

THE RUGBY FIVES ASSOCIATION  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - SEPTEMBER 2018

General Secretary's Report

A key development this year was the design, agreement and implementation of a new strategy for the RFA aimed not only at looking to reverse the gentle decline of the sport over a number of years but also raising the profile of the game and making it more accessible to a wider audience. Practical developments to date have been:-

- The establishment of a number of sub-committees led by a Board member. The sub-committees are Membership, Clubs, IT, Marketing/PR and Finance. Anyone wishing to get involved even if only on a short term basis should contact the relevant committee leader. Further details are available on the website
- The creation of a project group to implement court refurbishment at Loretto, Fettes, Merchiston Castle and Edinburgh Academy. This is an excellent development as if it is successful it can be used as a spring board for other projects in the rest of the UK
- The recruitment of Gareth Price as a paid Development Officer whose key objective is to increase the numbers of both fives players and courts with particular emphasis on growing the game outside of independent schools. The aim is to build on successes at Derby Moor, Cambridge and most recently in the North-East where the game is experiencing an exciting renaissance under the dynamic City of Durham fives club. Gareth is a well-known fives player who has been active on the tournament circuit for a number of years and is of course the organiser of the President's Cup. He brings great energy and enthusiasm to the role which combined with his background knowledge of the game, will ensure that he makes a very positive impact
- A review of all the RFA's policies including the adoption of a comprehensive Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy together with an RFA Members Privacy Policy

As usual, news regarding courts was mixed. At Halifax, an agreement was made with the local authority to allow state schools to make use of the old Heath courts although bureaucracy has delayed the actual commencement. The two courts in regular use at Clifton are to be used for storage during the forthcoming school term which will entail the West of England tournament being played elsewhere. A determined campaign by the Manchester YMCA fives club ensured that a plan to convert one of the two courts be put on hold at least for the time being whilst at UCS, only one of the two courts was now available for playing fives. Re-roofing was undertaken successfully at Whitgift.

As far as tournaments were concerned, probably the most notable event was the retirement of David Gardner as organiser of BUSF – a role he had undertaken with great commitment and enthusiasm for a staggering fifty eight years. Theo Parker kindly agreed to take over from next season. Meanwhile, attendance at tournaments was

encouraging overall with a particularly large entry for the North of England consisting of thirty two singles and seventeen pairs. Fives continued to grow within the Cambridge Sports Centre with four schools actively involved and a staff league comprising eight players competing on a monthly basis

Hamish Buchanan's Club Report describes a number of exciting games including four whose outcome was determined by only two points. The President's Cup ran smoothly in its temporary home of St. Paul's despite the late arrival of the organiser (and, more importantly, the buffet!) due to heavy snow.

There was good news regarding balls. Following a series of trials, two new but very similar balls have just started to be produced and will be available for the start of the 2018/9 season from Gloves and Balls.

A number of old and distinguished friends departed in the course of 2017/8 – Denise Hall-Wilton (a pioneer of women's fives), Bob Dorey, David Hebblethwaite, Andrew Cowie, Tony Dawes, Eric Marsh and John Pretlove (the last four all former National Singles Champions).

To finish on a positive note, it was reassuring to see fives apparently flourishing in a hitherto rarely reported school. According to the Bloxhamist magazine, a full-page fives report by the master in charge mentioned 104 pupils playing at some point in the year, and the courts in regular use on five, sometimes six days a week.

Phil Atkinson  
General Secretary  
August 2018