

Marlborough College

Sunday, 11th December 2022

Organiser Hamish Buchanan reports an excellent and record-breaking President's Cup, held once more on the courts of Marlborough College. The entry comprised the youngest 32 players of the last 30+ years, so almost certainly ever. It was the youngest final ever, with an average age of around 20. All four winners were mixed pairs; the main final and the Love Mug had two mixed pairs. Helena Tunks is the second woman to win the President's Cup — after Martha Nugent in 2018. Abbie Evans and Maddi Gibson (with separate partners) won trophies in their first ever RFA tournament. There was a full complement of 32 players, with seven from the Marlborough Town Club; two players were drafted in at less than 2 hours' notice after the snow halted two coming from the west. The trophy was resplendent on its new base, and there were new engraved crystal tumblers for the winners., who were as follows:

The President's Cup: Helena Tunks & Gwydion Wiseman beat Martha Nugent & Marcus Cloke Browne.

The Mate's Plate: Louise Mathias & Laurence Cook beat Bruce Hanton & Simon Hendry.

The Love Mug: Maddi Gibson & Ben Chua beat Savanna Leboff & Lewis Keates.

The T-Pot: Abbie Evans & Tom Watkinson beat Richard Christie & Sarthak Garella.

Also played: Will Bishop & Chris Davey; Joe Garratt & Ed Crichton; Tim Bury & Charlie Lacewing; Ollie Arnold & Julie McIntyre; Harvey Bishop & Alex Dorokhov; Toby Bury & Stuart Scott; Alex Smith & Nick Whitney; Tim Hebblethwaite & Adam Piekos.

1st Azkarate (Basque) Memorial Tournament

San Ignacio Sports Centre, Bilbao, Spain

4th December 2022

Egoitz Campo reports: This Rugby Fives tournament, held on the squash court of the San Ignacio Sports Centre, was to honour the memory of Hilario Azkarate (1935 -2012), a Basque handball (Pelota Vasca) player of the 1960s, the first winner of 6 individual titles. There were five competitors, three from the Basque region, another Spaniard, and one Nicaraguan.

The Singles tournament was played as a round robin with games played to 8 points. Egoitz Campo, the organiser, won all his games and was the overall winner.

The final classification was 1-Egoitz Campo (Basque Country), 2-Diego Martínez (Spain), 3-Alex Martínez (Nicaragua), 4-Joseba Zubiaurre (Basque Country), 5-Samuel Otero (Basque Country). A doubles match was also played, in which Diego and Alex beat Egoitz and Samuel 10-7. The group plan to organise a second Basque Singles Fives Championship in April.

Updated Women's Rankings

January 2023

The RFA is delighted to publish the latest Women's Rankings by courtesy of Chris Burrows. They have been updated with results from the Durham Ladies Championships in October and the National Ladies U23 Championships in December. 59 players are ranked in Singles and 63 in Doubles.

There has been considerable movement in the top 20 of each category (see below) as a number of players from the universities and U18 players from the City of Durham Club and the Edinburgh Academy in particular have enjoyed success in one or both of the relevant ranking events. Young players from across the country have made significant advances below the top 20 also.

The full rankings can be seen at <https://therfa.uk/rankings/>

The next ranking event takes place this coming weekend on the courts of the Manchester Y Club: the Ladies' National Championships. We look forward to seeing a mix of young challengers and experienced adults taking part in this event.

Women's Rankings January 2023

SINGLES Top 20				DOUBLES Top 20			
<i>Current</i>	<i>Previous</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Points</i>	<i>Current</i>	<i>Previous</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Points</i>
1	1	L Mathias	85.0	1	1	L Mathias	84.8
2	3	C Beattie	80.1	2	2	M Nugent	70.1
3	2	M Nugent	78.7	3	3	S Zhang	68.5
4	4	S Zhang	71.7	4	5	S Leboff	62.1
5	7	I Lee	68.8	5	4	C Beattie	61.5
6	26	R Ogilvie	66.1	6	6	H Tunks	54.2
7	5	M Raynor	64.0	7	28	R Ogilvie	53.8
8	11	H Brown	62.7	8	25	L Barton	52.0
9=	6	K Sumner	62.0	9	32	O Smart	51.4
9=	10	I Wright	62.0	10	7	K Sumner	50.9
11	9	H Nugent	59.8	11	8	M Raynor	47.7
12	12	K Bell	59.7	12=	9	I Lee	47.6
13	8	H Tunks	59.6	12=	9	K Bell	47.6
14	32	L Barton	54.3	14	30	R McNaught Davis	43.5
15	13	S Leboff	53.2	15	19	I Wright	39.5
16	21	V King Forbes	50.9	16	12	H Nugent	37.5
17	14	K Innes	47.8	17	13	J McIntyre	35.6
18	35	O Smart	47.1	18	49	C Clark	33.6
19	15	L Ware	46.1	19	27	H Brown	32.6
20	22	J McIntyre	45.6	20	15	K Hird	31.9

West of England Schools Championships

Sherborne School, Dorset

Saturday/Sunday, 6-7 January 2023

Organiser Ian Jackson reports: 64 players from 9 schools attended these championships and enjoyed much good Fives over the weekend. We are very grateful to Sherborne School for hosting the event, especially as a member of Sherborne staff now needs to be at the courts for the whole time. Nick Scorer took on the lion's share himself and must have called in lots of favours from his colleagues and we are very grateful to each of them.

There appeared to be four quality players in the U16 tournament, two from Winchester and two from Alleyn's. Sadly, the late withdrawal of one of those, Alexander Dorokov from Alleyn's, gave Jeffrey Chan a relatively easy path to the final in the lower half of the singles. The top half of the draw was a little stronger and the top seed Anthony Cloke Browne from Winchester had to work hard to see off the top player from St. Paul's, Freddie Hammond Giles, 11-2, 12-11 in an enthralling quarter-final. The semi-final was an almost exact repeat match but went the other way and Yarin Nagyel from Alleyn's won through 11-4, 11-9 with a very tense end to the second game. Yarin had given a lot in that win and could not quite reproduce the same level in the final the next morning. The first two-thirds of the first game was close but gradually Jeffrey Chan's superior length and line paid dividends and he won comfortably 11-6, 11-1.

While the later rounds were taking place, Sam Roberts, organised an excellent plate competition, which was fiercely contested. The four semi-finalists were two from Tonbridge and one each from Winchester and St. Paul's. The Winchester dominance could not be stopped, and Zach Goulding won the final, beating Joshua Ferro from St. Paul's in a close match 15-12.

The Seniors looked to have an outstanding top seed in Shiloh Wu from Winchester, while the number two seed, Chris Lee, was also from Winchester. With Winchester also having seeds 5 and 6, neutrals were hoping that someone could break this dominance. Theo Vernacchio from Alleyn's came close but could not quite do so in the top half of the draw, losing 11-7, 1-11, 11-9 to Henry Akerman from Winchester. JP Cheng from Winchester survived a scare against the impressive Felix Stone from Blundell's, only coming through 16-15 for a quarter-final place against Max Freudenheim from Tonbridge. It was even closer than the top half where Max finally won 8-11, 11-6, 11-8 in a marathon, to deny Winchester all four semi-finalists. In the top semi-final Shiloh came through easily against a tired Henry Akerman. In the lower half Max showed that he was not quite as tired and pushed the number two seed Chris Lee all the way in another marathon, before succumbing 11-5, 11-12, 11-6. As expected Shiloh Wu won the final comfortably 11-2, 11-1. He played a superb length and line and varied the angles and pace impressively and Chris had no answer to that.

First match losers contested a plate competition. In Pool A Kristians Davins from Derby Moor won all his games and contested the final against Max Fowle from Sherborne, who won all his in Pool B. Kristians just hit the ball a little too hard in the final against a tiring Max and won 15-7.

Second match losers contested a bowl. Felix Stone from Blundell's won his group easily and played Greg Slater from Tonbridge in the final, winning comfortably 15-5.

After the singles all other schools were trying to break the Winchester dominance but knew they faced an uphill task. In the U16s, without Dorokhov, Alleyn's were not as strong and Winchester 2 overcame them comfortably in the bottom semi-final to face their teammates who had overcome St. Paul's 1 in the other semi-final. Both pairs were working the other around the angles at the back of the court in a way not always seen at this level but in the end the two year 11 players were too strong for the two year 10 players in the final and Winchester 1 (Anthony Cloke Browne & Jeffrey Chan) beat Winchester 2 (James Kennedy & Arthur James-Duff) 11-0, 11-3.

The plate competition was contested with rally scoring which made for some close results. Winchester 3 topped Pool A, winning all games, while Stamford 1 just edged out St. Paul's 2 in an extremely close Pool B, despite losing one game. In the final Winchester 3 (McGregor & Goulding) were just too strong for Stamford 1 (Sharpe & McNaughton) winning 15-9.

In the Senior doubles the top four seeds came through to the semi-finals. Winchester 1 were too strong for last year's U16 winners at the West of England, Alleyn's, Theo Vernacchio & Laurie Milner. The other semi-final had the makings of a classic between Tonbridge 1 (Max Freudenheim & Greg Slater) and Winchester 2 (Henry Akerman & JP Cheng). When the first game was sneaked 12-11 by Winchester it certainly started well. Winchester made a few uncharacteristic errors in the second game and Tonbridge capitalised to take that 11-6. The lead swung many times in the final game before

Tonbridge reached the first match point at 10-8. Five match points came and went before Winchester edged ahead 11-10. It took them until their fourth match point to finally close things out 12-10 in the third game of a superb match. The final was a slight anti-climax as the top seeds were relatively fresh while Winchester 2 were exhausted, and JP Cheng was nursing a bad bruise. Winchester 1 (Shiloh Wu & Chris Lee) beat Winchester 2 (Henry Akerman & JP Cheng) 11-1, 11-5.

However, for many, despite the epic semi-final, the highlight of the tournament was the Senior Doubles plate. Seven pairs lost their first match and contested the plate in an all-play-all format. As the afternoon went on it was clear this was going to be very close with three pairs, Derby Moor 1, Blundell's 2 and the scratch pairing of Sheyns (yes, one from Sherborne and one from Alleyn's) contesting things. The last match started just as the epic main semi-final came to an end and Derby Moor took on Sheyns. A win to Derby Moor and they won the plate, whereas a win to Sheyns by 11-9 or more would see Blundell's 2 as winners. They would have been on equal points with Sheyns, but won by virtue of Blundell's winning their head to head. I have never seen the platform as full nor as much enthusiasm for each point and even if the hitting and retrieving may not quite have rivalled the main semi-final, the passion and determination was every bit its equal. Again fortunes fluctuated but, after what seemed an age, Sheyns won 11-10. The organiser was told the awful news that three pairs had tied on 65 points out of 66, each having won one of their two matches against the other pairs. Further calculations ensued to see how many points each pair had conceded. Derby Moor and Blundell's had both conceded 35 but Sheyns had conceded only 33, and so Gareth Kwong from Sherborne and his partner Eli Arie from Alleyn's became the plate champions by the most slender of margins, a result that was almost impossible when the last game started. It was a pity not to be able to have three winners as all three pairs thoroughly deserved to win.

The schools now look forward to a good term of Fives culminating in the Nationals at the end of March when those playing at the West of England Championships will have to take on the players from the rest of country, including the very impressive group coming up through the Edinburgh schools. It was a pleasure running the tournament and the enthusiasm, desire to improve and decency of all the Fives players never ceases to impress me.

Results

U18 Singles

1st round: E Watson (Derby Moor) w/o J Cole (Blundell's); T Gardner (Tonbridge) bt A Upton (Sherborne) 15-9; L Milner (Alleyn's) bt B Aubury (Winchester) 15-5; H Akerman (Winchester) bt L Taor (St Paul's) 15-3; G Slater (Tonbridge) bt J Peake (Sherborne) 15-2; D Wielenga (Blundell's) bt K Davins (Derby Moor) 15-6; T Vernacchio (Alleyn's) bt F Molesworth-St Aubyn (Sherborne) 15-3; G Kwong (Sherborne) bt D Wright (Derby Moor) 15-5; F Stone (Blundell's) bt R Zhou (Winchester) 15-6; J Cheng (Winchester) bt M Fowle (Sherborne) 15-4; C Calzia (St Paul's) bt E Arie (Alleyn's) 15-0; A Rackham (Blundell's) bt R Beard (Sherborne) 15-7; F Edelman (Tonbridge) bt B Robertson (Sherborne) 15-7

2nd round: S Wu (Winchester) bt Watson 15-0; Milner bt Gardner 15-3; Akerman bt Slater 15-12; T Vernacchio bt Wielenga 15-7; M Freudenheim (Tonbridge) bt Kwong 15-0; Cheng bt Stone 16-15; Calzia bt Rackham 15-4; C Lee (Winchester) bt Edelman 15-3

Quarter-finals: Wu bt Milner 11-0, 11-0; Akerman bt Vernacchio 11-7, 1-11, 11-9; Freudenheim bt Cheng 8-11, 11-6, 11-8; Lee bt Calzia 11-9, 11-1

Semi-finals: Wu bt Akerman 11-0, 11-2; Lee bt Freudenheim 11-5, 11-12, 11-6

Final: S Wu (Winchester) bt C Lee (Winchester) 11-2, 11-1

Plate: K Davins (Derby Moor)

Bowl: F Stone (Blundell's)

U18 Doubles

1st round: Blundell's 1 bt Derby Moor 1 11-1, 11-2; Winchester 3 bt Sherborne 1 11-2, 11-2; Alleyn's bt Tonbridge 2 11-6, 11-1; Winchester 2 bt Derby Moor 2 11-0, 11-4; Sherborne 2 bt Marlborough 11-9, 11-9; St Paul's bt Blundell's 2 7-11, 11-9, 11-7; Tonbridge 1 bt Sherborne/Alleyn's 11-1, 11-1

Quarter-finals: Winchester 1 bt Blundell's 1 11-5, 11-1; Alleyn's bt Winchester 3 11-7, 11-3; Winchester 2 bt Sherborne 2 11-0, 11-4; Tonbridge 1 bt St Paul's 11-3, 11-3

Semi-finals: Winchester 1 bt Alleyn's 11-6, 11-3; Winchester 2 bt Tonbridge 1 12-11, 6-11, 12-10

Final: Winchester 1 (C Lee & S Wu) bt Winchester 2 (H Akerman & J Cheng) 11-1, 11-5

Plate: Sherborne/Alleyn's (G Kwong & E Arie)

U16 Singles

1st round: J Ferro (St Paul's) bt A Parkinson (Winchester) 15-1; Z Goulding (Winchester) bt E Richards (Tonbridge) 15-1; M Bilagi (St Paul's) bt O Wilson (Tonbridge) 15-7; C Greaves (Derby Moor) bt A de Vrieze (Winchester) 15-3; E Xiao (Winchester) bt P Monro-Davies (St Paul's) 15-4; O Carroll (Tonbridge) bt E Calzia (St Paul's) 15-3; W Huang (St Paul's) bt H Rogerson (Tonbridge) 15-0

2nd round: A Cloke Browne (Winchester) bt Ferro 15-2; F Hammond Giles (St Paul's) bt Goulding 15-4; J Kennedy (Winchester) bt Bilagi 15-2; Y Negyal (Alleyn's) bt Greaves 15-0; Xiao bt G Louet (Alleyn's) 15-4; A James-Duff (Winchester) bt Carroll 15-4; R McGregor (Winchester) bt J Moesel (Sherborne) 15-0; J Chan (Winchester) bt Huang 15-4

Quarter-finals: Cloke Browne bt Hammond Giles 11-2, 12-11; Negyal bt Kennedy 11-7, 11-5; James-Duff bt Xiao 11-5, 11-4; Chan bt McGregor 11-5, 11-0

Semi-finals: Negyal bt Cloke Browne 11-5, 11-9; Chan bt James-Duff 11-6, 11-2

Final: J Chan (Winchester) bt Y Negyal (Alleyn's) 11-6, 11-1

Plate: Z Goulding (Winchester)

U16 Doubles

1st round: Winchester 1 bt St Paul's 3 11-0, 11-2; Stamford 2 bt Winchester 4 11-5, 11-0; St Paul's 1 bt Stamford 3 11-1, 11-6; Winchester 2 bt Tonbridge 2 11-0, 11-1; Winchester 3 bt Marlborough 11-4, 11-1; St Paul's 2 bt Tonbridge 1 8-11, 11-8, 11-6

Quarter-finals: Winchester 1 bt Stamford 2 11-0, 11-2; St Paul's 1 bt Stamford 1 11-0, 11-0; Winchester 2 bt Winchester 3 11-5, 11-8; Alleyn's bt St Paul's 2 11-1, 11-2

Semi-finals: Winchester 1 bt St Paul's 1 11-0, 11-3; Winchester 2 bt Alleyn's 11-6, 11-2

Final: Winchester 1 (J Chan & A Cloke Browne) bt Winchester 2 (A James-Duff & J Kennedy) 11-0, 11-3

Plate: Winchester 3 (Z Goulding & R McGregor)

Ladies National Rugby Fives Championships

The Y Club, Manchester

Saturday/Sunday, 21-22 January 2023

STOP PRESS Louise Mathias won her fourth consecutive Singles title and, with Shinan Zhang, their fourth consecutive Doubles title at this year's Ladies' National Championships at the Y Club in Manchester. For the first time Camille Beattie, the National U18 and U23 champion, reached the final to play Louise after a very close semi-final indeed against Shinan Zhang. Shinan had the satisfaction, though, of partnering Louise to victory over Camille and her partner Imogen Wright, the U18 champions, in the semi-final of the Doubles, going on to beat first-time finalists Savanna Leboff & Helena Tunks to retain their title.

As ever the Plates were hard fought, with Olivia Smart from the Edinburgh Academy winning the Singles plate in a second game against Eton Fives exponent Rachel Wood, while Durham's pair of Kirsten Bell & Lizzie Ware beat scratch pair Leah Hogarth and Rachel Wood to win the Doubles Plate. Stamford School had both pairs in the Bowl, with Bea Grindal & Tilly Stevens taking the honours.

Organiser Louise Mathias reports: It was fantastic to see so many players come together to compete in the Ladies' National Championships, held at the Y Club in Manchester for the fourth year.

In the singles, a first-round match between Olivia Smart and Savanna Leboff had everyone gripped as they battled out three long games, with Olivia taking the first, before Savanna came back to win the next two, both by 11-9, to take her to the quarter-finals. Rosa Ogilvie, U23s finalist, showed some fantastic competitive play and strength of shot, winning against Imogen Wright, taking her to the semi-finals on her first time at the Nationals. Rosa then faced Louise in the semi-final, but despite some fantastic retrieval was unable to budge the reigning champion. In the other quarter-finals Camille Beattie, the U23 champion, and Shinan Zhang gained comfortable victories over their opponents to meet each other in the second semi-final. This proved another tense and exciting game to watch as, despite Shinan cruising ahead to 10-1 in the first game, Camille dug deep and played some excellent winners to turn the score around to 16-15. The crowds were gathering for what might

be another epic three-gamer; however, Camille managed to pull away for the last few points, winning the second game 15-11. This took her to her first national singles final, in which she would play Louise on the Sunday morning.

The Plate singles competition was also full of some well contested games within two round-robin groups. In the first group, Lizzie Ware cruised through her games to play a semi-final against Olivia Smart, who came a very close runner-up in the second group, losing to Rachel Wood 11-9. Meanwhile Rachel, winner of group two, faced Chrissie Clark in the other semi and maintained a dominant position to take her to the final. The plate final proved an important rematch between Olivia and Rachel, this time with Olivia coming out on top to win her first ever plate singles title 15-13 in another very close and hard-fought game. A big shout-out must go to RFA President Julie McIntyre for her part in the day's play. On top of her helping the organiser, she must be the only sitting President to play in a National Singles in recent memory!

Sunday morning started with the singles final between Louise and Camille, in front of a full gallery. Camille showed no signs of nerves, and quickly dispelled the memory of her one-sided loss to Louise the previous year with some error-free hitting, putting pressure on the defending champion. With relentless retrieval, Louise managed to creep out to 14-8 ahead, only for Camille to switch the pressure straight back with three quick points. Unfortunately, that's where the comeback ended: first set to Louise 15-11. Camille maintained this momentum into the second game, racing to a 4-0 lead in no time; however, Louise was able to draw on her previous experience in halting the younger player's charge. This time the lead was decisive, and Louise sealed her fourth consecutive title with another wrong-footing winner at the front of the court. Huge credit must go to Camille in making this a final to remember; surely she now has the game to win her own national title in the coming years.

After the final, the doubles draw got under way; special mention must go to the group of Stamford girls who travelled up for the play on Sunday. In the main draw, Roseanna & Eleanora, a new Edinburgh/Durham pair, showed great partnership to win against Wendy & Pippa in a great three-gamer. The quarter- and semi-finals all went to seedings, with Rosa & Olivia playing Helena & Savanna in a very closely matched semi-final. Despite serving at 'game-ball' down in the first game, Helena & Savanna held their nerve to inch to victory 16-14. They then went on to take the second game 15-12 after some intense rallies with strong hitting from both sides. In the other semi-final, Camille & Imogen produced some great play, with Imogen finding some lovely left-hand nicks; however, Louise & Shinan remained in control to take them to their fourth final together. The final versus Helena & Savanna was a one-way show, with Louise & Shinan dominating the winner-count to successfully defend their title once again.

In the doubles plate, it was Leah & Rachel and Lizzie & Kirsten who came top of their respective group to go straight into a final. Here Lizzie and Kirsten showed great attacking play and good movement to win 15-5.

Many thanks go to The Y Club for hosting the tournament yet again, and to all the players for an excellent weekend of fives!

Results

Singles

Preliminary round: C Clark bt P Dobney 11-8, 11-5

1st round: L Mathias bt E Vallascas 11-0, 11-0; S Leboff bt O Smart 10-12, 11-9, 11-9; I Wright bt R McNaught-Davis 11-6, 11-0; R Ogilvie bt Clark 11-2, 11-0; S Zhang bt C Davidson 11-0, 11-0; K Bell bt J McIntyre 11-2, 11-0; H Tunks bt L Ware 11-5, 11-3; C Beattie bt R Wood 11-0, 11-1

Quarter-finals: Mathias bt Leboff 15-2, 15-1; Ogilvie bt Wright 15-1, 15-6; Zhang bt Bell 15-2, 15-1; Beattie bt Tunks 15-3, 15-0

Semi-finals: Mathias bt Ogilvie 15-1, 15-0; Beattie bt Zhang 16-15, 15-11

Final: L Mathias bt C Beattie 15-11, 15-8

Plate: O Smart bt R Wood 15-13

Doubles

1st round: C Clark & C Davidson bt B Grindal & T Stevens 11-2, 11-4; R McNaught-Davis & E Vallascas bt P Dobney & W Nicholls 9-11, 11-4, 11-7; L Hogarth & R Wood bt E Tyler & R Wright 11-2, 11-4

Quarter-finals: L Mathias & S Zhang bt Clark & Davidson 15-0, 15-0; C Beattie & I Wright bt K Bell & L Ware 15-6, 15-12; R Ogilvie & O Smart bt McNaught-Davis & Vallascas 15-0, 15-2; S Leboff & H Tunks bt Hogarth & Wood 15-2, 15-3

Semi-finals: Mathias & Zhang bt Beattie & I Wright 15-7, 15-1; Leboff & Tunks bt Ogilvie & Smart 16-14, 15-12

Final: L Mathias & S Zhang bt S Leboff & H Tunks 15-5, 15-2

Plate: K Bell & L Ware bt L Hogarth & R Wood 15-5

Bowl: B Grindal & T Stevens bt E Tyler & R Wright 15-9

National U25 Championships

Oundle School

Saturday/Sunday, 28-29 January 2023

STOP PRESS Derby Moor Club's Lewis Keates won the Singles at the National U25 Championships, beating Cameron Low from the West of England Club in the final. Lewis then went on to win the Doubles title with clubmate Bally Singh, this time against Cameron and his partner Archie McCreath. Both Plates went to Oxford University, Louis Odgers winning the Singles and Vivek Thakrar & Harry Turner the Doubles. Young players from Stamford School won both the traditional PlatePlates (for losers in first round matches): Hari Jones the Singles, and Rory Jones & Charlie Burrows the Doubles. 21 players contested the Singles and 20 pairs the Doubles. Warmest thanks go to Joe Sumner for organising and to Oundle School for hosting.

Organiser Joe Sumner reports: On the last weekend of January, the National Under 25s returned to Oundle School after last having been played there in 2020. With some big names no longer eligible by age this year, the draw promised an exciting tournament with a lot of players very evenly matched.

The Singles started early on Saturday morning, and the seeded players made swift progress through to the quarter-finals. Special mention should go to young Charlie Lacewing from Christ's Hospital, who put in a very impressive performance against Joe Sumner, which can probably partly be attributed to the amount of time he appears to have spent in the gym recently! In the quarters, everything again went to seeding, except, typically, for Joe who was outplayed by Gwydion Wiseman in a two hour plus three-game marathon. This set up interesting semi-finals of Lewis Keates against Addie Chai, and Cameron Low versus Gwydion.

After going 8-1 down against Addie in the first, Lewis eventually overcame what appeared to be a tiring opponent relatively easily in two games. In the other match, Gwydion couldn't quite reach the level he had displayed in the previous round, and Cameron, with his deceptively relaxed style of play, was able to win through comfortably in two games (although it must be said, looking a bit worse for wear by the end). Thus, the final was set: First seed – Lewis Keates, against Second seed – Cameron Low, the match to be played Sunday morning.

Running alongside the main competition was the Plate and the 'PlatePlate' for those who lost in the second round and first round respectively. The Plate was a very high-quality affair and eventually what emerged was an all-Oxford final of Louis Odgers versus Teddy Monro-Davies. It produced an excellent game between two players who know each other well, which Louis eventually just edged 16-15. The PlatePlate (an U25s tradition) was contested mostly by young school-age players, who all showed a lot of promise; In the end, Hari Jones from Stamford School outplayed the competition to deservedly claim his prize.

Sunday morning, most were wanting to watch the Singles final. Once this started, it soon became obvious that Cameron hadn't recovered from the previous day's play, and Lewis was able to win fairly comfortably in two games.

The Doubles then kicked into action and, as per seeding, eventually produced semi-final line-ups of Cameron Low & Archie McCreath against scratch pair Gwydion Wiseman & Marcus Cloke Browne, with Lewis Keates & Bally Singh playing Addie Chai & Joe Sumner. Both games went the distance, with Cameron & Archie coming through 14-16, 15-7, 15-5, and Lewis & Bally winning 15-13, 11-15, 15-12.

The same format as for the Singles, the Doubles Plate was contested by those who had lost in the second round. After some tough games, it ended up producing the Varsity-preview final of Oxford's Vivek Thakrar & Harry Turner against Cambridge's Emrys Thursfield & Savanna Leboff. Credit must go to Emrys for playing with his damaged ankle, and to

Savanna who, as with all the ladies who played, has improved dramatically over the last few years. However, in the end, Vivek & Harry deservedly took the win 11-5, 6-11, 11-9, giving Oxford the double in the plates. The PlatePlate was again for those who lost in the first round, and was another all-schoolboy affair. In the end, it was Charlie Burrows & Rory Jones from Stamford School who won, meaning Stamford returned home with both PlatePlate titles!

Owing to the length of the main competition semi-finals (and to how tired some of the players were), it was very late when the final eventually got going. Cameron & Archie started well, and took the first game relatively easily 15-4. However, Cameron's obvious exhaustion, and perhaps Bob Dolby's inter-game Derby Moor pep talk, seemed to help rally Lewis and Bally, who managed to take the second 15-9. The deciding game was very exciting to watch; If there's one thing that's certain in fives, it's that Derby Moor players will hit the ball hard, but Cameron and Archie matched it well. The game eventually got to 14-14, and then 15-14 championship point for Cameron & Archie. Cameron thought he'd won and stopped playing when Bally appeared to hit the bar, but the players eventually agreed that the bar was not hit – no let! Lewis & Bally won the next point – 15-15, championship point for them, which they converted, winning the final 4-15, 15-9, 16-15! Congratulations to Bally, and even more so to Lewis for winning both titles – he showed impressive fitness across the whole weekend, and the two titles were a massive achievement for him.

Well done to everyone that took part this year, it was a great competition. Quick mention for a few players; Isaac Weaver and Marcus Cloke Browne – I think both of these guys will be turning into top players in the open circuit over the next couple of years. Gwydion – doesn't really need a mention, but title contender next year? All the school players – you all played extremely well and should be very proud of yourselves; keep playing and it could be you winning the trophy in the not-too-distant future.

Thank you to Alex Smith for helping to run the Plate competitions, and especially to Bob Dolby and Chris Blakeley for all their help. Thank you to NoLimitz (Bedford) for your excellent work doing the tournament shirts. Thank you to all the parents and teachers that came as support/taxi drivers!

And finally, massive thanks to Oundle School and Victoria Brown for hosting us – a lot of work behind the scenes was put in by Victoria and others at the school to allow this event to take place, so on behalf of everyone who was at the tournament, thank you!

See you all next year.

Results

Singles

1st round: A Murat bt M Ho 15-2; H Turner bt L O'Connor 15-1; V Thakrar bt A Nazim 15-2; A Hutchinson bt H Jones 15-4; C Lacewing bt B Luttmann-Johnson 15-0

2nd round: L Keates bt Murat 15-1, 15-0; M Cloke Browne bt L Odgers 15-9, 15-1; A Chai bt Turner 15-0, 15-1; S Beattie bt Thakrar 15-9, 15-1; C Low bt Hutchinson 15-1, 15-0; I Weaver bt V Singh 15-5, 15-2; J Sumner bt Lacewing 15-8, 15-6; G Wiseman bt T Monro-Davies 15-2, 15-2

Quarter-finals: Keates bt Cloke Browne 15-10, 15-10; Chai bt Beattie 15-2, 15-7; Low bt Weaver 15-9, 15-11; Wiseman bt Sumner 15-5, 15-16, 15-5

Semi-finals: Keates bt Chai 15-12, 15-4; Low bt Wiseman 15-6, 15-8

Final: L Keates bt C Low 15-11, 15-3

1st Plate: 1st L Odgers; 2nd T Monro-Davies; 3rd C Lacewing

PlatePlate: H Jones

Doubles

1st round: R Hunter & H Jones bt C Lacewing & L O'Connor 15-11; A Hutchinson & A Murat bt B Luttmann-Johnson & A Nazim 15-0; C McNaughton & C Sharpe bt A Kiesal & M Ho 15-3; C Burgess & O Collett bt C Burrows & R Jones 15-7

2nd round: C Low & A McCreath bt Hunter & Jones 15-1, 15-0; T Monro-Davies & L Odgers bt H Nugent & B Yass 15-2, 15-1; M Cloke Browne & G Wiseman bt Hutchinson & Murat 15-4, 15-3; A Ahuja & E Pyman bt V Thakrar & H Turner 13-15, 15-10, 16-15; L Keates & B Singh bt McNaughton & Sharpe 15-3, 15-1; S Beattie & V Singh bt S Leboff & E Thursfield 15-8, 15-6; A Chai & J Sumner bt Burgess & Collett 15-0, 15-1; S Garella & H Tunks bt T Cowin & H Wright 15-4, 15-2

Quarter-finals: Low & McCreath bt Monro-Davies & Odgers 15-8, 15-2; Cloke Browne & Wiseman bt Ahuja & Pyman

15-0, 15-1; Keates & B Singh bt Beattie & V Singh 15-11, 15-8; Chai & Sumner bt Garella & Tunks 15-0, 15-2
Semi-finals: Low & McCreath bt Cloke Browne & Wiseman 14-16, 15-7, 15-5; Keates & Singh bt Chai & Sumner 15-13; 11-15, 15-12
Final: L Keates & B Singh bt C Low & A McCreath 4-15, 15-9, 16-15
Plate: V Thakrar & H Turner bt S Leboff & E Thursfield 11-5, 6-11, 11-9
PlatePlate: C Burrows & R Jones

South East Schools Regional Championships

Tonbridge School

Saturday, 4th February 2023

Tonbridge hosted Eastbourne, Christ's Hospital and St. Olave's for the 11th South East Regionals. All those schools look forward to welcoming Whitgift and St. Dunstan's back in the next couple of years. The slightly smaller numbers did not detract from the quality of the play, and it was good to welcome many spectators too, on a day when the weather was fine and not too cold.

The Senior Singles looked like being a battle between Genesis Nsenga from St. Olave's (losing finalist in 2022) and Max Freudenheim from Tonbridge (semi-finalist at the West of England). So it turned out as both won their semi-finals easily. There were many long rallies in the final, but Max had no answer to Genesis's power on both wings. Genesis becomes the first winner from St. Olave's at this tournament. The senior Plate was well contested in an all-play-all format, and the deciding game was between two Tonbridgians, in which Alex Woolf overcame Thomas Gardner in a very long and close encounter.

The U16 Singles contained both of last year's finalists in the draw and it looked like a repeat of last year's final. This was again the case and Oliver Woolf from Tonbridge and Charlie Lacewing from Christ's Hospital progressed fairly comfortably to their second final. The final showed how much Charlie had improved playing with adult group at Christ's Hospital and his superior line and length meant Oliver could not bring his powerful right hand into play often enough to trouble Charlie, who came through to a comfortable victory, also the first time this title has been won by a player from his school. There was also good competition in the Plate, with Oliver Wilson from Tonbridge having a few too many shots for the others. Harry Hemming from Eastbourne just pipped his doubles partner Dexter Bell for the number two place.

After a good lunch it was time for the Doubles, which was played in all-play-all format. The key game in the senior doubles was between the top pairs from Tonbridge and Christ's Hospital. Greg Slater & Max Freudenheim were too clinical for Christ's Hospital's pair and deservedly retained that trophy for Tonbridge. The U16 competition looked to have a great deciding game in prospect, with Charlie Lacewing trying to dominate for Christ's Hospital against the more evenly matched pair of Oliver Woolf & Oliver Wilson from Tonbridge. It was very close for a long time but at the crucial moments the Tonbridge pair managed to vary their line with enough accuracy to stop Charlie dominating and they deserved their very close win.

Results

U18 Singles

Final: G Nsenga (St Olave's) bt M Freudenheim (Tonbridge) 11-3, 11-5

Plate: A Woolf (Tonbridge)

U18 Doubles

1st: Tonbridge (M Freudenheim & G Slater); **2nd:** Christ's Hospital (O van Huet Lindeman & J Durant)

U16 Singles

Final: C Lacewing (Christ's Hospital) bt O Woolf (Tonbridge) 11-2, 11-4

Plate: O Wilson (Tonbridge)

U16 Doubles

1st: Tonbridge (O Wilson & O Woolf); **2nd:** Christ's Hospital (C Lacewing and T Pender)

Northern Schools Regional Championships

Durham University Courts, The Racecourse

Saturday, 4th February 2023

Organiser Julie McIntyre reports: Entrants from Sedbergh School, Manchester Y Club and the City of Durham Fives Club took part in the RFA Northern Schools' tournament this year. Durham provided two female entrants, continuing the trend of mixed games which has been a feature of RFA competitions this season.

Sedbergh (Archie Glover) and Manchester (Val Fikhter) provided the gold medal winners this year in the U18 and U16 categories, with a very strong showing from both players. The entry numbers meant that the two rounds were played across both age groups, with Archie and Val having a close match in the second group. Eleanora Vallascas of Durham used all her skill, despite being the youngest competitor, to battle through to the U16 bronze in the third group.

The U18 doubles final was a highly entertaining arm-wrestle between Archie Glover & Sam Follett from Sedbergh, and Imogen Wright & Val Fikhter, a scratch pair from Durham and Manchester, which went to Sedbergh 11-12, 11-8, 12-10!

A merit point also goes to Mr Follett for being the oldest competitor in the U16 doubles, in order to make sure everyone could compete.

All games were played in the proper spirit, and a special mention goes to Phoenix Ogilvie-Robertson and Nico Sorrosal for keeping the fun in Fives.

Results

Singles

U18 Gold: A Glover (Sedbergh)

U18 Silver: S Follett (Sedbergh)

U18 Bronze: I Wright (City of Durham)

U16 Gold: V Fikhter (Manchester Y Club)

U16 Silver: O Griffin (Sedbergh)

U16 Bronze: E Vallascas (City of Durham)

Doubles

U18 Gold: A Glover & S Follett (Sedbergh)

U18 Silver: Not awarded

U18 Bronze: V Fikhter & I Wright (Manchester/Durham)

U16 Gold: O Griffin & E Williams (Sedbergh)

U16 Silver: P Ogilvie-Robertson & N Sorrosal (Sedbergh)

U16 Bronze: R Follett & E Vallascas (Sedbergh/Durham)

North West Open Championships

Manchester Y Club

Saturday/Sunday, 11-12 February 2023

STOP PRESS It was a double once again for Will Ellison, who beat Ben Beltrami in the Singles and paired up with Theo Parker to win the Doubles against Ben and his partner Ollie Arnold. The Plates went to Ben Kirwan for Singles and to organiser Dave Fox and his partner Marco Skogh in the Doubles.

Results

Singles

1st round: W Ellison bt S Watson 11-1, 11-1; L Keates bt T Parker 4-11, ret.; C Brooks bt A Goodwin 11-4, 11-3; O Arnold bt M Skogh 11-4, 11-8; J Aquilina bt V Fikhter 11-0, 11-5; S Russell bt O McIntyre 11-6, 11-6; D Grant bt B Kirwan 10-12, 11-7, 11-7; B Beltrami bt C Yates 11-0, 11-1

Quarter-finals: Ellison bt Keates 11-4, 11-5; Brooks bt Arnold 11-6, 11-5; Aquilina bt Russell 11-5, 11-3; Beltrami bt Grant 9-11, 11-4, 11-8

Semi-finals: Ellison bt Brooks 11-2, 11-1; Beltrami bt Aquilina 11-3, 11-2

Final: W Ellison bt B Beltrami 10-12, 11-9, 11-1

Plate: B Kirwan bt O McIntyre

Doubles

1st round: O McIntyre & E Wardle bt V Fikhter & C Yates 11-6, 11-4

Quarter-finals: W Ellison & T Parker w/o; C Brooks & D Grant bt L Keates & B Singh 11-5, 11-5; J Aquilina & S Russell bt D Fox & M Skogh 11-5, 11-3; O Arnold & B Beltrami bt McIntyre & Wardle 11-2, 11-0

Semi-finals: Ellison & Parker bt Brooks & Grant 5-11, 11-1, 11-2; Arnold & Beltrami bt Aquilina & Russell 11-1, 11-2

Final: Ellison & Parker bt Arnold & Beltrami 12-10, 11-4

Plate: Fox & Skogh bt Keates & Singh 16-15

Oxford and Cambridge Past versus Present

London and Cambridge

Saturday, 11th February 2023

*Nick Whitney reports for **Oxford University**:* The 37th Oxford Past v. Present match took place at St Paul's School on Saturday with fixtures for the Men's VIII, Beavers IV, and a Women's VI.

Proceedings started with Singles for the Men's VIII. All 8 games were closely contested — a highlight being a marathon grudge match between brothers Dan Whitham (Past) and Aiden Whitham (Present) eventually going the way of Dan 15-10. This contributed to the Past winning 5 of the 8 singles games, and taking a 3 point lead going into the doubles.

The afternoon's Doubles games were similarly fiercely contested. The top two pairs for the Present, Teddy Monro-Davies & Louis Odgers and Aiden Whitham & Jamie Dare each picked up wins against their opposite Past pairs of Sam Roberts & Sid Bhushan and Tom Owen & Dan Whitham. However, the depth of the Past team came to the fore in the 3rd and 4th pairs, with all match going to the Past, despite some very close run games — notably Present's Vivek Thakrar & Harry Turner narrowly missing out to the Past's Matt Hale & Nick Whitney 16-14 in both games. The final score was 302-263, meaning that the Mackenzie Bowl was won by the Past for another year.

The Beavers fixture also went to the Past, led by Brian Elfick, who was returning to playing after about 10 years away from the game.

The Women's Match was contested as a set of exhibition singles matches followed by a round-robin tournament, including some mixed doubles pairs loaned from the Past. The winning pair was a Past-Present hybrid of Phoebe Thornhill & Tami Erdenebulgan, who dropped only a single game across the course of the day.

The day was rounded off with a dinner at Queen's Club, where we gave the Present team our best wishes for the upcoming Varsity Match.

*Bob Dolby reports for **Cambridge University**:* The 74th Past versus Present was notable not only for the large number of Past players who volunteered to play but also for the number of young players attending, and playing in, their first PvP. With George Crawley and Ben Yass unavailable to play, the Present Men fielded 6 first-time players out of 9. With top-ranked players like Matt Shaw and 4 former Captains playing for the Past it was no surprise that the 8 Singles went the way of the Past but only by 5 contests to 3.

Inevitably the Doubles likewise favoured the Past's greater experience and also the usual fact that the Past were able to give match time to 13 players while the Present VIII necessarily played every game. Andy Olliver & Rupert Mathieu were the only past pair asked to play four games of Doubles, which they did undefeated, while Ian Steed also did the full quota, partnering first Jack Malde, then Tim Hennock. For the Present Emrys Thursfield & Marcus Cloke Browne, Zhanibek Nurzhanuly & Ben Burgess, and Jack Pyman & Robert Menhart did their bit in winning substantial points but in the final analysis the match was always destined to go the way of the Past.

In the Women's Match the Past were able to field 4 players and the Present 6, so various contests were concocted, the outstanding one of which was Holly Nugent taking on Helena Tunks: this match was predictably close, Holly winning for

the Present 15-13. Not all results of games were recorded, as a great deal of coaching went on, but the Past were predictably the stronger, with Savanna Leboff, Cameron Roker and Sophie Kenny passing on their knowledge and experience to the Present, four of whom were new to the fixture. A Mixed Doubles tournament was also slotted in, with Savanna Leboff's V winning the Ted Isaacs Trophy.

The Dinner was held once more in Pembroke College, with 46 people enjoying superb food. A few words were spoken by the President and the Captain, and a toast was raised to absent and departed Sparrows, with Jock Burnet foremost in mind.

The Varsity Match 2023

St Paul's School, Barnes

Saturday, 18th February 2023

After several seasons of comfortable victories for the Oxford Men and the Cambridge Women respectively this year's contests produced much closer results.

In the Men's Match Oxford posted a lead of just 19 points after the eight Singles matches, then went on to muster a further 15 points in the Doubles with just two games to play. Time had by then run out, so it was agreed by both sides after discussion with Match Referee Marcus Bate to conclude the match, with Teddy Monro-Davies's Oxford victorious by an unassailable 34 points, 279 to 245. It was a sixth victory in a row for the Dark Blues.

The Beavers versus Sparrows match also went Oxford's way, as it has done for a number of seasons, but again Cambridge were able to mount a substantial challenge in the top matches and accrue a higher total of points than for some years, losing by 84-151.

Though the Women's Match did not have quite the same air of tension as the Men's, it was good to see the Oxford Women achieve a much higher score than in all previous encounters, with left-handed Lena Barton bringing a new dimension to Oxford's play in a match which the Cambridge Women won by 151-94, making it eight consecutive wins. It was not possible to stage a full Women's Reserves Match.

The North of England Open

Durham Racecourse

Saturday/Sunday, 25-26 February 2023

STOP PRESS In a strong field Ed Kay was successful in retaining his Singles title, winning it in the expected final against Dan Tristao for a third consecutive time. Dan got his reward in the Doubles, which he won for a fourth time, with his third partner, Dan Grant, at the expense of two-time defending champions Ollie Arnold & Ben Beltrami in a tense three-gamer. Max Bolt, Alleyn Old Boy and student at Manchester University, won the Singles Plate, and Ben Jourdan paired up with Lewis Keates to win the Doubles Plate. Warm thanks go to organiser Julian Aquilina and to RFA President Julie McIntyre and her City of Durham Fives Club for hosting this tournament, which traditionally attracts a top-class entry.

Organiser Julian Aquilina reports: Ed Kay successfully defended his singles title to retain the Ferens Trophy for the third time in a row, beating Dan Tristao in an epic 3-game final. Dan still came away from the tournament as a champion though, pairing up with Dan Grant to win the Fuller Cup. It was DT's fourth doubles trophy in Durham, and DG's first.

The Singles on Saturday featured 24 players, with six Durham University students joined by competitors from all over the country — Edinburgh, Manchester, Derby, Tiverton, Cambridge, and London.

Progress through the first three rounds, including the quarter-finals, was relatively straightforward. The only 3-gamer up to that point was between Ben Jourdan and Dan Grant in the second round, with Ben playing a blinder to nab the first game 12-10 before Dan surged to victory. Meanwhile, Ben Kirwan upset the seedings to take out Ollie Arnold (as he did at the National Singles), and Richie Murby and Tom Watkinson did well to suppress spirited performances from Lewis Keates and Isaac Weaver respectively.

The top four seeds faced off in the semi-finals, and after a fairly comfortable first game for each of the top two seeds (Dan Tristao and Ed Kay), Tom Watkinson and Ben Beltrami turned their fortunes around to level both matches at 1-game-all.

However, in the deciders, Dan and Ed were simply too good, setting up a repeat of the 2019 final. Although 2019's final had been very one-sided in Ed's favour, the spectators all expected a close match this time round, and the gallery was packed for the 7pm start time.

True to its promise, the final was full of fast and furious rallies, with amazing displays of shot-making and unbelievable foot speed and retrieval from both players. Dan constantly made use of all four corners of the court, bringing Ed forward with dropshots time and time again, but Ed was more than up to the challenge, and he took the first game 11-7. The intensity ratcheted up and up in the second game, with even more extraordinary movement on display and a dramatic finish seeing Dan clinch it 12-11 to force a decider. However, Ed brought the match under control in the third, finding more nicks and punishing more dropshots, and after exactly one hour he sealed victory with a return winner, 11-4. That's now three singles titles from three campaigns at the North of England for Ed.

In the plate, Max Bolt (Manchester University) and Alex Kessel-Holland (Durham University) topped their groups, with Max ultimately sealing a 15-8 victory in the final to lift the coveted plate.

On Sunday, most of the players returned for the Doubles, joined by seven fresh faces from the City of Durham club and the university. 12 pairs took to the courts, and quite quickly the top four seeds made it through to the semi-finals, although Jourdan & Keates put up some solid resistance against Kirwan & Watkinson, as did Scott & Weaver against last year's runners up, Aquilina & Kay.

In the semi-finals, top seeds and two-time defending champions Arnold & Beltrami needed three games to oust Kirwan & Watkinson in an incredibly hard-hitting battle, while Grant & Tristao played smart doubles to down Aquilina & Kay in straight sets.

The final was a stellar showcase of power, touch and retrieval, with the momentum swinging back and forth. The Dans edged the first game 12-10, before Ben and Ollie bounced back strongly in the second, winning it 11-5. Ben and Ollie seemed to have found the form which had won them the West of England together this season, and they certainly looked to have the upper hand going into the third. But the Dans were able to keep things close. After a ball change at 7-8 their experience proved valuable in the tightest of moments, and they scored a few points in quick succession to win 11-9.

Alongside the main draw, many more matches were played, including a round robin group for the first-round losers and another (the official plate) for the quarter-final losers. In the Plate, Jourdan & Keates and Scott & Weaver won their first two group games. Instead of a single game to decide the group, they went straight into a best-of-three final, which Ben and Lewis won 11-9 11-6.

Once again, special thanks to Julie McIntyre and the rest of the City of Durham club for all their help with the organisation and fantastic catering — players and spectators alike thoroughly enjoyed the spread. Finally, it was great to have such a well-attended event and a high-quality entry once again. Thank you to everyone who participated.

Results

Singles

1st round: M Morgan bt O Wallace-Vorberg 15-6; L Keates bt E Bevilacqua 15-3; O McIntyre bt A Tillotson 15-1; I Weaver bt M Bolt 15-0; S Scott bt M Matthews 15-0; B Kirwan bt A Kessel-Holland 15-0; B Jourdan bt T Wakelam 15-1; M Cloke Browne bt D Tillotson 15-0

2nd round: D Tristao bt Morgan 11-3, 11-5; R Murby bt Keates 11-4, 11-7; J Aquilina bt McIntyre 11-1, 11-0; T Watkinson bt Weaver 11-7, 11-2; B Beltrami bt Scott 11-1, 11-3; Kirwan bt O Arnold 11-1, 11-5; D Grant bt Jourdan 10-12, 11-4, 11-3; E Kay bt Cloke Browne 11-2, 11-2

Quarter-finals: Tristao bt Murby 11-6, 11-7; Watkinson bt Aquilina 11-3, 11-1; Beltrami bt Kirwan 11-4, 11-3; Kay bt Grant 11-3, 11-9

Semi-finals: Tristao bt Watkinson 11-1, 7-11, 11-2; Kay bt Beltrami 11-4, 6-11, 11-1

Final: Kay bt Tristao 11-7, 11-12, 11-4

Plate: M Bolt bt A Kessel-Holland 15-8

Doubles

1st round: A Hicks & O McIntyre bt N Jerome & M Morgan 15-12; B Jourdan & L Keates bt M Matthews & A Tillotson w/o ; B Kirwan & T Watkinson bt M Bolt & O Wallace-Vorberg 15-5 ; S Scott & I Weaver bt C Beattie & I Wright 15-1 ; M Cloke Browne & S Fraser bt L Hogarth & E Vallascas 15-0

Quarter-finals: O Arnold & B Beltrami bt McIntyre & Hicks 11-1, 11-1; Kirwan & Watkinson bt Jourdan & Keates 11-4, 11-6 ; J Aquilina & E Kay bt Scott & Weaver 11-6, 11-4 ; D Grant & D Tristao bt Cloke Browne & Fraser 11-2, 11-1
Semi-finals: Arnold & Beltrami bt Kirwan & Watkinson 11-4, 9-11, 11-4; Grant & Tristao bt Aquilina & Kay 11-5, 11-7
Final: Grant & Tristao bt Arnold & Beltrami 12-10, 5-11, 11-9
Plate: Jourdan & Keates bt Scott & Weaver 11-9, 11-6

South East Girls Regionals

Christ's Hospital, Horsham
23rd February 2023

A small tournament but notable in being the only regional competition on the RFA Fixtures calendar for schoolgirls, set up in 2017. This year it was run on the courts of Christ's Hospital, with players from Alleyn's School, Christ's Hospital and Eastbourne College. Alleyn's provided a substantial squad of girls ahead of the National Schoolgirls Championships, to be held at Marlborough College on April 23rd, and enjoyed success in the U16 and U14 categories, while players from Eastbourne College dominated the senior competition.

Champions

U18 Singles: Fiona Swann (Eastbourne College)

U18 Doubles: Eastbourne College (Rosa Beazleigh & Fiona Swann)

U16 Singles: Taylor-Rose Foo (Alleyn's School)

U16 Doubles: Alleyn's School (Emily Erdmeier & Annie Guo)

U14 Singles: Annabel Brown (Alleyn's School)

U14 Doubles: Alleyn's School (Annabel Brown & Frieda Hebblethwaite)

Scottish Schools Championships 2023

Fettes College, Edinburgh
February-March 2023

The Scottish Schools tournament season opened with the **Scottish Schools U18 Singles Championship**, in which Sam P from Merchiston Castle beat Toby C of Fettes College in the final to win the Boyd Cup. Lucas F (Merchiston) beat Jack H (Fettes) to win the McKeown Plate.

Richie Murby reports: Although it has only existed since 2017, the Scottish Schools Singles Championship is already a staple in the schools fives calendar north of the border. For some it acts as preparation for the UK National Schools, while for others it's an opportunity to shed doubles partners for a while and enjoy some competitive singles matches.

16 players from four schools took part, which allowed for a group stage consisting of four groups of 4, with the top two in each going through to the latter stages, and the 3rd- and 4th-placed players going into the Plate.

Edinburgh Academy contributed seven players to the tournament from their impressively deep squad. That five of them claimed a quarter-final place demonstrates that they brought quality as well as quantity. For Fettes, Toby C marched into the final in an impressive manner, although the resistance offered by EA's Ronnie B in the semi-final was far greater than the scoreline suggests. Meanwhile James M, in qualifying for the last 8, showed that he is ready to step into Toby's trainers next year.

Merchiston's Sam P had a more testing path to the final than Toby — his semi-final with Hugo R of (EA) was a lengthy game full of beautiful winners and savage levels of endurance. It was the match of the tournament and an incredible advertisement for the game. Sam emerged victorious by a score of 15-11.

Given the exhausting nature of the semi-final, Sam P could have been forgiven had he run out of steam in the final! But he showed few signs of tiredness, and his retrieving remained excellent. Despite falling to an early 6-0 deficit as Toby found

a string of winners, Sam demonstrated his fitness and determination to reverse the situation, and ground out the first game 11-6. In Game two, Toby's lengths and nicks from the first game began to elude him at key moments, and Sam used his court coverage and movement to defend almost everything that he encountered. Sam's impressive defending, mixed with some excellent width as the match wore on, allowed him to edge the second game 11-8 and win the Boyd Trophy.

In the Plate competition, proceedings were dominated by Merchiston. They served up an excellent all-MCS semi-final, won by Lucas F over Will G by the narrowest of margins. Lucas' subsequent 15-9 victory in the Plate final over a determined Jack H of Fettes was composed and patient, and demonstrated both his quality and his potential as a player — he is still in the U15 category, so we hope to see even more from him going forward.

Findlay S flew the flag alone for Loretto this year, and although he lost at the Plate quarter-final stage, he is to be commended not only for his improved play, but also for his efforts to galvanise the game at his school, successfully making fives a senior games option and bringing beginners to the courts.

Results

U18 Singles: Group Standings

Group 1: 1st. Sam P (MCS); 2nd. Ronnie B (EA); 3rd. Jack H (Fettes); 4th. Max C (EA)

Group 2: 1st. Calum S (EA); 2nd. James M (Fettes); 3rd. Lucas F (MCS); 4th. Findlay S (Loretto)

Group 3: 1st. Hugo R (EA); 2nd. Thomas W (EA); 3rd. Harrison (Fettes); 4th. Alex S (Fettes)

Group 4: 1st. Toby C (Fettes); 2nd. Alec S (EA); 3rd. Will G (MCS); 4th. Max K (EA)

U18 Singles: McKeown Plate Competition

Quarter-finals: Jack H (Fettes) bt Findlay S (Loretto) 11-4; Max K (EA) bt Alex S (Fettes) 11-2; Lucas F (MCS) bt Max C (EA); Will G (MCS) bye

Semi-finals: Jack H (Fettes) bt Max K (EA) 11-3; Lucas F (MCS) bt Will G (MCS) 12-11

Final: Lucas F (MCS) bt Jack H (Fettes) 15-9

U18 Singles: Boyd Trophy Knockout Stages

Quarter-finals: Sam P (MCS) bt James M (Fettes) 15-1; Hugo R (EA) bt Alec S (EA) 15-6; Ronnie B (EA) bt Calum S (EA) 15-8; Toby C (Fettes) bt Thomas W (EA) 15-1

Semi-finals: Sam P (MCS) bt Hugo R (EA) 15-11; Toby C (Fettes) bt Ronnie B (EA) 15-1;

Final: Sam P (MCS) bt Toby C (Fettes) 11-6, 11-8

Scottish Schools U18 Doubles Championship

Richie Murby reports: 8 pairs from 4 schools gathered at the Fettes College courts to battle out this year's U18 Doubles competition, and as is the traditional format for this competition, it was straight into knockout fives from the very start.

Although the quarter-finals did not produce any close matches, this was emphatically not the case in the semi-finals. Thomas W and the hugely improved Max C matched the dynamic Fettes I pairing of Toby C and James M in large parts of the match, and they might feel that the eventual 15-10 scoreline could have been even closer. As it was, Toby and James were able to stay composed and turn the screw when it mattered, advancing to the final. On the other court, Hugo R and Calum S, the EA first pair, quickly found out that Merchiston I were not feeling at all diminished by the absence of Sam P. Will G was in sharp and focused form, and the colossal right hand of Thomas R rattled the Academy pair with running balls into the body, back corner wrongfooters and back-wall nicks. This mode of attack looked to be sending Merchiston through, but EA kept calm and grimly clawed their way back from gameball down at 14-12 to win the match 16-14.

Liberated from the tension of the semi-final, and perhaps aware of the safety net of a best-of-three format in the final, Hugo and Calum began to express themselves more, unleashing angles and dropshots against a Fettes pairing that was extremely quick and nimble around the court, and not without weapons of its own. This combination made for a wonderfully varied and exciting spectacle. Though their retrieving was excellent, Toby C and James M could not quite match Calum and Hugo in terms of winners in the first set, and went on to lose 11-6. The second game could have gone

either way as James and Toby tightened up and raised the pressure. While any neutral fives fan might have hoped for the match to go into a deciding third set, just to enjoy more of the action, it was not to be, and once again Calum and Hugo demonstrated resolve and skill under pressure to edge it 12-11 and win the cup for EA.

Loretto stalwart Findlay S had welcomed former teammate Cameron M back into the fold to form a somewhat spontaneous pairing for this tournament. They performed creditably under the watchful eye of legendary former Head of Fives Roger Whait, but were broken down by the more consistent unit of Fergus F & Nick de V of Merchiston in the Plate semi-final. In the other Plate semi-final, Jack H and Cameron M comfortably rode the challenge of EA's third pair before advancing to the Plate final. There they were bested by MCS' young u16 pairing of Fergus and Nick, who proved to be a little better on the day at hitting a low ball and keeping the ball in difficult areas.

Congratulations to Fergus and Nick – we look forward to seeing them in Scottish Schools action again next year, along with the other 6 of the player entry who will still be at school next year. For those leaving this year, we wish you luck in the National UK Schools if you are taking part, and we hope you continue to play fives in the future. In any event, we salute you for the contribution you have made to the game.

U18 Doubles Main Competition

Quarter-finals: Toby C & James M (Fettes) bt Fergus F & Nick de V (MCS) 15-0; Thomas W & Max C (EA) bt Findlay S & Cameron M (Loretto) 15-2; Will G & Thomas R (MCS) bt Max K & Patrick M (EA) 15-1; Hugo R & Calum S (EA) bt Cameron M & Jack H (Fettes) 15-0

Semi-finals: Toby C & James M (Fettes) bt Thomas W & Max C (EA) 15-10; Hugo R & Calum S (EA) bt Will G & Thomas R (MCS) 16-14

Final: Hugo R & Calum S (EA) bt Toby C & James M (Fettes) 11-6, 12-11

U18 Doubles Plate

Semi-finals: Fergus F & Nick de V (MCS) bt Findlay S & Cameron M (Loretto) 15-3; Cameron M & Jack H (Fettes) bt Max K & Patrick M (EA) 15-6

Final: Fergus F & Nick de V (MCS) bt Cameron M & Jack H (Fettes) 15-10

Scottish Schools U16 Doubles Championship

Richie Murby reports: With various setbacks preventing Merchiston and Loretto participating in this tournament this year, Fettes and Edinburgh Academy had the opportunity each to field four pairs. This allowed Edinburgh Academy's Rosa O and Anna B to step forward and become the first female pairing ever in this competition. It also allowed Fettes to hand two very promising u14 pairs, Louis M & Lochie F and Olly P & Jonty W, their tournament debuts.

These two latter pairs competed strongly in the main competition, and though they lost out (to the eventual winners and runners-up respectively) they both came through tough Plate semi-finals: Louis and Lochie showed teamwork and organisation to fend off the attacks of the fast-improving Geordie M and Monty D, while Olly P and Jonty W were able to make adjustments when necessary to impressively overcome the more experienced Rosa O and her partner Anna B 15-13. In an intensely hard fought Plate final, both teams defended very well, but Olly and Jonty were able to produce more slightly more biting attacking series – and more service winners – at key moments, and this proved to be decisive for them.

In the main competition, Fettes II, Tom M & Henry L, produced the best fives of their careers so far to prevent the semi-finals from being an all-EA affair by beating Rosa and Anna, a pairing that, despite strong runs here and there, wasn't always able to fully gel down the stretch. Tom and Henry could not, however, avert an all-EA final, as Tom J and James T's sharpness and consistency proved too much in the semi-final. In the other semi-final, Jock L's strong left hand and Freddie's strong right gave them a platform to apply more and more pressure and crack the creditable resistance of Oscar Z and Fergus L.

Regardless of the result of the final, the trophy was already bound for the Academy (for the first time, incidentally, since 2014, when it was won by Ben Jourdan & Andrew Boyd) but the match was no less competitive for that. It was also highly entertaining, with neither team afraid to play short and hit a few angles as well as hitting long. Both pairs are still

working on how to remain consistent without lowering the pressure and letting opponents back into a rally, but equally, both pairs were very hard to break down at times, and both capable of turning defence into attack. Jock L and Freddie J gave it their all, and are to be commended, particularly given that they are still in the u14 age category. In the end, though, their teammates Tom J and James T were unflappable, well-organised and, when necessary, deft, deservedly winning the final.

U16 Doubles Main Competition

Quarter-finals: Fergus L & Oscar Z (EA) bt Geordie M & Monty D (Fettes) 15-10; Freddie J & Jock L (EA) bt Louis M & Lochie F (Fettes) 15-6; Tom M & Henry L (Fettes) bt Rosa O & Anna B (EA) 15-10; Tom J & James T (EA) bt Olly P & Jonty W (Fettes) 15-9

Semi-finals: Freddie J & Jock L (EA) bt Fergus L & Oscar Z (EA) 15-7; Tom J & James T (EA) bt Tom M & Henry L (Fettes) 15-9

Final: Tom J & James T (EA) bt Freddie J & Jock L (EA) 11-4, 11-3

U16 Doubles Plate Competition

Semi-finals: Louis M & Lochie F (Fettes) bt Geordie M & Monty D (Fettes) 15-11; Olly P & Jonty W (Fettes) bt Rosa O & Anna B (EA) 15-13

Final: Olly P & Jonty W (Fettes) bt Louis M & Lochie F (Fettes) 15-10

Midlands Schools Championships 2023

Bedford School

Sunday, 26th February 2023

STOP PRESS In all 39 boys and girls from 6 schools were involved in this year's championships. Rugby won the U18 Singles and Doubles, while Stamford did the double in the U15 category. Organiser Alex Smith ran further competitions at Under 14 level.

Results

U18 Singles

19 players entered: Rugby 4, Derby Moor 4, Bedford Modern 4, Bedford 3, Stamford 2, Oundle 2

Quarter-finals: S Kambli (Bedford) bt T Cowins (Stamford) 11-6; W Milne (Rugby) bt A Noble (Rugby) 11-6; Joseph C (BMS) bt F Adams (Bedford) 11-8; D Leng (Rugby) bt C Greaves (Derby Moor) 11-1

Semi-finals: Kambli bt Milne 11-7; Leng bt Joseph C 11-4

Final: Leng (Rugby) bt Kambli (Bedford) 15-3

Plate: D Britton (Stamford) bt L Mackenzie (Oundle) 11-8

U18 Doubles

Quarter-finals: Rugby 1 bt Oundle 1 11-7; Stamford 1 bt Derby Moor 1 11-8; Bedford Modern 1 bt Rugby 2 12-10; Bedford 1 bt Derby Moor 2 11-4

Semi-finals: Rugby 1 bt Stamford 1 15-8; Bedford 1 bt Bedford Modern 1 15-13

Final: Rugby 1 (Leng & Noble) bt Bedford 1 (Kambli & Morgan) 15-10

Plate: Stamford 1 bt Bedford Modern 1

U15 Singles

12 players entered: Stamford 7; Bedford Modern 3; Rugby 1; Bedford 1

Quarter-finals: F Morgan (Bedford) bt Y Tang (Rugby) 11-8; C Sharpe (Stamford) bt C Burrows (Stamford) 11-9

Semi-finals: R Jones (Stamford) bt Morgan 11-1; C McNaughton (Stamford) bt Sharpe 11-4

Final: McNaughton bt Jones 15-10

Plate: C Burrows (Stamford)

U15 Doubles

Semi-final: Stamford 2 bt Rugby 11-3

Final: Stamford 1 (C McNaughton & C Sharpe) bt Stamford 2 (C Burrows & R Jones)

Plate: Rugby

U14 Singles

Quarter-finals: A Bogan (Stamford) bt T Robertshaw (Bedford Modern) 11-2; E Shirley (Bedford Modern) bt B Higham (Bedford Modern) 11-7

Semi-finals: E Hunter (Stamford) bt Bogan 11-1; H Jones (Stamford) bt Shirley 11-0

Final: H Jones bt E Hunter 16-14

Plate: A Bogan (Stamford) bt T Robertshaw 11-6

U14 Doubles

Semi-finals: Stamford 2 bt Bedford Modern 1 11-1; Stamford 1 bt Stamford 3 11-2

Final: Stamford 1 (E Hunter & H Jones) bt Stamford 2 (A Bogan & M Bogan) 11-5

Plate: Stamford 3

In addition there was a further **Mixed Junior Singles** competition, involving 14 players from Stamford, Rugby and Bedford Modern, which was won by Toby Jones (Stamford) from Matty Bogan (Stamford) by 11-7. There was also a **Girls' Plate** competition won by Diya Dhokia (Rugby) from her schoolmate Evelina Billaud 11-9.

National Winchester Fives Doubles

Winchester College

Sunday, 12th March 2023

Organiser Harry Akerman reports: It was Bradfield's turn to host the Barnes Bridge this year, but with warm wet weather following on the heels of a cold snap it was conditions made for sweating courts, and so with 48 hours to go (but after the trophies had already been engraved!) the decision was made to move it to Winchester. Photos arrived on Sunday morning of wet courts at Bradfield as 36 relieved players (and one relieved organiser) started what for many would be their last outing on these magnificent Winchester courts. The day saw three sets of father-sons playing, but only one family were brave enough to play with each other!

The outstanding game of the first round was Winchester's Chris Lee partnering Will Kennedy in narrowly beating Ben Roberts & Aiden Witham. The game went on some time, threatening not only the playing schedule but, worryingly, the court showed early signs of sweating. Maybe it was the most intense game of the day..... but luckily the humidity dropped and disaster was averted! The games then went as expected through to the semi-finals, which were won by the first and second seeds, both in two games. Dan G & Dan T in particular were pushed so so hard, only narrowly squeaking past Ben Beltrami & Theo Parker 15-13, 16-15. The Dans admitted that a third game would probably have seen Ben & Theo come through as they were finishing the second game the stronger, and you wondered how much the Dans would have left in the tank for a final against reigning multiple champions, Will Ellison & Ed Kay.

And so to the final. Could Will make it title number 12 — and Ed's 6th — in his pursuit of Dave Hebden's 14? Could the Dans keep the tempo up, and would Dan Grant withstand the barrage he was bound to endure? Such was the intensity of their semi-final win that you felt Dan & Dan's best chance was to win in 2 games, and they duly did the first bit by winning 15-13. Will & Ed came out stronger in the second and you suspected the third would also go the same way now they had their foot down. The decider was incredible, with neither pair getting more than two points ahead of the other right until the end. At 11-9 no one could confidently pick a winner, and whilst mistakes were occasionally being made, the general quality of play, the athleticism and the shot-making from all parts of the court made for a real treat to watch. There had to be a winner, of course, but there was more than one in the crowd (even if not on court) who thought that we really should be playing best of 5.... Maybe next year. Anyway, on this occasion the Dans triumphed for a second time, having last won in 2015.

The various plates were also hotly contested, and with no Hales there this year it was an opportunity for some new names on the trophy. There were many close games but the only 3-game match of the day other than the final of the main draw was the plate final. Shinan Zhang & Penn Chai had an extraordinary first game... winning 11-0 in what appeared to the casual observer to be a close match, only for Emrys Thursfield & Ashwin Ahuja to come back 11-8. However, Shinan's superior fitness over the boys proved to be the difference in the third game. So for the third year in a row Executioners take the plate!

And so to next year — hopefully we will be in the brand new Winchester College sports complex, but we will really miss these courts which once again provided such brilliant entertainment on a thankfully dry playing surface.

Results

Preliminary round: S. Zhang & P. Chai bt R. James-Duff & A. James-Duff 15-8, 15-5; E. Thursfield & A. Ahuja bt H. Akerman & J. Cheng 15-11, 15-8

1st round: W. Ellison & E. Kay bt Zhang & Chai 15-1, 15-3; C. Lee & W. Kennedy bt B. Roberts & A. Whitham 15-13, 15-12; D. Butler & S. Roberts bt S. Kirby & R. Christie 15-2, 15-2; O. Arnold & J. Aquilina bt B. Kirk & D. Spiegel 15-2, 15-0; B. Beltrami & T. Parker bt J. Chan & A. Cloke Browne 15-2, 15-2; J. Birch & T. Hebblethwaite bt W. Akerman & H. Bishop 15-4, 15-6; A. Passey & L. Keates bt R. Thompson & T. Kiggell 15-4, 15-4; D. Tristao & D. Grant bt Thursfield & Ahuja 15-5, 15-2

Quarter-finals: Ellison & Kay bt Lee & Kennedy 15-1, 15-4; Arnold & Aquilina bt Butler & Roberts 15-3, 15-7; Beltrami & Parker bt Birch & Hebblethwaite 15-5, 15-6; Tristao & Grant bt Passey & Keates 15-4, 15-4

Semi-finals: Ellison & Kay bt Arnold & Aquilina 15-5, 15-9; Tristao & Grant bt Beltrami & Parker 15-13, 16-15.

Final: Tristao & Grant bt Ellison & Kay 15-13, 11-15, 15-11

Plate

Preliminary round: Zhang & Chai bt Spiegel & Kirk 15-5; James-Duff & James-Duff bt Christie & Kirby 15-6

1st round: Roberts & Whitham bt Akerman & Cheng 15-9; Zhang & Chai bt Thompson & Kiggell 15-9; James-Duff & James-Duff bt Akerman & Bishop 15-10; Thursfield & Ahuja bt Chan & Cloke Browne 15-8

Semi-finals: Zhang & Chai bt Roberts & Whitham 15-10; Thursfield & Ahuja bt James-Duff & James-Duff 15-10

Final: Zhang & Chai bt Thursfield & Ahuja 11-0, 8-11, 11-4

First Round Plate Losers

Preliminary round: Chan & Cloke Browne bt Kiggell & Thompson w/o; Akerman & Bishop bt Akerman & Cheng 15-12

Semi-finals: Chan & Cloke Browne bt Kirk & Spiegel 15-4; Akerman & Bishop bt Kirby & Christie 15-6

Final: Akerman & Bishop bt Chan & Cloke Browne 15-10

Colquhoun Trophy 2023

Marlborough College

Saturday, 18th March 2023

STOP PRESS Winchester College provided both players for the two finals, U18 and U16, in this year's Colquhoun Trophy at Marlborough College. 24 players from four South West Schools took part: Malvern College, Marlborough College, Sherborne School and Winchester College.

Results

U18 Singles

Group A: 1st H Akerman (Winch); 2nd R Zhou (Winch); 3rd M Fowle (Sher); 4th J Peake (Sher); 5th M Nieper (Malv)

Group B: 1st J Cheng (Winch); 2nd A Upton (Sher); 3rd B Aubery (Winch); 4th I Mezhibovskiy (Malv); 5th J Harle (Malv)

Semi-finals: Akerman bt Upton 11-3, 11-4; Cheng bt Zhou 11-2, 11-3

Final: Akerman bt Cheng 11-4, 11-3

Plate: M Fowle

U16 Singles

Group A: 1st A James-Duff (Winch); 2nd E Xiao (Winch); 3rd S Wilson (Malv); 4th R Jain (Malv); 5th J Moesel (Sher)

Group B: 1st J Kennedy (Winch); 2nd I Corrie (Marl); 3rd M Wilson (Malv); 4th A de Vrieze (Winch)

Semi-finals: James-Duff bt Corrie 11-0, 11-0; Kennedy by Xiao 11-3, 11-9

Final: James-Duff bt Kennedy 11-7, 3-11, 11-9

Plate: S Wilson

Updated Women's Rankings

Rugby Fives Association

6th March 2023

The RFA is delighted to publish the latest Women's Rankings in Singles and Doubles as compiled by Chris Burrows. They reflect performances in the recent Ladies' National Championships held on the courts of the Manchester Y Club in late January. Below we reproduce the top 20 rankings, which show the relevant movement of players' positions. In all 60 women are ranked in Singles, 65 in Doubles.

The full Rankings can be viewed at <https://therfa.uk/rankings/>

Women's Rankings March 2023

SINGLES Top 20				DOUBLES Top 20			
<i>Current</i>	<i>Previous</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Points</i>	<i>Current</i>	<i>Previous</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Points</i>
1	1	L Mathias	91.7	1	1	L Mathias	89.2
2	2	C Beattie	82.4	2	3	S Zhang	72.5
3	3	M Nugent	78.2	3	2	M Nugent	69.6
4	4	S Zhang	75.3	4	5	S Leboff	68.6
5	6	R Ogilvie	68.6	5	5	C Beattie	63.5
6	5	I Lee	68.2	6	6	H Tunks	60.9
7	13	H Tunks	64.6	7	7	R Ogilvie	56.2
8	7	M Raynor	62.9	8	8	L Barton	51.5
9	9	I Wright	62.3	9	9	O Smart	51.2
10	8	H Brown	62.2	10	12	K Bell	50.2
11	9	K Sumner	61.3	11	10	K Sumner	48.9
12	12	K Bell	60.9	12	23	L Ware	47.4
13	11	H Nugent	59.2	13=	11	M Raynor	46.8
14	18	O Smart	58.5	13=	12	I Lee	46.8
15	15	S Leboff	56.5	15	14	R McNaught Davis	46.4
16	14	L Barton	53.8	16	18	C Clark	45.1
17	19	L Ware	51.9	17	22	L Hogarth	44.3
18	16	V King Forbes	50.4	18	15	I Wright	43.8
19	32	R Wood	48.9	19	16	H Nugent	36.8
20	28	C Clark	48.6	20	17	J McIntyre	35.1

National U13 Championships

St Paul's School, Barnes

Sunday 12th March 2023

STOP PRESS Berkhamsted's players once again took both the Singles and the Doubles titles in a tournament featuring 54 players from 9 Schools. In a long day it was possible to run a Plate competition in both categories, so that medals were eventually shared out between Alleyn's, Berkhamsted, Edinburgh Academy and Merchiston Castle.

Organiser Sam Russell reports: 9 schools, 54 entrants, 221 games. One full on day of Fives at the U13 National Championships 2023 held at St Paul's School on March 12th.

The day kicked off with eight round robin Singles groups. Competition was understandably fierce as there was all to play for, with the top two from each group qualifying for the knockout stages and those in third and fourth place entering a plate competition. It quickly became clear that Edinburgh Academy and Merchiston Castle School had made the journey to London with some extra space in their luggage roughly large enough to fit a trophy, as they dominated the early matches in style. Their main challenger appeared to be Berkhamsted, an Eton Fives playing school whose players were trying their hand at Rugby Fives for the first time and steadily improving after each game. Alleyn's possessed excellent strength in depth and the remaining schools, Stamford, St Paul's Juniors, Sherborne, Stoke Newington and Whitgift, were also all very capable of causing an upset.

After an intense morning of play, the 16-strong line up for the knock-out stage was confirmed: it included 5 players from Alleyn's, 4 from Edinburgh Academy, 3 from Berkhamsted, 2 from Sherborne and 1 from both Merchiston and Stoke Newington School. There were two stand-out matches in the knockouts. The first was an all-Berkhamsted quarter-final match-up between doubles partners Beau Copeland and Rocky Higgs. Beau's use of a sophisticated left hand down the line shot saw him race to an early lead, only to be pegged back by some hard-hitting from Rocky. At 10-10 it was anyone's game, until some fine serving from Beau enabled him to swing the momentum back in his favour and take the match 12-10.

The second was a semi-final clash between Benji Mahoney-Muir of Edinburgh Academy and James Robertson of Merchiston. The game was tight throughout but James had the edge, grinding his way to match point at 10-7. He had one foot in the final when he opted to play a drop shot on a mid-court ball, a moment that is no doubt still haunting him, allowing Benji back into the rally and, ultimately, into the match. Benji then displayed excellent resolve and fighting spirit to take the game 12-11. He was joined in the final by Beau, who did a fantastic job of dispatching Rumi Kohashi-Khan of Alleyn's, a quality player feared for his powerful left hand, in the other semi.

The final, at the end of a long day, was a good match up, with both players using the court space well, mixing up drop shots and their powerful right hands. In the middle of the contest, at roughly 7-7, Beau lunged into the back left corner to retrieve a ball and went over on his angle. He was seemingly in some pain and it appeared as if the final might have to end in a walk over. However, Benji showed good sportsmanship in helping Beau back to his feet, and the game continued. The injury scare provided Beau with a renewed energy and he managed to play his best when it mattered to take the game and the trophy 15-8. Meanwhile, Hamish Foley of Merchiston beat Prannav Jesurasel in an high quality Plate final.

The Doubles was a straight knockout tournament with first round losers competing in a plate contest. Unsurprisingly, the players who had made it to the latter stage of the singles also fared well in the doubles. The highlight of the tournament was an incredibly close semi-final between Edinburgh Academy and Merchiston, which went the way of EA 12-11 after both pairs had saved numerous match points.

The winning EA pair of Frank Brown & Benji Mahoney-Muir then took on the Berkhamsted pair of Beau Copeland and Rocky Higgs in the final. Although a close contest at times, the Berkhamsted pair were more powerful, and smashed their way to a reasonably comfortable victory. Unfortunately for the onlooking parents Frank and Benji displayed enough of the classic EA fighting spirit to hold off defeat long enough for the hopes of making the 6pm train back up to Scotland to slowly disappear. The Plate competition was dominated by Alleyn's, with Noah Buck & Arthur O'Byrne coming out as eventual winners in an all-Alleyn's final.

Thank you to all the participants, teachers and parents for their involvement, helping facilitate a very competitive tournament and an excellent day of fives.

Schools taking part: Alleyn's, Berkhamsted, Edinburgh Academy, Merchiston Castle, St Paul's Junior, Sherborne Prep, Stamford, Stoke Newington, Whitgift

Results

Singles: Group Stage

Group 1: 1st F Brown (EdAc); 2nd A O'Byrne (All); 3rd L Hadcroft-Parrouty (Berkh). Also played: A Rankin (Merch), I Bhat (Whit), W Perry (SherPrep) and O Streater (Stam)

Group 2: 1st F Derry (EdAc); 2nd F Gardner (SherPrep); 3rd A Walker (Merch). Also played: A Malik (Whit), A Ratto (All), T Mundell (Stam) and M Harper (Berkh)

Group 3: 1st R Higgs (Berkh); 2nd F McAllister (All); 3rd P Jesurasel (EdAc). Also played: J Hillel Baditz (StoNew), N Rao (All), N Afanasyev (SherPrep) and K Trichur (StPJ)

Group 4: 1st B Copeland (Berkh); 2nd T Green (All); M Hunter (Stam). Also played: H Weir (EdAc), H Stevenson (Whit), T Lawrence (All) and N Weldon

Group 5: 1st J Robertson (Merch); 2nd S Negyal (All); T Jones (Stam). Also played: N Ixer (Whit); R KInnear (All), O Sharpe (StPJ) and W Franklin (Berkh)

Group 6: 1st C Field (Berkh); 2nd X Aparacio-Paul (SherPrep); 3rd H Foley (Merch). Also played: G Blench (Whit), N Buck (All), M Bogan (Stam) and L Philip (StPJ)

Group 7: 1st L Clark (EdAc); 2nd D Gilbody (StoNew); 3rd J Hammond Giles (StPJ). Also played: H Ortner (Whit), A Tolumen (All) and A Krnc (SherPrep)

Group 8: 1st B Mahoney-Muir (EdAc); 2nd R Kohashi-Khan (All); 3rd L Shepherd (StPJ). Also played: A Dragazis (StoNew), A Roux (All) and R Rolls (SherPrep)

Knock-out Stage

Round 1: Kohashi-Khan bt Brown 11-4; Derry bt Gilbody 11-0; Higgs bt Arapacio-Paul 11-8; Copeland bt Negyal 11-7; Mahoney-Muir bt O'Byrne 11-5; Clark bt Gardner 11-4; Field bt McAllister 11-8; Robertson bt Green 11-4

Quarter-finals: Kohashi-Khan bt Derry 11-7; Copeland bt Higgs 12-10; Mahoney-Muir bt Clark 11-6; Robertson bt Field 11-4

Semi-finals: Copeland bt Kohashi-Khan 11-5; Mahoney-Muir bt Robertson 12-11

Final: B Copeland (Berkhamsted) bt B Mahoney-Muir (Edinburgh Academy) 15-8

Plate: H Foley (Merchiston Castle) bt P Jesurasel (Edinburgh Academy) 11-6

Doubles

1st round: Sherborne 2 bt St Paul's Juniors 2 11-1; Berkhamsted 3 bt Whitgift 2 11-4; Stamford 1 bt Alleyn's 5 11-8; Sherborne Prep 1 bt Alleyn's 6 11-9; Berkhamsted 1 bt Stoke Newington/Stamford 11-0; Merchiston 2 bt Sherborne Prep 3 11-6; Alleyn's 2 bt St Paul's Juniors 3 11-0; Berkhamsted 2 bt Alleyn's 3 11-4; St Paul's Juniors 1 bt Alleyn's 4 11-8; Edinburgh Academy 3 bt Stamford 2 11-0; Edinburgh Academy 2 bt Whitgift 3 11-0

2nd round: Edinburgh Academy 1 bt Sherborne Prep 2 11-5; Berkhamsted 3 bt Stamford 1 11-9; Berkhamsted 1 bt Sherborne Prep 1 11-3; Alleyn's 1 bt Merchiston 2 11-3; Merchiston 1 bt Alleyn's 2 12-10; Berkhamsted 2 bt Whitgift 1 11-7; Edinburgh Academy 3 bt St Paul's Juniors 1 11-1; Edinburgh Academy 2 bt Stoke Newington 1 11-2

Quarter-finals: Edinburgh Academy 1 bt Berkhamsted 3 11-4; Berkhamsted 1 bt Alleyn's 1 11-4; Merchiston 1 bt Berkhamsted 2 11-4; Edinburgh Academy 2 bt Edinburgh Academy 3 11-8

Semi-finals: Berkhamsted 1 bt Edinburgh Academy 1 11-4; Edinburgh Academy 2 bt Merchiston 1 12-11

Final: Berkhamsted 1 (Copeland & Higgs) bt Edinburgh Academy 2 (Brown & Mahoney-Muir) 15-7

Plate: Alleyn's 3 (Buck & O'Byrne) bt Alleyn's 5 (Lawrence & Roux) 15-2

National Schools Mixed Doubles 2023

Oundle School

Sunday, 19 March 2023

The inaugural Schools Mixed Doubles Championship attracted an entry of 19 pairs from 5 schools: Alleyn's, Oundle, Marlborough, Rugby and Stamford. Organiser Alex Smith set up two categories: Senior (U18) and Junior (U15). 10 pairs contested the Senior competition, which the Alleyn's pair of Annie Guo & Yarin Negyal won, with Stamford's Emily

Tyler & Teddy Cowin taking the Plate. in the Junior competition Alleyn's and Stamford provided the 9 pairs between them, though in the end it was Alleyn's who won the Gold and the Plate.

Results

Senior: U18

Group 1: 1st Marlborough 2 (Erin Butler & Max di Gloria); 2nd Alleyn's 2 (Emily Erdmeier & Toby Blyth) ; 3rd Rugby 2 (Elena Newbould & Arthur Noble) ; 4th Stamford 1 (Emily Tyler & Teddy Cowin)

Group 2: 1st Alleyn's 1 (Annie Guo & Yarin Negyal; 2nd Marlborough 1 (Hally Barton & Piers Fulford-Smith); 3rd Oundle 2 (Zara Isaacs & James Yardy)

Group 3: 1st Rugby 1 (Yvonne Tang & David Leng); 2nd Marlborough 3 (Phoenix Fleming & Isaac Bradbury); 3rd Oundle 1 (Tilly x & Lucas Mackenzie)

Quarter-finals: Rugby 1 bt Stamford 1 11-9; Marlborough 1 bt Alleyn's 2 11-4; Marlborough 2 bt Rugby 2 11-2; Alleyn's 1 bt Marlborough 3 11-4

Semi-finals: Rugby 1 bt Marlborough 1 15-12; Alleyn's 1 bt Marlborough 2 15-5

Final: Alleyn's 1 (Guo & Negyal) bt Rugby 1 (Tang & Leng) 15-11

Plate: Stamford 1 (Tyler & Cowin) bt Alleyn's 2 (Erdmeier & Blyth) 15-13

Junior: U15

Group 1: 1st Alleyn's 3 (Taylor-Rose Foo & James Dorokhov); 2nd Stamford 1 (Bea Grindal & Hari Jones); 3rd Alleyn's 4 (Anna Ratto & Riley Kinnear)

Group 2: 1st Stamford 2 (Tilly Stevens & Euan Hunter); 2nd Alleyn's 2 (Annabel Brown & Sam Negyal); 3rd Alleyn's 6 (Scarlet Wigley & George Shilton)

Group 3: 1st Alleyn's 1 (Annabel McAllister & Milo Arie); 2nd Alleyn's 5 (Frieda Hebblethwaite & Rumi Kohashi-Khan); 3rd Stamford 3 (Sophie Dobson & Rory Jones)

Quarter-finals: Alleyn's 1 bt Alleyn's 6 11-2; Stamford 1 bt Alleyn's 2 11-5; Stamford 3 bt Alleyn's 3 11-6; Stamford 2 bt Alleyn's 5 11-8

Semi-finals: Alleyn's 1 bt Stamford 1 15-7; Stamford 2 bt Stamford 3 15-10

Final: Alleyn's 1 (Annabel McAllister & Milo Arie) bt Stamford 2 (Sophie Dobson & Rory Jones) 11-4, 11-1

Plate: Alleyn's 3 (Taylor-Rose Foo & James Dorokhov) bt Alleyn's 6 (Scarlet Wigley & George Shilton) 15-13

National Schools Championships

St Paul's School, Barnes

Saturday-Monday, 25-27 March 2023

22 schools participating: Alleyn's, Bedford, Bedford Modern, Berkhamsted, Blundell's, Christ's Hospital, Derby Moor, Edinburgh Academy, Fettes, Loretto, Manchester Y Club, Marlborough, Rugby, St John's Marlborough, St Olave's, St Paul's, Sedbergh, Stamford, Stoke Newington, Tonbridge, Whitgift and Winchester.

Bob Dolby reports: Once more these championships were kindly hosted by St Paul's School, with the entries and draws masterminded by Dave Butler, aided throughout the three days principally by Sam Roberts, Ian Jackson and Alex Smith. Thanks must go not only to the players for their whole-hearted commitment to proceedings but also to the various coaches, masters-in-charge, parents and friends who gave the players unflinching encouragement. The General Secretary of the RFA, Chris Blakeley, was also present throughout, drumming up support for the Association.

With the U13s having already been staged a fortnight before, as ever there were three categories for some 130 players to contest — U18, U16 and U14. In the U18 Singles we had a defending champion, Shiloh Wu from Winchester, heading a field of some 50 players. There was little doubt that Shiloh would once more make the final but would it be against either his doubles partner, Chris Lee, or Genesis Nsenga from St Olave's, or could the Tonbridge Nr 1, Max Freudenheim, spring a surprise in the semi-final. In due course it was Genesis who made his way to the final, where he was unable to

penetrate Shiloh's defence or match his courtcraft. We now look forward to seeing Shiloh and Genesis playing, perhaps together, in the British Universities Championships in November.

The U18 Doubles gave us another Winchester versus St Olave's final. Genesis teamed up with left-handed Caleb Boy, himself a previous National U13 and U14 Singles and Doubles Champion. Together they produced an extraordinary display of power to win with comparative ease and make history in the process: Genesis became the first player to win both the Eton Fives U18 Doubles title, a few days earlier, and the Rugby Fives U18 Doubles title. A unique achievement.

The U16 Singles competition also produced something unexpected when Freddie Hammond Giles from St Paul's, in just his second appearance at an RFA tournament and a year young, surprised many by the ease with which he moved to victory in a draw which contained some experienced players from Alleyn's, the Edinburgh Academy and Winchester. The Doubles went rather more to expectations, with Winchester's West of England Schools champions, Jeffrey Chan & Anthony Cloke Browne, beating Alex Dorokhov & Yarin Negyal from Alleyn's in the final. We look forward to seeing several of these players performing next year in the U18 competition.

The U14 category was played out over two densely action-packed days. In the Singles 12 initial groups produced 3 competitions, with the main one featuring 16 of the best. Valentine Fikhter, who plays at the Manchester Y Club, and Hari Jones, who plays his Fives on Stamford's squash courts, met in as close a final as we have seen at this level. Valentine, runner-up in last year's U13 Championships, won Gold this time, managing it in two games, both of which could have gone the other way. It seems likely that Valentine and Hari will meet again — often. In the Doubles, which Valentine didn't enter, there were pairs from 4 different schools in the semi-finals. It was the Stamford pair of Euan Hunter & Hari Jones who triumphed in the final, just reward for the commitment they and their school have shown to the game over the past few years. One player to watch out for in the coming years is Taylor-Rose Foo of Alleyn's, whose striking of the ball with her left hand was notable over the course of the day.

Plate and Second Plate competitions have long been an important feature of these championships. They were run as usual in all 6 categories, each of them hard fought, enabling players from 8 different schools to enjoy success: Alleyn's, Berkhamsted, Blundell's, Edinburgh Academy Marlborough, St Paul's, Stamford and Winchester. Medals won in these competitions are very well earned.

Results

U18 Singles

1st round: S Inglis (SPS) bt T Harrison (BMS) 11-2; A Springfield (EdAc) bt D Wright (Derby) 11-0; K Davins (Derby) bt C Tomlinson-Hodge (Blun) 11-0; J Clearly (BMS) bt L Taor (SPS) 11-6; B Yu (SPS) bt F Edelman (Ton) 11-4; E Arie (All) bt M Cunningham (EdAc) 11-0; D Leng (Rug) bt L Milner (All) 12-11; B Aubery (Win) bt H Gibb (BMS) 11-4; R Zhou (Win) bt J Thompson (BMS) 11-0; N Jones (Blun) bt P Marston (EdAc) 11-9; C Swanson (EdAc) bt A Chaturvedi (All) 11-3; F Stewart (Lor) bt E Watson (Derby) 11-4; A Noble (Rug) bt A Tully (SPS) 12-10; A Woolf (Ton) bt M Khurana (EdAc) 11-7; T Gardner (Ton) bt A Rackham (Blun) 11-3; T Whyte (EdAc) bt H Williams (Lor) 11-0; J Cole (Blun) bt W Freebairn (SPS) 11-3

2nd round: S Wu (Win) bt Inglis 15-2; Springfield bt Davins 15-6; C Boy (StO) bt T Vernacchio (All) 15-2; A Glover (Sed) bt Arie 16-14; W Sauvel-Porter bt Leng 15-2; Aubery bt S Kembli (Bed) 16-15; M Freudenheim (Ton) bt Zhou 15-4; C Lee (Win) bt Jones 15-1; Swanson bt G Slater (Ton) 15-5; JP Cheng (Win) bt Stewart 15-0; H Rintoul (EdAc) bt Noble 15-0; C Calzia (SPS) bt Woolf 15-2; F Stone (Blun) bt Gardner 15-2; D Wielenga (Blun) bt Whyte 15-10; G Nsenga (St O) bt Cole 15-3

3rd round: Wu bt Springfield 15-3; Boy bt Vernacchio 15-2; Sauvel-Porter bt Glover 15-8; Freudenheim bt Aubery 15-0; Lee bt Swanson 15-8; Rintoul bt Cheng 15-3; Calzia bt Stone 15-13; Nsenga bt Wielenga 15-1

Quarter-finals: Wu bt Boy 11-1, 11-6; Freudenheim bt Sauvel-Porter 11-3, 11-1; Lee bt Rintoul 11-1, 11-4; Nsenga bt Stone 11-3, 11-6

Semi-finals: Wu bt Freudenheim 11-1, 11-4; Nsenga bt Lee 2-11, 11-4, 11-5

Final: S Wu (Winchester College) bt G Nsenga (St Olave's) 11-2, 11-3

Plate: T Whyte (Edinburgh Academy) bt G Slater (Tonbridge) 15-9

2nd Plate: E Arie (Alleyn's) bt M Cunningham (Edinburgh Academy) 11-8

U18 Doubles

1st round: Edinburgh Academy 3 bt Tonbridge 2 16-14; Edinburgh Academy 2 bt Blundell's 3 15-12; Alleyn's 2 bt Bedford Modern 2 15-0; St Paul's 2 bt Derby Moor 2 15-3; St Paul's 3 bt Bedford Modern 1 15-2; Blundell's 2 bt Rugby

15-12; Derby Moor 1 bt Edinburgh Academy 4 15-7; Winchester 2 bt St Paul's 4 15-6;

2nd round: Winchester 1 bt Edinburgh Academy 3 15-0; Edinburgh Academy 2 bt Alleyn's 2 15-3; Tonbridge 1 bt St Paul's 2 15-2; Edinburgh Academy 1 bt St Paul's 3 15-1; Alleyn's 1 bt Blundell's 2 15-8; St Paul's 1 bt Derby Moor 1 15-1; Blundell's 1 bt Winchester 2 15-10; St Olave's bt Loretto 15-0

Quarter-finals: Winchester 1 bt Edinburgh Academy 2 11-2, 11-3; Edinburgh Academy 1 bt Tonbridge 1 11-7, 6-11, 11-7; Alleyn's 1 bt St Paul's 1 11-9, 11-1; St Olave's bt Blundell's 1 11-2, 11-3

Semi-finals: Winchester 1 bt Edinburgh Academy 1 11-2, 11-3; St Olave's bt Alleyn's 1 11-1, 11-0

Final: St Olave's (Boy & Nsenga) bt Winchester 1 (Lee & Wu) 11-0, 11-7

Plate: Winchester 2 (Cheng & Zhou) bt Edinburgh Academy 3 (Cunningham & Whyte) 15-12

2nd Plate: Blundell's 3 (Rackham & Tomlinson-Hodge) bt Edinburgh Academy 4 (Khurana & Marston) 11-7

U16 Singles

Group A: 1st J Chan (Win); 2nd S McMurran (Bed)

Group B: 1st R Brown (EdAc); 2nd J Ferro (SPS)

Group C: 1st Y Neygal (All); 2nd R Winkley (Win)

Group D: 1st C Lacewing (CH); 2nd F Lonie (EdAc)

Group E: 1st A Cloke Browne (Win); 2nd C McNaughton (Stam)

Group F: 1st F Hammond Giles (SPS); 2nd T Gordon (Win)

Group G: 1st A Dorokhov (All); 2nd L Saunders-Aroma (Ton)

Group H: 1st E Calzia (SPS); 2nd F Caton (Ton)

Group I: M Arie (All); 2nd O Woolf (Ton)

Group J: 1st J Tones (EdAc); 2nd T Sullivan-Ferrarin (Whit)

Also played: O Carroll (Ton), S Khurana (All), A Shaw (All); S Stevenson (Ton), C Sharpe (Stam), O Wang (SPS), T Blyth (All), C Greaves (Derby), J Bourne (Ton), O Zbikowski (EdAc), E Louet (All), D Britton (Stam), R Jones (Stam), K Hay (SPS), S Richarz (All), T Cowin (Stam), T Jarrold (EdAc), T Ritchie (SPS) and L Sheilds (All).

1st round: J Chan (Win) bt O Woolf (Ton) 15-8; M Arie (All) bt E Calzia (SPS) 15-10; A Cloke Browne (Win) bt F Caton (Ton) 15-2; C Lacewing (CH) bt L Saunders-Aroma (Ton) 15-4; Y Neygal (All) bt J Ferro (SPS) 15-2; F Hammond Giles (SPS) bt T Sullivan-Ferrarin (Whit) 15-0; A Dorokhov (All) bt J Toner (EdAc) 15-3; R Brown (EdAc) bt J Bourne (Ton) 15-1

Quarter-finals: Chan bt Arie 11-7, 11-6; Cloke Browne bt Lacewing 11-2, 11-1; Hammond Giles bt Negyal 11-4, 11-5; Brown bt Dorokhov 11-4, 7-11, 11-7

Semi-finals: Chan bt Cloke Browne 8-11, 11-5, 11-6; Hammond Giles bt Brown 11-2, 11-4

Final: F Hammond Giles (St Paul's) bt J Chan (Winchester) 11-9, 11-3

Plate: C McNaughton (Stamford) bt R Jones (Stamford) 12-11

2nd Plate: T Jarrold (EdAc) bt L Sheilds (All) 11-0

U16 Doubles

1st round: Winchester 1 bt All/Whit 15-0; Tonbridge 2 bt St Paul's 2 15-12; Edinburgh Academy 1 bt Alleyn's 3 15-13; St Paul's I bt Alleyn's 4 15-1; Stamford 1 bt St Paul's 3 15-1; Tonbridge 1 bt Winchester 2 15-3; Alleyn's 2 bt Edinburgh Academy 2 15-8; Alleyn's 1 bt Stamford 3 15-3

Quarter-finals: Winchester 1 bt Tonbridge 2 11-2, 11-0; St Paul's 1 bt Edinburgh Academy 1 11-4, 11-1; Tonbridge 1 bt Stamford 1 11-5, 11-8; Alleyn's 1 bt Alleyn's 2 11-1, 11-0

Semi-finals: Winchester 1 bt St Paul's 1 11-9, 11-8; Alleyn's 1 bt Tonbridge 1 11-2, 11-3

Final: Winchester 1 (J Chan & A Cloke Browne) bt Alleyn's (A Dorokhov & Y Neygal) 11-9, 11-3

Plate: Edinburgh Academy 1 (T Jarrold & J Toner) bt Stamford 1 (D Britton & T Cowin) 11-3

2nd Plate: Stamford 3 (C Burrows & R Jones)

U14 Singles

Group A: 1st J Fienberg (Berk); 2nd M Russell (EdAc)

Group B: 1st V Fikhter (ManY); 2nd I Bradbury (Marl)

Group C: 1st J Lawrie (EdAc); 2nd E De-Rosa Rashid (SPS)

Group D: 1st L Fraser (Fet); 2nd T Constance (SPS)

Group E: 1st F Coleman (Whit); 2nd G Harrison (SNS)

Group F: 1st W Henry (EdAc); 2nd G Shilton (All)

Group G: 1st F James (EdAc); 2nd J Morrison (Ton)
Group H: 1st C Burrows (Stam); 2nd T-R Foo (All)
Group I: 1st P Mannion-Miles (Whit); 2nd D Gilbody (SNS)
Group J: 1st J Dorokhov (All); 2nd G Hughes (Ton)
Group K: 1st E Hunter (Stam); 2nd D Guganeswaran (SPS)
Group L: 1st H Jones (Stam); 2nd J Keane (Berk)

Also played: M Constance (SPS), N Cortas (SPS), W Ashley (StJM), F Murray (EdAc), S Schendel (All), J Gandhi (SPS), J Duff (EdAc), E Chowdhury (SPS) and A Skukla (SPS).

1st round: Fienberg bt Morrison 15-10; Mannion-Miles bt Burrows 15-11; Jones bt Coleman 15-1; Fraser bt Hughes 15-5; Lawrie bt Constance 15-3; Hunter bt Henry 15-2; James bt Dorokhov 15-12; Fikhter bt Shilton 15-1

Quarter-finals: Fienberg bt Mannion-Miles 15-13; Jones bt Fraser 15-11; Lawrie bt Hunter 15-4; Fikhter bt James 15-0

Semi-finals: Jones bt Fienberg 15-6; Fikhter bt Lawrie 15-12

Final: V Fikhter (Manchester Y Club) bt H Jones (Stam) 11-9, 12-10

Plate: I Bradbury (Marlborough) bt E De-Rosa Rashid (SPS) 15-1

2nd Plate: M Constance (SPS) bt J Duff (EdAc) 15-3

U14 Doubles

1st round: Stamford 1 bt St Paul's 1 15-7; Berkhamsted 2 bt Stoke Newington 1 15-4; Alleyn's 1 bt St Paul's 2 15-1; Berkhamsted 1 bt Edinburgh Academy 2 15-7; Winchester 1 bt Edinburgh Academy 3 15-1; Tonbridge 1 bt St Paul's 1 15-13; Alleyn's 2 bt Berkhamsted 3 15-8; Edinburgh Academy 1 bt St Paul's 4 15-1

Quarter-finals: Stamford 1 bt Berkhamsted 2 11-4, 11-6; Berkhamsted 1 bt Alleyn's 1 11-5, 5-11, 11-8; Winchester 1 bt Tonbridge 1 11-2, 9-11, 11-2; Edinburgh Academy 1 bt Alleyn's 2 11-1, 11-0

Semi-finals: Stamford 1 bt Berkhamsted 1 11-0, 11-7; Edinburgh Academy 1 bt Winchester 1 2-11, 11-1, 11-9

Final: Stamford 1 (E Hunter & H Jones) bt Edinburgh Academy 1 (F James & J Lawrie) 11-2, 11-7

Plate: Edinburgh Academy 2 (W Henry & F Murray) bt St Paul's 1 (T Constance & E De-Rosa Rashid) 16-14

2nd Plate: Berkhamsted 3 bt St Paul's 3 16-15

Bowl: Alleyn's 1 bt Tonbridge 1 15-6

National Doubles Championship

Alleyn's School, Dulwich

Saturday/Sunday, 1-2 April 2023

STOP PRESS Ed Kay & Dan Tristao win their second Cyriax Cup, beating first-time finalists Ben Beltrami & Theo Parker in straight games in the final. Ben Chua & James Smith win the Plate.

Charlie Brooks reports: Ed Kay and Dan Tristao won their second National Doubles title together, beating first time finalists Ben Beltrami and Theo Parker 15-7, 15-11. Dan has now won the Cyriax Cup five times — two with Dan Grant and one with Will Ellison — and has made every final since his first win in 2012.

The first matches started on a chilly London morning, not the customary early-spring weather that has graced National Doubles weekends in recent years. Thankfully the scintillating pace of play from the outset soon warmed the players. Pick of the round was a returning Andy Pringle with Executioners partner Penn Chai against dual-coders Gwydion Wiseman and James Toop; having won the first game to 9, Gwydion and James came out on top in a very close second, 15-13, and marched into the quarter-finals.

Elsewhere, the remainder of the top 8 pairs progressed to set up some juicy quarter-final encounters, played after the local market had proved a popular re-fuelling spot. First up was a brilliant match between Ollie Arnold/Dan Grant and Archie McCreath/Cameron Low — the two left-right combinations in the quarters. As the match entered the deciding game, Cameron's consistency and retrieval was playing the perfect foil to Archie's pace, but ultimately the experience of Ollie/Dan won through despite the latter's injury.

Injury also played its part in the other side of the draw, where James Tilston and Julian Aquilina put up a great fight against Ben and Theo; Julian's left shoulder allowed only limited shots on that side and switching was required. This

almost seemed like an inspired tactical decision, with James combining power and flair off his left. Alas, it was not enough — Ben and Theo now had a chance at the number one seeds.

Elsewhere, Matt Shaw and Sam Russell stepped up their level in the second game against Will Ellison and Charlie Brooks, smashing front wall nicks and applying plenty of pressure, but eventually succumbed. Ed and Dan beat Gwydion and James in the final match-up to set up a semi against Ollie and Dan.

Semi-finals next, and no upsets so far — top four seeds safely through. That was all about to change though, as Ben and Theo stormed ahead against defending champions Charlie and Will. A superb first game saw them race into a lead, taking it 15-6, winners flying off all four gloves. Charlie and Will fought back in the second before Ben and Theo rediscovered their form in the decider to triumph.

Dan and Ed made more serene progress, reaching their third consecutive final. That is not to say their opponents didn't put up a fight, and you can never count out a string of Grant or Arnold thunderbolts, but, in the end, the score was reasonably comfortable.

So the final pitted the big-hitting, shot-making pair of Ben and Theo against the guile and athleticism of Dan and Ed. The newer pair had a decent start, settling their nerves early. However, it didn't take long for the pressure to build on them; Dan and Ed's courtcraft manoeuvred their opponents into awkward positions time and again, combining this with exceptional retrieving and defending when necessary. It was certainly not all one-way, with Theo playing the shot of the match — a drop shot winner from an impossible angle — to bring the score to 7-12 and a sniff of opportunity. Consistency from Dan and Ed made the difference in the closing stages, though, and a 15-7 scoreline in their favour was well deserved.

It was critical for Ben and Theo to up their intensity in Game 2, and they did just that. Ben opened with two winners and eradicated the unforced errors. Theo followed suit. But playing Dan and Ed, that only gets you to parity, and at 7-7 the game was in the balance. Which way would it tilt? Once more, pressure was exerted, the level raised, and within a few key moments Dan and Ed were again celebrating victory and lifting the trophy.

The Plate was, unsurprisingly, a close affair, with a high standard and exciting Fives. Pick of the matches was a superb semi-final where Ben Chua and James Smith beat Lewis Keates and Louise Mathias after saving multiple match points. This galvanised them for the final, where they beat Cambridge pair Ashwin Ahuja and Emrys Thursfield. James and Ben add their names to the plate alongside players who went on to win the Cyriax Cup multiple times — John East and Hamish Buchanan amongst others ...

Once again, many thanks to Alleyn's School for hosting another fabulous tournament, adorned with top quality Fives.

Scores

1st round: S Russell & M Shaw bt L Keates & L Mathias 15-7, 15-3; J Aquilina & J Tilston bt A Ahuja & E Thursfield 15-8, 15-3; B Beltrami & T Parker (4) bt B Chua & J Smith 15-2, 15-4; O Arnold & D Grant (3) bt P Harrison & S Scott 15-4, 1-5; C Low & A McCreath bt T Hebblethwaite & Y Negyal 15-12, 15-7; J Toop & G Wiseman bt P Chai & A Pringle 15-9, 15-13; E Kay & D Tristao (2) bt E Arie & M Bolt 15-3, 15-4

Quarter finals: C Brooks & W Ellison (1) bt Russell & Shaw 15-0, 15-9; Beltrami & Parker bt Aquilina & Tilston 15-8, 15-12; Arnold & Grant bt Low & McCreath 15-8, 12-15. 15-5; Kay & Tristao bt Toop & Wiseman 15-6, 15-10

Semi-finals: Beltrami & Parker bt Brooks & Ellison 15-6, 7-15, 15-6; Kay & Tristao bt Arnold & Grant 15-6, 15-11

Final: Kay & Tristao bt Beltrami & Parker 15-7, 15-11

Plate

Semi-final: Chua & Smith bt Keates & Mathias 16-14; Ahuja & Thursfield bt Chai & Pringle 15-7

Final: Chua & Smith bt Ahuja & Thursfield 15-9, 15-6

RFA Rugby Fives Mixed Doubles Championship

Alleyn's School, Dulwich

Sunday, 2nd April 2023

STOP PRESS Holly Nugent from the Cambridge University Fives Club teamed up with defending champion Nick Whitney to win the third staging of this tournament, beating Ladies National Doubles champion Shinan Zhang and her partner, Eton Fives player Abhishek Bhattacharya, in the final. Viola King Forbes and Emrys Thursfield, both also from Cambridge University, beat multiple Ladies National Champion Louise Mathias and Cambridge Town Club player Liam McKnight in the Plate final.

Scores

Group A: 1st Imogen Wright & Terry McElvaney; **2nd** Holly Nugent & Nick Whitney; **3rd** Viola King Forbes & Emrys Thursfield; **4th** Louise Mathias & Liam McKnight

Group B: 1st Savanna Leboff & Patrick Harrison; **2nd** Shinan Zhang & Abhishek Bhattacharya; **3rd** Julie McIntyre & Joe Garratt; **4th** Harriet Fearon & Ashwin Ahuja

Semi-finals: Shinan Zhang & Abhishek Bhattacharya bt Imogen Wright & Terry McElvaney 12-10, 12-10; Holly Nugent & Nick Whitney bt Savanna Leboff & Patrick Harrison 7-11, 11-6, 11-4

Final: Holly Nugent & Nick Whitney bt Shinan Zhang & Abhishek Bhattacharya 11-4, 11-5

Plate

Semi-finals: Viola King Forbes & Emrys Thursfield bt Harriet Fearon & Ashwin Ahuja 15-7; Louise Mathias & Liam McKnight bt Julie McIntyre & Joe Garratt 15-7

Final: Viola King Forbes & Emrys Thursfield bt Louise Mathias & Liam McKnight 11-5, 11-9

National Veterans Championships

Marlborough College, Dorset

Saturday/Sunday 15-16 April 2023

STOP PRESS Saturday's Singles may have seen a small entry but the players produced a series of long and tough matches, beginning with a mammoth three-gamer between Nick Geere and Tim Widdop and climaxing in a final and a third-place play-off that both went to three games. It was Dave Fox, who qualifies for the Vintage category, who eventually overcame the younger Alex Rew to win his first Veterans Singles title.

Nine fresh players joined the Doubles draw on Sunday. The four seeded pairs enjoyed a comfortable passage into the semi-finals where Marlborough Town Club stalwarts Harvey Bishop & Jim Hughes beat Ed Brooke & Sam Roberts in a close three-gamer before going on to defeat Vintage champion Morgan Spillane and three times winner of this event Andy Pringle in a final that could also easily have gone to three games! Bob Davison & Neil Witcombe won the Plate to make it a clean sweep for the Marlborough Town Club.

Scores

Singles

Preliminary round: N Geere bt T Widdop 10-12, 11-7, 11-7

Quarter-finals: D Fox bt N Geere 11-3, 11-2; J Hughes bt R Christie 11-3, 11-2; A Rew bt E Brooke 11-7, 12-10; S Roberts bt B Baral 11-1, 11-0

Semi-finals: Fox bt Hughes 15-12, 15-11; Rew bt Roberts 11-8, 11-8

Final: Fox bt Rew 15-8, 8-15, 15-8

3rd Place match: Hughes bt Roberts

Plate: Brooke

Doubles

Quarter-finals: E Brooke & S Roberts bt T Fevyer & R Thompson 11-0, 11-0; H Bishop & J Hughes bt B Baral & N Geere 11-1, 11-1; A Pringle & M Spillane bt P Folland & S Hendry 11-0, 11-0; D Fox & T Widdop bt R Davison & N Witcombe 11-4, 11-5

Semi-finals: Bishop & Hughes bt Brooke & Roberts 3-15, 15-4, 15-3; Pringle & Spillane bt Fox & Widdop 15-4, 15-5

Final: Bishop & Hughes bt Pringle & Spillane 15-5, 16-15

Plate: Davison & Witcombe

The Masters Doubles and the Grand Masters Doubles

Marlborough College, Dorset. Saturday, 15th April 2023

On the 20th anniversary of the **National Masters Doubles championship (Over 65s)** 4 pairs lined up to contest a round robin, followed by two head-to-heads for the medals. Spencer Beal and Tony Hamilton were looking for a fifth consecutive title, Brian Kirk was hoping to go one further than last year's runner-up spot and the other five players were hoping to make their mark on their first appearance in the event. All were hoping not to see a repeat of last year's fall which led to Phil Atkinson's retirement from the event with a broken wrist!

The round robin produced three uneventful wins for Spencer & Tony, with two for Brian & Stuart Kirby, one for Andy Passey & Richard Sutcliffe and no luck for Leslie Jenkinson & John Sanders. After a suitable pause for refuelling the 3rd Place match was played, with Andy Passey & Richard Sutcliffe emerging triumphant. Meanwhile the title match between Spencer & Tony and Brian & Stuart got underway. The expected close match did not materialise, as Spencer settled into his defensive role as Mr Reliable while Tony produced the winners on both flanks, ensuring that desired fifth victory. As luck would have it there turned out to be no medals to award but Spencer & Tony enjoyed raising the trophy once more.

After a break of two years lost to Covid-19 the third **National Grand Masters Championship (Over 75s)** took place, with three pairs vying for the Silver Salver. Each pair contained a past champion: Bernard Atkinson playing with 'new boy' John East, Martin Wilkinson pairing up with John Hawke (taking a break from running the adjacent Veterans Championship), and Bev Boag teamed up with Giles Stimson. The event was played as a straight round robin, which Bernard & John won with two comfortable victories, while John & Martin notched up one win over Bev & Giles to take the Silver medal. For John East it was his first title, for Bernard his second.

Scores

The Masters

Round Robin: 1st S Beal & A Hamilton; 2nd S Kirby & B Kirk; 3rd A Passey & R Sutcliffe; 4th L Jenkinson & J Sanders

Final: Beal & Hamilton bt Kirby & Kirk 15-1

Bronze medal match: Passey & Sutcliffe bt Jenkinson & Sanders 15-4

The Grand Masters

Round Robin: Gold B Atkinson & J East; Silver J Hawke & M Wilkinson; Bronze B Boag & G Stimson

The Scottish Open Championships

Fettes College, Edinburgh

Saturday/Sunday, 29-30 April 2023

STOP PRESS There was a series of firsts recorded at this year's Scottish Open: Richie Murby won his first Singles title, denying Dan Grant his first; RFA President Julie McIntyre won her first title, the Doubles with Richie — a double first for him —, and it is likely that she became the first sitting President of the RFA to win a maiden title, while also surely being the first mother to follow her son in winning that event, Oscar McIntyre having won it last year. Richie and Julie's win must also be the first case of a mixed pair winning a regional open event. Strathallan School, who are playing their Fives on squash courts, recorded their first medal-winning performance, with Eric M teaming up with Derby Moor's Lewis Keates to win the Doubles Plate, while Edinburgh Academy's Findlay S won the Singles Plate.

Richie Murby reports: The Singles took the form of two pools, with the top two from each qualifying for the semi-finals and the rest going into the Plate. The Plate final turned out to be an all-schoolboy matchup, with Loretto's improving Findlay S. taking on Edinburgh Academy southpaw Alec S. Findlay defended well but was unable to consistently move Alec out of position, and Alec ran out a comfortable winner.

In the main competition, the semi-finals saw group winners Dan Grant and Richie Murby pitted against group runners-up Ben Jourdan and Lewis Keates respectively. Ben Jourdan went all out in a fast and entertaining semi-final, but ultimately could not outpace Dan, who seemed if anything to relish the high speed. In the other semi-final, Lewis Keates fought hard against Richie Murby but was hampered by an ankle problem and lost in two games.

The final, however, was to go to three. Richie won the first game surprisingly quickly with some off-platform dropshots and decent width. For Game 2, Dan made the right adjustments, showing high-quality rally construction and execution, and some of his trademark volleys. This translated to an 11-5 victory. In the decider, Dan took an early lead, but, with both players tiring, Richie managed to keep the error count a little lower than his opponent, and to grind out a run of points that eventually took him over the line for his first Open singles title.

The Doubles were played on Sunday. With 8 players representing their school (7 pupils and one member of staff, the irrepressible Ewan Lee), Strathallan made up fully half of the draw. That Strathallan came down in such numbers is hugely positive for the game — especially when one considers that, until very recently, the school had not played the game in decades. All of the boys played well, especially given that they train on squash courts. We hope to see more of Strathallan fives in the coming years.

As is customary for this tournament, the pairings were drawn up by the organisers in a bid for parity. The only all-Strathallan pairing, Ed L and Magnus M, were unlucky not to make it out of their group: although they collected more points than their closest competitors, they scored one less win and thereby missed out. They came very close to winning the Plate too, but were pipped by another Strathallan player, Eric M, and his highly experienced partner, Lewis Keates.

In the main competition, we were delighted to see the return of Ian Purvis, former National Schools Doubles champion. He and his partner, Strathallan pupil Oliver D-H, combined well to reach the final. However, Julie MacIntyre & Richie Murby, having ended Enrique Carbonell's ambitions of repeating last year's doubles win, built an unassailable lead in the final, winning 15-3, and securing a first Open Doubles winner's medal for a delighted RFA President!

Results

Singles

Round Robin

Group A: 1st D Grant; 2nd L Keates; 3rd Alec S; 4th Findlay S; 5th J McIntyre

Group B: 1st R Murby; 2nd B Jourdan; 3rd E Hodges; 4th Hattie W

Semi-finals: Murby bt Keates 11-1, 11-3; Grant bt Jourdan 11-4, 11-3

Final: Murby bt Grant 11-0, 5-11, 11-5

Plate: Alec S bt Findlay S 15-4

Doubles

Group A: 1st J McIntyre & R Murby; 2nd Ed L & Magnus M; 3rd Oliver D-H & I Purvis

Group B: Forbes S & Toby C; 2nd E Carbonell & Oscar P; 3rd L Keates & Eric M; 4th E Lee & Charlie W

Semi-finals: McIntyre & Murby bt Carbonell & Oscar P 15-6; Oliver D-H & Purvis bt Forbes S & Toby C 15-7

Final: J McIntyre & R Murby bt Oliver D-H & I Purvis 15-3

Plate: L Keates & Eric M bt Ed H & Magnus M 15-12

The National Schools Girls' Championships

Marlborough College, Dorset

Sunday, 30th April 2023

49 girls, from 11 schools, took part in this year's National Schools Girls' Championships, the 14th of its kind since the inception of this event in 2010.

In the Under 18 category defending Singles champion Camille Beattie from the City of Durham Fives Club and her club partner Imogen Wright were too strong for all opposition, but their two regular opponents from the Edinburgh Academy gave the Durham players closer games in the two finals than the scores suggest.

In the U16s it was good to see four schools fighting it out for the top medals – Blundell's, Alleyn's, Eastbourne and Edinburgh Academy – with Jemima Mitchell from Blundell's taking the gold in the Singles but losing out with her partner 15-16 in a thrilling and much applauded final match of the day against the Alleyn's top pair.

There were good numbers for the U14 and U13 age-groups, with the more championship-hardened players from Alleyn's and Stamford dominating. Special mention must be made of Taylor-Rose Foo, who did the double in the U14s, and of the junior girls from Stamford, who play their Fives to an ever-improving standard on squash courts.

Results

U18 Singles

Group A: 1. Camille Beattie (Durham); 2. Rosa Beazleigh (Eastbourne); 3. Hannah Thomas (Malvern)

Group B: 1. Rosa Ogilvie (Edinburgh Acad); 2. Phoenix Fleming (Marlborough); 3. Maisie Spencer (Eastbourne)

Group C: 1. Olivia Smart (Edinburgh Acad); 2. Fiona Swann (Eastbourne); 3. Erin Butler (Marlborough); 4. Arabella Shuttleworth (Malvern)

Group D: 1. Imogen Wright (Durham); 2. Yvonne Tang (Rugby); 3. Clemmie Davidson (Edinburgh Acad); 4. Lia Krieger (Eastbourne)

Quarter-finals: Beattie (Durham) bt Beazleigh (Eastbourne) 11-2; Wright (Durham) bt Swann (Eastbourne) 11-4; Smart (Edinburgh Acad) bt Butler (Marlborough) 11-1; Ogilvie (Edinburgh Acad) bt Fleming (Marlborough) 11-1

Semi-finals: Beattie bt Wright 11-1; Ogilvie bt Smart 11-1

Final: Camille Beattie (Durham) bt Rosa Ogilvie (Edinburgh Acad) 15-0

Plate: Yvonne Tang (Rugby) bt Hannah Thomas (Malvern) 12-10

U18 Doubles

Quarter-finals: Rugby bt Eastbourne II; 11-4. Eastbourne I bt Malvern; 12-11.

Semi-finals: Durham bt Rugby 11-2; Edinburgh Academy bt Eastbourne I; 11-1

Final: Durham (Camille Beattie & Imogen Wright) bt Edinburgh Academy (Rosa Ogilvie & Olivia Smart) 15-8.

Plate: Eastbourne I bt Eastbourne II 11-6

U16 Singles

Group A: 1. Jemima Mitchell (Blundell's); 2. Anna Bailey (Edinburgh Academy); 3. Diva Tiwari (Alleyn's)

Group B: 1. Elena Newbould (Rugby); 2. Millie Smart (Edinburgh Acad); 3. Natalia Talbot (Blundell's)

Group C: 1. Daisy Dunkley (Eastbourne); 2. Emily Erdmeier (Alleyn's); 3. Grace Li (Malvern)

Group D: 1. Annie Guo (Alleyn's); 2. Nelly Bathard-Smith (Eastbourne); 3. Alice Thomas (Malvern)

Quarter-finals: Jemima Mitchell (Blundell's); bt Nelly Bathard-Smith (Eastbourne); 11-1; Diva Tiwari (Alleyn's) bt Elena Newbould (Rugby) 11-5; Anna Bailey (Edinburgh Acad) bt Annie Guo (Alleyn's) 11-7; Daisy Dunkley (Eastbourne) bt Emily Erdmeier (Alleyn's) 11-6

Semi-finals: Mitchell bt Tiwari 11-6; Bailey bt Dunkley 11-9

Final: Jemima Mitchell (Blundell's) bt Anna Bailey (Edinburgh Acad) 15-4

Plate: Annie Guo (Alleyn's)

U16 Doubles

Quarter-finals: Blundell's bt Alleyn's II 11-5. Edinburgh Academy bt Malvern 11-0.

Semi-finals: Blundell's bt Edinburgh Academy 11-1 Alleyn's I bt Eastbourne 11-7

Final: Alleyn's I (Emily Erdmeier & Annie Guo) bt Blundell's (Jemima Michell & Natalia Talbot) 16-15.

Plate: Eastbourne bt Edinburgh Academy 11-5.

Bowl: Alleyn's II bt Malvern 11-0

U14 Singles

Group A: 1st Bea Grindal (Stamford); 2nd Nina Brown (Bloxham); 3rd Chloe Newington (Marlborough); 4th June Keefe (Ursuline HS, Wimbledon)

Group B: 1st Tilly Stephens (Stamford); 2nd Scarlett Wigley (Alleyn's); 3rd Immy Keenan (Marlborough)

Group C: 1st Phoebe Simons (Bloxham); 2nd Emily Tyler (Stamford); 3rd Maya Hayeem (Marlborough); 4th Martha Harrison (Ursuline HS, Wimbledon)

Group D: 1st Taylor-Rose Foo (Alleyn's); 2nd Bea Davies (Marlborough); 3rd Zara Spencer-Jones (Marlborough)

Quarter-finals: Foo bt Hayeem 11-0; Grindal bt Wigley 11-7; Stephens bt Brown 11-6; Tyler bt Simons 11-4

Semi-finals: Foo bt Grindal 11-0; Tyler bt Stephens 11-1

Final: Taylor-Rose Foo (Alleyn's) bt Emily Tyler (Stamford) 11-0

Plate: Scarlett Wigley (Alleyn's) bt Phoebe Simons (Bloxham) 11-5

U14 Doubles

Semi-finals: Alleyn's bt Stamford II; Stamford I bt Bloxham

Final: Alleyn's (Taylor-Rose Foo & Scarlett Wigley) bt Stamford I (Bea Grindal & Tilly Stephens)

Plate: Marlborough I (Maya Hayeem & Chloe Newington)

U13 Singles

Group A: 1st Annabelle Brown (Alleyn's); 2nd Ellie Raybould (Stamford); 3rd Erin Clark (Stamford)

Group B: 1st Anna Ratto (Alleyn's); 2nd Frieda Hebblethwaite (Alleyn's); 3rd Emily Chowings (Stamford)

Group C: 1st Sophie Dobson (Stamford); 2nd Issy de Soyza (Alleyn's); 3rd Bella Wienand (Stamford)

Quarter-finals: Brown bt Clark 11-0; Hebblethwaite bt de Soyza 11-5; Ratto bt Wienand 11-5; Dobson bt Raybould 11-3

Semi-finals: Brown bt Hebblethwaite 11-3; Dobson bt Ratto 11-5

Final: Annabelle Brown (Alleyn's) bt Sophie Dobson (Stamford)

Plate: Anna Ratto (Alleyn's) bt Frieda Hebblethwaite (Alleyn's) 11-4

U13 Doubles (Round robin)

Gold: 33 pts Alleyn's I (Annabel Brown & Frieda Hebblethwaite)

Silver: 25 pts Stamford I (Sophie Dobson & Bella Wienand)

Plate: 18 pts Alleyn's II (Anna Ratto & Issy de Soyza)

Basque Rugby Fives Singles Championship 2023

San Ignazio Municipal Sports Centre, Bilbao

Saturday, 22nd April 2023

Egoitz Campo reports: This tournament was held as usual on squash courts. There were 8 participants, all but one of whom were from the Basque region. The tournament was won (as last year) by Egoitz Campo, who has the advantage of having been a player of Basque Pelota as a child. Unusually, the games were all played to 12 minutes, the player with the highest number of points at the end of the period being the winner. This explains the variable winning scores from the matches.

A Doubles championship is planned for August.

Scores

Quarter-finals

Egoitz Campo bt Antony Burgos 18-7

Daniel Barrientos bt Andi Erromo 7-6

Joseba Zubiaurre bt Jon Ander Gil 11-9

Samuel Otero bt Luis Getxo 10-8

Semi-finals

Egoitz Campo bt Daniel Barrientos 15-1

Joseba Zubiaurre bt Samuel Otero 11-10

Final

Egoitz Campo bt Joseba Zubiaurre 16-3

3th/4th place match

Samuel Otero bt Daniel Barrientos 12-6

The Wood Cup – Club Knockout

St Paul's School, Barnes

Saturday/Sunday, 22-23 April 2023

STOP PRESS A small entry which nevertheless produced a full day's play on Saturday, followed by a final on Sunday morning. Initially conducted in round robin format, the preliminary matches produced four semi-finalists vying for the trophy, and three remaining sides contesting the Plate. In the main competition a freshly formed Old Pauline IV defeated the defending champions, the West of England Club, who had been hoping for three in a row, while in the Plate, conducted as a three-team round robin, the meeting between the Executioners' 1st IV and the club's 2nd IV decided the destiny of the medals.

Results

Semi-finals: West of England bt Edward Alleyn Club; Old Paulines bt Cambridge Town

Final: Old Paulines bt West of England 150-138

Plate: Executioners 1 bt Executioners 2

Teams

Cambridge Town: A Ahuja, L Cook, E Kay, E Thursfield

Edward Alleyn Club: B Kirwan, A McCreath, A Naumenko, G Wiseman

Executioners 1: C Barnett, B Chua, A Pringle, M Suddaby

Executioners 2: W Chan, J Garratt, B Hale, S Zhang

Marlborough Town: H Bishop, W Bishop, P Folland, S Hendry

Old Paulines: from J Aquilina, C Brooks, T Parker, B Roberts, S Roberts, S Russell, D Tristao

West of England: O Arnold, C Low, T Maconie, T Watkinson

National Vintage Championships

Cambridge University Sports Centre

Sunday, 14th May 2023

Bob Dolby reports: With just the one day to complete Singles and Doubles all games were played to 15, which proved quite enough for all 12 players competing and enabled Brian Kirk to express his thanks to all and to award the medals and trophies and have photographs taken by 5pm. A triumph of organisation!

In the morning's Singles, staged as a knock-out, the outstanding early match was between Sam Roberts and Andy Pringle, where Andy staged a nail-biting comeback from a seemingly hopeless position to take it to 14-all, only to lose 14-16. Sam next had the satisfaction of knocking out the defending champion Morgan Spillane in the semi-final but then couldn't manage to beat his doubles partner Dave Fox in what was a leg-sapping final. Dave thus became only the second player to become Veterans and Vintage Singles champion in the same season, the other being Dave Hebden in 2005 — an impressive double. Meanwhile Andy Pringle topped a four-man round robin for the Plate.

The 6 pairs in the Doubles were split into two pools of three. This arrangement quickly and neatly produced 4 semi-finalists and a Plate final. The two semi-finals played out almost as neatly, setting up a final of defending champions Fox & Roberts against Pringle & Spillane. Meanwhile the Plate was decided on the third court, a tight match from which Nick Geere & Brian Kirk emerged victorious 15-12. The final of the main competition too was tight, with the momentum swinging from one side to the other and the outcome uncertain until Andy & Morgan broke into a 13-9 lead. All four players were playing with impressive consistency, so it took some time for that score to move to 14-10, at which point it took Andy & Morgan 11 championship points to clinch the title! Disappointment for the defending title-holders but delight for the new champions, who just four weeks previously had been runners-up in the Veterans Doubles. It was Morgan's second win, having taken the Doubles title with Chris Blakeley in 2019.

Another piece of history was made: Andy Pringle added the 500th title won by a Cambridge player since 1925. What more appropriate place to do so than the new courts at the Cambridge University Sports Centre. It is Andy's 8th title, after

winning the Winchester Fives Mixed Doubles with Alexandra Steel 3 times, the Veterans Doubles with John Minta twice and once with Hamish Buchanan, and the South East Doubles with Ed Hatton once.

Our warmest thanks to organiser Brian Kirk — contract renewed!

Scores

Singles

Quarter-finals: D Fox bt N Geere 15-9; I Jackson bt R Christie 15-4; S Roberts bt A Pringle 16-14; M Spillane bt J Stubbs 15-3

Semi-finals: Fox bt Jackson 15-5; Roberts bt Spillane 15-4

Final: Fox bt Roberts 15-9

Plate

1st Pringle 45pts; **2nd** Geere 33pts; **3rd** Christie 32 pts; **4th** Stubbs 17pts

Doubles

Pool A

Fox & Roberts bt Christie & Stubbs 15-8, bt Mathieu & Oscroft 15-12

Mathieu & Oscroft bt Christie & Stubbs 15-12

Pool B

Pringle & Spillane bt Hamilton & Jackson 15-2, bt Geere & Kirk 15-0

Hamilton & Jackson bt Geere & Kirk 15-6

Semi-finals: Fox & Roberts bt Hamilton & Jackson 15-5; Pringle & Spillane bt Mathieu & Oscroft 15-6

Final: Pringle & Spillane bt Fox & Roberts 15-10

Plate: Geere & Kirk bt Christie & Stubbs 15-12

National Winchester Fives Mixed Doubles Championship

Malvern College, Worcestershire

Sunday, 21st May 2023

Louise Mathias and Ollie Arnold successfully defended their title at the Winchester Fives Mixed Doubles, making it four in a row. In the final they beat Shinan Zhang and her partner Penn Chai, having won a tough three-game semi-final against Eton Fives Ladies Champion Karen Hird and her partner Lewis Keates. In the Plate Helena Tunks & Ashwin Ahuja came through against fellow Cambridge players Holly Nugent & Sarthak Garella, with Sarthak eventually having to retire with severe cramp after the exertions of a tough Plate semi-final. Organiser Shinan was delighted to see several players new to the butters game and to have chosen a day where the sunny spring weather allowed a picnic on the superb Malvern College grounds. Warmest thanks to the College and to Chris Thomas for hosting the event.

Results (Ladies' names first)

Pool A: **1st** L Mathias & O Arnold 88 pts; **2nd** S Leboff & E Thursfield 72 pts; **3rd** M Gibbons & C Davey 67 pts; **4th** H Brown & J Garratt 52 pts; **5th** J McIntyre & B Kirk 43 pts

Pool B: **1st** S Zhang & P Chai 66 pts; **2nd** K Hird & L Keates 54 pts; **3rd** H Tunks & A Ahuja 39 pts; **4th** H Nugent & S Garella 27 pts

Semi-finals: Mathias & Arnold bt Hird & Keates 14-16, 15-7, 15-9; Zhang & Chai bt Leboff & Thursfield 15-3, 15-8

Final: Mathias & Arnold bt Zhang & Chai 15-4, 16-14

Plate

Semi-finals: Nugent & Garella bt Gibbons & Davey 15-13, 15-11; Tunks & Ahuja bt Brown & Garratt 15-8, 15-7

Final: Tunks & Ahuja bt Nugent & Garella (rtd)

Medley of Rugby & Eton Fives

Marlborough College
Saturday, 3rd June 2023

Last played in the early 2000s this dual event has been revived by organiser Lewis Keates. Six pairs of mostly Rugby Fives players took part, the majority from the two clubs who play both codes, the Marlborough Town Club and the Derby Moor Fives Club. They were joined by multiple Ladies Eton Fives Champion Karen Hird, and by Stuart Watson from the Exeter Club and Charlie Lacewing from Christ's Hospital. Lewis plans to play next year's event on the courts at the Cambridge University Sports Centre.

Lewis Keates reports: With the sun shining down 12 players descended on the Wiltshire town of Marlborough to play the revived Medley of Eton and Rugby Fives. Most were more accustomed to the latter, but with the prospect of facing a multiple Ladies Eton Fives champion in Karen Hird, it soon became apparent that winning all your Rugby games would not be enough.

With six pairs split into two pools and each pair playing one game of each code to 12 and 15 respectively, long rallies and tight scorelines made it very close as to who would go through to the semi-final stage. With Pool A winners losing to Pool B runners-up and Pool B winners beating Pool A runners-up, it set the scene for a rematch of Richard Christie & Tom Kiggell versus Karen Hird & Harvey Bishop.

The final was a spectacular one. In the four-wall contest, thanks to big hitting and good teamwork, Richard and Tom took first blood on familiar turf 15-7. Next up was Eton Fives, where the experience of Karen and accuracy of Harvey made the fight for every point intense, but eventually Richard and Tom managed to gain those all-important 5 points, thus winning the championship by just one point! A Plate final was held for the 3rd place pairs in both pools, in which Brian Kirk & Paul Folland beat Stuart Watson & Lewis Keates.

A great day of Fives was had by all. A special mention must go to Charlie Lacewing — not only the youngest entrant but also the only one who learnt Eton Fives on the day and therefore takes the title 'Player of the Day'.

A big thanks to Marlborough College for hosting us. We hope to see you all again — and more — next year as we move to the Cambridge.

Results (Eton Fives scores first)

Pool A

1st Charlie Lacewing & Bally Singh 24/28; **2nd** Jim Hughes & Brian Kirk 21/25; **3rd** Lewis Keates & Stuart Watson 11/24

Pool B

1st Harvey Bishop & Karen Hird 24/23; **2nd** Richard Christie & Tom Kiggell 15/30; **3rd** Paul Folland & Stuart Kirby 7/11

Semi-finals: Christie & Kiggell bt Lacewing & Singh 12-1, 13-15; Bishop & Hird bt Hughes & Kirk 12-7, 15-12

Final: Christie & Kiggell bt Bishop & Hird 5-12, 15-7

Plate: Folland & Kirby bt Keates & Watson

National Ladies Winchester Fives Championships

Bradfield College
Sunday, 4th June 2023

Ladies Rugby Fives champion Louise Mathias won the Ladies Winchester Fives Singles title for the first time, then won the Doubles with Savanna Leboff, also for their first time. Multiple Eton Fives champion Karen Hird won the Singles Plate and then the Doubles Plate with Maddy Raynor, to whom warmest thanks for organising and running this long-standing national event.

Scores

Singles

Quarter-finals: Holly Nugent bt Maddy Raynor 11-8; Helena Tunks bt Savanna Leboff 11-7; Shinan Zhang bt Karen Hird 11-8

Semi-finals: Louise Mathias bt Nugent 11-3, 11-1; Zhang bt Tunks 11-3, 11-2

Final: Mathias bt Zhang 11-5, 11-3

Plate: Karen Hird bt Savanna Leboff 11-4, bt Maddy Raynor 11-5

Doubles

Round Robin

1st Savanna Leboff & Louise Mathias W3 45 pts; **2nd** Helena Tunks & Shinan Zhang W1 41 pts; **3rd** Karen Hird & Maddy Raynor W1 40 pts; **4th** Holly Nugent & Martha Nugent W1 30 pts

Final: Leboff & Mathias bt Tunks & Zhang 12-11, 11-3

Plate: Hird & Raynor bt Nugent & Nugent 12-10, 10-12, 11-4

National Open Rugby Fives Mixed Doubles Championship

Cambridge University Sports Centre

Saturday, 17th June 2023

STOP PRESS Nine pairs contested the inaugural National Rugby Fives Mixed Doubles competition organised by Savanna Leboff and Helena Tunks on the courts of Cambridge University. In the main draw, arrived at after the initial two Pools had been played out, Louise Mathias & Ollie Arnold added the new title to their Winchester Fives Mixed Doubles title, beating Camille Beattie & Tom Watkinson in the closely fought final. In the Plate Martha Nugent & Ashwin Ahuja triumphed in a three-gamer against Savanna and her partner Ed Kay. Much filming was completed in the course of the competition, of which more in the report to come. Huge thanks to Savanna and Helena for setting up and running this very successful first staging of the event.

Savanna Leboff reports: Last Saturday, the wonderful Fives on show at the first-ever National Open Mixed Doubles tournament solidified this new tournament's place among the most competitive of fixtures. 9 partnerships consisting of some of the strongest male and female players of the game graced the aesthetic courts of Cambridge.

A day packed with Fives then ensued. First seed pairing Louise Mathias & Ollie Arnold made a clean sweep of their group (66 points in 6 games) before beating Holly Nugent & Penn Chai in a semi-final filled with power and skill (15-7, 15-4), earning the pair of pairs the sought-after mini trophy of "Best Match". Camille Beattie & Tom Watkinson won the other group (aided by their monumental comeback from 10-2 down to win 11-10 against Holly & Penn, thereby earning the mini trophy of "best comeback"). They then won their semi-final game against Helena Tunks & Ben Beltrami (15-11, 15-6) — they too showed great power and skill. The final was a joy to watch, a thrilling game between Louise & Ollie and Camille & Tom. Louise & Ollie were the winners after a hard-fought match (15-11, 15-12), a lovely end to their final tournament for many months. Camille's consistently effective and impressive play throughout the day earned her the mini trophy of "Best Shot", a cardboard trophy she'll value enormously.

In the Plate final, Martha Nugent & Ashwin Ahuja played Savanna Leboff & Ed Kay, with the former pair winning in 3 games after a mid-match wobble (11-7, 2-11, 11-3) and being awarded one of the odder trophies in circulation: a suspected sugar shaker.

Overall it was a high-quality and high-intensity day of Fives. The importance of integrating the male and female players in competitive play cannot be stressed enough, and we hope that this tournament goes from strength to strength in the coming years.

Results

Pool A

1st: Louise Mathias & Ollie Arnold 88pts; **2nd** Helena Tunks & Ben Beltrami 76pts; **3rd** Martha Nugent & Ashwin Ahuja 55pts; **4th** Eleanora Vallascas & Oscar McIntyre 51pts; **5th** Julie McIntyre & Ed Hodges 5pts

Pool B

1st Camille Beattie & Tom Watkinson 65pts; **2nd** Holly Nugent & Penn Chai 61pts; **3rd** Savanna Leboff & Ed Kay 60pts; **4th** Imogen Wright & Lewis Keates 31pts

Semi-finals: Mathias & Arnold bt Nugent & Chai 15-7, 15-4; Beattie & Watkinson bt Tunks & Beltrami 15-11, 15-6

Final: Mathias & Arnold bt Beattie & Watkinson 15-11, 15-12

Plate

Semi-finals: Nugent & Ahuja bt Wright & Keates 15-6; Leboff & Kay bt Vallascas & McIntyre 15-10

Final: Nugent & Ahuja bt Leboff & Kay 11-7, 2-11, 11-3

Derby Moor Invitation Doubles

Derby Moor Fives Club, Littleover, Derby
Sunday, 25th June 2023

Bob Dolby reports: With the 12 pairings concocted by Lewis Keates, matches became closer and closer as the day progressed until we eventually concluded proceedings towards 6.00pm with a three-gamer. What more could we want for the 19th running of this friendly tournament first played in 2004? One substantial group of players came down from the City of Durham Club, Nick Geere and Keith Kennerley from the South West, Callum Yates and Oscar McIntyre from university in Manchester along with Val Fikhter from the Y Club, Simon Beattie from Nottingham University, Chris Davey from Berkhamsted, Mark Kiteley from Bedford, Chris Blakeley from London and Karen Hird from Repton, joining our own Derby Moor stalwarts for 8 hours of non-stop Fives. No Max Frost (injured), no Bally Singh (on holiday), no Aaron Wheatley (cricket), no Rob Whitehorn (elsewhere). Every year is different.

Four first round matches set up a pool for the 1st Plate, from which Cody Greaves & Stuart Kirby emerged victorious, Cody thereby winning his first Fives medal and the traditional engraved boule. The quarter-finals likewise produced a second pool from which Nick Geere and Keith Kennerley eventually took the honours, reversing a 9-15 pool defeat by Camille Beattie & Vishal Singh in a final which Nick & Keith won 15-11. If at first you don't succeed, ...

The two semi-finals in the main competition got underway after the post-lunch group photo was taken. Kristians Davins & Oscar McIntyre had had the match of the day in the previous round, beating Camille & Vishal in a scintillating three-gamer, but in multiple winner Anthony Goodwin and ever-improving Karen Hird they met their match in terms of sheer consistency: Karen hardly hit a ball down and Anthony got his hands to everything, no matter what Oscar and Camille threw at them. In the other semi-final National U14 champion Val and National U25 champion Lewis just could not break down Richard and Simon's defence. It all came down to one or two more errors in each game which Richard & Simon won 15-11, 15-13.

Somehow it was inevitable that the final also went to three games; perhaps also the bookies would have had their money on Anthony, who has won this event four times previously. What was a surprise was the start that Anthony & Karen got in the third game: 8-1 up very quickly -- it was a lead that Simon and Richard could not claw back. So, for the second year in a row we have a Mixed pair winning this season-ending event, Camille & Lewis last year, Karen & Anthony this.

Huge thanks as always to Brian Kirk for running this tournament, with the help of Stuart and Lewis. Next year will be our 20th anniversary. We will make it special.

Scores

1st round: Mark Kiteley & Callum Yates bt Tony Hicks & Brian Kirk 16-14; Chris Davey & Adam Hicks bt Ed Hodges & Imogen Wright 15-4; Camille Beattie & Vishal Singh bt Cody Greaves & Stuart Kirby 15-8; Nick Geere & Keith Kennerley bt Chris Blakeley & Julie McIntyre 15-2

Quarter-finals: Val Fikhter & Lewis Keates bt Kiteley & Yates 11-0, 11-0; Simon Beattie & Richard Christie bt Davey & Hicks 11-2, 11-2; Kristians Davins & Oscar McIntyre bt Beattie & Singh 11-5, 9-11, 11-5; Anthony Goodwin & Karen Hird bt Geere & Kennerley 11-1, 11-5

Semi-finals: Beattie & Christie bt Fikhter & Keates 15-11; 15-13; Goodwin & Hird bt Davins & McIntyre 15-11, 15-11

Final: Anthony Goodwin & Karen Hird bt Simon Beattie & Richard Christie 15-9, 6-15, 15-7

3rd Place Play-off: Val Fikhter & Lewis Keates bt Kristians Davins & Oscar McIntyre 15-13

1st Plate: Cody Greaves & Stuart Kirby bt Ed Hodges & Imogen Wright 15-9

2nd Plate: Nick Geere & Keith Kennerley bt Camille Beattie & Vishal Singh 15-11

National End-of-Season Rankings

Rugby Fives Association, 22nd June 2023

Dan Tristao finishes the 2022/3 season on top of the official RFA Singles rankings, with Will Ellison leading the Doubles standings. Ed Kay, Will, Ben Beltrami and Julian Aquilina complete the top five spots in Singles, with Julian climbing from seventh last year. In the Doubles, Ben (up to fifth, from seventh last year) joins Will, Dan, Ed and Ollie Arnold in the top five.

Whilst the new rankings system, introduced at the beginning of the season, may not have changed things too much at the top of the rankings, the fact that it is now automated has allowed far more players to be represented. We have over 200 players in both the Singles and Doubles lists, with the most new entrants in a single year since rankings began.

Dan's continued run atop the Singles is largely due to a successful defence of his National title. His opponent in the final, Ben Beltrami, has made progress towards catching the top three, but remains a little way off. That's because Ed and Will were also winners multiple times around the various regional events, securing plenty of ranking points to keep them out of reach. For now ...

Refreshingly, this season saw two further regional Singles winners, with Ollie Arnold (South East) and Richie Murby (Scotland) claiming their maiden titles. Those results, along with some other strong performances, catapult Ollie up to seventh, and Richie ninth. Lewis Keates (14th) and Oscar McIntyre (19th) make good progress in the top 20, while Addie Chai is up to 22nd after reaching the National Singles finals for the first time. The highest new entrant is Isaac Weaver, thanks to his victory in the British Universities championships.

In Doubles, the regional (non-handicap) titles were shared between seven players, all in the top 10. Will Ellison remains in top spot — having won 11 of the last 12 tournaments entered, and with at least three wins in each ranking year. Dan Tristao and Ed Kay remain close behind, having won their second National Doubles title and a further regional title each this season. Ollie Arnold had another strong season, winning three regional titles.

However, the biggest mover in the top 10 is Sam Russell, who climbs four places up to 10th thanks to his consistency of reaching the latter stages of regional tournaments. Similarly to Singles, Lewis Keates also had a strong season and now lies 12th, while there are large gains for Gwydion Wiseman (16th), James Toop (19th), Bally Singh (20th) and Joe Sumner (21st).

Finally, if you have ever wondered how ranking points accumulate over time, we have included a breakdown for the top 32 players — which you can see by clicking on the appropriate link below. These show how the new ranking system works as you accumulate points over a rolling three-year period. We have now completed one season under this system, but you will see that it includes results going back the full three years.

		SINGLES Top 10					DOUBLES Top 10	
End of Season	Beginning of Season	Name	Points		End of Season	Beginning of Season	Name	Points
1	1	D Tristao	102.5		1	1	W Ellison	100.7
2	2	E Kay	99.8		2	3	D Tristao	98.0
3	3	W Ellison	90.0		3	2	E Kay	97.3
4	4	B Beltrami	77.1		4	4	O Arnold	88.8
5	7	J Aquilina	57.0		5	6	B Beltrami	86.8
6	6	T Watkinson	54.5		6	7	T Parker	82.6
7	15	O Arnold	51.2		7	5	C Brooks	77.3
8	8	C Brooks	47.6		8	9	D Grant	70.4
9	10	R Murby	47.2		9	11	J Aquilina	57.9
10	12	D Grant	44.1		10	14	S Russell	53.9

End-of-Season Rankings for Women

Rugby Fives Association, 3rd July 2023

The Rugby Fives Association is delighted to publish end-of-season Rankings for Women. There are 69 names in the Singles Rankings and 65 in the Doubles — they can be seen at www.therfa/rankings. Below are listed the top 20 in each category. They show little change in the top 3 in either Singles or Doubles, but there is movement below since the last rankings published in March. The results from the National U18 Championships have been taken into account, with young players from City of Durham Club and the Edinburgh Academy in particular making progress.

We look forward to seeing a substantial entry for the Ladies U23 Championships in December where those eligible will be able to consolidate their position in the rankings and others will be able to either improve their position or enter for the first time.

Women's Rankings End of Season 2022-23

		SINGLES Top 20					DOUBLES Top 20	
<i>Current</i>	<i>Season start</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Points</i>		<i>Current</i>	<i>Season start</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Points</i>
1	1	L Mathias	90.3		1	1	L Mathias	87.7
2	2	C Beattie	84.1		2	3	S Zhang	71.0
3	3	M Nugent	76.7		3	2	M Nugent	68.2
4	4	S Zhang	73.8		4	5	S Leboff	66.7
5	6	R Ogilvie	72.0		5	5	C Beattie	65.9
6	5	I Lee	66.2		6	6	H Tunks	59.5
7	9	I Wright	64.9		7	7	R Ogilvie	54.5
8	7	H Tunks	62.6		8	8	L Barton	50.0
9	14	O Smart	62.4		9	9	O Smart	49.1
10	10	H Brown	60.7		10	10	K Bell	48.2

11	8	M Raynor	60.0		11	18	I Wright	48.0
12	12	K Bell	59.5		12	11	K Sumner	47.4
13	11	K Sumner	59.3		13=	12	L Ware	45.4
14	13	H Nugent	57.8		13=	13	I Lee	45.4
15	15	S Leboff	55.0		15	15	R McNaught Davis	44.9
16	16	L Barton	52.3		16	13	M Raynor	44.1
17	17	L Ware	50.4		17	16	C Clark	43.6
18	18	V King Forbes	48.9		18	17	L Hogarth	42.4
19	20	C Clark	47.1		19	19	H Nugent	35.3
20	19	R Wood	46.7		20	20	J McIntyre	33.6

End of Season 2022-23

2022-2023 RESULTS ROUND-UP All winners of events

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

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 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)

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

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: Alleyn's School (A.Guo & Y.Negyal)
U15: Alleyn'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 (Alleyn's School)

U16 Doubles: Alleyn's School (E.Erdmeier & A.Guo)
U14 Singles: A.Brown (Alleyn's School)
U14 Doubles: Alleyn'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: Alleyn's School (E.Erdmeier & A.Guo)
U14 Singles: T-R.Foo (Alleyn's School)
U14 Doubles: Alleyn's School (T-R.Foo & S.Wigley)
U13 Singles: A.Brown (Alleyn's School)
U13 Doubles: Alleyn'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

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

End of season 2022-23