

THE IRISH CONNECTION

Contact between Rugby Fives and Irish Handball has, until the 1979 season, been rather tentative. It was gratifying, therefore, to see that five Handball players (four Irish and one American) were entered for the Scottish Fives Championships in Edinburgh. Shortly afterwards, one of the Irishmen, Sean McEntee, was to organise the Wilson Bros. 'Colt Cup' International Handball Tournament at Queen's University in Belfast. He kindly offered to reserve two places in the last sixteen for visiting Fives players from England. The two people to go were Chris Heron and Tony Wynn, who, after spending two enjoyable days in Ireland, returned having generated interest in further visits to Fives tournaments.

Sponsorship for the Handball tournament came from the distributors of Colt Cars in Ireland, and in the time before it was due to be held there was considerable publicity in the newspapers and even an interview on local radio. A brief visit was even made by the Mayor of Belfast (will the Lord Mayor of London ever visit a Fives tournament?).

The ball used is hollow rubber about the same size as a Fives ball, and is very bouncy. A Handball court is 20 feet by 40 feet, white (with no markings) except for the back wall which was glass, and with no bar across the front. The two

courts to be used were part of the magnificent sports complex recently built at Queens. The first matches were played on the Friday evening and Tony had a good win to take him into the last eight. Fives involvement ended in the next round and it was then a case of watching the experts. The final was a long hard game in which clever use was made of the ceiling (yes, the ceiling is a playing surface) to push the opponent to the back of the court. The winner was Peadar McGee and runner up was Pat Kirby, both of whom showed some interest in visiting England next season to play our game.

It is difficult to see how the two games could be brought closer together, but contacts have now been made and further exchanges of players seems likely. One thing at least can be said for certain, that the friendliness and spirit of the game is remarkably similar to that of the Fives world.

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