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Marlborough meets Warminster – for One-Wall

Warminster, Wiltshire

June 2016

Tom Kiggell writes: If you thought Wallball was a new-fangled innovation, think again – the Fives court at Warminster, at least 150 years old, offers the chance to play a much earlier version of the game. The wall got a tidy-up, the lines on the floor were freshly marked out, the photographer was booked, and so a team from Marlborough College travelled across Wiltshire on a sunny June afternoon for an exhibition match to re-christen the Warminster wall.

It took Marlborough's Rugby Fives players a while to get their head around the variations. The court is bigger, the bar higher. The idea of standing outside the court in order to retrieve the ball took a bit of getting used to; so too the fact that Warminster Fives is a three-a-side game. Optimising court coverage and minimising confusion between team-mates both therefore took some time, especially once the players stopped just whacking it and started serving more cleverly and using the wings front right and left. A shot hit here could usually only be retrieved by a fleet-footed opponent, and even then he was drawn forwards and out of position. The central and side players both had to react sharply to shots heading into these front corners.

We found that an Eton Fives ball gave a better game than a G6, but there is surely more experimenting to be done in the months ahead with various balls as the game develops through the school. Marlborough issued an open invitation to the Verlucians to come and try Rugby and Eton Fives in a return fixture. But Wallball is surely the closest relation among the other versions of handball currently played, and a Wallball court or two would clearly allow for more players to participate than is possible on this one outdoor court, and also allow the essential skills to develop faster.

The Warminster players took to the game very wholeheartedly, and learnt fast. There were actual spectators too, staff and pupils – full of interest and keen to know when they could have a go – as well as a number of startled passers-by who were used to this space being occupied by parked cars and milling children in uniform. It was a splendid occasion enjoyed by all; the Marlborough contingent were made very welcome and were honoured to take part in such a momentous occasion.

Hats off and many thanks to the Headmaster, the sports department, and especially to the Head of Development, Graeme McQueen. Watch this space for more Fives news from Warminster.

South West Open Championships 2016

Blundell's School, Tiverton

9-10 July 2016

Organiser Wayne Enstone reports: Spectators were treated to some wonderful performances on both day's at this year's championships in both the singles and doubles competitions.

Saturday began with young Craig Baxter (Derby Moor) beating local Keith Kennerley 12-10 in the third. In other first round games Alexandra Steel (Old Blundellian) gave a very good account of herself, pushing Anthony Goodwin (Derby Moor) in the second game. Veteran Richard Christie (Derby Moor) also played well in his first game against experienced Jim Hughes (Marlborough Town) who is playing as well as ever. Another veteran, Nick Geere (Deep West), showed his experience in winning in two very intensely contested games against the energetic young Lewis Keates (Derby Moor). Vintage player Stu Watson (Exeter) put in a fine performance against a much improving Sam Russell (Durham University) but Sam covered the Watson angle shots to win in two games. Alex Rew (Exeter) dispatched a young hard-hitting Aaron Wheatley (Derby Moor) who is just back playing and, whilst beaten to low scores, certainly showed promise for the future.

The match of the second round and the first seeding upset was Antony Goodwin beating Hamish Buchanan in a three-game epic. All credit to Anthony's fine retrieving ability to see him over the line. An equally enthralling match was also taking place in the top half between Ed Hatton (Old Blues) and Alex Rew, with Alex again beating the seeded Ed in three. Other matches went to the seeded players, who all won in two. Sam Russell certainly gave ex-winner Matt Cavanagh (OBMs) and current National Veterans Champion a very good match, showing again his increasing improvement at singles. Will Ellison wasn't giving anything away as usual, however, though newcomer to the SW tournament Alfred Ainsworth (Old Tonbridgians) put in a very creditable performance to give Will a good warm-up. In the bottom half of the draw Alfred's school coach and doubles partner Ian Jackson (ex-BUSF Doubles winner) came up against a very impressive Ben Beltrami and, despite losing to low scores, equally played well. Even though Dave Butler (Durham University) wasn't feeling too well he certainly firstly controlled play to defeat Jim Hughes, then Jim's partner, Alex Rew, to earn his place in the semi's. Ollie Arnold (Bristol University) showed what an exciting singles prospect he is becoming, firstly dispatching Craig Baxter quickly, then providing Will with plenty of rallies to think about. Unfortunately, with Will's experience and tremendous attacking shots, Ollie now realises areas of his game he needs to develop in order to break into the elite singles group. Another seed upset took place in the quarter-finals where Charlie Brooks beat third seed Matt Cavanagh, showing he has now fully recovered from a knee injury that kept him out of the game last year. Meanwhile Ben Beltrami booked his place in the semi by defeating a very tired looking Anthony Goodwin convincingly.

In the semi-finals Dave Butler did his best to attack Will whenever he could; however, with the combination of Will being able to increase the pace and Dave looking under the weather it was a comfortable win for Will. Quite the opposite in the other semi, though, as Charlie was yet again to upset the seeding and beat Ben, the number two seed, in a three-game battle. Initially Ben showed the form that has produced him his well earned high ranking, winning the first game, but then Charlie slowly produced his old form and winning shots and one could see the energy drain from a young player as the match went into a third and deciding game, which Charlie controlled excellently and, surprisingly, won to love after many hard-fought rallies. So, a mixed day of fortunes on the singles front and a new opponent for Will in his ninth consecutive final, having previously won on five occasions, but the outcome had to wait until the Sunday morning.

The doubles, as usual started on the Saturday after the second round of the singles, with some interesting new pairings and the most significant question being asked: Could any of them give our National Doubles Champions Charlie Brooks & Will Ellison a run for their money? A first round three-gamer saw young guns Craig Baxter and Lewis Keates defeat mixed pairing Dan Hill & Alexandra Steel 12-10 in the third. Another close match was that where Wayne Enstone & Ed Hatton beat Richard Christie & Aaron Wheatley in two games. An interesting new pairing of Anthony Goodwin & Sam Russell proved too powerful for Alfred Ainsworth & Ian Jackson. In another three-gamer Nick Geere & Jack Turner (ex-Blundell's School Captain) were able to blast past Veteran Keith Kennerley & Vintage Brian Kirk (Derby Moor). Unfortunately, that success was short-lived as they were beaten by Ben Beltrami & Hamish Buchanan, who quickly won through to the quarter-final. Equally Charlie & Will moved through to the quarters after giving Craig & Lewis a master class – but what wonderful experience for young players to gain!

A tournament organiser's nightmare can be having too many three-game matches, so for the organiser to be involved in the longest of those matches is the reason he will be banned from playing in future years to come — maybe! From all accounts the match was entertaining, with Alex Rew & Jim Hughes winning deservedly 12-10, after being match ball down in the third. That put them through to the semi-finals, but unfortunately that semi was quickly over, with Charlie & Will showing true champions' form. In the lower half Ollie Arnold & Dave Butler had too much fire power for Anthony & Sam. which set up them up to play Ben & Hamish. This contest also proved to be a quick one, with Ollie hitting the ball with power from the left that hasn't been seen since our RFA treasurer-elect Dave Parlbly performed here some years ago – happy memories! Ben & Hamish rallied in the second; however, Ollie and Dave proved just too good on the day. So this set up for an interesting Sunday,

with the two singles finalists playing each other before then playing together in the doubles final — very interesting.

In between the main tournaments the Plates were being contested. In the Singles Richard Christie and Ian Jackson had a hard fought semi which Ian eventually edged to win to 8, while on the other side of the draw Alfred Ainsworth was consistently beating his opponents to 2. The final was then between the two Tonbridge club players. Ian actually made the better start; however, as we coaches know we eventually pay the penalty by developing our players to a standard above ourselves and such was the case here, Ian being very proud of his one time pupil who won to 6.

In the Doubles Plate Richard Christie & Aaron Wheatley gave Ian Jackson & Alfred Ainsworth their toughest challenge in the semi, getting 10 points; however, Brian Kirk & Keith Kennerley, whilst playing well and winning many rallies, couldn't break down the defence of the eventual winners, Ian and Alfred, who won to love!

A long day for all. and so we were ready for a much deserved drink and meal at our usual venue, the Butterleigh Inn. A special mention and best wishes were given to Will, who is to marry Nicky in two weeks and organised the wedding to fit in with this championship, and to Ed and Hazel, whose wedding is in four weeks' time.

The finals on Sunday were a real treat for everyone to watch, being action-packed. The singles final was Charlie Brooks's first for quite some time, but with his recent National Doubles success he certainly looked very composed. Will was on form, as proven the previous day, and right from the start of the match it was clear that he was not going to give up his trophy without a fight. At 4-3 to Will, Charlie was proving to be a very worthy opponent and a real threat. After several changes at this point Will then began to move into another gear and, whilst not dominating the rallies, he slowly moved the score on to game ball 3. As we had witnessed throughout the rallies Charlie was not willing to let the game go without a final burst of effort and at 10-5 he really was still causing Will to work hard. Will eventually produced the quality shots to close out the game and win the first game to 5. The second game followed a similar pattern of play in terms of Charlie staying with Will in rallies up to 4 -2; then we saw Will slowly moving the score onto 8-2. At 8-3 Charlie produced some excellent shots and it seemed possible he could get back into the match; however, Will seemed to sense the danger and, as he does, produced his own wonder shots. This possibly helped them both save energy for the doubles final to be played after this battle royal, with Will winning to 4. Amidst much of the brilliant play we witnessed it is worth mentioning how both players called shots down which one might well have thought were up, but such is the spirit of fairness in which these top players play the game; all credit to them — it is wonderful to witness. Well done to both players, great role models.

In the doubles final, Ollie Arnold continued, as in previous matches, to rocket the ball around the court for him & Dave to take an initial lead, but fortunately for Charlie & Will they managed to weather the storm and throughout many ferocious hitting rallies to move ahead taking a 5-1 lead. At 5-3 Ollie & Dave looked as though they had halted Charlie & Will's momentum only for the score to quickly switch back to 10-3 in Charlie & Will's favour and then a quick end, 11-3. Ollie & Dave made a super start to the second game, with more controlled hitting bringing them greater success, moving them into a 4-0 lead, which left us spectators thinking this match could be going to three games. Just as in the first game, though, Will & Charlie slowly started to impose their own strategy and once again moved to level the score and then proceeded, as in the first game, to dominate rallies. They won the second game to 4, and with it the match. They are a truly great partnership and it will undoubtedly take another brilliantly gifted pair to take this trophy off them. It was an excellent final to watch, with many exciting rallies and numerous winning shots, so well done to all players.

Whilst the main finals were taking place there were six players up for the challenge of the Sunday American Doubles competition. This year the players chose to organise a round robin, playing two games against each pair, the winning pair the one posting the most points. As usual, it was very

closely contested: the winners were Keith Kennerley partnered with Alfred Ainsworth: they won all their games, so worthy winners.

To conclude proceedings the usual prize-giving of the local Devon Dartington Glassware took place before players departed to as far away as Edinburgh. Well done to all for making it another enjoyable weekend.

Finally, it is a privilege for me to write this report after witnessing yet again Fives of the highest standard. A massive thanks to Will and Charlie for supporting the Championship as current National Champions and providing us with such a wonderful standard of play over the whole weekend. Also thanks go to: Chris H-D for booking me the facilities of Blundell's School and dealing with last-minute maintenance issues; to the school for its continuing support of Fives; to Tim Lewis for booking the Saturday meal and his on-the-day support in general — we wish him all the best with his imminent second knee replacement; to Lesley on the catering side; and lastly to Nigel Gordon for his generous and continued sponsorship of the event with his G6 balls, which made for some great performances and exciting play.

Do think about joining us next year for a fun weekend of fives; all are welcome!

Singles

1st round: C Baxter bt K Kennerley 11-3, 10-12, 12-10; A Rew bt A Wheatley 11-1, 11-1; J Hughes bt R Christie 11-8, 11-1; S Russell bt S Watson 11-3, 11-2; N Geere bt L Keates 11-6, 11-8; A Goodwin bt A Steel 11-0, 11-5

2nd round: W Ellison bt A Ainsworth 11-5, 11-2; O Arnold bt Baxter 11-0, 11-1; Rew bt E Hatton 7-11, 11-2, 11-9; D Butler bt Hughes 11-1, 11-8; M Cavanagh bt Russell 11-9, 11-4; C Brooks bt Geere 11-0, 11-1; Goodwin bt H Buchanan 11-9, 8-11, 11-9; B Beltrami bt I Jackson 1-0, 11-2

Quarter-finals: Ellison bt Arnold 11-2, 11-4; Butler bt Rew 11-0, 11-0; Brooks bt Cavanagh 11-1, 11-0; Beltrami bt Goodwin 11-3, 11-4

Semi-finals: Ellison bt Butler 11-3, 11-2; Brooks bt Beltrami 5-11, 11-6, 11-0

Final: Ellison bt Brooks 11-5, 11-4

Singles Plate: Ainsworth bt Jackson 11-6

Doubles

1st round: Baxter & Keates bt D Hill & Steel 11-3, 6-11, 12-10; W Enstone & Hatton bt Christie & Wheatley 11-7, 11-7; Goodwin & Russell bt Ainsworth & Jackson 11-4, 11-5; Kennerley & Kirk bt Geere & Turner 10-12, 11-9, 11-4

Quarter-finals: Brooks & Ellison bt Baxter & Keates 11-1, 11-3; Hughes & Rew bt Enstone & Hatton 11-9, 4-11, 12-10; Arnold & Butler bt Goodwin & Russell 11-5, 11-3; Beltrami & Buchanan bt Kennerley & Kirk 11-2, 11-4

Semi-finals: Brooks & Ellison bt Hughes & Rew 11-5, 11-3; Arnold & Butler bt Beltrami & Buchanan 11-0, 11-5

Final: Brooks & Ellison bt Arnold & Butler 11-3, 11-4

Doubles Plate: Ainsworth & Jackson bt Kennerley & Kirk 15-0

American Doubles: Ainsworth & Kennerley

South East Open Championships 2016

Christ's Hospital, Horsham, 27/28th August

On a warm August Saturday, writes organiser Ed Hatton, the largest yet group of Fives players at this event gathered for the third South East Open at Christ's Hospital in Sussex.

The singles entry was a strong group of 18 players, which included seven of the top 10 in the land. It was also pleasing to have nine players who had not previously entered the tournament. The first round went according to seedings, although Tom Watkinson pushed David Butler very hard in the first game, as did Anthony Goodwin to Julian Aquilina in the second.

Top seeds Will Ellison, Dan Tristao and Dan Grant made comfortable progress in the quarter-finals, but it was a different story for Ben Beltrami, who after a slow start and a dominant second game, was eased past by a determined Butler. Perhaps predictably, Tristao and Ellison met once again in the final.

In a reverse of last year's result, Will was unable to keep up with Dan's punishingly accurate control of the court, down-the-line shots, reverse angles, volleys and more, all combining to wear down Will's resistance and leaving Dan a worthy champion. A very strong plate competition produced a repeat of the 2015 National Schools final, with the same result – Tom Watkinson beat Rob Whitehorn.

The doubles took place on the same day, inspired by the example of the South West Open. The players produced remarkably few fatigue-related grumbles and a complex round-robin arrangement involving three groups of three pairs resulted in Aquilina & Watkinson and Tristao & CH club member Bart Callaghan in his first senior tournament reaching the semis. Ellison & new entrant Alfred Ainsworth from Tonbridge also made it through their group, just, while Butler & Whitehorn qualified as highest-scoring second place pair.

The semis saw convincing, if not easy, progress for Aquilina & Watkinson to meet Ainsworth & Ellison in the final. Here, the star was certainly Ainsworth, impressively partnering the national doubles champion and refusing to buckle under the pressure that their opponents put on him. So, Ainsworth & Ellison earned a well-deserved win in the Christ's Hospital Cup. In the plate, after another gruelling round-robin, Blackaby & Hatton could count themselves deserved, if narrow, winners.

The RFA is very grateful to Christ's Hospital school for the use of the Fives courts and Sports Centre. One of the competitors commented that the showers and toilets were the best of the RFA tournament venues!

RESULTS

Singles

1st round: Callaghan bt Geere 12-10, 11-2; Hamilton bt Ainsworth 6-11, 11-8, 11-9

2nd round: Ellison bt Callaghan 11-0, 11-2; Parker bt Hatton 11-2, 11-0; Butler bt Watkinson 12-10, 11-1; Beltrami bt Whitehorn 11-5, 11-2; Grant bt Stokes 11-2, 11-0; Toop bt Hamilton 11-3, 11-0; Aquilina bt Goodwin 11-1, 11-7; Tristao bt Blackaby 11-3, 11-2

Quarter-finals: Ellison bt Parker 11-3, 11-2; Butler bt Beltrami 11-8, 0-11, 11-8; Grant bt Toop 11-1, 11-3; Tristao bt Aquilina 11-4, 11-5

Semi-finals: Ellison bt Butler 11-2, 11-6; Tristao bt Grant 11-5, 11-3

Final: Tristao bt Ellison 11-5, 11-7

Plate: Watkinson

Doubles

Group A: Ainsworth & Ellison bt Blackaby & Hatton 11-4; Butler & Whitehorn bt Ainsworth & Ellison 11-7; Blackaby & Hatton bt Butler & Whitehorn 11-9

Group B: Callaghan & Tristao bt Beltrami & Blakeley 11-6; bt Geere & Goodwin 11-5; Geere & Goodwin bt Beltrami & Blakeley 11-9

Group C: Aquilina & Watkinson bt Grant & Keates 11-3; bt Hamilton & Parker 11-9; Hamilton & Parker bt Grant & Keates 11-3

Semi-finals: Aquilina & Watkinson bt Butler & Whitehorn 15-10; Ainsworth & Ellison bt Callaghan & Tristao 15-7

Final: Ainsworth & Ellison bt Aquilina & Watkinson 15-10

Plate: Blackaby & Hatton

Rankings following the South West Championships

September 2016

Updated rankings reflecting the results from the South West Championships held in July have now been posted. The results from the recently held South East Championships will be included in a rankings update following the London event to be held September 10th/11th.

The new singles rankings show Charlie Brooks entering the top 10 at number 6 following his appearance in the final at Tiverton. Will Ellison consolidates his lead at the top. Anthony Goodwin enters the top 30 at 25, whilst Alex Rew (26), Alfred Ainsworth (36), and Ian Jackson (44) are new entries.

In the doubles, SW finalists David Butler & Ollie Arnold make progress in the top 10 whilst Alex Rew and Jim Hughes enter the top 20 at 16. Alfred Ainsworth, Ian Jackson, Lewis Keates, Keith Kennerley, and Brian Kirk are new entries.

The official RFA rankings are prepared by Dave Hebden.

Ladies Under 23 Championships

St Paul's School, Barnes, Sunday November 20th

The first ever RFA Ladies Under 23 Championships will be held on Sunday 20 November at St Pauls School in Barnes. Organised by RFA Director Kathleen Briedenhann, the event has been set up to get players from as many universities and schools as possible, and will be open to competitors who are under 23 on the day of the championships.

There will be both singles and doubles championships, and if any player is without a doubles partner, the organiser will endeavour to pair them up with someone. Entry fee is £10 per person and players can pay on the day of the event.

London Open Championships 2016

Alleyn's School, Dulwich, Saturday-Sunday September 10-11th

Organiser Will Ellison writes: Alleyn's School hosted the 22nd London Open and, for the fourth year in a row, Will Ellison and Dan Tristao between them came away with both the singles and doubles titles. Unfortunately for Dan, he was unable to defend the singles title he won last year due to a tennis commitment at the All England Club; instead, Will won his third London Open singles title with a victory over first-time finalist Dan Grant. However, Dan T and Will were able to team up once again to win the doubles title for the fourth year in a row.

Will's win increases his open singles tally to 24 wins – now one clear of Hamish Buchanan's 23 titles and third behind Neil Roberts (33) and Wayne Enstone (95), with Dan Tristao fifth in the leaderboard

with 19 titles. Will's third title here ties the record set jointly by Neil Roberts, Hamish Buchanan, Ed Fuller and James Toop.

The singles tournament on Saturday started out largely by following the seedings – the shock of the round of 32 was perhaps Tom Watkinson's comfortable win over the more experienced and higher-ranked Chris Burrows. It was also encouraging to see some strong performances by current schoolboys, including Charlie Barnett of Merchant Taylors' School pushing Nick Geere hard and Alleynian Ben Kirwan's assured performance against fellow schoolboy Alex Hopkins.

In the round of 16, Theo Parker came through in three games against Alleyn Old Boy Peter Hanton, sealing the final game to love. Julian Aquilina once again outlasted James Tilston in yet another three-game encounter. Finally, Hamish Buchanan's fine win over Ollie Arnold is worthy of a mention – the former champion's tactical nous and home court knowledge saw him upset the seedings.

The quarter-finals went with the top four seeds – although some eyes were raised with Julian Aquilina's 11-5 11-5 win over six-time National Singles champion James Toop. Julian's consistency and retrieval saw him comfortably through, although in truth James is just getting back into the game after over a year without tournament Fives, and we hope to see more of him again soon!

In the first semi-final, Will Ellison calmly dispatched Julian Aquilina 11-0, 11-3, showing a ruthless display of aggressive Fives. Dan Grant and Charlie Brooks had a much tighter match: Dan's winners, coupled with a few uncharacteristic errors from Charlie, saw him win the first game to five; in the second, Dan again started out strongly, although Charlie pegged him back from 9-5 to 10-9 and saved four match points before finally capitulating. This led to a repeat of the 2014 National Singles final the morning after: Ellison vs Grant.

Dan Grant started very strongly and rushed to a 7-2 lead; however, Will's persistence and retrieval saw him claw back the first game 11-8. The second game was closer throughout, although Will kept his nose in front and sealed it to 7 to take the title.

In the singles plate, Chris Burrows held off strong opposition, including no.12-ranked Ollie Arnold, to win his group of five players. James Tilston won the other group to set up the final, which James ended up coming through fairly comfortably – 15-5 – to take the title.

After a slightly delayed start, as many competitors were watching the singles final, the doubles tournament started on Sunday morning. The pick of the early matches has to be Angus Hanton and Nick Geere's three-game win against Billy Rentoul and Sky Yang of Alleyn's School. It was great to see the local boys playing so well and making their elders stay on court for nearly an hour and a half!

In the quarter-finals, Will Ellison and Dan Tristao were made to work hard in a second game against Tim Hebblethwaite and Ed Ronan – eventually nicking it 12-10. Arnold and Parker came through a three-gamer against Julian Aquilina and James Tilston, although, rather bizarrely, none of the games was closer than 11-4! Dan Grant and Gareth Price came through 11-8, 12-10 against a very determined pairing of Peter Hanton and Henry Jefferies – overcoming a 10-6 deficit in one of the games, to see them through to the semi-finals. By contrast, Hamish Buchanan and Charlie Brooks beat Angus Hanton and Nick Geere fairly comfortably 11-2, 11-2.

Both semi-finals were close games: in the top half, Will Ellison and Dan Tristao survived a scare against Ollie Arnold and Theo Parker – including being 8-0 down in the first game, which they ended up losing 12-10 – to eventually win in three games. They found their top gear in the second and third games, both of which they won to three. This was the first time that they had dropped a game as a pair – due testament to Arnold and Parker's very accurate and powerful hitting in the first game. It was, however, a big ask to maintain this in a best-of-three-game match! In the bottom half, Dan Grant and Gareth Price were edged out 11-8, 12-10 by the on-form pairing of Hamish Buchanan and Charlie Brooks, whose consistency and retrieval were paying dividends on the Alleyn's courts.

The doubles final was yet another close match, with some very long rallies and outstanding retrieval from both pairs. The first game started out fairly evenly, although a string of errors from Ellison and Tristao saw Brooks and Buchanan take a 7-2 lead. Ellison and Tristao clawed this lead back and ended up taking the game 11-9. The second game was closer throughout, but eventually Ellison and Tristao again took it to nine.

In the doubles plate, we used a Monrad draw – with 8 pairs, this guarantees three games for all players and a final ranking of each pair. We had to make do with 7 pairs, but this nonetheless made for some excellent games. Henry Jefferies and Peter Hanton came through unbeaten to take the title – beating James Tilston and Julian Aquilina 15-12 in the final game. Tim Hebblethwaite and Ed Ronan beat regular Tuesday evening sparring partners Ed Carr and Rocco Sulkin 15-8 to take third place.

The final mention must be to Gareth Price for his kind use of his Spikeball set – perhaps something of a precedent for future tournaments?! Gareth's daughter "EJ" also gets a special mention for taking plenty of photos throughout the day, including the group shots. Finally, singles trophy donor David Gardner was kindly on hand to present the Gardner Quaich. We must, of course, thank Allyn's School for their generosity in letting us use their courts and facilities once again.

We look ahead to next year and what will be the 23rd tournament looking set to return to St Paul's School!

RESULTS

Singles

1st round: B Kirwan bt A Hopkins 11-4, 11-3; A George bt A Hamilton 11-1, 11-4; J Tilston bt A Cochrane 11-2, 11-1; T Watkinson by C Burrows 11-6, 11-3; H Buchanan by S Stokes 11-2, 11-1; N Geere bt C Barnett 11-6, 11-5

2nd round: W Ellison bt B Kirwan 11-2, 11-2; T Parker bt P Hanton 11-11, 11-6, 11-0; J Toop bt A George 11-3, 11-3; J Aquilina bt J Tilston 7-11, 11-0, 11-2; C Brooks bt T Watkinson 11-0, 11-0; H Buchanan bt O Arnold 11-9, 11-8; T Maconie bt H Jefferies 11-5, 11-3; D Grant bt N Geere 11-0, 11-0

Quarter-finals: W Ellison bt T Parker 11-1, 11-5; J Aquilina bt J Toop 11-5, 11-5; C Brooks bt H Buchanan 11-0, 11-0; D Grant bt T Maconie 11-1, 11-5

Semi-finals: Ellison bt Aquilina 11-0, 11-3; Grant bt Brooks 11-5, 11-9

Final: Ellison bt Grant 11-8, 11-7

Plate: Tilston

Doubles

1st round: T Hebblethwaite & E Ronan bt B Kirwan & J Hanton 11-1, 11-4; J Aquilina & J Tilston bt C Barnett & A Hopkins 11-1, 11-6; P Hanton & H Jefferies bt E Carr & R Sulkin 11-2, 11-1; A Hanton & N Geere bt B Rentoul & S Yang 6-11, 11-5, 11-7.

Quarter-finals: W Ellison & D Tristão bt T Hebblethwaite & E Ronan 11-4, 12-10; O Arnold & T Parker bt J Aquilina & J Tilston 4-11, 11-1, 11-3; D Grant & G Price bt P Hanton & H Jefferies 11-8, 12-10; C Brooks & H Buchanan bt N Geere & A Hanton 11-2, 11-2

Semi-finals: W Ellison & D Tristão bt O Arnold & T Parker 10-12, 11-3, 11-3; C Brooks & H Buchanan bt D Grant & G Price 11-8, 12-10

Final: Ellison & Tristao bt Buchanan & Brooks 11-9, 11-9

Plate: P Hanton & H Jefferies

Owers Trophy 2016

St Paul's School, Barnes, Saturday October 1st

STOP PRESS

In the second running of the new-format Owers Trophy (for teams of Old Boys from individual schools), the Old Paulines again emerged as victors. This year, it was the combination of three current Cambridge students – Ed Kay, Ben Beltrami and Matt Shaw – that took the title, but the event was not without its stories, shocks and nail-biting drama along the way.

For instance, the second Old Paulines team failed to make the semi-finals after only winning one match in the round-robin stage; both Sherborne and the Scottish Schools entered the event for the first time (the latter being confined to the plate, as the three were actually from different schools); the margin between second and third positions in the first round-robin group was a single point; and, the Old Bradfieldians (David Butler, Ed Ronan and James Marshall) performed superbly, not just in reaching the final, but also pushing the Cambridge Old Paulines harder than perhaps anyone – OBs included – had thought possible.

Oh, and finally, the Plate is yet to be decided. This is because the two teams that qualified for the final are the two from Derby Moor; and, because of how long the tournament took to reach that stage, and how long the drive home would be afterwards, it was agreed that the Plate final could be played at a later date in Derby...

RESULTS

Round-robin stage

Group 1: 1st Cambridge Old Paulines; 2nd Old Eastbournians; 3rd Derby Moor; 4th Old Shirburnians

Group 2: 1st Old Bradfieldians; 2nd Alleyn Old Boys; 3rd Old Paulines; 4th Derby Moor 'Young Guns'

Knockout stage

Semi-finals: Old Bradfieldians bt Old Eastbournians 33-21; Cambridge Old Paulines by Alleyn Old Boys 33-9

Final: Cambridge Old Paulines bt Old Bradfieldians 34-22

Plate: TBC (but it will be a team from Derby Moor!)

Local players christen refurbished court at St Andrew's Prep School

St Andrew's Prep School, Eastbourne, Saturday 8th October 2016

The newly refurbished court at St Andrew's Prep School in Eastbourne has been christened by four prominent players with a strong local connection. Old Androvians Andy Pringle and Simon Beal were joined for an afternoon of mixed doubles by reigning national ladies champions Kathleen Briedenhann and Tessa Mills during an Open Day at the school.

For the record, Andy and Tessa won two games to one, but more importantly the match drew crowds of interested current and former staff, as well as current and former pupils, all afternoon. Many expressed an interest in playing – and, in some cases, starting to play again – our great game; and, with prospect of some coaching help from Eastbourne College staff, the RFA hopes that the game is set for a successful re-introduction to the school and a long-term future.

As a welcome by-product, it should also help to ensure a good future for Eastbourne College Fives, as many pupils from St Andrew's go on to the College.

The court itself could hardly be in a better position to ensure the game is seen by plenty of staff and pupils. It's right between one of the main classroom blocks and the school playing fields, next to one of the school car parks and in a block of buildings that also contains the School shop and medical centre.

The court was refurbished by the school with some financial help from the RFA Charitable Trust and following advice from the RFA's technical expert, Stuart Kirby; and, happily, the four players reported that the court played extremely well, with a clean bounce and excellent lighting. Naturally, being a Fives court of more than 100 years old, it has a few idiosyncrasies: the court is a little longer than average, with a low front wall and a couple of odd bits and pieces intruding into the playing area.

Perhaps most worryingly, these 'bits and pieces' include a fire alarm in the back left corner, but given that the four players hit it only once in three games – and Andy claimed to be aiming for it! – it suggests it won't be too much of a hazard. This is especially the case when you consider that the children who will play on the courts will be no more than 13 years old, and the 'hazards' (which also include a roof support bolt and some wood below the viewing window) are all at the back of the court.

Perhaps surprisingly, this was the first time that any of the four players had played on the court. Although both Andy and Simon were pupils at the school, the court had already morphed into a storage room long before they arrived to study.

We look forward to bringing you further news of Fives success at the school, and hope that this will start with some Androvians at the Under 13s championships later in the season.⁴

Rankings following the London Championships 2016

by David Hebden on 6th October 2016

Updated rankings reflecting the results from the South East Championships (August) and the London Championships (September) have now been posted.

The new singles rankings show only marginal changes in the top 20, but lower down Chris Burrows (#25), Tom Watkinson (#30) and Rob Whitehorn (#35) make significant upward moves. There are no new entries.

In the doubles, Charlie Brooks moves up to No. 3 while Hamish Buchanan moves up to No. 5. Gareth Price moves into the top 20 at No. 20. Further down other risers are Alfred Ainsworth, Peter Hanton, Tom Watkinson, Henry Jefferies, Robert Whitehorn, Tim Hebblethwaite and Christian Blackaby. Bart Callaghan, Angus Hanton, and Ed Ronan are new entries.

The Lady's Cup 2016

Cambridge University Sports Centre; Saturday, 15th October 2016

Bob Dolby reports: Katie and Joseph Sumner became the winners of the 3rd Lady's Cup, beating Anastasia de Clermont and Tom Beal in the final after a round of group matches and two close semi-finals.

In the Beginners' Event Alice Day and Alina Guna won Le Petit Pot by beating Liv Theaker and Trevor White after these four players emerged from a lengthy series of 21-rally matches.

21 players ranging in age and in experience met for this year's Lady's Cup, an event designed to encourage Ladies Fives at schoolgirl and university level. National champions Kathleen Briedenhann and Tessa Mills came to give the benefit of their experience in a competition where the only condition is that one half of the pair is a schoolgirl, recent school leaver or a beginner.

There were players from Cambridge University and Nottingham University, and from Rugby School and Bedford Modern School. This year no players were able to come from Aldenham School and Christ's Hospital — we hope to see them able to compete again next year.

6 pairs contested the main trophy, the Lady's Cup, while 9 others played a series of short games designed to produce a final in which the prize was Le Petit Pot, an item of pottery for each winning player.

In the Lady's Cup siblings Katie & Joe Sumner from Bedford Modern School beat Rugby's Anastasia de Clermont & Tom Beal in the final, while the Plate match between the losing semi-finalists — an all-Rugby affair between Lottie Harbottle & George Terry and Freya Harrison & Jacob Drabble — went to Lottie & George. Lottie thus had the distinction of retaining the Plate which she won last year with Vlad Shirokiy.

In the match for the Lady's Bowl Emily O'Malley (Old Olavians, Derby Moor and Nottingham University) & Tessa Mills (Old Eastbournian and University of Kent at Canterbury) had a little too much experience for the Cambridge University pairing of Georgina Shepherd & Cassi Henderson.

On Court Three the final of the Beginners' event featured total beginner Alina Guna from Cambridge (when Cassi invited her to try her hand Alina thought she was entering a Rugby Union event!) played with Alice Day from Rugby. Their opponents were also from Rugby: master in charge Trevor White and another near-total beginner Liv Theaker. Alina & Alice came through a close match to win their trophies designed by an artisan potter in southern Burgundy.

Results

Lady's Cup: Sumner & Sumner bt de Clermont & Beal

Plate: Harbottle & Terry bt Harrison & Drabble

Bowl: O'Malley & Mills bt Shepherd & Henderson

Petit Pot: Guna & Day bt Theaker & White

Yorkshire Open Championships 2016

Giggleswick School, North Yorkshire; Saturday/Sunday October 15/16th

John Hawke reports: As is traditional for this tournament, the doubles were played on Saturday and the singles on Sunday. This arrangement tends to result in highly competitive later rounds in the doubles, at the expense of some performances in the singles. Beer and a late night on Saturday may also be a factor in the singles results.

The singles competition was only added to the tournament in 2014, so the previous couple of years have been devoted to building up the number of entrants. This year, we appear to have become of age, with participants of a stature that would please any organiser.

The doubles competition followed the form book up to the first semi-final, when Ben Beltrami and Ed Kay defeated the previous year's runner-up pair of Hamish Buchanan and Will Ellison in two close games. Further upset was to follow in the second semi-final, when Ollie Arnold and Theo Parker beat last year's winners, Dave Butler and Dan Tristao. This was a thrilling match, the first three-gamer of the tournament, and finally won 15-9, 8-15, 15-11.

Arnold and Parker rightly took a while to recover from this marathon before they were ready to take to the court for the final. A recovery period which was, in hindsight, well used, as the final was another long haul, with periods where the score did not advance, much to the consternation of the

spectators, who could feel their time in the pub being eaten away. Most managed to push the worry about food and drink to the back of their mind as the tension mounted.

Ollie and Theo won the first game with ease, 15-6, then took command in the early stage of the second before becoming becalmed around the ten-point mark and finally losing this one 12-15. In the last game, it appeared that the rigours of the long semi-final had handed the advantage to Ben and Ed, but sheer determination and grit pulled Ollie and Theo up to and past their opponents, with them winning a great match 15-11.

The awe of the spectators quickly changed to panic when it was realised that the kitchen at the White Hart closed at 9pm, less than 15 minutes in the future (Organiser's note: we must get players to turn up on time at the start of the day, and not an hour late!).

Co-operation from the pub staff, and judicious ordering for the vanquished and the victors while they showered, saved the day and a fine evening was had by all who went to the dinner. This was not, however, the final crisis of the day for some players, who almost had to spend the night in their cars, but that is another story.

Singles on Sunday got off to another slow, late start. The winners of the night before suffered for their efforts and did not do themselves justice, but that might have been expected. Otherwise, matches went broadly to form, with all but the clash between Beltrami and Butler being completed in two games. To the spectator, none of the games, apart from the aforementioned, were of particularly high quality, until, that is, we got to the final: a duel between the familiar figures of Dan Tristao and Will Ellison.

The first game went to Dan, and the second to Will, leaving all to play for in the final game of a wonderful tournament. Dan appeared to have the edge in the early points, but in all honesty very little separated the players until the score reached seven-all. This was a seminal point, the rally that brought an 8-7 lead to Will being the longest singles rally that I and many others have witnessed. By the end, it seemed likely that defibrillators would be needed for the onlookers, let alone the players. From then on, Will was in command. Points still did not come easily, but they came to him and not Dan.

All in all, the tournament was an organiser's delight. Super Fives, close finals and a bit of an upset in the doubles. We will do it all again next year, but I will change the supplier of the rolls which had become a bit stale by Sunday!

RESULTS

Doubles

Preliminary Round: Butler & Tristao bt Atkinson & Sandie 15-4, 15-6

First Round: Butler & Tristao bt Davey & Sorensen 15-4, 15-0; Arnold & Parker bt Minta & Widdop 15-1, 15-4; Beltrami & Kay bt Bristow & E Hawke 15-13, 15-12; Buchanan & Ellison bt Kirby & Wheatley 15-2, 15-7

Semi-finals: Arnold & Parker bt Butler & Tristao 15-9, 8-15, 15-11; Beltrami & Kay bt Buchanan & Ellison 15-12, 15-11

Final: Arnold & Parker bt Beltrami & Kay 15-6, 12-15, 15-11

Plate: (Round Robin)

Bristow & E Hawke bt Atkinson & Sandie 15-5; bt Davey & Sorensen 15-5; bt Kirby & Wheatley 15-6. Kirby & Wheatley bt Atkinson & Sandie 15-1; bt Davey & Sorensen 15-2; Atkinson & Sandie bt Davey & Sorensen 15-9

Plate Winners: Bristow & Hawke

Second Plate: Kirby & Wheatley

Singles

Preliminary Round: Beltrami bt E Hawke 11-4, 11-2; Kay bt Bristow 11-7, 11-1; Tristao bt Davey 11-0, 11-6

First Round: Ellison beat Sorensen 11-0, 11-1; Butler bt Beltrami 9-11, 11-4, 11-1; Kay bt Arnold

11-5, 11-7; Tristao bt Parker 11-3, 11-0

Semi-Finals: Ellison bt Butler 11-8, 11-1; Tristao bt Kay 11-9, 11-1

Final: Ellison beat Tristao 8-11, 11-5, 11-7

Plate: (Round Robin)

Beltrami bt Arnold 15-8; bt Parker 15-4; bt E Hawke 15-12. Parker bt Arnold 15-10; bt E Hawke 15-8; E Hawke bt Arnold 15-8

Plate Winner: Beltrami

RFA square the series with the Winchester Fives Association

Winchester College; Sunday, 23rd October 2016

The WFA's Harry Akerman reports: We had our annual match against the Rugby Fives Association yesterday, and despite the fact that Dan Tristao only emailed me at 4am on the morning of the match confirming their team (which was still two and a half hours before he went to bed!) they turned up with a very strong team. Any team with John Minta and Ben Beltrami down as a third pair is going to be a match for anyone; and, indeed they proved to be too strong for the WFA team.

With each pair playing each of the opposition pairs in one game to 15 and then then two games against their opposite pair, the RFA got their noses in front after the first round of matches. They then continued to win each round such that, in the end, their winning margin was 249-214 points.

I would love to describe more of the matches, but as mine was always the last to finish each round, I did not see anyone else playing until we had the privilege of watching the final game between both team's first pairs.

The speed and anticipation of both Dan and Will (and Hamish and James!) around the buttress was absolutely incredible and a real treat to see.

Unusually for a fives match, we finished bang on time and so we were able to head to The Queen for some well-earned lunch at the time we said we would be there!

Thanks to all for playing, especially to those who came from quite a distance: John Minta from Manchester, Steve Coffey from Malvern, James Marshall from Brighton, and Theo, Ollie and Tom from Bristol, as well as many more from London.

Next year we will get our revenge, but the series is now poised at 3-3!

WFA vs RFA

2011 WFA win 248-217

2012 WFA win 252-223

2013 RFA win 237-217

2014 RFA win 258-230

2015 WFA win 266-257

2016 RFA win 249-214

Scores: (WFA first)

WFA I bt RFA I 13-15, 15-10; bt RFA II 15-13; bt RFA III 15-11; bt RFA IV 15-6

WFA II lost to RFA I 9-15; lost to RFA II 5-15, 6-15; bt RFA III 15-13; bt RFA IV 15-8

WFA III lost to RFA I 3-15; lost to RFA II 15-16; lost to RFA III 11-15, 3-15; bt RFA IV 15-7

WFA IV lost to RFA I 1-15; lost to RFA II 5-15; lost to RFA III 8-15; bt RFA IV 15-7, 15-8

RFA Win 249-214 (for teams see next page)

WFA Team

- I Will Ellison & James Bristow
- II Dave Butler & Harry Akerman
- III James Marshall & Giles Munn
- IV Steve Coffey & Andy Passey

RFA Team

- I Dan Tristao and Hamish Buchanan
- II Ollie Arnold & Theo Parker
- III John Minta & Ben Beltrami
- IV Johnny Baker & Tom Watkinson

West of England Championships 2016

Clifton College, Bristol; 29-30th October

STOP PRESS: It was a weekend of dominance by the game's top four ranked players at Clifton. After Will Ellison, Dan Tristao, Dan Grant and Ed Kay all reached the semi-finals of the singles championship, the same four players also went on play out the doubles final between them. In the singles, Will eventually claimed his fourth West of England singles title – and his 26th in total – by beating Dan Tristao. And Will then went on to complete the double, teaming up with Ed to add the doubles title as well.

Organiser Simon Werkshagen reports: Another successful and highly competitive West of England Championships has come to an end. Despite a smaller singles entry than ever before the quality of the players and games was exceptional!

The highlight of the first few singles rounds was undoubtedly the match between Matt Cavanagh and Matt Shaw which produced three fabulous games, with the older and wiser head eventually coming through.

As predicted the top four seeds made their way through to the semi-finals and, as expected, Dan and Will moved their way into the Sunday morning final relatively easily.

In the singles plate there were two boxes, with each player able to have four games of singles followed by a play-off between the highest scorers of each box. This produced a great final which was won by Matt Shaw.

Sunday morning saw another fabulous quality final between the first and second seeds. Some rallies were truly mesmerizing with power and precision and amazing fitness, but eventually Will pulled ahead and won the final.

Just a few minutes later both players were involved with their doubles partners, ready to take on all challengers. Once again the quality of the doubles entry was outstanding; and after four hard-fought rounds the final saw holders Dan G & Dan T take on Will & Ed.

I have been to most of WofE finals over the last 30 years but this was the first time that I have seen the ball being hit quite so ferociously as these four players were doing on Sunday afternoon. We had some onlookers who had never seen our game played before: they were amazed at the aggression, balance and speed at which the game was played.

Congratulations to all four players: as far as I am concerned the true winner was Fives, with both pairs deserving victory. Eventually, however, Will and Ed came through to beat the defending champions and I was extremely grateful to be able to clear up the courts, go home and put my feet up!

Thanks to Lionel for his help and to all the players for making it all such a good weekend.

See you all next year.

Scores

Singles

Preliminary round: B Beltrami bt B Jourdan 12-10, 11-5

1st round: S Russell bt J Tilston 11-5, 11-5; P Hanton bt R Whitehorn 11-9, 11-5; G Price bt A George 11-5, 12-10; H Jefferies bt G Munn 11-3, 11-5; O Arnold bt N Geere 11-1, 11-0

2nd round: W Ellison bt Russell 11-4, 11-2; R Murby w/o J Toop; E Kay bt Hanton 11-6, 11-2; Beltrami bt D Butler 6-11, 11-8, 11-2; D Tristao bt Price 11-4, 11-6; M Cavanagh bt M Shaw 7-11, 11-3, 11-2; D Grant bt Jefferies 6-11, 11-8, 11-4; Arnold bt J Aquilina 11-5, 11-8

Quarter-finals: Ellison bt Murby 11-2, 11-1; Kay bt Beltrami 11-7, 11-1; Tristao bt Cavanagh 11-2, 11-5; Grant bt Arnold 11-8, 11-2

Semi-finals: Ellison bt Kay 11-4, 11-8; Tristao bt Grant 12-11, 11-2

Final: Ellison bt Tristao 11-8, 11-2

Plate: Shaw

Doubles

1st round: George & Russell bt Geere & B Baral 11-3, 11-8'; Jefferies & Tilston bt A Goodwin & A Wheatley 11-6, 11-3

Quarter-finals: Ellison & Kay bt George & Russell 11-4, 11-9; Beltrami & Shaw bt Aquilina & Hanton 4-11, 11-8, 11-4; Arnold & Butler bt Boyd & Jourdan 11-0, 11-0; Grant & Tristao bt Jefferies & Tilston 11-9, 11-2

Semi-finals: Ellison & Kay bt Beltrami & Shaw 11-8, 11-9; Grant & Tristao bt Arnold & Butler 4-11, 11-8, 11-4

Final: Ellison & Kay bt Grant & Tristao 12-10, 11-4

Plate: Aquilina & Hanton

Rankings up-date following the West of England Championships

by David Hebden on 8th November 2016

Updated rankings reflecting results from the Yorkshire and West of England Championships held in October have now been posted. These rankings will be the basis for the seedings in the forthcoming National Singles Qualifiers.

In the singles Will Ellison retains a narrow lead over Dan Tristao after wins in both the last two events. The top 20 shows very little change in the order, but after strong showings in the West of England, Ben Jourdan, Giles Munn, and Rob Whitehorn enter the top 30. Further down, Ed Hawke moves up to No. 31, while Nick Geere is a new entry at 54.

After their excellent win in Yorkshire, Ollie Arnold and Theo Parker move up to Nos. 7 & 10 in the doubles rankings. Above them there are no changes in the top 4 with Will Ellison holding a comfortable lead at the top, while Ed Kay and Ben Beltrami move up a place to 5 and 6 respectively. Stuart Kirby moves up 19 places to No. 50, and there are 2 new entries – James Bristow makes a welcome return to the rankings at No. 52, while Derby Moor player Aaron Wheatley comes in at 73.

British Universities & Student Fives (BUSF) Championships 2016

St Paul's School, Barnes; Friday-Sunday November 18-20th

The organisers have today published the draws for the 2016 Student Championships – which can be downloaded by clicking on the appropriate links below – and it looks like being a cracking tournament.

Much will be expected of the Cambridge squad, which has had a hugely successful few years and – in Ed Kay, Ben Beltrami and Matt Shaw – provides the defending champions in both singles and doubles championships. However, it's clear that they won't have everything their own way, with the likes of David Butler, Ollie Arnold and Theo Parker all sure to test the best of the Light Blues.

The event starts on Friday November 18th, and we hope to bring you regular updates from the courts at St Paul's via the RFA Twitter feed, before a full report as soon as possible after the event.

RFA Schools' Winchester Fives Doubles 2016

Winchester College
Sunday, 6th November

Organiser David Barnes reports: A small but high-quality entry of ten pairs contested the fifteenth edition of the Schools' Winchester Doubles on a cold November day. It was very good to see two pairs each from Marlborough and Bedford Modern, the rest of the entry coming equally from St. Paul's and Winchester, old rivals in this event.

Winchester are very strong at the moment, and this was soon demonstrated by their third pair who, having beaten Marlborough II, then proceeded to win a mammoth three-game quarter-final against St. Paul's I. Marlborough I had a similar encounter with St. Paul's II, winning 15-12 in the third – a fine achievement. Bedford Modern I were unlucky to meet the talented Winchester second pair in their first match, losing in two games in which the scores didn't reflect the quality of the rallies.

In the semi-finals, Marlborough I and Winchester III both showed the effects of their hard-won quarter-final matches, losing heavily to the top two Winchester pairs. This left the prospect of a battle royal in the final between the same two pairs (Kullavanijaya & Song and Kidner & Younger) as last year, and we were not disappointed!

In a superb match, the ball was struck fiercely and accurately by all four players, and the quality of the retrieving and volleying was as high as I have seen in Schools' Winchester Fives. After sharing the first two games, both pairs continued to play as well as ever in the third, and it was hard to predict the result. Eventually last year's winners established a lead at a crucial late stage and thus maintained the pecking order over their younger rivals – but only just! This is the first time in this event that the same pairs have contested successive finals, with the same pair winning, and it brings Winchester level with St. Paul's in the number of victories at six wins each.

The plate was predictably won by St. Paul's I, who beat St. Paul's III in the final and take the modest trophy back to London for yet more engraving!

My thanks to those who came to play, those who brought them and those who came to support them; and particularly to Giles Munn for his help and to Winchester College for its hospitality.

Scores

First round: St. Paul's III bt Bedford Modern II 15-4, 15-6; Winchester III bt Marlborough II 15-9, 15-2

Quarter-finals: Winchester I bt St. Paul's III 15-0, 15-5; Marlborough I bt St. Paul's II 8-15, 15-12, 15-12; Winchester II bt Bedford Modern I 15-4, 15-2; Winchester III bt St. Paul's I 15-7, 11-15, 15-13

Semi-finals: Winchester I bt Marlborough I 15-3, 15-2; Winchester II bt Winchester III 15-2, 15-4

Final: Winchester I (P.Kullavanijaya & A.Song) bt Winchester II (T.Kidner & A.Younger) 15-10, 11-15, 15-10

Plate: St. Paul's I (M.Evans & D.Whitham)

British Universities and Student Rugby Fives Championships (BUSF) 2016

St. Paul's School, Barnes; November 18-20

STOP PRESS: It was a case of Cambridge defending their titles successfully at this year's British Universities and Student Championships, the 57th of its kind. Ed Kay looked in a different class in Singles from all his rivals, including his opponent in the final, Ben Beltrami, while the combination of Matt Shaw & Ben Beltrami was too steady for the aspiring pair from Bristol, Ollie Arnold & Theo Parker, who had recently won their first regional title at the Yorkshire Open.

For Ed it was his second consecutive title; for Matt & Ben their third.

In the fiercely contested Plates Francis Thomas had too much fire-power for Rob Whitehorn in the Singles, but Rob was able to combine with Dan Sorensen to win the Doubles Plate.

Organiser David Gardner reports: After an absence of many years the event moved back to London. This seemed to be a logical decision, as many of the potential competitors were Paulines, who all lived locally, thus reducing the cost of the event for many of the students.

St. Paul's were the host school, for the first time in the 57 year history of the event. We were made extremely welcome and were assisted by many from the School Staff – Sam Roberts & Peter King in particular – and others from the Sports Centre and car park areas, all of whom were most helpful and co-operative. Our thanks go to all of them for helping to make the event such a success!

Whilst on 'thanks', I must also mention invaluable pre-event assistance from David Barnes & Ed Kay (our student advisor), whilst without the tireless efforts of Chris Horrocks throughout the entire event things might have ground to a halt!

In the past, where local food outlets have been at some distance, we have provided a little refreshment to keep the players going. On this occasion we were treated to a veritable banquet each day. A delicious array of homemade bagels, sandwiches & cookies were prepared by volunteer Pauline parent, Claire Shaw. These were eagerly consumed by players and spectators alike. Our warmest thanks go both to her and other family members, all of whom contributed to this extremely welcome addition to the event.

We have always been aware that there many potential participants at universities, but with no official club, and often no partner for the doubles, we have been unable to get them to participate. This year a strong effort was made to rectify this situation. With particular help from Bob Dolby chasing school leavers and myself following them all up, we ended up with a record entry of sixteen universities – nine of which had just one player! So the effort was worthwhile.

I had identified at least nineteen possible institutions where we knew there were players, so to get sixteen was encouraging – last year we had just seven! Let's hope that this trend continues and that some of those 'singles' can find a partner next year from the same university.

There is another record worth noting. This year, of the 35 that entered Singles and 19 pairs in the Doubles, everyone appeared and participated! There were one or two minor alterations to pairs due to injury or illness, but no withdrawals at all. This has not occurred in 57 years!

The results of the matches are all recorded below. There were many highly competitive matches, although, strangely enough, only one that went to three games – very unusual.

In the Singles Ed Kay was again dominant and successfully defended his title, despite the efforts of fellow Cambridge opponent Ben Beltrami. Ben had his reward in the Doubles, partnered by Matt Shaw: there they achieved a hat-trick of victories, fending off a strong challenge this time from Bristolians Ollie Arnold & Theo Parker.

The Plate events both went to universities with 'single' players. The Singles to Francis Thomas from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and the Doubles to the mixed pairing of Dan Sorensen & Rob Whitehorn (Warwick & Exeter), though Chris Davey played with Rob in some of the games.

The experiment of allowing a single player from a university to form a 'mixed' pairing with another singleton appears to have paid off, as we had four such pairings, including both finalists in the Plate and nobody sitting around doing nothing for half the day! Twenty-seven of the thirty-five entrants also played in the Singles Plate!

In conclusion, we should mention where they all came from:

The long-distance travel prize goes to new entrants from Aberdeen, with second place to Exeter and Heriot Watt, from Edinburgh;

Durham, Oxford, Cambridge & Bristol are all regulars; Birmingham, Manchester & Edinburgh are welcomed back;

London provided welcome regulars UCL & LSE plus newcomers SOAS; BPP (Law School) & LSHTM (School of Tropical Medicine).

However, the top prize must go to Dan Sorensen from Warwick, who was called from his slumbers at 2.am from a London hospital and asked to be on court at 9.am in London to replace injured fellow Old Bedfordian Chris Davey. Dan duly arrived in good time and is to be commended for his 'devotion to duty'. But surely that is what this game of Fives is all about?

And what's more: on Sunday, on the adjoining courts we had the inaugural Ladies U23 championships where there were players from Canterbury Christ Church University, Bristol University, Nottingham University and the University of Southampton, plus a 7-strong squad from Fettes College. Perhaps one day, if the women's game continues to grow, we may see a Ladies Universities championships.

As for the annual men's match versus the RFA? If all were to be available it could be the same team that was victorious last season. RFA beware!

Scores

Singles

Preliminary round: B Chua (LSE) bt M Patterson (Durham) 15-3, 15-2 ; M Hale (Oxford) bt J Angers (Durham) 15-0, 15-1 ; C McKinney (Aberdeen) bt B Rich (Durham) 15-3, 15-7 ; H Mahajan (LSE) bt Ad Wordley (Durham) 15-4, 15-3

1st round: E Kay (Cambridge) bt Chua 15-0, 15-2 ; C Blackaby (Durham) bt J Smith (Manchester) 15-11, 15-4 ; F Thomas (SOAS) bt B Ashraf (Durham) 15-0, 15-6 ; S Russell (BPP) bt G Muscat (Oxford) 15-8, 15-3 ; M Shaw (Cambridge) bt Al Wordley (Durham) 15-4, 15-0 ; Mahajan bt A Ibbetson (LSHTM) 15-3, 15-10 ; S Bhushan (Oxford) bt T McCahon (Durham) 15-2, 15-1 ; O Arnold (Bristol) bt J Manger (Cambridge) 15-0, 15-3 ; D Butler (Edinburgh) bt Hale 15-0, 15-1 ; C Davey (Birmingham) bt T Raikes (Durham) 15-12, 15-6 ; R Whitehorn (Exeter) bt G Marshall (Durham) 15-0, 15-0 ; T Parker (Bristol) bt T Owen (Oxford) 15-2, 15-0 ; A Boyd (Cambridge) bt D Hutt (Durham) 15-7, 15-3 ; I Ackland (Bristol) bt T McFarlane (LSE) 15-3, 15-0 ; J Sinton (Heriot Watt) bye ; B Beltrami (Cambridge) bt McKinney 15-8, 15-5

2nd round: Kay bt Blackaby 15-4, 15-2 ; Russell bt Thomas 15-5, 15-4 ; Shaw bt Mahajan 15-6, 15-3 ; Arnold bt Bhushan 15-1, 15-2 ; Butler w/o Davey; Parker bt Whitehorn 16-15, 15-1 ; Ackland bt Boyd 15-4, 15-6 ; Beltrami bt Sinton 15-2, 15-3

Quarter-finals: Kay bt Russell 15-4, 15-3 ; Shaw bt Arnold 15-10, 15-4 ; Butler bt Parker 15-6, 15-10 ; Beltrami bt Ackland 15-5, 15-6

Semi-finals: Kay bt Shaw 15-4, 15-4 ; Beltrami bt Butler 15-9, 15-12

Final: Kay (Cambridge) bt Beltrami (Cambridge) 15-5, 15-1

Plate: Thomas (SOAS) bt Whitehorn (Exeter) 15-10, 15-2

Doubles

Preliminary round: Muscat & Owen (Oxford) bt Al Wordley & Marshall (Durham) 15-6, 15-8 ; McCahon & Raikes (Durham) bt McFarlane & I Salim (LSE) 15-6, 15-12 ; W Capstick & M Lewin (UCL) bt McKinney & Shannon (Aberdeen) 15-3, 15-6

1st round: Beltrami & Shaw (Cambridge) bt Muscat & Owen 15-4, 15-5 ; Ad Wordley & Ashraf (Durham) bt Ibbetson & Smith (LonMan) 15-4, 15-9 ; Chua & Mahajan (LSE) bt Butler & Sinton (Ed. Unis) 15-11, 15-11 ; Russell & Thomas (London) bt Patterson & Rich (Durham) 15-3, 15-0 ; Boyd & Kay (Cambridge) bt McCahon & Raikes 15-10, 15-7 ; Ackland & Manger (BriCam) bt D Sorensen & Whitehorn (WarExe) 7-15, 15-8, 15-6 ; Blackaby & Hutt (Durham) bt Bhushan & Hale (Oxford) 15-2, 15-9 ; Arnold & Parker (Bristol) bt Capstick & Lewin 15-2, 15-0

Quarter-finals: Beltrami & Shaw bt Wordley & Ashraf 15-1, 15-1 ; Russell & Thomas bt Chua & Mahajan 15-6, 15-12 ; Boyd & Kay bt Ackland & Manger 15-9, 16-14 ; Arnold & Parker bt Blackaby & Hutt 15-1, 15-1

Semi-finals: Beltrami & Shaw bt Russell & Thomas 15-4, 15-8 ; Arnold & Parker bt Boyd & Kay 15-13, 15-7

Final: Beltrami & Shaw (Cambridge) bt Arnold & Parker (Bristol) 15-8, 15-11

Plate: Sorensen & Whitehorn (WarExe) bt Ibbetson & Smith (LonMan) 15-9, 15-9

Ladies U23 Championships

St. Paul's School, Barnes; Sunday 20th November 2016

STOP PRESS: At the inaugural Ladies U23 championships Tessa Mills took the Doubles title, playing with Rugby schoolgirl Freya Harrison, to add to her National Rugby Fives Doubles title and the Winchester Fives Doubles title, held both with Kathleen Briedenhann.

Later in the day Tessa, a student at Canterbury Christ Church University, also won the U23 Singles title, beating Shinan Zhang of Southampton University in the final. Shinan had defeated Louise Mathias of Bristol University in an eagerly awaited and very close semi-final.

A 7-strong squad of girls who came down from Fettes College were rewarded with the Doubles Plate for their first pair, while Cambridge University's Georgina Shepherd won the Singles Plate.

The best laid plans and all that..... Organiser Kathleen Briedenhann had a neat and tidy 16 entrants for the Inaugural Ladies U23 championships, with four universities and two schools represented, and was looking forward to a morning's Doubles and an afternoon's Singles when Mother Nature contrived to put a spoke in the wheels: Storm Angus stranded 7 Fettes girls and their coach at Edinburgh airport and Louise Mathias at Bristol railway station.

Undeterred, those who had made it to St. Paul's on time set about playing what matches they could while awaiting news of progress from far-flung places. Eventually all was well: the Scottish contingent made it by noon and Louise likewise. The programme could revert to plan.

With six national champions at various levels competing, plus the captain of the Cambridge University Ladies, expectations were high and those who came to watch, – parents, friends, coaches, young men competing in the adjacent British Universities Championships – were not disappointed.

After a series of round robin matches in which national U14 champions Maddy Kent & Katie Sumner impressed and Cambridge's 1st pair of Georgina Shepherd & Lottie Simpson grew in stature to fight out the bronze medal match, a final of great quality ensued. New pairing of Tessa Mills & Freya Harrison took on Louise Mathias & Shinan Zhang, all schoolgirl champions, in a match which went to three games, snatches of which can be seen in Sam Russell's video of the day. Tessa and Freya emerged as winners, which meant that Tessa now holds the treble of Doubles titles (National Rugby Fives, National Winchester Fives and U23s) while Freya added a senior title to her U16 Doubles title.

The Singles competition was unlikely to be as close since Tessa is clearly the best player of this age group, but the great interest lay in the first clash as seniors, in the semi-final, between Louise Mathias, the 2015 schoolgirl champion, and Shinan Zhang, her predecessor. The match seesawed throughout but was turned in the last stages by Shinan's greater power. The same power enabled Shinan to give Tessa a reasonable game in the final but not enough to prevent her doing the double on the day.

We look forward to a bigger entry next year, with more universities represented (this time it was Nottingham, Southampton, Bristol and Cambridge) and more schoolgirls (Fettes and Rugby this year) and kinder weather. The event can only progress!

Singles

Final: T Mills bt S Zhang 11-3, 11 -2

Plate: G Shepherd bt F Harrison 11-4, 11-1

Doubles

Final: Harrison & Mills bt Zhang & L Mathias 11-8, 10-12, 11-7

3rd Place: G Shepherd & L Simpson bt M Kent & K Sumner 15-8

Plate: J Cheadle & C Sutton bt E Henderson & E O'Malley 15-4

Colquhoun Trophy (South West Schools Regional Tournament)

Sherborne School, Dorset, November 27th

History was made in two ways at this year's Colquhoun Trophy: not only did Addie Chai from Blundell's become the first player to follow a Colts title with the Senior title, Benedict Mercer became the first boy from Sherborne to win either of the two titles.

Addie's achievement was all the more impressive as this year's Senior title came only a year after his Colts title. But, all the qualities that helped him last year – a very mature and patient game, working his opponent hard with excellent line and length, backed up with excellent retrieving – were in evidence again this year; and, after some tight rallies early in the first game of the final (against James Barrows from Marlborough), he went on to secure the title in comprehensive fashion.

Equally comprehensive was the way in which Benedict secured the Colts title. With only six players, this was decided in a round-robin, but not only did Benedict have a 100% record in that, he never conceded more than two points in any game. What's more, Sherborne could celebrate another prize in this category, as Harry Harvey won the Plate by finishing third in the round-robin. The two home players were separated by Blundellian George Gibbs, who won four of his five matches to finish second behind Benedict.

It's clear from these players that future Open events will be very closely contested, as indeed this year's was. No less than 12 players competed, split into two pools; and, if there was any question over Addie's ability to step up into the Open category, he answered them with a 100% record in his group games to qualify for the semi-finals.

Here he would face fellow Blundellian and fellow former Colts champion Tobias Francis, who had finished second in the other pool behind Marlborough's Arthur Rigg. Like Addie, Arthur had a 100% record in his group games, but the route to that result was much harder, with one win being 11-9, and two others 11-8. Nevertheless, he secured his semi-final spot, where he faced fellow Marlburian James Barrows, who had survived a close battle of his own: he only reached the semis after an 11-9 win over Sherborne's Will Shardlow. It was tough on Will, last year's runner-up, but he had the consolation of going on to win the Plate this year.

When the dust had settled, that meant two in-house semi-final battles, with Addie winning the Battle of the Blundellians, and James securing bragging rights in Marlborough. It also meant the final would be a repeat of an earlier group game; and, just as in that game, it was Addie who emerged the winner, but by an even more decisive margin this time. Few would bet against Addie repeating this win next year, and becoming the only boy ever to retain a Colquhoun Trophy title.

As ever, the RFA wishes to express its thanks to Sherborne School for allowing us to use their courts, and for the hospitality shown to players, coaches and parents alike.

RESULTS

Open

Round robin Pool 1: 1st Arthur Rigg (Marlborough); 2nd Tobias Francis (Blundell's); 3rd James Maclaurin (Blundell's); 4th Christian Cabburn (Blundell's); 5th Archie Buston (Sherborne)

Pool 2: 1st Addie Chai (Blundell's); 2nd James Barrows (Marlborough); 3rd Will Shardlow (Sherborne); 4th Jack Lockwood (Blundell's); 5th Milo Martin (Marlborough); 6th Barney Ames (Blundell's)

Knockout section

Semi-finals: Barrows (Marlborough) bt Rigg (Marlborough) 15-1; Chai (Blundell's) bt Francis (Blundell's)

Final: Chai bt Barrows 11-1, 11-0

Plate: Shardlow (Sherborne)

Colts

Round-robin final positions

1st Benedict Mercer (Sherborne)

2nd George Gibbs (Blundell's)

3rd (and Plate winner) Harry Harvey (Sherborne)

4th Boris Ames (Blundell's)

5th Joe Horsey (Blundell's)

6th Tommy Ryder (Blundell's)

Draw for the National Singles Championship 2016

Finals (last 16) at St Paul's School, Barnes, December 3rd/4th

Organiser Charlie Brooks has today published the draw for the final rounds of the 2016 National Singles Championship. To say it contains the cream of the game is something of an understatement; and, indeed, one senior member of the RFA has already described the prospect of these 16 players fighting it out for the top prize in Rugby Fives as 'mouth-watering'.

There's no better indication of the quality of the participants than the fact that no less than 10 of the top 13-ranked players in the country are taking to the courts at St Paul's this coming weekend.

The top four seeds – defending champion Will Ellison, former champion Dan Tristao, 2014 runner-up Dan Grant and recently crowned student champion Ed Kay (all pictured above at the recent West of England Championships) – qualified by right, but it's clear that the 12 who came through regional

qualifying will challenge even these elite players. And probably cause some hard work for Dave Hebden, when he works out the next set of official rankings!

We've got the 'old guard' of Matt Cavanagh and John Minta, former champion and runner-up, respectively, but plenty of youth, too: Ben Beltrami, Matt Shaw, Ollie Arnold and Theo Parker are all still students, while very few of the others have yet to suffer the indignity of their 30th birthday.

For full details of the draw, click on the link below. And, keep an eye on the RFA's Twitter feed over the weekend for details of the matches as they happen and – quite probably – some salacious off-court gossip!

National Singles Championship 2016

Finals (last 16) at St Paul's School, Barnes, December 3rd/4th

Organiser Charlie Brooks writes: Dan Tristao regained the National Singles title, beating top seed Will Ellison in another exceptional final on the St. Paul's courts. As ever, they fought titanically over every point, neither willing to concede an inch. In the end, after the first two games were shared and it stood at 8-8 in the third, Dan dug that little bit deeper to find the necessary energy to pull himself across the line. Dan had flown out of the blocks to take Game 1, playing with great pace and precision. Will then upped his performance; he started to move Dan around more as well as find winners to hit back and send the match to a decider.

What is remarkable is that we have come to expect this level of play from these two; rallies continuing for impossibly long, regular nicks in every corner of the court and spectators consistently amazed. At times in the match, Will was able to find the back wall nick on a whim for clear winners, and at others, Dan's deft touch produced dropshots that were simply unreachable. It is also worth mentioning that the spirit the match was played in was a testament to both players; long may their rivalry continue!

Will and Dan had breezed through their three matches on Saturday, despite the sweltering heat of the St. Paul's courts. Looking at the draw beforehand, it seemed Will's biggest challenge would be his semi-final against Ed Kay, who recently swept away all competition in winning the British Universities title. Ed had been in dominant form in his previous matches on the day; however, Will simply had too much and registered a surprisingly comfortable victory. In the other semi-final, Dan came up against a tiring Charlie Brooks and was never unduly troubled.

The draw went almost exactly in line with the seedings (#onlyhebdenknows). The first round saw all eight seeds through to the quarters, mainly in serene fashion. The exceptions were Matt Cavanagh's two close games in defeating Ollie Arnold and Julian Aquilina just about managing to hold off Matt Shaw, 15-13 in the third.

In fact, the final was only the second match to upset the seedings, the other being an epic contest between Dan Grant and Charlie Brooks in their quarter-final. 16-15 in the third tells its own story. Charlie had seemed comfortable in winning the first, Dan even more so in winning the second. At 10-all in the third it was anyone's – Charlie went on a bit of a run, but Dan managed to save 10 or more match points before seeing one of his own pass by. With the tension palpable, Charlie just about eked out the victory to reach his first National Singles semi-final.

In the plate, Matt Shaw recovered Phoenix-like from his first round 3-gamer with Julian to take the silverware. He had seemed down and out, barely able to move; but such are the spoils of the National Singles plate that he found it within himself to beat Minta, Parker and finally Ollie Arnold (defending plate champion) to emerge victorious. As always, this is the king of plate competitions and this year's standard did not disappoint.

RESULTS

First Round: Ellison bt Tilston 15-1, 15-3; Aquilina bt Shaw 15-2, 13-15, 15-13; Beltrami bt Minta 15-5, 15-5; Kay bt Hanton 15-0, 15-2; Grant bt Goodwin 15-1, 15-2; Brooks bt Parker 15-0, 15-4; Cavanagh bt Arnold 15-9, 15-13; Tristao bt Price 15-4, 15-4

Quarter-finals: Ellison bt Aquilina 15-0, 15-0; Kay bt Beltrami 15-12, 15-2; Brooks bt Grant 15-10, 4-15, 16-15; Tristao bt Cavanagh 15-2, 15-4

Semi-finals: Ellison bt Kay 15-1, 15-2; Tristao bt Brooks 15-4, 15-5

Final: Tristao bt Ellison 15-5, 9-15, 15-8

Plate Final: Shaw bt Arnold 15-4, 15-4

RFA CLUB PRESIDENT'S CUP

Merchant Taylors' School, Northwood, 11th December 2016

STOP PRESS

Dan Tristao ended 2016 on a high, adding victory in the President's Cup to the national singles championship that he won last week. His partner in winning what is generally regarded as the toughest event in the Fives calendar was Morgan Spillane, a former Irish 4-Wall handball player, who now plays at the Christ's Hospital Club.

This is the first time that Dan has won this event, but there will be several 'repeat offenders' engraving their names on the various other bits of 'silverware'. The Mate's Plate was won by former Cup winner Guy Matthews and Ben Beltrami; the T-Pot went to Jon Abecassis (2007 Cup winner) and Angus Hanton; and the Love Mug was won by David Butler (T-Pot winner two years ago) and Charlie Barnett.

This year's edition of the over-subscribed President's Cup was tinged with great sadness, and not just on the part of those several players who didn't make the cut. As our estimable organiser Gareth Price told us in a mid-session break, the courts are earmarked for demolition in the coming summer to make way for a Geography Teaching Block. with no firm plans as yet for their replacement. This then was the last President's Cup to be run at Sandy Lodge Lane for the foreseeable future.

But hey, as they say, let's not be too downcast: perhaps one day we may see a suite of 4-6 courts, with air-conditioning, players' lockers and arcadian piped music gracing the MTS campus. Meanwhile Gareth raised our spirits with not only enough sandwiches to shake a stick at (whatever that may mean) but also with his mother's delicious Spicy Chicken Noodle Soup, copious mince-pies, mulled wine and crackers with traditionally bad jokes, of which Dave Butler got the best: Why does Santa have three gardens?*

With little need to wear a paper crown Guy Matthews also provided on-court entertainment, not just for his bemused partner Ben Beltrami and the opposing pair but for all the chilly spectators at 7.30pm who watched Guy & Ben wrest the Mate's Plate from Hamish B. & Jon Peterson. Guy now nearly has the full tea service: just the T-Pot to win and he'll join an illustrious club whose full list of members #OnlyDavidBarnesKnows, but certainly Hamish belongs in it.

Incidentally, with Hamish Hunter now a feature of the Fives world (he was playing with Ed Hatton), we will now have to refer to Hamish B. as "the real Hamish", as he was delighted to hear himself called recently.

Dave Butler, when he wasn't posing for x-rated photos with Dan T. or pulling crackers with all and sundry, had the repeat experience of winning an absent trophy, namely the Love Mug, with Charlie Barnett. Last time it was the T-Pot with Bernard Atkinson, but at least that time a creative President,

Bob D. was able to present Dave with the Electric Kettle. This time there was not even a coffee mug bearing the message SLEEP – EAT – PLAY FIVES – REPEAT as recently presented to the Fettes Girls at the Ladies U23s. Dave must feel very hard done by, except that Gareth had paired him up with the excellent Charlie B., who is following in Dan Grant's footsteps at MTS under the excellent care of Gareth and Simon Hardman and carried Dave to victory.

The Love Mug itself, so Ben Chua tells us, is currently residing at an address not unadjacent to Buckingham Palace. Perhaps those well known lovebirds at St. James's Palace are using it?

The T-Pot, however, now seems to have found a permanent home in slightly less upmarket Herne Hill as Julian Hanton returned it this year only for his father to win it back playing with Jon Abecassis, a pleasing Oxford/Cambridge combination, though Jon did his best to spoil the look of the pair with his Union Jack shirt. Or was it a pro-Brexit statement? With no Jeremy Stubbs this year to carry the French flag, the fans in Burgundy and Banstead strangely quiet and an indisposed Monsieur Barnes absent, there was little of a continental flavour to the occasion.

But we did have our Irish Connection, namely Morgan Spillane, whom Gareth had paired with new National Singles Champion Dan Tristao. Those who regard CH, where Morgan has learnt the game, as nearly as far flung as the rest of the EU were somewhat surprised to find that left-handed Morgan hits the ball with Ollie-Arnold-like power and makes a mistake only once every 90 minutes. Dan was therefore able to indulge himself in the final with every shot under the sun, and quite a few of them under the bar, and still come out well ahead of Tim Hebblethwaite & Andy Passey. All four players in the final were debutants, all are now members of the RFA, and proceedings were brought to a witty close by President Bernard by 8.pm; what finer advert for the event?

So, the venue next year? Does anyone know of a set of 4 courts suitable for a December event, with radiators and a kitchen? Or prepared to gift us a heated marquee to erect outside the courts at Alleyn's or Whitgift? Creative thinking needed if the legacy of Geoffrey Rimmer is to be honoured in the manner that befits his memory. Perhaps Santa has something in his sack.

*Answer: So that he can ho ho ho!

Results

RESULTS

President's Cup

1st round: Beltrami & Matthews bt Hatton & Hunter 15-4, 15-7; Russell & Webster bt Hanton B & Hale 15-8, 11-15, 15-9; Abecassis & Hanton A by Perry & Steel 13-15, 15-8, 15-0; Tristao & Spillane bt Stokes & Hanton J 15-2, 15-2; Passey & Hebblethwaite bt Butler & Barnett 15-12, 9-15, 15-13; Aquilina & Atkinson A bt Ellison & Blakeley 15-15; 9-15, 15-1; George & Garella bt Davey & Kennerley 15-6, 16-15; Buchanan & Peterson bt Baral & Geere 15-7, 15-1

2nd round: Beltrami & Matthews bt Russell & Webster 15-11, 15-12; Tristao & Spillane bt Abecassis & Hanton 15-3, 15-1; Passey & Hebblethwaite bt Aquilina & Atkinson 15-5, 15-9; Buchanan & Peterson bt George & Garella 15-11, 15-6

Semi-finals: Tristao & Spillane bt Beltrami & Matthews score unrecorded; Passey & Hebblethwaite bt Buchanan & Peterson 15-11, 15-2

Final: Tristao & Spillane bt Passey & Hebblethwaite 15-3, 15-10

T-Pot

1st round: Russell & Webster bt Hanton B & Hale score unrecorded; Abecassis & Hanton A bt Stokes & Hanton J 15-8, 15-12; Aquilina & Atkinson bt Baral & Geere 15-2, 15-11; Perry & Steel bt George & Garella 15-11, 15-7

Semi-finals: Abecassis & Hanton bt Russell & Webster 15-9, 15-4; Aquilina & Atkinson bt Perry & Steel 15-5, 15-9

Final: Abecassis & Hanton bt Aquilina & Atkinson 15-8, 10-15, 15-8

Love Mug

1st round: Ellison & Blakeley bt Perry & Steel 15-12, 15-3; Butler & Barnett bt Baral & Geere 15-8, 15-4; Hatton & Hunter bt Stokes & J Hanton 15-8, 15-9; Davey & Kennerley bt B Hanton & Hale 0-15, 15-13, 15-7

Semi-finals: Butler & Barnett bt Ellison & Blakeley 'in two games'; Hatton & Hunter bt Davey & Kennerley score unrecorded

Final: Butler & Barnett bt Hatton & Hunter 15-11, 15-13

Mate's Plate

Semi-finals: Beltrami & Matthews bt Ellison & Blakeley; Buchanan & Peterson bt Davey & Kennerley 15-11 in the third game

Final: Beltrami & Matthews bt Buchanan & Peterson 15-1, 15-12

New Year Rankings – Tristao takes over at No. 1 in the Singles

David Hebden, 2nd January 2017

Rankings following the National Singles and the Universities Championships (Singles & Doubles)

Updated rankings reflecting results from the Universities Championships held in November and the National Singles held in November (Qualifiers) and December (Finals) have now been posted.

In the singles, the new National champion Dan Tristao takes over from Will Ellison at the top, while elsewhere in the top 10 Ed Kay moves up to 3, Charlie Brooks to 5, and Matt Shaw enters at No. 10. Ed Kay and Charlie Brooks both made the semi-finals of the Singles, while Matt Shaw won the Plate. Singles qualifiers Gareth Price, Anthony Goodwin, Sam Russell, and James Tilston all make good progress in the top 30. Inigo Ackland and James Bristow make welcome returns into the rankings, while Monty Evans and Harveer Mahajan are also new entries.

The doubles rankings show less change since the only new results are from the Universities Doubles where the points awarded are less than that for an Open championship. In the top 10 Parker moves ahead of Butler who did not play in the event. Boyd, Russell, Whitehorn, Thomas, Blackaby, Ashraf and Wordley all make good progress, while Hutt, Mahajan, Manger and Sorensen are new entries.

Several people have been good enough to make suggestions during the year regarding the ranking system, not all of them rude. I am always pleased to receive new ideas and they are not forgotten. Currently my priority is to improve the current system so that the rankings updates are a little less onerous, and after this is done I shall take a look at making further enhancements to the process. Thank you for your patience!

West of England Schools Championships 2017

Sherborne School, Dorset, January 7th/8th

STOP PRESS: Winchester College achieved the remarkable feat of providing all the main competition finalists in this year's West of England Schools' Championships at Sherborne School.

Last year's Colts' champion Kidner beat the 2016 Senior winner Song with a finely judged display of singles, but Song had his revenge in an extremely close doubles final, as he and P Kullavanijaya retained their 2016 title by defeating Kidner and Younger.

The U16 event was dominated by Winchester as well, with Poyntz beating his doubles partner Matvienko to win the singles, while the pair of them were just too powerful for their plucky second pair, Bagnell and B Kullavanijaya, in the doubles final.

Malvern players won both singles plates, while Alleyn's took the Senior doubles and St. Paul's the Colts.

Organiser Lionel Lawson reports: These Championships were held at Sherborne School on 7/8 January and attracted a very healthy entry of 74 players. It was particularly good to have entries from Whitgift and Sedbergh, who had not been involved for a number of years.

After a busy first round of 12 matches, the 16 seeded players came into action. The majority of matches saw the seeded players come through untroubled but Whitham of St Paul's was pushed hard by Yang of Alleyn's, eventually winning to 12.

In the third round Kirwan of Alleyn's had a very tight match against Alec Younger of Winchester, with Younger just coming through to 14. The remaining 3rd round matches gave rise to straight-forward wins for the seeded players.

The first quarter was an intriguing clash between last year's champion, Albert Song of Winchester and his team-mate Alec Younger – Younger pushed the champion hard in the first game losing to 7 but Song then upped a gear to cruise into the semis. Pete Kullavanijaya of Winchester (4th seed) had a tough game against Whitham of St Paul's in the second quarter winning each game to 7. The third quarter saw last year's National and West of England Colts Champion, Tom Kidner of Winchester in action against Tudor of Malvern. Tudor gave him a good run for his money in the first – with Kidner winning to 7 – but Kidner then took full control and won the second to 1. The final quarter was an intriguing clash between Hanton of Alleyn's and second-seeded Monty Evans of St Paul's. Hanton squeezed home in the first to 10 but, with Hanton troubled by cramp, Evans stormed home to win the 2nd and 3rd games to 3 and love.

We therefore had three Winchester players in the semis. In the first match Song took on his doubles partner Kullavanijaya in an intriguing tussle. There was very little between the players in the first game, which Song took narrowly to 9, but by then Kullavanijaya was starting to suffer with a degree of cramp and he could not hold on in the second, which Song won 11-1. In the second semi Kidner had too much firepower for Evans, who had come through 3 games with Hanton.

We thus had an exciting clash between last year's Senior Singles Champion and last year's Colts champion. As anticipated the game was very even, but Kidner demonstrated his class and great potential by marginally having the greater range of shots, coming home to 6 in each game. There is no doubt that Tom Kidner has a great and exciting future in the game. Song is also a fine player and it will be interesting to see how they both fare in the Nationals.

There were 30 players involved in the Colts singles and 7 of the 8 top seeded players reached the quarter-finals. The exception was Nelson of Malvern who narrowly beat Monro-Davies of St Paul's

15-13. In the quarters Cochrane of Alleyn's beat 4th seed Bagnell of Winchester, but the 3 top seeds came through untroubled. In the first semi Matvienko took control of the first game against Cochrane of Alleyn's. In the second game Cochrane pushed him hard but finally conceded to 8. In the second semi McGuire of Sedbergh resoundingly won the first game to 2 but the second-seeded Poyntz of Winchester drew level in the second and then just outlasted his gallant opponent, taking the 3rd game to 9. The final between the two Winchester boys was a very close affair and could have gone either way but on this occasion Poyntz prevailed.

The Winchester squad took their excellent form in the Singles into the Doubles competitions. In the Senior competition the 8 top seeded pairs reached the quarters and the 4 top seeded pairs reached the semis. In the first semi Alleyn's pushed Winchester I all the way before finally conceding. In the second semi Winchester II were too steady for St Paul's I – thus again we had an all-Winchester final.

As anticipated the final was a close run affair – both games were evenly matched and standard of play and the spirit in which the game was played was highly commendable. Albert Song and Pete Kullavanijaya ran out narrow winners against their team-mates Tom Kidner and Alec Younger to 10 and 9.

The Colts Doubles was also dominated by Winchester, who provided 3 of the 4 semi-finalists. 4th seeds Malvern were the other team to come through. The 2 top Winchester pairs sailed through to the final and Winchester I (Matvienko and Poyntz) had just about too much fire-power for Winchester II (Seymour Bagnell and Ben Kullavanijaya), winning to 8 and 5.

Thus a hectic weekend of Fives came to a late close. The RFA is indebted to Sherborne School (and in particular to Nick Scorer) for the use of their excellent facilities and for their generous hospitality throughout.

Results

Senior Singles:

1st Round: Nurzhanuly (Tonbridge) bt Manur (Malvern) 15-10, Ambukumar (Whitgift) bt Ames (Blundell's) 15-2, Davies (St Paul's) bt Hanley (Tonbridge) 15-6, Yang (Alleyn's) bt Russell (Whitgift) 15-5, Rentoul (Alleyn's) bt Von Rein (Tonbridge) 15-2, Maclaurin (Blundell's) bt Yass (St Paul's) 15-11, Francis (Blundell's) bt Nielsen (Bedford Modern) 15-2, Colbert (Bedford Modern) bt Lockwood (Blundell's) 15-12, Smith (Sherborne) w/o Clarke (Blundell's) scr, Burton (Whitgift) bt Clark (Bedford Modern) 15-3, Barnard (Alleyn's) bt Cabburn (Blundell's) 15-7, Shardlow (Sherborne) bt Williams (St Paul's) 15-1.

2nd Round: Song (Winchester) bt Wells (St Paul's) 15-2, Jackson (St Paul's) bt Nurzhanuly 15-3, Younger (Winchester) bt Ambukumar 15-8, Kirwan (Alleyn's) bt Davies 15-2, Whitham (St Paul's) bt Yang 15-12, Chai (Blundell's) bt Rentoul 15-8, Low (Whitgift) bt Maclaurin 15-2, Kullavanijaya (Winchester) bt Francis 15-3, Kidner (Winchester) bt Colbert 15-3, Smith bt Patel (Tonbridge) 15-10, Byers (Winchester) bt Burton 15-3, Tudor (Malvern) bt Barnard 15-0, Hanton (Alleyn's) bt Shardlow 15-5, Sumner (Bedford Modern) bt Gueroult (St Paul's) 15-3, Mackison (Winchester) bt Dickinson (Eastbourne) 15-0, Evans (St Paul's) bt Naumenko (Alleyn's) 15-1.

3rd Round: Song bt Jackson 15-5, Younger bt Kirwan 16-14, Whitham bt Chai 15-9, Kallavanijaya bt Low 15-8, Kidner bt Smith 15-0, Tudor bt Byers 15-4, Hanton bt Sumner 15-4, Evans bt Mackison 15-0.

Quarter-finals: Song bt Younger 11-7 11-1, Kullavanijaya bt Whitham 11-7 11-7, Kidner bt Tudor 11-7 11-1, Evans bt Hanton 10-12 11-3 11-0.

Semi-finals: Song bt Kullavanijaya 11-9 11-1, Kidner bt Evans 11-5 11-3

Final: Tom Kidner (Winchester) bt Albert Song (Winchester) 11-6 11-6

Colts Singles:

1st Round: Horsey (Blundell's) bt Standen (Malvern) 15-6, Kullavanijaya (Winchester) bt Bavasha (St Paul's) 15-0, Wiseman (Alleyn's) bt Bruce (Malvern) 15-11, Cochrane (Alleyn's) bt Ames (Blundell's) 15-0, Harvey (Sherborne) bt Ryder (Blundell's) 15-9, Parsapour (St Paul's) bt Tulloch (Malvern) 16-14, Bagnell (Winchester) bt Ali (Derby Moor) 15-3, McGuire (Sedbergh) bt Singh (Derby Moor) 15-1, Mercer (Sherborne) bt Fraser (Winchester) 15-7, Odgers (St Paul's) bt Burgess (Tonbridge) 15-7, Percival (Winchester) bt Murphy (Blundell's) 15-1, Monro-Davies (St Paul's) bt Vause (Blundell's) 15-2, Nelson (Malvern) bt Skoczylas (St Paul's) 15-8, Ward-Jackson (St Paul's) bt Crooke (Tonbridge) 15-5.

2nd Round: Matvienko (Winchester) bt Horsey 15-0, Wiseman bt Kullavanijaya 15-5, Cochrane bt Harvey 15-3, Bagnell bt Parsapour 15-9, McGuire bt Mercer 15-2, Percival bt Odgers 15-6, Nelson bt Monro-Davies 15-13, Poyntz (Winchester) bt Ward-Jackson 15-0.

Quarter-finals: Matvienko bt Wiseman 11-2 11-0, Cochrane bt Bagnell 11-8 11-1, McGuire bt Percival 11-5 11-2, Poyntz bt Nelson 11-0 11-1

Semi-finals: Matvienko bt Cochrane 11-2 11-8, Poyntz bt McGuire 2-11 11-3 11-9

Final: Alex Poyntz (Winchester) bt Stepan Matvienko (Winchester) 11-7 12-10.

Senior Doubles:

1st Round: St Paul's II bt Tonbridge II 15-5, Alleyn's III bt Bedford Modern II 15-12, St Paul's IV bt Blundell's III 15-1, St Paul's III bt Tonbridge I 16-14, Bedford Modern I bt Alleyn's II 16-15, Sherborne w/o Eastbourne scr

2nd Round: Winchester I bt St Paul's II 15-5, Blundell's I bt Alleyn's III 15-12, Winchester III bt St Paul's IV 15-3, Alleyn's I bt Blundell's II 15-1, Winchester II bt Whitgift II 15-1, Malvern bt St Paul's III 15-6, Whitgift I bt Bedford Modern I 15-12, St Paul's I bt Sherborne 15-2

Quarter-finals: Winchester I bt Blundell's I 11-5 11-2, Alleyn's I bt Winchester III 11-3 11-6, Winchester II bt Malvern 11-8 11-6, St Paul's I bt Whitgift I 11-5 1-11 11-2

Semi-finals: Winchester I bt Alleyn's I 12-10 11-6, Winchester II bt St Paul's I 11-5 11-6

Final: Winchester I (Albert Song and Pete Kullavanijaya) bt Winchester II (Tom Kidner and Alec Younger) 12-10, 11

Colts Doubles:

1st Round: Tonbridge bt Derby Moor 15-11, Sherborne bt St Paul's II 15-13, Malvern I bt Blundell's II 15-2, Winchester III bt Blundell's I 15-5, St Paul's III bt Malvern II 15-5

Quarter-finals: Winchester I bt Tonbridge 11-0 11-5, Malvern I bt Sherborne 11-5 11-3, Winchester III bt St Paul's I 11-6 11-8, Winchester II bt St Paul's III 11-0 11-1

Semi-finals: Winchester I bt Malvern I 11-4 11-2, Winchester II bt Winchester III 11-2 11-6

Final: Winchester I (Stepan Matvienko and Alex Poyntz) bt Winchester II (Seymour Bagnell and Ben Kullavanijaya) 11-8, 11-5.

Senior Singles Plate: Advait Manur (Malvern)

Colts Singles Plate: Matt Bruce (Malvern)

Senior Doubles Plate: Alleyn's (Billy Rentoul and Sky Yang)

Colts Doubles Plate: St Paul's (Max Skoczylas and Kian Parsapour)

North West Open Championships

Y Club, Manchester, January 14/15th 2017

STOP PRESS: It was a weekend of history-making in Manchester, where John Beswick presided over the 50th North West Open Championships and Matt Shaw won his first open title. Mind you, that only came after the rather more seasoned campaigner Will Ellison took the singles crown, with a win over second seed Ed Kay. In a repeat of the 2016 final, this was Will's 27th singles title and his third NW Open win, but Ed too left Manchester with a gold medal after teaming up with fellow Cambridge student Matt to win the doubles title after defeating Will and Gareth Price in the final.

Organiser John Beswick reports: A smallish but comfortable entry for a 2-court event. Some old faithfuls chose to go on the Jesters Tour to Scotland which, unfortunately, clashed this year.

It was excellent to have a wide range of adult players from Manchester, Bristol, Cambridge, Derby, London, and N. Yorkshire for this anniversary event. Well done to Jon Lidiard for bringing his young players from Sedbergh and to Archie McCreath for coming down from Edinburgh. Great also to see Tim Lewis up from the Deep West, with his daughter, to support.

The Singles was completed in a day, with invariably high quality matches in all rounds. Kay and Ellison looked, predictably, the pick of the players. Yet again, though, Will seemed to find an extra gear in the final against Ed.

In the Singles Plate there were two left-handers in the last four of Hanton, McCreath, Goodwin and Jefferies, but it was Henry and Peter who fought out a close final, won by Henry.

The Doubles pairings contained youth and experience, and matches were all hard-fought. The semi-final, which saw 2nd seeds Arnold & Beltrami confront 3rd seeds Kay & Shaw, was the most tantalising and duly went to 3 games, Kay & Shaw pulling rank in the end. These two then went on to target Gareth Price relentlessly in the Doubles final, taking Will Ellison out of the game as much as possible. It worked.

The Doubles Plate was notable for the presence in the final of a 70 year-old stalwart of Manchester Fives, Peter Woods, playing with Ged Darlington. They came up against young guns Craig Baxter & Aaron Wheatley who, after a tight semi-final against a Sedbergh pair, managed to win what turned out to be Derby Moor's 50th Plate since the Club was founded in 2004.

What a great tournament!

RESULTS

Singles

1st round: J Smith bt C Baxter 11-3, 11-4; F Thomas bt T Maguire 11-0, 11-2; J Bristow bt J Lidiard 11-3, 11-0; S Russell bt A Wheatley 11-8, 11-0

2nd round: W Ellison bt Smith 11-2, 11-0; H Buchanan bt A McCreath 11-5, 11-0; B Beltrami bt Thomas 11-3, 11-5; J Aquilina bt H Jefferies 11-3, 11-5; C Brooks bt J Bristow 11-0, 11-6; M Shaw bt A Goodwin 11-8, 11-2; O Arnold bt P Hanton 11-5, 11-2; E Kay bt S Russell 12-10, 11-0

Quarter-finals: Ellison bt Buchanan 11-3, 11-1; Beltrami bt Aquilina 11-5, 11-7; Brooks bt Shaw 11-2, 11-3; Kay bt Arnold 11-1, 11-6

Semi-finals: Ellison bt Beltrami 11-6, 11-0; Kay bt Brooks 11-0, 11-5

Final: Ellison bt Kay 11-1, 11-5

Plate: Jefferies

Doubles

1st round: H Jefferies & F Thomas bt G Darlington & P Woods 11-5, 11-7; J Bristow & H Buchanan bt L Keates & B Kirk 11-1, 11-5; A Goodwin & N Roberts bt J Annett & J Lidiard 11-5, 11-2; C Baxter & A Wheatley bt R Bradley & T Maguire 11-0, 11-2

Quarter-finals: W Ellison & G Price bt Jefferies & Thomas 11-1, 11-1, J Aquilina & P Hanton bt Buchanan & Bristow 11-8, 6-11, 11-4; E Kay & M Shaw bt Goodwin & Roberts 11-8, 11-1; O Arnold & B Beltrami bt Baxter & Wheatley 11-1, 11-2

Semi-finals: Ellison & Price bt Aquilina & Hanton 11-2, 11-3; Kay & Shaw bt Beltrami & Arnold 10-12, 11-6, 11-8

Final: Kay & Shaw bt Ellison & Price 11-1, 11-8

Plate: Baxter & Wheatley

Ladies National Championships

St. Paul's School, Barnes, Sunday 15th January 2017

Once again a year to celebrate 'Ladies Fives', writes Alex Steel.

A slightly smaller competition of 19 players this year still provided a day full of intense competition. Thanks must go to Trevor White, who continues to bring a large contingent of ladies from Rugby school, continuing their progress, which is evident to see each year they attend.

The morning began with Doubles played in a knock-out format in two pools. Sadly, due to time restraints, a doubles plate was not an option. In the main competition, defending champions Briedenhann & Mills beat schoolgirls Freya Harrison & Harriet Fagan in one semi-final while second-seeded Raynor & Steel came through comfortably against Katie Sumner & Louise Mathias.

The 2017 Doubles final was perhaps the closest ladies' final yet. Raynor & Steel fought valiantly against the defending champions, making the first game extremely tense and extremely entertaining to watch, with Raynor & Steel winning the first game 15-13. However, Briedenhann & Mills' experience as a pair began to show through, as they took the second and third games 15-1 and 11-4. Many congratulations to them on their fifth consecutive title.

The Singles competition was conducted in a simple knock-out format; and, due to a lack of time, the plate competition will be conducted at Rugby school, which is where the majority of the participants originated from. We await the results of that with bated breath.

In the main competition, Maddy Raynor reached the final via victories over Freya Harrison, Louise Mathias and three-time champion Kathleen Briedenhann, while Tessa beat Arte Denton, Katie Sumner and Alexandra Steel. Both ladies, Raynor and Mills, were exhausted by time the final came around and both fought valiantly, but Tessa was the victor winning her first Singles National Title. Many congratulations to both, and especially to Tessa, who repeated at senior level the double she won at Under 23 level last November.

RESULTS

SINGLES

Round 1: A.Denton bt M.Harte 11-4; A.de Clermont bt D Woodley 11-5; D.Skene bt L.Theaker 11-9

Round 2: K.Briedenhann bt Skene 11-1; C.Henderson bt L.Simpson 11-4; M.Raynor bt F.Harrison 11-2; L.Mathias bt H.Fagan 11-3; T.Mills bt Denton 11-0; G.Shepherd (injured – scratched against K.Sumner) K.Sumner went through; A.Steel bt de Clermont 11-3; L.Harbottle bt L.Robinson.

Quarter-finals: Briedenhann bt Henderson 11-2; Raynor bt Mathias 11-7; Mills bt Sumner 11-0; Steel bt Harbottle 11-1.

Semi-finals: Raynor bt Briedenhann 15-8; Mills bt Steel 15-4

Final: Mills bt Raynor 15-8, 15-10

Plate: TBC

DOUBLES

Round-robin

Group A: Briedenhann & Mills bt Mathias & Sumner 11-3, bt Robinson & Skene 11-0, bt Harbottle & Theaker 11-0, bt Denton & Woodley 11-0. Mathias & Sumner bt Robinson & Skene 11-0, bt Harbottle & Theaker 11-2, bt Denton & Woodley 11-3. Robinson & Skene bt Denton & Woodley 11-4. Harbottle & Theaker bt Robinson & Skene 11-9, bt Denton & Woodley 11-8.

Group B: Raynor & Steel bt Simpson & Shepherd 11-1, bt Harrison & Fagan 11-0, bt de Clermont & Harte 11-1. Simpson & Shepherd bt de Clermont & Harte 11-5. Harrison & Fagan bt Simpson & Shepherd 11-4, bt de Clermont & Harte 11-7.

Semi-finals: Briedenhann & Mills bt Harrison & Fagan 11-0; Raynor & Steel bt Mathias & Sumner 11-2

Final: Briedenhann & Mills bt Raynor & Steel 13-15, 15-1, 15-4

Neil Butterfield revisits Fives USA

27th January 2017

In October 2016 Neil Butterfield went back to New England to revisit courts he had first played on in 1982 and to seek out a privately owned Singles court in Maine.

See this link to read his report: **Neil Butterfield revisits Fives USA**

The years between 1979 and 1994 were a time of close ties between the Fives-players of the USA and those of the RFA and the RFA Club run by Tom Wood.

Groups of American players, mostly led by John Carey, came to Britain on six occasions between these years, touring the country in order to play on courts from Sherborne to Edinburgh, and even on Jersey. They were liberally hosted by Tom and Joan Wood, by the RFA Club under its President Alastair Mackenzie, by the Old Bedfordians, the UCS Old Boys, and by many of the schools they visited.

Jerry Bellows, a teacher at St. Mark's, came over in 1994 and played in the Barnes Bridge. British players ventured across the Atlantic on more than a dozen occasions, often led or inspired by the indefatigable Tom Wood and his wife Joan and by the ever-persuasive Old Bedfordian Mark Daniel.

The UCS Old Boys made repeat visits; the Guthrie Dalesmen undertook a tour; Peter Ingram took a party of young players from Merchant Taylors' School on one occasion. Between them these touring players experienced Fives on the courts of St. Mark's School in Southborough (these now demolished), at Groton School in Massachusetts, at the Union Boat Club in Boston and on privately owned courts in Maine and Connecticut.

Eve Carey, the wife of John Carey, created a majolica Vase as a trophy to be played for in what were termed 'International Matches': the Carey-Wood Cup. The Cup, played for on 6 occasions, featured images of Fives-players in various poses.

Some 25 years have passed since this Golden Age of Transatlantic Fives. It is good to see Neil Butterfield's efforts to rekindle the spirit of that time.

2017 Jesters tour to Scotland

Edinburgh/Musselburgh, Friday-Sunday 13-15th January 2017

Frank and Harry Akerman write: The 27th Jesters Tour weekend to Edinburgh proved again to be a big success, with 34 tourists representing the Jesters in the 26 matches, and this despite the date clashing with the 50th North West tournament in Manchester and with the Ladies National Championships. There were many familiar faces back, some regulars (Duncan Neale, Ed and Robin Thompson, and Mansell Jagger) whilst for Joe Gribble this was his first fives-playing trip to north of the border this millennium. We also were pleased to welcome four new tourists, including Shi-nan Zhang, our first ever female player.

Friday afternoon saw a Jesters victory against a strong combined Scottish Universities VI before we had a very high-quality Select VI tournament taking the best six schoolboys from Edinburgh and pairing them each with a Jester. Two pairs – Gary Lemmon (Loretto) & Dave Butler and Archie McCreath (Fettes) & Jez Sinton – each only lost one game in the round-robin tournament; however, while Doug Tidy (Merchiston) & Harry Akerman lost two games, they scored more points overall, so the rules committee (Harry Akerman) decided that Doug was the winning schoolboy!

Following the tournament, we were generously hosted by Fettes for a very tasty curry on Friday night, which saw 70 diners, comprising Jesters, members of the Caledonian Club, school coaches, headmasters, parents, families and boys enjoying an extremely sociable evening. It is clear there is plenty of enthusiasm for Fives in Edinburgh.

On Saturday morning, our resources were stretched thinly, as we lost John Minta to flu and went down to a strong team from the Caledonian Club (139-129) and also to the Old Merchistonians. The withdrawal of one of the school teams for Saturday afternoon saw a re-jigging of resources, allowing an Old Bradfield Team (Butler, Sinton, Marshall, Mettam) to win the inaugural (and possibly final!) Sinton-Matthews cup against an Old Blues team from Christ's Hospital (Hawke, Lebon, Matthews, Peterson), and didn't they enjoy their bragging rights for the evening!

Our Saturday evening meal at La P'tite Folie (for at least the 20th year) provided us with an opportunity to reminisce about the 27 years of the tour organised by Frank Akerman – a role from which he is now standing down, passing over the reins to Dave Butler and Ben Hale. In responding, Frank thanked all those who had supported the weekend and also underlined the absolutely vital part played by Harry, who for many years has been responsible for the day-to-day court and game allocations, which is such an essential part to the smooth running of the three days. Frank said he was sure that, with such enthusiastic masters in charge (Matt Hillier at Merchiston, Hector McFarlane at the Academy, Roger Whait at Loretto and Peter Worlledge at Fettes), the immediate future for similar Fives weekends in Edinburgh will be assured.

Warmer weather on Sunday sadly meant sweaty courts and the fixture against an enthusiastic Edinburgh Academy 1st IV team had to be cut short. Meanwhile, at Fettes, the walls were getting wet, but play was possible, allowing an opportunity to see Archie McCreath & Grant Sperling, the Fettes 1st pair, beating both the Jesters pairs. There were also good games against the Merchiston and Loretto 1st IVs, while on the Sunday morning Matt Hillier produced a VI which included Roger Layton and which, for the second year running, was too strong for a tiring Jesters team. We also lost our second match against another strong Caledonian Club side, with fitness once again being a prominent problem!

So, while this era of Jesters tours comes to an end with the usual noises from our camp of sore bodies, bruised hands and commitments to be fitter for next year, the standard and enthusiasm of the school players at all age levels remains high in Edinburgh. As well as some very strong colts coming through at all the schools (including Max Layton, son of Roger), there are also a good number of girls playing Fives and there will be plenty of strong opposition to take on the players in the first Butler/ Hale tour, the dates of which next year will not be allowed to clash with the North West or the Ladies

Championships. And, there should be no reason why the current male:female ratio of 33:1 should not also improve.

Over to you, Ben and Dave....!

Normal service resumed at the U25s

Oundle School, 4-5 February 2017

STOP PRESS: Normal service was resumed when Ed Kay won his third successive National U25 Singles title, beating Ben Beltrami in the final. Ed then went on to win his third successive Doubles title with Matt Shaw, beating Ben Beltrami & Ollie Arnold in the final. It is Ed's sixth in a row, having previously won 3 times with Dan Tristao. It was a year of repeats elsewhere, with Robert Whitehorn winning the Singles Plate once more, defeating Ben Chua; and then Cameron McKelvie winning the Doubles Plate Plate (aka Sleep-Eat-PlayFives-Repeat Fives Mug) he had won last year, but this time with Oundle Sixth Former Will Richardson. Ben Chua won the Doubles Plate with James Smith, and Christian Blackaby the Singles Plate Plate.

Organiser Ed Kay reports: The Under 25s was held at Oundle for the 6th year in a row. With a total of 32 players across the singles and doubles, it is one of the best attended tournaments in the RFA calendar. This is in no small part due to the extraordinary commitment of the current crop of young players, who are willing to travel from far and wide for this event. The organizer would especially like to thank the teams from Oxford and Durham for continuing to support the tournament in great numbers.

The Singles draw had some interesting first rounds, with Francis Thomas vs. Oli Quarry the pick of the bunch. Francis started strongly, taking the first 15-3, but Oli outlasted him to win the final two games 15-7, 15-4. Sid Bhushan had a good win against Ben Chua 16-14,15-12, and James Smith beat Dan Hutt 15-13, 15-11.

In the 2nd round Sam Russell played some great fives to beat schoolboy champion Andrew Boyd 15-2 15-3. The rest of the matches went to seeding, except for James Tilston's win over Henry Jefferies 14-16, 15-7, 15-4. However, Tilston couldn't continue this form into the semi-final and lost 15-4, 15-3 to Shaw. Parker vs. Arnold was picked as the match of the second round; however, Ollie managed to cruise past Theo 15-0, 15-6. The semi-finals were quick affairs as well, with Kay and Beltrami making it to the final for the third year running. In the final Ed was too strong for Ben, who made uncharacteristic unforced errors. Ed thus took his third Under 25s singles title 15-5,15-4.

In the Plate, Rob Whitehorn became the first person to retain it, beating Francis Thomas, Oli Quarry and Ben Chua on his way to the title. Meanwhile in the Plate Plate Christian Blackaby overcame James Smith in the final to ensure that the title remained in Durham hands for another year.

In the Doubles, the first rounds were all fairly comfortable for the top 8 seeds, except for Blackaby & Hutt. Their tough draw saw them take on Chua & Smith and, in a match that went to three games, Christian & Dan came through 15-10, 11-15, 15-6. The quarter-finals had some great games. Thomas & Jefferies took down Goodwin & Whitehorn in a hard-hitting game. Tilston & George needed 90 mins to beat Russell & Quarry in 3 close games. In the semi-finals, fatigue overcame Thomas & Jefferies and they fell meekly to Kay & Shaw. In the other semi Tilston & George put up good resistance in the first game, but Beltrami & Arnold were too strong, taking the match 15-7, 15-0. The final was a keenly anticipated affair, and with as many as 8 spectators. In the first game Kay & Shaw showed the consistency that took them to the previous two titles and won it 15-7. Then Beltrami & Arnold bounced backed with a stunning performance in the second game to win 15-6. The third was

touch and go, and at 7-7 it was anyone's game. However, Kay & Shaw managed to make it over the line 15-7.

In the Doubles Plate, Chua & Smith overcame all their opponents in the round robin of death to take the silverware. In the Doubles Plate Plate Cameron McKelvie retained his 2016 title, this time with a new partner, Will Richardson, a talented Oundle schoolboy.

Many thanks go to Tony Burrows and Oundle School for allowing us to use their excellent facilities. Thanks also go to the Jesters Club for helping to fund the university students playing in this tournament.

Singles

1st round: Quarry bt Thomas 3-15, 15-7, 15-4; Russell bt Alex Wordley 15-3, 15-2; Boyd bt Raikes 15-4, 15-1; Parker bt Marshall 15-0, 15-0; Whitehorn bt Hale 15-0, 15-1; Bhushan bt Chua 16-14, 15-12; Arnold bt McKelvie 15-12, 15-1; Blackaby bt Manger 15-7, 15-6; Tilston bt Adam Wordley 15-9, 15-4; Jefferies bt McGee 15-0, 15-3; Goodwin bt Mills 15-4, 15-1; George bt Sumner 15-3, 15-8; Smith bt Hutt 15-13, 15-11

2nd round: Kay bt Quarry 15-3, 15-0; Russell bt Boyd 15-2, 15-3; Parker bt Whitehorn 15-6, 15-13; Arnold bt Bhushan 15-3, 15-4; Shaw bt Blackaby 15-6, 15-0; Tilston bt Jefferies 14-16, 15-7, 15-4; Goodwin bt George 16-14, 15-12; Beltrami bt Smith 15-4, 15-3

Quarter-finals: Kay bt Russell 15-4, 15-0; Arnold bt Parker 15-0, 15-6; Shaw bt Tilston 15-4, 15-3; Beltrami bt Goodwin 15-3, 15-0

Semi-finals: Kay bt Arnold 15-5, 15-1; Beltrami bt Shaw 15-2, 15-8

Final: Kay bt Beltrami 15-5, 15-4

Plate: Whitehorn

Plate Plate: Blackaby

Doubles

1st round: Blackaby & Hutt bt Chua & Smith 15-10, 11-15, 15-6; Jefferies & Thomas bt Marshall & Alex Wordley 15-3, 15-0; Goodwin & Whitehorn bt Davey & Sorensen 15-2, 15-2; George & Tilston bt Bhushan & Mills 15-1, 15-4; Quarry & Russell bt Raikes & Adam Wordley 15-6, 15-4; Boyd & Manger bt Hale & McGee 15-0, 15-3; Arnold & Beltrami bt McKelvie & Richardson 15-7, 15-1

Quarter-finals: Kay & Shaw bt Blackaby & Hutt 15-2, 15-6; Jefferies & Thomas bt Goodwin & Whitehorn 15-12, 7-15, 15-5; George & Tilston bt Quarry & Russell 15-12, 13-15, 15-10; Arnold & Beltrami bt Boyd & Manger 15-5, 15-3

Semi-finals: Kay & Shaw bt Jefferies & Thomas 15-6, 15-0; Arnold & Beltrami bt George & Tilston 15-7, 15-0

Final: Kay & Shaw bt Arnold & Beltrami 15-7, 6-15, 15-7

Plate: Chua & Smith

Plate Plate: McKelvie & Richardson

Women's Rankings February 2017

The Rugby Fives Association, 16th February 2017

The RFA is delighted to publish the fourth set of rankings since the inception of Women's Rankings in March 2016.

They show new Ladies National Singles Champion Tessa Mills having overtaken her regular Doubles partner Kathleen Briedenhann at the top after her success at St. Paul's in January.

Maddy Raynor moves up to third after her silver medal in Singles and Doubles at the Ladies National Championships.

Cassi Henderson's rise from 26th to 17th reflects the growing strength of Rugby Fives at Cambridge University.

Four new players from Rugby School and Staff enter the rankings for the first time.

The next set of Women's Rankings will be published in April 2017 after the Ladies National Winchester Fives Championships in Singles and Doubles, played at Malvern College.

Success for Light and Dark Blues at the Varsity Match

St. Paul's School, 18th February 2017

STOP PRESS: In the 87th Varsity Match Cambridge University won a predictable victory, their 7th in a row, by 293-94 to take the Jock Burnet Cup. Their success was built largely on the strength of their top IV, which consisted of four National Schools Champions, three of them Full Blues.

However, in the Sparrows versus Beavers match the Dark Blues recorded a hefty victory by 180-70 and thus took home the coveted Fist of Iron.

Cambridge won the Silver Salver in the 3rd Varsity Match for Ladies by 180-6, their three nationally ranked players proving too experienced for their opposite numbers in all departments of the game.

Scores

Oxford University versus Cambridge University

Singles. (Oxford names first): S Bhushan (St. Paul's & Pembroke) (*Hon. Sec.*) lost to EI Kay (St. Paul's & Emmanuel) 0-15; MW Hale (Winchester & St. Hilda's) (*Capt.*) lost to BMJ Beltrami (St. Paul's & Selwyn) (*Capt.*) 0-15; AN Mills (Highgate & St. Edmund Hall) lost to MJR Shaw (St. Paul's & Homerton) (*Hon. Sec.*) 1-15; TRG Owen (St. Dunstan's & St. Hugh's) lost to ADF Boyd (Edinburgh Academy & Churchill) 0-15.

Doubles. Bhushan & Mills lost to Beltrami & Kay 0-15, 2-15; lost to Boyd & Shaw 9-15, 9-15. Hale & Owen lost to Boyd & Shaw 6-15, 0-15; lost to Beltrami & Kay 1-15, 2-15. AJG Cranstoun (Merchiston Castle & Exeter) & GC Muscat (Tonbridge & Balliol) lost to J Manger (Oundle & Downing) & EL Tebboth (Merchant Taylors' & Selwyn) 10-15, 8-15; beat LW Cook (Bishop's Stortford HS & Emmanuel) & AMJ Guéroult (St. Paul's & Corpus Christi) 15-11, 15-12. HD Hutchinson (Oundle & New) & AO Petrenco (Westminster & LMH) lost to Cook & Guéroult 9-15, 3-15; lost to Manger & Tebboth 2-15, 2-15.

Result: Cambridge bt Oxford 293-94.

Oxford Beavers v Cambridge Sparrows

Singles. (Oxford names first): JHD Miller (Rugby & St. Hugh's) bt NR Turnbull (RGS High Wycombe & Trinity Hall) 15-4; KS Jessel (Alleyn's & LMH) bt CE Constable (Whitgift & Jesus (*Capt.*) 15-13; AG McGee (Radley & St. Hugh's) (*Capt.*) bt OP Smart (Merchant Taylors' & Downing) 15-3; TG Goldsworthy (Denstone & Lincoln) bt J Galliver (Charterhouse & Robinson) 15-3.

Doubles. Jessel & Miller bt Smart & Turnbull 15-2, 15-3; bt Constable & Galliver 15-0, 15-4. Goldsworthy & McGee bt Constable & Galliver 15-9, 15-3; bt Smart & Turnbull 15-13, 15-13.

Result: Oxford Beavers bt Cambridge Sparrows 180–70.

Oxford Ladies v Cambridge Ladies

Singles. (Oxford names first): RM Parr (Shrewsbury & Christ Church) (*Capt.*) lost to GE Shepherd (Oakham & Emmanuel) (*Capt.*) 2-15; ITJ Ryan (Highgate & New) lost to CJ Henderson (Elizabethtown Area HS & Queens') 0-15; JJ Hreben (Eastbourne & St. Hilda's) lost to CL Simpson (Rugby & Robinson) 1-15; EM Haseldine (St. Paul's & St. Edmund Hall) lost to JEB Coombs ((Oakville Trafalgar HS & Emmanuel) 0-15.

Doubles. Parr & Ryan lost to Shepherd & Simpson 0-15, 0-15; lost to Coombs & Henderson 1-15, 1-15. Haseldine & Hreben lost to Coombs & Henderson 0-15, 1-15; lost to Shepherd & Simpson 0-15, 0-15.

Result: Cambridge Ladies bt Oxford Ladies 180–6.

David Barnes reports: Just as Oxford did in the 1990s, Cambridge has recently had a wealth of talented fives players in residence. This year their top four singles players had all in their turn been the National Schools' singles champion – surely a first. And three of them – Messrs Kay, Beltrami and Shaw – had already been awarded their Full Blue for Fives. So it was not surprising that the Light Blues came out on top in the 2017 Varsity Match. Oxford gained some consolation with a convincing win in the reserves (Beavers v. Sparrows), while the Cambridge Ladies were too experienced for their Oxford counterparts in the second four-a-side encounter between the Universities.

This year's captains, Matt Hale of Oxford and Ben Beltrami of Cambridge, both in their final year, did well to assemble a full complement of players, although other commitments caused two of the Cambridge men to be delayed. Even so, all the matches were completed by 4.30 or so. I notice on re-reading my report from last year that I floated the idea of a singles game for everyone, including the bottom four of the eight. There was time available again this year, as it turned out, so how about next year, if the captains agree?

Despite serious preparation and effort on the part of Hale and his men, there was only limited reward for Oxford in the top half of the draw. Their first pair (Bhushan and Mills) did very well to glean twenty points in the doubles, but the pressure applied by the Cambridge players was relentless. Beltrami and Kay were particularly severe in both singles and doubles, but, to their credit, Oxford fought hard and never gave up. Last season's schools champion, Boyd, started his Varsity career with a fine singles performance for Cambridge and had a top-class doubles partner in Shaw. In the bottom half, the scores were closer, although Cambridge 3 (Manger & Tebboth) won all four of their games.

Oxford 3 (Cranstoun & Muscat) were the most successful Dark Blue pair, scoring 48 points out a possible 60.

The Oxford Beavers showed that Oxford's squad had much greater strength in depth by winning all their games and recording a stunning victory by more than a hundred points. I hope some of them are back next year to compete for a place in the eight.

The Ladies match was not as exciting as last year. Oxford's star of 2016, Louisa Hotson, is no longer in residence, while the much more experienced Cambridge team had clearly benefitted from the institution of a mixed doubles event at the Cambridge Past v, Present the weekend before. I hope that the Oxford players are not too upset at being defeated by such high-quality opposition, and I urge next year's captains to continue the good work of recruiting promising talent for their ladies' squads. Ladies' fives is on the march!

My thanks go again this year to Owen Toller, who helped greatly with the organisation of the match, and to St. Paul's School for once again providing its fine facilities for the Varsity Match, as it has done since 1983.

Rankings following the North West and the Under 25 Championships

David Hebden, 22nd February 2017

Updated rankings reflecting results from the North West Championships held in January and the Under 25 event held earlier this month have now been posted.

There are no changes in the order of the top 10 singles players, with Dan Tristao and Will Ellison still very closely matched at the top. NW finalist and U25 winner Ed Kay consolidates his position at number 3. Ollie Arnold (11), Theo Parker (13) and Sam Russell (19) all make progress in the top 20, while Ben Chua rises to 50 and Oliver Quarry returns to the list at 54 after good wins the U25s.

Although Will Ellison retains his commanding lead at the top, the doubles showing some more interesting changes. Matt Shaw, who with Ed Kay won in both the NW and U25s, moves up to number 6. Losing finalist in the NW Gareth Price moves up to 12, while semi-finalist Peter Hanton moves up to 15. Henry Jefferies, Francis Thomas, and Anthony Goodwin all make good progress, while NW Plate winners Craig Baxter and Aaron Wheatley are also high risers. Oliver Quarry, Dan Hutt, Jeremy Manger and James Smith benefit from good results in the U25s.

From time to time, when things are quiet, I shall attempt to reveal a little of the mysteries of the rankings system. In this report I will address the question "why have I gone up (just a little) in the singles rankings even though I didn't play in the last events?". The singles ranking process includes an adjustment based on a player's wins against higher ranked players and defeats against lower ranked players. Results over the previous 2 seasons are included but the effect of these adjustments gradually diminishes over time. Eventually the results from season minus 2 have zero impact. So if you have had bad defeats which are dragging you back, then this impact reduces as time goes by, which might result in a small improvement in your ranking points. All clear?

Rick Wilson (1940-2017) and Peter Grender

February 2017

The RFA is sad to report the death at the age of 76 of **FRF ('Rick') Wilson**. Player, coach and stalwart of the Alleyn Old Boys Fives Club, though himself an Old Bedfordian, Rick was President of the RFA 1991-1993. From school onwards, where he was known as 'Bob', Rick loved the game of Fives. He studied at Edinburgh University and did teacher training at the University of Leeds, where he played in a strong university IV, and went on to teach Modern Languages at Oswestry School, then Dulwich College. In the 70s and 80s Rick was a regular participant in the President's Cup, winning the Mate's Plate and the Love Mug twice each. In 1995 he was runner-up, with David Hebden, in the Veterans' Doubles. Rick has been described by one of his regular club-mates as "charming, competitive, occasionally cussed, with a warm smile and a weakness for the gentle cross-court shot so beloved of players at Alleyn's".

A Memorial Service for Rick will be held on Tuesday, 4th April at 2pm in Christ's Chapel, Gallery Road, Dulwich, London SE21 7AE, followed by refreshments in Dulwich College. For further details please contact Bob Dolby through this website (Contact Us).

We would also like to record the passing of **Peter Grender**, runner-up in the National Doubles in 1957, winner of the Scottish Doubles in 1957 and 1958, and of the North of England Doubles in 1958, all with the same partner, fellow Old Dunstonian David Gardner.

Midlands Schools Regional Schools Championships

Bedford School and Bedford Modern School, Sunday 26th February 2017

Bob Dolby reports: The customary five schools entered this year, the fifth since its inception in 2013. Three of them competed in the small but lively U15 section at Bedford School, which began with a knock-out Doubles competition. From it Derby Moor I and Rugby I emerged to fight out the final. This turned out to be the best and closest match of the day, with all four players improving as the contest became ever tighter. In the end the Rugby pair of Beal & McKay managed to cope sufficiently well with Ali's bullet-like service to eke out a win, the fourth time that Rugby has won the Quarry Cup. Meanwhile the Rugby 2nd pair of Christopher & Grady beat BMS's National U14 Schoolgirl champions Kent & Sumner in the semi-final losers' match, for which victory they earned RFA coffee mugs. At the same time the year-young combination of Carr & Knox from BMS won the Plate for first round losers.

In the afternoon three U15 Singles pools were played out and produced 8 quarter-finalists, with both sexes represented. BMS, Derby Moor and Rugby all had players involved at that stage but in the end the final was an all-Rugby affair, from which Ronan McKay emerged the winner, more mobile and steadier than his opponent. Dean Ali from Derby Moor won the semi-final losers' match for the Singles Plate. A special mention must be made of Miguel Carr who reached the semi-final a year young.

Over at Bedford Modern School the morning's U18 Doubles competition produced the predicted final of BMS I versus Rugby I, with the latter school looking to win the trophy for the first time. It was not to be, however, as Joe Sumner & Oliver Colbert proved too steady on their own courts in a tremendous three-game final. Meanwhile the Modern did the double by winning the Doubles Plate in the persons of George Larrington & Nishant Pradhan.

After lunch play in the four U18 Singles pools took place. As expected BMS and Rugby eventually produced two semi-finalists each, with the match between Joe Sumner and Vlad Shirokiy of particularly high quality. In the final Rugby's Michael Suddaby had too much of a task in coping with

Joe's superior steadiness and mobility, but it was fitting that Michael graced the final after four years of distinguished performance in this annual event. Likewise it was good to see James Attwood and Vlad Shirokiy, in their last year, play out the Plate final for semi-final losers. We wish James, Vlad and Michael all the best for their post-school Fives and look forward to seeing Joe & Oliver defend their titles next year.

The organiser's and the RFA's thanks go to Stuart Kirby who ran the U18 section, to the two schools for the use of their (dry!) courts, to Bedford School for the excellent catering, and to all the masters i/c and parents who supported the players. We look forward to seeing some of the latter at subsequent competitions this season.

Results

U15 Singles

Quarter-finals: R McKay (Rugby) bt K Sumner (BMS) 11-4 ; D Ali (Derby Moor) bt J Beal (Rugby) 11-4 ; X Christopher (Rugby) bt P Grady (Rugby) 11-9 ; M Carr (BMS) bt J Noble-Layng (BMS) 11-1

Semi-finals: McKay bt Ali 11-4 ; Christopher bt Carr 11-5

Final: McKay bt Christopher 15-5

Plate: Ali bt Carr 11-3

Also competed: M Kent, J Knox, A Sivasuthan (BMS) ; D Bazylijski, K Mahmood, A Ry (Derby Moor)

U15 Doubles

Quarter-finals: Derby Moor I bt BMS III 15-0 ; Rugby II bt BMS I 15-9 ; BMS III bt Derby Moor II 15-0

Semi-finals: Derby Moor I bt Rugby II 15-11 ; Rugby I bt BMS III 15-3

Final: Rugby I (Beal & McKay) bt DMF I (Ali & Ry) 11-8, 5-11, 11-5

Plate: BMS I (Carr & Knox)

U18 Singles

Quarter-finals: M Suddaby (Rugby) bt H Beard (Bedford) 15-2 ; J Attwood (BMS) bt G Larrington (BMS) 15-6 ; J Sumner (BMS) bt O Colbert (BMS) 15-1 ; V Shirokiy (Rugby) bt J Rees-Bidder (BMS) 15-9

Semi-finals: Suddaby bt Attwood 15-3 ; Sumner bt Shirokiy 15-12

Final: Sumner bt Suddaby 15-7

Plate: Shirokiy bt Attwood 15-6

Also competed: N Pradhan, M Nielsen, C Clark, Z Khan, T Hartshorn (BMS) ; K Awan (Bedford) ; M Leung, L O'Connor, T Marinko (Oundle)

U18 Doubles

1st round: BMS I bt Oundle 15-0 ; BMS IV bt BMS V 15-1

Quarter-finals: Rugby bt Bedford III 15-1 ; BMS II bt BMS III 15-10 ; BMS I bt Bedford II 15-0 ; BMS IV bt Bedford I 16-14

Semi-finals: Rugby bt BMS II 15-5 ; BMS I bt BMS IV 15-1

Final: BMS I (Colbert & Sumner) bt Rugby (Shirokiy & Suddaby) 14-16, 15-4, 15-7

Plate: BMS III (Larrington & Pradhan)

North of England Championships

Durham, Saturday/Sunday 25/26th February 2017

With 18 players featuring in each of the singles and doubles draws, the 2017 North of England tournament entry was smaller than in previous years. However, there were many exciting matches to look forward to.

The pick of the matches in the round of 16 was Buchanan vs. Tilston; Hamish edged the first game 11-9, before James fought back to take the second 11-7. Unfortunately, the crowd were denied a third, as a back injury prevented Hamish from continuing. No three-gamers in this round, then, with the other seven seeds all safely through to the quarter-finals.

Here, there was smooth progress for the top three seeds: the familiar trio of Tristao, Ellison and Grant. Sam Russell put in a solid performance against Dan T, giving further weight to Dave Butler's prediction that he's on the verge of recording a big win (though maybe not quite the scalp of Tristao, yet). The battle between the fourth and fifth seeds saw two former Durham captains go the distance – Butler taking the first 11-6, Aquilina the second 11-2. The crowd were not to be denied this time, and although Dave built an early lead in the third, Julian clawed his way back from 4-10 down to pinch it 12-10 and upset the seedings.

This seemed to take its toll on the organiser, who then succumbed to Tristao rather quickly. In the other semi-final, Ellison looked very comfortable in game 1, before having to fight hard to shut Grant out of the second: 11-3, 11-9.

So, the final was a repeat of 2015: Tristao vs. Ellison. Eagerly anticipated and, as ever, a crowd of seven gathered on the gallery. In Game 1, Will proved too consistent, easing to 11-6, while Dan Grant tweeted incessantly about the tin. The second game started in much the same way, but Tristao soon steadied himself – the players treating the spectators to high quality and exceptionally long rallies. Eventually, Dan managed to close it out 11-7, taking us into our second deciding set of the day. Will got off to a quick start, going up 4-0, but Dan forced his way back in to level the score, before stringing together another run of points to lead 9-6. Will was not about to give up, though, digging deep to reach 9-9. But it was not quite enough, as Dan closed out the match to take his fourth Ferens trophy: 6-11, 11-7, 11-9.

The singles plate featured two round robins, from which Blackaby and Jourdan each emerged unbeaten. As Christian was then unavailable for the final, Smith stepped up. He put up strong resistance in the second game, but Ben was just too strong in the end, winning 11-2, 11-9.

The doubles tournament all went to seeding, though Blackaby & Russell pushed Buchanan & Murby in game 2 of their quarter-final. An inspired, one-armed McCahon teamed up with the organiser to cause problems for Hanton & Tilston, but the match stopped short after Tilston – dubbed 'the retirement king' – took out his regular partner with a shot to the face.

In the final, Butler & Tristao took on Ellison & Grant – the pairs having won this title in 2015 and 2016, respectively. Dave came under heavy pressure from the top seeds, and they wrapped up the first game 11-7. The second game was gruelling, and the momentum moved back and forth. The score crept up and up, and each pair saved multiple game/championship points. But in the end, Will and Dan G were able to clinch it, defending their title: 11-7, 12-11. This was Will's sixth doubles title at the North, and Dan's second.

In the doubles plate, Blackaby & Russell won all their games to take the silverware, beating Geere & Jourdan 11-7, 11-7 in the final.

RESULTS

Singles

Prelim: A Wordley bt T McCahon 11-6 11-3; D Hutt bt T Wakelam 11-4 11-0

1st round: D Tristao bt Wordley 11-1 11-0; S Russell bt W Hosking 11-3 11-3; J Aquilina bt C Blackaby 11-2 11-3; D Butler bt N Geere 11-0 11-0; D Grant bt J Smith 11-5 11-8; J Tilston bt H Buchanan 9-11 11-7 11-?; P Hanton bt B Jourdan 11-2 11-1; W Ellison bt Hutt 11-1 11-1

Quarter-finals: Tristao bt Russell 11-8 11-5; Aquilina bt Butler 6-11 11-2 12-10; Grant bt Tilston 11-0 11-4; Ellison bt Hanton 11-5 11-2

Semi-finals: Tristao bt Aquilina 11-3 11-2; Ellison bt Grant 11-3 11-9

Final: Tristao bt Ellison 6-11 11-7 11-9

Plate

Pool A

Blackaby bt Wakelam 15-1; bt Smith 15-8; Smith bt Wakelam 15-5

Pool B

Jourdan bt Hutt 15-4; bt Geere 15-4; bt Wordley 15-4; Hutt bt Geere 15-4; bt Wordley 15-2; Geere bt Wordley 15-9

Final: Jourdan bt Smith 11-2 11-9

Doubles

Prelim: N Geere & B Jourdan bt T Raikes & A Wordley 11-7 11-2

Quarter-finals: W Ellison & D Grant bt G Marshall & M Pattysonn 11-3 11-2; P Hanton & J Tilston bt J Aquilina & T McCahon 11-9 3-1 ret.; H Buchanan & R Murby bt C Blackaby & S Russell 11-3 12-10; D Butler & D Tristao bt Geere & Jourdan 11-8 11-5

Semi-finals: Ellison & Grant bt Hanton & Tilston 11-1 11-4; Butler & Tristao bt Buchanan & Murby 11-3 11-9

Final: Ellison & Grant bt Butler & Tristao 11-7 12-11

Plate

Blackaby & Russell bt Raikes & Wordley 15-9; bt Marshall & Pattysonn 15-5;

Geere & Jourdan bt Raikes & Wordley 15-2; bt Marshall & Pattysonn 15-1

Final: Blackaby & Russell bt Geere & Jourdan 11-7 11-7

Rugby Fives Association v. The British Universities

Cambridge University Sports Centre

Sunday, 5th March at 1.00pm

Has there ever been a stronger line-up for this 50th anniversary event?

The RFA will be represented by Will Ellison & Dan Grant, Hamish Buchanan & Charlie Brooks, Julian Aquilina & James Bristow — with nearly 150 open titles between them.

The representative student VI will consist of Ben Beltrami & Ed Kay from Cambridge, Ollie Arnold & Theo Parker from Bristol, and Dave Butler & Sam Russell (ex-Durham, and now Edinburgh and London respectively). These six have a hatful of titles from the National Schools, the British Universities and the National U25s, not to mention open titles as well.

If you want to see the very best that Fives has to offer, come along to the Cambridge University Sports Centre on Sunday afternoon. No charge!

RFA VI v. BUSF Representative VI

Cambridge, Sunday 5th March 2017

After their unaccustomed success in last year's fixture against the RFA, the representative side from the British Universities had the great satisfaction of repeating their victory this year by a comfortable margin. It was the 50th of these encounters, each of them run by David Gardner. It also turned out to be Hamish Buchanan's 21st appearance in the match.

As ever in these matches it hinged very much on the final round of Doubles, as up till then there had not been more than a handful of points between the two sides. The six Singles, which culminated in a titanic match between Will Ellison and Ed Kay, left the students just 2 points up. The first set of Doubles saw that lead increase to 4 points; after the second set the margin was 15 points. Would experience tell — or youth?

It turned out to be youth, but this is a young side with plenty of experience, so it was no surprise to see the three student pairs win 4 of the 6 final games, thus increasing their lead to 45 points. The final score was 236-191.

The sides were:

RFA: Will Ellison & Dan Grant; Charlie Brooks & Hamish Buchanan; Julian Aquilina & James Bristow

BUSF: Ben Beltrami & Ed Kay (Cambridge); Ollie Arnold & Theo Parker (Bristol); Dave Butler (Durham & Edinburgh) & Sam Russell (Durham & London)

50th RFA versus BUSF representative match Cambridge, Sunday 5th March 2017

BUSF v. RFA		
<i>Singles</i>		
Kay	v. Ellison	15-16
Beltrami	v. Brooks	15-12
Butler	v. Grant	1-15
Arnold	v. Aquilina	12-15
Parker	v. Bristow	15-8
Russell	v. Buchanan	15-5
		73-71
<i>Doubles</i>		
Kay & Beltrami	v. Aquilina & Bristow	15-5
Arnold & Parker	v. Ellison & Grant	15-13
Butler & Russell	v. Brooks & Buchanan	5-15
		108-104
Kay & Beltrami	v. Brooks & Buchanan	15-9
Arnold & Parker	v. Aquilina & Bristow	15-5
Butler & Russell	v. Ellison & Grant	10-15
		148-133
Kay & Beltrami	v. Ellison & Grant	15-11, 15-9
Arnold & Parker	v. Brooks & Buchanan	15-16 15-3
Butler & Russell	v. Aquilina & Bristow	13-15 15-4
		236-191

South East Schools Regional Tournament

Tonbridge School, Saturday February 4th 2017

Whitgift and Tonbridge dominate South East Schools tournament

With the courts at Whitgift unplayable there was a late transfer to the courts at Tonbridge for this year's event.

Results:

U18 Singles: C. Low (Whitgift) bt H. Anbukumar (Whitgift) 11-2, 11-1

U18 Plate Singles: G. Boyle (Christ's Hospital) bt C. Lam (Tonbridge) 11-8

U18 Doubles: Whitgift I (Anbukumar & Low) bt Tonbridge I (Hanley & Lam) 11-4, 11-6

U18 Plate Doubles: Whitgift II (Burton & Russell) bt Eastbourne (Dickinson & Yeung) 15:11

U16 Singles: N. Jerome (Whitgift) bt D. Ahmed (Whitgift)

U16 Plate Singles: E. Toalster (Tonbridge) bt H. Street (Tonbridge) 15-8

U16 Doubles: Whitgift I (Jerome & Kendrick) bt Whitgift II (Ahmed & Lam) 11-4, 4-11, 11-7

U16 Plate Doubles: Tonbridge I (Street & Toalster) bt Tonbridge II (Choo-Choy & Burgess) 15:11

Scottish Schools Championships

Fettes College, Thursday March 2nd 2017

Fettes make a clean sweep in the Scottish Schools U18 Doubles competition

Archie McCreath & Grant Sperling underlined their claim to be the Scottish pair to watch at the upcoming National Schools Championships after defeating the Loretto 1st pair, though the latter must have been tired after an epic semi-final against Merchiston Castle in which they came back from 1-10 to win 16-15. It was Fettes' first success in this event since 1985.

Results:

Quarter-finals: Fettes I (A. McCreath & G. Sperling) bt Merchiston Castle III (Max L. & Tomas M.) 15-1 ; Merchiston Castle II (Christopher B. & Matthew C.) bt Edinburgh Academy I (K.Jenkins & R.Quantrill) 15-2 ; Merchiston Castle I (Sean Y. and Douglas T.) bt Fettes II (J.Clark & E.Li) 15-2 ; Loretto I (G.Lemmon & P.Maddison) bt Edinburgh Academy II (C.Dowie & A.Lundie) 15-1

Semi-finals: Fettes I bt Merchiston Castle II 15-2 ; Loretto I bt Merchiston Castle I 16-15

Final: Fettes I bt Loretto I 11-1, 11-5

Plate: Fettes II

The U16 Doubles took place on Thursday March 9th and were won by Merchiston Castle's first pair in an all-Merchiston final. Fettes I won the Plate, beating Edinburgh Academy I.

The Inaugural Scottish Schools U18 Singles took place on Thursday March 16th and the trophy, donated by the father of Andrew Boyd, was won by Archie McCreath from Fettes. Doug T. from Merchiston Castle won the McKeown Plate

Ladies Winchester Fives Championships

Malvern College, Sunday 5th March 2017

With the courts affected by persistent rain at Malvern, organiser Maddy Raynor tailored the competition to the conditions, running the Doubles competition first so as to involve as quickly as possible all competitors, who had come from the South Coast, the Deep West, Marlborough and Sedbergh to join local players from Malvern College.

There was particular interest in how well current schoolgirl champion Amelia Law and ex-champion Shinan Zhang could do against defending champions Briedenhann & Mills, and a keen interest in the likely Singles final between Briedenhann and Mills, separated in the current Women's Rankings by

Results

Doubles Champions: Kathleen Briedenhann & Tessa Mills

Doubles runner-ups: Shinan Zhang & Amelia Law

Doubles plate winners: Iby Lee & Anna Laakkonen

Singles Champion: Kathleen Briedenhann

Singles runner-up: Tessa Mills

Singles plate winner: Anna Laakkonen

Scores

Doubles: Knock-out tournament

1st round: Kathleen Briedenhann & Tessa Mills bye; Polly Bell & Imogen Boddy bt Eden McGuire & Amy Lewin 15-4; Shinan Zhang & Amelia Law bt Iby Lee & Anna Laakkonen 15-2; Ruby Page & Jemima Cookson bt Cosi Bugel & Stella Smith 15-4

Semi finals: Briedenhann & Mills bt Bell & Boddy 15-1, 15-0; Zhang & Law bt Page & Cookson 15-0, 15-1

Final : Briedenhann & Mills bt Zhang & Law 15-3, 15-3

Plate competition (round robin):

Winners: Iby Lee & Anna Laakkonen (30 points)

2nd: Cosi Bugel & Stella Smith (22 points)

3rd: Eden McGuire & Amy Lewin (12 points)

Lee & Laakkonen bt Bugel & Smith 15-7; Lee & Laakkonen bt McGuire & Lewin 15- 2; Bugel & Smith bt McGuire & Lewin 15-10

Singles: Knock-out tournament

1st round : Tessa Mills bye ; Iby Lee bt Cosi Bugel 15-0; Shinan Zhang w/o Stella Smith; Imogen Boddy bt Ruby Page 15-1; Maddy Raynor bt Amy Lewin 15-0; Amelia Law bt Anna Laakkonen 15-9; Kathleen Briedenhann bt Eden McGuire 15-1; Polly Bell bt Jemima Cookson 15-6

Quarter-finals : Mills bt Lee 15-3; Zhang bt Boddy 15-2; Raynor bt Law 15-2; Briedenhann bt Bell 15-1

Semi-finals: Mills bt Zhang 15-7; Briedenhann bt Raynor 15-8

Final: Briedenhann bt Mills 11-6, 11-4

Plate competition

Group 1 – Laakkonen bt Bugel 11-2, Laakkonen bt Page 11-1, Bugel bt Page 11-6

Group 2- Cookson bt Page 11-6, Cookson bt McGuire 11-10, McGuire bt Page 11-4

Plate Final: Laakkonen bt Cookson 15-5

Winchester Fives Doubles Championship

Sedbergh School, Cumbria, Sunday March 12th

Harry Akerman writes:

With four pairs withdrawing in the final few days before the tournament, the organisers decided to play the tournament as two groups of six pairs in a round-robin format, with the top two pairs going through to the semi-finals. A plate was then held for the other eight pairs.

The round-robin fixtures produced no unexpected results, but plenty of good Winchester Fives. Dave Fox was rolling back the years to serve with irritating regularity straight into the buttress much to the enjoyment of the watching Lawrence Catlow (retired fives master at Sedbergh).

James Bristow and Hamish Buchanan pushed top seeds Will Ellison and Gareth Price close in losing 15-10, before Mike Crompton and Harry Akerman briefly found themselves 8-4 up against Dave Butler and Ben Beltrami, until improving consistency by the younger pair and decreasing energy levels by the older pair meant that normal order was restored (15-8).

Impressive Fives by the Sedbergh colt Taylor McGuire and (playing in his first season) Sedbergh master Jordan Annett ensured there were plenty of tough games in the pre-lunch round-robin, but the top four seeds made it through to the semi-finals, where the power of the first two seeds proved too much for the third and fourth seeds. Will was therefore into the final and looking to land an eighth title, whilst the other three finalists were yet to get their names on the trophy.

The top seeds were fast out the blocks, playing a series of winners to find themselves 12-6 up, with Will especially showing what a fine player of Winchester Fives he is, with amazing speed and reflexes around the buttress and the front of the court. Dave and Ben steadied the ship and started playing with more control to take the game to 13-13, but with the game slipping away from him, Will then served a pair of unretrievable buttress serves and then went to win the first game 15-13.

Dave and Ben were not disheartened, however, and continued in the second game largely where they had left off in the first to build a commanding lead before closing the game out 15-2. You felt that Will and Gareth would have to start the third game strongly to stand any chance of winning the title, and they did go 3-0 up, but Dave and Ben chipped and away and kept the pressure on a resilient, but tiring, Gareth, before going on to win the decider 15-8.

The plate tournament was a straight knockout, with Dave Fox (still serving into the buttress with irritating regularity!) and Bill Gunyon (drafted in at the last minute for an injured John Minta) coming from behind to beat Andy Passey and Will Akerman 15-11.

The format of the day worked well, with everyone getting plenty of Fives; the courts, which had been pre-heated for 48 hours, did not sweat one iota; the hospitality of Jon Lidiard and Sedbergh was very generous; and so, all in all, it was a very enjoyable weekend. Thanks very much Sedbergh. Bradfield next year...

RESULTS

Victories in Round-Robin (out of five games played)

Group A

W.Ellison & G.Price 5; B.Hale & M.Catton 1; J.Lidiard & T.McGuire 2; J.Bristow & H.Buchanan 4; A.Passey & W.Akerman 3; T.Wakelam & S.Shepherd 0

Group B

J.Annett & R.Bradley 1; D.Butler & B.Beltrami 5; R.James-Duff & J.Gribble 2; M.Patterson & M.Patterson 0; D.Fox & B.GunYon 3; M.Crompton & H.Akerman 4

Semi-Finals: W.Ellison & G.Price beat M.Crompton + H.Akerman 15-2, 15-11; D.Butler & B.Beltrami beat J.Bristow and H.Buchanan 15-4, 15-1

Final: Butler & Beltrami beat Ellison & Price 13-15, 15-2, 15-8

Plate: Fox & Gunion beat Passey and W.Akerman 15-11

National U13 Rugby Fives Championships

St. Paul's, Sunday 12th March 2017

STOP PRESS After the disappointment of losing both finals last year when a year young, Gwydion Wiseman this year carried off both Singles and Doubles titles. With more players and schools wishing to enter than could be catered for at St. Paul's, a high-quality competition was a fitting end to Peter de Winton's 12-year stint as organiser of this tournament from which so many future champions have emerged. The RFA would like to record their warmest thanks here to Peter.

Organiser Peter de Winton writes: With 44 competitors from 8 schools, it was a healthy field of players, all displaying their usual competitive spirit and enthusiasm. We missed having boys from St. Olave's and St. Dunstan's this year but welcomed Bloxham for the first time, and were pleased to see St. Paul's Junior School for the second year.

In the pool stage of the Singles, Alleyn's Senior School and Merchant Taylors' were to the fore, providing 10 of the 16 seeds for the knock-out stage, with St. Paul's and Pilgrims' also well in evidence. For the knock-out stage, Wiseman of Alleyn's (last year's runner-up) and Garella of Merchant Taylors' were seeded 1 and 2. In the games that followed, Wiseman made short work of his opponents, dropping a mere 2 points before the final. Meanwhile, Garella had progressed via some tighter contests and overcame Smailes of Pilgrims' to face Wiseman in the final, where Wiseman's superior strength and big hitting was too much for his opponent: Wiseman won 15-1. In the interest of sustaining boys' energy for the Doubles, no Singles Plate or 3rd/4th play-off was staged.

We started the Doubles after a lunch break, with the 1st and 2nd match losers going into the Plate. This worked really well as it swelled the number of Plate contenders and created more activity in the afternoon at all levels of play. Alleyn's demonstrated their skills at Doubles by filling 2 of the 4 semi-final places, which they converted to finalist places, with the first pair running out victors. Merchant Taylors', who had improved considerably since 2016, deservedly won the Doubles Plate, this time from the ubiquitous Alleyn's.

My thanks to St. Paul's for allowing us the use of the courts, to the coaches for their input into the running of the day, to all the parents who turn up to support, feed and nurture their charges, and to Bob Dolby, Frank Akerman and Bernard Atkinson for their tireless support both before and during the day. Thanks also to David Bawtree for spending most of the afternoon at St. Paul's and for presenting the prizes.

The 9.15 start paid off once again, but there is an argument for reducing the number of points per game in the bigger Singles pools so as to finish on time for the lunch break. Once again this year I have had to cap the size of some teams to 6 players and decline an entry from a school, so there is potential to expand the day if time and facilities permit. Having thoroughly enjoyed running the event for 12 years, I have decided to stand down now and shall pass the organisation of the Championships on, knowing that this age group love their Fives and that there is keen demand from schools for places.

Singles Pools

Pool 1: 1st Smailes (Pilgrims'); 2nd Ridley (St. Paul's Junior); 3rd Ali (Merchant Taylors'). Also played: Pesaro (Alleyn's Junior), Harrison (Alleyn's Senior), Richards (Bloxham), Clayton (Blundell's), Beardsley S (Derby Moor)

Pool 2: 1st Matthews (Merchant Taylors'); 2nd Roberts (St. Paul's Junior); 3rd= Pryse-Lloyd (Alleyn's Junior) and Shaw (Alleyn's Senior). Also played: Howells (Bloxham), Bartlett (Blundell's), Winsley (Blundell's)

Pool 3: 1st Garella (Merchant Taylors'); 2nd Meggyesi (Alleyn's Senior); 3rd Zezza (St. Paul's Junior). Also played: Mynors (Alleyn's Junior), Sealey (Bloxham), Wetherall (Blundell's), Robshaw (Blundell's)

Pool 4: Tillotson A (Merchant Taylors'); 2nd Johnstone (Alleyn's Senior); 3rd Mahmood (Derby Moor). Also played: Marshall (Alleyn's Junior), Blake (Bloxham), Mayor (Blundell's), Davies (Pilgrims')

Pool 5: 1st Kirwan (Alleyn's Senior); 2nd Fowler (Pilgrims'); 3rd Tanner (Alleyn's Junior). Also played: Hughes (Bloxham), Yeadon (Blundell's), Yates (Derby Moor), Tillotson D (Merchant Taylors')

Pool 6: 1st Wiseman (Alleyn's Senior); 2nd Sheikh (Merchant Taylors'); 3rd Scott (Alleyn's Junior). Also played Smith (Bloxham), Swarbrick (Blundell's), Beardsley M (Derby Moor), Fox (Pilgrims'), Hussain (St. Paul's Junior)

Singles Knock-out

1st round: Wiseman bt Zezza 15-0; Roberts bt Meggyesi 15-4; Sheikh bt Matthews 15-9; Kirwan bt Ali 15-1; Tillotson A bt Pryse-Lloyd 15-6; Smailes bt Ridley 15-5; Fowler bt Johnstone 15-3; Garella bt Shaw 15-10

Quarter-finals: Wiseman bt Roberts 15-1; Sheikh bt Kirwan 15-5; Smailes bt Tillotson 15-12; Garella bt Fowler 15-8

Semi-finals: Wiseman bt Sheikh 11-1, 11-0; Garella bt Smailes 11-6, 11-2

Final: Wiseman (Alleyn's Senior) bt Garella (Merchant Taylors') 15-1

Doubles Knock-out

1st round: Merchant Taylors' II bt Bloxham II 11-0; Derby Moor I bt St. Paul's Junior II 11-8; Alleyn's Junior II bt Blundell's III 11-0; Alleyn's Senior III bt Bloxham III 11-4; Blundell's II bt Alleyn's Junior III 11-10; Alleyn's Senior II bt Pilgrims' II 11-7

2nd round: Alleyn's Senior I bt Merchant Taylors' II 11-2; Blundell's I bt Derby Moor I 11-1; Merchant Taylors' I bt Alleyn's Junior II 11-5; Pilgrims' I bt Alleyn's Senior III 11-9; Bloxham I bt Blundell's II 11-3; Alleyn's Senior II bt Merchant Taylors' III 11-2; St. Paul's Junior I bt Blundell's IV 11-0; Alleyn's Junior I bt Derby Moor II 11-3

Quarter-finals: Alleyn's Senior I bt Blundell's I 11-0; Merchant Taylors' I bt Pilgrims I 11-3; Alleyn's Senior II bt Bloxham I 11-1; St. Paul's Junior I bt Alleyn's Junior I 11-3

Semi-finals: Alleyn's Senior I bt Merchant Taylors' I 11-4; Alleyn's Senior II bt St. Paul's Junior I 11-6

Final: Alleyn's Senior I (Kirwan & Wiseman) bt Alleyn's Senior II 11-1

Plate: Merchant Taylors' III bt Alleyn's Senior II 11-3

National Vintage Championships

Cambridge University Sports Centre

Sunday, 19th March 2017

STOP PRESS After many years of playing in competitions at all levels Stuart Kirby finally, and deservedly, has won his first national title in Rugby Fives: the Vintage Singles. And having achieved this, Stuart then went on to win the Doubles with his opponent in the Singles final, multiple champion Neil Roberts. Their opposition in the Doubles final were Richard Christie & Brian Kirk, also featuring in their first national final.

Ian Fuller and Dave Hebden having declared their intention not to defend their titles, there were certain to be new names engraved on the trophies this year. Organiser Brian Kirk assembled 16 competitors at New Portugal Place to vie for the silverware. Eleven of them contested the Singles in the morning. Two early matches stood out: having warmed up with a match against Chris Blakeley Nick Geere gave first seed Neil Roberts much more than an easy run out in the second round, while Richard Christie, something of an unknown quantity as a Singles player, battled his way first past Andy Passey, then likewise against Dick Warner. Tony Hamilton meanwhile came out on top in a quality match with Angus Hanton; and Stuart Kirby eased his way past Phil Atkinson. In the semi-finals Neil Roberts' win over Richard Christie was nowhere near as comfortable as the score suggests, but Stuart began to look ominously strong as he dismissed his familiar adversary Tony Hamilton.

In the final Stuart raced into a large lead with effective serving and a variety of down-the-wall shots but then found himself pegged back to 9-9 as, uncharacteristically, his serve let him down. But, after some nervy rallies, the first game was secured at 11-9 and Stuart made his greater mobility and those same returns-of-serve down the left-hand wall count. A visibly tiring Neil found himself quickly outmanoeuvred. Stuart's Derby Moor clubmates suggested their man owed Anthony Goodwin a beer for all the matches he had played with Stuart to sharpen up his game!

Meanwhile a three-man Plate competition delivered victory for Brian Kirk who was beginning to look like a man on a mission.

With the arrival of the northern contingent — Sandie and Nithsdale —, olds hands Sutcliffe and Kiteley, and of course the President, the Doubles got underway in two pools. Kirby & Roberts looked unstoppable in Pool A and they were joined in the next stage by Geere & Hanton who were just that little bit sharper than main rivals Nithsdale & Sutcliffe. In the other pool the well-practised partnership of Christie & Kirk swept all before them, leaving Hamilton & Warner to fight it out successfully with Bernard Atkinson & Andy Passey for the fourth semi-final slot.

In the semis Kirby & Roberts were too steady for Hamilton & Warner, but next door the match between Christie & Kirk and Geere & Hanton was a humdinger from which the Derby pair emerged narrow victors 16-14. After such a tight semi-final contest it was asking too much of Richard & Brian to take the favorites to the wire, and Stuart & Neil duly emerged as champions at their second attempt.

A lengthy 4-pair Doubles Plate raged on in the adjacent courts, going to the very last match. When Bernard Atkinson, playing in his 21st Vintage tournament, 16 years after he won it, heard that he could win the Plate with 46 points "something clicked in my head". Luckily it wasn't in his hip or knee! He did indeed win it, with his partner Andy Passey, by just 2 points: their earlier 16-14 victory over Phil Atkinson & Mark Kiteley turned out to be crucial. Mugs-for-Horlicks were their prize.

Huge thanks to organiser Brian Kirk from all competitors and spectators, and from the fans in Banstead and Burgundy, both of whom were present, Dave having come to return the Doubles trophy and Bob having come to perform twitter duty. This competition deserves to go up to 20 players next year: young Mr Hanton and others, beware — we'll be on your case.

Singles

1st round: N Geere bt C Blakeley 15-1; R Christie bt A Passey 15-7; P Atkinson bt B Kirk 15-2

Quarter-finals: N Roberts bt Geere 11-4, 11-1; Christie bt R Warner 12-10, 11-7; A Hamilton bt A Hanton 11-7, 11-4; S Kirby bt P Atkinson 15-8 (sic), 11-3

Semi-finals: Roberts bt Christie 11-1, 11-1; Kirby bt Hamilton 11-6, 11-1

Final: Kirby bt Roberts 11-9, 11-0

Plate: Kirk bt Blakeley, bt Passey; Passey bt Blakeley

Doubles

Pool A: Kirby & Roberts bt Nithsdale & Sutcliffe, bt Geere & Hanton, bt P Atkinson & Kiteley; Geere & Hanton bt Nithsdale & Sutcliffe, bt Atkinson & Kiteley; Nithsdale & Sutcliffe bt Atkinson & Kiteley

Pool B: Christie & Kirk bt Hamilton & Warner, bt B Atkinson & Passey, bt Blakeley & Sandie; Hamilton & Warner bt Atkinson & Passey, bt Blakeley & Sandie; Atkinson & Passey bt Blakeley & Sandie

Semi-finals: Kirby & Roberts bt Hamilton & Warner 15-5; Christie & Kirk bt Geere & Hanton 16-14

Final: Kirby & Roberts bt Christie & Kirk 15-8

Plate: 1st B Atkinson & Passey 46 pts; 2nd P Atkinson & Kiteley 44 pts; 3rd Nithsdale & Sutcliffe 33 pts; 4th Blakeley & Sandie 23 pts

Girls' South East Regional Fives Tournament

Christ's Hospital, Horsham

Thursday, 23 March 2017

Ed Hatton reports: Three schools gathered at Christ's Hospital on Thursday 23rd March for the first ever South East Girls' Regional Fives Championships. With the success of the National Girls Championships the schools and their players felt that the time was right to extend the girls' season and there was no better way to do it. There were three categories, U18, U14 and U13.

In the U13s, despite a strong Christ's Hospital challenge, the Alleyn's pair of Martha Nugent and Katie Innes proved quick, powerful and unstoppable, and took both Singles and Doubles titles, thus ensuring a clean National sweep for Alleyn's – the U13 Alleyn's boys won their titles a few days later at St Paul's.

At U14 level, the Eastbourne pair of Jenner & Park put up a strong challenge, the former finishing 2nd in the round-robin format. The eventual winner was twice National U13 Singles and Doubles champion Aiysha Alli from Christ's Hospital, dropping 7 points in 5 games on her ruthless way to victory. She and partner Sophie Lambert won the Doubles.

At U18 level, despite a keen effort from their opponents, Christ's Hospital veterans Beatrix Crinnion and Phoebe Thornhill were too strong for all concerned. Their singles final was a classic yo-yo encounter, ending with a narrow victory by 11-9 to Thornhill. They also won the Doubles.

The participants considered the tournament a success and enjoyed the 'elite packed lunches' provided by the school. We hope to have more competitors from more schools next year.

National Schools' Championships 2017

St. Paul's School, 27-30 March 2017

Organiser Peter King reports : This year's tournament was again played over four days with three age-groups; nineteen schools were represented, and it was great to see a strong showing from north of the border, if sad to have no representatives from a few schools with rich history in the competition. 140 competitors in all took to the courts, with the U14 competition restored to a full entry of 48, and although Winchester were again the dominant force across the senior and colts' competitions there were finalists from a further ten establishments. The standard of play was very high, with some memorable fives at all levels. And it is probably fair to say that the camaraderie of the occasion, on and off court, has rarely been better.

The Open singles tournament went largely with the seeding in the early stages, although mention should be made of Archie McCreath (Fettes) who removed the top Pauline in the knockout. In the final Tom Kidner repeated his success in the West of England, leaving Albert Song his team-mate, indeed House-mate, at Winchester, a rueful runner-up for the second time. Only one game in the singles went to three games, but what a game that was, with Alec Younger (Winchester) and Ben Kirwan (Alleyn's) extending their stay on court 6 well beyond the two-hour mark as Ben survived 11-12, 11-9, 11-3! Ben also led early in his semi-final against Albert, but after conceding the first game 11-12 was unable to produce the goods for a second time. The overall standard was encouragingly high, and many of the plate quarter-finalists might in other years have graced the last 16 of the main competition. The plate was won by Isaac Hudis of St Paul's, and the second plate went to Advait Manur of Malvern, both of whom can look back on a season of great improvement. In the doubles Winchester I came through as champions, defeating their Winchester colleagues in a splendid three-game final, remarkable for the powerful hitting and tremendous agility of both pairs.

The Colts' singles event was always a matter of whether anyone could get close to the top four seeds; and the answer was a fairly emphatic "no"! However, in the semi-final Alex Poyntz faced a repeat of his West of England semi-final against Taylor McGuire (Sedbergh) and again it was three long games before Alex finally emerged to challenge his Winchester partner Stepan Matvienko, who proved the more durable and sharper in a two-game final. The plate finals were a mini-match between Whitgift and Merchant Taylors', Daniel Ahmed winning the first for Whitgift and Jamie Graham the second for MTS – honours even! In the doubles Marlborough (Harry Powell & Oscar Waters) fought their way past Winchester II to reach the final, but ultimately the singles finalists, despite various aches and pains, proved too strong. Ahmed completed a double for Whitgift in the plate, in company with Philip Lam.

The U14 tournament arrives on the third day and proved extremely enjoyable for all who took part. The favourites were those who had contested the U13 event last year, and it is certainly noticeable that those with only one term's fives behind them nowadays struggle to match those with more experience. St Olave's had dominated the 2016 tournament but by no means had it their own way this year, as only their top two reached the main singles knockout among representatives from seven other schools. The newcomers from Merchiston Castle showed great talent in reaching the semi-finals, where Max Layton was well beaten by Isaac Jochim (St Olave's) and Tom Macintosh lost to current U13 champion Gwydion Wiseman (Alleyn's), but only after a titanic struggle to 7-7. The final was an epic, with Wiseman going very close but the older Jochim's strength and retrieving taking him to a 12-11 second game and an eventually unassailable 7-0 lead in the third. The two met again in the doubles final, and again Alleyn's had their moments, winning the middle game with deceptive ease, but in the end it was steady work by Yoann Bleunven that probably tipped the balance in the Olavians' favour.

Many thanks to all involved in organisation and support, especially Ian Jackson, who again shouldered the burden of managing the U14 events, to parents, fanclubs, and some extremely devoted staff without whom the school players would not be developing such an obvious love of the game and skilful enjoyment.

Results

Open Singles

Pool A: 1st T.Kidner (Winchester); 2nd W.Rentoul (Alleyn's); 3rd A.Manur (Malvern); 4th Q. Gueroult (St Paul's)

Pool B: 1st C.Low (Whitgift); 2nd C.Barnett (Merchant Taylors'); 3rd L.Conte (Marlborough)

Pool C: 1st D.Whitham (St Paul's) 2nd C.Cabburn (Blundell's); 3rd K.Jenkins (Edinburgh Academy)

Pool D: 1st P.Kullavanijaya (Winchester); 2nd M.Suddaby (Rugby); 3rd C.Dowie (Edinburgh Academy)

Pool E: 1st J.Sumner (Bedford Modern); 2nd L.Wells (St Paul's); 3rd G.Sperling (Fettes)

Pool F: 1st M.Cheveley (St Paul's); 2nd G.Barnard (Alleyn's); 3rd B.Ames (Blundell's)

Pool G: 1st A.Tudor (Malvern); 2nd A.Ahuja (St Paul's)

Pool H: 1st M.Evans (St Paul's); 2nd J.Maclairin (Blundell's); 3rd A.Naumenko (Alleyn's)

Pool I: 1st A.McCreath (Fettes); 2nd H.Anbukumar (Whitgift); 3rd C.Beswick (Marlborough)

Pool J: 1st A.Younger (Winchester); 2nd I.Hudis (St Paul's); 3rd W.Hanley (Tonbridge)

Pool K: 1st B.Kirwan (Alleyn's); 2nd W.Stevens (Bradfield); 3rd R.Quantrill (Edinburgh Academy)

Pool L: 1st J.Hanton (Alleyn's); 2nd H.Jackson (St Paul's); 3rd P.Dickinson (Eastbourne)

Pool M: 1st A.Chai (Blundell's); 2nd B.Yass (St Paul's); 3rd A.Rigg (Marlborough)

Pool N: 1st V.Shirokiy (Rugby); 2nd J.Mann (Edinburgh Academy); 3rd A.Perry (Tonbridge)

Pool O: 1st A.Song (Winchester); 2nd J.Davies (St Paul's); 3rd D.Burton (Whitgift)

Round 1: Whitham beat Low 11-8, 11-0; Kullavanijaya beat Sumner 11-0, 11-3; Tudor beat Cheveley 11-7, 11-5; McCreath beat Evans 12-10, 11-9; Kirwan beat Younger 11-12, 11-9, 11-3; Hanton beat Chai 11-1, 11-3; Song beat Shirokiy 11-0, 11-4

Quarter-finals: Kidner beat Whitham 11-6, 11-4; Tudor beat Kullavanijaya 11-6, 11-8; Kirwan beat McCreath 11-2, 11-8; Song beat Hanton 11-4, 11-8

Semi-finals: Kidner beat Tudor 11-2, 11-6; Song beat Kirwan 12-11, 11-3

Final: Kidner beat Song 11-4, 11-8

First plate: Hudis (St Paul's)

Second plate: Manur (Malvern)

Open Doubles

Preliminary round: St Paul's II beat Edinburgh Academy II 11-2, 11-0; Rugby beat St Paul's V 11-2, 11-2; Blundell's II beat Tonbridge 3-11, 12-11, 11-4.; St Paul's III beat Marlborough 12-10, 11-4; Alleyn's II beat Merchant Taylors' 11-6, 11-8

1st round: Winchester I beat Alleyn's III 11-0, 11-0; Fettes beat St Paul's IV 11-8, 11-0; Malvern beat St Paul's II 11-6, 12-11; Alleyn's I beat Rugby 11-3, 11-3; Winchester II beat Blundell's II 11-1, 11-0; St Paul's III beat Edinburgh Academy I 11-3, 11-6; Alleyn's II beat Whitgift I 11-5, 11-3; St Paul's I beat Blundell's I 11-1, 11-3

Quarter-finals: Winchester I beat Fettes 11-4, 11-9; Alleyn's I beat Malvern 11-2, 11-9; Winchester II beat St Paul's III 11-0, 11-0; St Paul's I beat Alleyn's II 11-4, 11-2

Semi-finals: Winchester I beat Alleyn's I 11-3, 11-7; Winchester II beat St Paul's I 11-6, 11-8

Final: Winchester I (Kullavanijaya/Song) beat Winchester II (Kidner/Younger) 11-8, 4-11, 11-4

Plate: Whitgift I (Anbukumar/Low)

Colts Singles

Pool A: 1st S.Matvienko (Winchester); 2nd C.Jobson (St Paul's); 3rd M.Gill (Alleyn's); 4th C.Crooke (Tonbridge)

Pool B: 1st E.Townshend (Merchant Taylors'); 2nd N.Jerome (Whitgift); 3rd W.Meredith (Alleyn's)

Pool C: 1st H.Gujadhur (Winchester); 2nd M.Scoczylas (St Paul's); 3rd A.Lundie (Edinburgh Academy)

Pool D: 1st H.Powell (Marlborough); 2nd S.Fraser (Winchester); 3rd T.Peel (Edinburgh Academy)

Pool E: 1st L.Odgers (St Paul's); 2nd D.Ahmed (Whitgift); 3rd J.Graham (Merchant Taylors')

Pool F: 1st J.Drabble (Rugby); 2nd M.Henry (Winchester); 3rd G.Gibbs (Blundell's)

Pool G: 1st A.Cochrane (Alleyn's); 2nd B.Mercer (Sherborne); 3rd C.Clark (Edinburgh Academy)

Pool H: 1st T.Mc Guire (Sedbergh); 2nd D.Percival (Winchester); 3rd H.Harvey (Sherborne)

Pool I: 1st S.Kendrick (Whitgift); 2nd H.Street (Tonbridge); 3rd G.Ward-Jackson (St Paul's)

Pool J: 1st W.Hirth (Alleyn's); 2nd V.Matthews (Merchant Taylors'); 3rd D.Troup (Edinburgh Academy)

Pool K: 1st B.Kullavanijaya (Winchester); 2nd A.Mehta (Rugby); 3rd B.Burgess (Tonbridge)

Pool L: 1st K.Parsapour (St Paul's); 2nd H.Turner (Alleyn's); 3rd R.Hodgson (Edinburgh Academy)

Pool M: 1st S.Bagnell (Winchester); 2nd Z.Murphy (Merchant Taylors'); 3rd W.Redgate (Tonbridge)

Pool N: 1st A.Poyntz (Winchester); 2nd O.Waters (Marlborough); 3rd P.Lam (Whitgift); 4th D.Jourdan (Edinburgh Academy)

Round 1: Townshend beat Gujadhur 11-2, 11-1; Odgers beat Powell 11-0, 11-6; Cochrane beat Drabble 11-0, 11-5; McGuire beat Kendrick 11-1, 11-1; Hirth beat Kullavanijaya 11-1, 12-10; Bagnell beat Parsapour 11-2, 11-2

Quarter-finals: Matvienko beat Townshend 11-3, 11-0; Cochrane beat Odgers 11-2, 11-0; McGuire beat Hirth 11-5, 11-5; Poyntz beat Bagnell 11-3, 11-9

Semi-finals: Matvienko beat Cochrane 11-1, 11-4; Poyntz beat McGuire 7-11, 11-9, 11-8

Final: Matvienko beat Poyntz 11-3, 11-6

First plate: Ahmed (Whitgift)

Second plate: Graham (Merchant Taylors')

Colts Doubles

Preliminary round: Merchant Taylors' II beat Edinburgh Academy III 11-1, 11-0; Winchester IV beat Edinburgh Academy II 11-7, 11-12, 11-9; Tonbridge beat St Paul's III 11-1, 11-6; St Paul's II beat Whitgift II 11-7, 5-11, 11-9; Winchester III beat Tonbridge II 11-5, 11-4; Blundell's beat Alleyn's II 11-3, 11-6

First Round: Winchester I beat Merchant Taylors' II 11-2, 11-5; Rugby beat St Paul's I 11-1, 11-1; Alleyn's I beat Winchester IV 11-3, 11-2; Whitgift I beat Tonbridge 12-11 12-10; St Paul's II beat Edinburgh Academy I 11-7, 9-11, 11-3; Marlborough beat Winchester III 11-2, 11-8; Merchant Taylors' I beat Sherborne 11-3, 11-6; Winchester II beat Blundell's 11-2, 11-0

Quarter-finals: Winchester I beat Rugby 11-0, 11-1; Alleyn's I beat Whitgift I 11-4, 11-9; Marlborough beat St Paul's II 11-4, 11-6; Winchester II beat Merchant Taylors' I 11-6, 11-9

Semi-finals: Winchester I beat Alleyn's I 11-5, 11-0; Marlborough beat Winchester II 11-3, 11-8

Final: Winchester I (Matvienko/Poyntz) beat Marlborough (Powell/Waters) 11-3, 11-0

Plate: Whitgift II (Ahmed/Lam)

Under 14 Singles

Pool A: 1st I.Jochim (St Olave's); 2nd Kottler (Marlborough); 3rd D.Alvaris (Merchant Taylors')

Pool B: 1st S.Mahendran (Alleyn's); 2nd D.Arjun (St Paul's); 3rd W.Bucknell (Blundell's)

Pool C: 1st A.Malik (St Paul's); 2nd M.Mulvey (Merchiston Castle); 3rd M.Jackson (Sedbergh)

Pool D: 1st A.Lewis (Tonbridge); 2nd A.Shah (Merchant Taylors'); 3rd M.Chibber (St Olave's)

Pool E: 1st Macpherson-Petermann (Marlborough); 2nd R.Patel (Winchester); 3rd B.Philpot (Tonbridge)

Pool F: 1st M.Layton (Merchiston Castle); 2nd J.Kirwan (Alleyn's); 3rd A.Choi (St Paul's)

Pool G: 1st Z.Bub (Merchant Taylors'); 2nd Chetwood (Marlborough)

Pool H: 1st B.Pymont (St Paul's); 2nd O.Knight (Tonbridge); 3rd J.Exley (Bradfield)

Pool I: 1st Y.Bleunven (St Olave's); 2nd R.Nolan (Tonbridge); 3rd A.Booth (Sedbergh)

Pool J: 1st B.Ames (Blundell's); 2nd F.Harrison (St Paul's); 3rd J.Jobling (Merchant Taylors')

Pool K: 1st Z.Taylor-Schindler (Alleyn's); 2nd Peck (Marlborough); 3rd J.Lumby (Winchester)

Pool L: 1st T.Macintosh (Merchiston Castle); 2nd D.Keren (Merchant Taylors'); 3rd T. Magalhaes (St Paul's)

Pool M: 1st Mayne (Marlborough); 2nd K.Redfern (Winchester); 3rd L.Jopling (St Paul's)

Pool N: 1st J.Parker (Tonbridge); 2nd A.Sofat (St Paul's); 3rd H.Rackham (Blundell's)
Pool O: 1st B.Afshar (Merchiston Castle); 2nd V.Prashra (St Olave's); 3rd J.Cameron (Merchant Taylors')
Pool P: 1st G.Wiseman (Alleyn's); 2nd A. van Lanschot (St Paul's); 3rd Cotterell (Marlborough)

Round 1: Jochim beat Mahendran 11-4; Malik beat Lewis 12-11; Layton beat Macpherson-Petermann 11-3; Pymont beat Bub 11-2; Ames beat Bleunven 11-8; Macintosh beat Taylor-Schindler 11-0; Mayne beat Parker 12-11; Wiseman beat Afshar 11-0

Quarter-finals: Jochim beat Malik 11-1; Layton beat Pymont 11-4; Macintosh beat Ames 11-9; Wiseman beat Mayne 11-0

Semi-finals: Jochim beat Layton 11-0; Wiseman beat Macintosh 11-7

Final: Jochim beat Wiseman 4-11, 12-11, 11-6

First plate: Mulvey (Merchiston Castle)

Second plate: Chibber (St Olave's)

Under 14 Doubles

1st round: Merchant Taylors' II beat Marlborough III 15-10; Alleyn's II beat Marlborough II 15-6; Merchiston Castle II beat St Paul's III 15-3; Merchiston Castle I beat Merchant Taylors' III 15-3; St Olave's III beat Tonbridge II 15-13; St Paul's IV beat Blundell's 15-13

2nd Round: St Olave's I beat Merchant Taylors' II 15-2; St Paul's II beat Winchester 15-9; Alleyn's II beat Sedbergh 15-7; Merchiston Castle II beat Merchant Taylors' I 15-3; Merchiston Castle I beat St Paul's I 15-3; Alleyn's I beat St Olave's III 15-4; St Olave's II beat Tonbridge I 15-3; Marlborough I beat St Paul's IV 15-4

Quarter-finals: St Olave's I beat St Paul's II 15-4; Merchiston Castle II beat Alleyn's II 15-5; Alleyn's I beat Merchiston Castle I 15-7; St Olave's II beat Marlborough I 15-5

Semi-finals: St Olave's I beat Merchiston Castle II 15-5; Alleyn's I beat St Olave's II 15-3

Final: St Olave's I (Bleunven/Jochim) beat Alleyn's I (Mahendran/Wiseman) 11-7, 1-11, 11-7

Plate: Merchant Taylors' I (Keren/Shah)

National Veterans' Championships

Marlborough College, Wiltshire, April 1st/2nd 2017

STOP PRESS

The record books will show that 2016's champions retained their titles at the 2017 Veterans' Championships, but that basic fact hides the struggle they faced to do so. Indeed, some results in the earlier rounds had seasoned observers of the game muttering about a 'changing of the guard'.

That much was obvious from the off, when Saturday's singles tournament saw the debut appearance in this event of Jim Hughes and Alex Rew, both of whom put in strong performances: Alex only lost his quarter-final match with Tom Kiggell 16-14 in the third game, while Alex lost at the same stage to eventual runner-up John Minta.

In the end, though, it was last year's first-time winner Matt Cavanagh who emerged as champion, beating John Minta in the final for the second year running.

Come the doubles, too, Jim and Alex put in a strong performance, going on to reach the final after a fine semi-final win over five-time winners Hamish Buchanan & Bruce Hanton.

In the final, they faced last year's winners John Minta & Andy Pringle, but the champions simply flew out of the blocks in the first game. John, in particular, hit a rich vein of form, covering the court faster than a man his age has any right to, and hitting a series of winners from all angles with such ferocity that Alex and Jim simply didn't know what had hit them.

After the one-way traffic of that first game (a 15-1 win for John and Andy), though, Jim and Alex settled down in the second and held the champions for the first half of the second game, keeping them at bay as far as 7-7, with lots of exciting and hard-fought rallies.

However, from then on John and Andy began to exert their authority, cutting out the mistakes they were making and starting to find their length again. Faced with a barrage of such a wide variety of angles, length and power, Jim and Alex weren't able to find an answer and, after a 15-8 win in the second game, John and Andy again claimed the title.

RESULTS

Singles

1st round: M Cavanagh bt T Brown 15-1, 15,-1 ; W Harrison bt N Geere 15-9, 15-13 ; T Kiggell bt A Hanton 15-1, 15-2 ; A Rew by J Stubbs 15-0, 15-0 ; H Buchanan bt N Butterfield 15-5, 15-1 ; J Beswick bt H Bishop 15-1, 15-0 ; J Hughes bt K Kennerley 15-8, 15-0 ; J Minta bt J Gribble 15-2, 15-0

Quarter-finals: Cavanagh bt Harrison 15-1, 15-8 ; Kiggell bt Rew 9-15, 15-2, 16-14 ; Buchanan bt Beswick 15-9, 15-8 ; Minta bt Hughes 15-13, 15-1

Semi-finals: Cavanagh bt Kiggell 15-2, 15-6, Minta bt Buchanan 15-8, 15-11

Final: Cavanagh bt Minta 15-10, 15-2

Plate: Hughes bt Gribble

Second Plate: Harrison bt Geere

Doubles

1st round: Sutcliffe & Walter bt Gribble & Stubbs 15-9, 15-10 ; Christie & Kirby bt Folland & Jenkinson 15-5, 15-1 ; Beswick & Harrison bt Boddington & Davies 15-1, 15-8 ; Hughes & Rew bt Clark & Hendry 15-5, 15-6 ; Kennerley & Kirk bt Hawke & Sandie 15-3, 15-12 ; Mathieu & Oscroft bt Baral & Geere 15-11, 14-16, 15-9 ; Buchanan & B Hanton bt Blakeley & Julius 15-1, 15-

Quarter-finals: Minta & Pringle bt Sutcliffe & Walter 15-7, 15-6 ; Christie & Kirby bt Beswick & Harrison 15-9, 15-13 ; Hughes & Rew bt Kennerley & Kirk 15-2, 15-3 ; Buchanan & Hanton bt Mathieu & Oscroft 15-7, 12-15, 15-4

Semi-finals: Minta & Pringle bt Christie & Kirby 15-2, 15-1 ; Hughes & Rew bt Buchanan & Hanton 15-2, 15-4

Final: Minta & Pringle bt Hughes & Rew 15-1, 15-8

Plate: Sutcliffe & Walter bt Kennerley & Kirk

The National Masters' Championships

Marlborough College, Saturday 1st April 2017

Organiser David Bawtree reports: 10 stalwarts entered the Masters' competition on Saturday 1st April at Marlborough College. Our President, Bernard Atkinson, was a participant and also presented the winners with the Admiral's Cup. Each pair played the other pairs one game to 15 and the winner was decided on points.

Final scores:

Beal & Hamilton – 60

Hebden & Wilkinson – 47

Atkinson & Ogle – 41

Thus the Cup went to Spencer Beal & Tony Hamilton, first-time winners, who proved too strong for well-fancied previous champions Dave Hebden & Martin Wilkinson. Two other former winners, Bernard Atkinson and Bev Boag, were also involved in the competition.

Numbers entering for the Masters continue to grow and it may be that next year we will have to set a separate date for the Masters as it is difficult to co-ordinate court time with the Veterans Singles competition, which runs a Plate as well. Nevertheless, it was a thoroughly enjoyable occasion with some 700 years of experience on court!

National Doubles Championships

Alleyn's School, Dulwich
Saturday-Sunday, 8-9 April 2017

STOP PRESS:

There had been mutterings among the game's Grandees that this season was something of a 'Changing of the Guard', but there was precious little evidence of that at the sharp end of this year's National Doubles Championship. The final was a repeat of last year – and 2013 and 2014, for that matter – and the result was the same as on every other occasion: a win for Will Ellison and Charlie Brooks. This now means Will has five wins in this championship, and has taken his overall tally of open Rugby Fives titles to 63, overtaking Ian Fuller and David Gardner in the process.

In truth, Will and Charlie had looked strong all weekend, and didn't even concede a point until the quarter-finals – when their opponents managed to score a meagre four. Their semi-final clash saw them ship just 10 points over two games, and although their regular foes in the final – Dan Grant and Dan Tristao – had the temerity to score 13 points in the second game, the defending champions' 15-4 win in the first game seemed to indicate beyond any reasonable doubt that the trophy would be staying with Will and Charlie for another 12 months.

Still, there was some evidence in the earlier rounds that the four finalists will have to work hard to stay in their positions at the top of the game. The Dans took three games to defeat Cambridge students Ed Kay and Ben Beltrami in the semi-finals, while the other losers in the semi-finals were the similarly young Matt Shaw and Ollie Arnold; and, the Plate went to Henry Jefferies and Francis Thomas.

Results

1st round: M Cavanagh & E Hatton bt E Carr & R Sulkin 15-8, 15-2 ; H Jefferies & F Thomas bt E Malone & L Rowland 15-8, 15-6

2nd round: C Brooks & W Ellison bt T Hebblethwaite & W Yates 15-0, 15-0 ; A George & P Hanton bt Cavanagh & Hatton 15-8, 15-6 ; D Butler & T Parker bt J Hanton & B Kirwan 15-7, 15-2 ; O Arnold & M Shaw bt C Blackaby & S Russell 15-1, 15-8 ; B Beltrami & E Kay bt A Goodwin & A Wheatley 15-0, 15-2 ; H Buchanan & R Perry bt B Jourdan & R Murby 15-6, 15-13 ; J Aquilina & J Tilston bt J Baker & G Price 15-5, 15-10 ; D Grant & D Tristao bt Jefferies & Thomas 16-14, 15-5

Quarter-finals: Brooks & Ellison bt George & Hanton 15-2, 15-2 ; Arnold & Shaw bt Butler & Parker 15-6, 11-15, 15-7 ; Beltrami & Kay bt Buchanan & Perry 15-4, 15-4 ; Grant & Tristao bt Aquilina & Tilston 15-6, 15-9

Semi-finals: Brooks & Ellison bt Arnold & Shaw 15-4, 15-6 ; Grant & Tristao bt Beltrami & Kay 11-15, 15-12, 15-9

Final: Brooks & Ellison bt Grant & Tristao 15-4, 15-13

Plate: Jefferies & Thomas

Latest Women's Rankings

Friday, 21st April 2017

The latest Women's Rankings take into account results in the Ladies Winchester Fives Championship held in March at Malvern College. Kathleen Briedenhann beat Tessa Mills in the final to win the Singles title at that event, a result which enables Kathleen to return to the top of the rankings. Kathleen and Tessa won the Doubles, a success which consolidates their position as the top two players in the women's game.

There are a number of new names in the rankings as a result of their participation in the Malvern competition: Anna Laakkonen, Ibbey Lee, Cosi Bugel, Amy Lewin and Stella Smith, all of them schoolgirls, and one player from Sedbergh School, Imogen Boddy, has moved up three places to number 12.

End-of-season rankings will be published in June after the next two events: the National Schoolgirls' Championships at Marlborough in April and the Mixed Winchester Doubles at Bradfield in May.

Current	Previous	Name	Points
1	2	K. Briedenhann	89.22
2	1	T. Mills	85.75
3	3	M. Raynor	77.85
4	4	A. Steel	73.89
5	6	S. Zhang	63.47
6	5	L. Mathias	56.59
7	8	A. Law	54.98
8	7	L. Harbottle	48.61
9	9	L. Robinson	43.28
10	10	M. Wong	42.90
11	11	P. Thornhill	40.64
12	15	I. Boddy	39.18
13	12	B. Crinnion	36.06
14	13	G. Shepherd	35.73
15	16	P. Bell	35.19
16	-	A. Laakkonen	30.73
17	14	D. Skene	29.59
18	17	C. Henderson	26.56
19	18	C. Bedford	26.33
20	19	A. Lombard	25.77
21	20	A. de Clermont	25.66
22	21	E. Shilina	25.23
23	22	L. Theaker	21.88
24	23	K. Martin	21.17
25=	24	M. Richards	19.60
25=	24	K. Hird	19.60
27	26	M. Nugent	17.26
28	-	I. Lee	17.23
29	27	M. Whitehead	16.49
30	28	L. Simpson	15.87
31	29	K. Broad	14.65
32	30	L. Browne	13.26
33	-	C. Bugel	13.09
34	31	S. Haco	10.41
35	32	D. Treloar	8.18
36	33	L. Dan	7.42
37	34	M. Ivanova	7.32
38	35	J. Jones	7.30
39	36	T. Gordon	6.90
40	37	A. Flood	6.71
41	38	F. Porter	6.58
42	39	L. Calman-Grimsdale	6.25
43	40	J. Morton	4.56
44	41	N. Ross	4.36
45	42	R. Patel	3.95
46	43	D. Black	3.91
47	44	M. Ward	3.84
48	-	A. Lewin	3.43
49	45	V. King-Forbes	3.42
50	46	K. Rolls	3.37
51	47	W. Carling	2.46
52	48	M. Cole	2.06
53	-	S. Smith	1.96
54	49	M. Harte	1.91

The Wood Cup

St. Paul's School, Barnes

Saturday-Sunday, 22-23 April 2017

With 12 out of the 33 players contesting the final rounds of this year's Club Knock-out being Old Paulines it felt from the outset as if the OPs would have the last say. And indeed it was so, as they progressed to an increasingly comfortable win in the final against the holders, the Wessex Club.

There were 8 teams in the first round on Saturday morning. The Old Paulines, playing a different IV in each round, were too strong for a very game Executioners IV, three of whom finished the contest crooked. The West of England Club likewise were too powerful for the young guns from Derby Moor, but that match did feature a top-quality tussle between the ever improving duo of Ollie Arnold and Rob Whitehorn, won 11-9 by the slightly stronger Bristolian. The match between Cambridge University and the RFA IV was very close indeed, with the students coming out on top by a mere 10 points, thanks to Ed Kay and Ben Beltrami contributing heavily in the Singles. Over at Allyn's the Wessex IV proved far too strong for an under-strength AOBs IV.

In the afternoon's semi-finals at St. Paul's we saw a wonderful game of Singles between Ed Kay and Will Ellison, with a victory for Ed this time. Next door Ben Beltrami and Dave Butler also had a high-class encounter, which went to Dave. There was little in it after the Singles, but Wessex pulled away in the Doubles to clinch their place in the final. In the other semi-final Charlie Brooks was subbed in for Julian Aquilina — a tribute to the threat posed by a strong West of England team who fought hard and made a real match of it.

In the final there was inevitably great expectation of the Singles match between Dan Tristao and Will Ellison, which this time went in Will's favour. There were just 6 points in it after the Singles. Julian Aquilina came back into the OPs' IV to replace the rusty Tom Dean and the OPs, with their pairings of Brooks & Tristao and Aquilina & Tilston, were able to build up a significant, match-winning points margin.

For once there was a Plate final, played on Saturday afternoon, in which a reconstituted RFA IV of Jefferies & Russell and Dyke & Hale beat the Derby Moor IV in a Doubles-only contest by 73-52.

Our thanks to all the players, to Club secretaries for raising their sides, to St. Paul's for their 5 courts (one harboured a large selection of examination furniture) and to Tom Dean for organising. Next up: the Owers Trophy!

Scores

1st round:

Cambridge University bt RFA 105-95

Wessex bt AOBs 132-47

West of England bt Derby Moor 132-47

Old Paulines bt Executioners 132-20

Semi-finals:

Old Paulines bt West of England 119-72

Wessex bt Cambridge University 120-74

Final:

Singles (OPs' names first)

Tristao lost to Ellison 7-11; Brooks bt Butler 12-10; Tilston bt Akerman 11-7; Aquilina bt Munn 11-7 (41-35)

Doubles:

Aquilina & Tilston bt Ellison & Munn 11-12, 11-2; lost to Akerman & Butler 11-5, 0-11 (33-30)

Brooks & Tristao bt Akerman & Butler 11-2, 11-5 ; by Ellison & Munn 11-5, 11-8 (44-20)

Result: Old Paulines beat Wessex 118-85

Teams:

Alleyn Old Boys: Buchanan, Carr, Sulkin and Wordsworth

Cambridge University: Beltrami, Boyd, Kay and Manger

Derby Moor: Baxter, Goodwin, Wheatley and Whitehorn

Executioners: Compton, Dyke, Hale and Webster

Old Paulines: from Aquilina, Brooks, Dean, Tilston and Tristao

RFA: Baker, Chua, Jefferies and Russell

Wessex: Akerman, Butler, Ellison and Munn

West of England: Arnold, Maconie, Murby and Parker

The National Schoolgirls' Championships

Marlborough College

Sunday, 23rd April 2017

65 girls contested this year's event, just three down on last year's record entry. We missed Sedbergh who were unable to send a contingent, but we welcomed two schools from Edinburgh (nearly 400 miles as the crow flies?). With masters and mistresses-in-charge, drivers, parents, friends and local enthusiasts it was a Fives-fest, a further vindication of Alex Smith's initiative in founding this competition, now in its eighth year.

In the U18s it was a pity that Amelia Law's partner from last year was unfit to defend their Doubles title, but her absence gave Christ Hospital's Beatrix Crinnion & Phoebe Thornhill a chance to go one round further than last year. In the final they met Ibby Lee and Anna Laakkonen, a year young, who displayed a maturity of play that belied their years to win the title for Marlborough. In the Singles, contested by 16 players, Thornhill and Lee swept aside all opposition, including an out-of-sorts defending champion Law. In the final we saw two right-handers using their left hand to great effect, but in the end it was Lee's greater range of shots that proved effective. We look forward now to seeing school-leavers Amelia, Phoebe, Beatrix and Lottie Harbottle from Rugby playing in women's competitions.

The entry for the U16 was the biggest yet: 27 players on the day. The question was: Would the excellent U15 pair from Bedford Modern, Maddie Kent & Katie Sumner, be able to challenge defending champions Harriet Fagan and Freya Harrison from Rugby. Before we reached the expected final between these pairs the Fettes combination of Cheadle & Sutton gave the Rugby 2nd pair a stern challenge in the quarter-final, winning 12-10 in what the organiser described as "a fantastic game". The same can be said of the final between Bedford Modern and Rugby I, where the BMS youngsters had one chance at game ball at 14-10, were unable to convert it, and then suffered an onslaught of big right hands from Fagan. Game and title to Rugby 16-14. In the Singles it was a Scottish player once more who caught the eye, the unheralded Meryl Smith from Edinburgh Academy dismissing the much fancied Freya Harrison in the semi-final but running out of steam against defending champion Fagan in the final.

16 girls fought out the U14 competition. Aiysha Alli of Christ's Hospital, who had won the U13 Singles title twice before, was the clear favourite and duly won both the Singles and Doubles, with her partner Sophie Lambert, but the general standard was high in both events and this augurs well for the future. Just 6 players contested the U13 section, from two schools. No doubt these players from Alleyn's and Christ's Hospital will meet more numerous opposition as they progress through the years: from small acorns.....

Results

U18 Singles

1st round: P Thornhill (Christ's Hospital) bt V King Forbes (Alleyn's) 11-0 ; H Nugent (Alleyn's) bt L Theaker (Rugby) 11-4 ; A Laakkonen (Marlborough) bt L Dan (Alleyn's) 11-0 ; A Law (Malvern) bt I Wood (Eastbourne) 11-1 ; I Lee (Marlborough) bt M Harte (Rugby) 11-2 ; B Crinnion (Christ's Hospital) bt L Calman-Grimsdale (Alleyn's) 11-0 ; A de Clermont (Rugby) bt C Bugel (Marlborough) 11-5 ; L Harbottle (Rugby) bt O O'Dwyer (Eastbourne) 11- 1

Quarter-finals: Thornhill bt Nugent 11-0 ; Law bt Laakkonen 11-7 ; Lee bt Crinnion 11-0 ; Harbottle bt de Clermont 11-8

Semi-finals: Thornhill bt Law 11-1 ; Lee bt Harbottle 11-1

Final: Lee (Marlborough) bt Thornhill (Christ's Hospital) 15-6

Plate: Harte (Rugby) bt Theaker (Rugby) 12-10

U18 Doubles

Pool A: 1st Marlborough ; 2nd Christ's Hospital ; 3rd Rugby I ; 4th Alleyn's II

Pool B: 1st Malvern ; 2nd Rugby II ; 3rd Alleyn's I ; 4th Eastbourne

Semi-finals: Marlborough bt Rugby II 11-0 ; Christ's Hospital bt Malvern 11-7

Final: Marlborough (Laakkonen & Lee) bt Christ's Hospital (Crinnion & Thornhill) 15-7

Plate: Rugby I (Harbottle & Theaker) bt Eastbourne (O'Dwyer & Wood) 11-2

U16 Singles

1st round: Smith (Edinburgh Academy) bt Worledge (Fettes) 11-1 ; Day (Rugby) bt Okeowo (Aldenham) 11-4 ; Kent (Bedford Modern) bt McWalters-Reed (Edinburgh Academy) 11-4 ; Cheadle (Fettes) bt Brown (Malvern) 11-7 ; Dutton (Fettes) bt Bell (Marlborough) 11-4 ; Denton (Rugby) bt Robson (Edinburgh Academy) 11-1 ; Barton (Marlborough) bt Stokes (Edinburgh Academy) 11-1 ; Doroshenko (Malvern) bt Minto (Fettes) 11-2 ; Woodley (Rugby) bt Simmons (Fettes) 11-7 ; Tofts (Edinburgh Academy) bt Gray (Fettes) 11-5 ; Gonder (Malvern) bt Conway (Aldenham) 11-6 ; Joseph (Christ's Hospital) bye v. Stark (Edinburgh Academy)

2nd round: Smith bt Green (Christ's Hospital) 11-4 ; Kent bt Day 11-6 ; Harrison (Rugby) bt Cheadle 11-3 ; Denton bt Sutton 12-10 ; Sumner (Bedford Modern) bt Barton 11-5 ; Doroshenko bt Woodley 11-4 ; Fagan (Rugby) bt Tofts 11-2 ; Joseph bt Gonder 11-3

Quarter-finals: Smith bt Kent 11-3 ; Harrison bt Denton 11-8 ; Sumner bt Doroshenko 11-2 ; Fagan bt Joseph 11-2

Semi-finals: Smith bt Harrison 11-7 ; Fagan bt Sumner 11-2

Final: H Fagan (Rugby) bt M Smith (Edinburgh Academy) 15-2

Plate: A Green (Christ's Hospital) bt E Conway (Aldenham) 15-5

U16 Doubles

Quarter-finals: Bedford Modern bt Fettes III 11-0 ; Christ's Hospital bt Marlborough 11-4 ; Rugby I bt Edinburgh Academy I 11-0 ; Fettes I bt Rugby II 12-10

Semi-finals: Bedford Modern bt Christ's Hospital 11-9 ; Rugby I bt Fettes I 11-1

Final: Rugby I (Fagan & Harrison) bt Bedford Modern (Kent & Sumner) 16-14

Plate: Fettes II (Gray & Minto) bt Aldenham (Conway & Okeowo) 11-9

U14 Singles

Semi-finals: Alli (Christ's Hospital) bt Park (Eastbourne) ; Jenner (Eastbourne) bt Baxter (Christ's Hospital)

Final: Alli bt Jenner

Plate: G Chambers (Marlborough) bt S Lambert (Christ's Hospital)

U14 Doubles

Semi-finals: Christ's Hospital II bt Eastbourne ; Christ's Hospital I bt Marlborough

Final: Christ's Hospital I (Alli & Lambert) bt Christ's Hospital II (Baxter & van de Berkmortel)

Plate: Marlborough I (Chambers & Connell) bt Eastbourne (Jenner & Park)

U13 Singles

Final Order: 1st M Nugent (Alleyn's) ; 2nd K Innes (Alleyn's) ; 3rd G Lane (Christ's Hospital)

U13 Doubles

Final: Alleyn's (Innes & Nugent) bt Christ's Hospital (Anyanwu & Lane)

SCOTTISH OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS

Loretto School, Musselburgh, April 29/30th

STOP PRESS

Will Ellison enjoyed another successful trip to Scotland this weekend, picking up this third Scottish Open Singles title. However, there was plenty of Scottish interest at the sharp end of the event, with the runner-up being local player Richie Murby, while the runner-up in the Singles plate (to organiser Neil Roberts) was another local, Mike Kemp.

Richie secured his second medal of the weekend in the doubles championship, where he and partner Alley Scott won the Plate. As far as we're aware, this makes Alley's the first female name on the trophy. Meanwhile, the main doubles title went to Jonathan Lee and Patrin Maddison.

Organiser Neil Roberts writes:

This year's Scottish Open Fives Tournament, held over the weekend of 29-30th April, had a truly international feel, with players from Scotland, England, Spain, Russia and the USA drawn to the Loretto School courts to challenge for the coveted Cuthbertson Quaich.

In the first round, the four Loretto schoolboys all performed creditably, but only Patrin Maddison progressed to the quarter-finals of the main competition, where – despite many high-quality rallies – he was unable to beat number one seed Will Ellison.

Eventually, on the same evening that Vladimir Klitschko fought Anthony Joshua in a heavyweight battle, we witnessed another titanic struggle on the Fives court, as Will overcame Richie Murby's spirited resistance in the final.

In the plate competition, Neil Roberts beat number one Russian player Nikita Razumovskiy on the way to defeating Mike Kemp in the final.

In the doubles tournament, Patrin Maddison and Loretto old boy Jonathan Lee defeated Adam George and Nikita Razumovskiy in the final after a series of round robin matches produced both a main and a plate final.

RESULTS

Singles

First round: P Maddison bt A Scott 11-0, 11-1; N Roberts bt M Sinclair 11-8, 11-7; M Kemp bt N Razumovskiy 11-1, 11-1; E Castillo Carbonell bt A Walls 11-2, 11-6

Quarter-finals: W Ellison bt Maddison 11-2, 11-1; A George bt Roberts 11-1, 11-3; J Tilston bt Kemp 11-1, 11-1; R Murby bt Castillo Carbonell 11-1, 11-2

Semi-finals: Ellison bt George 12-10, 11-2; Murby bt Tilston 11-0, 11-3

Final: Ellison bt Murby 11-2, 11-7

Plate: Roberts bt Kemp 15-6

Doubles

Round Robin:

J Lee & P Maddison bt Murby & Scott 15-5; bt George & Razumovskiy 15-9, bt Castillo Carbonell & Sinclair 15-2; bt Kemp & Walls 15-2

A George & N Razumovskiy bt Murby & Scott 16-15; bt Kemp & Walls 15-12; bt Castillo Carbonell & Sinclair 15-9; lost to Lee & Maddison 9-15

M Kemp & A Walls lost to Castillo Carbonell & Sinclair 9-15; lost to George & Razumovskiy 12-15; lost to Murby & Scott 12-15; lost to Lee & Maddison 2-15

R Murby & A Scott bt Castillo Carbonell & Sinclair 15-13; bt Kemp & Walls 15-12; lost to Lee & Maddison 5-15; lost to George & Razumovskiy 15-16

E Castillo Carbonell & M Sinclair lost to Lee & Maddison 2-15; lost to Murby & Scott 13-15; lost to George & Razumovskiy 9-15; bt Kemp & Walls 15-9

Final: Lee & Maddison bt George & Razumovskiy 11-5, 11-6

Plate: Murby & Scott bt Castillo Carbonell & Sinclair 5-11, 11-5, 11-4

Winchester Fives Mixed Doubles Championship

Bradfield College, Berkshire, May 7th 2017

Six pairs took to the courts at Bradfield for the 2017 Winchester Fives Mixed Doubles Championship. And, if there was any slight disappointment at a relative lack of numbers, that was more than made up for by the quality of play on show during what turned into a very long day. In fact, by general consensus, this was highest-quality of mixed doubles play in many years.

The day's play started with a round-robin (with the top two pairs going on to play the final), in which each pair played one game to 15 against each other pair; and the quality of play was obvious right from the start. Although experienced campaigners Andy Pringle & Alex Steel and Jim Hughes & Maddy Raynor won their opening two matches, they had to work hard.

In particular, they had to adapt their regular Rugby Fives tactics to overcome the unique challenge posed by Eton Fives specialists Gareth Hoskins & Karen Hird, who were only too happy to venture well up the court and try to find winning volleys into the buttress. Meanwhile, the maturity of play from the Sumner siblings belied the fact that they are still both at school.

The first crunch match of the day pitted Alex & Andy against Jim & Maddy, and it was a tough match. However, former champions Alex and Andy eventually prevailed 15-11, giving them a 100% record in their first three games.

Meanwhile, the slightly late-arriving Eastbourne contingent – Spencer, Kathleen and Tessa – had taken to the courts, with Ollie Arnold partnering Tessa to victory over the other two. Indeed, it was

the quality of their play that marked them out as potential favourites for the title, and they duly went on to match Andy & Alex, with a 100% record in their opening three games.

That meant that the clash between these pairs would be a strong indication of the ultimate destination of the winner's trophy; and, the clash didn't disappoint. It was the toughest match of the day up to that point, and fortunes ebbed and flowed throughout. Tessa & Ollie went into an early lead and seemed set for a comfortable win, only for Andy and Alex to peg them back. Almost inevitably, the game went to 14-all, but in the end it was Tessa & Ollie who secured the vital two points for a 16-14 win.

Following this with a win in their next game, that meant a 100% record in the round-robin game, and a place in the final. It also meant that the very last match of the round-robin – between Alex & Andy and Spencer & Kathleen would be crucial: a win for the former would see them into the final, but if the latter pair it would mean awkward maths and difficult discussions for the organiser (Alex!) as it would leave three pairs with three wins in the round-robin...

The opening few minutes seemed to suggest that such an outcome was all too possible, as Spencer & Kathleen went into a 10-5 lead. From then, though, Alex & Andy started to find their form, and with their opponents seeming to tire, they eventually closed out the game 15-11 to clinch a place in the final for the fifth consecutive year.

After the round-robin clash went to 16-14, much was expected of the final, and the four players more than delivered. It was a match full of tremendous Fives, with no quarter given or asked, and played in a superb spirit.

It was a best-of-three games final, and almost inevitably it went the distance, with Andy & Alex coming back well after losing the first game to really find their form in the second and send the match into a deciding third game.

For the first few minutes, they continued that fine form and eked out an 8-4 lead. However, at that point, Tessa & Ollie began to fight back: a run of four quick points drew them level, and then they eked out a small lead, although they were never significantly ahead. Even with them 13-10 up, the game was too close to call.

Trouble was, no one had told Tessa, and she nonchalantly found two clean winners into the butress in successive rallies to clinch the game – and, with it, the title. It was a fitting end to the finest match of the day, and without doubt the best mixed doubles match in recent memory.

The Players: Alexandra Steel & Andy Pringle; Tessa Mills & Ollie Arnold; Kathleen Briedenhann & Spencer Beal; Maddy Raynor & Jim Hughes; Karen Hird & Gareth Hoskins; Katie Sumner & Joseph Sumner

RESULTS

Round-robin

Alex & Andy bt Kathleen & Spencer 15-11, lost to Tessa & Ollie 14-16, bt Maddy & Jim 15-1, bt Katie & Joseph 15-3, bt Karen & Gareth 15-2; Kathleen & Spencer lost to Tessa & Ollie 8-15, lost to Maddy & Jim 9-15, bt Katie & Joseph 15-2, bt Karen & Gareth 15-13; Tessa & Ollie bt Maddy & Jim 15-12, bt Katie & Joseph 15-1, bt Karen & Gareth 15-1; Maddy & Jim bt Katie & Joseph 15-5, bt Karen & Gareth 15-6; Katie & Joseph lost to Karen & Gareth 8-15

1st Tessa & Ollie, 2nd Alex & Andy, 3rd Maddy & Jim, 4th Kathleen & Spencer, 5th Karen & Gareth, 6th Katie & Joseph

Final: Tessa & Ollie bt Alex & Andy 15-8, 7-15, 15-10

Tristao and Ellison head the 2016-17 End of Season Rankings

Dave Hebden writes: Dan Tristao and Will Ellison continue their battle at the top in the newly published End of Season Rankings. Dan regains top spot in the Singles while Will retains his dominance in the Doubles.

With Will winning 6 out of 9 of the open Singles events on offer, some might have expected to see Will at the head of the Singles. However, in the 5 events where both players were present, Dan took a 3 to 2 advantage, with one of his wins over Will being in the National Singles which carries the most ranking points. Dan's other wins came in the South East and the North East. So these two maestros swept the board in the season's singles and are to be congratulated by all, possibly excepting those on the circuit who are striving to win a title themselves!

Elsewhere in the Singles, Ed Kay moves up to 3 after winning the U25 & University events, and reaching the final in Manchester and the semi-finals in the National, while Charlie Brooks shoots up to number 4 following his return to the circuit after recovery from injury. Charlie was also a National semi-finalist and reached the SW final. In the top 20 Theo Parker and Sam Russell make good progress after solid performances in a number of events, while Ben Jourdan rises to number 20 after a good season. Goodwin, Tilston, Rew, Whitehorn, Watkinson, and veteran Roberts all move into the top 30.

There are a total of 11 new singles entries for the 2016-17 season. Worthy of note perhaps are the Spanish pelota ace Enrique Castillo Carbonell and Loretto schoolboy Patrin Maddison, who both did well up in Scotland. Tonbridge player Alfred Ainsworth comes in at number 38 after his Plate win in the SW.

In the Doubles Will Ellison picked up 5 of the 7 open Doubles titles on offer, two of these with Charlie Brooks including the National Doubles. These wins enabled Charlie to move up the rankings into 2nd place. Will's other titles came with Dan Tristao (London), Ed Kay (WofE), and Dan Grant (NE). The two other open titles were won by Ollie Arnold & Theo Parker (Yorkshire) who both move into the top 10, and Ed Kay & Matt Shaw who picked up the NW. Ed and Matt were also successful in the U25s, whilst Matt picked up another title in the University Doubles this time partnered by Ben Beltrami.

Gareth Price (NW finalist) and Peter Hanton (who picked up points in 5 events) both make good progress into the top 20. Other progress of note is made by Jim Hughes & Alex Rew (SW semi-finalists), Henry Jefferies, Francis Thomas, Tom Watkinson, Craig Baxter and Christian Blackaby.

The "draw for partners" events (where just 50% points are awarded) see Alfred Ainsworth from Tonbridge hit the big time by winning the South East with Will Ellison, while two new names from Scotland, Loretto's Patrin Maddison and Jonathan Lee from the Caledonian Club, appear after their win in Scotland. And it's good to see another female player added to the rankings with Alley Scott winning the Scottish Plate with Richie Murby. These players are amongst 19 new entries in the doubles rankings.

Tournament entries were once again encouraging, broadly maintaining the levels of the last few seasons.

Finally, to amuse myself I keep a record of where ranked players learnt their fives (usually but not always their school). Looking at the top 50 ranked singles players and awarding 50 points for number one, 49 for number two, etc., we come up with a table which might contain a few surprises for some. No surprise at the very top with St. Paul's dominating, but Edinburgh Academy at three is perhaps unexpected. Here are the top 10:

Singles Rankings top 10 clubs:

1	St. Paul's	452
2	Alleyn's	124
3	Edinburgh Academy	99
4	Winchester College	77
5	Merchant Taylors'	74
6	Derby Moor	55
7	Bradfield	46
8	Bedford Modern	42
9	Radley College	37
10	St. Olave's	36

End-of-season Women's Rankings 2017

The Rugby Fives Association

June 20th 2017

The RFA is delighted to publish the end-of-season rankings for Women's Fives.

They show the continued see-sawing at the top between our closely matched champions Tessa Mills and Kathleen Briedenhann, and also the close rivalry between Maddy Raynor and Alexandra Steel just below them.

After Kathleen had garnered critical points with her victory in the Ladies' Winchester Fives Singles, back came Tessa with a points-winning victory in the Winchester Fives Mixed Doubles, while Alexandra's silver-medal performance in that event was just not quite enough to make up ground she had lost to Maddy earlier in the year.

Meanwhile, after the National Girls' Championships, the new U18 champion Ibbey Lee from Marlborough College climbs into the top 10 and with her comes Phoebe Thornhill of Christ's Hospital, her opponent in the singles final.

Other schoolgirls make steady progress after their performances in their championships: Anna Laakkonen (Marlborough – 14), Anastasia de Clermont (Rugby – 18), Holly Nugent (Alleyn's – 19), and most particularly Maisie Harte (Rugby – up to 29 from 54), while ex-Cambridge Eton Fives player Karen Hird (22) benefits from a strong performance at the Winchester Mixed Doubles.

The next ranking event will be the Ladies' National Singles and Doubles Championships at St. Paul's in January.

See next page for rankings

Current	Previous	Name	Points
1	2	T. Mills	88.33
2	1	K. Briedenhann	88.20
3	3	M. Raynor	78.20
4	4	A. Steel	77.77
5	5	S. Zhang	63.47
6	6	L. Mathias	59.54
7	7	A. Law	56.92
8	28	I. Lee	54.61
9	11	P. Thornhill	53.95
10	8	L. Harbottle	53.28
11	9	L. Robinson	43.28
12	10	M. Wong	42.90
13	13	B. Crinnion	40.66
14	16	A. Laakkonen	40.08
15	12	I. Boddy	39.18
16	14	G. Shepherd	35.73
17	15	P. Bell	35.19
18	21	A. de Clermont	33.85
19	27	H. Nugent	29.70
20	17	D. Skene	29.59
21	18	C. Henderson	26.56
22	25	K. Hird	26.40
23	19	C. Bedford	26.33
24	20	A. Lumbard	25.77
25	22	E. Shilina	25.23
26	23	L. Theaker	21.96
27	24	K. Martin	21.17
28	25	M. Richards	19.60
29	54	M. Harte	18.62
30	29	M. Whitehead	16.49
31	30	L. Simpson	15.87
32	31	K. Broad	14.65
33	33	C. Bugel	13.87
34	32	L. Browne	13.26
35	34	S. Haco	10.41
36	36	L. Dan	9.52
37	42	L. Calman-Grimsdale	8.69
38	35	D. Treloar	8.18
39	37	M. Ivanova	7.32
40	38	J. Jones	7.30
41	39	T. Gordon	6.90
42	40	A. Flood	6.71
43	41	F. Porter	6.58
44	49	V. King-Forbes	5.86
45	43	J. Morton	4.56
46	44	N. Ross	4.36
47	45	R. Patel	3.95
48	46	D. Black	3.91
49	47	M. Ward	3.84
50	48	A. Lewin	3.43
51	50	K. Rolls	3.37
52	51	W. Carling	2.46
53	52	M. Cole	2.06
54	53	S. Smith	1.96
55	-	O. O'Dwyer	1.12
56	-	I. Wood	0.40

Executioners' end-of-season doubles tournament

Saturday 17th June, St Paul's School.

Organiser Guy Matthews writes: On the hottest day of the year, eleven intrepid souls ventured into the oven of the St Paul's School courts for arguably the biggest event in the Fives world – the Executioners' end-of-season doubles tournament. Unbelievable scenes as eleven players turned up within half an hour of the start time. After finding the only available piece of paper – a receipt for two lattes and a cookie – and a pen, the organiser started scribbling and came up with the perfect combinations of pairs. Showing the type of foresight which has made him a laughing stock in psephological circles, the organiser said loudly: “Duncan Neale & Robert Mathias are the pair to beat”.

Given the odd number, the organiser laid down an exciting rule that each pair would have to sub the organiser in for one of their four matches. Hale & Steel opted to grasp the nettle early and the organiser stepped in for Hale for the first game: Neale & Mathias 15 – 0 Matthews & Steel. Elsewhere Compton & Webster embarked on a steady and victorious campaign through the group stages; while Stokes & Rogers notched up a couple of early wins. Little should be said for the efforts of Wall & Petersen, except that they are both fine and decent fellows and that an absence of talent was vastly counterbalanced by a joie de vivre akin only to a pair of young ex-public school boys trooping off to the polling booth to vote for Corbyn.

As things developed it became clear that Duncan Neale was hustling hard. Turning up in prescription dark glasses, soaked in sweat and talking of two hours of sleep, he hit sly front-of-court winners reminiscent of Frank Akerman schooling the colts on the Jesters tour. The organiser rightly stepped in: Compton & Webster 15 – 7 Matthews & Mathias. Hale & Steel deserve praise for some valiant efforts as they sought to overcome their poor start; as the group stages drew to a close it became clear that the undefeated Compton & Webster would be facing Stokes & Rogers in the final, with Hale & Steel against Neale & Mathias in the play-off for third place.

The organiser – now at a loose end – challenged the fifth place finishers to a two-versus-one wooden spoon play-off. Matthews 15 – 3 Wall & Petersen.

Scenes.

Wall uttered a phrase that can be summed up with the acronym ‘FML’ and stomped off the court.

In the bronze medal play-off Hale & Steel headbutted the concrete wall that is Duncan Neale and eventually succumbed.

The final was an ambitious best-of-three-to-eleven affair and, at one game all, all four players were lying on their backs on the court with mutterings of ‘calling it a draw’. Cue explosion from the organiser and the final game was begun. Congratulations to Compton & Webster, who triumphed over a spirited Stokes & Rogers.

Off to The Sun Inn in Barnes. Absolute scenes as Petersen bought champagne and a table tennis table was discovered (off point, but Matthews 21 – 12 Stokes). The organiser gave a short speech, praising Andy Pringle for being an utter legend as Captain of the Club and lauding all who turned out for such a terrific day.

The views expressed here are solely those of the organiser, though all would agree that Andy Pringle is a Legend

Derby Moor Invitation Doubles

Derby Moor Community Sports College, Littleover, Derby
Sunday 25th June 2017

Brian Kirk reports: The annual (14th) Derby Moor Fives Tournament took place on Sunday 25th June, 2017. An excellent turn-out from old stalwarts plus some new entrants made for a super day's fives with 12 pairs, with an age range of 13 to 63 (or perhaps a bit more!) competing for the honours. Players came from London, Bedford, Rugby, Derby and Halifax.

The format, as ever, meant that evenly matched pairs played in a knock-out for the main competition with early losers playing in a round robin format for the plate, thus making sure everyone left exhausted but happy. A strong contingent from Rugby enabled youthful pairings with Derby Moor youngsters. With an event featuring Bob Sandie and John Hawke from Halifax, tournament veterans Nick Geere and Mark Kiteley and a welcome showing from multiple-champion Hamish Buchanan, who was paired with an up-and-coming Derby colt Vishal, there was sure to be a high standard of play.

Seeded one, Hamish & Vishal met a fancied pair combining strength (Aaron Wheatley) and subtlety (Nick Geere) in a closely fought three-setter. Aaron & Nick took the third game and then won their semi-final, establishing a firm position for the final. At the other end of the draw, ex-schoolboy champion Rob Whitehorn & Old Rugbeian George Terry made steady progress through the draw, beating firstly Rugby's Mike Suddaby & DMF's Lewis Keates, and then Ashley Hill & Bob Sandie, to reach the final.

The final did not quite live up to expectations, with Whitehorn & Terry beating Wheatley & Geere comfortably in straight games despite long rallies. It was Rob's first win in this event and it was George's first appearance! The third place play-off between previous winners Hill & Sandie and old hands Anthony Goodwin & Mark Kiteley was mammoth, with the organiser having to evict the four from court so that the final could commence. An honourable draw was agreed upon as the more mature players in the pairings had had enough.

In the plate two pools of 3 and 4 pairs battled for the honours. Schoolboys Kais and AR, in particular, acquitted themselves brilliantly playing against much stronger opposition. The plate final was a fine affair with stalwart Richard Christie & partner Chris Evans playing Suddaby & Keates; the latter pair won 11-7, 11-5, with Lewis playing the best fives of his life.

Club Captain Stuart Kirby explained that this was the second chance for the Derby Moor Club to showcase its newly enclosed courts and warmly thanked everyone who entered for supporting the tournament. A good day's fives was had by all.

Previous winners

<i>Year</i>	<i>Winners</i>
2004	Phil Bishop & John East
2005	Hamish Buchanan & Stuart Kirby
2006	John Beswick & Matt Orr
2007	Anthony Goodwin & John Minta
2008	Ashley Hill & Bob Sandie
2009	Phil Bishop & Max Frost
2010	Wayne Enstone & Jay Gravatt

2011	Mike Baxter & Tim Widdop
2012	Mike Baxter & Jay Gravatt
2013	Anthony Goodwin & Bob Sandie
2014	Ashley Hill & Tim Widdop
2015	Chris Davey & Anthony Goodwin
2016	Hamish Buchanan & Lewis Keates
2017	George Terry & Robert Whitehorn

This tournament marks the end of the Rugby Fives Season