

THE RUGBY FIVES ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - SEPTEMBER 2017

General Secretary's Report

This year has seen considerable activity both on and off court including a number of really tangible achievements.

There is much to report regarding court maintenance and development. At Winchester, plans are afoot for six new courts to replace the existing four. Sadly, play has ceased for the time being at Merchant Taylors' where the current block is to be demolished and replaced by a yet to be confirmed number of new courts. In the interim, the President's Cup will continue to be contested and is scheduled to be played at St. Paul's next season. At Bedford School, an appeal has been launched to fund the refurbishment of their four existing courts. As at other locations (e.g., Loretto and Edinburgh Academy), Stuart Kirby has been providing expert advice and, in this instance, produced a detailed report recommending enclosure and reducing the height of the back walls. At nearby Bedford Modern, new lighting has finally been installed providing a much improved playing experience. The single court at St Andrew's Preparatory School at Eastbourne has also been refurbished - an occasion marked by a friendly doubles game involving members of the RFA. More generally, the design for new low cost courts has been finalised so that the RFA now has an attractive alternative product to market to schools and other bodies.

Regretfully, fives is no longer being played on the old Heath Courts in Halifax following the decision of the local council to increase the annual charge to an unaffordable level given the small number of players using the courts. Another (hopefully temporary) discordant note is that dampness continues to bedevil the new courts at Rugby.

As far as the actual playing of the game is concerned, good news is most definitely in the ascendant. At Oundle, fives has been incorporated into the PE curriculum whilst at Sherborne, the Sherborne Whippets RFC has been founded which meets at the School courts on Wednesday evenings at 7pm. In Durham, a public club based at the University courts is being set up which will focus on attracting new children and adults to the sport as well as hopefully drawing back any older players living in the vicinity.

Once again, the Tournaments continued to attract encouraging numbers of players as well as generating both excitement and a high quality of fives. Particularly noteworthy were BUSF, which produced a record entry of sixteen universities (albeit nine provided one player) and the men's National Doubles which recorded thirty six participants assisted by the use of an external online entry system. It is planned to develop an in-house version which should significantly reduce the administration currently faced by organisers. Meanwhile, the National Girls' Championships attracted over 60 players for the second year running.

The RFA Club continues to thrive – a notable addition to the fixture list being a tour of Scotland which was a great success. Well done to Hamish Buchanan and Ed Hatton for ensuring that there is a full and attractive selection of matches throughout the season.

The demand for coaching qualifications has been gratifyingly high. Wayne Enstone reported that six players passed the Level 1 Course held at Blundell's. The new External Verifier attended the Assessments to review paper work together with course delivery and handouts in

addition to speaking to the coaches. He was pleased with what he saw and consequently passed us as a Centre. A Level 2 course will be held at Westway and St Paul's on 2nd/3rd September. Interest has been so intense that a further course is likely to be held next Spring.

The RFA has continued to supply balls and gloves in instances where the sport needs revitalising. Edinburgh and Bristol Universities have benefited in this way as has Groton School in Massachusetts following a visit from our own Neil Butterfield.

Tragically, Nigel Gordon who manufactured the G6 fives ball, died suddenly last week whilst Jabez Cliff, one of our longstanding suppliers of fives balls, ceased trading last year. Fortunately, Gloves and Balls, our equipment supplier, is trialling alternatives which should be generally available from October. Meanwhile, they are willing and able to re-cover any used balls in the immediate future.

Two well-known and highly respected members of the RFA also died during the year. They were Hugh Pigott (a former Hon Sec of the RFA Club) and Rick Wilson, an ex-RFA President for whom a full obituary appeared in the June edition of the Fives Newsletter.

Finally, it was the unanimous decision of the Board to make Ian Fuller an Honorary Life Member in recognition of his exemplary service both as General Secretary and Treasurer over many years.

Phil Atkinson
General Secretary
August 2017