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SOUTH WEST CHAMPIONSHIPS

Blundell's School, Tiverton, 28/29th July 2007

James Toop was a happy man on the train back from Tiverton, clutching two trophies: one for his first singles title since the National Singles title in 2003, and the other for his first ever open doubles title.

His wins came at the end of a weekend where the quality of fives made up for the relatively low quantity of players. Right from the start, there were close matches, with Nick Geere and Hugh Aveston going to three games in the first round, while Andy Pringle only beat Stuart Watson in two very tight games.

Come the quarter-finals, and the top seeds – James Toop and Hamish Buchanan – made comfortable progress, but the third and fourth seeds had to work harder. Andy Pringle was within a point of forcing Kevin Henry to a third game, while John Minta was pushed all the way by new Devon resident Nick Austin. It was perhaps partly as a result of this that the top two seeds eventually made it to the final although, as is often the case, the scores don't tell the story of how close the semi-finals really were.

Right from the off in the final, James was the more aggressive, never afraid to take Hamish's shots on the volley and hurry his opponent. Couple that to his determination to stay in the rallies – obvious from his superb retrieval – and it forced Hamish into a series of thoroughly uncharacteristic errors. James's tactics eventually wore Hamish down, allowing him to move ahead to take the first game and then – by a more convincing margin – the second and, with it, the title.

In the doubles tournament, too, the top four seeds made it through to the semi-finals, but the closest match of the competition was the quarter-final between the scratch pairings of Nick Austin & Andy Pringle and Jim Hughes & Stuart Watson. It was a hard-hitting match played in excellent spirit, with Tim Lewis encouraging(!) all four players, but Nick and Andy held their nerve to win 11-8 in the third game.

They then went on to give top seeds Hamish Buchanan and Dave Hebden a scare in the first game of the semi-final, going down 11-9. However, in the second game, the top pair's class showed through, and they went on to a final against John Minta & James Toop, who had beaten last year's runners-up, Kevin Henry and Wayne Enstone, in the other semi-final.

Here, as in the singles final, James was happy to volley anything he could to hurry his opponents, while John mixed outright power and pace with deft use of the angles and tried to emulate James's trademark spin shots. Hamish and Dave coped well to begin with, but gradually the relentless assault began to take its toll. James and John kept their noses in front to take a tight first game, and took no prisoners in the second, going on to win it 11-3.

That gave James his first 'double' since the National Under 25 championships in 2003. However, he wasn't the only double winner of the weekend, as local hero Stuart Watson battled his way to a win in the round-robin doubles plate with Jim Hughes, before summoning the strength for a monumental fightback from 10-6 down to beat Nick Geere 12-10 in the singles plate final. A remarkable achievement...

Singles

1st Round: H Buchanan bt J Eadie w/o; H Aveston bt N Geere 11-4, 3-11, 11-9; A Pringle bt S Watson 11-8, 11-8; K Henry bt T Lewis 11-1, 11-4; J Minta bt A Smith 11-2, 11-1; N Austin bt P A'Hern 11-1, 11-2;
J Hughes bt S King 11-3, 11-1; J Toop bt S Lewis 11-1, 11-2

Quarter-finals: Buchanan bt Aveston 11-1, 11-1; Henry bt Pringle 11-6, 12-11; Minta bt Austin 11-7, 11-7; Toop bt Hughes 11-0, 11-1
Semi-finals: Buchanan bt Henry 11-1, 11-3; Toop bt Minta 11-4, 11-0
Final: Toop bt Buchanan 11-6, 11-3
Plate: Watson

Doubles

Quarter-finals: Buchanan & Hebden bt Geere & Lewis 11-3, 11-3; Austin & Pringle bt Hughes & Watson 11-8, 9-11, 11-8; Enstone & Henry bt A'Hern & Smith 11-5, 11-5; Minta & Toop bt Aveston & King 11-2, 11-3
Semi-finals: Buchanan & Hebden bt Austin & Pringle 11-9, 11-5; Minta & Toop bt Enstone & Henry 11-3, 12-10
Final: Minta & Toop bt Buchanan & Hebden 11-8, 11-3
Plate: Hughes & Watson

OFFICIAL RFA RANKINGS

London, 9th September 2007

Following the South West Open Championships, things are tighter than ever at the top of the RFA rankings. Although the top of both tables has a familiar set of names in a basically unchanged order, the gaps between the players have narrowed considerably, and a good performance from any one of them at the forthcoming London Open could change things hugely.

In the singles rankings, Matt Cavanagh remains on top, just ahead of Ed Fuller. But, with neither of them playing at Blundell's, South West champion James Toop was able to make up good ground on the four players ahead of him. Although he continues in fifth spot, he's now only half a point behind Phil Bishop.

The biggest movers below him after the most recent championship were semi-finalist Kevin Henry - who moves into the top 20 at 15th - and Nick Austin, who (playing in his first tournament for some time) earned enough points from his quarter-final appearance to jump back up into the top 30.

In the doubles rankings, South West runner-up Hamish Buchanan remains a clear number one, but behind him, John Minta is now alone in second place after winning the title at Blundell's, while his title-winning partner James Toop climbs into the top 10. Meanwhile, Nick Austin followed up his progress in the singles rankings with a jump of almost 30 places in the doubles rankings after reaching the semi-finals at Blundell's. And, also moving up in both sets of rankings was Stuart Watson - winner of two Plate competitions. He jumped up 15 places to just outside the top 40 in the singles and climbed almost 40 places to 50th in the doubles rankings.

LONDON OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS

Alleyn's School, Dulwich, 15/16th September 2007

After a weekend of fine weather and even better fives, it was Ed Fuller and Hamish Buchanan (with partner Ben Taberner) who went home with the London Open silverware, retaining the singles and doubles titles respectively.

While the scores may make it look as if Ed's win over James Toop in the singles final was comfortable, in reality it was anything but. In a match characterised by tremendous athleticism, amazing shot-making and

brehtaking retrieving, long rallies were the order of the day, with the players evenly matched. James's trademark spin shots were less effective than usual with the Cliff ball on the Alleyn's courts, but he still made Ed work hard for every point. However, at the end of any given rally, it was almost always Ed who came out on top, allowing him to retain the title.

Neither had easy routes to the final, with James edging out Hamish Buchanan in three games in one semi-final, while Ed's opponent came from a little closer to home - his father, who had repeated last year's win over John Minta in a tough quarter-final. In both matches, however, youth won through, as it had done many times in the earlier rounds, where promising young players had fine victories. Alleyn's schoolboy Peter Hanton consigned Ed Hatton to the plate, while Dan Grant had a good win over Marcus Bate, but perhaps the performance of the day was Will Ellison's win over Sam Roberts.

Come the doubles, though, and it was the four experienced, seeded pairs who made it through to the semi-finals. On one court, James Toop and John Minta raced through the first game against Andy Pringle and Chris Jones before edging a much tighter second game to claim their place in the final. But, on the other court, there was an absolutely thrilling match. National Under 25 champions Alan Beverly and Charlie Brooks had shared the first two games with Hamish Buchanan and Ben Taberner, and looked to be on their way to a famous victory, 10-3 up in the third. However, they reckoned without the sheer willpower of their opponents, who survived match point against them and then scored an astonishing nine straight points to win the game and secure their place in the final.

Here, Hamish and Ben carried on where they left off, and took the first game, retrieving everything John and James could throw at them as well as hitting crucial winners. In the second game, however, the tide turned and, with John and James well ahead, a third and deciding game seemed inevitable. But, incredibly, with a score of 10-3 again, Hamish and Ben mounted a comeback. Abandoning the all-out power attack he had used earlier in the game, Hamish varied the pace more and began to dominate the game, finding winners and forcing mistakes from his by now increasingly rattled opponents. For the second match in a row, he and Ben scored nine unanswered points and, in this case, secured the championship - Ben's first London title, but for Hamish, his seventh successive London doubles win.

Singles

1st round: D Colton bt A Bowden 11-2, 11-2; S Korris bt W Fleming 11-3, 11-5; P Hanton bt E Hatton 11-9, 11-3; M Gibbor bt I Ackland 12-10, 11-2; W Ellison bt A George 11-2, 11-1; A Pringle bt A Hanton 11-7, 11-5

2nd round: E Fuller bt Colton 11-2, 11-0; H Akerman bt B Taberner 11-3, 11-4; I Fuller bt Korris 11-3, 11-4; J Minta bt Hanton 11-3, 11-2; J Toop bt Gibbor 11-1, 11-6; D Grant bt M Bate 11-4, 11-5; Ellison bt S Roberts 11-3, 11-4; H Buchanan bt Pringle 11-7, 11-4

Quarter-finals: E Fuller bt Akerman 11-6, 11-1; I Fuller bt Minta 12-10, 6-11, 11-5; Toop bt Grant 11-2, 11-4; Buchanan bt Ellison 11-4, 11-5

Semi-finals: E Fuller bt I Fuller 11-6, 11-1; Toop bt Buchanan 11-2, 7-11, 11-4

Final: Fuller bt Toop 11-2, 11-4

Plate: Bate

Doubles

1st round: Grant & Fleming bt Hanton & George 2-11, 11-8, 11-4; Pringle & Jones bt Ackland & Ackland 11-4, 11-4; Ellison & Mogford bt Arnott & Wilkinson 11-1, 11-3; Hatton & Korris bt Thomas & Winzeler 11-6, 12-10

Quarter-finals: Buchanan & Taberner bt Grant & Fleming 11-2, 11-9; Brooks & Beverly bt Gibbor & Colton 11-6, 11-4; Pringle & Jones bt Ellison & Mogford 9-11, 11-5, 11-1; Toop & Minta bt Hatton & Korris 11-9, 11-2

Semi-finals: Buchanan & Taberner bt Brooks & Beverly 6-11, 11-7, 12-10; Toop & Minta bt Pringle & Jones 11-2, 11-8

Final: Buchanan & Taberner bt Toop & Minta 11-7, 12-10
Plate: Gibbor & Colton

SUTTON VALENCE EXHIBITION MATCH

Sutton Valence School, 23rd September 2007

On Sunday September 23rd, the unique three-walled former Bat Fives courts at Sutton Valence School in Kent staged an exhibition match. Playing a specially adapted form of Rugby Fives to a fascinated audience was a huge selection of players, from the school's coach Steve Piper to senior RFA members (such as Ian Fuller and Dave Hebden) and a selection of local players, including Ian Jackson and Martin Wilkinson from Tonbridge as well as the Beals from Eastbourne College.

The courts themselves were in superb condition, and presented a new challenge to even the most experienced players. Replacing the back wall on the otherwise conventional (albeit relatively wide and short) courts were two lines on the ground. One, level with the end of the side walls, marked the end of the court for singles, while another (a couple of feet further back) was used for playing doubles. These were similar to the baseline in tennis, in that the ball had to bounce inside them to be 'in'. However, in pretty much every other respect, standard Rugby Fives rules were used for the afternoon's play.

Players adapted to the game quickly, though, soon learning the shots that were hardest to return. Low, hard drives wide to the rear of the court, in particular, were often effective winners; pushing an opponent to the back of the court before playing a short shot was another favoured tactic. For a look at the courts and players in action, visit the Gallery section of this site by clicking on either the link below or the link in the left-hand navigation bar.

OWERS TROPHY (OLD BOYS CHAMPIONSHIP)

St Paul's School, Barnes, 29th September 2007

For the second year running, the Alleyn Old Boys beat the Old Paulines to win the Owers Trophy. And, for the the second year running, the final was a nail-biting affair, with the Alleyn Old Boys' tactics working perfectly to secure them a (very) slightly more comfortable victory than in 2007. Last year, they won by just three points, but this year their advantage was a positively comfortable four.

Mind you, close matches had very much been the order of a day that had seen more than 50 players competing at two venues for the title. Although the Alleyn Old Boys and Old Dunstonians won their groups comfortably, things were much tighter in the other groups. Group Two was soon christened the 'Group of Death' and the Old Paulines first team only won through after overcoming a strong challenge from both the Old Blundellians and Old Olavians. The tightest group of all, though, was Group Four, where the Old Wykehamists and Old Eastbournians tied on 98 points apiece. With the game between the two teams also a tie, the result of the group was decided on points conceded, with the Wykehamists winning through to the semi-finals by virtue of having conceded only 19 points to the Old Oundelians, whereas the Old Eastbournians had dropped 20.

In the semi-finals, however, the Wykehamists met their match in the Alleyn Old Boys, and the Old Paulines beat the Old Dunstonians to set up a repeat of last year's final. And, a repeat is pretty much exactly what it was. The AOBs' top pair of Hamish Buchanan and Bruce Hanton won both their games comfortably, conceding just 10 points in the process. And, although top Paulines Alan Beverly and Charlie Brooks hammered the AOBs' second pair, it was the 12 points that the Ackland brothers secured in losing against the Paulines' second pair of Adrian Lee and Mark Gibbor that proved crucial in deciding the overall result.

The plate, too, was keenly contested and it seemed appropriate that two of the teams who had so narrowly missed out on a place in the semi-finals should reach the final. In the end, though, the stronger squad of the Old Blundellians had enough to record a comfortable win over the Old Eastbournians.

Group stages

Group 1: 1st Alleyn Old Boys 116pts; 2nd Old Paulines 2 91pts; 3rd Old Bedfordians 75pts

Group 2: 1st Old Paulines 1 119pts; 2nd Old Blundellians; 3rd Old Olavians

Group 3: 1st Old Dunstonians; 2nd Old Merchant Taylors'; 3rd Old Whitgiftians

Group 4: 1st Old Wykehamists 98pts*; 2nd Old Eastbournians 98pts; 3rd Old Oundelians 39pts

* Winners on points difference

Semi-finals: Alleyn Old Boys bt Old Wykehamists; Old Paulines 1 bt Old Dunstonians

Final: Alleyn Old Boys bt Old Paulines 44-40

Plate: Old Blundellians

YORKSHIRE OPEN DOUBLES TOURNAMENT

Giggleswick/Sedbergh Schools, 13th October 2007

Adverse climatic conditions meant that banana skins weren't the only slippery things in evidence at the 2007 Yorkshire Open. Misty drizzle aggravated the already damp appearance of the Giggleswick School courts and after the first two games, play was abandoned.

However, the organiser had contingency plans in readiness and the entire tournament decamped in convoy to Sedbergh School, where play recommenced (Sedbergh being, in reality, part of Yorkshire, before being loaned to Cumbria in the 1970s local government reorganisation). Hopefully Sedbergh's four re-furbished courts would enable the time lost in travelling to be made up.

Sadly, in similar weather, even those courts were unable to withstand the inevitable consequences of 32 sweating fives players, and after seeing two players lose their footing on the increasingly slippery court floors, organiser Ian Roberts declared the Tournament abandoned. Only six games and part of a seventh had been completed. The eighth game in the first round was not even commenced and play in the Plate never started either.

This was a tragedy, as there had been a strong entry of 16 pairs, with some novel combinations making the seeding of the middle ranks a difficult call. If play had continued, some interesting results might have ensued. The unfinished match left first seeds Hebden & Buchanan trailing 11-9 to Hal Mohammed & Will Midmer, whilst the other Durham University pair of Chris Hay & Alan Bowden took the first game off Wayne Enstone & Kevin Henry before the ambushed Mancunians recovered their cool, and with it their match. It was good to welcome two Rossall schoolboys and their enthusiastic master in charge to join what there was of the competition.

For all, there had been a lot of travel to little avail. But some of the combatants regained something of their flagging spirits with a pie & peas supper chez Neil & Gillian Roberts whilst watching England's Rugby World Cup semi-final victory over the French in Paris.

1st Round: S Korris & RJ Sutcliffe bt R Grey & CE Butler 11-4, 11-1; AJ Marshall & E Ronan bt P Brown & M Docherty 11-0, 11-0; J Minta & TC Widdop bt E Hawke & JR Hawke 11-6, 11-2; GW Enstone & K Henry bt A Bowden & C Hay 9-11, 11-0, 11-4; CD Lamb & PC Reynolds bt T Root & A Lewis 12-10, 11-3;

B Nithsdale & W Harrison bt B Kirk & R Christie 11-2, 11-1; H Mohammed & WF Midmer vs DJ

Hebden & NH Buchanan 11-9, match abandoned; TI Roberts & RG Sandie v NH Roberts & JG Beswick match not played
Remainder of Tournament and Plate Competition: Not played.

OFFICIAL RFA RANKINGS

London, 26th October 2007

After his win in the London Open, Ed Fuller has reached the top spot in the official RFA rankings, compiled by Dave Hebden. In doing so, he emulates his father, Ian, who last headed the rankings in 1999, and is still in the top 10 - at number seven.

Elsewhere in the top 10, James Toop (runner-up in the London Open) moves into fourth place ahead of Phil Bishop, while both Harry Akerman and Dan Grant (quarter-finalists at the London Open) jump into the top 20. At the same time, Will Ellison, who scored a notable win over Sam Roberts, climbs to 30th.

The top places in the doubles rankings remain unchanged, but London Open champion Ben Taberner jumps up to fifth, while runner-up James Toop is now just one place behind him. Highest risers in the doubles rankings are Dan Colton and Mark Gibbor, who won the Plate in the London Open. Click on the link below to see the full rankings.

WEST OF ENGLAND CHAMPIONSHIPS

Clifton College, 27/28th October 2007

Four years after he first won the title, James Toop won the singles title at the West of England Championships, while Hamish Buchanan and John Beswick teamed up for the first time in some 10 years to clinch the doubles title. In both cases, that was no mean feat, with the field being probably the strongest for any tournament in recent years. Five of the top six ranked players competed for the singles trophy and well over half of the top 30 doubles players vied for the doubles title.

With such a strong field, upsets were inevitable, and so it proved. In the first round, for example, Charlie Brooks beat Kevin Henry in three games, but the biggest shock of the tournament came in the second round, where former national champion Phil Bishop lost to Will Ellison in three gruelling games. However, neither could capitalise on their victories, with Charlie going out to Mark Gibbor in the second round, and Will losing to Harry Akerman (unseeded, despite his number 15 ranking) in the quarter-finals.

Harry was joined in the semi-finals by the top two seeds – defending champion Matt Cavanagh and James Toop – and John Minta, who had played what he described as his best ever single game of fives in beating Hamish Buchanan in the previous round. Matt had a comfortable win over Harry, but the second semi was much tighter: John took the first game by the narrowest of margins, only for James to come back strongly and take the next two games comfortably. It was from him he would continue into the final, and he duly emerged as champion after a comprehensive win in two games.

In the doubles tournament, too, the top ranked players were made to work hard – John Minta and Phil Bishop were pushed all the way by Mark Gibbor and Dan Colton in the first round, for example – but eventually it was the eight seeded pairs who reached the quarter-finals, with three of the top four going on to the semi-finals. The exception was the top-seeded pair of Bishop and Minta, who lost a hard-hitting encounter with Alex Rew and Jim Hughes in three games.

That set up a semi-final clash with Marcus Bate and James Toop and, although Jim and Alex played well, the London pair just had enough to edge it in two tight games. In the final, they faced John Beswick and

Hamish Buchanan, who had made ominously easy progress, never conceding more than four points in any one game. And, come the final, they carried on where they had left off, with a clinical display of power and consistency to beat their young rivals in two games.

Finally, in a tournament of such quality, a word must go to the winners of the two plate tournaments. In the singles, Alex Griffiths played superbly to win the silverware, winning both his semi-final and the final (against Alex Rew and Jim Hughes, respectively) by just two points. In the doubles, meanwhile, Harry Akerman and Mario Mohammed (who took more points off the eventual champions in the main tournament than any other pair) won the trophy, but only after a nail-biting 16-15 win over Tom Maconie and Will Ellison in the semi-final.

Singles

1st round: D Grant bt D Ackland 11-2, 11-1, M Bate bt F Sjostrom 11-5, 11-4; H Akerman bt T Maconie 11-1, 11-4; P Bishop bt A Griffiths 11-6, 11-4; H Buchanan bt R Nagy 11-6, 11-1; S Moger bt D Colton 11-7, 11-5; A Pringle bt J Hughes 11-8, 6-11, 11-6; C Brooks bt K Henry 9-11, 11-1, 11-5; M Gibbor bt Clapp 11-4, 11-1; S Maskell bt S Watson 11-4, 11-6; J Toop bt E Hatton 11-4, 11-6
2nd round: M Cavanagh bt A Rew 11-4, 11-4; Grant bt Bate 11-12, 11-6, 12-11; Akerman bt B Taberner 11-4, 12-10; W Ellison bt Bishop 11-7, 9-11, 11-7; Buchanan bt Moger 11-4, 11-3; J Minta bt Pringle 11-8, 11-7; Gibbor bt Brooks 11-4, 11-9; Toop bt Maskell 11-1, 11-2
Quarter-finals: Cavanagh bt Grant 11-5, 11-2; Akerman bt Ellison 11-5, 11-5; Minta bt Buchanan 11-4, 11-8; Toop bt Gibbor 11-8, 11-3
Semi-finals: Cavanagh bt Akerman 11-5, 11-2; Toop bt Minta 11-12, 11-2, 11-1
Final: Toop bt Cavanagh 11-3, 11-5

Singles Plate

Preliminary round: Sjostrom bt Clapp 15-6; Hatton bt Ackland 15-11
Quarter-finals: Rew bt Maconie 15-3; Griffiths bt Nagy 15-11; Taberner bt Sjostrom 15-6; Hughes bt Hatton 15-4
Semi-finals: Griffiths bt Rew 16-14; Hughes bt Taberner 15-13
Final: Griffiths bt Hughes 15-13

Doubles

1st round: Ackland & Griffiths bt Lewis & Watson 11-2, 11-8; Hanton & Hanton bt King & Werkshagen 11-9, 11-4
2nd round: Bishop & Minta bt Gibbor & Colton 11-9, 11-8; Rew & Hughes bt Lawson & Moger 11-6, 11-8; Jones & Pringle bt Ackland & Griffiths 11-2, 11-8; Bate & Toop bt Maconie & Ellison 11-3, 11-6; d'Ancona & Taberner bt Aveston & King 11-5, 11-6; Enstone & Henry bt Hanton & Hanton 11-5, 11-7; Grant & Sjostrom bt Nagy & Smith 6-11, 12-10, 12-10; Beswick & Buchanan bt Akerman & Mohammed 11-4, 11-4
Quarter-finals: Rew & Hughes bt Bishop & Minta 11-6, 9-11, 11-2; Bate & Toop bt Pringle & Jones 11-5, 11-3; d'Ancona & Taberner bt Enstone & Henry 11-6, 11-8; Beswick & Buchanan bt Grant & Sjostrom 11-2, 11-3
Semi-finals: Bate & Toop bt Hughes & Rew 11-8, 12-11; Beswick & Buchanan bt d'Ancona & Taberner 11-2, 11-1
Final: Beswick & Buchanan bt Bate & Toop 11-2, 11-1

Doubles Plate

Preliminary round: Nagy & Smith bt Lawson & Moger 15-10; Maconie & Ellison bt Aveston & King 15-10
Semi-finals: Gibbor & Colton bt Smith & Nagy 15-9; Akerman & Mohammed bt Maconie & Ellison 16-15
Final: Akerman & Mohammed bt Gibbor & Colton 15-6

SCHOOLS WINCHESTER FIVES DOUBLES TOURNAMENT

Winchester College, 4th November 2007

Only five schools entered this year, with Alleyn's bringing a pair for the first time. Sadly, no Winchester Fives-playing schools (apart from the hosts) were able to support the tournament – the first time this has happened. It is perhaps time to re-examine the *raison d'être* of this modest event.

The four seeded pairs duly reached the semi-finals, although Winchester I were given a stern early examination by St Paul's IV, the eventual plate winners. Alleyn's gave the top St Paul's pair a shock by taking the first game of the semi-final to 2, but the Paulines changed tactics and came back strongly to take the second game to 1 and the third to 7. St Paul's II had just the better of the second semi-final against the top Winchester pair, winning in two close games.

The final, played in front of a select gallery, went to three games and was narrowly won by the St Paul's first pair (Faber and Malone) who were marginally steadier and more accurate than St Paul's II (Harris and Hine). Congratulations to St Paul's on their high standard of fives, and many thanks to Dr McManus and Winchester College for their hospitality.

1st Round: Winchester II bt Marlborough II 16-15, 15-8; Christ's Hospital bt St Paul's III 15-5, 15-13; Winchester III bt Marlborough I 15-1, 15-9; St Paul's IV w/o Alleyn's II
Quarter-finals: St Paul's I bt Winchester II 15-2, 15-7; Alleyn's I bt Christ's Hospital 15-3, 15-4; St Paul's II bt Winchester III 15-5, 15-5; Winchester I bt St Paul's IV 15-11, 15-12
Semi-finals: St Paul's I bt Alleyn's I 2-15, 15-1, 15-7; St Paul's II bt Winchester I 15-12, 16-15
Final: St Paul's I (J Faber & E Malone) bt St Paul's II (J Harris & M Hine) 15-7, 12-15, 15-11

NORTH OF ENGLAND WINCHESTER FIVES CHAMPIONSHIP

Sedbergh, 11th November 2007

As the players gathered for the Northern Winchester Doubles Tournament, the distant strains of the Sedbergh School CCF Band participating in the School's Remembrance Day commemorations were much in evidence. Play commenced after the last post had been sounded, with the eight participating pairs playing in two blocks of four. Each pair played the other three pairs in their block on the basis of totalling the scores over two games to eleven.

Each block produced a winner and a runner up. After a play-off across the blocks, the finalists emerged with Old Sedberghian Roger Pearson and fellow White Rose Club player Bob Sandie pitted against Brian Kirk and Clive Butler. The result was a victory for Sandie and Pearson played as best of three games to fifteen (which was convenient as Bob Sandie had forgotten to bring the Trophy with him from the previous Tournament). And this despite Brian's consistently accurate serving into the buttress throughout the competition.

The Block play also produced a Plate Final, comprising Tournament organiser and Sedbergh master-in-charge Laurence Catlow and his pupil Matt Pimlott, who played Charles Lamb and John Hawke. Local knowledge reigned triumphant, with the Sedbergh pair making full advantage of the buttress to seize custody of the Plate.

Laurence Catlow was clearly relieved that the improvements to the Sedbergh courts had proved their worth and enabled the Tournament to proceed without interruption. For the Sedbergh pair to retain the Plate at Sedbergh must have been a most satisfactory conclusion to a most enjoyable day.

Block A: RG Sandie & RA Pearson bt T Root & A Lewis 22-1; Ayling & Elletson 22-5; CD Lamb & JR Hawke 22-8. Root & Lewis bt Ayling & Elletson 22-20. Lamb & Hawke bt Root & Lewis 18-13. Ayling & Elletson bt Lamb & Hawke 16-14.

Block B: B Kirk & C Butler bt TI Roberts & DK McIntyre 22-2; P Brown & M Docherty 22-8; L Catlow & Pimlott 22-5. Brown & Docherty bt Roberts & McIntyre 22-7; Catlow & Pimlott 22-5. Catlow & Pimlott bt Roberts & McIntyre 22-12.

Final: Sandie & Pearson bt Kirk & Butler 15-10, 15-8

Plate Final: Catlow & Pimlott bt Lamb & Hawke 11-7, 11-5

NATIONAL STUDENT & BUSA CHAMPIONSHIPS

Christ's Hospital, 23rd/25th November 2007

There were excellent attendances at the 2007 BUSA Championships from several universities, particularly Oxford, Cambridge, Durham, Leeds and London, but it was also very pleasing to see appearances from Southampton, Edinburgh and Bristol. In the end, though, three of the four titles were won by Oxford, with Dan Tristao in his first year winning both the main Singles and – partnered by Oxford captain Jack Furniss – Doubles titles.

Although only two of the Main singles matches went to three games, these both took place late on Friday, delaying the organisers' eating and drinking! Will Midmer lost narrowly to sixth seed Mark Gibbor, and ninth seed Chris Hay beat eighth seed Jonny Major.

The two singles semi-finals on Saturday afternoon were completely different in style. Cambridge's Alan Beverly battled through against Bristol's Dan Colton in two hard-hitting games, packed full of aces and back-wall nick winners. However, the second match, between Imperial's Will Ellison and Dan Tristao, illustrated well how a slightly slower ball rewards the positioning of your opponent around the court and then killing them off with delicate drop-shots. Tristao demonstrated this in a near-perfect second game against the highly rated Ellison.

The final was something special, with Tristao's accuracy and ability to get his shots to hug the wall more than a match for Beverly's power on both sides. Alan fought bravely in his attempt to retain the title, but was eventually undone by a very nimble opponent.

Whilst 14 of the 16 seeds made it through to the last 16 of the singles, the doubles created a few surprises. Cambridge pairs had won five of the last six BUSA titles, but Durham's second pair of Chris Hay and Adrian Love beat Cambridge's first pair in the quarter-finals. Meanwhile, top seeds Hal Mohammed and Will Midmer (also from Durham) moved serenely through to the final, beating Tim Barlow and a badly injured Jonny Major from Edinburgh in their semi-final. Oxford's Furniss and Tristao also moved steadily into the final, beating the vanquishers of Cambridge in the semis.

The final was always going to be tense, with both pairs having plenty of experience and a left-right combination. Durham took early leads in both games, but Oxford reeled them in and eventually took the title with some excellent hitting, producing several superb outright winners along the way.

The singles plate went to Durham's Charlie Legget, who beat Oxford's Alistair Jennings in three close games. Having lost his doubles partner Allan Bowden to injury and only able to play in the doubles plate, the victory was all the more sweeter. The doubles plate kept the scorers busy, eventually going to Oxford's Sam Adcock and David Park, despite the former's entire fives kit ending up in Hastings on the

last Saturday night train! In another three-gamer, they overcame their Varsity rivals, Cambridge's Alqahir Ladak and Paul Simister.

Christ's Hospital was an excellent location for the competition and thanks must go to Bill Avenell and the School for allowing us the 6th form centre for the competitors to relax in. Thanks must also go to all the players, supporters and organisers. BUSA have funded and helped the RFA organise the competition for several years now and it was great to have Vikki Scott, BUSA's Sports Programme Manager, supporting on finals day and congratulating the winners as they received their medals and trophies from Chris Horrocks CBE, the RFA President.

This Universities competition would probably never have started had it not been for David Gardner's organisation 47 years ago, and it certainly would not run as smoothly as it has done over the years had he not been at the helm every year since then. This was David's 48th BUSA tournament as organiser, with the 49th likely to be in Edinburgh.

Singles

1st round: Love (Dur) bt Porteous (Leeds) 15-0, 15-0; Carr (Bristol) bt Rutley (UCL) 15-1, 15-1; Hay bt Bhuva (UCL) w/o; Reid (Cam) bt Weisner (Leeds) 15-3, 15-3; Park (Ox) bt Vara (UCL) 15-1, 15-3; Holl (Ox) bt Ackland (UCL) w/o; Hale (S'ton) bt Jones (Cam) w/o; Lebon (Cam) bt Chandler (Dur) 15-0, 15-1; Bowden (Dur) bt Arcoumanis (UCL) 15-6, 15-7; Cochran (Dur) bt Tidy (Ox B) 15-4, 15-4; Jennings (Ox) bt Morse (S'ton) 15-4, 15-9; Midmer (Dur) bt Parker (Leeds) 15-1, 15-3; Adcock (Ox) bt Roberts (Dur) 15-0, 15-0

2nd round: Beverly (Cam) bt Kelly (Ox) 15-0, 15-0; Love bt Carr 15-10, 15-9; Hay bt Reid 15-2, 15-1; Major (Edin) bt Park 15-7, 15-4; Colton (Bris) bt Gwynn (Cam) 15-0, 15-1; Barlow (Edin) bt Orton (Dur) 15-7, 15-6; Holl bt Hale 15-5, 15-4; Benson (Leeds) bt Acton (UCL) 15-9, 15-9; Ellison (Imp) bt Belassie (Cam) w/o; Lebon bt Fleming (UCL) 15-11, 15-4; Furniss (Ox) bt Bowden 15-2, 15-2; Marshall (Leeds) bt Cochran 15-2, 15-2; Gibbor (UCL) bt Leggett (Dur) 15-3, 15-7; Midmer bt Jennings 15-9, 15-4; Ladak (Cam) bt Adcock 15-7, 15-10; Tristao (Ox) bt Simister (Cam) 15-5, 15-3

3rd round: Beverly bt Love 15-8, 15-6; Hay bt Major 14-16, 15-4, 15-8; Colton bt Barlow 15-10, 15-13; Holl bt Benson 15-2, 15-2; Ellison bt Lebon 15-2, 15-4; Marshall bt Furniss 15-0, 15-11; Gibbor bt Midmer 15-11, 13-15 15-12; Tristao bt Ladak 15-5, 15-3

Quarter-finals: Beverly bt Hay 15-4, 15-5; Colton bt Holl 15-0, 15-6; Ellison bt Marshall 15-12, 15-5; Tristao bt Gibbor 15-5, 15-6

Semi-finals: Beverly bt Colton 15-11, 15-9; Tristao bt Ellison 15-5, 15-1

Final: Tristao bt Beverly 15-11, 15-9

Plate: Leggett

Doubles

1st round: Major & Barlow (Edin) bt Belassie & Jones (Cam) w/o; Cochran & Roberts (Dur) bt Tidy (Ox B) & Kelly (Ox) 8-15, 12-14 rtd; Colton & Carr (Bris) bt Vara & Arcoumanis (UCL) 15-7, 15-8; Hay & Love (Dur) bt Horsewood & Fleming (UCL) 15-3, 15-6

2nd round: Mohammed & Midmer (Dur) bt Bhuva & Hedley (UCL) 15-2, 15-0; Holl & Jennings (Ox) bt Hale & Morse (S'ton) 15-6, 15-2; Major & Barlow bt Cochran & Roberts 15-2, 15-3; Gibbor & Ackland (UCL) bt Benson & Parker (Leeds) 15-1, 15-0; Furniss & Tristao (Ox) bt Simister & Ladak (Cam) 15-2, 15-5; Colton & Carr bt Weil & Hedley 15-1, 15-2; Hay & Love bt Marshall & Weisner 15-2, 15-8; Beverly & Lebon (Cam) bt Park & Adcock (Ox) 15-1, 15-3

Quarter-finals: Mohammed & Midmer bt Holl & Jennings 15-2, 15-6; Major & Barlow bt Gibbor & Ackland 15-15, 15-8, 15-11; Furniss & Tristao bt Colton & Carr 15-10, 15-7; Hay & Love bt Beverly & Lebon 13-15, 15-5, 15-3

Semi-finals: Mohammed & Midmer bt Major & Barlow 15-5, 15-2; Tristao & Furniss bt Hay & Love 15-5, 15-4

Final: Tristao & Furniss bt Mohammed & Midmer 15-10, 15-7

Plate: Park & Adcock

ITALIAN OPEN HANDBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Nizza Monferrato, Italy, 16/18th November 2007

On the 16-18th November, a crack team of English handball players headed over to Nizza Monferrato (near Milan and famous for its wine) for the Italian Open Handball championships, writes Dan Grant.

One-wall handball is basically a very simplified version of fives, allowing people from around the world, with their different variations of handball, to compete on common ground. In a nutshell, there is one wall and a court. You have to hit a big blue bouncy rubber ball against the wall and into the court – a rally generally follows. You can play singles or doubles, though this weekend, we only played doubles.

England's first pair was a made up of two Eton fives players – Pete Cohen and David Mew – and the second pair was Rugby – Dan Grant and Adrian Lee – and each adjusted to the game in various ways. The secret of handball is to be good at volleying and to have super-fast reactions near the front wall (where the Eton duo excelled), but you also have to be able to hit it low (the best shot is to hit the nick where the wall meets the floor) and powerfully – a Rugby skill. This was the first time most of us had played competitively against other nations, so the whole weekend was a superb learning curve and we all noticeably improved as the weekend went on.

The experience was a little bit surreal, with an FA Cup-style draw done for the group stages on the Friday night – the Italian version however, consisted of 4 wenches fishing names out of various wine glasses – and then on Saturday the competition commenced. There was a flag procession for all the nations in front of 200 screaming fans and we were filmed for local television.

We would be competing against the Welsh, Irish, French, Belgians, Dutch, Basques, Italians and Americans. Pete and David had a good victory over the home team in the group stages and then put up a good fight in the plate. Dan and Ady also played very well, and although they lost all their group matches, fortunately they didn't finish with the wooden spoon, because they beat the Welsh on points!

In the end, England's first pair finished 16th out of 21 (having annihilated the Belgians) and our second finished 18th – after destroying the Netherlands in the Bowl competition. Although this may not seem too good, considering it was the third time we'd ever played, we were pretty happy with our progress. Things can only get better from here on and, come the world championships in 2009, the smart money is definitely going to be on us to win (probably).

In the end, the USA dominated and thrashed everyone, since one-wall handball is actually their native sport. It was a great experience and it was awesome to meet so many people from around the world. Thanks to Ady, the England team had by far the best kit and we made every other country jealous; Milan being the capital of fashion, we had to get our priorities right! But the highlight of the weekend had to be the French getting red-carded in the quarter finals for disorderly conduct. Excellent.

LADIES NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

St Paul's School, Barnes, 2nd December 2007

This year we had an excellent entry of 17 in the singles and 16 in the doubles. We had a contingent of five from Durham University and four from UCL amongst others. Out of the total entry, only four had played in ladies Rugby Fives tournaments before, making seeding a bit of a lottery!

We started with the singles tournament, where yet again no-one was able to equal the excellent playing by Claire Knowles who dropped only one point in the contest and made it appear virtually effortless despite an ongoing knee problem. Emma Seton proved a strong number 2 seed in the bottom half of the draw but was only able to take one point in the final. The singles plate was deservedly won by Irene Bravo, our only schoolgirl entrant, currently in her final year at Malvern College.

In the doubles tournament, Claire Knowles and Melanie Whitehead dominated the top half of the draw, although the Eton fives pairing of Sophie Palmer and Claire Rymarz put up a strong fight. The bottom half was dominated by the first-time pairing of Emma Seton and Irene Bravo, who proved to be a force to be reckoned with. The final was closer than it has been in recent years, with Claire and Melanie winning through 15-4, 15-8. The doubles plate was won convincingly by Helen Toop (crossing over from Eton fives) and Gemma Reece.

Singles

Preliminary round: G Reece bt T Cardona 15-5

1st round: C Knowles bt G Reece 15-0; A Peacock bt E Kislingbury 15-1; J Dickson bt K Larch 15-13; C Rymarz bt M Griffith 15-3; M Whitehead bt K Roberts 15-3; H Toop bt I Bravo 15-10; S Palmer bt S Nigam 15-0; E Seton bt A Hatch 15-0

Quarter-finals: Knowles bt Peacock 15-0; Rymarz bt Dickson 15-1; Whitehead bt Toop 15-2; Seton bt Palmer 15-2

Semi-finals: Knowles bt Rymarz 15-0; Seton bt Whitehead 15-2

Final: Knowles bt Seton 15-0, 15-1

Plate: Bravo

Doubles

1st round: Knowles & Whitehead bt Kislingbury & Cardona 15-1; Palmer & Rymarz bt Toop & Reece 15-1; Peacock & Roberts bt Griffith & Nigam 15-2; Seton & Bravo bt Larch & Hatch 15-2

Semi-finals: Knowles & Whitehead bt Palmer & Rymarz 15-2; Seton & Bravo bt Peacock & Roberts 15-6

Final: Knowles & Whitehead bt Seton & Bravo 15-4, 15-8

Plate: Toop & Reece

NATIONAL OPEN SINGLES CHAMPIONSHIP

St Paul's School, Barnes, 1st/2nd December 2007

Ferocious competition was the consistent theme of the 2007 National Singles championships. This had also been true in the qualifying rounds, with players of the calibre of Marcus Bate and Simon Fraser having to work hard even to earn a place in the finals. Half of the first-round matches of the last 16 went to three games. Particularly notable was the match between Simon Fraser against Hamish Buchanan, a repeat of their meeting in the 2001 final, and with the same result, a win for Hamish. Simon went on to comfortably win the plate, though, and hopefully he will continue to be seen in competition more often. Bate was visibly pleased and exhausted after a gritty win against d'Ancona.

At the quarter-final stage, one of the few disappointments of the day struck. John Minta, in excellent form throughout the season and on the day, twinged a muscle in his shoulder and was forced to retire. Phil Bishop went on to carry the flag for Manchester in a well-contested semi-final against James Toop, but John was inevitably frustrated to not have a shot against the Number 1. Hamish had by now gained some rhythm in a close match against Marcus Bate, as had Matt Cavanagh against Will Ellison, and James Toop had hit top form in efficiently dispatching Chris Jones. He maintained the seeming fitness edge of not having played a three-gamer on Saturday by beating Phil Bishop in a close two-game semi-final, whilst on the other side of the draw Hamish Buchanan finally triumphed in a mammoth 3 gamer against Matt Cavanagh, after being prematurely discounted by certain spectators.

The final on Sunday morning appropriately showcased the highest quality fives to be found; James' invention, disguise and unpredictability against Hamish's consistency, retrieval and adaptability. These were also the qualities which determined the pattern of the match. In the first game, both played exacting length and width to extend and test each other's precision. Some exceptional pressure-volleying brought points for James, but neither was able to achieve a significant points gap and Hamish edged out the game 15-13. As the second game progressed, it became apparent that, in response to James' round-the-wall shots and tactical spin, Hamish was consistently able to adapt and anticipate more often than not. It's true that a shoulder injury reduced James' power on the right hand side, but this should take nothing away from the laudable achievement of Hamish in both substantially neutralising James' weapons and winning in two very close games. Both men's fitness was exceptional, and Hamish walked away a worthy champion for the third time.

1st round: J Toop bt S Maskell 15-2, 15-2; C Jones bt D Fox 15-8, 14-16, 15-8; P Bishop bt S Korris 15-1, 15-8; J Minta bt E Hatton 15-3, 15-2; H Buchanan bt S Fraser 11-15, 15-11, 15-9; M Bate bt P d'Ancona 5-15, 15-6, 15-13; W Ellison bt M Skogh

12-15, 15-2, 15-9; M Cavanagh bt T Maconie 15-6, 15-0

Quarter-finals: Toop bt Jones 15-2, 15-0; Bishop bt Minta 7-9 (retired); Buchanan bt Bate 15-12, 15-8; Cavanagh bt Ellison 15-8, 15-5

Semi-finals: Toop bt Bishop 15-12, 15-8; Buchanan bt Cavanagh 15-9, 8-15, 15-7

Final: Buchanan bt Toop 15-13, 15-13

Plate: Fraser

PRESIDENT'S CUP

Merchant Taylors' School, 9th December 2007

Phil Atkinson and Jon Abecassis combined superbly to lift the President's Cup with a tough two-game win over Ollie Stone-Lee and Brian Kirk. For Phil, it was his second win in the tournament (his first came in 2002) and he remains one of just four players to have lifted every trophy on offer at the event.

The pair looked a force to be reckoned with right from the off, winning all their matches on the way to the final in two games and only once conceding more than 10 points in a single game. Crucially, they combined a left-hander and a right-hander, and opponents struggled to find a weakness in their game. Phil served beautifully and dominated the left-hand side of the court, hitting a good length as well playing some lovely deft touches off the side wall, while Jon was almost faultless on the right-hand side, hitting with power and accuracy.

Ollie and Brian, on the other hand, had an altogether tougher route to the final, only clinching their place a 16-14 win in the third game of their semi-final. Despite that, they went on to push their opponents hard in a gripping match that was full of great play and drew a warm round of applause from the spectators.

But, while Ollie and Brian could claim the distinction of being the pair to score the most points off them, Jon and Phil always had the edge and duly completed a worthy victory.

Almost inevitably, though, this wasn't the last match to finish. On the next-door court, the losing semi-finalists from the main competition went on to meet in the final of the Mate's Plate. And, again almost inevitably, the match went to three games. Andy Pringle and Matt Hanney came back strongly to level the match in the second game, but faced some superb serving in the third game that effectively stopped them scoring. So, it was the pairing of Alex Smith and Bruce Hanton who doggedly held out to clinch the day's final piece of silverware, only coming off court at 8.30pm after their 12th game of the day.

The event's other two trophies went to Tony Burrows and Ed Ronan, who won the T Pot, and to Richard Fetherston and Hamish Buchanan (winning the Love Mug), the latter picking up a trophy at the event for the third consecutive year.

1st round: A Burrows & E Ronan bt W Ellison & R Christie 14-16, 15-9, 15-11; O Stone-Lee & B Kirk bt G Matthews & C Burrows 15-8, 15-8; A Smith & B Hanton bt H Buchanan & R Fetherston 15-11, 15-9; B Nithsdale & B Baral bt S Korris & J Hawke 16-15, 10-15, 15-10; A Pringle & M Hanney bt C Lamb & G Price 16-15, 15-9; A Passey & P Hanton bt A Lee & R Bridge 15-10, 15-11; J Abecassis & P Atkinson bt

E Hawke & I Roberts 15-9, 15-7; R Grey & F Sjostrom bt D Grant & T Webster 15-7, 15-4

Quarter-finals: Stone-Lee & Kirk bt Ronan & Burrows 15-3, 15-4; Smith & Hanton bt Nithsdale & Baral 15-5, 15-9; Pringle & Hanney bt Passey & Hanton 15-12, 15-9; Abecassis & Atkinson bt Grey & Sjostrom 15-11, 15-3

Semi-finals: Stone-Lee & Kirk bt Smith & Hanton 10-15, 15-9, 16-14; Abecassis & Atkinson bt Pringle & Hanney 15-6, 15-5

Final: Abecassis & Atkinson bt Stone-Lee & Kirk 15-11, 15-11

Mate's Plate: Smith & Hanton

T Pot: Burrows & Ronan

Love Mug: Buchanan & Fetherston

OFFICIAL RFA RANKINGS

London, 14th December 2007

Following his win in the National Singles Championship (see below) Hamish Buchanan has moved up to third place in the official RFA rankings, prepared by Dave Hebden. Runner-up James Toop remains in top spot, but the top four players (also including Matt Cavanagh and Ed Fuller) are now covered by just five points – an incredibly tight position.

Elsewhere in the rankings, several other players also benefit from successful campaigns in the National Singles Championship. Both Marco Skogh and Chris Jones makes good progress in the top 20, while Plate winner Simon Fraser jumps up to 22 and there are good moves for Ed Hatton, Steve Korris and Simon Maskell, as well as from Tom Maonie, who jumps straight into the top 30.

The recent BUSA Championships also provided a good boost to some players' rankings. Dan Tristao, a double winner at the tournament, jumps straight into the top 20 of the singles rankings and (with partner Jack Furniss) straight into the top 30 doubles. Elsewhere, Dan Colton, Chris Hay and Rob Holl head up the singles rankings, while losing finalists Hal Mohammed and Will Midmer jump up the doubles table.

WEST OF ENGLAND SCHOOLS' CHAMPIONSHIPS

Sherborne, 5th/6th January 2007

85 boys from 13 schools competed in the West of England Schools' Championships, but no single school dominated the list of winners. Alleyn's took both the Senior and Colts singles titles, St Paul's won the Senior Doubles title, but there was a first in the Colts Doubles championship, where boys from Derby Moor Community Sports College won a title for the first time in the school's history.

That win came courtesy of Ashley Hill and Anthony Goodwin, who beat Alleyn's in a three-game final. The same two schools also provided the finalists in the Colts Singles championship, but this time it was a win for the London school, with last year's winner Peter Hanton retaining his title with a win over Hill.

Alleyn's also took the Senior Singles title thanks to a hard-fought win by second-seeded Inigo Ackland over the top seed, Jamie Faber from St Paul's. Revenge came in the Doubles final, though, where St Paul's (Faber and Tim Hoolahan) beat Alleyn's (Ackland and Richard Lowe) in a tight three-game match.

Senior Singles

1st Round: Edwardson (Oundle) bt Kerrison (Merchant Taylors') 15-9; Walport (St Paul's) bt Collyer (Tonbridge); Longstreet (Blundell's) bt Spencer (Oundle) 15-1; Booker (KCS) bt Tunnard (Oundle) 15-2; Kennedy (Winchester) bt Bellringer (KCS) 15-8; Pickford (Eastbourne) bt Gamble (Winchester) 15-2; Baker (St Paul's) bt Reville (Rossall) 15-8; Ahrabian (St Paul's) bt Holder-Williams (Rossall) 15-3; Gauntlett (Christ's Hospital) bt Garratt (Eastbourne) 15-11; Garratt (Alleyn's) bt Docherty (Rossall) 15-8; Sri-Pathmathanan (KCS) bt Miller (Merchant Taylors'); Nichol (Oundle) bt Hennock (Christ's Hospital) 15-1; Rogers (Winchester) bt Hemming-Brown (Merchant Taylors') 15-10

2nd Round: Faber (St Paul's) bt Edwardson 15-1; Kelly (Winchester) bt Walport 15-3; George (Alleyn's) bt Longstreet 15-3; Sloan (Merchant Taylors') bt Booker 15-8; Burrows (Oundle) bt Kennedy 15-5; Barnes

(St Paul's) bt Pickford 15-6; Lowe (Alleyn's) bt Baker 15-11; Hoolahan (St Paul's) bt Choudhry (Merchant Taylors') 15-2; Winzeler (KCS) bt Marler (St Paul's) 15-0; Squire-Smith (Winchester) bt Ahrabian 16-14; Mighal (Christ's Hospital) bt Gauntlett 15-1; Rowland (St Paul's) bt Garratt (Alleyn's) 15-2; Simpson (Christ's Hospital) bt Hunter (Alleyn's) 15-2; Malone (St Paul's) bt Sri-Pathmathanan 15-6; Hine (St Paul's) bt Nichol 15-4; Ackland (Alleyn's) bt Rogers 15-0

3rd Round: Faber bt Kelly 15-0; George bt Sloan 15-9; Barnes bt Burrows 15-13; Hoolahan bt Lowe 15-8; Winzeler bt Squire-Smith 15-5; Rowland bt Mighall 15-3; Malone bt Simpson 16-15; Ackland bt Hine 15-3

Quarter-finals: Faber bt George 11-1, 11-4; Hoolahan bt Barnes 11-4, 11-7; Winzeler bt Rowland 11-3, 11-4; Ackland bt Malone 11-1, 11-2

Semi-finals: Faber bt Hoolahan 11-8, 11-9; Ackland bt Winzeler 11-9, 11-5

Final: Ackland bt Faber 11-9, 11-6

Plate: Marler

Senior Doubles

1st Round: Rossall II bt Oundel II 15-13; Christ's Hospital II bt Merchant Taylors' II w/o

2nd Round: Christ's Hospital I bt KCS II 15-7; Alleyn's II bt Rossall II 15-1; Alleyn's III bt Eastbourne 15-4; St Paul's IV bt Christ's Hospital II 15-3; Winchester III bt Rossall I 15-7; Merchant Taylors' III bt Marlborough 15-3

3rd Round: St Paul's I bt Christ's Hospital I 15-8; Alleyn's II bt KCS I 15-6; St Paul's III bt Alleyn's III 15-7; Winchester I bt St Paul's IV 15-3; St Paul's II bt Winchester II 15-9; Merchant Taylors' I bt St Paul's V 15-13; Oundle I bt Winchester III 15-9; Alleyn's I bt Merchant Taylors' III 15-3

Quarter-finals: St Paul's I bt Alleyn's II 11-4, 11-4; Winchester I bt St Paul's III 11-2, 11-5; St Paul's II bt Merchant Taylors' I 11-9, 4-11, 11-4; Alleyn's I bt Oundle I 11-1, 11-4
Semi-finals: St Paul's I bt Winchester I 11-2, 11-1; Alleyn's I bt St Paul's II 11-2, 9-11, 11-6
Final: St Paul's I (Faber & Hoolahan) bt Alleyn's I (Ackland & Lowe) 10-12, 11-5, 11-1
Plate: Eastbourne (Garratt & Pickford)

Colts Singles

1st Round: Rees-Bidder (Bedford Modern) bt Neale-Draysey (Christ's Hospital) 15-12; Bowyer-Knight (Marlborough) bt Page (Bedford Modern) 15-4; Percival (Merchant Taylors') bt Leydon (Merchant Taylors') 15-9; Longstreet (Blundell's) bt Wilson (Bedford Modern) 15-2; Edmonds (St Paul's) bt Judge (Merchant Taylors') 15-9; Stephens-Hemingway (Alleyn's) bt Durant (Blundell's) 15-7

2nd Round: Hanton (Alleyn's) bt Smith (Merchant Taylors') 15-0; Buhagiar (Merchant Taylors') bt Evans (Tonbridge) w/o; Ward (St Paul's) bt Rees-Bidder 15-0; Thompson (Christ's Hospital) bt Malde (St Paul's) 15-12; Lane (Winchester) bt Forrest (Christ's Hospital) 15-0; Hall (Blundell's) bt Bowyer-Knight 15-8; Garrat (Eastbourne) bt Percival 15-8; Chase (St Paul's) bt Rolls (Marlborough) 15-6; Kay (St Paul's) bt Hooker (Merchant Taylors') 15-3; Goodwin (Derby Moor) bt Longstreet 15-3; Edmonds bt Mathias (Christ's Hospital) 15-4; Bowden (Alleyn's) bt Lewis (Rossall) 15-7; Edmonds (St Paul's) bt Graham (Winchester)

15-1; Owen (Winchester) bt Stephens-Hemingway 15-6; Kennedy (Winchester) bt Payne (Blundell's) 15-7; Hill (Derby Moor) bt Barker (Merchant Taylors') 15-0

3rd Round: Hanton bt Buhagiar 15-0; Thompson bt Ward 15-12; Lane bt Hall 15-4; Chase bt Garratt 15-0; Kay bt Goodwin 15-3; Bowden bt Edmonds 15-11; Edmonds (St Paul's) bt Owen 15-10; Hill bt Kennedy 15-0

Quarter-finals: Hanton bt Thompson 11-0, 11-0; Chase bt Lane 11-5, 11-4; Kaye bt Bowden 11-8, 11-7; Hill bt Edmonds 11-4, 11-4

Semi-finals: Hanton bt Chase 11-0, 11-4; Hill bt Kay 11-0, 11-3

Final: Hanton bt Hill 11-8, 11-2

Plate: Rolls

Colts Doubles

1st Round: Alleyn's I by Blundell's I 15-3; Eastbourne bt St Paul's III 15-13; Winchester I bt Merchant Taylors' III 15-0; St Paul's II bt Merchant Taylors' II 15-2; Derby Moor bt Christ's Hospital II 15-0; St Paul's I bt Marlborough 15-11

Quarter-finals: Alleyn's I bt Eastbourne 11-0, 11-0; St Paul's II bt Winchester I 11-1, 12-10; Derby Moor bt Christ's Hospital I 11-0, 11-0; St Paul's I bt Merchant Taylors' I 11-3, 11-1

Semi-finals: Alleyn's I bt St Paul's II 11-3, 11-1; Derby Moor bt St Paul's I 11-1, 11-5

Final: Derby Moor (Hill & Goodwin) bt Alleyn's (Hanton & Bowden) 11-3, 5-11, 11-9

Plate: Marlborough (Rolls & Bowyer-Knight)

RFA BOARD

London, 1st January 2008

The RFA has appointed a new General Secretary. Replacing Ian Fuller, who stood down at the end of last year, is Andy Pringle, who has been a board member for some three years (with specific responsibility for the RFA website) and President of the Executioners Club for most of this century.

The RFA would like to express its gratitude to Ian for all his hard – and often un-noticed – work on behalf of the Association during his years as General Secretary, and is delighted that he will remain on the board of the Association as Honorary Treasurer. However, the official handover has now happened, allowing

Mrs Fuller considerably more room in her house, so if any member has any query regarding the game, the website or anything fives-related, they should pass it on to Andy, either via the link below or from the Contact Us page. All correspondence is gratefully received

NATIONAL DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP qualifying rounds

January 2008

After a day of hard competition in London, three pairs have made it through to the finals of the National Doubles Championship, where they will meet the top four seeds (who qualify automatically) and one pair who qualified from the South West region.

Comfortable winners of the London qualifying tournament were Marcus Bate and Will Ellison, who reached the semi-finals of the main competition last year. Runners-up on the day, but also making it through to the last eight, were the scratch pairing of Matt Cavanagh and Ed Fuller, who had a tougher route to the final, beating the hard-hitting pair of Colton and Gibbor before going on to put out reigning Under 25 champions Alan Beverly and Charlie Brooks in the semi-finals.

To clinch the final place in the last eight, the two losing semi-finalists played off. And, after two tight games, it was the England international one-wall Fives pairing of Dan Grant and Ady Lee – who had only reached the semis in the first place with a narrow win over Steve Korris and Ed Hatton in the quarter-finals – who won through in two games, beating Alan and Charlie 15-13 in both.

In the last eight (to be played at Alleyn's on the final weekend of March), these three pairs will be joined by the long-standing pair of Jim Hughes and Alex Rew, who qualified from the South West, as well as the top four seeds: defending champions Hamish Buchanan & Robin Perry, John Minta & Phil Bishop (runners-up for the last two years), Paddy d'Anconca & Ben Taberner, and Chris Jones and Andy Pringle.

London Qualifying tournament:

1st round: Marshall & Ronan bt D & I Ackland 15-6, 15-8; Colton & Gibbor bt Aveston & King 15-9, 15-6; Midmer & H Mohammed bt B & P Hanton 15-12, 15-8

Quarter-finals: Bate & Ellison bt Marshall & Ronan 15-10, 15-3; Grant & Lee bt Hatton & Korris 16-15, 15-13; Cavanagh & Fuller bt Colton & Gibbor 15-9, 15-13; Beverly & Brooks bt Midmer & Mohammed 15-7, 15-7

Semi finals: Bate & Ellison bt Grant & Lee 15-3, 15-0; Cavanagh & Fuller bt Beverly & Brooks 16-15, 15-3

Final: Bate & Ellison bt Cavanagh & Fuller 15-5, 15-3

Third place: Grant/Lee bt Beverly/Brooks 15-13, 15-13

Plate:

Pool A: Colton & Gibbor bt Ackland & Ackland 15-7, bt Midmer & Mohammed 15-11; Midmer & Mohammed bt Ackland & Ackland 15-5

Pool B: Hatton & Korris bt Aveston & King 15-10, bt Marshall & Ronan 16-14; Marshall & Ronan bt Aveston & King 15-6

Final: Hatton & Korris bt Colton & Gibbor 15-9

The top three pairs qualify for the finals weekend

The West: Hughes & Rew qualify

The North: No entrants

NORTH WEST OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS

Y Club, Manchester, 26/27th Month 2008

Ed Fuller completed the first double of his life at the 2007 North West Open. After beating Dave Fox in two games in the final of the singles tournament (retaining the title he won last year), he then teamed up with Phil Bishop to overcome the local pairing of Bowness and Skogh to also claim the doubles title. It was Ed's first ever doubles title, but the triumph completed a hat-trick of wins in this tournament for Phil, who had won the doubles title for the last two years with John Minta.

For all that, though, some of the most interesting stories happened earlier in the tournament. In the singles, for example, local star Bowness took Hamish Buchanan all the way in the quarter-final, with the new national champion only squeezing through 12-11 in the third game of an epic battle. Likewise, in the second quarter-final, Dave Fox took three games to dispose of John Beswick, while doubles partners Phil Bishop and Ed Fuller showed each other no mercy in the semi-final, with the young Londoner (and defending champion) finally winning through to a final against Dave Fox, who had beaten Hamish in two close games.

In the final, Ed duly lived to his 'Duracell Bunny' nickname, running and running, and proving just too strong for Dave. This was a notable result, not just because Ed had retained his title, but also (as organiser John Beswick pointed out) he thus became the first 'Southerner' to retain the North West singles title.

To add insult to injury, Ed then proceeded to go on to destroy another myth: that he couldn't play doubles. He and partner Phil Bishop breezed through the early rounds to set up a semi-final against former national champs John Beswick and Neil Roberts. It was another three-gamer, but Phil and Ed eventually came through after losing the first game, Phil back to his best and hitting the like a bullet with both hands.

This set up a final against the all-Manchester pair of Skogh and Bowness, who had upset the form book and beaten reigning London Open champions, Hamish Buchanan and Ben Taberner, in the semi-finals. Mind you, although it only went to two games, the match could hardly have been closer: the Manchester needed to score 12 points in both games to win. Sadly, they couldn't maintain that resilience in the final, and the Fuller/Bishop combination won through comfortably in two games.

Singles

1st Round: H Buchanan bt B Nithsdale 11-3, 11-3; M Bowness bt B Taberner 11-3, 11-4; D Fox bt M Roche 11-7, 11-2; J Beswick bt T Curtin 11-1, 11-3; P Bishop bt D C-Cotter 11-6, 11-7; M Skogh bt H Mohammed 11-4, 11-7; K Henry bt S Watson 11-9, 11-6; E Fuller bt W Harrison 12-10, 11-1
Quarter-finals: Buchanan bt Bowness 4-11, 11-6, 12-11; Fox bt Beswick 1-11, 11-7, 11-7; Bishop bt Skogh 11-8, 11-8; Fuller bt Henry 11-4, 11-8
Semi-finals: Fox bt Buchanan 11-8, 11-7; Fuller bt Bishop 12-10, 3-11, 11-4
Final: E Fuller bt D Fox 11-4, 11-7
Plate: H Mohammed

Doubles

1st Round: Kirby & Hill bt Nithsdale & Harrison 11-2, 9-11, 11-9; Enstone & Henry bt Butler & Kirk 11-0, 11-5; Fox & Mohammed bt C-Cotter & Curtin 11-4, 11-9; Lewis & Watson bt Christie & Gray 11-3, 11-7
Quarter-finals: Buchanan & Taberner bt Kirby & Hill 11-4, 11-2; Bowness & Skogh bt Enstone & Henry 11-3, 11-4; Bishop & Fuller bt Fox & Mohammed 11-0, 11-3; Beswick & Roberts bt Lewis & Watson 11-1, 11-3

Semi-finals: Bowness & Skogh bt Buchanan & Taberner 12-10, 12-11; Bishop & Fuller bt Beswick & Roberts 9-11, 11-6, 11-4
Final: Bishop & Fuller bt Bowness & Skogh 11-1, 11-5
Plate: Clydesdale-Cotter & Curtin

UNDER 25 CHAMPIONSHIPS

Merchant Taylors' School, 2nd/3rd February 2008

After some trauma behind the scenes, the Under 25s Championships eventually got off to a successful start and proved to be a fantastic tournament that saw some superb fives, writes Dan Grant.

The action took place at Merchant Taylors' School, which was a bit nippy, but perfect for viewing. There was an excellent turn out from all over the country, featuring weathered veterans and several new faces.

Saturday saw the "Singles of Pringles" kick off. The standard was excellent and, for the most part, play matched the seedings, albeit with a few upsets, including an good win for Ed Ronan over an injured Mark Gibbor in the 2nd round.

In the top half of the draw, Alan Beverly once again powered through to the final, and it was the bottom half where things really got interesting. Dan Tristao was the man to watch, and the BUSA champion readily progressed to the semis, where he met second seed Dan Grant. This turned out to be one of the best and certainly the most unusual matches of the tournament. Over two hours of quality fives, which unfortunately nobody saw because it went on so late, Dan T held off a comeback by Dan G to win the first game. The second went to Dan G and then, in the third, disaster struck: the school's annual theatrical production was going on behind the fives courts and, apparently, the constant thumping of the ball was not representative of the true sounds of Ancient Greece, so play was suspended half-way through the game. The match resumed on Sunday when Dan T closed out the match in style to progress to the final.

And, if the semi was good, the final was something else: a proper three-game epic, which totally messed up the day's scheduling! Beverly and Tristao both retrieved relentlessly and hit everything up, so the rallies were superb. Tristao scampered round the court and played some excellent width, and Beverly's rangy arms powered the ball all over the place! Beverly just took a tight first set tightly, only to see the second won by Tristao just as tightly. In the decider, Bev hit a mean streak after a long stalemate and closed out the match, despite a good fight, to retain his trophy and complete a hat-trick of victories. The plate competition was also strong, since the field in general was very strong this year. In the end, Chris Hay won in straight sets over Tom Dean.

The doubles was another fine event, and featured a first round deathmatch between Durham's first and second pairs – eventually won by the former. The BUSA champions, Furniss and Tristao, managed to get to the semis, where they eventually lost in 3. But the shock of the tournament was Will Ellison and Steve Korris, who, having previously never played together, beat top seeds and defending champions Beverly and Brooks to progress to the final, where they met the England pair of Adrian Lee and Dan Grant.

The first set was tightly fought and eventually, after some hard hitting and crafty nicks, Ellison and Korris powered through. The second set was a lot shorter and the new pairing deservedly won – both players winning their first major tournament. Congratulations also go to the young school paring of Hanton and George, who won the plate.

It was an excellent weekend of fives and congratulations to all those involved. The prize for the best novelty towel went to Dan Colton and he'll be looking to top it next year, when the tournament will hit new levels of wonder!

Singles

1st Round: Ronan bt Colver 15-0, 15-3; Gibbor bt Welch 15-12, 15-4; Mohammed bt Hay 15-12, 10-15, 15-8

2nd Round: Beverley bt Midmer 15-5, 15-1; Ronan bt Gibbor 10-15, 15-5, 15-3; Lee bt Pleming 15-5, 15-5; Ellison bt Dean 15-2, 15-5; Tristao bt Lamb 15-7, 15-4; Korris bt Mohammed 15-3, 10-15, 15-7; Brooks bt Colton 15-9, 15-9; Grant bt Chandler 15-2, 15-4
Quarter-finals: Beverley bt Ronan 15-0, 15-1; Ellison bt Lee 15-3; 15-1; Tristao bt Korris 15-5, 15-8; Grant
bt Brooks 15-13, 12-15, 15-11
Semis: Beverley bt Ellison 15-9, 15-7; Tristao bt Grant 16-14, 6-15, 15-5
Final: Beverley bt Tristao 15-12, 12-15, 15-11
Plate: Hay bt Dean 11-6, 11-2

Doubles

Prelims: Rider & Nichols bt Pleming & Lamb 15-4, 15-3; Ellison & Korris bt George & Hanton 15-1, 15-2; Mohammed & Midmer bt Hay & Seigel 15-8, 13-15, 15-4
Quarter-finals: Beverley & Brooks bt Rider & Nichols 15-3, 15-4; Ellison & Korris bt Colton & Dean 15-2, 15-9; Tristao & Furniss bt Marshall & Ronan 8-15, 15-8, 15-13; Grant & Lee bt Mohammed & Midmer 15-9, 15-12
Semi-finals: Ellison & Korris bt Beverley & Brooks 15-8 15-11; Grant & Lee bt Tristao & Furniss 13-15, 15-6, 15-7
Final: Ellison & Korris bt Grant & Lee 15-11, 15-2
Plate: George & Hanton

VARSIITY MATCH

St Paul's School, 16th February 2008

The captains of Oxford and Cambridge have announced their teams for the annual Varsity Match, which takes place at St Paul's School, London, on February 16th.

Playing for last year's winners Oxford will be S Adcock (Eastbourne and St. Edmund Hall), E Emmett (St. Paul's and Christchurch), J Furniss (St. Paul's and St. Edmund Hall), R Holl (Winchester and Worcester),

A Jennings (St. Paul's and Corpus Christi), D Park (Sherborne and St. Catherine's), D Tristao (St. Paul's and Lincoln) and E Wilman (Giggleswick and Hertford).

Meanwhile, representing Cambridge will be Alan Beverley (Girton), Richard Lebon (Trinity), Chris Jones (Emmanuel), Alqahir Ladak (Christ's), Malcolm Reid (St. John's), Paul Simister (Trinity), Charles Compton (St. John's), and Rupert Walter (St. John's).

VARSIITY MATCH

St Paul's School, 16th February 2008

Although the two sides were within a point of each other after the singles, Oxford again had greater depth this year, and all their pairs played well in the doubles to win the match with some ease.

The top singles attracted a large gallery and was a class apart, with Beverley, the Under 25 champion, playing irresistibly to defeat his conqueror in the British Universities singles, Tristao. Furniss and Lebon at two renewed their acquaintance from last year, with the Cambridge captain just winning this time. So Oxford needed the points from three and four, and they duly got them, with Jennings and Park defeating Jones and Ladak respectively and almost restoring the balance – Cambridge leading by just one point at

lunch.

The doubles had the same pattern as last year. Cambridge 1 (Beverly and Lebon) played well to win three out of four games, but their second pair lost all theirs and were virtually wiped out by BUSA champions Furniss and Tristao. Oxford's third and fourth pairs played impressively to take seven of their eight games, some of them by large margins, and although Cambridge never gave up, it was clear at a fairly early stage in the afternoon which way the match was going.

Congratulations to Oxford on a deserved victory, and top marks to both sides for punctuality, dress and sportsmanship on court. Many thanks also to St. Paul's School for hosting the match and continuing to provide a sizeable percentage of the participants!

In the reserves match, Oxford Beavers were again too strong for Cambridge Sparrows, although the match was better fought than last year.

Singles

(Oxford names first): DC Tristao (St. Paul's & Lincoln) lost to A Beverly (St. Paul's & Girton) 3-15; JC Furniss (St. Paul's & St. Edmund Hall) lost to RS Lebon (Christ's Hospital & Trinity) 13-15; AE Jennings (St. Paul's & Corpus Christi) bt CP Jones (Tonbridge & Emmanuel) 15-6; DM Park (Sherborne & St. Catherine's) bt A Ladak (St. Paul's & Christ's) 15-11 to come)

Doubles

Furniss & Tristao lost to Beverly & Lebon 8-15, 15-12; bt Jones & Ladak 15-1, 15-2. RJ Holl (Winchester & Worcester) & Jennings bt Jones & Ladak 15-10, 15-10; lost to Beverly & Lebon 4-15, 8-15. SJ Adcock (Eastbourne & St. Edmund Hall) & Park bt MC Reid (Edinburgh Academy & St. John's) & PR Simister (St. Paul's & Trinity) 15-5, 15-10; bt CK Compton (Eastbourne & St. John's) & RE Walter (Tonbridge & St. John's) 15-6, 13-15. EJ Emmett (St. Paul's & Christ Church) & ES Wilman (Giggleswick & Hertford) bt Compton & Walter 15-3, 15-6; bt Reid & Simister 15-6, 16-15
Result: Oxford bt Cambridge 260 pts to 193

Beavers v Sparrows

Singles

(Oxford names first): HR Wilman (Giggleswick & Hertford) lost to A Ashok (St. Paul's & Queens') 3-15; HR Waite (St. Paul's & Magdalen) bt PN Gwynn (Radley & Trinity) 15-7; JSW Kelly (Christ's Hospital & St. Hugh's) bt AFD Bailey (Clifton & St. Catharine's) 15-4; AJC Robinson (Tonbridge & Hertford) bt RA Lloyd (Bedford & Jesus) 15-0.

Doubles

Wilman & Waite lost to Ashok & Gwynn 14-16, 10-15; bt Bailey & Lloyd 15-3, 15-4. Kelly & Robinson bt Bailey & Lloyd 15-5, 15-2; bt Ashok & Gwynn 13-1, 5 15-7
Result: Oxford Beavers bt Cambridge Sparrows 160-93

NORTH OF ENGLAND CHAMPIONSHIPS

Durham, 23rd/24th February 2008

John Minta celebrated his comeback from injury in the best possible way by taking both the singles and doubles titles in the North of England Championships. In a repeat of last year's final, he beat Hamish Buchanan to win the singles championship, before teaming up with Phil Bishop to take the doubles title as well.

However, by the end of the tournament, he must have been sick of the sight of Will Ellison, as the young London student pushed him all the way in the semi-finals of both championships. First, Will took him to three games in the singles, and then teamed up with Marcus Bate to again take John and Phil to three games in the doubles. These two matches were, by common agreement, the games of the weekend. And, in the end, the finals were relatively easier affairs - even though the scratch pairing of Adrian Lee and Neil Roberts also took John and Phil to three games in the doubles final.

Overall, the tournament was a great success, with the highest number of entrants for many years and some notable performances. Hal Mohammed, for instance, did extremely well to beat fourth seed Marcus Bate in the first round and went on to the semi-finals, only losing to Hamish. If there was a sour note, it was that an injury to Dave Hebden prevented him playing with Hamish in the doubles. Jez Sinton gamely stepped into the defending champion's shoes - and reached his first open semi-final in the process - but he and Hamish couldn't beat the combined youth and experience of Lee and Roberts. And, they, in turn couldn't beat the Y Club pair, leaving the weekend's prizes to John Minta.

Singles

1st round: Orton bt Chandler 11-4, 11-6; Bowden bt Nancarrow 11-0, 11-4; Leggett bt Champness 11-2, 11-0; Cochran bt Kemp 11-4, 12-10; Murby bt Sinton 11-3, 11-2

2nd round: Buchanan bt Orton 11-1, 11-0; Legget bt Bowden 11-7, 11-5; Lee bt L'Hévéder 11-0, 11-1; Mohammed bt Bate 11-6, 11-8; Ellison bt Midmer 11-2, 11-4; Major bt Cochran 11-2, 11-0; Hay bt Hebden 11-3, 11-2; Minta bt Murby 11-3, 11-0

Quarter-finals: Buchanan bt Legget 11-8, 11-1; Mohammed bt Lee 11-3, 11-8; Ellison bt Major 11-3, 11-6; Minta bt Hay 11-3, 11-2

Semi-finals: Buchanan bt Mohammed 11-2, 11-4; Minta bt Ellison 12-10, 9-11, 11-3

Final: Minta bt Buchanan 11-3, 11-1

Plate: Bate bt Sinton 15-0

Doubles

1st round: Bowden & Legget bt Chandler & Nancarrow 15-4, 15-1; Hay & Major bt Pearson & Ross 15-9, 15-7; Bate & Ellison bt Champness & Chandler 15-0, 15-0; Midmer & Mohammed bt Atkinson & Chandler 15-1, 15-5; Kemp & Murby bt Cochran & Orton 8-15, 16-15, 15-9

Quarter-finals: Buchanan & Sinton bt Bowden & Legget 15-9, 15-8; Lee & Roberts bt Hay & Major 15-11, 15-4; Bate & Ellison bt Midmer & Mohammed 15-5, 15-3; Bishop & Minta bt Kemp & Murby 15-0, 15-2

Semi-finals: Lee & Roberts bt Buchanan & Sinton 15-5, 15-10; Bishop & Minta bt Bate & Ellison 16-14, 9-15, 15-10

Final: Bishop & Minta bt Roberts & Lee 11-2, 10-12, 11-4

Plate: Bowden & Legget bt Pearson & Ross 6-11, 11-5, 11-8

UNION BOAT CLUB

Boston, USA

[posted 02 March 2008]

The Union Boat Club, Boston, has recently been in touch with the RFA, and we are delighted to report that Fives is now flourishing at the club, with a well-attended club championship, exhibition matches at nearby schools and plans for a tour to England in September this year.

The Club itself has now joined the RFA and is gearing up for the 2007 season, when it expects to see some 30 players enter the Club Championship. As well as creating a Fives committee under chairman

Nick Elfner, they are actively seeking new players and will be playing an exhibition tournament this month at nearby Groton School, where there are four singles and four doubles courts, although not all are being used at the moment.

The Club is more than happy to welcome players from this side of the Atlantic, but are already planning a trip to this country in September and looking for potential opponents. If you are interested in hosting a team from Boston, please contact the RFA General Secretary, who is liaising with the UBC. But, in the meantime, if you want to see how the game is played in America, simply click on the link below to visit the UBC's own website.

RFA v BUSA

St Paul's School, 2nd March 2008

In match where the final outcome was never certain, the RFA team just held on to its lead to score a win over a very strong BUSA representative squad. There were never more than a handful of points between the two teams during the course of a hard-fought afternoon, and only at the death did it become clear that the RFA had done enough to clinch a win - by just four points.

The day had started well for the RFA as they took a 13-point lead in the singles, winning four of the six matches. However, right from the start of the doubles, the BUSA team started to inch their way back. Although Hamish Buchanan and Charlie Brooks won for the RFA, wins for BUSA's Tristao & Furniss and Ellison & Mohammed saw the students narrow the gap.

In the second round of doubles, the match between Jones & Pringle and Ellison & Mohammed saw the spoils all-but shared. However, a good win for Beverly & Colton over Grant & Lee was more than enough to compensate for Buchanan & Brooks beating Tristao & Furniss. So, again, the students narrowed the gap, which meant there was everything to play for in the final round.

On one court, Beverly & Colton continued their fine form, with their hard hitting proving too much for Jones & Pringle, although the RFA pair did manage to salvage a crucial few points at the end. However, on the other two courts, the RFA pairs were victorious, ensuring a win overall, but by almost the narrowest of margins.

How different it all might have been, though. At one point, Buchanan & Brooks were 6-12 down in their final game, but they gritted their teeth and came through to secure a crucial win 15-12. Such a result was typical of the afternoon's play, with two very closely matched teams. Indeed, it was typical of the closeness of the competition that no one pair failed to win a game of doubles, but at the same time, no one pair won all of their games; and, overall, the 18 individual games were shared between the two teams. In the end, it was the cushion that the RFA built up in the singles that was crucial.

Singles

(BUSA names first): A Beverly lost to H Buchanan 10-15; D Tristao lost to D Grant 12-15; W Ellison beat
C Jones 15-8; D Colton lost to A Lee 7-15; H Mohammed beat C Brooks 15-12; J Furniss lost to A
Pringle
8-15

Doubles

(BUSA names first) Furniss & Tristao beat Jones & Pringle 15-10; lost to Buchanan & Brooks 15-13, 4-15; lost to Grant & Lee 10-15. Beverly & Colton lost to Buchanan & Brooks 10-15; beat Grant & Lee 15-

5, 15-11; beat Jones & Pringle 15-8. Ellison & Mohammed beat Grant & Lee 15-11; beat Jones & Pringle 11-15, 15-10; lost to Buchanan & Brooks 12-15
Result: RFA bt BUSA 223pts to 219

OFFICIAL RFA RANKINGS

London, 1st March 2008

After his recent win in the North of England Championship, John Minta has closed the gap on the top four in the latest official RFA rankings. Prepared by Dave Hebden, the latest list shows James Toop still at the top of the pile, but Ed Fuller climbs into second after his win in January's North West Open. Matt Cavanagh and Hamish Buchanan complete the top four, but Minta is now just six points behind in fourth place. Indeed, just 14 points separate the top 5.

Elsewhere in the new rankings, Dave Fox climbs into the top 10 after finishing as runner-up in the Manchester tournament, while success in the Under 25s championship sees Adrian Lee, Steve Korris and Hal Mohammed make it into the top 20. Hal, also a semi-finalist in Durham, climbs 26 places.

In the doubles, Hamish retains his comfortable top position, with John Minta in second place. However, success for Ed Fuller (NW champion) sees him into the top 10, while Phil Bishop (winner in both the North and North West championships) climbs into third. Meanwhile Will Ellison (U25 winner) and Adrian Lee (runner-up in Durham) both make the top 20 after their recent successful runs, while Matt Bowness and Marco Skogh (semi-finalists in Manchester) also make good progress.

PROPOSED NEW COURTS

Rugby School, 2009

[posted 05 March 2008]

The RFA is delighted to report that there are plans for Rugby School to build new Fives courts. The campaign has great support among Old Rugbeians and, naturally, within the RFA. A site has been earmarked at the school, plans already exist and planning permission is being sought. The only stumbling block is money...

To which end, Old Rugbeian and keen Fives player Dick Warner is undertaking the Crick Run this weekend, Sunday March 9th, to raise funds for the project. He tells us it is a run he avoided like the plague in his schooldays, and suggests that Fives players past and present support the project by pledging fives-related amounts, £5, £55 and so on. To give, simply click on the link below to visit the relevant page on the school's website.

Naturally, there will be regular updates on the progress of the new courts, and the RFA will keep everyone fully up to date with everything that happens.

WINCHESTER FIVES DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP

Sedbergh, 9th March 2008

The newly enclosed courts at Sedbergh gave us a full day's play in front of galleries of cosseted spectators, writes organiser David Barnes. Competitors arrived, admirably punctually, from far and wide, and play was only delayed during the course of the day by some extremely close matches.

Round 1 saw Maskell and Pringle give Buchanan and Minta – a new pair for this competition – some valuable practice at the Winchester game, while Kirk and Butler took their time over beating local lads Catlow and Sturla.

The quarter-finals went with the seeding, although Fraser and Purvis (4th seeds) had a tremendous battle with Mohammed and Ellison (5th) before coming home in the third. The semi-finals saw the undoing of the seeding committee. First, the holders, Akerman and Mohammed, went down in straight games to Fraser and Purvis, who looked in awesome form; and then past winners Fox and Hebden were defeated by the narrowest of margins in the match of the tournament by the increasingly solid pair of Buchanan and Minta.

The final was a classic, with the more elegant duo of Fraser and Purvis taking the first game, only to be pinned back, and finally defeated, by the power and accuracy of Buchanan and Minta in games two and three. The scores also reflect the extra fitness of two of the country's top players in a three-game match, and it was remarkable that Fraser, who gets little tough opposition in Scotland, and Purvis, who plays infrequently, were able to keep pace with them for so long.

Congratulations, then, to John Minta, whose first Winchester Fives tournament this was, and to National Champion Hamish Buchanan, who finally adds the Barnes Bridge to his long list of titles! The plate, contested by eleven pairs, was won by Marshall and Ronan.

A plaque with a Latin inscription paying tribute to John Guthrie's generosity to Sedbergh was unveiled by Headmaster Christopher Hirst, and John himself stayed on to present the trophies at the end of the tournament. Laurence Catlow's long years of service to Sedbergh fives were also marked by a presentation. It was all a fitting end to a great day's fives.

1st Round: Kirk & Butler bt Catlow & Sturla 15-12, 15-7; H Mohammed & Ellison bt Brown & Root 15-3, 15-1; Fraser & Purvis bt Guthrie & Elletson 15-3, 15-5; Buchanan & Minta bt Maskell & Pringle 15-10,

15-6; Ross & Pearson bt Lamb & Burrows 15-6, 15-3; Marshall & Ronan bt Waugh & Pimlott 15-1, 15-4; Fox & Hebden bt Roberts & Sandie 15-1, 15-5

Quarter-Finals: Akerman & M Mohammed bt Kirk & Butler 15-1, 15-3; Fraser & Purvis bt Mohammed & Ellison 16-15, 13-15, 15-3; Buchanan & Minta bt Ross & Pearson 15-4, 15-7; Fox & Hebden bt Marshall & Ronan 15-7, 15-11

Semi-Finals: Fraser & Purvis bt Akerman & Mohammed 15-13, 15-7; Buchanan & Minta bt Fox & Hebden 15-12, 11-15, 16-14

Final: Buchanan & Minta bt Fraser & Purvis 13-15, 15-4, 15-9

Plate: Ronan & Marshall

PROPOSED NEW COURTS AT RUGBY SCHOOL

The Crick Run, 9th March 2008

[posted 15 March 2007]

The RFA has received the following report from Dick Warner, following his completion of the Crick Run to raise funds for the proposed new courts at Rugby School. We reproduce the report verbatim, with the natural proviso that the views expressed are those of Dick and not necessarily the RFA:

“Dick Warner succeeded in his foolhardy attempt on the oldest school run, the Crick Run, at age 57. Sunday 9th March brought very nice weather, thankfully, before the gales in the evening.

The ideal Saturday preparation - a marathon four-hour Fives match against St Paul’s School, losing my singles to an 18 year old, and three out of the four doubles. But our IV won, so I’m - as usual - accepting the kudos.

Fine preparation, four hours’ competitive Fives! The run itself was longer than I thought, a longish 10.4 miles, but the terrain was good and dry. Made a lot easier by my running mate, who had just eaten a macrobiotic meal of lentils before running, and spent most of the trip retching. I needed all my footwork to avoid the flying vomit! We came in in the shaming time of one hour 50 minutes, slightly slower than brisk walking pace. Winner did it in one hour and seven minutes.

What I was impressed by was the number of young Rugbeians (aged 15 and 16) running the Crick (rather than the six-mile Barby). Many of them seemed to have tucked into roast beef and Yorkshire pudding at the Whitelaw House reunion before setting out. How could they? And about 10 were girls, who all seemed to disappear in front of me. So not as effete as I had imagined.

And there were a lot of masters and mistresses running, which speaks of a very motivated and enthused cadre of staff, which was good news to me - and headmaster Patrick Derham started the run. All this spoke of good morale, and therefore of commitment to fives, which was underlined by head of sport Guy Steele-Bodger. The fives court project is in good hands.

I reckon that my run did more for raising awareness of the fundraising than the fundraising itself, for which I only had 3 weeks to publicise. The message had got out widely among the fives community, as well as the OR one. None the less, with your kind donations, I reckon I must have got the best part of £2000 pledged.

Add to that promises from the Rugby Fives Association Charitable Trust, the Jesters’ Club, an OR family and another anonymous donor, and we must have £30-£40,000 staked, before the fundraising leaflet is mailed. Target is a distant, but not unreachable £200,000, a lot less if everyone uses Gift Aid.

The location for the courts has been decided – crucially in the Sports’ Centre – and a very highly rated master, Head of Chemistry, Trevor White, has been appointed to run the fives. Target completion date is September 2009.

I’m enthused: and I’ve committed myself to taking a team to Rugby to play on the new courts for five years thereafter, to give them some opposition. Join me!”

NATIONAL UNDER 13s CHAMPIONSHIPS St Paul’s School, 16th March 2008

After a hard-fought day of Fives, in which players from no less than seven schools took part, it was the boys of Alleyn’s School who dominated the Under 13s Championships. Not only did they provide the

winner of both the singles and doubles titles, they also provided the runners-up.

However, it's testament to the strength of the game all over the country that, in the singles competition, the eight players in the quarter-finals came from five different schools – Alleyn's, St Dunstan's, Merchant Taylors', Rossall and Pilgrims. Nevertheless, the two semi-finals were all-South London affairs, with Alleyn's taking on St Dunstan's in both matches, and the two Alleyn's boys winning through. The final was a close match, with excellent skill on show from two such young players, but in the end it was Redmayne who came out as winner over Geberbauer.

In the doubles, too, the competition was fierce and, after the round-robin pool stages, places in the next round and Plate competition were won and lost by the narrowest of margins. Again, the semi-finals saw a strong showing from South London, with St Dunstan's and Alleyn's making up three of four pairs, but the fourth place went to a strong pair from Pilgrims School in Winchester.

Again, though, it was the Alleyn's boys who made the final – albeit only after tough matches against their opponents. And, here, the form book held true, with the school's first pair taking the title with a win in two games over the second pair.

Pilgrims and St Dunstan's didn't go home empty-handed, though. St Dunstan's Strutt-Clare did well to win the singles Plate, while the Pilgrims second pair won the doubles Plate in one of the day's closest matches, eventually beating St Dunstan's second pair 11-10.

Singles

Pool 1: 1st Over (Pilgrims) 55pts; 2nd Williams (Alleyn's) 47pts; 3rd Bar (Pilgrims) 39pts; 4th J Morrison (Rossall) 37pts; 5th Rajan (Merchant Taylors') 14pts; 6th Jervis (Merchant Taylors')

Pool 2: 1st Mears (St Dunstan's) 55pts; 2nd Merison (Pilgrims) 49pts; 3rd Criswell (Pilgrims) 41pts; 4th Southern (Rossall) 38pts; 5th Brenman (Alleyn's) 25pts; 6th Obilaye (Merchant Taylors') 7pts

Pool 3: 1st Akinlotan (St Dunstan's) 55pts; 2nd Geberbauer (Alleyn's) 54pts; 3rd Duxfield (Pilgrims) 33pts; 4th= Christie (Derby Moor) & Okenabirkie (St Dunstan's) 23pts; 6th M Morrison (Rossall) 14pts

Pool 4: 1st Redmayne (Alleyn's) 55pts; 2nd Strutt-Clare (St Dunstan's) 46pts; 3rd Wilders (Pilgrims) 41pts; 4th Whitehorn (Derby Moor) 24pts; 5th Patel (Merchant Taylors') 14pts; 6th J Williams (Rossall) 9pts

Pool 5: 1st Brubert (Alleyn's) 55pts; 2nd C Andrews (Rossall) 48pts; 3rd Barlow (Pilgrims) 37pts; 4th Lambert-Powell (St Dunstan's) 35pts; 5th H Andrews (Rossall) 14pts; 6th V Patel (Merchant Taylors') 10pts

Pool 6: 1st L Williams (Rossall) 55pts; 2nd Judge (Merchant Taylors') 50pts; 3rd Browett (Alleyn's) 49pts; 4th Whait (Loretto) 31pts; 5th Hilling (Pilgrims) 17pts; 6th Prinja (Merchant Taylors') 5pts

Quarter-finals: Akinlotan bt Judge 11-0; Redmayne bt Williams 11-1; Geberbauer bt Over 11-3; Mears bt Brubert 11-10

Semi-finals: Redmayne bt Akinlotan 11-5; Geberbauer bt Mears 11-1

Final: Redmayne bt Geberbauer 11-9, 11-4

Plate: Strutt-Clare

Doubles

Pool 1: 1st St Dunstan's 1 55pts; 2nd Pilgrims 1 49pts; 3rd Rossall 2 37pts; 4th Alleyn's 3 25pts; 5th Pilgrims 4 24pts; 6th Merchant Taylors' 3 8pts

Pool 2: 1st Alleyn's 1 55pts; 2nd Pilgrims 2 45pts; 3rd Merchant Taylors' 1 34pts; 4th= Derby Moor & Rossall 3 24pts; 6th Merchant Taylors' 4 12pts

Pool 3: 1st Alleyn's 2 55pts; 2nd Rossall 1 47pts; 3rd St Dunstan's 2 45pts; 4th Pilgrims 3 39pts; 5th Merchant Taylors' 2 29 pts; 6th Loretto/Rossall 25pts

Semi-finals: Alleyn's 2 bt Pilgrims 1 11-5; Alleyn's 1 bt St Dunstan's 1 11-6

Final: Alleyn's 1 (Redmayne & Brubert) bt Alleyn's 2 11-7, 11-2

Plate: Pilgrims 2

NATIONAL SCHOOLS' CHAMPIONSHIPS

St Paul's School, Barnes, 25/28th March 2008

This year's awkward Easter date made the entry smaller than usual, but 19 schools sent at least one representative. A feature of the year was that five of the six main finals were contested by two schools, Alleyn's and St. Paul's.

The Open Singles Pools brought the elimination of two good Paulines, Hine and Malone, who eventually contested the main plate final. In the match of the quarter-finals, Hoolahan (St. Paul's) had just the better of a fine match with Brubert (Alleyn's). Burrows (Oundle) did himself justice to reach the semi-final, where he went down bravely to Faber (St. Paul's). Ackland (Alleyn's) won his semi-final against Hoolahan, although the second game could have gone either way.

The final, a repeat of the West of England, brought together two very different styles. Ackland prefers to attack, while Faber has a more measured game, lacking only the devastating hit of his opponent. Ackland won the first game fairly comfortably, but the second was a tremendous battle, with the tenacious Faber refusing to give in while Ackland blew hot and cold in his efforts to put the ball away. In the end, it was Ackland who took the game and the match – but a third game might have told a different story.

The Open Doubles was contested by ten schools, but only two of them – Alleyn's and St. Paul's – looked like winning it. The semi-finals were neatly balanced, with each school's first pair playing the other's second. Both matches had their moments, although Alleyn's I had much greater difficulty with St. Paul's II, losing the first game and only just winning the next two.

The final was a knife-edge affair in front of a large and committed gallery. Faber and Hoolahan won the first game narrowly, but Ackland and Brubert fought back strongly to take the second. The third was extremely tense and could have gone either way, but the Alleyn's pair found the strength to keep hitting the ball round the court and the skill to get it back often enough to win a famous victory.

The Under 16 event produced some excellent fives in its later stages. Four good players reached the Singles semi-finals, and although Hanton (Alleyn's) beat Chase (St. Paul's) with some ease, Kay (St. Paul's) played well above his previous form to defeat Hill (Derby Moor) by a narrow margin over three games. Hanton, used to winning games easily, found himself with a real challenge in the final; but although Kay continued to produce some fine shots, he also tended to make unforced errors as the match went on, so allowing his opponent a breathing space. In the end, after a stiffer test than he has had in previous finals, Hanton proved a deserving winner.

The Under 16 Doubles contained the usual mixture of nonchalant skill and appalling error, with one or two close early matches and a rousing final to entertain the neutral and agonize the partisan. St. Paul's I did well to defeat Alleyn's I in one semi-final, but their second pair failed to trouble the Derby Moor pair in the other. The final went all the way, with Derby (Hill and Goodwin) taking the first game. St. Paul's (Chase and Kay) came back strongly to win the second easily and looked the better pair for much of the third, but the Derby boys kept hitting the ball round and came with a late run to take the match by a couple of points. This, to add to the

West of England title, was a great reward for the two young players and a tribute to the devoted coaching of members of the Derby Moor Club.

The Under 14s attracted entries from eight schools, and there was plenty of enthusiasm and not a little skill on show. Once again it was St. Paul's versus Alleyn's in the later stages, with the host school deservedly winning both titles this time. The Alleyn's finalists (all actually under 13) fought hard in both singles and doubles but were eventually outgunned by their opponents.

Our renewed thanks go to St. Paul's School for its hospitality, to Peter King and Sam Roberts for running the championships, to David Goodwin for doing the draw and to all those who came to support the four-day event.

Key: A = Alleyn's; Bl = Blundell's; Br = Bradfield; CH = Christ's Hospital; D = Dulwich; DM = Derby Moor; E = Eastbourne; KCS = KCS Wimbledon; M = Marlborough; MT = Merchant Taylors'; O = Oundle; R = Radley; SD = St. Dunstan's; SO = St. Olave's; SP = St. Paul's; S = Sedbergh; T = Tonbridge; Wh = Whitgift; W = Winchester.

OPEN U18

Singles

Pool A: 1st J Faber (SP); 2nd W Satterfield (CH); 3rd S Miller (MT)

Pool B: 1st L Squire-Smith (W); 2nd M Hemmings (T); 3rd C Choudhry (MT)

Pool C: 1st M Sturla (S); 2nd E Malone (SP); 3rd R Tunnard (O)

Pool D: 1st A George (A); 2nd S Sripathmanathan (KCS); 3rd G Kamenou (SD)

Pool E: 1st C Burrows (O); 2nd D Ahrabian (SP); 3rd F Dinwiddie (T)

Pool F: 1st N Simpson (CH); 2nd S Oberai (SP); 3rd A Whitby (MT)

Pool G: 1st T Hoolahan (SP); 2nd N Pickford (E); 3rd D Butt (SD)

Pool H: 1st J Brubert (A); 2nd M Hine (SP); 3rd: R Edwardson (O)

Pool I/J: 1st J Harris (SP); 2nd A Elletson (S); 3rd H Rogers (W)

Pool K: 1st J Liban (SP); 2nd A Bellringer (KCS); 3rd C Robinson (MT)

Pool L: 1st I Ackland (A); 2nd J Mighall (CH); 3rd A Spencer (O)

Knockout Stage: Faber bt Squire-Smith 11-2, 11-0; George bt Sturla 11-2, 11-0; Ackland bt Liban 11-5, 11-3

Quarter-Finals: Faber bt George 11-1, 11-1; Burrows bt Simpson 11-4, 11-2; Hoolahan bt Brubert 11-8, 11-7; Ackland bt Harris (SP) 11-2, 11-0

Semi-Finals: Faber bt Burrows 11-6, 11-3; Ackland bt Hoolahan 11-1, 11-9

Final: Ackland bt Faber 11-4, 11-8

Plate: Hine (SPS)

2nd Plate: Edwardson (Oundle)

Doubles

1st Round: CH I bt T II 11-3, 11-2; MT I bt O II 11-4, 11-2; E bt SD I 11-4, 11-7; KCS bt CH II 11-3, 11-0; MT II bt W II 11-1, 9-1, 11-5

2nd Round: SP I bt W I 11-2, 11-2; S I bt CH I 11-8, 11-7; SP IV bt MT I 12-10, 8-11, 11-9; A II bt E 11-1, 11-0; SP II bt MT III 11-0, 11-0; O bt T I 11-5, 11-4; SP III bt KCS 11-3, 11-4; A I bt MT II 11-0, 11-2

Quarter-Finals: St. Paul's I bt Sedbergh 11-3, 11-2; Alleyn's II bt St. Paul's IV 11-2, 11-3; St. Paul's II bt Oundle 11-6, 11-4; Alleyn's I bt St. Paul's III 11-0, 11-2

Semi-Finals: St. Paul's I bt Alleyn's II 11-3, 12-10; Alleyn's I bt St. Paul's II 8-11, 11-9, 11-6

Final: Alleyn's (Inigo Ackland & Jacob Brubert) beat St Paul's (Jamie Faber & Tim Hoolahan) 8-11, 11-7, 11-6

Plate: Tonbridge I

COLTS (Under 16)

Singles

Pool A: 1st D Hewlett (SO); 2nd B Stephens (A); 3rd R Harrison (T)
Pool B: 1st T Chase (SP); 2nd L Thomson (CH); 3rd J Gordon (KCS)
Pool C: 1st A Goodwin (DM); 2nd C Yuen (W); 3rd A Smith (MT)
Pool D: 1st J Malde (SP); 2nd A Ainsworth (T); 3rd I May (R)
Pool E: 1st D Wijesinghe (SP); 2nd A Percival (MT); 3rd J Gravatt (KCS)
Pool F: 1st S Rolls (M); 2nd J Short (T); 3rd L Robinson (Wh)
Pool G: 1st J Kennedy (W); 2nd B Hall (Bl); 3rd M Connolly (SD)
Pool H: 1st P Hanton (A); 2nd O Stubbings (E); 3rd A Barker (MT)
Pool I: 1st E Kay (SP); 2nd N Baines (W); 3rd O Evans (T)
Pool J: 1st D Bowden (A); 2nd J Tilston (SP); 3rd D Hooker (MT)
Pool K/L: 1st J Aquilina (SP); 2nd K Bowyer-Knight (M); 3rd T Graham (W)
Pool M: 1st P Judge (MT); 2nd S Garratt (E); 3rd D Aldham (KCS)
Pool N: 1st A Hill (DM); 2nd H Owen (W); 3rd J Bailey (Wh)
Knockout Stage: Chase bt Hewlett 11-3, 11-6; Goodwin bt Malde 11-0, 11-1; Rolls bt Wijesinghe 11-3, 11-4; Hanton bt Kennedy 11-0, 11-0; Hill bt Judge 11-2, 11-4
Quarter-Finals: Chase bt Goodwin 11-3, 11-9; Hanton bt Rolls 11-0, 11-0; Kay bt Bowden 11-6, 11-6; Hill bt Aquilina 11-1, 11-1
Semi-Finals: Hanton bt Chase 11-0, 11-3; Kay bt Hill 11-4, 1-11, 11-9
Final: Hanton bt Kay 11-8, 11-4
Plate: Stephens (Alleyn's)
2nd plate: Aldham (KCS)

Doubles

1st Round: Wh bt W II 11-7, 11-4; MT II bt T II 11-1, 11-7
2nd Round: DM bt Wh 11-0, 1-0; T I bt E 11-7, 11-9; MT I bt A II 11-6, 11-0; SP II bt KCS II 11-3, 11-2;
M bt SP III 11-0, 11-1; A I bt R 11-0, 11-0; W I bt KCS I 11-0, 6-11, 11-3; SP I bt MT II 11-4, 11-2
Quarter-Finals: Derby Moor bt Tonbridge I 11-4, 11-2; St. Paul's II bt Merchant Taylors' I 11-8, 11-8; Alleyn's I bt Marlborough 11-2, 11-6; St. Paul's I bt Winchester I 11-2, 11-2
Semi-Finals: Derby Moor bt St. Paul's II 11-1, 11-2; St. Paul's I bt Alleyn's I 11-9, 11-2
Final: Derby Moor (Ashley Hill & Anthony Goodwin) beat St Paul's I (Ed Kay & Tom Chase) 11-5, 2-11, 12-10
Plate: St Paul's III

UNDER 14

Singles

Pool A: 1st T Mills (SP); 2nd M Robson (O); 3rd R Lamb (MT)
Pool B: 1st A Senn (A); 2nd G Brown (SP); 3rd A Byrne (MT)
Pool C: 1st W Geberbauer (A); 2nd R Patel (MT); 3rd J Wheatcroft (T)
Pool D: 1st O Quarry (SP); 2nd A Hawthorn (W); 3rd H Lamb (M)
Pool E: 1st G Johnston (SP); 2nd M Florin (R); 3rd S Cummings (Br)
Pool F: 1st S Russell (SP); 2nd A Williams (A); 3rd V Patel (MT)
Pool G: 1st D Butler (Br); 2nd F Thomas (SP); 3rd A Smith (T)
Pool H: 1st A Lindsell (R); 2nd A True (SP); 3rd S Scott (Br)
Pool I: 1st Z Brubert (A); 2nd N Oddie (W); 3rd G Michel (O)
Pool J: 1st D Rupra (SP); 2nd H Wilson (M); 3rd A Shale (MT)

Knockout Stage: Geberbauer bt Quarry 11-8; Brubert bt Rupra 11-0
Quarter-Finals: Senn bt Mills 11-0; Geberbauer bt Johnston 11-8; Russell bt Butler 11-5; Brubert bt Lindsell 11-1
Semi-Finals: Senn bt Geberbauer 11-2; Russell bt Brubert 11-5.
Final: Russell beat Senn 11-4, 11-7
Plate: Oddie (Winchester)
2nd Plate: Lamb (MTS)

Doubles

1st Round: W bt O 15-7
2nd Round: A I bt D 15-1; SP IV bt T 15-4; R bt MT III 15-3; A II bt SP III 15-11; B bt MT IV 15-5; SP II bt MT II 15-6; SP I bt W 15-2; M bt MT I 15-3
Quarter-Finals: Alleyn's I bt St. Paul's IV 15-1; Radley bt Alleyn's II 15-10; Bradfield bt St. Paul's II 15-13; St. Paul's I bt Marlborough 15-4
Semi-Finals: Alleyn's I bt Radley 15-4; St. Paul's I bt Bradfield 15-8.
Final: St Paul's I (Sam Russell & Ollie Quarry) beat Alleyn's I (Zack Brubert and Sam Redmayne) 11-4, 5-11, 11-2
Plate: St Paul's III

NATIONAL OPEN DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP

Alleyn's School, Dulwich, London, 29/30th March 2008

Playing in their eighth consecutive final, Hamish Buchanan and Robin Perry clinched their fifth straight National Doubles title with a win over Matt Cavanagh and Ed Fuller.

It was a win that came at the end of a weekend's top-quality doubles which had pitted the country's top pairs against each other – the top seeds joined by the pairs who come through the qualifying process. And, it's a sure sign of the closeness of the competition that not only did both semi-finals go the full distance of three games, in both matches the eventual finalists had to come from a game down to clinch their place in the final.

On one court, Hamish and Robin won through against Marcus Bate and Will Ellison in a repeat of one of last year's semi-finals. However, Marcus and Will – who themselves had reached the semis only after a three-game win in the quarter-finals – at least had the distinction of taking a game off the defending champions, which is more than anyone else has managed in this tournament for a good few years. Meanwhile, on the other court, spectators saw what must go down as the upset of the tournament, when John Minta and Phil Bishop (runners-up for the last two years) lost out to the scratch pairing of Ed Fuller and Matt Cavanagh, both arguably better known for their singles skill.

However, the final was to prove a match too far for Matt and Ed, as Hamish and Robin used their experience as a pair to overcome their opponents. Ed and Matt probed in vain for a weakness to exploit, but the defending champions continually failed to show one, always aware of where each other was on the court. Anything that went near Robin's right hand was returned with pace and power, while Hamish was able to hit attacking shots with either hand. Indeed, it was a run of crucial cross-court winners into the nick from Hamish in the second game that seemed to break his opponents' resolve and seal a thoroughly deserved fifth title for him and his partner. After such domination, their next target must surely be to go on to emulate the feat of Neil Roberts and Wayne Enstone, who won the title together for a record nine consecutive times from 1991 to 1999.

Quarter-finals: Buchanan & Perry bt Hatton & Korris 15-8, 15-3; Bate & Ellison bt Jones & Pringle 3-15, 15-11, 15-8; Cavanagh & Fuller bt Grant & Lee 15-5, 15-5; Bishop & Minta bt Beverly & Brooks 15-5, 15-9

Semi-finals: Buchanan & Perry bt Bate & Ellison 10-15, 15-6, 15-4; Cavanagh & Fuller bt Bishop & Minta 8-15, 15-5, 15-7

Final: Buchanan & Perry bt Cavanagh & Fuller 15-8, 15-2

Plate: Beverly & Brooks

NATIONAL VETERANS' CHAMPIONSHIPS

Christ's Hospital, Horsham, 5/6th April 2008

Neil Roberts was too strong for the field in this year's Veterans Singles, beating Dave Hebden comfortably in the final with some very impressive fives, thereby securing his 3rd successive title. Outside of Neil's run to the title, there was plenty of fiercely contested fives, and although the entry was small this year, the play continued until well after 7.30pm on the Saturday evening.

This was not only down to plenty of tea drinking, but largely due to two epic matches involving newcomer Angus Hanton. Fresh from his workouts with his son Peter (recent U16 Schoolboy champion), Angus was able to demonstrate that he too was capable of winning silverware in beating redoubtable competitors Brian Nithsdale and then Bob Sandie on his way to 3rd place and the Single Plate. A magnificent performance!

Snow greeted the travellers on the Sunday morning, but all 6 pairs managed to fight their way through to the Christ's Hospital courts, and again a very good day's fives was enjoyed by all. Neil Roberts teamed up with the evergreen Wayne Enstone to power their way to win their 3rd title. Neil's mistakes could be counted on the fingers of one foot, while Wayne delighted the spectators with his unique brand of volleying and interceptions. Phil Atkinson and Brian Nithsdale did brilliantly to reach their first final, and they put up some stout resistance without being able to greatly trouble the great pair, who have a remarkable 28 National Doubles titles between them.

Stuart Kirby and Brian Kirk, who like Angus Hanton have also been practising with Schoolboy champions at Derby Moor (perhaps this is the way forward for the rest of us?), continued their domination of recent Veterans Plate competitions in beating Dave Hebden and Keith Puckle in the 3rd place play-off.

Singles

Group A: Roberts bt Hanton 15-1, 15-0; Roberts bt Nithsdale 15-3, 15-0; Hanton bt Nithsdale 15-11, 15-13

Group B: Hebden bt Hawke 15-2, 15-6; Hebden bt Sandie 15-10, 15-7; Sandie bt Hawke 15-2, 15-0

Final: Roberts bt Hebden 15-0, 15-1

3rd Place play-off (Plate): Hanton bt Sandie 8-15, 15-5, 15-8

5th place play-off: Nithsdale bt Hawke 15-7, 15-0

Doubles

Group A: Roberts & Enstone bt Atkinson (B) & Stuart 15-3, 15-4; Roberts & Enstone bt Kirby & Kirk 15-2, 15-2; Kirby & Kirk bt Atkinson (B) & Stuart 15-4, 15-7

Group B: Atkinson (P) & Nithsdale bt Hawke & Sandie 15-4, 15-3; Atkinson (P) & Nithsdale bt Hebden & Puckle 15-12, 16-14; Hebden & Puckle bt Hawke & Sandie 15-10, 15-2

Final: Roberts & Enstone bt Atkinson (P) & Nithsdale 15-2, 15-5

3rd Place play-off (Plate): Kirby & Kirk bt Hebden & Puckle 15-2, 15-8
5th place play-off: Hawke & Sandie bt Atkinson (B) & Stuart 9-15, 16-15, 15-12

OFFICIAL RFA RANKINGS

London, 11th April 2008

The latest official RFA rankings, as prepared by Dave Hebden, have been published to take into account the results of the National Doubles tournament. And, the three most major moves come from players who reached the final. While Hamish Buchanan remains in a clear first place, his championship-winning partner Robin Perry climbs eight places to fourth, just behind John Minta and Phil Bishop.

The other big movers are Ed Fuller and Matt Cavanagh, who did exceptionally well to reach the final of the National Doubles. Ed jumps five places to fifth, while Matt rises 10 places to eleventh. Also climbing a few places are Alan Beverly and Charlie Brooks, who won the Plate competition. For the full details of the latest rankings, click on the link below.

The singles rankings - with James Toop in top spot - have not changed in the latest update, and the next rankings list to be published will be the end of season rankings. These will be calculated following the Scottish Open, which takes place over the first weekend of May.

NATIONAL CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP (WOOD CUP)

St Paul's School, 12/13th April 2008

For the fourth year on the trot, the Wood Cup final was played out between Manchester's Y Club and the Alleyn Old Boys. And, for the third year on the trot, it was the Mancunians who came out as winners. While the eventual outcome was never in doubt, credit must go to the runners-up, who pushed the eventual champions far harder than many onlookers - and perhaps even they themselves - had expected.

As well as this, the Alleyn Old Boys can lay claim to another distinction over the weekend - the narrowest victory - when they beat a very strong RFA Club squad by just three points in the semi-final. The Y Club, too, had a tough semi-final, but can thank a devastating performance by their first pair - John Beswick and John Minta - for securing a 15-point win over the Executioners.

Come the final, and the two Johns seemed to have set the tone for the match with emphatic wins in their singles. However, the Alleyn Old Boys refused to lay down, and wins for Dave Hebden and Bruce Hanton meant that the Y Club led by just seven points going into the doubles.

In the first round of matches, honours were pretty much even, as both sides traded blows. Particularly impressive was the performance of Inigo Ackland, recent winner of the National Schools Championship and partnering Dave Hebden, a man more than 40 years his senior and the winner of more than 100 titles in his illustrious career. The youngster was totally undaunted by the opposition and was only too happy to give as good as he got from the hard-hitting Y Club players. A major talent for the future...

It was only in the reverse doubles that the match swung decisively the way of the Y Club. John Minta and his partner Phil Bishop (who had not played in the Saturday games and taken a while to get to the speed of the match) started to hit their stride and won both games against the Hebden/Ackland pairing. With John Beswick and Ben Taberner winning their first game as well, the result was put beyond doubt, and the Wood Cup could make the return journey up the M6

Quarter-finals: Manchester Y Club bt Old Paulines; Executioners bt White Rose 127-59; RFA Club bt Dulwich Devils; Alleyn Old Boys bt Exeter
Semi-finals: Manchester Y Club bt Executioners 105-90; Alleyn Old Boys bt RFA Club
Final: Manchester Y Club bt Alleyn Old Boys 107-76

VINTAGE & MASTERS CHAMPIONSHIPS

Oundle School, 20th April 2008

The National Vintage tournament was held on Sunday 20th April at Oundle School, where the facilities for such an event were much appreciated on a cold damp morning. It was a record entry and a full day's fives was expected.

In the morning, the fact that it was provbably going to be a long day of Fives was guaranteed by Bob Sandie taking almost an hour to overcome Dick Warner in the first round, which was played over just one game. They met again in the final of the Plate about three hours later when Dick had his revenge in another long battle.

Meanwhile, the main competition went according to the seeding, with Dave Hebden just overcoming a newly qualified Jeremy Schroeter in one semi-final in three long games. Ever youthful and with deep reserves of stamina and experience, Dave still had some energy for the final with Wayne, but despite some excellent rallies, Wayne was simply too fast and too strong in the end.

In the Doubles, again the seeding worked, although Wayne and John East (partners again after a gap of probably 20 years) dropped a game to Warner and Grey as John slowly adjusted to playing fives again on some strange courts. Keith Puckle and Dave Hebden overcame some stout resistance from Ross and Hamilton in one semi-final, while Enstone and East caught a tiring Schroeter and McIntyre in the other. Again, in the final, Wayne's speed and strength were the main difference as Dave finally tired a little, while John and Keith tried their best simply to keep the rallies going. Warner and Grey duly won the doubles plate.

Congratulations to Dick Warner for playing a total of five singles and five doubles matches in the day, but especially to the new young whippersnapper Bob Sandie with six matches of both Singles and Doubles in one day. There is probably a Health and Safety rule against that for Vintage players. Lastly, much thanks to Oundle School (and Tony Burrows) for allowing us the use of their excellent facilities and for their warm hospitality during a long day's Fives.

It was also good to see the high standard of fives in the Masters Championship (played on the same day), although only two pairs entered. In the end, Bev Boag and Douglas Rice beat Bernard Atkinson and David Bawtree in two games. However, all bodes well for next year, as a number of players edge over the 65 age threshold and it looks as though there could be four pairs taking part. The venue has yet to be decided, and this really depends on the numbers taking part in the Vintage. If the success of this year's event at Oundle is repeated it may be necessary to have the Masters on a separate day. Watch this space...

Vintage Singles

1st round: R Grey bt T Hillman 15-0; R Sandie bt D Warner 15-13; G McIntyre bt J Hawke 15-12; P De Winton bt J Sanders 15-1

Quarter-finals: W Enstone bt R Grey 11-0, 11-0; T Hamilton bt R Sandie 11-5, 11-6; J Schroeter bt G McIntyre 11-0, 11-0; D Hebden bt P de Winton 11-1, 11-3

Semi-finals: Enstone bt Hamilton 11-2, 11-1; Hebden bt Schroeter 9-11, 11-6, 11-9

Final: Enstone bt Hebden 11-5, 11-0
Plate: Warner

Vintage Doubles

1st round: Hawke & Sanders bt Sanders & Hillman 15-4
Quarter-finals: Puckle & Hebden bt Atkinson & de Winton 11-2, 11-4; Hamilton & Ross bt Arnott & Wilkinson 11-2, 11-6; Schroeter & McIntyre bt Hawke & Sandie 11-4, 11-5; Enstone & East bt Warner & Grey 11-7, 9-11, 11-4
Semi-finals: Puckle & Hebden bt Ross & Hamilton 11-6, 11-5; Enstone & East bt Schroeter & McIntyre 11-6, 11-3
Winners: Enstone & East bt Puckle & Hebden 11-5, 11-1
Plate: Warner & Grey

Masters Doubles

Final: B Boag & D Rice bt B Atkinson & D Bawtree 15-3, 15-12

SCOTTISH OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS

Loretto School, Musselburgh, 3rd/4th May 2008

John Minta claimed his second double of the season with victory in both the singles and doubles tournaments at the Scottish Open. It was a truly dominant display in the singles, with a comfortable two-game win over organiser Neil Roberts in the final. And, while some said that he enjoyed the luck of the draw in facing players in the semi-final and final who were exhausted by their exploits in the previous round, the truth is that no one could live with his combination of pace around the court, powerful hitting with both hands and sheer aggression, always keen to take the ball early on the volley.

If the final was between two men from the North of England, it was good to see a strong Scottish contingent at Loretto. What's more, two of them reached the semi-finals. Edinburgh University's Johnny Major had an excellent win over Andy Pringle in the quarter-finals, before being demolished by the Minta steam-roller in the semis, while Caldeonian Club stalwart Simon Fraser found a determined Neil Roberts just too strong in the semi-final after making comfortable progress to that point.

There were fewer Scots in the following day's doubles championship - still the only open doubles tournament where the pairings are selected in a seeded draw - but again it was Simon Fraser who saw the greatest success. After a round-robin between all five pairs, he and partner Graham Butterworth (who had spent the entire day looking just moments away from a major coronary, and more than once ended a rally on his knees) went on to win the Plate Doubles, claiming the unique wooden Smith Plate in the process.

The main final was contested by what were clearly the two strongest pairs from the round-robin: John Minta and his partner Grem McIntyre took on Dave Hebden and Charles Lamb. And, what a match it was, with never more than a few points between the pairs. Certainly, if John had expected a repeat of his relatively comfortable win in the singles, he was to be very disappointed. Grem and John edged a tight first game before Dave and Charles came back to win the second - again by a narrow margin.

In the decisive third game, it was a tremendous and fascinating battle, with Dave and John desperately trying to find winners and protect their partners, while Charles and Grem did their very best to return whatever was hit (and occasionally belted!) at them. It was a magnificent game, with a real mixture of shots and styles: John's familiar power play was matched by Dave's subtlety at the front of the court, and all four players were charging round for all they were worth.

Almost inevitably, the game went to the wire, and Charles and Dave had a couple of match points at 10-9

up. However, Charles was served out and a potential match-winner from Dave clipped the top of the bar, putting John in, and he duly saw out the final three points to clinch his second title of the weekend.

Singles

1st round: G McIntyre bt J Milne 15-1, 15-13; J Major bt I Roberts 15-1, 15-2; N Roberts bt R Murby 15-3, 15-3; M Kemp bt C Lamb 15-10, 15-7; B Baral bt J Hawke 15-4, 15-1; S Fraser bt R Butterworth 15-0, 15-0

Quarter-finals: J Minta bt McIntyre 15-1, 15-1; Major bt A Pringle 16-14, 15-9; N Roberts bt Kemp 15-3, 15-0; Fraser bt Baral 15-0, 15-1

Semi-finals: Minta bt Major 15-0, 15-3; Roberts bt Fraser 15-4, 15-11

Final: Minta bt Roberts 15-1, 15-5

Plate: Pringle

Doubles

Round-robin: Minta & McIntyre bt Fraser & Butterworth 15-7; bt Pringle & I Roberts 15-5; lost to Hebden & Lamb 9-15; bt Baral & Kemp 15-6. Fraser & Butterworth lost to Hebden & Lamb 8-15; bt Baral & Kemp 15-10 (did not play Pringle & I Roberts). Pringle & I Roberts lost to Hebden & Lamb 13-15; bt Baral & Kemp 15-3. Hebden & Lamb bt Baral & Kemp 15-3

Final: Minta & McIntyre bt Hebden & Lamb 12-10, 8-11, 12-10

Plate: Fraser & Butterworth

RFA OFFICIAL RANKINGS

London, 18th May 2008

The RFA has today published the final rankings for the 2007/08 season (prepared by Dave Hebden) and they see James Toop and Hamish Buchanan top the singles and doubles rankings respectively.

After a strong season, in which he won two championships and was runner-up in the National Singles, James takes over from Matt Cavanagh, who drops to third. Ed Fuller again finishes a season one place below the top spot, while National Champion Hamish Buchanan winds up in fourth place. Meanwhile, John Minta (also a winner of two titles this season) is closing in on the top four in fifth place.

Lower down the order, Will Ellison caps a fine season by securing ninth place, while Neil Roberts returns to the top ten after reaching the final of the season's last event, the Scottish Open. Also making good progress over their position at the start of the season and into the top 20 are Harry Akerman, Simon Fraser and Dan Grant, while Dan Tristao is the highest new entry at 15.

In the doubles rankings, the top spot is occupied – as it has been for the last four seasons – by Hamish Buchanan, with a clear lead over his closest challengers, the Manchester duo of Phil Bishop and John Minta. The biggest mover in the top ten is Ed Fuller (winner of the North West Open and runner-up in the National Doubles), but James Toop and Marcus Bate also make good progress to reach seventh and eight respectively.

At the same time, Will Ellison and Adrian Lee move into the top 20, while North West runner-up Matt Bowness, Under 25 champion Steve Korris and BUSA champion Jack Furniss all make it into the top 30. For full details of the latest rankings, simply click on the link below.

RFA AGM

London, 18th June 2008

[posted 03 June 2008]

Notice is hereby given that the 82nd Annual General Meeting of the Rugby Fives Association will be held on Wednesday, 18th June 2007 at 7.30 pm at the offices of Clifford Chance, 4 Coleman Street, London EC2.

Members should have received the relevant paperwork, either by Royal Mail or email, but for those who have not, you can click on the links below to download all of the documents. Also, if you have not yet received the documents and are a fully paid-up RFA member, the most likely reason is that the General Secretary does not have your current postal and/or email address. So, if you think that may be the case, please contact the Gen Sec with your latest details.

THE RUGBY FIVES ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

AGENDA ITEM 4 – GENERAL SECRETARY’S REPORT 2007-8

As many of you will have seen from the RFA’s website or the mid-season Newsletter, I have now taken over the role of General Secretary from Ian Fuller, so I must go no further without extending my thanks to him for all the hard work he has put in over the last few years. It is only now that I have taken on many of his duties that I have come to realise how much he did – and how well he did it. The board, and the RFA in general, owe him an enormous debt of gratitude, and we are delighted that he will continue to be involved in the game as a board member and Honorary Treasurer. And, while we’re on the subject, I’m delighted to report a positive financial situation for the Association, as you will see in the attached financial report.

Never mind financial control, though, this year has also shown Ian’s skill as a coach. Over the last few years, we have become used to St Paul’s dominating the schools’ competitions – and a steady stream of fine young players continues to emerge from Barnes – but, this year, boys from Alleyn’s under Ian’s tutelage have scored some notable wins, picking up the singles and doubles titles in the Open Schools National Championships, as well as dominating the Under 13 championships.

That said, what must delight us all is that, first, so many schools are entering these competitions and, second, when you consider the plate competitions, so many schools are picking up trophies. Over the four age categories at the National Schools championships, for instance, more than 20 schools were represented, and many of them – including, for the first time in this tournament, Derby Moor – won trophies.

Indeed, the strength of the game among young players is great news for the future. This season, we have seen strong entries in both the BUSA and Under 25 championships, with the final stages producing matches and champions of the very highest quality. Surely, it won’t be long before the likes of Dan Tristao, Alan Beverly and Will Ellison are challenging the established stars and winning Open competitions.

This year, Hamish Buchanan completed a memorable double, winning both the National Singles and (with Robin Perry) Doubles titles. But, it’s further evidence of the strength in the game that no one player has dominated this season’s championships, and several different payers have picked up trophies around

the country. As ever, our thanks go to the many tournament organisers who give up their time for the various championships and ensure that they run so smoothly.

We were also delighted this year to see the first tournaments on the new courts at Oundle School, but this is far from the only good news about courts. Although there have been some disappointments – we have lost the courts at Abingdon and Haileybury – there is excellent news elsewhere.

As I write, work looks set to start soon on improving the facilities at Alleyn's, while we are delighted that Fives is thriving again at Leeds University and that the court at Heversham Grammar School is set to be enclosed. However, the greatest news of all is that there seems a strong likelihood that Rugby Fives will return to the School that gave the sport its name. Rugby is planning to build two courts and has given a commitment to the game in the future. Naturally, they are looking for a sizeable investment, but something like a third of the necessary £200,000 has already been pledged – and that's before the launch of an appeal to Old Rugbeians, which will hopefully raise a substantial amount of money. Needless to say, we are delighted with developments and will continue to help the school every step of the way however we can, whether financially or in terms of our experience with other courts around the country. As they say, watch this space...

Or, perhaps more likely, watch our website. I continue to look after the RFA's website and am pleased that so many of you have given such positive feedback on it. I am very grateful, in particular, to the tournament organisers who supply me so promptly with entry forms and results. Indeed, thanks to the miracles of texting, I was even able to have the results of one tournament online before the organiser had returned home! That said, I am always on the lookout for more content – and photographs in particular – so please do send me anything you have. The next step in the development of the site is to try and include video content, and we will be working with the site's developers, Jackson Bone, to have this new section of the site up and running before the start of next season.

At the same time, we will also continue with our other means of communication, the Annual Review and mid-season newsletter, both produced with the Eton Fives Association. Again, we are delighted with the positive feedback on both, and our thanks must go to Ian Roberts for his efforts on the Annual Review. It is a huge and hugely time-consuming project, but the hard work that he and his colleagues from the EFA put in produced a truly impressive document. Likewise, the newsletter met with much approval, and benefited this year from our use of a professional graphic designer to lay it out. We were also able to keep our costs down by distributing almost half of the copies electronically. Using email rather than Royal Mail cuts down on the costs of printing, envelopes and stamps, and I would encourage any member who doesn't already receive publications via email to seriously consider it.

We will continue with these three publications – website, Annual Review and Newsletter – over the coming season, and will continue to work with the Fives Federation to ensure that each has a defined purpose, with as little overlap between them as possible. We will also be working with the Federation to pursue possible avenues of sponsorship and to monitor the progress of the City Fives Association. The CFA is now well established, with its own one-wall tournaments and even selecting players for international competition. It is currently drawing up an ambitious five-year plan, and we hope to be able to report on its continued success in the future.

Last, but very definitely not least, I shall finish with a comment on one very definite success, the RFA's 80th Anniversary Dinner last September. Not only did a large number of RFA members attend the function at the Queen's Club, they all enjoyed a tremendous evening and – thanks in no small part to Dick Warner's efforts as auctioneer – the RFA's coffers were swelled to the tune of some £1700.

Andy Pringle
May 2008

RFA CLUB MANAGER'S REPORT

The RFA Club has been successful in its travels again this year. I have so far received 30 match reports with 18 wins and 12 losses.

Once again, the match managers have done an excellent job of raising competitive teams and getting them to the fixtures, and they deserve all of our thanks for this commitment. Thanks also to the opposition teams who always provide excellent accommodation and a good pint after the game, if not before in some cases!

With regard to this year's tournaments, Gareth Price did an excellent job of organising the President's Cup. Congratulations to Phil Atkinson and Jon Abecassis who emerged as the eventual winners.

In the Wood Cup, James Toop, Freddie Sjostrom and Dan Grant joined me to make up the RFA side. After a qualifying game against Old Tonbridgians, and a quarter final victory over a scratch Alleyn Old Boys reserve team, the RFA lost in the semi finals to the Alleyn Old Boys by a mere 3 points. Thanks very much to the team for putting in so much effort, and congratulations to the Manchester YMCA who ran out as eventual winners.

Thanks again to everyone who has contributed to the RFA Club again this year, I hope you all have a good summer break and look forward to seeing you on court soon.

Ed Fuller
May 2008

THE RUGBY FIVES ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Financial Report

It is pleasing to see another year of profit for the Association although there are a few 'exceptions' to these figures which I will highlight in this report.

On the income side, the profit from championships should be lower by some £900 as we are still awaiting a bill from our tankard supplier for all tankards provided since March 1st.

The figures for subscriptions reflect some adjustments from the overpayments last year and include some refunds. Since the year end approx £500 has been paid in from overdue amounts so the totals are pretty similar to last year.

On the expenditure side, the costs of producing the Annual review and the Newsletter were both higher, mainly due to the increased number of colour photographs in the Review. The despatch of AGM papers and the Newsletter by e-mail has had a beneficial impact on our postage costs although a bill of £420 for the distribution of the Annual Review is not reflected in these figures.

As mentioned in my report last year we hadn't received a renewal notice in respect of our Civil Liability insurance which resulted in 2 premiums being paid during this financial year.

The Board decided last year to pay for a professional photographer to collate some much need action shots and also to produce a library of current players and officials so this is a one off expense for the year.

The loss shown for the dinner mainly related to the costs of the gifts presented but it should be remembered that a donation of £1700 was made to the Charitable Trust thanks to the brilliant auctioneering efforts of Dick Warner.

The Board has approved the Accounts and recommends them approval.

Ian Fuller
May 2007

Auditor's Statement

My examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Company and a comparison of the Accounts presented with those records. It includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the Accounts and seeking explanations from Directors concerning any such matters.

I do not express an audit opinion on the Accounts. In the course of my examination no matter has come to my attention that indicates that the Directors have not met the requirements to ensure that proper accounting records are kept and Accounts are prepared which agree with the accounting records.

FW P de Winton
May 2008

DERBY MOOR INVITATION DOUBLES

Derby Moor, 22nd June 2008

Players from Derby Moor Fives, Alleyn Old Boys, the White Rose Club and the Manchester Y Club contested the 5th Derby Moor Invitation Tournament. After several matches in two Pools, Phil Bishop and Jimmy Goodwin were beaten in a close, hard-hitting semi-final by David Hebden and Max Frost (DMF U14), while next door Bob Sandie and Ashley Hill – who has already won two Doubles titles this year – got the better of Ian Roberts and Richard Christie in a lengthy tactical battle.

The final was marked by a remarkable performance by the young Max, who withstood a huge amount of pressure from Ashley and Bob, trying their utmost to keep Dave out of the game. However, the pressure told in the end, with an exhausted Max and Dave going down in two games. Plate A was won by Brian Kirk and Anthony Goodwin (DMF U16), Plate B by Tim Widdop and Matt Gilbert (DMF U16). Grem McIntyre – two-time Scottish champion – and Rob Grey won the Wooden Spoon by default!

RFA AGM

London, 18th June 2008

The 82nd Annual General Meeting of the RFA took place on June 18th in the offices of Clifford Chance in London. It was the first to held under the Association's new General Secretary, and both he and the President marked the occasion by formally thanking Ian Fuller, the previous General Secretary, for his work.

During the meeting, there were no comments on the General Secretary's report, and the annual accounts

were accepted (see below for details of both). In addition, five board members – David Barnes, David Gardner, Paddy d’Ancona, David Fox and Ollie Stone-Lee – were re-appointed as Directors after retiring by rotation. At the same time, Peter de Winton was re-elected as Auditor, and David Barnes was re-elected as Honorary Archivist.