



THE BEAVER

Anyone for tennis, netball, rowing...?

Despite being in the heart of London, LSE has always had its sporty side. **Jarlath O'Hara** offers a guide to the School's recent athletic endeavours.

The School's Athletic Union (AU) now has 28 sports clubs, with other ones sure to emerge this year as eager freshers start new ones. They are mainly divided into non-competitive and competitive clubs with the former just providing sport and recreation for our students, staff and alumni on campus, and the latter putting forward teams to represent LSE in various competitions.

The central aim for the AU is to provide sport for all. Whether you're an international sports star or a sub for the Meadow Farm 4th XI who haven't won in three seasons, there's something to suit your standard. For example, the football club has seven teams, all playing in league and cup competitions, while the netball club has five teams. All competitive clubs are affiliated to the University of London Union for London based competitions as well as to the British Universities Sports Association, which organises competitions across England, Scotland and Wales.

David and Goliath style triumphs are now encapsulated deep within LSE folklore. The campus squash and badminton courts regularly draw crowds of at least two to take in the blood, sweat and tears as friend becomes foe in a personal duel. Further afield in the picturesque setting of suburban Surrey lies the fortress that is Berrylands. With grass courts better than Wimbledon and football and rugby pitches finer than Wembley (or is that the Millennium Stadium?), LSE can boast the finest pitches in the world (perhaps slightly excessive but they are very good).

So what kind of sports do LSE students enjoy? The Squash Club, aided by the Houghton Street

squash courts, is the club with the most members – five men's and women's teams along with hundreds of casual members. One of the oldest established is the Rowing Club. Although it disbanded for a number of years, rowing at LSE is now into its third year of dominating the tideway. With senior and novice crews, the club caters for all abilities and is based at the University of London boathouse in Chiswick. We have many martial arts clubs including boxing, muay thai boxing, karate and tae kwon do. There is also aerobics and yoga for those feeling slightly more peaceful.

Unsurprisingly, football (soccer) and rugby play a major part in sports life but we're equally proud of the more unusual clubs such as rock climbing and ultimate disc – that's frisbees to most of us. With LSE having such an international make up, the AU obviously follows suit and membership is evenly spread between men, women, international and UK students. It will be no surprise, however, that the basketball team comprises more Americans than Brits, while the opposite is true of the cricket team. This trend continues throughout the AU with certain clubs dominated by those from countries where they are the national sport – such as badminton, table tennis and volleyball.

This international mix does pay dividends. Last academic year we finished in our highest ever position in the British University Sports Association rankings and received an award, presented by The Princess Royal, for being the third most improved university in British sports.

However, no AU overview would be complete without mentioning the social scene that thrives within the spiritual home of the AU, namely

The Three Tuns. Whether you've annihilated the auld enemy, King's, or been hammered by Holloway, win, lose or draw, Wednesday night is a time for rejoicing! The AU Barrel is the ultimate pre-Christmas party, a big fancy dress parade as Michaelmas term comes to an end. It is worth joining the AU just to see the bemused looks on the faces of passers-by, as they watch what resembles the badly behaved little brother of the Notting Hill carnival conga down the Strand. The prestigious AU Colours Ball takes place at the end of the Lent term and the Sports Day ends the year on a competitive note. The fact that, for some, these 'occasional' social gatherings seem to have been blurred into something of a two year drinking session means it is almost easy to forget that the standard of sport here is actually tremendous.

But whatever your ability or experience there is so much to gain from being a part of the AU. And, of course, once you leave, there is always the Economicals. ■



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