

Results and Reports from the RFA Website 2010-2011

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SOUTH WEST CHAMPIONSHIPS

Blundell's School, Tiverton, 10/11th July 2010

In his seventh appearance in a senior singles final, Will Ellison finally clinched his first title in the South West Championship – and celebrated by teaming up with Marcus Bate to take the doubles title as well.

This year's event was graced by an excellent entry of all ages and experience, and although the top eight seeds won through to the quarter-finals, there were plenty of good matches on the way. Marcus Bate, for example, survived tough encounters with Adam George (who went on to win the plate) and Alex Rew to clinch his quarter-final berth; Ed Hatton, meanwhile, only just edged out Gareth Price in the second round, while Kevin Henry had a tough battle with Anthony Goodwin at the same stage.

In the end, though, the seedings proved correct. The top four seeds – John Minta, Will, Hamish Buchanan and Dan Grant – won through to the semi-finals, with John and Will reaching the final. Both players had reached the final without dropping a game, although Chris Burrows and Dan came close to taking a game off John in the quarter- and semi-final respectively. Come the final, though, there was none of the nervousness that some had expected of Will. In fact, it was John who looked the less at ease, making uncharacteristic errors and allowing Will to race through the first game for the loss of just a single point.

The second game, however, was very different. John began to play much more aggressively – hitting the ball harder, using more angle around the walls and trying to blast Will out of his comfort zone – and, at first, it seemed to be working, as he raced into a 9-4 lead. But Will never gave up and gradually fought his way back into the game. Although John did have game-point at a couple of stages, he could never find the crucial winner that would take the match into a third game. Instead Will's dogged retrieval and fierce cross-court play seemed to sap John's will, and it was Will who held his nerve to take the second game – and his first title. His cry of "Finally!" as he clinched the final point was surely heard several miles away.

The doubles, too, saw a fine entry, but as in the singles, the top four seeds won through to the semi-finals. In the top half, although Ed Hatton and Andy Pringle pushed top seeds Will and Marcus hard in the first game, the higher-ranked pair went on to clinch their final place with a routine win in the second game.

In the bottom half, though, things were much tighter, and led to a semi-final between two scratch pairings: Chris Burrows and John Minta faced Hamish Buchanan and Wayne Enstone, the latter pairing having only just scraped through after a tight match with Dan Grant and Gareth Price. The semi, though, was even tighter, with the first two games shared, and it was only in the third that the experience of Hamish and Wayne told, as they raced into a good lead and survived a strong fightback to take the game 11-5.

That set up a mouth-watering final, and to start with it delivered. The two pairs were closely matched, but sadly Wayne sustained a nasty injury, which forced him to become little more than a passenger. Will and Marcus won the first game comfortably, and although some inspired play by Hamish (who was virtually playing singles for much of the time), backed up by sheer grit and determination from Wayne, won the second game, it was inevitable that the younger pair would clinch the title – and this they duly did with an 11-4 win in the third game.

Singles

1st round: J Minta bt C Bury 11-0, 11-1; S King bt K Kennerley 11-0, 11-2; A Pringle bt T Lewis 11-0, 11-0;

C Burrows bt N Geere 11-2, 11-0; M Bate bt A George 11-9, 11-6; A Rew bt J Marshall 11-0, 11-1; J

Savery bt J Gravatt 11-4, 11-1; D Grant bt S Watson 11-3, 11-3; R Bury bt D Shultz 7-11, 12-11, 12-11; G Price bt

T Bury 11-1, 11-1; E Hatton bt J Garratt 11-2, 11-1; K Henry bt M Frost 11-5, 11-0; A Goodwin bt H Aveston 5-11, 11-3, 11-6; J Hughes bt S Kirby 12-11, 11-5; W Ellison bt R Christie 11-0, 11-0

2nd round: Minta bt King 11-4, 11-0; Burrows bt Pringle 11-2, 11-6; Bate bt Rew 12-11, 9-11, 11-2; Grant bt Savery 11-1, 11-5; H Buchanan bt Bury 11-1, 11-1; Hatton bt Price 12-11, 11-9; Henry bt Goodwin 11-9, 11-7; Ellison bt Hughes 11-0, 11-1

Quarter-finals: Minta bt Burrows 11-5, 11-9; Grant bt Bate 12-10, 11-3; Buchanan bt Hatton 11-1, 11-4; Ellison bt Henry 11-1, 11-1

Semi-finals: Minta bt Grant 12-10, 11-8; Ellison bt Buchanan 11-5, 11-5

Final: Ellison bt Minta 11-1, 12-10

Plate: George

Doubles

1st round: Bate & Ellison bt R Bury & Geere 11-0, 11-0; Aveston & King bt Frost & Goodwin 11-0, 11-7; Henry & Savery bt Gravatt & Marshall 11-4, 7-11, 11-4; Hatton & Pringle bt Lewis & Watson 11-2, 11-0; Burrows & Minta bt Garratt & George 11-3, 11-0; Rew & Hughes bt Christie & Kirby 11-1, 7-11, 11-3; Grant & Price bt Kennerley & Shultz 11-2, 11-1; Buchanan & Enstone bt C & T Bury 11-3, 1-4

Quarter-finals: Bate & Ellison bt Aveston & King 11-1, 11-5; Hatton & Pringle bt Henry & Savery 11-6, 11-5; Burrows & Minta bt Rew & Hughes 11-3, 11-4; Buchanan & Enstone bt Grant & Price 11-9, 11-9

Semi-finals: Bate & Ellison bt Hatton & Pringle 11-7, 11-1; Buchanan & Enstone bt Burrows & Minta 11-8, 9-11, 11-5

Final: Bate & Ellison bt Buchanan & Enstone 11-4, 10-12, 11-4

Plate: Christie & Kirby

American Doubles: G Price & Warner

UK OPEN 1-WALL HANDBALL DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIPS

This year's UK Open doubles saw players from Ireland and Belgium travel to the Westway for one of Europe's premier 1-wall handball events. The men's open grade was fiercely contested through the group stages – Belgium's Bastien van Nuffelen & Phillippe de Mil qualified through to the semis along with England's Peter Cohen & Gareth Price, Adrian Lee & Peter White, and Anthony Theodossi & Ryan Perrie.

Lee & White drew Cohen & Price, winning 21-17 despite a hard-hitting comeback that nearly caused a reverse. Van Nuffelen & De Mil negotiated Theodossi & Perrie more easily, setting up a fabulous final with Lee and White that saw outrageous killshots combined with diving retrievals. In the end the Belgians took the title with a 21-17 win, cue huge celebrations from the visiting pair.

The Ladies Open also went down to the wire; Rees and Scoones had to win in the final round-robin match to secure the title, and held their nerve to defeat Ganguly & Thompsell in a hard fought match with some seriously big hitting. It was the first international title for Rees & Scoones, both having lost out in their finals at the Irish Open earlier in the year.

Finally, the men's challenger grade was won by more home-grown Westway talent; Tommy Curtin and Luke Thomson negotiated a tricky group and semi-final to come up against visiting Irish duo Colm Grace and Brian O'Sullivan. There was quality on show throughout the game, left-hander Thomson's speed around court and Curtin's big hitting proved a winning combination as the English pair stayed ahead from start to finish. Thomson adds the doubles challenger title to his earlier singles win, a real confidence boost

as he begins preparations to travel with England to the European Handball championships in September.

2010 EUROPILOTA CHAMPIONSHIPS

Valencia, Spain, 8/11th September 2010

England's handball players claimed the biggest prize of their lives last night, when they won the European 1-Wall Championship in the 2010 Europilota Championships.

After emphatic wins against Belgium and Italy in the group stages, they then secured an equally emphatic win against the Netherlands in the semi-final. The result was that, in the final, they faced the host nation, Spain, who had also won through without dropping a single game.

The final itself was broadcast live on Spanish TV and played in front of a crowd of 600 paying spectators – of whom only 10 were paying for England – and with countless friends around the world watching online. Nevertheless, England (represented by the RFA's Ady Lee and Dan Grant alongside the EFA's Peter Cohen) staged a remarkable comeback from two match points down and went on to claim the title.

LONDON OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS

Merchant Taylors' School, Northwood, 18/19th September 2010

It was a weekend packed full of surprises, but the 2010 London Open was a tour de force for Will Ellison. He produced a superb performance to defeat reigning champion James Toop in the singles – ending James' two-year unbeaten run in singles tournaments in the process – before teaming up with Hal Mohammed to win the doubles title as well.

From the word go, in fact, Will had looked in ominously good form, and he went on to record astonishing wins in the quarter- and semi-finals. In the last eight, Will faced Dan Grant (a top-10 ranked player) and beat him without conceding a single point; then, in the next round, it was John Minta's turn to feel the Ellison heat, going out of the tournament 11-2, 11-2.

Elsewhere in the draw, though, there were much closer matches. In the last 16, it took three games for Marcus Bate to overcome England handballer Pete Cohen, and for Hamish Buchanan to dispatch Charlie Brooks, while in the previous round an all-England handball clash saw Christ's Hospital schoolboy Luke Thomson edge out Gareth Price in three games.

In the end, though, the top three seeds (James, John and Will) made it into the semi-finals, accompanied by fifth seed Matt Cavanagh, who had taken three games to secure his quarter-final win over Hamish. What was remarkable, however, was how one-sided both matches were. After Will's emphatic win over John Minta, James did better still, conceding just a single point in beating Matt.

The final too started in a way that no one expected: Will took the first game to love, simply blitzing James. Will had an answer for anything James could throw at him, and then went on to hit some glorious winners. The second game was rather different and – seemingly thanks to a change of tactics that forced some mistakes from Will – James took an early lead. However, gradually Will clawed his way back, overtook James and went on to clinch the win. It was remarkable performance, not just because it was Will's first win over James in competition, but also because it was James' first defeat in singles competition since losing to Ed Fuller in this tournament two years ago.

Still, if that was an upset, it was nothing compared to some of the results in the doubles - a competition which this year featured a record number of participants. And, perhaps chief among those was Luke Thomson and Pete Cohen's win over Hamish Buchanan and Matt Cavanagh – third seeds this year and winners of the title in 2006 – in the last 16. Then again, perhaps as much a shock was the previously untried pairing of Gareth Price and Dan Tristao beating first Charlie Brooks and James Bristow in the last 16 before going on to edge out second seeds James Toop and Marcus Bate in the quarter-finals.

That left the bottom half of the draw wide open, and it was the hard-hitting left/right pairing of Tom Dean and Andy Pringle who benefitted. They beat Luke and Pete in the quarters, before going on to knock out Dan and Gareth in the semi-final to clinch their place in the final. This semi was remarkable in its own right, and could set trivia fans scurrying to their record books: when was the last time a semi-final was contested by an unseeded pair and the sixth seeds?

In the top half, meanwhile, three pairs stood out, and the top seeds, Will and Hal, made ominously strong progress to the semi-finals. Here they faced Chris Burrows and John Minta, who had only just come through against Dan Grant and Ady Lee in an epic three-game encounter in the quarter-finals. However, John and Chris weren't able to repeat their heroics in the semi, dispatched clinically by Hal and Will.

Although the final featured a perhaps-surprising line-up, there was no doubting some of the quality on show. With both pairs featuring left-/right-hand combinations, there were precious few weaknesses to pick on, and the early points were shared. However, as the games wore on, Hal and Will began to eke out a lead they would never lose, finding the crucial nicks, hitting the winners and being able to retrieve what Tom and Andy could throw at them. Hal's stubborn defence was particularly impressive in the face of sustained attack.

In the end, it was a deserved win for Will and Hal in two games, and saw Will secure his second successive 'double', having picked up both the singles and doubles titles at the South West Open in July.

See next page for scores:

Singles

1st round: E Kay bt V Patel 11-0, 11-0; H Jefferies bt R Patel 11-0, 11-1; C Brooks bt J Gravatt 11-3, 11-4;

L Thomson bt G Price 11-9, 4-11, 11-4; T Dean bt T Lewis 11-2, 11-0; A Pringle bt J Malde 11-5, 11-0

2nd round: J Toop bt Kay 11-0, 11-4; M Bate bt P Cohen 11-2, 9-11, 11-3; M Cavanagh bt Jefferies 11-2, 11-4; H Buchanan bt Brooks 7-11, 11-6, 11-2; W Ellison bt Thomson 11-6, 11-0 ;D Grant bt Dean 11-4, 11-6; T Maconie bt E Hatton 11-9, 11-7; J Minta bt Pringle 11-5, 11-8

Quarter-finals: Toop bt Bate 11-1, 11-5; Cavanagh bt Buchanan 11-6, 7-11, 11-3; Ellison bt Grant 11-0, 11-0; Minta bt Maconie 11-9, 11-8

Semi-finals: Toop bt Cavanagh 11-0, 11-1; Ellison bt Minta 11-2, 11-2

Final: Ellison bt Toop 11-0, 11-8

Plate: Price

Doubles

1st round: M Baxter & J Goodwin bt V & R Patel 11-3, 11-5; S Kirby & R Christie bt J Malde & J Ader 11-4,

11-2; L Thomson & P Cohen bt A Edmonds & H Jefferies 11-2, 11-3; J Gravatt & D Aldham bt N Finney &

R Lamb 11-4, 11-1

2nd round: W Ellison & H Mohammed bt Baxter & Goodwin 11-0, 11-1; T Maconie & E Hatton bt E Kay &

K Ward 11-0, 11-5; D Grant & A Lee bt A Goodwin & M Frost 11-3, 11-5; C Burrows & J Minta bt Kirby & Christie 11-0, 11-0; Thomson & Cohen bt H Buchanan & M Cavanagh 11-7, 12-10; T Dean & A Pringle bt

R Bridge & M Gibbor 11-1, 11-4; G Price & D Tristao bt C Brooks & J Bristow 12-10, 12-11; M Bate & J Toop bt Gravatt & Aldham 11-2, 11-1

Quarter-finals: Ellison & Mohammed bt Maconie & Hatton 11-7, 11-3; Burrows & Minta bt Grant & Lee 11-12, 11-9, 11-8; Dean & Pringle bt Thomson & Cohen 11-1, 11-2; Price & Tristao bt Bate & Toop 0-11, 12-11, 11-5

Semi-finals: Ellison & Mohammed bt Burrows & Minta 11-2, 11-1; Dean & Pringle bt Price & Tristao 11-7,

11-5

Final: Ellison & Mohammed bt Dean & Pringle 11-6, 11-5

Plate: Brooks & Bristow

OWERS TROPHY

St Paul's School, Barnes, 2nd October 2010

Appearing in their fifth consecutive Owers Trophy final, the Old Paulines took advantage of their strong squad to regain the trophy they last won in 2008.

In all, six teams took part in the Old Boys' tournament, resulting in more than 25 players – many of them not regulars on the competition circuit – taking to the St Paul's courts. The event started with the teams split into two round-robin groups of three, and the top four teams soon established their dominance.

In the first group, the Alleyn Old Boys (three-times winners of the event, and formed of a remarkable squad of three members of the Hanton family and one Buchanan) took top spot after a narrow win over the defending champions, the Old Pilgrims. Meanwhile, it was a similar story in the second group, with

the Old Paulines finishing on top after beating the Old Eastbournians. These four teams would go on to play in the knockout semi-finals.

That meant that the remaining two teams – the Old Oundelians and (making their debut in this event) the Old Rugbeians – would play out the Plate Final. Sadly, there was no fairytale for the Rugby boys, just a week ahead of the official opening of the new courts at their school, as the Oundelians (Charles Lamb, Chris Burrows, Alex Smith and Doug Roberts) took a convincing win.

There was further disappointment in the main draw, where an injury to one of the Old Pilgrims meant that their team was forced to withdraw and concede their semi-final match to the Old Paulines, gifting them a place in the final. Here, they would face the Alleyn Old Boys, who had secured a 13-point victory over the Old Eastbournians in the one remaining semi-final.

Come the final, though, it was soon obvious that the strength of the Old Paulines' squad – they had the luxury of being able to play Sam Roberts and Henry Jefferies in the early rounds, before subbing in Dan Tristao and Tom Dean to play alongside Alan Beverly and Charlie Brooks in the later rounds – would win the day. Tom and Dan made swift work of dispatching the AOBs' father-and-son pairing of Angus and Peter Hanton, and although Hamish Buchanan and Bruce Hanton made Alan and Charlie work hard, it was the Old Pauline pair who won the game, giving their side a 13-point lead at the halfway point of the final.

That was effectively the end for the AOBs, and in the final two games, their spirit seemed broken. The by now-dominant Old Paulines won both games convincingly, securing the title with an overall winning margin of 37 points. Harsh, perhaps, but no more than they deserved on a day when no team managed to win more than a single game against them.

Round-robin stage

Group 1: Alleyn Old Boys bt Old Rugbeians 58-31, bt Old Pilgrims 45-40; Old Pilgrims bt Old Rugbeians 60-15

Group 2: Old Paulines bt Old Oundelians 60-11, bt Old Eastbournians 51-37; Old Eastbournians bt Old Oundelians 60-10

Knockout stage

Semi-finals: Old Paulines bt Old Pilgrims w/o; Alleyn Old Boys bt Old Eastbournians 50-37

Final: Old Paulines bt Alleyn Old Boys 60-23

Plate: Old Oundelians

YORKSHIRE OPEN DOUBLES TOURNAMENT

Giggleswick School, 16th October 2010

Hamish Buchanan and Will Ellison lived up to their billing as the country's top-ranked doubles players by winning the Yorkshire Open Doubles tournament - their first event playing as a pair. The tournament started with a round-robin, and then moved into a knockout stage. Will and Hamish beat John Minta and Phil Bishop in the semi-final, before going on to take the title with an emphatic win over Neil Roberts and John Beswick in the final.

Round-robin stage:

Pool 1: NH Roberts & JG Beswick bt P Manning & TC Widdop 11-0, 11-2; bt JR Hawke & P McIntyre 11-0,

11-0; bt DK McIntyre & O Woolhouse 11-0, 11-1; bt P Bishop & J Minta 12-10, 11-9. Bishop & Minta bt Manning & Widdop 11-6, 12-11; bt Hawke & P McIntyre 11-4, 11-2; bt DK McIntyre & Woolhouse 11-

0, 11-1. Manning & Widdop bt Hawke & P McIntyre 11-0, 11-3. Hawke & P McIntyre bt DK McIntyre & Woolhouse 11-2, 11-0
Pool 2: NH Buchanan & W Ellison bt RG Sandie & N Reddy 11-1, 11-2; bt B Kirk & C Butler 11-0, 11-1;
bt S Kirby & R Christie 11-3, 11-4. Kirby & Christie bt Sandie & Reddy 11-1, 11-0; Kirk & Butler 7-11, 11-3, 11-8; Kirk & Butler bt Sandie & Reddy 11-2, 11-4
Semi-finals: Buchanan & Ellison bt Bishop & Minta 11-3, 11-5; Beswick & Roberts bt Kirby & Christie 11-4, 11-4
Final: Buchanan & Ellison bt Beswick & Roberts 11-1, 11-0
Plate: Manning & Widdop

NEW COURTS OPENED

Rugby School, 9th October 2010

More than 100 guests gathered at Rugby School on Saturday October 9th to mark an auspicious day: the official opening of the school's two new Fives courts. During the morning, the crowds were treated to two exhibition matches – on one court, four Old Rugbeians did battle (Dick Warner, David Urquhart, Ian Jackson and John Harland), while on the other court two of the game's rising stars (Under 25 champion Dan Tristao and Will Ellison, double winner at September's London Open) took on two of the game's greatest ever players, Wayne Enstone and Hamish Buchanan.

After these matches, the guests (including donors, as well as members of the RFA and EFA) were treated to a lunch, at which the school's current headmaster, Patrick Derham, said a few words, before the courts were officially declared open by John Evans, master in charge of Fives at the school from 1968 to 1973. After that, the courts were free to all, and after several of the current schoolboys and -girls had tried their hand at the game, members of the RFA took the chance to try the new courts.

OFFICIAL RFA RANKINGS

London, 17th October 2010

The latest RFA rankings show a momentous change: for the first time since the end of the 2003/04 season, Hamish Buchanan is not on top of the doubles rankings. Instead, following wins in the South West and London Open Championships, it's Will Ellison who now takes the number one spot in the doubles rankings, ending a six-year run for Hamish in the top spot.

Indeed, although the latest rankings (prepared for the RFA by Dave Hebden) only take into account the South West and London Open championships (and not the recent Yorkshire Open), the results are enough to see some major changes in the rankings. As well as Will taking over in first place, his London partner Hal Mohammed moves up to fifth place, while RFA General Secretary Andy Pringle climbs to eighth after reaching the semi-final at Blundell's and the final at Merchant Taylors. Andy's partner in London, Tom Dean, moves up 16 places to 15th, while just two places ahead of him is Chris Burrows, who rises 15 places after partnering John Minta to the semis in both the South West and London Opens.

Wayne Enstone is another big riser – up 15 places to 16th after finishing as runner-up in Blundell's – but the two biggest climbers are Ed Hatton and Gareth Price, up 23 and 29 places respectively.

By contrast, there's rather less major movement in the singles rankings. Despite losing in the final of the London Open, James Toop remains well clear in top spot, with John Minta staying in second place. However, following his wins in the London and South West Opens, Will Ellison moves up into third

place, closing in on John's second place. A little lower down, meanwhile, Tom Maconie and Marcus Bate both climb three places to 10th and 11th spots, while Kevin Henry's quarter-final appearance at Blundell's sees him up seven places and back into the top 20.

WEST OF ENGLAND CHAMPIONSHIPS

Clifton College, Bristol, 23rd/24th October 2010

By taking both the singles and doubles titles at the West of England Championships, Will Ellison extended his winning streak to seven titles in his last seven events. His two Clifton wins came after previous double wins in the London and South West Open Championships, as well as in the recent Yorkshire Doubles tournament.

Will's wins were the culmination of a fine weekend of high-quality Fives, as evidenced by the fact that the singles Plate (for first-match losers) included such names as England Handball captain Ady Lee, Alex Rew, Charlie Brooks and the eventual winner, Ed Brooke.

There were plenty of close matches throughout the tournament – Jim Hughes was involved in three-game matches in both the first and second rounds, for instance – but in the end it was seven of the eight seeds who reached the quarter-finals (the only unseeded player to make it this far was Hal Mohammed, who had beaten Ed Hatton in the second round); and the top three seeds (James, Will and John Minta) made comfortable progress into the semi-finals. The one major upset, though, came when Dan Grant put out former national champion Matt Cavanagh with a gritty win in three games. Dan also pushed James hard in the first game of their semi – he even had game-ball at one stage – but in the end James came through to face Will, who had beaten John 11-4, 11-5 to set up a repeat of last month's London Open final.

The two players may have been the same, but the Clifton match was very different to the one at Merchant Taylors. Indeed, James took the first game in the final and had several match points in the second before a major comeback saw Will take the game and send the final into a deciding third game. Here, he raced into a big early lead before James pegged him back. However, showing real confidence and strength of character, Will held on to win the deciding game 12-10. It was an amazing match: two hours long and described by the admiring RFA Deputy President Dick Warner as the best game of singles he had ever seen.

Will and James were on opposite sides in the doubles final, too - partnered by Hal Mohammed and Marcus Bate respectively. It was a repeat of last year's final at this event, and the first game was a real nail-biter. James and Marcus made the early running and had several chances to win the game – they were 10-6 up at one stage – but Will and Hal remarkably fought back to take the game 12-10. The second game was close, too, but Will and Hal always had their noses in front, and they closed it out 11-7 to retain the title they won in 2009.

If there was a disappointment, it was that an injury to Hamish Buchanan had prevented him and John Beswick taking part, but overall there was no lack of quality in the doubles tournament. Two first-round matches went to three games, while Jim Hughes and Alex Rew had the distinction of taking a game off the defending champions in the quarter-finals before losing in three.

Again, it was the top eight seeds who made the quarter-finals, but here there were some slight upsets, with fifth seeds Grant & Lee – a long-standing partnership – beating the previously untried partnership of Hatton and Minta, while Brooks & Beverly beat London finalists Dean & Pringle in two hard-hitting games. Sadly for these winning pairs, however, they weren't able to upset the seedings in the semi-finals.

The Plate, meanwhile, was also worthy of mention, with particularly strong performances from younger players. In the round-robin stage, the most crucial match was between the Derby youngsters Max Frost & Anthony Goodwin and recent London school-leavers Jay Gravatt & Henry Jefferies. The Derby boys came through 12-10 in the third game, before going on to take a more comfortable two-game win in the

Plate final, securing their first ever piece of silverware in adult Fives.

Singles

1st round: J Hughes bt S Moger 8-11, 11-4, 11-5; T Dean bt C Brooks 11-8, 11-7; T Kiggell bt A Pringle 11-9, 11-8; A Beverly bt S Byron-Evans 11-2, 11-4; W Ellison bt D Roberts 11-0, 11-0; G Price bt S Watson 11-3,11-3; M Bate bt E Brooke 11-0, 11-3; E Hatton bt A Rew 11-1, 12-10; H Mohammed bt T Lewis 11-0, 11-1;J Minta bt J Byron-Evans 11-0, 11-0
2nd round: J Toop bt R Warner 11-1, 11-1; Dean bt Hughes 11-7, 10-12, 11-4; D Grant bt Kiggell 11-9, 11-9; M Cavanagh bt Beverly 11-9, 11-6; Ellison bt H Jefferies 11-2, 11-2; Bate bt Price 11-4, 11-6; Mohammed bt Hatton 11-4, 12-11; Minta bt A Lee 11-3, 11-1
Quarter-finals: Toop bt Dean 11-4, 11-0; Grant bt Cavanagh 11-6, 5-11, 11-3; Ellison bt Bate 11-2, 11-5; Minta bt Mohammed 11-2, 11-5
Semi-finals: Toop bt Grant 12-10, 11-2; Ellison bt Minta 11-4, 11-5
Final: Ellison bt Toop 7-11, 12-10, 12-10
Plate: Brooke

Doubles

Preliminary round: Jefferies & Gravatt bt Christie & Wyatt-Haines 11-3, 11-6
1st round: Ellison & Mohammed bt Mullen & Richards 11-0, 11-1; Rew & Hughes bt Jefferies & Gravatt 11-7, 4-11, 12-10; Grant & Lee bt Werkshagen & Lawson 11-7, 11-0; Hatton & Minta bt Goodwin & Frost 11-6, 11-9; Dean & Pringle bt Kirk & Butler 11-1, 11-1; Beverly & Brooks bt J & S Byron-Evans 11-3, 11-4; Furniss & Price bt Moger & Maskell 4-11, 11-9, 11-6; Bate & Toop bt Watson & Lewis 11-5, 11-2
Quarter-finals: Ellison & Mohammed bt Rew & Hughes 11-12, 11-6, 11-5; Grant & Lee bt Hatton & Minta 6-11, 12-10, 11-6; Beverly & Brooks bt Dean & Pringle 11-6, 11-6; Bate & Toop bt Furniss & Price 11-9, 11-0
Semi-finals: Ellison & Mohammed bt Grant & Lee 11-8, 11-7; Bate & Toop bt Beverly & Brooks 11-4, 11-8
Final: Ellison & Mohammed bt Bate & Toop 12-10, 11-7
Plate: Goodwin & Frost

OFFICIAL RFA RANKINGS

London, 28th October 2010

The recent run of successes for Will Ellison is reflected in the latest official RFA rankings, prepared by Dave Hebden, as Will now moves ahead of John Minta to second place in the singles rankings. James Toop, however, remains well clear in top spot.

The latest rankings take into account the West of England Championships and the Yorkshire Open Doubles, so there's not huge movement in the singles rankings. The two most major moves come from Hal Mohammed, who climbs into the top 20 after reaching the quarter-finals in Clifton, while Ed Brooke jumps up to 30th after winning the Plate in the same tournament.

There's more movement in the doubles rankings, with James Toop up into the top ten after reaching the final in Clifton. Will Ellison, meanwhile, cements his position at the top of the rankings, almost 10 points clear of the second-placed Hamish Buchanan. Charlie Brooks and Alan Beverly also see good rises after the semi-final appearance in Clifton, but it's success at Giggleswick that sees the largest jumps: John

Beswick, Neil Roberts, Richard Christie and Stuart Kirby all make good progress. For full details of the latest rankings, click on the link below (or in the left-hand menu).

SCHOOLS WINCHESTER FIVES DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP

Winchester College, 7th November 2010

Seven schools supported the tournament this year, and the general standard was good, reports organiser David Barnes. The buttress game and the slightly slower French ball brought out the best in the competitors, as brute strength was not enough. Accuracy was at a premium, and the best players soon discovered that movement up and down the court, plus judicious volleying from the right, is the way to cope with the extra demands that the buttress places on them.

It was good to see Merchant Taylors' and KCS in the competition, although the latter were reduced to one pair by a half-term injury. The remaining pair played very good fives, defeating Winchester II narrowly to reach the semi-final. Blundell's young pair – both still only 14 – were very unlucky not to reach the plate final, but time is on their side, and they will be favourites to win this competition – among many others – one day.

Of the Winchester Fives-playing schools, Tonbridge and Radley brought a pair each, and the hardworking Tonbridge players were the deserving winners of a very evenly balanced plate competition which cruelly exposed the organiser's mathematical deficiencies.

As for St. Paul's and Winchester, the standard remains high, and all three pairs from each school had their moments. The final was a much better match than the scores show, but the Wykehamists deserved their victory by slightly superior retrieving and attacking, and by making fewer unforced errors. Having won a close first game, they achieved what few school pairs can manage – to keep the initiative throughout the second game and not to allow their opponents a run of points.

1st round: Winchester II bt Merchant Taylors' II 15-5, 15-9; KCS bt Blundell's 15-8, 16-15; Winchester III bt Radley 15-10, 15-10; St. Paul's III bt Tonbridge 15-8, 15-8

2nd round: St. Paul's I bt Merchant Taylors' I 15-10, 15-7; KCS bt Winchester II 11-15, 15-5, 15-13; St. Paul's II bt Winchester III 15-6, 15-5; Winchester I bt St. Paul's III 16-14, 15-8

Semi-finals: St. Paul's I bt KCS 15-7, 15-7; Winchester I bt St. Paul's II 15-1, 15-12

Final: Winchester I (J Kennedy & N Baines) bt St. Paul's I (N Edmonds & J Malde) 15-9, 15-3

Plate: Tonbridge (A Ainsworth & N Whitney)

NATIONAL BUCS STUDENT CHAMPIONSHIPS

Oundle, 26/28th November 2010

An entry of 49 for the Singles and 23 pairs for the Doubles, representing 13 educational institutions, made for another high entry, although several regular teams were missing - including Leeds, Exeter and Warwick. However, it was excellent to see Cambridge competing again with a very strong entry – in fact they were represented in both the Main & Plate Singles finals, and won the Doubles Title!

Despite the onset of the 'arctic' spell of weather, conditions at Oundle were fine, with plenty of cold, frosty and a little icy weather, but only a dusting of snow one morning. However it is to the credit of most of the participants, particularly those from the North, that they arrived reasonably on time for their matches on the Friday morning.

Only a small group, who arguably had the easiest journey (by rail from London), found it impossible to adhere to the time schedule. As it happens, they also found timekeeping a problem throughout the weekend, so I doubt if it had much to do with the weather !!!

Our thanks are again due to Oundle School for hosting the event, the first time on their new facilities. Although they had considerable teething problems, the recent de-waxing of the walls has made considerable improvements to the bounce of the ball, and if they are able to fit a further wax removal into the schedule in the future, the facilities will become some of the best in the country. The excellent pace of the courts, the warm viewing and waiting areas, and the constant supply of warm drinks, made it a definite bonus for spectators and players alike!

Durham had, perhaps, the greatest overall depth, with four Singles and three Doubles quarter-finalists. However, it was last season's Schools Champions who had the final say, with the Cambridge Doubles pair of Chase & Kay coming straight from the Schools to win BUCS at the first attempt, whilst Kay almost achieved the 'Double' losing only at the last hurdle to Grant (UCL) in the final.

The Plate Singles saw a Southampton victory by Steven Coffey over Charles Compton (Cambs) while the Plate Doubles went to a 'mixed' pairing (Adam George St. Andrews & Dan Murray of Middlesex) over Imperial - Chris Burrows & Jun Yamazaki.

It was certainly good for the tournament, and the game in general, that seven Universities were represented in the four finals, rather than being dominated by just one or two institutions.

Thanks go also to our regular team of organisers – David Barnes, Chris Horrocks, and Wayne Enstone – who provided much valuable assistance and much entertaining banter throughout the weekend!!

Singles

1st round: Coffey (Soton) bt Esin (Ox) 15-1, 15-8; Chase (Cam) bt Spencer (Dur) 15-0, 15-2; Compton (Cam) wo Hansom (UCL); Murray (Mddx) bt Betts (Dur) 15-10, 16-14; Lung (UCL) wo Brubert (Cam); Aquilina (Dur) bt Mckeever (R.Holl) 15-3, 15-1; Ward K (Dur) bt Kelly (Cam) 16-14, 15-7; Tilston (Dur) bt Ward E. (Soton) 15-3, 15-7; Judge (Cam) bt Lang (UCL) 15-1, 15-1; Adcock (Ox) bt Gravatt (Dur) 15-5, 15-2; Joyce (Dur) bt Weil (UCL) 15-3, 15-0; Harvey (UCL) wo Malone (Cam); Cochran (Dur) bt Hoskins (Oun) 15-8, 15-8; Malhotra (UCL) wo Buchhalter (Dur); Baker (Ox) wo Pragnell (R. Holl); Roberts (Bris) wo Murphy (Dur)

2nd round: Grant (UCL) bt Bowden (Dur) 15-5, 15-3; Chase bt Coffey 15-12, 15-8; Hanton (Dur) bt Compton 15-5, 16-15; Ronan (Ox) bt Murray 15-0, 15-2; Legget (Dur) bt Lung 15-0, 15-0; George (St. Andrews) bt Aquilina 15-10 15-6; Ward K bt Rutley (UCL) 15-0, 15-1; Murby (Glas) bt Tilston 15-10, 15-7; Ackland I (Dur) bt Judge 15-7, 15-10; Hine (Ox) bt Butt (Edin) 15-4, 15-3; Adcock bt Cumberlege (Edin) 15-8, 15-7; Kay (Cam) bt Joyce 15-2, 15-0; Griffiths (Dur) bt Harvey 15-0, 15-0; Hoolahan (Ox) bt Cochran 15-1, 15-3; Baker (Ox) bt Malhotra 15-1, 15-1; Burrows (Imp) bt Roberts 15-1, 15-1

3rd round: Grant bt Chase 15-8, 15-10; Hanton bt Ronan 15-8, 15-7; Legget bt George 15-2, 15-4; Murby bt Ward K 10-15, 15-7, 15-7; Ackland I bt Hine 15-6, 15-10; Kay bt Adcock 15-0, 15-2; Griffiths bt Hoolahan 15-9, 15-6; Burrows bt Baker 15-1, 15-1

Quarter-Finals: Grant bt Hanton 15-3, 15-10; Legget bt Murby 15-5, 15-1; Kay bt Ackland I 15-7, 15-10; Burrows bt Griffiths 15-9, 15-4

Semi-Finals: Grant bt Legget 15-1, 15-0; Kay bt Burrows 15-15, 15-9, 15-9

Final: Grant bt Kay 15-5, 15-5

Plate

Semi-Finals: Compton (Cam) bt Aquilina (Dur) 11-2; Coffey (Soton) bt Tilston (Dur) 11-6

Final: Coffey bt Compton 15-7, 15-4

Doubles

1st round: Judge & Reid (Cam) bt Lang & Malhotra (UCL) 15-2, 15-0; Spencer & Cochran (Dur) wo Mckeever & Pragnell (R. Holl); Aquilina & Tilston (Dur) bt Butt & Cumberlege (Edin) 15-7, 15-4; Joyce & Gravatt (Dur) bt Coffey & Ward E (Soton) 15-3, 15-3; Adcock & Esin (Ox) bt Lung & Harvey (UCL) 15-2, 15-1

2nd round: Griffiths & Ackland I (Dur) bt Judge & Reid 15-2, 15-10; Hoolahan & Baker (Ox) bt Spencer & Cochran 15-2, 15-7; Kay & Chase (Cam) wo Rutley & Hansom (UCL); Aquilina & Tilston bt Grant & Weil (UCL) 15-13, 15-8; Ronan & Hine (Ox) bt Joyce & Gravatt 15-10, 15-10; Brupert & Kelly (Cam) bt Burrows & Yamazaki (Imp) 15-13, 15-6; Malone & Compton (Cam) bt Betts & Bowden (Dur) 15-2, 15-6; Legget & Hanton (Dur) bt Adcock & Esin 15-1, 15-2

Quarter-finals: Griffiths & Ackland bt Hoolahan & Baker 16-15, 15-7; Kay & Chase bt Aquilina & Tilston 15-4, 15-5; Ronan & Hine bt Brupert & Kelly 15-3, 15-2; Legget & Hanton bt Malone & Compton 15-6, 15-6

Semi-Finals: Kay & Chase bt Griffiths & Ackland 13-15, 15-7, ret injured; Legget & Hanton bt Ronan & Hine 15-10, 15-9

Final: Kay & Chase bt Legget & Hanton 15-11, 15-12

Plate

Semi-Finals: George (StA) & Murrey (M'Sex) bt Adcock & Esin 11-9; Burrows & Yamazaki (Imp) bt Coffey & Ward E. (Soton) 11-4

Final: George & Murray (M'sex) bt Burrows & Yamazaki 15-6, 15-10

NATIONAL SINGLES CHAMPIONSHIP

St Paul's School, Barnes, 4/5th December 2010

James Toop cemented his position as one of the most successful Rugby Fives players with a win over Will Ellison in this year's national singles championship. By winning his third title in a row, he became the first person since the great Wayne Enston to win three successive titles; and, in securing this title for the fourth time, he moved to second equal in the list of all-time winners, level with Eric Marsh and John Pretlove. Only Wayne has won the title more often.

It was fitting that James and Will should contest this year's final, as they have dominated the singles game this year. Indeed, this was the third successive tournament in which they had played out the final. However, whereas Will won in the London and West of England Championships, today was very much James's day.

Although Will started the final brightly, going into a 3-0 lead, James soon pegged him back, and from then on, he put in a dominant performance, going on to win the first game 15-5. His pace around the court and dogged retrieval, along with the ability to spin the ball tight against the wall (limiting Will's ability to play attacking shots) seemed to demoralise and tire his opponent, who wound up playing shots that smacked more of frustration and fatigue than aggression; and, when Will did play his familiar hard cross-court boasts, they didn't quite catch the nick and James's pace allowed him to reach them, attack and take up a dominant position at the front of the court - from where, more often than not, he proved deadly.

The second game, on the other hand, was an altogether closer affair. Will changed tactics and tried to keep James more at the back of the court, and it was a successful ploy - the two were rarely more than a few points apart as the game progressed. Then, with the game poised delicately at 10-9 to Will, there was huge rally, which seemed to decide the outcome of the match. It was possibly hundreds of shots long, as each player probed for a weakness, but it was James who came out on top.

This seemed to sap Will's resolve, and although he won rallies to earn the right to receive, a couple of

serves into the nick at crucial points by James demoralised him further. In the end, James took the game 15-11, and the cry of 'Yes!' as he did so could probably have been heard many miles away.

It was a classy and sporting final, played in tremendous spirit in front of an appreciative crowd, and was a fitting end to a weekend of fine Fives. Right from the first round, there had been fine games, with the pick of the early clashes probably being Dan Grant's three-game win over Tom Maconie.

Overall, the seeding generally held true, with the top eight seeds reaching the quarter-finals, and three of the top four reaching the semi-finals. The only 'upset' (although that is far too strong a word) was Matt Cavanagh's victory over fourth seed Dan Tristao in the quarter-final. However, he was turned over by James in the semi-final, as was last year's runner-up John Minta, who was beaten to 4 and 9 by Will.

However, elsewhere in the tournament, there were clear signs that James and Will can't rest on their laurels, as young players put in some strong performances. BUCS semi-finalist Charlie Legget pushed Dan Tristao hard in the first round, but perhaps the most amazing performance came from Luke Thomson, who went on to win the Plate - a remarkable achievement from someone who is still a schoolboy.

1st round: J Toop bt L Thomson 15-1, 15-6; M Bate bt C Burrows 15-6, 15-2; M Cavanagh bt E Hatton 15-2, 15-0; D Tristao bt C Legget 15-12, 15-10; J Minta bt J Malde 15-4, 15-1; H Buchanan bt M Skogh 15-5, 15-8; D Grant bt T Maconie 15-13, 7-15, 15-7; W Ellison bt A Pringle 15-6, 15-7

Quarter-finals: Toop bt Bate 15-6, 15-3; Cavanagh bt Tristao 15-10, 15-3; Minta bt Buchanan 15-9, 15-9; Ellison bt Grant 15-4, 15-9

Semi-finals: Toop bt Cavanagh 15-2, 15-6; Ellison bt Minta 15-9, 15-4

Final: Toop bt Ellison 15-5, 15-11

Plate: Thomson

RFA CLUB PRESIDENT'S CUP

Merchant Taylors' School, Northwood, 12th December 2010

John Minta achieved something only one other person in the last 20 years has managed at the the 2010 President's Cup. Partnered by Clive Butler, he won the President's Cup for the second year running, after partnering Robert Grey to win the cup in 2009. Only Ian de Weymarn (in 2001 and 2002) has managed the same feat since 1990.

In truth, it was only in the final that John and Clive were truly pushed. In the earlier rounds, John's ability to protect his weaker partner and hit clean winners from all over the court – combined with Clive's determined resistance – meant that no pair scored more than 9 points off them in a single game. The final, though, was a different matter, and in Jay Gravatt and Ed Kay (a last-minute replacement for a sadly flu-ridden Dick Warner) they came up against an evenly matched pair whose play belied the fact that they are both first-year university students.

For the most part, they were able to cope with John's power and target Clive. However, it's credit to Clive that he was able to withstand the battering and maintain rallies long enough for John to find the crucial winners - and that's what finally told. Jay and Ed often looked as if they might nick a game, only for John to find a vital nick – although it was perhaps fitting that the final winning shot (a perfectly weighted side-wall, front-wall drop shot) was played by Clive. The challenge is now on for John to go on and become the first person ever to win the President's Cup three years in a row...

If the final was eventually a victory for experience, elsewhere in the tournament young players shone through. The Mates Plate final, for instance, featured two students and one schoolboy, and it was the

combination of Imperial student Chris Burrows and St Paul's schoolboy Theo Parker who emerged victorious. Theo's Colts doubles-winning partner Sam Russell also picked up a trophy, partnering organiser Gareth Price to a win in the Love Mug over Dan Grant and Guy Matthews.

The final match on court also saw a fine youngster on show, but in the end Derby's Max Frost and his partner Bhaswar Baral had to give second best to Ady Lee and Stuart Kirby. As ever our thanks go to Merchant Taylors for hosting the event, and to Gareth Price for successfully organising a superb event, despite the best efforts of illness and injury to scupper his plans.

1st round: Hanton & Passey bt Grant & Matthews 15-8, 15-6; Minta & Butler bt Christie & Hamilton 15-8, 15-6; Ackland & Arnott bt Meek & Dyke 12-15, 15-10, 15-12; Kirby & Abecassis Mohammed & Lamb 15-10, 15-6; Gravatt & Kay bt Lee & Kiteley 15-12, 15-8; Smith & Burrows bt Pringle & Webster 15-10, 15-13; Frost & Baral bt Buchanan & Hawke 15-11, 15-12; Burrows & Parker bt Price & Russell 14-16, 15-7, 15-6

2nd round: Minta & Butler bt Hanton & Passey 15-4, 15-1; Ackland & Arnott bt Kirby & Abecassis 12-15, 15-10, 15-13; Gravatt & Kay bt Smith & Burrows 15-3, 15-4; Burrows & Parker bt Frost & Baral 15-5, 15-10

Semi-finals: Minta & Butler bt Ackland & Arnott 15-1, 15-9; Gravatt & Kay bt Burrows & Parker 15-10, 15-12

Final: Minta & Butler bt Gravatt & Kay 15-12, 15-12

Love Mug: Price & Russell

T-Pot: Lee & Kirby

Mates Plate: Burrows & Parker

WEST OF ENGLAND SCHOOLS CHAMPIONSHIPS

Sherborne School, Dorset, 8/9th January 2011

A good and very busy weekend at Sherborne - that was the verdict of organiser Lionel Lawson on the West of England Schools Championships, which enjoyed 78 entries from 14 schools.

The Senior Singles was won convincingly by Luke Thomson of Christ's Hospital. He was the top seed and is a very talented and sharply focused player. He beat Max Frost from Derby Moor in the final 11-2, 11-1. Max, the third seed, had done well to reach the final by overcoming James Kennedy of Winchester, the second seed, in the semi-finals, 1-11, 11-9, 11-1.

The Colts Singles was slightly depleted as the first and third seeds from Alleyn's (Brubert and Browett) withdrew as Brubert was unwell. The final was won by Matt Shaw of St Paul's (the second seed) who beat Sam Wyatt-Haines of Blundell's (the fourth seed) 11-3, 11-3.

The Senior Doubles was won convincingly by Christ's Hospital who beat Winchester in the final 11-5, 11-4. Christ's Hospital's pair was the sparkling Luke Thomson ably supported by Adam Matthias. Winchester's pair were James Kennedy and Nick Baines.

The Colts Doubles was won by fourth seeds Winchester (Jerry Ganendra and Ed Wylde), who beat third seeds Blundell's (Sam Wyatt-Haines and Jack Grandfield) 11-4, 11-4. Derby Moor (Rob Christie and Robert Whitehorn) had caused an upset in the quarter-finals by eliminating St Paul's 1 (second seeds) in a thrilling three-game tie, but then lost to Blundell's in the semis.

The Senior Singles Plate was won by Alex Lewis of Rossall, the Colts Singles Plate by Ben Chua of Winchester, the Senior Doubles Plate by Bradfield (David Butler and Stuart Cummings) and the Colts Doubles Plate by Winchester (Ben Chua and Matt Hale).

Senior Singles

1st round: Cameron (Winchester) bt Kimberlin (KCS Wimbledon) w/o; Holder-Williams (Rossall) bt Carlton (Blundell's) w/o; Maleki (KCS Wimbledon) bt Crofts (Eastbourne) w/o; Woolard (Winchester) bt Johnston (St Paul's) w/o; Le Joncour (Winchester) bt Gordon-Head (Sherborne) 15-5; Goodwin (KCS Wimbledon) bt Ashman (St Paul's) 15-6; Baxter (Derby Moor) bt Daykin (Blundell's) 15-4; Law (St Paul's) bt Mitchell (Sherborne) 15-0; Goodwin (Derby Moor) bt Lovstrom (Christ's Hospital) 15-12
2nd round: Thomson (Christ's Hospital) bt Cameron 15-0; Thomas (St Paul's) bt Wheatley (Derby Moor) 15-2; Ader (St Paul's) bt Holder-Williams 15-0; Oddy (Blundell's) bt Lama-Novjaim 15-8; Ainsworth (Tonbridge) bt Maleki 15-1; Stracey (Christ's Hospital) bt Woolard 15-3; Aldham (KCS Wimbledon) bt Smart (Sherborne) 15-3; Malde (St Paul's) bt Le Joncour 15-1; Frost (Derby Moor) bt Goodwin 15-1; Russell (St Paul's) bt Reid (Blundell's) 15-0; Baines (Winchester) bt Webb (Tonbridge) 15-2; Butler (Bradfield) bt Baxter 15-6; Law bt Lewis (Rossall) 16-14; A Matthias (Christ's Hospital) bt Prince (St Paul's) 15-0; R Matthias (Christ's Hospital) bt Atkins (Winchester) 15-2; Kennedy (Winchester) bt Goodwin 15-2
3rd round: Thomson bt Thomas 15-1; Ader bt Oddy 15-5; Ainsworth bt Stracey 15-3; Malde bt Aldham 15-13; Frost bt Russell 15-4; Butler bt Baines 15-10; A Matthias bt Law 15-5; Kennedy bt R Matthias 15-4
Quarter-finals: Thomson bt Ader 11-1, 11-0; Malde bt Ainsworth 11-9, 11-6; Frost bt Butler 11-9, 11-1; Kennedy by A Matthias 11-1, 11-6
Semi-finals: Thomson bt Malde 11-3, 11-2; Frost bt Kennedy 11-11, 11-9, 11-1
Final: Thomson bt Frost 11-2, 11-1
Plate: Lewis

Senior Doubles

1st round: Derby Moor II bt Tonbridge 15-2; Winchester II bt Christ's Hospital III 15-9; Marlborough bt KCS Wimbledon II 15-7; Winchester III bt Sherborne I 15-4; Bradfield bt Blundell's II w/o; Rossall bt Sherborne II 15-1; St Paul's IV bt Eastbourne w/o
2nd round: Christ's Hospital I bt Blundell's I; Derby Moor II bt St Paul's III 16-14; St Paul's II bt Winchester II 15-2; Derby Moor I bt Marlborough 15-0; St Paul's I bt Winchester III 15-4; Christ's Hospital II bt Bradfield 15-7; KCS Wimbledon I bt Rossall 15-4; Winchester I bt St Paul's IV 15-2
Quarter-finals: Christ's Hospital I bt Derby Moor II 11-2, 11-7; St Paul's II bt Derby Moor I 12-10, 12-11; St Paul's I bt Christ's Hospital II 11-5, 11-4; Winchester I bt KCS Wimbledon I 11-8, 9-11, 11-7
Semi-finals: Christ's Hospital I bt St Paul's II 11-3, 11-2; Winchester I bt St Paul's I 11-9, 6-11, 11-4
Final: Christ's Hospital (Thomson & Matthias) bt Winchester (Kennedy & Baines) 11-5, 11-4
Plate: Bradfield (Butler and Cummings)

Colts Singles

1st round: Beltrami (St Paul's) bt Chua (Winchester) 15-4; Blunden (Derby Moor) bt A Scott (Blundell's) 15-0; Heath (Marlborough) bt Baxter (Derby Moor) 15-4
2nd round: McPherson (Blundell's) bt Brubert (Alleyn's) w/o; Wylde (Winchester) bt Guerohl (St Paul's) 15-2; Pabari (St Paul's) bt Richards (Eastbourne) 15-0; Beltrami bt Whitehorn (Derby Moor) 15-4; Russell (Marlborough) bt Edmonds (St Paul's) 15-13; Frosell (Marlborough) bt Blunden 15-2; Fulford-Smith (Marlborough) bt Gemade (Christ's Hospital) w/o; Wyatt-Haines (Blundell's) bt Dance (Sherborne) 15-0; Hale (Winchester) bt Browett (Alleyn's) w/o; Christie (Derby Moor) bt Webber (Blundell's) 15-4; Ganendra (Winchester) bt Heath 15-0; Kahn-Pascual (St Paul's) bt Pinder (Winchester) 15-3; Grandfield (Blundell's) bt Bar (Winchester) 15-8; Whait (Loretto) bt Teterin (Eastbourne) 15-1; Kent (Christ's Hospital) bt H Scott (Blundell's) 15-7; Shaw (St Paul's) bt Mackleden (Eastbourne) 15-1
3rd round: Wylde bt McPherson 15-0; Beltrami bt Pabari 15-12; Frosell bt Russell 15-11; Wyatt-Haines bt Fulford-Smith 15-0; Christie bt Hale 15-13; Kahn-Pascual bt Ganendra 15-4; Whait bt Grandfield 15-1; Shaw bt Kent 15-4
Quarter-finals: Wylde bt Beltrami 11-6, 11-7; Wyatt-Haines bt Frosell 11-1, 11-7; Kahn-Pascual bt

Christie 11-2, 11-0; Shaw bt Whait 11-1, 11-1
Semi-finals: Wyatt-Haines bt Wylde 11-3, 11-2; Shaw bt Kahn-Pascual 11-12, 11-9, 11-4
Final: Shaw bt Wyatt-Haines 11-3, 11-3
Plate: Chua

Colts Doubles (full results to come)

1st round: Derby Moor II bt Alleyn's w/o; Marlborough I bt Winchester II 16-15; St Paul's II bt Blundell's III 15-1; Winchester I bt Eastbourne 15-2; Blundell's I bt Winchester III w/o; St Paul's III bt Christ's Hospital w/o; Derby Moor I bt Blundell's II w/o; St Paul's I bt Marlborough II 15-3
Quarter-finals: Marlborough I bt Derby Moor II 12-10, 11-4; Winchester I bt St Paul's II 11-4, 11-1; Blundell's I bt St Paul's III 11-5, 11-1; Derby Moor I bt St Paul's I 9-11, 11-9, 11-7
Semi-finals: Winchester I bt Marlborough I 11-3, 12-11; Blundell's I bt Derby Moor I 12-10, 11-9
Final: Winchester (Ganendra & Wylde) bt Blundell's (Wyatt-Haines & Grandfield) 11-4 11-4
Plate: Winchester (Chua & Hale)

NORTH WEST OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS

Y Club, Manchester, 22nd/23rd January 2011

STOP PRESS: Dan Tristao maintained his unbeaten record against Will Ellison to claim the second open singles title of his career at the NW Open yesterday. In fact, it was a good tournament for the younger players, with Dan Grant also reaching the semi-finals, and good wins in the early rounds for Tom Dean and Charlie Brooks – over Neil Roberts and Dave Fox respectively.

However, Will was able to claim his revenge in the doubles tournament, teaming up with Hal Mohammed to take the title with a win over Ady Lee and Dan Grant (who were appearing in their first ever open doubles final as a pair, after a fine win over defending champions John Minta and Phil Bishop in the semis). This now means that Will holds all six regional English doubles titles at the same time – quite some achievement. He was made to work hard for it, though, only reaching the final after a tough three-game win over the Old Pauline pair of Charlie Brooks and Tom Dean in the semi-final.

Singles

1st round: T Dean bt N Roberts 12-11, 10-12, 11-7; D Grant bt G Price 12-10, 6-11, 11-4; H Buchanan bt J Beswick 11-6, 6-11, 11-4; D Tristao bt A Lee 11-4, 11-1; C Brooks bt D Fox 12-11, 11-2; M Bowness bt H Mohammed 10-12, 11-9, 11-1
Quarter-finals: W Ellison bt Dean 11-2, 11-0; Grant bt Buchanan 8-3 w/o; Tristao bt Brooks 7-11, 11-6, 11-6; J Minta bt Bowness 11-7, 11-1
Semi-finals: Ellison bt Grant 11-6, 6-11, 11-1; Tristao bt Minta 11-6, 12-10
Final: Tristao bt Ellison 11-9, 11-7
Plate: Lee

Doubles

1st round: Tristao & Price bt Kirby & Kirk 11-2, 11-1
Quarter-finals: Ellison & Mohammed bt Goodwin & Frost 11-5, 11-7; Brooks & Dean bt Beswick & Roberts 12-11, 11-4; Grant & Lee bt Bowness & Skogh 11-7, 7-11, 11-6; Bishop & Minta bt Tristao & Price 7-11, 11-1, 11-5
Semi-finals: Ellison & Mohammed bt Dean & Brooks 6-11, 11-2, 11-8; Lee & Grant bt Minta & Bishop 11-3, 11-2
Final: Ellison & Mohammed bt Lee & Grant 11-4, 11-2
Plate: Beswick & Roberts

NATIONAL LADIES' CHAMPIONSHIPS

St Paul's School, Barnes, 30th January 2011

Claire Knowles continued her dominance of Ladies Rugby Fives, with another double in the Ladies Championships. By again winning both the singles and doubles titles, she has taken her tally of wins in the competitions to 10 – and remains unbeaten in both since first winning the titles in 1999. And, as before, she did more than just win the titles; she dominated the tournaments, without conceding a single point in the singles, while (with partner Melanie Whitehead, with whom Claire has won nine of her 10 doubles titles) she conceded just four points en route to the doubles title.

The entry for the championships (postponed from December due to snow) was bolstered by several girls from Eastbourne College, and Senior School Girl champion Tessa Mills did well to reach the semi-finals of the singles – her first adult tournament. However, the College's top performance came from teacher Kathleen Briednhann, who came through some very tough matches to claim a place the final.

In the quarter-finals, she put out England Handballer Anita Ganguly, before going on to face Alex Steel in what was reckoned to be the best game of the tournament. It was a superb match, full of powerful hitting, amazing retrieval and impressive athleticism from both girls, but in the end Kathleen was able to claim the win – always able to run down Alex's shots before finding the crucial winners. In truth, the final was probably a game too far for Kathleen, but it's to her credit that, in the face of such a dominant display from Claire, with a succession of winners hit to a perfect line and length, she always had a smile on her face.

In the doubles, too, it was much the same story, with Claire (ably assisted by Melanie) dominating the matches. They conceded just a point against Eastbourne's schoolgirl champs, Tessa Mills and Charlie Dodds, in the semi-final, before going on to face the untried partnership of Alex Steel and Anita Ganguly in the final.

Alex and Anita made a strong pair, with Alex's powerful hitting backed up well by Anita, who is more familiar with Eton Fives and 1-Wall handball, but visibly grew in confidence through the day. They had a fine win in the semi-finals against Kathleen and Eastbourne schoolgirl Anna-Louise Walters, but weren't able to overcome the defending champions in the final. Although the match was closer than the scores suggest, with many long, hard-fought rallies, there was never any doubt as to the eventual destination of the trophy.

Singles

1st round: Charlotte Dodds bt Helen Higgins 15-13; Emmalina Thompsell bt Laura Scott 15-4; Anita Ganguly bt Anna-Louise Walters 15-0; Alex Steel bt Rachel Williams 15-0

Quarter-finals: Claire Knowles bt Dodds 15-0; Tessa Mills bt Thompsell 15-3; Kathleen Briedenhann bt Ganguly 15-8; Steel bt Melanie Whitehead 15-2

Semi-finals: Knowles bt Mills 15-0, 15-0; Briedenhann bt Steel 15-6, 15-4

Final: Knowles bt Briedenhann 15-0, 15-0

Plate: Whitehead

Doubles

1st round: Dodds & Mills bt Thompsell & Higgins 15-4, 15-1; Steel & Ganguly bt Williams & Scott 15-1, 15-0

Semi-finals: Knowles & Whitehead bt Dodds & Mills 15-1, 15-0; Steel & Ganguly bt Briedenhann & Walters 15-3, 15-4

Final: Knowles & Whitehead bt Steel & Ganguly 15-1, 15-2

Plate: Dodds & Mills

NATIONAL UNDER 25 CHAMPIONSHIPS - Dan Grant Does the Double

Merchant Taylors' School, Northwood, 5/6th February 2011

The RFA has now received Dan Grant's full report from the Under 25s championships, which we reproduce here in its entirety. Before you sit down to read it, we recommend you get a warm beverage. This may well be the longest single report ever published on this site!

It's not every day that the Fives courts at MTS are graced with such a remarkable array of young, attractive, talented, keen and well-dressed sportsmen. And indeed, the weekend of the U25s was no exception. However we did also see a bunch of Fives-lovers turn up from all over the country to compete in what is arguably the greatest and most challenging tournament of the year.

So, this year, we mixed the format by having singles on Saturday and doubles on Sunday, and things got off to a shocking start. The preliminary round saw ALL the seeds knocked out, which left the draw wide open! On paper, thanks to reverse seeding (which encourages participation), this resulted in the strongest Plate competition ever! Much of the singles competition was of a high standard and things got off to a schedule-destroying start right away as the schoolboys Butler and Thomas fought it out in an epic – the former coming through in three. Another notable match in the early rounds was a feisty exchange between two of Durham's finest, Gravatt and Ackland. Gravatt did well to take Inigo to three sets and almost had him until Jay was distracted by some terrible gone-wrong flair as Ackland, attempting a shot through his legs, missed the fives ball entirely, instead managing to hit balls of a completely different nature. This event also put some oomph into the prestigious Flair Competition, as Ackland's 'self-harm' earned him high points for originality, which he then swiftly lost with heavy negative marks for 'grace'.

This was the strongest U25s singles competition EVER, with not one, not two, but three top 10 players competing. Unhappily for the others, this pretty much meant that all the quarter-finals went as expected. However, credit goes to BUCS finalist Kay, who, facing his St Paul's idol Tristao, pushed the scampering mongrel to 16 in the first. And so this left us with two blockbuster semis. In the top half of the draw, Ellison was set to play Burrows, and in the bottom half Tristao was to play the man he fears the most – Grant. Ellison, true to recent form where he has completely won everything (except the National Singles, but we don't talk about that), smashed Burrows away with ease. Even though he was wearing a non-torn pair of tracksuit bottoms, Chris just didn't have an answer to Will's ferocious style of play. The other semi-final, however was not so clear cut. In true U25s form, where the best matches are always played in front of the smallest crowds possible, the two Dans took to the stage in front of David Barnes and Butler, who were in for a treat.

The first set was filled with remarkable shot-making and superb retrieval. Tristao pulled away at the end to earn a 14-10 lead, only to have Grant pull it back to tie the scores and then take the lead 15-14. Set point down, Tristao pulled some audacious serving out of his repertoire and the set ended with him winning 16-15. In the second, Grant came out guns blazing and took Tristao out 15-7. In the third, Grant started strong, forcing an 8-2 lead, but then Tristao changed his game plan and, after winning two ridiculously long rallies, began to dictate the play. He took the third 15-10 – a feat which prompted Grant to call him “a complete and utter [expletive deleted]”.

And so this set up a repeat of last year's final. Tristao vs Ellison. Last year was probably the most remarkable Fives final in history – Ellison losing in the 3rd set 16-14. After being 14-4 up. Last year, the game had everything: brilliant skill, fantastic retrieval, smart shot-making by both players. Would we see a repeat of such excitement this year? In a word: no. Tristao took it in two from an off-form Ellison. Interestingly, Dan is the only player who Will is still yet to beat. Maybe next year?

As for the plate, well, it was Adam George who pulled through in an epic win over Butler, winning 25

sets to 20 (Ed's note: if you want to understand the, err, unique format for this final, please ask Dan!). Remarkable stuff and many an avid viewer remarked that it was probably George's time-outs that did it.

In 2011, the entertainment off-court was elevated to luxurious levels. As usual we had the every-expense spared buffet on offer, but we also had live commentary from Gareth Price and a jukebox which boomed the tunes out over the railings. Each player was entitled to their signature tune for court-entrance music, much like Maximus Decimus Meridius would have enjoyed in Gladiator. For example, in the final Tristao had 'Tonight I'm Loving You' by Enrique Iglesias, feat. Ludacris. Ellison had 'Superstition' by Stevie Wonder. A full playlist is available on request, but it goes without saying that the anthem for the tournament was the Far East Movement's 'Like a G6'.

And so to the doubles. This year saw a much greater field, which is good (but not as good as it could have been). As expected, the seeds made it decisively through to the semi-finals, the only upset being the fifth seeded Kay and Chase having an excellent three-set slog-fest victory over Burrows and Ackland. The pair came through 14-16, 15-13, 15-11 in a long game which heard more grunting and sex-noises than Peter Stringfellow's yacht on a summer's day. When the match ended, Burrows' arm sadly fell off and the walls were given some time to recover.

Alas, the BUCS champions couldn't repeat their heroics against Ellison and Mohammed, who sliced through them like butter, which is no great surprise considering that this pair has been unbeaten in 18 months. An outstanding achievement. Could anyone beat these guys? Well, Grant and Tristao stepped up to the mark after toying with Ronan and Marshall in the other semi. Could the defending U25s champions beat the defending virtually-everything doubles champions??

What ensued was a remarkable final, lasting over two hours, watched solely by a brilliant Dick Warner. This was a game which all four players would later call 'the best doubles game they've ever played in', and for once, I'm not exaggerating.

Everyone played their best fives: solid, smart, delicate and precise. The first set was a real nail-biter. The annual impromptu pair of Double D took what seemed like first blood, going to a 14-10 lead, only to have the tried and tested pair of Will and Hall pull it back to 14-all. Then the score was 15-all. Then some truly remarkable serving happened. Each player served out both hands of the opposition with aces. This player has never seen anything quite like it. At length, it was the Dans who finally managed to get a finger on a serve and after a long rally, the bar was hit and the first set went to Grant and Tristao.

The second was a topsy-turvy affair. Dan Squared took a quick lead and may have become a bit complacent at 9-4 up. Will and Hal dug in and took it back to level pegging, before taking the lead and winning 15-12.

The break between the second and third set was slightly longer than the officially allocated three minutes, but you could not blame these players, who had already been on court for over an hour and a half and through five shirts between them. The tiredness began to show in the third as a few slow steps here and few mistimes there made all the difference. Eventually it was the two Dans' skill of slightly better relentless retrieving and smart shot-making which began to cut through and to a rapturous singular applause from the rafters they won 15-7, the final shot being a heavy slice from Dan Grant, which was also the final shot of his U25s career – a fitting end to a great few years.

In the plate Gravatt and Ward beat the schoolboys Parker and Thomas, who had performed exceptionally well that weekend. However, what they made up for in strong St Paul's power, they lost in the flair competition, where neither scored a single point (step it up, St Paul's!) The competition was looking for a truly exceptional outcome this tournament, which was a tough ask considering how far the bar has been raised over the past few years. The flair competition continues in its quest to advance the skill and range

of shots possible in fives, and it was only really later in the tournament where the true masters began to go for it. George flaired it up with some stylish shoes, but that had nothing on Tristao who was on a mission to win the prize again after last year's audacious 'Intentional 16s'. He whisped his hair back and doggedly launched himself into the air before gracefully hitting a wrong-footer volley spin twizzler. But Grant wasn't having any of it. In his semi-final he called upon all his experience on the international handball circuit and pulled quite possibly the best flair out of thin air. Back in September, Grant had stunned several hundred Spaniards and live TV cameras (perhaps not in a good way), with an innovative and groundbreaking 'Tornado Serve' in Llargues. This U25s he was on a mission to see if such a serve was transferable to fives. Having told Tristao exactly what to expect, he tossed the ball up to serve, spun around like a discus thrower in a full 360, before misjudging his footing on purpose and cleverly cutting the ball in a slice-tastic Ace. Tristao was dumbfounded and marks for Gloating were impossibly high. The Tornado Sizzling Slice Spectacular remains the greatest flair to date.

And that about concluded the tournament. It has been my pleasure to organise the Under 25s for the last four years and I've seen some of the best fives and camaraderie on the circuit to date. I hand the torch happily over to Chris Burrows who I'm sure will surpass himself and put on a tournament to rival the Olympic Games next year. I leave you with a serious note, however. Fives desperately needs keen and supportive players to see the sport persevere through the next few years. The future of the adult game depends on the schools and universities bolstering the youth contingent. The U25s is one of the greatest and funnest tournaments on the calendar and one in which like-minded players from all over the country can unite and compete and learn from some of the best players in the country. Although I'm pleased at the tremendous uptake this year from schools such as St Paul's and Merchant Taylors', and universities as far afield as Southampton and Edinburgh, I would expect more from the strong fives-playing bases such as Oxford, Cambridge and UCL, who did not enter an official contingent this year. Come on guys, you have no excuse!

NATIONAL UNDER 25s CHAMPIONSHIPS

Merchant Taylors' School, Northwood, 5/6th February 2011

Singles

Preliminary round: Parker bt R Patel 15-13, 15-4; Ward bt Russel w/o; Cumberlege bt Finney 15-4, 15-7; Coffey bt V Patel 15-2, 15-4; Butler bt Thomas 15-7, 10-15, 15-3

1st round: Ellison bt Parker 15-2, 15-0; Hanton bt George 15-1, 15-5; Mohammed bt Ward 15-2, 15-9; Burrows bt Cumberlege 15-1, 15-3; Grant bt Coffey 15-10, 15-11; Ackland bt Gravatt 16-15, 5-15, 15-11; Kay bt Murray 15-3, 15-3; Tristao bt Butler 15-3, 15-0

Quarter-finals: Ellison bt Hanton 15-6, 15-5; Burrows bt Mohammed 15-1, 15-3; Grant bt Ackland 15-10, 15-7; Tristao bt Kay 16-14, 15-5

Semi-finals: Ellison bt Burrows 15-3, 15-6; Tristao bt Grant 16-15, 7-15, 15-10

Final: Tristao bt Ellison 15-8, 15-6

Plate: George

Doubles

1st round: Gravatt & Ward bt Russel & Butler w/o; Hanton & George bt Patel & Patel 15-0, 15-0; Kay & Chase bt Finney & Shah 15-4, 15-5; Coffey & Murray bt Parker & Thomas 15-6, 15-8

Quarter-finals: Grant & Tristao bt Gravatt & Ward 15-10, 15-7; Ronan & Marshall bt Hanton & George 15-7, 15-9; Kay & Chase bt Ackland & Burrows 14-16, 15-13, 15-11; Ellison & Mohammed bt Coffey & Murray 15-0, 15-5

Semi-finals: Grant & Tristao bt Ronan & Marshall 16-15, 15-5; Ellison & Mohammed bt Kay & Chase 15-4, 15-5

Final: Grant & Tristao bt Ellison & Mohammed 16-15, 12-15, 15-7

Plate: Gravatt & Ward

VARSITY MATCH

St Paul's School, Barnes, 19th February 2011

A rejuvenated Cambridge won this season's Varsity Match by a clear margin, recording the first light-blue victory since their four-point win in 2006.

British Universities singles finalist Kay gave Cambridge a good lead by defeating the veteran Ronan, playing in his sixth and final University Match, while the second-string singles resulted in a narrow win for Oxford's Hine over Malone. Chase at three for Cambridge won well against Barnes, and the Oxford captain Baker, the only left-hander on either side, went down by a few points to Brubert at four after a lengthy battle.

Cambridge's 23-point lead in the singles looked useful, if by no means decisive. As the doubles developed, it became clear that Kay and Chase, the reigning British Universities doubles champions, were the outstanding pair, and they defeated Oxford 1 (Ronan & Adcock) convincingly. However, Hine & Baker for Oxford combined well against the second Cambridge pair (Malone & Brubert), winning one of their games to love and restoring the balance of the match.

Cambridge's third and fourth pairs this year were more experienced than their opponents, all of them new to the Varsity Match. This allowed the light-blues to settle more quickly and establish a good lead on points against their opposite numbers.

At halfway in the doubles, Cambridge had increased their lead to 47 points and looked safe. Oxford 3 (Barnes and McKelvie) would have none of this, defeating Cambridge 4 heavily; and the top dark-blue pair won both their games as well, giving just a glimmer of hope. But the irresistible Cambridge 1 and their reliable third pair (Kelly & Rowland) won all their games to ensure the lead was protected, the final margin being 37 points.

The Oxford Beavers were too good for the Cambridge Sparrows in the reserves match, retaining the 'Fist of Iron' trophy won three years ago. It was good to see each University bring a full complement of players this year. Congratulations to both captains on this achievement, and to Cambridge's Charles Compton on leading a winning side.

Lastly, our thanks go to St. Paul's School for providing the excellent venue – and equalling the record of nine Old Paulines playing in the top match.

Singles: (Oxford names first): EO Ronan (Bradfield & Linacre) lost to E Kay (St. Paul's & Emmanuel) 5-15; ML Hine (St. Paul's & St. John's) bt ER Malone (St. Paul's & Churchill) 15-13; GWJ Barnes (St. Paul's & LMH) lost to TJG Chase (St. Paul's & Churchill) 6-15; JC Baker (St. Paul's & Pembroke) (Capt.) lost to JB Brubert (Alleyn's & Queens') 9-15

Doubles: Ronan & SJ Adcock (Eastbourne & St. Edmund Hall) lost to Kay & Chase 5-15, 4-15; bt Malone & Brubert 15-7, 15-11. Hine & Baker bt Malone & Brubert 15-8, 15-0; lost to Kay & Chase 5-15, 7-15. Barnes & CDH McKelvie (St. Paul's & Trinity) lost to WFA Kelly (Winchester & Girton) & LO Rowland (St. Paul's & Fitzwilliam) 5-15, 12-15; bt CK Compton (Eastbourne & St. John's) (Capt.) & MC Reid (Edinburgh Academy & St. John's) 15-2, 15-1. CLY Waller (Clifton & New) & AD Esin (St. Paul's & Pembroke) lost to Compton & Reid 5-15, 13-15; lost to Kelly & Rowland 5-15, 15-16
Result: Cambridge bt Oxford by 238 pts to 201 pts

Oxford Beavers v Cambridge Sparrows

Singles: (Oxford names first): HR Wilman (Giggleswick & Hertford) lost to PRH Judge (Merchant Taylors' & Robinson) 4-15; ES Wilman (Giggleswick & Hertford) bt TPR Hennock (Christ's Hospital & Trinity) 15-4; JC Thompson (Tonbridge & Queen's) bt CR Emerton (St. Paul's & St. John's) 15-0; JRP Johnson (Tonbridge & St. Hugh's) bt BSI Quarry (St. Paul's & Selwyn) 15-4.

Doubles: Wilman & Wilman bt Judge & Hennock 15-7, 12-15; bt Emerton & Quarry 15-1, 15-4.

Thompson & Johnson bt Emerton & Quarry 15-3, 15-7; lost to Judge & Hennock 13-15, 14-16.

Result: Oxford Beavers bt Cambridge Sparrows by 163 pts to 91 pts

NORTH OF ENGLAND OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS

Durham, 26/27th February 2011

Dan Tristao not only retained his North of England Singles title in a repeat of last year's final, but he also teamed up with Hamish Buchanan to take home the Doubles title, writes organiser Ady Lee.

Match of the Singles first round was undoubtedly the Lee vs Legget game, which went on for over three hours (!) due to Legget's pre-arranged doctor's appointment between the first and second games. After losing the first game comfortably, Legget took the time in between sets 1 and 2 to change his strategy and eventually came through in three.

The quarter-finals looked to be going with seeding, although Legget again pushed Buchanan to a tight three sets before experience showed through. However, in the final game of the quarters, Jonny Major upset the draw by coming through against Dan Grant. Jonny came out the blocks quickly in the first set, and superb retrievals mixed with a slightly off-colour Grant meant he eventually won 11-9 in the third set.

The semis went with seedings, as Tristao comfortably beat Major and Minta defeated Buchanan, who was slightly jaded after his three-set game with Legget. The final was an excellent display of power hitting, retrieval and athleticism, which has come to underpin the modern game. After Minta stormed through the first set, Tristao had to change his strategy and eventually counter-punched his way to the second set. The third set came slightly easier for Tristao, as Minta was left with too much to battle against, given Dan's position of power early in the final set.

The doubles competition featured many pairs that were strong on paper, but largely untested, with only the Grant & Lee pairing regularly playing together. Such was the strength of the field that Minta & Price had to play Bate & Major in the first round, all four being recognised top-flight players.

The semi-finals went with seedings, which left the final between top seeds Buchanan & Tristao and second seeds Grant & Lee, who had reached their second consecutive doubles final after the North West Open in Manchester. Grant & Lee powered their way to a 10-3 lead in the first set and, despite a small fightback, they closed it out 11-9. During the second set, both Buchanan & Tristao changed to a more aggressive game, seemingly hitting winners at will as they closed out the set to 5.

The final set saw another change of tactic as Buchanan & Tristao eschewed the winners they were hitting in the second set in favour of waiting for mistakes to come through from Grant and Lee, who felt pressured to change tactics themselves. This patient approach showed through as the top seeds won the third set to 5.

Many thanks to all those that came to play in Durham. Your continued support means a lot to the RFA and I look forward to seeing you all again next year.

Singles

Preliminary round: Roberts bt Cochran 9-11, 11-5, 11-5

First round: Tristao bt Roberts 11-3, 11-1; Mohammed bt Bowden 11-3, 7-11, 11-6; Grant bt Gravatt 11-0, 12-11; Major bt Ward 11-0, w/o; Buchanan bt Aquilina 11-5, 11-4; Legget bt Lee 5-11, 12-10, 11-7; Bate bt Price 11-2, 11-9

Quarter-finals: Tristao bt Mohammed 11-2, 11-1; Major bt Grant 11-7, 2-11, 11-9; Buchanan bt Legget 11-5, 6-11, 11-8; Minta bt Bate 11-4, 11-6

Semi-finals: Tristao bt Major 11-6, 11-6; Minta bt Buchanan 11-6, 11-0

Final: Tristao bt Minta 6-11, 11-6, 11-3

Plate: Price

Doubles

First round: Buchanan & Tristao bt Bowden & Cochran 11-0, 11-5; Mohammed & Legget bt Aquilina & Tilston w/o; Minta & Price bt Bate & Major 11-4, 11-6; Grant & Lee bt Gravatt & Ward 11-3, 11-1

Semi-finals: Buchanan & Tristao bt Mohammed & Legget 11-4, 11-9; Grant & Lee bt Minta & Price 11-9, 11-3

Final: Buchanan & Tristao bt Grant & Lee 9-11, 11-5, 11-5

Plate: Legget & Mohammed

RFA v BUCS

St Paul's School, Barnes, 6th March 2011

The annual representative match between the British Universities & the Rugby Fives Association, took place at St. Paul's on 6th March, writes David Gardner.

It was again well contested with strong teams appearing for both sides. The No 1 singles spot saw the current BUCS champion, Dan Grant (UCL), taking on the past triple champion, Dan Tristao, whilst at No 2 former National Singles Champion Hamish Buchanan took on the BUCS runner up Ed Kay. Ed, in his first year at Cambridge, gave Hamish a very good run for his money, eventually losing out by just two points, 15-13. Tristao, however, proved to be much more in command, and overpowered Grant comfortably by 15-4.

Despite this, the lower order gained victories and the students ended the singles with, surprisingly, an overall lead of six points! Traditionally the RFA win the singles fairly comfortably and the students gnaw away at the lead for the rest of the day!

The first round of the Doubles saw the strong play from BUCS continue, with victories in two out of three matches, although only tying the round on points at 34 all. Nevertheless, at the half-way stage of the match, the students were still clinging on to their narrow lead of six points gained in the Singles.

Hopes were soon dashed in the second set of Doubles, as the RFA stormed into the lead, taking all three matches very comfortably to establish a 27-point advantage with the final round to come. A spirited revival by the younger team kept the last six games to a mere 19-point deficit, with the match scores finally concluding at 235 to 189 in favour of the RFA.

There were occasions when the students should have done much better, and one cannot but reflect on missed opportunities, when a more positive, and indeed, at times, a more serious approach, might well have reduced the deficit considerably! In the end experience told, and the senior team ran out very worthy winners..

Singles (RFA names first)

Tristao beat Grant 15-4; Buchanan beat Kay 15-13; Dean lost to Burrows 4-15; Lee beat Ackland 15-9; Pringle lost to Hanton P. 11-15; Hanton B. lost to Adcock beat 5-15

Doubles (RFA names first)

1st round: Dean & Pringle lost to Burrows & Grant 6-15; Buchanan & Hanton lost to Ackland & Hanton 13-15; Lee & Tristao beat Adcock & Kay 15-4
2nd round: Buchanan & Hanton beat Burrows & Grant 15-5; Lee & Tristao beat Ackland & Hanton 15-2; Dean & Pringle beat Adcock & Kay 15-5
3rd round: Lee & Tristao beat Burrows & Grant 15-7, 15-16; Dean & Pringle beat Ackland & Hanton 16-14, 15-16; Buchanan & Hanton beat Adcock & Kay 15-6, 15-13
Result : RFA beat BUCS by 235 points to 189

LADIES' WINCHESTER FIVES CHAMPIONSHIPS

Winchester College, 12th March 2011

Eastbourne College teacher Kathleen Briedenhann won her first Fives title at the Ladies Winchester Fives championships, beating Alex Steel in two very close games to win the singles title. However, Alex didn't go home without a trophy, teaming up with former mixed doubles champion Anita Ganguly to win the Doubles title.

Singles

Final: Kathleen Briedenhann bt Alex Steel

Doubles

Winners: Ganguly & Steel

WINCHESTER FIVES NATIONAL DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP

Winchester College, 13th March 2011

A sizeable entry of 24 pairs contested the Winchester Fives Doubles for the Barnes Bridge trophy at Winchester College, and the organiser reluctantly took a late decision to play games to 11 rather than 15 in order to finish the competition at a reasonable hour.

Round 1 produced two cracking matches, the first won in three close games by the talented young Wykehamists Ganendra and Kennedy, and the second, also a three-gamer, by the determined Derby Moor combination of Kirk and Butler. The second round saw the entry of the seeded pairs, some of whom were subjected to stern challenges but who all eventually won through to the quarter-finals.

By this stage, these pairs – some of them new combinations, others established ones – were all accustomed to the buttress and the speedy new '5 star' ball, and the play at times became bewilderingly rapid. Austin and Rew, up from the West Country, provided Roberts and Tristão with a real test before going down narrowly in three games; Lee and Marshall gave Fox and Minta a good match, as did former champions Akerman and Mario Mohammed in their encounter with Buchanan and Grant; and holders and top seeds Ellison and Hal Mohammed looked impressive as

they defeated Price and Pringle, the eventual plate winners, with something to spare.

The semi-finals contained the best fives of the championship, all four pairs playing with huge skill and great pace. Countless shots, including many services, were completely unreturnable, directed as they were into the area around the base of the buttress or the nick at the back or sides of the court. Volleying from the right-hand court – always a feature of good Winchester fives – was also much in evidence. This was the game at its best, full of variety and devoid of the long slogging rallies that can render the Rugby version less than fascinating to watch. Both semi-finals went to three games, and the winning margin in the third was a mere couple of points in each case, with the top and second seeds coming through to face each other in the final, as last year at Bradfield.

The final itself was an anticlimax after such superb displays. Ellison and Mohammed continued to play their best fives and overwhelmed Fox and Minta, who were unable to find an answer in either game. This was the Wykehamists' third successive win, and it opens the way to a 'grand slam' – consecutive wins at all four venues – at Sedbergh next year.

We are most grateful to Winchester College for the use of their courts, and to Radcliffe & Co for their generous sponsorship of the event.

1st Round: Edmonds & Malde bt T Marshall & M Hale 11-3 11-3; Hughes & Kiggell bt Parker & Thomas 11-2 11-8; Ganendra & Kennedy bt Davies & Montagu-Pollock 11-12 11-9 11-6; Passey & Pearce-Smith bt Dorman & Lyons 11-1 11-0; Kirk & Butler bt Gunyon & Maltby 2-11, 11-3 11-8; Coffey & B Hale bt East & Wilson 15-8 15-12 (sic); McManus & Munn bt Ainsworth & Arnott 11-0 11-2
2nd Round: Ellison & H Mohammed bt Edmonds & Malde 11-2 11-3; Price & Pringle w/o Hughes & Kiggell; Akerman & M Mohammed bt Ganendra & Kennedy 11-1, 11-6; Buchanan & Grant bt Passey & Pearce-Smith 11-9 11-8; Roberts & Tristão bt Kirk & Butler 11-2 11-0; Austin & Rew bt Coffey & Hale 11-7 11-8; Lee & J Marshall bt McManus & Munn 11-9 11-7; Fox & Minta bt Kirby & Christie 11-5 11-2
Quarter-Finals: Ellison & H Mohammed bt Price & Pringle 11-3 11-5; Buchanan & Grant bt Akerman & M Mohammed 11-8, 11-3; Roberts & Tristão bt Austin & Rew 11-3 5-11 11-7; Fox & Minta bt Lee & J Marshall 11-8, 11-5
Semi-finals: Ellison & Mohammed bt Buchanan & Grant 7-11, 11-5, 11-9; Minta & Fox bt Roberts & Tristao 11-7, 7-11, 12-10
Final: Ellison & Mohammed bt Minta & Fox 11-1, 11-3
Plate: Price & Pringle

UNDER 13s CHAMPIONSHIPS

St Paul's School, 13th March 2011

Organiser Peter de Winton writes: Although entries for the competition were down on 2010, both in terms of overall numbers and of schools entering, those who came enjoyed a spirited day of Fives and there were a lot of close matches, particularly in the semis and finals. It was good to see a large number of parents cheering on their sons, and there was an excellent atmosphere of co-operation between the schools, making the staging of matches run smoothly.

In the pool stage of the Singles, some clear winners emerged who went on to the knockout finals. Dawber from Alleyn's was impressive, losing only one point in his four matches, and he and the other five pool winners all achieved maximum points. Although three of the pool winners were from Pilgrims, there was also one each from Alleyn's, Blundell's and Merchant Taylors.

In the knockout stage, the six winners already mentioned did battle with the two best second-placed players, who came from Rossall and Alleyn's. The quarter-finals went with the seeding created by the pools stage, though Boissier of Pilgrims ran Scott of Blundell's close, losing 15-12. The semi-finals were keenly fought: Scott took Dawber to three games and Kinnear won the inter-Pilgrims match with Bull 11-6, 11-9. In the final, Dawber started decisively and was leading Kinnear comfortably, only to put a number of services down and thus unsettle his rhythm and pace. Kinnear took his chance, raised his game and did not look back, winning 11-6, 11-2. In the Plate, for the next eight best players from the pools, Tinkler-Davies from Alleyn's showed superior fitness, playing steadily through his three matches and giving away only fourteen points in the process of winning the Tankard.

In the Doubles, as in 2010, the competition went straight to the knockout stage, with 14 pairs competing. Pilgrims 1 made decisive progress to the final, giving away only four points in two games. Alleyn's 1 played three games to get to the final, and in the semi-final overcame stiff resistance from Blundell's 1 to get through 11-7. The final was very closely fought, with many tight rallies, but with Pilgrims 1 showing the greater resilience and running out eventual winners. The play was of very high standard and augurs well for these boys in the future. Rossall repeated their achievement of 2010 by winning the Plate for first-round losers, defeating Pilgrims 3 by 15-12 in a close match.

My thanks to St. Paul's for allowing us the use of the courts and their excellent facilities, the coaches for their enthusiasm and flexibility over a long day, and to Frank Akerman for his tireless support in helping to run the show. In spite of the lower numbers, I am optimistic that participating schools generally benefited by playing others from a variety of abilities, and I would like to encourage all schools to enter, including those who do not feel confident that their boys to be among the winners, as their teams will get plenty of Fives anyway. I look forward to welcoming new schools, particularly those where taking part in the competition could give the desired impetus to developing the game further..

Singles

Round-robin stages:

Pool 1: 1st Dawber (Alleyn's); 2nd Bryant (Pilgrims); 3rd Mills (Rossall); 4th Clarke (Blundell's); 5th Hamilton (Merchant Taylors)

Pool 2: 1st Boissier (Pilgrims); 2nd Singh (Derby Moor); 3rd Hanton (Alleyn's); 4th Hill (Blundell's); 5th Lees (Pilgrims)

Pool 3: 1st Bull (Pilgrims); 2nd Jessel (Alleyn's); 3rd Lee (Rossall); 4th Michaelson (Richmond Park Academy); 5th Blackmore (Blundell's)

Pool 4: 1st Scott (Blundell's); 2nd Trapnell (Rossall); 3rd Wilders (Pilgrims); 4th Morgan-Giles (Pilgrims); 5th Johnson (Derby Moor)

Pool 5: 1st Kinnear (Pilgrims); 2nd Tinkler-Davies (Alleyn's); 3rd Kennedy (Christ's Hospital); 4th Lockwood (Blundell's); 5th Forster (Richmond Park Academy)
Pool 6: 1st Stephenson (Merchant Taylors); 2nd Maree (Rossall); 3rd Hussey (Pilgrims); 4th Pyle (Blundell's); 5th Roberts (Christ's Hospital)
Quarter-finals: Dawber bt Trapnell 15-6; Scott bt Boissier 15-12; Bull bt Stephenson 15-1; Kinnear bt Jessel 15-6
Semi-finals: Dawber bt Scott 11-10, 5-11, 11-5; Kinnear bt Bull 11-6, 11-9
Final: Kinnear bt Dawber 11-6, 11-2
Plate: Tinkler-Davies (Alleyn's)

Doubles

1st round: Alleyn's 2 bt Rossall 1 11-9; Pilgrims 4 bt Derby Moor 11-9; Alleyn's 1 bt Blundell's 3 11-1; Pilgrims 2 bt Merchant Taylors 11-6; Rossall 2 bt Christ's Hospital 11-10; Blundell's 1 bt Pilgrims 3 11-3
Quarter-finals: Pilgrims 1 bt Blundell's 2 11-3; Alleyn's 2 bt Pilgrims 4 11-8; Alleyn's 1 bt Pilgrims 2 11-2; Blundell's 1 bt Rossall 2 11-7
Semi-finals: Pilgrims 1 bt Alleyn's 2 11-1; Alleyn's 1 bt Blundell's 1 11-7
Final: Pilgrims 1 bt Alleyn's 1 11-10, 11-7
Plate: Rossall

COLQUHOUN TROPHY

Sherborne School, Dorset, 20th March 2011

Despite some last-minute withdrawals reducing the size of the field this year, the second running of the Colquhoun Trophy produced some fine Fives.

Set up to commemorate the life of Charlie Colquhoun, former master-in-charge at Clifton Collge, and to promote schoolboy Fives in the South West, this year's event was enjoyed by boys from Blundell's, Malvern and Marlborough as well as the host school, Sherborne. As in 2010, there were Open and Colts categories, starting with a round-robin pool before going on to a knockout to decide the winner.

In the Open section, Malvern's Jamie Killick and Jamie Smart from Sherborne came through their pools with 100% records, and duly booked their place in the final after semi-final triumphs. In the first of these two matches, Jamie used his experience to record a comfortable win over his fellow Malvernian Adam Flattery, while in the second Jamie Smart beat Marlborough's Will Kirkpatrick in an altogether closer match that was played in a tremendous spirit and displayed Fives of the highest quality.

Come the final, though, it was the class of Killick that shone through, and he went on to win comfortably in two games. The Plate, meanwhile, produced an all-Sherborne final, with George Gordon-Head going on to beat Alex Mitchell in two games.

Because of last-minute withdrawals, the Colts section was reduced to a single pool, with the top two qualifying for the main final and the other two playing the Plate final.

The result was a final between Alex Frosell of Marlborough (whose 100% record gave him top spot in the pool) and Jack Webber of Blundell's. On paper, it looked like a win for the Marlborough boy, but the scores are not an accurate reflection of the play: the rallies were much closer than the scores suggest. However, the Blundell's squad didn't go home empty-handed: Harvey Scott beat Sherborne's Ed Dance to claim the Colts Plate, meaning that each of the four schools won some silverware in the day's competition – a fitting end to a fine day's play that showed off all the qualities Charlie would have

appreciated.

Open

Round-robin

Pool 1: 1st J Killick (Malvern); 2nd W Kirkpatrick (Marlborough); 3rd A Mitchell (Sherborne); 4th J Reid (Blundell's)

Pool 2: 1st J Smart (Sherborne); 2nd A Flattery (Malvern); 3rd G Gordon-Head (Sherborne); 4th H Kasahara (Blundell's)

Knockout:

Semi-finals: Killick bt Flattery 15-1; Smart bt Kirkpatrick 15-12

Final: Killick bt Smart 11-3, 11-0

Plate: Gordon-Head

Colts

Round-robin

1st A Frosell (Marlborough); 2nd J Webber (Blundell's); 3rd H Scott (Blundell's); 4th E Dance (Sherborne)

Knockout:

Final: Frosell bt Webber 11-1, 11-0

Plate: Scott

OFFICIAL RFA RANKINGS

London, 21st March 2011

The RFA today published the latest singles and doubles rankings – prepared, as ever, on the Association's behalf by Dave Hebden – and the biggest moves come from Jonny Major.

The rankings take into account last month's North of England Championships, and it was Jonny's performance here – beating Dan Grant to reach the semi-finals – that propelled him 31 places up the singles rankings to 10th position. The only other move in the top 10 sees the champion in Durham, Dan Tristao, overtake John Minta to climb into third position. He now sits behind James Toop and Will Ellison, giving the top three a distinctly youthful feel.

Dan also makes good progress in the doubles rankings after winning the North of England championship, climbing six places to 10th, just one place behind Ady Lee, who also climbs into the Top 10 for the first time. There's no change to the top of the rankings above Ady, but the two biggest movers are Charlie Legget and Jonny Major, who climb up the rankings after good performances in Durham. For the full rankings, simply click on the link below.

NATIONAL VINTAGE CHAMPIONSHIPS

Oundle School, 20th March 2011

John East reports: There were no air strikes, earthquakes or tsunamis near Oundle on 20th March, so that the Vintage Rugby Fives Tournament did not make the national news headlines. But, for the 15 enthusiastic contenders, this was nevertheless the place to be on that day to try to claim their place in history.

As usual, the Facilities provided by the school were excellent. The courts continue to improve every year, and if Tony Burrows has another attempt to take more wax off the walls this summer, as he hopes to do, they should be just about ideal. Given their position between the North and the South and the terrific

indoor facilities provided, they are an excellent addition to our Fives Court stock; added to which, Tony provided the usual hospitality in the way of sandwiches, cakes and drinks, although we should not overlook Dickie Warner's flapjack (Dickie demonstrating his more domesticated side here).

This year, the artwork at the Fives courts had some rather racy, but impressive, depictions of fives players in various stages of exhaustion and undress causing some surprise to a couple of female spectators. (I am not sure if they were commissioned by the RFA but perhaps they could be hired for the next RFA Dinner) Fortunately the models were somewhat younger than those on display on the courts that day.

Turning to the underlying excuse for this pleasant get together, it will come as no surprise that Wayne Enstone again won the Singles trophy, showing terrific agility and dexterity. However, it was wonderful also to have Ian Fuller attend his first Vintage tournament, and this meant that Wayne was pressed rather harder than usual in the final and had to move into a new top level of effort that we have perhaps not seen him display at the Vintage before. This made for an excellent first game, which Wayne won 11-7, but after that Ian's efforts somewhat fell away and Wayne went through to win the second game easily, though not without some good rallies. As usual, the closest game in the singles tournament was the first round match between Dickie and Bob Sandie (which is now an annual event by popular demand), with Bob this year just shading it at 16-14, to win the prize of playing Wayne in the next round. Elsewhere the seeds marched through as planned, although Tony Hamilton had a good tussle with Brian Nithsdale.

In the Singles Plate, Dickie Warner triumphed rather comfortably in his group, while the other group was closer, with Martin Wilkinson catching Bob Sandie by surprise, but then tiring under the relentless efforts of Brian Nithsdale who also eventually wore Bob down to claim the right to play Dickie for the plate trophy. Dickie won the first game (which was meant to be the only game) 11-8, but then decided with Brian that any final should really be the best of three games, after which he lost the next game 10-12 before finally claiming the third to win the plate after a bit of a marathon for players of this vintage.

The Doubles provided some close matches. Bob and Brian had a good game against Neil Arnott and Martin Wilkinson, before meeting the old (but new to the Vintage tournament) pairing of Ian Fuller and Jeremy Schroeter, who in fact marched comfortably through to the final. In the other half, Wayne and Tim Lewis, the holders, won their first game 12-10, 11-4 against an odd pairing of the newest entry to the age group, Brian Kirk, and the longest-serving Vintage player in the tournament, Bernard Atkinson, still diving about the court like a young Veteran. He claimed that he liked the somewhat smoother surfaces at Oundle as they did less damage to his knees than many courts, although others of us thought that you were meant to play standing up, particularly in the Vintage class.

Wayne and Tim then dispatched Dickie playing with the organiser. The organiser definitely had concerns about how Dickie would cope with the Doubles after six long games of Singles, and indeed there were certain signs of fatigue, which occasionally manifested itself in an inability on Dickie's part to leap out of the way of his opponent as quickly as is his wont. This irked Wayne, but nevertheless, although the games were reasonably hard fought and close, Wayne's amazing ability to dance round the court and Tim's steadiness on the right-hand side saw them through to their third successive Final. The organiser missed the first game of the Final, being engaged in the doubles plate, but with the score of 11-5, it seems that Ian and Jeremy were just too strong and steady for Wayne and Tim, and this was certainly the case in the second game, where Tim was visibly tiring. So it was pleasing to see two new names on this trophy, and Jeremy and Ian could be a tough pair to beat for some time.

The Doubles Plate was a single group of four first-round losers. East and Warner beat Kirk and Atkinson by the narrowest of margins having given away a sizeable lead, while Tony Hamilton and Euan Clarke, the holders, won two of their three games reasonably comfortably. Neil Arnott and – after quite a lot of hard singles – Martin Wilkinson were somewhat fading by this stage. So, the stage was set for the decider between Euan and Tony and the organiser and Dickie. It started as a very close contest for the first six

points but then, at least to the organiser's surprise, a long run saw East and Warner come almost straight through to 15-6 and the trophy.

My thanks must go to all the participants for making it such a hugely enjoyable day – it always is – and again to the School and Tony for providing their facilities, such a friendly reception and their hospitality. It all makes it a very easy tournament to run, but next year I will advance to a new level of fives, i.e. the Masters, and at that point I had always thought I would hand it over to a younger man; and the new boy in the group, Brian Kirk, has very kindly offered to step up to the plate (I know that metaphor comes from the wrong sport). I will certainly provide any help that is needed, but I feel sure that the organisation will at the least move towards a new level of technological efficiency, more in keeping with the 21st century.

NATIONAL VINTAGE CHAMPIONSHIPS

Oundle School, 20th March 2011

Singles

1st round: Sandie bt Warner 16-14; Wilkinson bt McIntyre 15-1

2nd round: Enstone bt Sandie 11-1, 11-2; Hamilton bt Nithsdale 11-6, 11-8; Schroeter bt Arnott 11-1, 11-0; Fuller bt Wilkinson 11-0, 11-1

Semi-finals: Enstone bt Hamilton 11-1, 11-3; Fuller bt Schroeter 11-4, 11-1

Final: Enstone bt Fuller 11-7, 11-0

Plate: Warner

Doubles

1st round: Enstone & Lewis bt Kirk & Atkinson 12-10, 11-4; East & Warner w/o; Sandie & Nithsdale bt Arnott & Wilkinson 11-4, 11-8; Fuller & Schroeter bt Hamilton & Clarke 11-3, 11-0

Semi-finals: Enstone & Lewis bt East & Warner 11-7, 11-5; Fuller & Schroeter 11-0, 11-3

Final: Fuller & Schroeter bt Enstone & Lewis 11-5, 11-2

Plate: East & Warner

NATIONAL SCHOOLS' CHAMPIONSHIPS

St Paul's School, Barnes, 28th-31st March 2011

This year's tournament enjoyed a huge entry, 30% up on the average for the previous five years, with twenty-one schools initially submitting entries in at least one of the three age groups; and it was especially good to welcome a small contingent from Rugby. Ten of these schools had representation in one or other of the singles finals, and new names will have been inscribed on both the Under 14 trophies, as well as the Colts' plate (which is in fact a goblet....?).

In the Open tournament, one player stood out from the field, and Luke Thomson (Christ's Hospital) did not disappoint. His all-round game applied so much pressure to his opponents that few could get into the game at all: it was a credit to Nick Edmonds (St Paul's) that he achieved as many as 12 points in the final. At one stage it looked as though both plate winners might also be from Christ's Hospital, with Robert Mathias always favourite and taking the Griffiths trophy, but Jacob Ader of St Paul's broke the stranglehold in the second plate.

In the Open doubles, there were several three-game thrillers from early on, and although the plate contained only five pairs, any one of them could have claimed to be hard done by in the main draw: an injury which caused the seeded Winchester pair to withdraw opened up the bottom quarter, and KCS made the most of the opportunity, also defeating Christ's Hospital II before losing a semi-final to St Paul's I. In the other semi-final SPS II produced a great effort against top-seeded Christ's Hospital, and in the end the first pair could make no more inroads, with CH taking the final in straight games.

The Colts' tournament was remarkable both for a huge entry and for a very high standard of play achieved by many who are actually Under 15 players. One of these, Sam Wyatt-Haines from Blundell's, emerged as champion, defeating Ed Wylde (Winchester) in the final. His greatest challenge had in fact been in the quarter final, a repeat of last year's Under 14 final, where Yul Kahn-Pascual (St Paul's) eventually succumbed after an epic three games. The two plate competitions also both went to younger players, with Marcus Hunter of Rugby showing how quickly he has taken to the game in a tight finish against Ollie Thompson (Sedbergh), and Tom Walters of Whitgift visibly improving as the week went on to take the second plate.

The Colts' doubles final was a rarity in this year's tournament, one of only two matches (both finals) in which the loser of the first game came back to win in three. The experience of Brubert and Browett (Alleyn's) appeared to be in the ascendant, but Wylde, despite an exhausting singles final in the morning) and Ganendra gradually asserted themselves to pull off the win. Some exciting fives was played in the earlier rounds, especially by Christ's Hospital and Rugby, and a tense plate final was won by Sedbergh's second pair, 16-14 against SPS III.

The Under 14 competition had a similar entry to last year, and the standard of play was again very high indeed. 2010 Under 13 champion Simon Whait (Loretto) was top seed, but he was unable to get past Elliot Webb (Tonbridge), coming off the back of a brilliant unbeaten first term of fives. Tristen McFarlane of St Paul's, like Webb a relative novice, also impressed in reaching the semi-finals, but both were undone by the experience of the Derby Moor boys, Rob Whitehorn and Matt Blunden, who went on to play an extraordinary final, with three games of attritional rallying resulting in the end in a win for Matt. Both plate competitions contained a number of promising players and congratulations to the two winners Elliot Tebboth (Merchant Taylors') and Sacha Thompson (Alleyn's). The strength of the Tonbridge team continued to be apparent in the doubles, where pair I edged past the (presumably extremely tired) Derby Moor pair, and pair II similarly got home against St Paul's I. The final did not produce any surprises, and pair III could not withstand the experienced Alleyn's pair in the plate final.

Many thanks to all involved in organisation and support, especially to those school staff who were giving up holiday time (and rather more who were supposed still to be teaching!). The whole championship was played in an excellent spirit, with the highest standards of sportsmanship and manners on court and camaraderie off it. (This paragraph is identical to last year, and deservedly so!)

NATIONAL SCHOOLS' CHAMPIONSHIPS

St Paul's School, Barnes, 28th-31st March 2011

Open Singles

Pool A/B: 1st L.Thomson (Christ's Hospital); 2nd G.Fox-Edwards (Radley); 3rd M.Bhushan (St Paul's); 4th S.Cummings (Bradfield)

Pool C: 1st S.Russell (St Paul's); 2nd J.Smart (Sherborne);

Pool D: 1st A.Ainsworth (Tonbridge); 2nd Cameron (Winchester); 3rd G.Woodfield (Oundle)

Pool E: 1st J.Malde (St Paul's); 2nd R.Patel (Merchant Taylors); 3rd X.LeJoncour (Winchester)

Pool F: 1st R.Harrison (Tonbridge); 2nd G.Terry (Rugby); 3rd M.Baldry (Marlborough)

Pool G: 1st R.Law (St Paul's); 2nd A.Lewis (Rossall); 3rd N.Finney (Merchant Taylors')

Pool H: 1st J.Kennedy (Winchester); 2nd R.Mathias (Christ's Hospital); 3rd T.Hoskins (Oundle)

Pool I: 1st N.Edmonds (St Paul's); 2nd S.Woollard (Winchester); 3rd E.Thornton (Oundle)

Pool J: 1st M.Oddy (Blundell's); 2nd G.Waugh (Sedbergh); 3rd W.Kirkpatrick (Marlborough)

Pool K: 1st D.Aldham (KCS); 2nd W.Sloper (St Paul's); 3rd S.Stracey (Christ's Hospital)

Pool L: 1st D.Butler (Bradfield); 2nd V.Patel (merchant Taylors'); 3rd N.Whitney (Tonbridge)
 Pool M: 1st T.Parker (St Paul's); 2nd J.Atkins(Winchester); 3rd T.Holder-Williams (Rossall)
 Pool N: 1st A.Mathias (Christ's Hospital); 2nd T.Edwards (Rugby)
 Pool O/P: 1st M.Frost (Derby Moor); 2nd J.Roberts (Tonbridge); 3rd J.Ader (St Paul's); 4th A.Shah (Merchant Taylors')
 Round 1: Russell beat Ainsworth 11-4 11-6; Malde beat Harrison 11-4 11-4; Law beat Kennedy 11-7 11-2; Edmonds beat Oddy 11-9 11-0; Butler beat Aldham 11-6 11-9; Parker beat A.Mathias 11-3 11-2
 Quarter-finals: Thomson beat Russell 11-0, 11-2; Malde beat Law 11-1, 11-4; Edmonds beat Butler 11-7, 11-7; Parker beat Frost 11-6, 11-1
 Semi-finals: Thomson beat Malde 11-3, 11-5; Edmonds beat Parker 11-5, 11-3
 Final: Thomson beat Edmonds 11-7, 11-5
 First plate: R.Mathias
 Second plate: Ader

Open Doubles

Preliminary round: Rugby beat Winchester II 11-6, 11-0; Merchant Taylors' II beat Radley 11-9, 11-5; KCS beat St Paul's IV 11-4, 6-11, 11-7
 1st round: Christ's Hospital I beat Rugby 11-0, 11-0; St Paul's III beat Rossall 11-3, 11-7; Tonbridge II beat Marlborough 11-1, 11-2; St Paul's II beat Merchant Taylors' II 11-1, 11-2; St Paul's I beat Bradfield 11-9, 9-11, 11-1; Tonbridge I beat merchant Taylors' I 11-5, 11-9; Christ's Hospital II beat Oundle I 11-2, 11-6; KCS Wimbledon beat Winchester I 11-3, 11-4
 Quarter-finals: Christ's Hospital I beat St Paul's III 11-0, 11-0; St Paul's II beat Tonbridge II 11-6, 11-8; St Paul's I beat Tonbridge I 11-3, 7-11, 11-6; KCS beat Christ's Hospital II 11-4, 11-5
 Semi-finals: Christ's Hospital I beat St Paul's II 11-7, 11-6; St Paul's I beat KCS 11-3, 11-6
 Final: Christ's Hospital I (Thomson/A.Mathias) beat St Paul's I (Edmonds/Malde) 11-4 11-5
 Plate: Bradfield (Butler/Cummings)

Colts Singles

Pool A: 1st S.Browett (Alleyn's); 2nd B.Chua (Winchester); 3rd G.Matthews (Oundle); 4th T.Butler (Marlborough)
 Pool B: 1st O.Dewhurst (St Paul's); 2nd W.Rider (Tonbridge); 3rd J.Miles (Sutton Valence);
 Pool C: 1st J.Webber (Blundell's); 2nd M.Hunter (Rugby); 3rd A.McGrigor (Marlborough); 4th M.Adewumni (Whitgift)
 Pool D: 1st E.Wylde (Winchester); 2nd S.Combe (Blundell's); 3rd T.Meddings (KCS)
 Pool E: 1st B.Lawry (Sedbergh); 2nd H.Coles (Winchester); 3rd L.Laville (KCS)
 Pool F: 1st N.Pabari (St Paul's); 2nd N.Lawrence (Marlborough); 3rd H.Searle (Merchant Taylors');
 Pool G: 1st A.Gemade (Christ's Hospital); 2nd S,McKenzie Boyle (Tonbridge); 3rd C.Constable (Whitgift)
 Pool H: 1st M.Shaw (St Paul's); 2nd C.Farmer (Sedbergh); 3rd P.Watson (Oundle)
 Pool I: 1st A.Brubert (Alleyn's); 2nd H.Scott (Blundell's); 3rd L.Stone (Sedbergh)
 Pool J: 1st A.Frosell (Marlborough); 2nd O.Thompson(Sedbergh); 3rd T.Walters (Whitgift)
 Pool K: 1st T.Edmonds (St Paul's); 2nd A.Fleming (Tonbridge); 3rd L.Mullally (Whitgift)
 Pool L: 1st J.Ganendra (Winchester); 2nd T.Middlehurst (KCS); 3rd L.Brady (Merchant Taylors')
 Pool M: 1st Y.Kahn-Pascual (St Paul's); 2nd N.Pinder (Winchester); 3rd H.Mallinder (Rugby); 4th L.Brandon (Whitgift)
 Pool N: 1st C.Kent (Christ's Hospital); 2nd T.Woods (Merchant Taylors'); 3rd L.Fulford-Smith (Marlborough); 4th A.Davidson (Tonbridge)
 Pool O: 1st H.Judge (Merchant Taylors'); 2nd D.Taylor (St Paul's); 3rd O.Aucamp (Sutton Valence);
 Pool P: 1st S.Wyatt-Haines (Blundell's); 2nd M.Hale (Winchester); 3rd B.Quinn (KCS); 4th

J.Worne (Whitgift)

Round 1: Browett beat Dewhurst 11-0, 11-0; Wylde beat Webber 11-5, 11-0; Lawry beat Pabari 11-4, 11-7; Shaw beat Gemade 11-0, 11-4; Brubert beat Frosell 11-3, 11-4; Ganendra beat Edmonds 11-3, 11-4; Kahn-Pascual beat kent 11-3, 11-1; Wyatt-Haines beat Judge 11-0, 11-3.

Quarter-finals: Wylde beat Browett 11-4, 11-1; Shaw beat Lawry 11-5, 11-4; Brubert beat Ganendra 11-6, 11-1; Wyatt-Haines beat Kahn-Pascual 11-9, 10-12, 11-5.

Semi-finals: Wylde beat Shaw 11-6, 11-9; Wyatt-Haines beat Brubert 11-2, 11-5

Final: Wyatt-Haines beat Wylde 11-7, 11-0

First plate: Hunter

Second plate: Walters

Colts Doubles

1st round: Sutton Valence Beat Whitgift III 11-6, 11-3; KCS I beat Whitgift II 11-7, 6-11, 12-11; Winchester II beat Marlborough III 11-2, 11-0; Blundell's I beat St Paul's III 11-7, 11-6; Merchant Taylors' II beat Tonbridge I 12-10, 7-11, 11-5; Merchant Taylors I beat Oundle 11-9, 11-4; Christ's Hospital beat Tonbridge II 11-2, 11-3; Sedbergh I beat Marlborough II 11-1, 11-0; St Paul's II beat Sedbergh II 11-7, 11-7; Rugby beat Blundell's II 11-1, 11-3; Whitgift I beat KCS II 11-8, 11-6

2nd Round: Alleyn's beat Sutton Valence 11-0, 11-1; Winchester II beat KCS I 11-1, 11-1; Blundell's I beat Merchant Taylors' II 11-0, 11-0; Marlborough I beat Winchester III 11-2, 11-4; St Paul's I w/o Merchant Taylors' I scr; Christ's Hospital beat Sedbergh I 11-3, 6-11 11-5; St Paul's II beat Rugby 11-4, 2-11, 12-10; Winchester I beat Whitgift I 11-2, 11-2.

Quarter-finals: Alleyn's beat Winchester II 11-3, 11-4; Blundell's I beat Marlborough I 11-7, 11-2; Christ's Hospital beat St Paul's I 11-9, 5-11, 11-9; Winchester I beat St Paul's II 11-0, 11-5

Semi-finals: Alleyn's beat Blundell's I 11-8, 11-3; Winchester I w/o Christ's Hospital scr.

Final: Winchester I (Ganendra/Wylde) beat Alleyn's (Browett/Brubert) 2-11, 11-4, 11-2

Plate: Sedbergh II (Farmer/Stone)

Under 14 Singles

Pool A: 1st S.Whait (Loretto); 2nd Matthews (Winchester); 3rd C.Forsyth (Whitgift)

Pool B: 1st H.Langham (Tonbridge); 2nd D.Hodgkinson (Bradfield); 3rd D.Gregory (Merchant Taylors')

Pool C: 1st Terrafranca (Winchester); 2nd M.Nunes (St Paul's); 3rd J.McPhillips (Sedbergh); 4th T.Dawber (Alleyn's)

Pool D: 1st E.Webb (Tonbridge); 2nd F.McNaughton (Oundle); 3rd Higginson (Christ's Hospital); 4th H.Lea (Bradfield)

Pool E: 1st G.Keller (St Paul's); 2nd M.Hemmings (Bradfield); 3rd J.Fischer (Oundle); 4th C.Gray (Whitgift)

Pool F: 1st O.Horner (Whitgift); 2nd F.Dalby-Bowler (Alleyn's); 3rd H.Akbar (Merchant Taylors'); 4th Norris (Christ's Hospital)

Pool G: 1st E.Loftus (Radley); 2nd Crew (Winchester); 3rd O.Afolayan (Merchant Taylors)

Pool H: R.Whitehorn (Derby Moor); 2nd T.Robinson (Sedbergh); 3rd M.Hutchings (Tonbridge)

Pool I: 1st R.Thickness (Alleyn's); 2nd O.Baseley (Oundle); 3rd D.Hunt (Tonbridge); 4th A.Bokhari (Radley)

Pool J: 1st A.Segun (Tonbridge); 2nd E.Tebboth (Merchant Taylors'); 3rd G.Wainwright (Sedbergh); 4th S.Johnstone (Bradfield)

Pool K: 1st Watkinson (Winchester); 2nd A.Norman (Bradfield); 3rd Ahmed (Christ's Hospital); 4th C.Mabbutt (Whitgift)

Pool L: 1st T.McFarlane (St Paul's); 2nd A.Shah (Merchant Taylors'); 3rd S.Thompson (Alleyn's); 4th F.Ashworth (Oundle)

Pool M: 1st D.Tomlinson (Bradfield); 2nd H.Chisty (Whitgift); 3rd H.Nolan (Tonbridge); 4th C.Barton (Oundle)
 Pool N: 1st V.Posch (Sedbergh); 2nd S.Bhushan (St Paul's); 3rd J.Ganendra (Winchester);
 Pool O: 1st Petrie (Winchester); 2nd A.Watson (Oundle); 3rd Mathias (Christ's Hospital)
 Pool P: 1st M.Blunder (Derby Moor); 2nd D.Abbas (Whitgift); 3rd A.Wheal (Merchant Taylors')
 1st round: Whait beat Langham 11-1; Webb beat Terrafranca 11-4; Horner beat Keller 11-6;
 Whitehorn beat Loftus 11-7; Thicknesse beat Segun 11-2; McFarlane beat Watkinson 11-3; Posch
 beat Tomlinson 11-9; Blunden beat Petrie 11-0
 Quarter-finals: Webb beat Whait 11-8; Whitehorn beat Horner 11-1; McFarlane beat Thicknesse 11-
 8; Blunden beat Posch 11-4
 Semi-finals: Whitehorn beat Webb 15-9; Blunden beat McFarlane 15-6
 Final: Blunden beat Whitehorn 8-11, 11-7, 11-9
 First plate: Tebboth
 Second plate: Thompson

Under 14 Doubles

1st round: Winchester III beat Oundle I 15-11; Bradfield II beat Christ's Hospital I 15-7; St Paul's II
 beat Merchant Taylors III 15-5; Whitgift II beat Sedbergh II 15-5; merchant Taylors' I beat
 Bradfield III 15-7; Radley beat Tonbridge III 15-3; Whitgift II beat Winchester II 15-4; Sedbergh I
 beat Oundle III 15-0; Bradfield I beat Oundle II 15-0; Tonbridge II beat merchant Taylors' II 15-5;
 Whitgift I beat Christ's Hospital II 15-1
 2nd round: Derby Moor beat Winchester II 15-1; St Paul's II beat Bradfield II 15-8; Tonbridge I
 beat Whitgift II 15-2; Winchester I beat Merchant Taylors' I 15-9; St Paul's I beat Radley 15-8;
 Sedbergh I beat Winchester II 15-2; Tonbridge II beat Bradfield I 15-12; Whitgift I beat Alleyn's
 15-12
 Quarter-finals: Derby Moor beat St Paul's II 15-2; Tonbridge I beat Winchester I 15-5; St Paul's I
 beat Sedbergh I 15-13; Tonbridge II beat Whitgift I 15-10
 Semi-finals: Tonbridge I beat Derby Moor 15-12; Tonbridge II beat St Paul's I 15-11
 Final: Tonbridge I (Webb/Langham) beat Tonbridge II (Nolan/Segun) 11-6, 11-9
 Plate: Alleyn's (Dalby-Bowler/Thicknesse)

NATIONAL DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP

Alleyn's School, Dulwich, 2nd/3rd April 2011

Hamish Buchanan and Robin Perry today took their eight successive National Doubles title, putting them within sight of a couple of notable records: Wayne Enstone and Neil Roberts' nine consecutive wins in this championship, and Ian Fuller and Dave Hebden's 10 wins in total.

Hamish and Robin's win this year, as it was 2009 and 2010, was achieved at the expense of Will Ellison and Marcus Bate, and again it was a close match. Indeed, the first game in the final could have gone either way, with both pairs having more than one game point in a game that was an incredibly tight and tense affair from start to finish. Hamish and Robin were first to game point – at 14-12 – but Will and Marcus fought back to 15-14, only for Hamish to play probably the two most crucial shots of the match – two aced services – before he and Robin went on to take the game 16-15.

The second game was also a close affair, with plenty of lengthy rallies, but as it went on, Hamish and Robin eked out a lead, with Will and Marcus unable to find the crucial nicks or force their opponents into mistakes. On the other hand, Hamish began to find winners and tempt Will and Marcus into occasional weak shots that were soon punished. Seemingly unable to find the right tactics to unsettle the defending

champions, Will and Marcus were always behind in the second game and went on to lose it 15-8.

However, they can take some satisfaction from the fact that, even in such an open competition, they were clearly the second best pair all weekend: they emerged from their round-robin group with two emphatic wins and went on to record a comfortable semi-final win over Dan Tristao and Gareth Price, who had upset third seeds Dan Grant and Ady Lee in the group stages.

Indeed, it was the open nature of the competition that marked this tournament, as injury forced the withdrawal of some familiar names, both on and before the day. The result was a few unfamiliar pairings - and some interesting results, not least of which was Dan and Gareth's win over Dan and Ady. However, credit must also go to the previously untried partnership of Hal Mohammed and Charlie Brooks, who reached the semi-finals at their first attempt and pushed the eventual winners very hard at that stage before bowing out.

Nevertheless, in 2011, it is again the names of Buchanan and Perry that will be engraved on the Cyriax Cup. Only time will tell if they can go on to etch their names into the record books in 2012, but not many would bet against it on this showing.

Group A: Buchanan/Perry bt Burrows/Gravatt 15-10, 15-6, bt Akerman/Pearce-Smith 15-11, 15-10; Burrows/Gravatt lost to Akerman/Pearce-Smith 10-15, 11-15. Winners Buchanan/Perry; Runners-up Akerman/Pearce-Smith

Group B: Pringle/Dean retired injured; Brooks/Mohammed bt Wolstenholme/Marshall 15-11, 15-5. Winners Brooks/Mohammed; Runners-up Wolstenholme/Marshall

Group C: Grant/Lee lost to Price/Tristao 10-15, 16-14, 7-15, bt Lyons/Dorman 15-0, 15-2; Price/Tristao bt Lyons/Dorman 15-1, 15-5. Winners Price/Tristao; Runners-up Grant/Lee

Group D: Bate/Ellison bt Hatton/Maconie 15-3, 15-3, bt Ackland/George 15-8, 15-7; Hatton/Maconie bt Ackland/George 15-5, 15-4. Winners Bate/Ellison; Runners-up Hatton/Maconie

Semi-finals: Buchanan/Perry bt Brooks/Mohammed 15-12, 15-10; Bate/Ellison bt Price/Tristao 15-3, 15-10

Final: Buchanan/Perry bt Bate/Ellison 16-15, 15-8

Plate: Grant/Lee

OFFICIAL RFA RANKINGS

London, 4th April 2011

Less than six months after he lost the number one spot in the National Doubles rankings for the first time since the end of the 2003/04 season, Hamish Buchanan today returned to the top of the heap after his win (with partner Robin Perry) in the National Doubles championship. Fittingly, the person he replaces is Will Ellison, who was runner-up in the same championship, along with Marcus Bate, who climbs to third in the new rankings, which are prepared on behalf of the RFA by Dave Hebden.

The National Doubles Championship is the only event to be reflected in the new list, but there are still some big moves: Robin Perry, for instance makes his annual climb up the rankings, finding himself in fifth position, while Dan Tristao reaches the top 10 for the first time, and both Gareth Price and Charlie Brooks also make progress to just outside the top 10.

Lower down, James Marshall climbs 20 places to 35th, where he finds himself just behind Harry Akerman and Jules Pearce-Smith, who also did well in the Plate competition at the National Doubles Championship. For the full rankings, simply click on the link below.

NATIONAL VETERANS' & MASTERS' CHAMPIONSHIPS

Christ's Hospital, Horsham, 9/10th April 2011

As usual, the Veterans' tournament initially attracted a good-sized entry, but this had been pared down to a small but select body of men by the morning of the singles competition. On paper, writes organiser John Hawke, qualification for this prestigious event is simple; you must be 45 or older on the day of the event, and have a working understanding of the rules of Fives. Ability or talent for the game is not required. However, the frailty of the over-45 year old body, and the uncanny ability of family members and friends to organise weddings, funerals, christenings and even holidays for the appointed weekend makes attendance at Christ's Hospital far more uncertain. Eventually, though, with customary disregard for the posted start time, seven stalwarts (and the non-playing organiser) arrived and prepared to do battle. At the same time, the six contestants for the Masters cup also turned up, but they were quickly dispatched to the far side of the Fives courts lest they embarrassed the Veterans with their superior display of fitness and court-craft.

With only seven entries, the number one seed and title holder, Hamish Buchanan, was granted a bye in the first round. He used this advantage sneakily, appearing to sleep while surreptitiously studying, from the gallery, the form and tactics of the rest of the field. That this 'sleep' was a sham is certain; no-one could stay comatose in the face of the howls of frustration and screams of glee emanating from the courts below, as some close matches ebbed and flowed.

Fortunately for the organiser, and in due deference to the required Saturday evening sojourn at the Bax Castle, the matches that went to three games petered out after the first round, with semis and finals all being completed in two. This is not to say that the standard of play reduced. It was sustained, or even improved, as the day progressed.

Once the semi-finals were out of the way, Hamish was again released to slumber for another hour. This time the doze was real, as the only form he needed to study was that of the other finalist, Neil Roberts, who slept in a chair nearby. During this period of slumber for the greats, the lesser mortals did battle again for the plate, a single round-robin open to all but the finalists. High quality Fives again. Eventually, around 6 o'clock, the plate games were partially suspended so that the final could take place. A blistering pair of games where the only person who really noticed the age of the participants was Neil Roberts, as the youthful Hamish slowly sucked out Neil's energy to win a well fought match.

Back to the plate. With the time fast approaching that at which showering facilities would close, a tie at the top of the round-robin, requiring a play-off game, was possible. Tony Hamilton managed to save us from a sweaty evening in the pub by winning his final game in style, making him undisputed winner of that exquisite plate.

Sunday, doubles day, started in much the same way as Saturday, a fine, warm, day, with groups of Fives players standing round, but none either changed or ready to play. Eventually the games started, and Sunday continued the quality and competitiveness of the previous day. Again there were only seven pairs taking part, so the format was identical to that of Saturday, with three games to 15 for the main, knockout competition and everyone apart from the finalists going in to the round-robin plate. Last year's winners, Enstone and Roberts, got the first-round bye. Everything went as expected until the final, when Hamish played his usual hard-hitting, quality game, while Bruce Hanton, his partner, hit the form of his life, retrieving virtually everything hit his way, and returning it with force and precision. This onslaught was too much even for the mighty pairing of Enstone and Roberts, who retreated in shock. What a match!

Again, the plate was still to finish when the final was completed. Crafty manoeuvring by Sandie and Nithsdale ensured that the final game of the day was between them and the other possible plate winners,

Oscroft and Shroeter. This game was a classic, with nothing to choose between them until, at 11 all, Jeremy suffered an ankle injury which left him almost unable to move. An easy win for the northerners, you think. Suddenly Rod Oscroft took over, pulling him and Jeremy clear, but the never-say-die attitude of Brian Nithsdale communicated itself to Bob Sandie, and they dug in to win by three points.

The showers were still open as the last of the competitors got to the Sports Centre, so the day finished in fragrant fashion with the traditional pint (or two) at the Sussex Oak.

Many thanks to all who came to CH, whether player or visitor, cup winner or loser of every game. Special gratitude is due to Stuart Kirby, who not only organised and supplied the sumptuous vittles, but who also played while suffering from a nasty chest infection. Ed Hatton graciously sorted things out at the Christ's Hospital end, while David Bawtree added his customary polite but forceful help.

- As John mentions above, the Masters tournament was played at the same time as the Veterans. Organiser David Bawtree reports that a good day was had by all: the weather was perfect and the courts played well. Three pairs took part in a round-robin tournament, and the eventual winners were David and his partner, Bernard Atkinson, who edged out Douglas Rice and Bev Boag to clinch the title.

Singles

First Round: Buchanan bye; Kirby bt Sandie 14-16, 15-10, 15-6; Walter bt Hamilton 5-15, 15-10, 15-4; Roberts bt Nithsdale 15-5, 15-13

Semi-finals: Buchanan bt Kirby 15-11, 15-4; Roberts bt Walter 15-3, 15-7

Final: Buchanan bt Roberts 15-10, 15-3

Plate: Hamilton

Doubles

First Round: Enstone & Roberts bye; Oscroft & Schroeter bt Atkinson & Kirk 15-12, 15-7; Nithsdale & Sandie bt Arnott & Walter 15-4, 15-9; Buchanan & Hanton bt Kirby & McIntyre 15-5, 15-6

Semi-finals: Enstone & Roberts bt Oscroft & Schroeter 15-7, 15-4; Buchanan & Hanton bt Nithsdale & Sandie 15-5, 15-2

Final: Buchanan & Hanton bt Enstone & Roberts 15-9, 15-2

Plate: Sandie & Nithsdale

NATIONAL MASTERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

Christ's Hospital, Horsham, 9th April 2011

Result:

Rice & Boag bt Akerman & McIntyre 15-8, 15-8. Atkinson & Bawtree bt Akerman & McIntyre 15-7, 15-9; bt Rice & Boag 15-15, 15-6

RFA DINNER

Queen's Club, 16th April 2011

More than 90 guests attended the RFA Dinner at the Queen's Club in London last night. Deliberately timed to coincide with the final rounds of the National Club Championship, it attracted a large crowd of Fives players past and present, as well as guests from the Eton Fives Association and England Handball.

The evening started with a minute's silence for the late Ian Roberts, who died earlier this year, but after that everyone got down to the serious business of eating, drinking and being merry. It was a thoroughly informal evening, with no speeches other than a few words from President Frank Akerman, and rather a few more from Alex Smith as he regaled the crowd with the story of the demise of the original Owers Trophy, before presenting the Old Paulines (the current holders) with the new trophy. A presentation was also made to Peter Dunscombe, who had recently stood from his role of organiser of the West of England Championships after almost 40 years' service.

In a straw poll of attendees, it was agreed that the evening had been a tremendous success, and such was the positive feeling that the RFA will look into the possibility of making the Dinner an annual event.

NATIONAL CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP (WOOD CUP)

London, 16/17th April 2011

'A coming of age' - that was the verdict of Manchester's Phil Bishop as the Old Paulines bought an end to the Y Club's run of five consecutive victories in the National Club Championship. It was the third straight year that these two teams have contested the final, but the first time that the Old Paulines have emerged victorious. Following their win in the Owers Trophy last year, it cements their position as arguably the strongest club side in the UK.

Indeed, what was perhaps most surprising was not that they won the Wood Cup, but the manner in which they did so. After all, the Y Club were going for a record-breaking sixth straight win in the competition, and had a very strong squad.

In the early rounds, these two teams had had ominously good wins to set up the final. The Y Club eased past Derby Moor in the quarter-finals, before disposing of the Executioners in the semi-final, while the Old Paulines dispatched the White Rose Club and then the Wessex Club, who seemed tired after their epic four-point win over former finalists the Alleyn Old Boys in the quarter-finals.

All seemed set for the mighty close final, and that was borne out by the opening singles, which were shared two games apiece and gave the defending champions a one-point lead going into the doubles. However, while their greater experience – the side's average age was about 42 – might have been expected to carry them through to the title again, what happened was completely the opposite.

In fact, the younger Old Paulines came out with all guns blazing and simply blitzed their opponents off the court. On one court, Charlie Brooks & Tom Dean beat Marco Skogh & John Beswick to 3 and 2, and on the next door court, although the pairings of Ady Lee & Dan Tristao and John Minta & Phil Bishop shared the two games, it was the Paulines who extended their lead. As a result, they went into the second set of doubles with a 22-point lead.

From here on, it was one-way traffic; as John Beswick would later admit, on the day, the Old Paulines

were simply too strong. Incredibly, the first games in both reverse doubles were 11-0 wins for the Old Paulines – to add insult to injury, Ady and Dan took their 11 points against Marco and John in a single hand – which put them into an unassailable lead, and secured them the Wood Cup for the first time in their history. Could they go on to approach the Y Club's record five consecutive wins? Only time will tell...

Preliminary round: Derby Moor bt Executioners II; Exeter v RFA Club not played; Wessex bt West of England; Alleyn Old Boys bt Old Tonbridgians; White Rose Club bt Derby Moor II
Quarter-finals: Manchester Y Club bt Derby Moor I; Executioners I bt Exeter/RFA w/o; Wessex bt Alleyn Old Boys; Old Paulines bt White Rose Club
Semi-finals: Manchester Y Club bt Executioners I 113-80; Old Paulines bt Wessex 97-59
Final: Old Paulines bt Manchester Y Club 105-65

SCOTTISH OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS

Loretto School, Musselburgh, 30th April/1st May 2011

Will Ellison added the Scottish Open singles championship to the list of titles he has won this season by defeating defending champion John Minta in the final. It was a tremendous match that ebbed and flowed: in the first game, Will took an 11-2 lead and, although John fought back, Will managed to take it 15-7. In the second, by contrast, John was 14-8 up and the match seemingly heading for a deciding third game; but, whether John let his concentration slip or Will found a second wind, Will fought back to take the game – and with it, the title – 16-14.

The doubles was played in a league system rather than a knockout, and the winners were also two new names to the list of Scottish Open champions: Jay Gravatt and Simon Hodgson. Runners-up were Jonny Major and Grem McIntyre.

Singles

Preliminary round: Kemp bt McIntyre 15-3, 15-1

1st round: Ellison bt Kemp 15-1, 15-0; N Roberts bt A George 15-7, 15-6; J Major bt J Gravatt 15-3, 15-3;

J Minta bt E Cumberlege 15-1, 15-7

Semi-finals: Ellison bt Roberts 15-0, 15-0; Minta bt Major 15-6, 15-13

Final: Ellison bt Minta 15-7, 16-14

Plate: George

Doubles

Winners: Gravatt & Hodgson

Runners-up: Major & McIntyre

NATIONAL SCHOOL GIRLS' CHAMPIONSHIPS

Marlborough College, 1st May 2011

The second National School Girls' Championship (organised by Alex Smith) provided a great day at Marlborough College, with girls from six schools (three new this year – Rugby, Blundell's, Marlborough) playing and producing lots of competitive games, with the winners' trophies shared. On an individual level, Marlborough Senior girls crowned a great day with the Senior Doubles Title; Rugby U16 girls also did very well to take both Singles & Doubles titles, while Eastbourne's Tessa Mills fought hard to retain

her Senior Singles Title. Louise Matthias (last year's U13 winner) had an inexorable march to the U14 singles title without losing a point, beating Alice Smith of Blundell's in the Final, who is actually U13 so a very impressive performance from her too.

Senior Singles

Final: Tessa Mills (Eastbourne College) bt Laura Jardine Paterson (Marlborough College)

Plate: India Pearey (Christ's Hospital)

Senior Doubles

Final: Laura Jardine Paterson & Louisa Treadwell (Marlborough College) bt India Pearey & Susie Wilson (Christ's Hospital)

Plate: Philippa Jackson & Vicky Munro (Christ's Hospital)

U16 Singles

Final: Francesca Ruffell (Rugby School) bt Shinan Zhang (Malvern College)

Plate: Susie Durant (Blundell's School)

U16 Doubles

Final: Francesca Ruffell & Hannah Hawkesley (Rugby School) bt Coralie Strong & Jo Harley (Christ's Hospital)

Plate: Shi Nan Zhang & Lavinia Delucci (Malvern College)

U14 Singles

Final: Louise Mathias (Christ's Hospital) bt Alice Smith (Blundell's School)

Plate: Clemmie Keyes (Marlborough College)

U14 Doubles

Final: Olivia Walsh & Louise Mathias (Christ's Hospital) bt Mary Ward & Daisy Treloar (Christ's Hospital)

Plate: Venetia Inchbald & Sophie Walters (Eastbourne College)

U13 Singles

Final: Amy Cross (Blundell's School) bt Emily Combe (Blundell's School)

Plate: Mary Ward (Christ's Hospital)

U13 Doubles

Final: Alice Smith & Emily Combe (Blundell's School) bt Lucy Gibson & Amy Cross (Blundell's School)

DERBY MOOR INVITATION DOUBLES

Derby, 19th June 2011

For Tim Widdop it was his first title in 23 years of playing; for Mike, aged 17, it was his first senior final and a chance to emerge from the shadow of fellow club members Max Frost and Anthony Goodwin. In the final Mike and Tim played steadily to beat the experienced pair Stuart Kirby and Clive Butler in a tough three-setter.

In the early rounds Bhaswar Baral, partnering National U14 Singles champion Matt Blunden, had given a master class in variation of pace in a three-game tussle with Oliver Woodhouse and Jimmy Goodwin, whose immense left hand Bhaswar described as "rabid". Jay Gravatt came down from Durham to team up with 15 year-old Rob Christie and take the home pair of Brian Kirk and Richard Christie to another three-setter in the quarter-finals. Younger brother Craig Baxter, playing in his first Derby Doubles as a 14 year-old, paired off with Anthony Goodwin to win the third place play-off.

The Plate competition produced a colourful final in which Dickie Warner and Robert Whitehorn, another of Derby Moor 14 year-old hopefuls, took on Max Frost and his partner from Halifax, Paul McIntyre. In the end Max's serving power was just too much for Dickie and Robert.

Among the spectators were the injured John Hawke and Grem McIntyre, both of whom we hope to see playing again next year, along with the absent Bob Sandie and Wayne Enstone. Also viewing her first Fives competition was the new Director of Sport at Denstone College, Fran Porter, who is hoping to kick-start the game at that school after a lengthy period of time in which their courts have languished unused.

First Round: Jay Gravatt & Rob Christie bt. Anthony Goodwin & Colin Heptonstall 15-5, 15-12; Bhaswar Baral & Matt Blunden bt. Jimmy Goodwin & Oliver Woodhouse 11-15, 15-3, 15-6

Quarter-finals: Brian Kirk & Richard Christie bt. Gravatt & Christie 15-10, 13-15, 15-11; Stuart Kirby & Clive Butler bt. Max Frost & Paul McIntyre 15-12, 16-15; Anthony Goodwin & Craig Baxter bt. Baral & Blunden 15-11, 16-14; Tim Widdop & Mike Baxter bt. Dickie Warner & Robert Whitehorn 15-8, 15-4
Semi-finals: Kirby & Butler bt. Christie & Kirk 15-7, 15-6; Widdop & Baxter bt. Goodwin & Baxter 15-10, 15-2.

Final: Widdop & Baxter bt. Kirby & Butler 15-7, 7-15, 15-10

3rd Place play-off: Goodwin & Baxter bt. Kirk & Christie 15-13

Plate: Frost & McIntyre bt. Warner & Whitehorn 15-12