

THE RUGBY FIVES ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - SEPTEMBER 2014

General Secretary's Report

In my report last year I wrote that “we keenly await the first ball to be struck” at the new Cambridge courts. I am delighted to report that many balls have been struck there and those members who have been privileged enough to play there will, I am sure, agree that the University now has a wonderful facility at its disposal. A Cambridge City Club is also currently being developed. Both were given good publicity in May when Jacob Brubert, the current University Captain, appeared on Radio Cambridgeshire for a 15-minute discussion about the game in general and at Cambridge in particular.

Much work has been done, by Stuart Kirby in particular, in monitoring the quality of other courts and advising schools on improvements. Thanks to the generosity of Bruce and Angus Hanton, Allyn's now have new floors modelled on those at Cambridge and it is hoped that other schools will follow suit. Rossall have two new back walls, St. Paul's will have new lighting, the Derby courts are being enclosed and Stuart has been closely involved in advising on all these. He has also made visits to a number of other schools as well as pursuing the possibility of low cost courts through the use of significantly cheaper materials. The Board is greatly indebted to Stuart for all his time and expertise in handling all these issues. We are concerned about some other venues, UCS and Clifton in particular, and we are proactive in reviewing these situations on a regular basis.

The number of new members has grown significantly over the season thanks to the perseverance of your President in persuading individuals to complete their application forms! With the new Direct Debit system and tiered subscription rates we now have a much firmer base on which to move forward.

We have been delighted by the level of entries into our Championships and in particular by the numbers of young players now continuing to play the game. The British Universities, organised by David Gardner for the 54th time, had one of the best entry levels yet and the South West, run by Wayne Enstone for the 31st time, also had record entries. A resume of the season will appear in the Annual Review so I won't repeat the content here but I would like to record the Board's appreciation to ALL our hard working organisers for their efforts, without which we wouldn't be reporting such excellent entry levels. It is also appropriate at this point to record again our thanks to the Jesters for the grant made available to us to support students and younger members to attend Championships which goes a long way to retaining their interest and involvement with the game.

Apart from our work on the quality of courts, we also monitor closely the health of the game at Schools and overall are pleased with the numbers playing. The South East and Midlands Regional Championships are now firmly established and well supported and it was disappointing that, due to freak weather conditions, the National Schools had to be curtailed to being held over a weekend, with the Under 14's event having to be moved to the beginning of November this year. Given the importance of schools to our game, it was decided that each Board member should have specific responsibility for a number of schools. The aim is to be proactive in maintaining close contact with each school so that we can provide support

wherever necessary and deal with any potential problems at an early stage.

Ladies Fives continues to grow well and we now have a very good nucleus of young players. The School Girls' Championships this year was a great success and next season there will be a 'Lady's Cup' competition, to be run along the same lines as the President's Cup, which we hope will encourage players of all ages and abilities to take part. Denise Hall-Wilton has decided to stand down from running the Ladies Winchester Fives tournament after running the event since its inception. We are greatly indebted to Denise for all her untiring work and dedication which has laid the foundation for the today's strength in the Ladies game.

As mentioned in my Financial Report, the Board has decided, after considerable research and feedback, that the current RFA website and the *fivesonline* site do not meet the needs of Members. A new website has been commissioned which will be available from September and we believe that this more flexible and modern site, which is far easier to maintain and to keep up to date, will provide a fresh and dynamic look for members to enjoy.

The Fives Coaching Qualification has continued to develop. We now have nine qualified coaches at Level 2 and seven at Level 1. Courses will continue to be held at regular intervals and we are hugely indebted to Wayne Enstone for his boundless energy and enthusiasm in not just running the courses but in his overall input to the coaching structure. We hope that the coaches will be able to use their qualification in opening up new avenues for people to play Fives. The Board will continue to subsidise deserving cases and criteria for grants have now been published. In addition to his involvement in the coaching courses, Wayne ran three masterclasses at Durham, Cambridge and Oxford Universities which the students found hugely inspirational and again our gratitude to Wayne for his time and effort in organising these special days.

Through the 100 Club we have given grants this year to both Edinburgh Academy and Loretto School to assist with the costs of the provision of a coach

As you will see from their report, the Club section continues successfully and the list of fixtures grows each year. Our thanks go to Hamish Buchanan and Ed Hatton for making the fixtures 'happen' and to the Match Managers for raising their teams. Next season we want to use the School matches as an opportunity to recruit even more school leavers, as we feel that many are still lost to the game when they move on.

Other points to mention are that during the year, all our Equity Policies have been reviewed and re-published. David Barnes has been travelling the length and breadth of the country building up our Archives and together with Dave Hebden is working on a 'Census' of Fives courts worldwide. A short insight into their work will appear in the Annual Review which makes fascinating reading.

Throughout all spheres of the Rugby Fives we are so fortunate in having such a large number of willing volunteers who give up their free time for the benefit of the game. Without them we would not be in the strong position that we currently enjoy and we are forever grateful for the work they undertake.

Ian Fuller, General Secretary
August 2014