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EDITORIAL

A Happy New Year to all my readers. I'm sure you will soon run off the Christmas pud or whatever.

Last year was not exactly the best we have ever had in sport - as far as officials were concerned certainly. Strange how the officials/referees/umpires, whatever they are called, were having a rough time in so many sports. Cricket, tennis, boxing, rugby, as well as soccer come immediately to mind. It seems unlikely that we, the officials in all those sports, have suddenly lost our ability, simultaneously, to make fair decisions. There must be something else. It has to be something to do with 'professionalism', with money. And what happens in professional sport is then imitated in amateur sport as we know on the local parks. Sport really has come to matter too much - and I never thought I would ever write those words.

The statistics of the Football League show that dismissals and cautions are still rising. Liverpool, however, have an almost unblemished record this season. I would love to believe that it is a sign that the virtuous prosper, but I don't think it's that at all. I suspect it's that when players are confident they can do well, they feel less pressured into dishonest or foul play.

Some officials blame the media for blaming us, and sometimes they are right. There, however, I detect a change to our advantage. From three pieces printed in this issue of the magazine, it seems that some writers are coming over to our side. And John Motson recently went out of his way to excuse a referee, who shall remain nameless, for giving a free kick outside the box, when it was a clear penalty.

Let's make 1988 the year of change. The nonsense has gone far enough.

Opinions expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Reading RA

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MONTHLY MEETINGS

November

A reasonable evening for once, weather-wise, and a good turn-up of over half of our members. The business included several items of particular interest. A member, who had lost his chance of promotion because a letter had not reached him from the County FA, had no redress unfortunately. The Berks & Bucks take the view that the responsibility remains ours because all the details are in the Handbook. Simple advice therefore - read your Berks & Bucks Handbook.

The Chiltern Society had asked us to support a proposal that we should receive a match fee for attending personal hearings. (We are already entitled to travelling and out-of-pocket expenses as well as loss of earnings). There was no support. As referees, we are obliged to go to hearings as part of our duties for which we have received a fee. Therefore we should only receive expenses, as we do.

The longest discussion was about substitutes. The Magazine editor had published the July FA letter which gives an unequivocal answer. The league representatives said the leagues had never been informed, although the Secretary had been sent a copy of a letter from the Berks & Bucks which had (supposedly) been sent to the leagues in August. As John Lambden pointed out, Law must override Competition rules and there should be no confusion. It was agreed that leagues should be invited to ask the Berks & Bucks for copies of the correspondence for their own meetings, and to notify the clubs. Meantime, the Law is clear and referees should act on it, but with common sense (as always).

The second half was a training session devised by Brian Papworth. After an opening demonstration of non-thought-transference (which gave a few insights into what his friends thought Brian might have had a picture of!), Brian was able to show the need for **communication**, the theme of our exercise. He split members into five groups to think about communication before, during and after the match.

The first group, it has to be admitted, was powerful in experience - and hopeless at sticking to the point. They produced excellent general do's and don't's on arrival at the ground, but only 'introduce yourself' was strictly about communication.

Brian, generous to a fault, gave them a few tips: talk to the groundsman about the pitch, be courteous and welcoming to your linesmen, communicate your personality.

All downhill after that. There was agreement that communication in the dressing can be very valuable, but it has to be handled carefully and depends on the personality of the referee. Do it if you can do it well and it comes naturally. Choose your words carefully. If you say you will do something, you have to do it. Problem of timing. To avoid resentment (e.g. if you interrupt the team talk), one referee asks the managers beforehand to come for him. Another member reminded us that players often welcome words from the referee so they know what he's like and where they stand.

At the kick-off, be welcoming. Move towards your approaching captain. Introduce yourself (and linesmen). Communicate confidence in what you say and how you appear. (Body language as well as spoken).

During the game, should you explain decisions? A qualified 'No'. There are occasions, though, when a quick explanation is helpful and not controversial. e.g. ball hasn't rolled far enough. Many of us respond instinctively anyway.

Should you mix with players after the game e.g. in a club bar? Consensus was 'Yes'. It is an opportunity for useful communication because it helps to break down 'them' and 'us' attitudes. Good for your next visit and for other referees in the future. You also quench your thirst (and sometimes get fed as well). The danger of heated discussion can be avoided. Most of us are happy to discuss the game in general and even a particular point of law, but not a particular controversial decision. There is sometimes an occasion when it's wiser not to socialize - you detect that quite easily yourself!

Brian concluded by reminding us that referees are all different. If the ideas we had talked about don't work for you, don't use them. But do, at least, give them a try.

The Chairman thanked Brian for an enjoyable and helpful session.

December

The Christmas Special, enjoyed by nearly 80 members. Very little ordinary business, but some important events.

President George Mills was called upon to make presentations to our former and long-serving honorary auditors, who are having

a well deserved rest now that we have a professional audit. George said a few words about the service to refereeing, not only as auditors, of Don Sargeant and Ray Weedon, before presenting each of them with a handsome carriage clock. Don is now our longest serving member with some 55 years in the Society behind him and 15 years as auditor; Ray, a mere newcomer, with only 35 years and 10 years as auditor. Members joined George in congratulating and thanking them warmly for their service.

From long-serving members to beginners. 12 of our new colleagues, fresh from successful completion of the last training course, were there to receive congratulations from our Football League Assessor and ex-Football League linesman. David Keen, who also presented each of them with the RA Manual, Reading RA Handbook and a copy of the November magazine. All compulsory reading.

From the pleasant business of presentations to the excitement of the Draw and literally dozens of prizes. None for me again, but what about Bernie and Jill? Who ended up with the bottle of wine he asks himself? And I liked the thought of Bernie with the car vac

Bangers and mash and free drink, with committee members doing the waiting on (literally 'service before self') to round off an excellent evening, and the year of 1987.

FORTY YEARS ON

President and Life Member George Mills, holder of the RA Meritorious Service Award, completed 40 years membership in November.

George refereed in his native Yorkshire before coming 'down South' - to Slough, Wokingham, then Reading. He officiated on the local leagues and the Hellenic, and his biggest 'plum' was the Berks & Bucks Senior Cup Final in 1960 at Elm Park.

Since he gave up as an active referee owing to illness, George has devoted himself to the work of the RA. Committee member since 1956; Secretary 1964-73; Vice Chairman before and after that; Chairman 1976-79; Representative on the County FA 1968-78; B & B representative to the Southern Division from 1970; President since 1983. Since 1962 George has been involved in training and was Training Officer from 1968-74. Some record of service.

Congratulations, George, from all your colleagues and friends. Soon be the half century.

ANOTHER REFEREE ASSAULTED

This time though it was **not** a soccer referee. Bobby Frankham, the boxer, knocked down twice in the first round of his fight early in December, attacked the referee when the fight was stopped. This sparked off fighting among the supporters and it took 15 minutes for order to be restored. His manager and trainer blamed it all on the referee - 'he was never in control'. (The fight lasted just over two minutes!)

In recent years two boxers have been banned sine die for incidents involving referees. John Morris, secretary of the British Boxing Board of Control was quoted as saying: 'Whatever a referee does, or however he handles a contest, is no reason for the kind of behaviour that happened here. It is like saying that, if a football referee gives a penalty wrongly and a goal is scored from it, a player can go and beat up the referee'. Of course there are some Frankhams playing soccer today who think just that, but you know what he means.

CHRISTMAS DRAW

A great success as usual but special thanks this year to our new organizer, Pat Monaghan and his wife, Sue. We broke even as intended, with a really impressive list of prizes (and winners, including several well-known names . . .). And Ivan (McNelly) sold over 260 **books** of tickets. Again.

Prize	Ticket no	Name
Portable Cassette/Radio	6251	T & T Tampsett
Fruit Hamper	7928	Doreen c/o I McNelly
Bottle of Whisky	5051	S Turner
Tin of Assorted Biscuits	2857	W Petherick
Kitchen Note Board	7840	c/o I McNelly
Carriage Clock	6295	Bob c/o I McNelly
Box of Christmas Crackers	6248	T & T Tampsett
Car Care Pack	1694	S Thacker
Bottle of Sherry	3558	Steve c/o I McNelly
3 Coffee Mugs	7986	Tally Ho
Wine Rack	4213	F L Brewer
Jar of Sweets	6234	T Maidment
Lead Crystal Fruit Bowl	7228	W Rolfe
Musical Teddy Bear	7267	A W c/o P Verber
Male Gift Set	3908	K Nice
Bottle of Rose Wine	7818	c/o I McNelly
Box of Chocolates	7920	Roy c/o I McNelly
Car Vacuum Cleaner	5712	B A Young
3 Kitchen Containers	4532	M Jerome

Christmas Hamper	7638	Mrs J Rumsey
Cheese Dish	7788	P Stannett
4 Cans of Lager	1894	T Gale
Musical Ornament	6830	M Clarke
Bottle of White Wine	5738	Jill Young
Tool Box	0640	M Borland
Soda Stream	2569	G Hawkins
Female Gift Set	4229	K Parsons
Bottle of Red Wine	4240	c/o K Parsons
Car Cassette Holder	1429	A Wiltshire
Box of Cheese Biscuits	0817	C Corp
4 Cans of Light Ale	0612	M Borland
Pot Plant	4959	A Tappern
Bottle of Sherry	3932	J Nice
Cactus Plant	2037	B Gentle
Video Alf	4551	Clive c/o D Reigate
Cuddly Toy	0319	G Argent

FORMER GLORY

Doug Ellis, Aston Villa's illustrious chairman, was at the opening the other week of the club's new indoor cricket facilities, a further effort to promote links between the football club and the local community. 'It's not generally known,' said Mr Ellis to the assembled guests, 'that Aston Villa used to be a cricket club.' Almost immediately a voice rang out from the back of the hall: 'Used to be a football club as well.'

(Stephen Bierley, The Guardian, 31/10/87)

OFFSIDE

When are we going to do something about offside?

Of the many controversies relating to the game of soccer, offside is the only one that everyone seems to agree about - everyone is against it. Of course managers use (abuse) it, but because it's there. Few admit it to using it as a tactic, even when they quite clearly do. Terry Venables said recently, 'I have never told any of my players actively to step up, but I do believe in advancing the back four, who move as though they are roped together, to 10 or 15 yards beyond the penalty area.' I don't suppose it's their fault if it looks like a deliberate offside trap.

Offside is disliked by players and spectators alike because it prevents goals and creates stoppages in a game which is all about movement. As a tactic, it compresses the game into a fraction of the playing area, already too small because of the superior fitness of today's players, and it leads to frustration all round. For linesmen and referee, it is one of the most difficult offences to judge, both in fact and in interpretation.

In an article in the 'Football Referee' some years ago, I pointed out how easy it is, even for a competent linesman, to make a wrong decision if only slightly out of line, or if not quite capable of judging a true right angle (possibly at a fast run). For example, if the linesman is just a yard out of position and the second last defender is 10 yards away from him, he would be nearly 4 yards wrong in judging an opponent on the far side of a normal sized pitch. No wonder spectators never accept the flag (unless it's for their team of course).

What about the law itself? What is 'seeking to gain an advantage'? We obviously don't agree on what it means, because there are differences of interpretation every weekend at whatever level.

There have been many suggestions about changing the Law and the GM Vauxhall Conference is being used this season for a FIFA experiment with a new clause in Law 11 to the effect that a player cannot be offside directly from a free kick. Early observations suggest it has yet made much difference, mainly because clubs haven't learned how to exploit it.

Ken Aston once said, 'The intent of offside is to prevent the scoring of a goal by a player who has not honestly worked for it'. In 1863 when the FA was formed, any attacker in front of the ball when it was played by a team mate was offside, regardless of the number of opponents between him and the goal. This was soon considered too severe and in 1866 the law was amended to three players. Not until 1925 was the number reduced to two. Could it now be reduced to one?

Or Law 11 disappear altogether?

RAMEM878

Last year, for the first time, all our membership data was stored in a computer file. I wrote about it in the magazine and produced some statistics. This year we can do a few comparisons - again with a minimum of effort.

By the December meeting we had 126 members against last year's 133, but exactly the same number of active adult referees - 106 (but this year only two Youth referees against last year's three). The age bands of the various Classes (with last year's figures in brackets) are as follows:

Age	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Total
25 and under	2 (1)	1 (4)	5 (6)	8 (11)

26 - 30	1 (1)	3 (1)	5 (8)	9 (10)
31 - 35	2 (3)	7 (5)	6 (11)	15 (19)
36 - 40	12 (8)	5 (7)	13 (16)	30 (31)
41 - 45	12 (7)	5 (2)	11 (7)	28 (16)
46 - 50	7 (6)	1 (3)	2 (2)	10 (11)
Over 50	2 (4)	4 (2)	0 (2)	6 (8)

Totals 38 (30) 26 (24) 42 (52) 106 (106)

Interpretation? Although 36 to 40 is still our largest group, we are getting older in total but better qualified.

98 of all our members (active and non-active) qualified in Reading (last year 102). 55 of the active referees qualified within the last five years (62), 22 qualified between 6 and 10 years ago (14), and 31 more than 10 (33). Even more members are refereeing in the local Saturday Leagues than in the Sunday League - 71 (62) against 53 (53); 44 are willing to do Saturday morning schoolboy matches (39) and 40 are approachable for games at half terms (37). One odd difference is that only 19 members claimed to be coaches against 42 last year. (I suspect changing the name to 'coach' from 'mentor' misled people - the figure is certainly wrong). Our members are even more concentrated in the RG3 postal area - 48 (46).

And, of course, if you miss getting your magazine at the meeting, it comes to you in an envelope with a computer printed label

COULD IT HAPPEN AT WEMBLEY?

The music blared at a recent match between a Chinese and a Greek side, and the crowd rose and stood in respectful silence. They assumed it was the Chinese national anthem. The Chinese players also stood to attention, thinking it was the Greek. Then a voice sang out: it was a toothpaste commercial.

(Simon Barnes, The Times, 14/11/87)

LACK OF DISCIPLINE HARDLY THE FAULT OF REFEREES **The Times, 30/12/1987**

Unfortunately, I don't suppose too many players read The Times.
Maybe some managers and League and FA officials do.

RED CARD OUT OF THE BLUE UPSETS SOCCER'S MAN IN BLACK
Daily Telegraph, 4/12/1987 (spotted by Alan Wellsteed)

LINESMAN RISES ABOVE THE VILLAINY
The Independent, 21/12/1987

RULES AND LAWS

Many a referee, when involved in a discussion with a player or football supporter, will use a little 'one-upmanship' and say "Football is played to the Laws of the Game - they are LAWS not RULES." Although this attitude may be a little pedantic, there are benefits in differentiating between the two.

It is true of course that the rules by which football is played are called Laws. The Laws are formulated by the International Football Association Board. (Not FIFA as I was wrongly quoted as saying in the minutes of the November meeting). However, what actually happens is that FIFA has two members on the International Board, and any alterations or interpretations that the Board makes are accepted by FIFA. In turn this means that they must be observed by all national football associations in membership with FIFA. This includes of course our own Football Association.

What must not be forgotten is that within these Laws, there is still room for national associations and local competitions to make their own **rules**. A simple example is Law 7 which says: "The duration of the game shall be two equal periods of 45 minutes, unless otherwise mutually agreed upon." The Advice to Referees says: ". . . if a shorter period is mutually agreed upon and is permissible under the Rules of the Competition the period should be divided in equal halves." This means that a competition in its rules may have a shorter duration than 90 minutes. In fact my refereeing is now with schoolboy matches, which have a considerably shortened duration.

Some leagues allow the time to be shortened at the referee's discretion if it is evident the game would otherwise not be completed, with particular reference to evening kick-offs. Cup matches often, but not always allow extra time in the case of draw at the end of normal time whenever that may be. This means that the referee must be familiar with the rules of the competition on which he is officiating. It also means that he cannot alter the Laws which say that the duration of the game must be in two equal halves.

A classic example of Laws and Rules is what we have spent a lot of time discussing at meetings this year - substitutes. Law 3 (2) says "Substitutes MAY be used . . ." [my emphasis] This gives every competition the opportunity of deciding whether or not it will allow substitutes. BUT, if the competition decides to have substitutes, the Laws have some restrictions: ". . . a team shall not be permitted to use more than two substitutes in any match . . ." It doesn't say they **must** have two substitutes, but they **may** not have more than two. So again discretion for the competition.

The Law on substitutes goes on to say that they "must be chosen from not more than five players whose names shall be given to the Referee prior to the commencement of the match." This doesn't mean that competitions have to allow for all five players in their rules, but they cannot exceed that number. Nor does it insist that clubs must have them even if the competition rules allow them, for it is unlikely in local football that clubs are going to have five players waiting on the touchline as substitutes. One other point to remember is that in some games, usually friendly matches, all five can be used as substitutes. However, the final part of this section of the Law cannot be altered by competitions or ignored by referees. The names of those players chosen as possible substitutes, no matter how many are permitted under the rules of the competition, **MUST** be given to the referee before the game starts. Even if competitions do not have that specifically in their rules for this season, they must still abide by it, for that is the Law of the Game, which cannot be altered.

What all this means is that referees must be aware of the rules of the competitions in which they officiate, but equally they must learn the laws well enough to know where there may be discretion allowed, and where, neither they, not the clubs or competitions are permitted to deviate from the Laws of the Game.

Dick Sawdon Smith

TRAINING

The one thing that doesn't stop is training. For reasons we need not go into again this minute, we constantly need to recruit

new referees. Reading does more than its share, not only in the number our team trains, but in the quality of the training itself. Many of us are proof of that (and if we're not, I suspect it's our fault rather than theirs). Earlier this season we wondered how we would cope when the Senior Training Officer had to resign owing to business commitments, but the old team of George Mills and John Lambden, with some able assistance, ran another successful course.

A new course will be held at the South Reading Community Centre, starting on Tuesday 16 February. We all have a responsibility to get people along to take part. Do your bit. Get them to ring George on Reading 691893 or John on 470825

Also there's going to be a short course of three evenings for potential instructors, starting on Monday, 25 January (same venue). The idea is new but simple. A number of members would like to make some contribution to training but need to discover more about it and their potential first. This is the way to find out. The end result should be a bigger group able to share responsibility for this essential part of the Society's work. See George or ring him, if you are interested.

FROM THE MIDDLE

The first of my series of articles in the Reading FC programmes talked about one of the interesting necessities of the game (even though it doesn't appear until Law 2).

The Ball

[first published in the Reading FC programme 2/3/85]

Not surprisingly, the most essential item of equipment for the game of football is . . . the ball.

Older spectators may remember with feeling having to head a soggy, brown pudding on a wet muddy day and catching the lace . . . The ball has changed and undoubtedly for the better. According to Law 2 it must be spherical, can be made of 'leather or other approved materials', but there is no restriction on colour - the sole criterion is visibility. Interesting how the predominantly white ball is usually preferred today - it was first introduced for floodlights and TV. And the brown ball re-appears only when there is snow on the ground. Size, weight and pressure are all specified in Law 2, and the approved pressure was increased as recently as 1983 - to bring the law into line with practice!

The ball gets a mention in many of the other laws: for example, it must be stationary when a free kick is taken; it must pass fully

over the line to be out of play or for a goal to be scored; it must come from behind the head at a throw-in.

Skills such as flighting the ball have certainly developed with the modern waterproof, laceless ball - hard to imagine what a difference it would have made to the old stars like Stanley Matthews.

And of course, if the ball bursts during play, the game is restarted by a dropped (new) ball where the old ball was.

[Reading Referees' Association]

DOES THE 'HOMER' REALLY EXIST?

Stories abound about referees' tendencies to favour the home side. We referees, being fair-minded and objective, tend to discount them. We certainly dismiss Alan Ball's unambiguous words 'you have to commit murder to get sent off at home' as the predictable rantings of someone not known for his love of referees. However, the latest official statistics make pretty uncomfortable reading, and suggest that a revision of attitude towards Mr Ball may be called for. Of the players sent off so far this season (November), 75 out of 111 were visiting players. There could be other reasons. For example, players at home might be especially well behaved because they don't want to upset their fans by revealing their nastiness, and so on. Not very convincing.

MAYBE THIS IS THE ANSWER

Another tale from the Scilly Isles. Steve Watt recollects an encounter between the much-feared St Martin's striker Frankie Goddard, whose wife used to encourage him with cries of 'Kick him in the slats, Frankie.' His robust play caused one local referee to caution a visiting St Mary's full-back for continually hoofing the ball into touch when under pressure from fearsome Frank. The full-back, understandably miffed, questioned the validity of the booking. The referee's reply was stunningly simple: 'I'm sorry, boy, but I have to live here.'

(Stephen Bierley, The Guardian, 5/12/87)

BE SMART

Our training team and visiting speakers often re-emphasize the need for referees to look smart. Few nowadays could compare, however, with Jack 'Jimmy' Howcroft, who refereed the 1920 Cup Final and was reputedly 'the strongest and most respected referee of his day'. (But does Kevin stock bow ties?)

(picture with acknowledgement to 'The Football League 1888-1988')

MONTHLY MEETINGS

January 21 Football Forum:

Peter Bartlett, local player and club manager
Frank Hawkins, local club chairman and referee
Stewart Henderson, Reading FC, Youth Development Officer
Kenny Nice, referee, a County rep. side manager

February 18 Guest speaker: Ian Branfoot, Reading FC Manager

SOCIAL EVENTS

Friday, March 4 Dinner Dance and Cabaret
 Wokingham Town FC

Mike Borland is planning another Wembley trip - details as soon as they are available.

IT'S NOT JUST OUR PROBLEM

'At Happy Valley, Third Division newcomers, Diamond Mine and SKM were involved a battle that required police intervention before order was restored, with the end result being an early finish after the referee declined to take the game the full distance.' Not from the Reading Evening Post, but from the South China Morning Post - SKM = Shek Kip Mei.

When the referee gave Diamond Mine, leading 1-0, a free kick in their own penalty area, one of the opposition started fighting. Two players were sent off, but later when a penalty was awarded to SKM, trouble flared again, leading the referee to abandon the match.

'The Hongkong Football Association are still awaiting the referee's report, but in view of earlier claims from the association that they will deal harshly with any violent conduct, it can only be assumed that both clubs will be severely punished.'

NO COMMENT

An Algerian Second Division football match ended abruptly when the referee decided to head off trouble by butting a player unconscious after he started arguing over a decision.

Referee Mustapha Laouedj put the player out for the count with a single, perfectly delivered head butt in the 66th minute and then blew his whistle for the end of the match.

Afterwards Mr Laouedj said: 'It was legitimate defence to prevent myself from being attacked.'

[Another extract from the South China Morning Post. Thanks to Richard Highfield, our inveterate traveller. Ed]