

Sports Report: Common Time, Week 10

Tuesday 22nd March

Basketball: Eton College (a)

There were highlights in this game, including some confident shooting from Ahearne, but on the whole it was a rather frustrating performance from the U18 team in which Winchester couldn't get into the game. We were missing a couple of players, but on this day Eton took their chances better and were first to loose balls. Pulsirivit and Bai, the heroes of the last encounter between these teams, worked with the same commitment that they have shown over the past five years, but they were not alone as all players worked hard as always. This will be the last game of the season and, although we were second on the day, with most of the team returning for next year the future looks very bright. L46-32

The U16s were missing several players, but after beating Eton a few weeks ago, the team was still hopeful. Winchester defended very well, keeping Eton below 50 despite them hitting some long shots, but were unable to play with the same fluency at the attacking end and the opponents deserved their win on the day. L72-43

Hockey: U15A v Bedales School (a) W2-5

Rugby: Rosslyn Park National Schools' 7s

The culmination of the first Rugby 7s season at Winchester College saw the boys compete at the famous Rosslyn Park National 7s Tournament. The Vase competition saw 190 schools entered and although this competition is theoretically for schools who only play one full term of rugby it contains many of the major rugby playing schools.

First up in the pool matches was Stonyhurst and this was a very tough first game of the tournament for the WinColl 7. The Lancashire school played with width and pace and although we had plenty of ball, turnovers in the opposition '22 led to several breakaway tries being conceded. A consolation try was deserved reward for the boys as they did not let their heads drop. Game two of the pool was against Kingham Hill School but a poor first half allowed the opposition to race into a 17-0 lead. The second half however, saw far better play from WinColl and tries from Callum Mackay and Will Matthews brought the game back to 17-12. Unfortunately, too many handling errors saw overlap opportunities missed and time ran out before the deficit could be overturned. The final pool match saw us lose out to a strong and quick City of London Freeman's team.

Despite coming away without a win the boys can very much hold their heads up. To take to the National stage having played a handful of rugby matches, for some boys across the last five years, deserves huge respect. With six of the squad eligible to play again next year some important lessons will have be learnt which will stand them in good stead going forward.

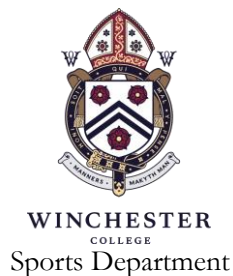
1st VII v Stonyhurst: L41-7

1st VII v Kingham Hill School: L12 - 17

1st VII v City of London Freeman's: L5 – 37

Chess vs Brighton College (h)

The Winchester A chess team beat a very strong Brighton A team by 3.5-2.5, winning their region to qualify for the National Schools Finals in Summer. There were wins for Dima Minko, Edison Xu and Ben Aubury and a draw for Freddie Yu.



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Rackets: Tuesday 22nd – Saturday 26th March

National Schools Doubles held at The Queen's Club, Baron's Court

U15s:

Arthur James-Duff and William Hammerson-Jones, playing for the first time on the testing Championship Court, made a good fist of challenging a powerful Tonbridge pair whose boys were both a year older. Although William and Arthur were finding their feet in games 1 and 2, in the next, they really took the match to the opposition and managed to take the score to a set, an admirable debut. Meanwhile, Oliver Frost and Sebastian Morgan, the B pair, presented as a decent team, impressively winning match 1 against the Harrow A's without dropping a game. They displayed a robust spirit when the score line got close. In Round 2, they came up against the no 2 seeds, Malvern. This was a tough challenge and although they did not win a game, our pair played well at times showing much potential.

Winchester's A pair, Jack Bristowe and Lukas Brunner, efficiently defeated a gifted Charterhouse yearlings' pair in their first match, with one of the games going to a set. They then made short work of Marlborough B's in their next match. In the quarter finals they came up against an extremely hard-hitting, strong Tonbridge pair, the eventual winners. The match was close with swings in both directions. However, Tonbridge just managed to prevail in the final game. Jack displayed his usual, impressive consistency and Lukas appeared to be improving with each rally and served many aces. He is also showing signs of mastering the service return.

Winchester B's, Alex Harker and Stephen Lam, initially took on a competent St. Paul's pair and managed to secure the victory in 3 tight games. They had partnered each other in several school matches and backed each other up well in the rallies. They then took on Marlborough 1 and managed to continue their winning streak with some impressive play. The next match seemed an impossible task in Tonbridge 1 who typically came in the form of 2 fearsome, hard hitters. Subject to the cheers of a particularly boisterous, Tonbridge-supporting gallery, they were blown away in the first 2 games. Then somehow, Alex and Stephen managed to enjoy the wild environment in which they found themselves and battled back to win game 3. Bearing in mind this was the second-best pair in the tournament, it was surely one of the greatest triumphs of the week. The next game went the way of Tonbridge but no matter, the point had been made.

First Pairs:

Oli Gibbon and Archie Sillars had a particularly harsh draw coming up against an Eton pair whose boys had both been selected for the elite Foster cup in December. However, this was to be a worthy battle. Our pair showed a highly mature sense of teamwork which gave the opposition very little weaknesses to exploit. We won game 1, 15 -10 and very narrowly lost game 2, 13 - 15. Eton now appeared on top with some tough serving and kills in the rallies, sealing game 3. However, our two managed to re-group and turned around the momentum to pick off game 4 with the loss of a mere 2 points. The final game ebbed and flowed in rhythm but eventually Eton secured the victory. The level of play of both pairs was staggering at times and Oli and Archie should look back with pride on competing at such a level.

Archie, with a loss of a whole season to injury, had managed to acquire the skills to make himself into a highly adept, right-court player, something which he innately was not. He has also gone out of his way to help others with their game, especially the younger years, and pass on his knowledge and excitement of the sport. Oli has handled the captain's role with an air of responsibility, friendliness and humour and this has helped sustain the overall friendliness of the WinColl rackets

set-up. Recently, he has worked to give himself a much-improved backhand and now has become a particularly proficient doubles player with a deadly serve and near-perfect return. I do hope they continue playing as an exciting adult rackets scene awaits.

U16s:

Bertie Vallat and Henry Nicholls, our A pair and seed 1, played an inexperienced Cheltenham pair in their first match, winning comfortably. In round 2, they came up against Radley B's.



Despite this being a more testing contest, this match also did not last long. Bertie served long runs of aces and amassed the points quickly. If there was ever a glitch in this routine, Henry came in and continued the trend. The semi-final against Wellington brought a decent contest with more rallies but the incessant serving power and consistent returns and rallying play steered the match in one direction and again, the result was a 3 - 0 victory.

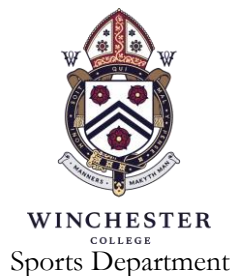
And to the final: the Tonbridge pair had been steadily improving throughout the tournament and one player particularly looked particularly sharp. This was to be a very different affair to the previous matches. Game 1 was bagged reasonably quickly by Winchester as a result of Bertie's penetrating serving. This had the effect of silencing the significant Tonbridge crowd who benefitted from their school now being on holiday. Game 2 was closer. Our boys were now up against a powerful pair who increasingly knew what they were doing. Despite this, Winchester managed to win the game using their proficient doubles technique. Game 3 was a little more straightforward and the level of play at times, was very high. Winchester took the game and the match.

They have gone through the season and the Nationals without losing a match or indeed a game, a truly admirable achievement.

Thursday 24th March

Hockey: U14A v King Edward VI, Southampton (a): L0 – 7

This proved to be a tough challenge. Our hosts gave us a demonstration in how to move the ball quickly, link together and move forward as a unit, whilst enjoying the team scoring goals rather than individuals seeking the highlights. It was a useful exercise to show our team where we see them reaching in the coming years.



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Not much went right during the first half, however, spirit and effort were much better in the second half as we began to rise to the challenge. Alberto Gianni Garcia, making his first appearance for the Yearlings since injury, produced many good saves in the second half. The group will learn much from the experience. (JMB)

Squash - Eton (a)

The final match on Eton's Squash courts proved to be a great one for the senior team with a number of very close games of high-quality squash. With Oscar Henshaw at fifth string and Tom Burge (Captain) at 2nd string both having 0-3 defeats it was left to Rigby Swarovski - Adams (3rd String), Harris Faizi (1st string) and Freddy Fisher (4th string) to try and win their matches for a memorable win for Winchester. Harris Faizi playing great length and drops won very emphatically 3-0, 11-1 in the third! So, the match score was 2-1 to Eton and in his final match for Winchester College Rigby Swarovski-Adams played great squash in an ever-changing match. Having lost the 1st game 14-16 he won the 2nd, lost the 3rd came back to win the 4th and then had a real battle in the 5th. Even the final rallies were closely balanced but with Rigby playing good length and punishing his opponent's poor length eventually he won his final match for Winchester 13-11 in the fifth!

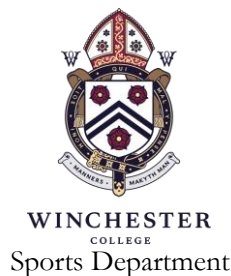
Freddy Fisher having moved up to 4th string had an equally memorable match, narrowly losing the first two games and then showing real tenacity winning the 3rd game 12-10 and the 4th 11-8. Once again, the match went to a deciding game. Although Freddy kept on retrieving and playing good rallies his opponent proved too strong winning 14-12 in the 5th! A very close match with Eton recording a final 3-2 win in their final match on their existing courts.

Playing their last match on their existing 10 courts the Eton U-14 's proved to be too consistent, showing that they were very capable of doing the basics well. Although many of the Winchester players had really good close games the Eton players just played better. especially when serving, so eventually won the greater number of matches. Henry Goss-Custard at 3rd string had a good 3-0 win, serving well and playing good length as did Matthew Leung. Two players had great five setters with Alexis Lecourt coming back from 2-1 down, showing great tenacity to win the 4th 15-13 and then the fifth 11-7! Unfortunately, Vardhan Mehrotra didn't share this luck, having battled from two love down to draw two all, and having had a number of match balls, was eventually beaten by his opponent's serves losing 10-12 in the fifth. Overall a great match with a number of very close games finally ended with Eton winning 7-3. (RAA)

Saturday 26th March

Winchester Football: Vis OTH v Commoners

In the midst of the spring heatwave, the return fixture of OTH vs Commoners saw OTH able to take the heat and force a 50-41 victory out of a stubborn, yet fallible, Commoners side. The narrow loss of XV's had clearly left its marks on OTH, who were eager to prove a point and seek vengeance on their Red and White opposition. The fixture opened with some characteristically assertive kicking from Freddie von Finck although OTH's defensive play, alongside their knowledge of the rules, enabled them to break momentum and head into half time narrowly behind. A fiery second half saw both teams turn to their kicks for inspiration, and inspirational it was when Freddie Van Every scored a memorable seven-post flyer, giving OTH sight of victory – several wheeled shots and deft Caspar Hall conversions later, the final whistle was blown. And so, a satisfying end to the



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season for OTH; meanwhile, the 'best of the rest' VIs fixture will play on Tuesday between Commoners and College. (A. Blakey, A)

Hockey: U16A v Lord Wandsworth College Boys-U16B: W3-0

Rowing: Men's Head of the River

The last race of the term for WCBC was also one of the biggest rowing races in the world, the Men's Head of the River Race. Over three hundred crews from around the UK and Europe came together on the river Thames. WCBC entered two mixed eights of senior and J16 athletes, a great chance for the squad to integrate and learn from each other. The two crews showing a healthy rivalry leading up to the race.

Conditions were sunny, with a light breeze, which allowed both the crews to attack the course with grit and determination. A big focus was to maintain the mid-race rhythm, which was certainly achieved. This was also a lesson in digging deep, as the last quarter of the race, from Hammersmith to Putney, began to bite. It was a great chance to sharpen our skills on the biggest stage possible and both crews gave admirable performances, against largely senior crews. The margin between the boats being only 10 seconds, over a twenty-minute race.

We will be looking forward to the Easter training camp, keen to capitalise on a great term's training and a fantastic final race. (SJL)

Saturday 26th – Monday 28th March

Fives: Schools' National Fives Championships, St. Paul's School

We took a squad of 21 boys, larger than many years as, unusually, the tournament fell in term-time. Indeed, the tournament had one of the largest entries I can remember with just shy of twenty schools taking part. There were some outstanding successes.

James Kennedy (D) won the U14 Singles title

James Kennedy (D) and Arthur James-Duff (D) won the U14 Doubles title

Marcus Cloke Browne (B) and Shiloh Wu (E) won the U18 Doubles title

Shiloh Wu (E) won the U18 Singles title.

Shiloh beat the number 1 seed, who has been the stand-out player of the last 5 years, and whom nobody else in the age group has ever got anywhere near to on a singles court, in the most remarkable and impressive style.

Monday 28th March: Football U14XI v Perins School U14A

We had a mixture of A and B players to play our first game against Perins School on a lovely afternoon on Gator. The game was played in great spirit with some excellent football from both teams but disappointingly the 3 goals from Perins were scored from set plays. Winchester were unable to deal with the quality of delivery and the physicality which we had a chat about at half time. Sebastian Kingsbury was able to put us back in the game before half time and give us something to build on.

The 2nd half was much better from Winchester, standing up and dealing with the bigger and stronger opposition and showing them what we can do. Sebastian again scored a great goal across



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the keeper and gave us a really good chance to get something from the game. However, we just couldn't find the equaliser and were punished with a breakaway goal from Perins which was a bit harsh as the 2nd half showed what the boys are capable of producing. L2-4 (JRD)

All fixtures details can be found on: <https://sportsfixtures.winchestercollege.org/>
Sporting quote for the week:

“Understanding that the good of the group comes first is fundamental to being a highly productive member of a team.” (Former UCLA basketball coach John Wooden)

M.S. Burley
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29th March 2022
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