

EDITORIAL

A Happy New Year! May the first year of the new decade herald all that you would wish.

Although we're still in the same season as before Christmas, this is always a time to reflect on the last year. From having an impression that maybe things were getting better for referees during last season, the first part of this has brought threats rather than promises. The co-operation of the local leagues in trying to reduce indiscipline and misbehaviour is welcome but highly significant.

But what chance is there when we get repeated public demonstrations of petulance and bad sportsmanship from the professionals on the box? It is also highly significant that the New Year's Day match between two skilful and strictly managed sides brought only one serious foul and very few stoppages, coupled with some exciting, excellent football. Ample proof that it can be done. The news that FIFA is re-examining its attitude to the so-called professional foul gives room for optimism - assuming they will actually push national associations into seeing that the law is applied consistently strictly. A few sendings off of famous-name goalkeepers, for example, might get the message across to any managers coaching gamesmanship or cheating - if any such exist of course!

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PRESIDENT'S PIECE

Will You Join the Revolution?

If I needed any evidence of the growing aggressiveness in our society, then I certainly get it sitting behind the wheel of my car, which is something I do a lot, travelling over 35,000 miles a year.

No, I'm not talking about other people's driving behaviour, but about the stickers they have in their car rear windows. One example, which I'm sure you have all seen, often appears on older cars. It says: 'I may be old and slow, but I'm paid for and in front of you.' I suppose the owners must find it amusing, but its humour is lost on me. I just find it unnecessarily aggressive. Another one which has sprung up lately is: 'Back off. Baby on board.' I often wonder what sort of household that child is going to be brought up in. I saw two stickers on a rear window recently, the more polite of which read: 'What are you staring at, Dickhead.'

Perhaps the most offensive, which I came across in North London, had the wording: 'If you don't like my driving, ring 01 (I can't remember the other numbers) and eat sh . . .' (except that it spelt out the word in full). I felt more like phoning the police to complain about the obscenity. The other sad thing about these stickers is that someone is making money out of printing them.

This attempt to hide aggression with humour is widespread. I have to admit that 'Spitting Images' is not one of my favourite television programmes, perhaps because I was brought up on the adage that sarcasm is the lowest form of wit, but I watched it one evening when the puppet of Boris Becker, the German tennis ace, was asked: 'Why are you so ugly?' The reply was: 'I've been taking lessons from Stephie Graff'. Is that funny, or just plain nastiness?

I went to Manchester recently to watch some training films for industry, and I was surprised, although perhaps I shouldn't have been, that one of the films, called 'You can cope', was

about how to deal with aggressiveness, verbal abuse and offensive behaviour at work. Not from awkward customers but from workmates and supervisors. Perhaps this shows how far along this road we have slipped.

At our RA meetings the topic of abuse and aggressiveness from players and club officials is debated with great feeling. The solutions put forward are heavier fines, longer suspensions for the guilty people, action against the clubs they belong to, and perhaps the withdrawal of our services as referees. I wouldn't knock any of those suggestions, although I would find it hard to contemplate the latter. But I have to ask, is there something we could all be doing to help stem this tide of aggression that threatens to swamp us?

I often run training courses for sales people in the retail trade on what is colloquially known as 'customer care', 'good service', 'making shopping more of a pleasure'. We believe, in fact we know, that customers want better service. Research has shown that 85% of people would be willing to pay extra for better service. The reason is simple. It is a too rare commodity, and it makes them feel good. Much of what we try to put over in our training is simply old fashioned courtesy. It is not our intention to make them feel obliged to be courteous, but rather to develop an attitude where they feel good, and want to make other people feel good. Her Majesty the Queen quoted in one of her Christmas Day broadcasts a simple but undeniable fact: 'Courtesy is Contagious'.

When we complete our training courses, I ask the sales people, who are normally young, to help me to start a revolution. 'Let us always try to do more than the minimum for others. Let us show that we appreciate what others do for us. Not just at work, but in everything we do. The return on our care and courtesy will be far more than extra sales - it will bring us a pleasanter life.'

Perhaps I can ask you too to join me in this revolution. Can we all make sure that when we go to a club we seek out the club official and greet him with a smile? Can we make sure any requests we may have are made in a pleasant and courteous manner and are not just demanded? Can we show our club linesmen that we appreciate their assistance? If there are ladies in the background who have made us a cup of tea, can we thank them for it? If we have an enjoyable game, can we thank the players for their part in it? At those times, on and off the field, when

we have to stand up to players or officials, can we do it in an assertive and not an aggressive manner?

Don't say it won't work. I recall a local referee who suffered badly with abusive, aggressive and threatening players in his early days, but adopted this policy and went on to many years enjoyable refereeing. What's more he became one of the best liked and **highly marked** referees in local football. So don't knock it before you try it. And remember that it is **you** I am asking to join the revolution. Don't leave it to others to enjoy the benefits.

Dick Sawdon Smith

MONTHLY MEETINGS

November

Strange how things happen. A good turnout of over 60 members and that was the evening the Trades' Union Club was being disrupted for re-decoration. Instead of rattling in too large a hall, we had an unusual intimacy, packed cheek-by-jowl in the small bar area downstairs.

There was plenty of motivation to get on with the business. One member had written in to query the Society's policy over kit. It was accepted that the RA kit and service were much improved. The Supplies Officer, Kevin Parsons, made it clear that we have no contract with any particular supplier - he responds to members' needs and wishes.

National RA was asking for more financial support for the new HQ building - £49,000 received so far. Membership of the Society stood at 109. The Membership Officer was chasing last year's members who hadn't rejoined.

The deteriorating behaviour of players, officials and spectators was discussed. The leagues are keen to take action but need our support. One experienced member, close to giving up refereeing, was in favour of a 2-week strike. Others wanted clear action but would not go so far at this stage. The onus is on us, both to do our job on the field and to give the leagues the ammunition they need. They have never been more on our side.

The second half of the meeting was a forum of County officials: Ray Claridge, Referees' Secretary; Stan Gigg, Cup

Competitions Secretary and, in place of Bill Gosling who was indisposed, Ted Cambridge.

The question and answer session started with misconduct reports. Ted explained the processes at the County end: from the guilty plea dealt with in the office as a matter of routine through to the personal hearing. A worry was expressed that the automatic process might fail to pick up important differences between cases. Ted's advice was that if there are in effect two offences - a sending off followed by foul or abusive language, it was wise to submit two reports. In response later to the question put from our last meeting - where a caution was followed by foul and abusive- he agreed that one report would suffice as the incident was continuous [and presumably the player would be sufficiently punished under the automatic procedure. Ed]

Stan Gigg had the lightest time as Cup Competitions Secretary, because his work is less controversial. He is the man responsible for the organization of the cups, draws and results. He particularly stressed the importance of the match cards and asked members to be sure to fill in all the details requested which are noted and acted upon - like the state of the pitch markings, provision of linesmen, time of start.

Cup appointments were described in some detail by Ray Claridge. The sheer size and difficulties of the task became very clear. He made 483 appointments for October and some 35% had to be changed for a variety of reasons, most of them genuine he thought!

Ray is doing his first round appointments in July, even before many referees have re-registered. He tries to keep referees to Saturday or Sunday if they only referee on the one day but it doesn't always work out. In the early rounds it is not really possible to match referees to games. For appointments to finals he does consider those refereeing on higher leagues but only if they are also refereeing in local football. 75% of appointments to early Minor Cup (U15) and Youth Cup (U18) matches go to those refereeing youth football on a regular basis. Later rounds are more widely spread. Members were pleased to hear that Ray is always willing to receive a last minute call if they are unexpectedly available - he often has late defections to cope with. [Maybe that's the way in for Dick! Ed]

In spite of the unusually noisy and cramped conditions, the panel and members all made the best of an evening which was both interesting and informative. For newer members it was also good to put faces to those names we see on the County correspondence.

December

The special Christmas meeting and over 80 members present. The Chairman started with the sad news of the deaths of Douglas Goodchild, the County FA Chairman, and Mrs Sargeant, wife of long-serving member Don. It was agreed to make a donation of £25 to charity.

The Secretary reported that:

- the RA had regretfully turned down the proposal to award the Meritorious Service Award to John Lambden at this stage on the grounds that his service to refereeing in the Army was unconfirmed and in any case was not eligible. He therefore falls short of the required 20 years. Members who know the quality of John's service were not pleased.
- Christchurch Meadows. Phil Lewis had written to the Council complaining about the changing facilities and problems with the nets etc, making a number of detailed suggestions. He had not only received a grateful reply, all his proposals were subsequently acted upon.
- a letter had been sent to the leagues about our concern at the increase in indiscipline and unacceptable behaviour, and proposing a meeting. This was welcomed by both Saturday and Sunday leagues and will be arranged.
- a letter had been sent by the Chairman to the Trades Union Club about the unsatisfactory conditions in which the November meeting had had to be held.
- a copy of a letter from Peter Absolom - printed in full in this issue - was read out.
- letters had been sent by two members reporting clubs to the Reading Football League. They were both being acted upon by the new Disciplinary Committee.
- views were sought on the possible recruitment of ex-professional footballers to referee in the Football League.

There was no consensus among members: some saw it as a serious threat, others did not.

In discussion members being assessed were reminded to keep assessors informed of any change in their fixture. In relation to two incidents reported, members were also reminded to check whether extra time is to be played and to inform both teams before the kick-off. Also to see both teams before calling a game off and to stay the statutory half hour if there is a possibility that the problem delaying the start can be resolved.

The next part of the evening (unusually) was the supper, with the Grand Draw being saved for a finale. Owing to staff shortages through flu, it was senior members of the Club who prepared the meal and served it, and it was certainly the best yet, with festive decorations, table settings and even crackers.

Finally the Grand Draw. The prizes were handsomely displayed and the 'double blind' method of draw kept up everyone's interest. After the draw for the first three top prizes, the winning tickets were matched with prizes by a second draw - so you didn't know what prize would go next and some big ones stayed through to near the end.

A very good evening. Special thanks to John Moore and his helpers. (Full list of winners on page 12.

A MEMBER WRITES

'Oh dear', what a pathetic response from the President of the [Reading] RA to remarks expressed by members concerning the state of park pitches and a request for representation on their behalf from the RA (see October/November issue 'Reading Referee').

Let me begin by stating that I, as an individual, am becoming increasingly disillusioned by the apathetic and timid approach taken by the committee on items that may be a little controversial.

I take umbridge at the reference made by the President - I quote: 'To claim their rights rather than accept personal

responsibility'. I have never been a person to shirk personal responsibility and never will be.

However, let me again reiterate that what I said at the meeting was as follows: that an Association is an organisation of persons having the same interest/ purposes etc., and a committee is a group of people chosen to consider or act on some matter arising on their behalf.

Therefore what purpose is the RA committee serving if, whenever a matter arises they prefer not to deal with, they resort to attacking individuals for exercising their rights.

The park pitches were in a dangerous condition at the start of the season exacerbated by the decision of the local Council to put out to contract the general maintenance of the pitches. Was it too much to ask the committee to get a reassurance on our behalf regarding the quality of the pitches?

The President went on to say that he had made 'bad friends' in the past, due to trying to get better deals for referees. As one who has represented hundreds of individuals personally and accepted the criticism that that inevitably brings, I sympathise with him.

Finally, the editor says the meeting following this was attended by a disappointing approx 50 members. I fear that if you do not stand up and exercise your personal responsibilities, Mr President, the number could fall to 15 not 50!

'Nuff said'.

Peter Absolom

Dick Sawdon Smith, Reading RA President, responds:

On the question of pitches, I would make two points. If clubs are not getting value for the money they have to pay for pitches, that is not the responsibility of the Referees' Association. If clubs or leagues made a complaint, I have no doubt the Association would support them with any detailed information supplied by members, but we should not lead the campaign, particularly with generalisations.

On the other hand, if any pitch does not conform to the Laws of the Game or to the rules of the competition, or if it is dangerous, then it is our individual responsibility as a referee to report it.

The Reading Football League tell me that they have received no reports on dangerous pitches this season. The Reading Sunday Leagues say that over the past season and a half they have received 10-12 reports from clubs and referees, but these have usually been about inadequate markings, poor dressing room accommodation etc. One referee did report a pitch as dangerous and the local council dealt with it within days.

It would seem that if pitches have been dangerous, then most referees have not been accepting their responsibility to report them. If this is not the case and the pitches are not dangerous, then it seems the Society was right to resist breaking into print with generalisations it would subsequently be unable to substantiate.

I think it should be recalled that the opinions I express in my 'President's Piece' are my own and not necessarily those of the committee. The point I was making in the last issue was a simple one. Before seeking action by the RA, members should in my opinion ask themselves: 'Have I carried out my personal responsibility.' That is an opinion by which I stand.

Dick Sawdon Smith

[Editor's footnote:

Although Peter's letter was in a sense a personal comment on the President, I have published it because the points he was making deserved an answer. I too am unafraid of controversy and generally in support of positive action. However, what Peter perhaps did not know is that, as Press Officer, I made it clear at the October meeting that I would write to the local press only if I had some hard evidence. I asked for it there and then or at half-time. I did not get one response.

This correspondence is now closed. Ed]

THE GAME IN SPAIN

On a recent (business) trip to Spain, Derek Mackenzie was stuck with the Spanish sporting press. This is what he spotted in Campeon:

Even if your Spanish is not too good, you've probably got the general idea. At the bottom of each soccer match report they print a 'technical note'. This includes the teams and a description of the goals but also a piece on the referee, Comments as well as cards shown. A rough translation of the critical bit of the one above is:

'Referee Lopez Nieto of the Andalucian Society. Regrettably biased in favour of Atletico, who certainly didn't need such help. This was reflected in the fouls and the cautions and it shows that those without personality are easily influenced by determined complaints.'

A wonder the British press hasn't thought of this one!

THE GRAND CHRISTMAS DRAW

John Moore reports that members sold so many tickets that prizes worth over £900 were won. Not only did the income also pay for the evening's food and expenses, John made over £190 in addition for RA funds. Thanks to all who sold tickets - 80% of all the books - and amongst whom Ivan McNelly continues to reign supreme with a record (for the new style books) of 190! He was presented with the latest design of RA tie as a small token of appreciation. Thanks also to those who assisted on the night as well as to Ray Emmans, Pat Monaghan, Bill Wallace and Dick Wilkins who donated additional prizes.

Finally a big thank you from all members to John himself who made such an excellent job of all the organization.

CHRISTMAS DRAW - List of Prizewinners

Prize	Ticket number	Winner's name
Colour TV set	2153	N. Pithers
Microwave oven	3709	T. Lee
Radio/cassette player	3030	K. Selman
Mars selection box	5841	G. Webb
Scalextric racing set	0625	J. Waller
Xmas teddy bear	0760	N. Dainty
Talking teddy bear	5413	D. Houghton
2 books	5440	L. Masters
Car toy	6694	Charlie (3 Brewers)
Exercise bicycle	2790	K. Wells
Rain Man video	1256	Del Boy
Callenetics video	1459	J. Waters
Electric knife	3831	Bill Lewis
Question of Sport game	4048	Mrs May
Football game	6737	K. Turner
Quotations game	3202	J. Flurry
Golf umbrella	5483	J. Bilsby
Electric kettle	6510	Del (Albion)
Jar of sweets	1592	Sue Jackson
Jar of sweets	0398	Sue James
4 Bottles of wine	6360	R. Phillips
4 Bottles of wine	0001	G. Mills
Large Xmas hamper	2359	Morris
Xmas food tray	3883	D. Church
Body Shop gift pack	1835	V. Albury
Giant cracker	1101	C. Pike
Head Sports bag	2271	Les (Fericon Press)
Bottle of Sherry & Port	6692	Fred (Volunteer)
Tin of biscuits	0480	Jean Eves
Tin of biscuits	2735	D. Crossland
Bottle of wine	1630	R. Rudd
£10 gift voucher	2930	G. Webb
Toiletry set	3722	R. Butler

THANKS AND APOLOGIES

It isn't often the editor can report he is overwhelmed by letters and enclosures - and in fact it hasn't quite got to that yet. However, I am receiving contributions from members and always try to include them. What I am failing to include for lack of space is all the press cuttings people send me. Please go on - it is good to be able to be selective. The apology is because I don't usually acknowledge them unless they are published (and I know who sent them in). Thanks all the same. They give an interesting view on what (some) others think of

referees and football, as well as some useful information, sometimes.

MEMBERSHIP AND TRAINING

I haven't been able to do my annual analysis of membership yet but can report that we reached 114 before the closing date at the end of the year. At the corresponding time last year it was 126, down from the previous year's 133. Unfortunately, we have now joined the national trend we had been successfully resisting. The good news is that 20 candidates have started the new training course and at least four more are expected to join - so we should be pushing 140 by the end of the season.

WHY DOES IT ALWAYS HAPPEN TO ME?

Saturday, Prospect Park and, surprisingly, only two matches. So only two of us, Martin Shearn and yours truly.

After the game, back to the super new changing rooms - what a pleasure after years of the derelict Manor House and the terrapin - and a leisurely chat and change out of our referees' gear. Pack the bags and off to say 'Cheerio' to the teams, but they'd already gone. So had the park-keeper. And the key. Every door was locked.

The trouble with modern, vandal-proof buildings is that they are very carefully designed to prevent unauthorised entry - and exit. Not a window would open. Cries for help didn't attract the slightest attention. Don't panic - there has to be a solution.

It was only the fire alarms that saved us from an unexpected overnight stay

Gordon Crutchfield

'FIFA SET TO STAMP ON PRO FOUL' (The Guardian, 20/12/89)

FIT TO OFFICIATE?

[Andy Perlejewski is a Lecturer in Physical Education as well as a referee in junior and senior football in the West Country, an active member of the Yeovil & District RA, and a regular reader of the 'Reading Referee'. It's finally cost him!]

In the past six seasons as an active referee I have been fortunate in that I have had the opportunity to officiate in nine different junior and senior leagues in and around the West Country. In that time I have been amazed by the differing levels of physical fitness displayed by officials of all classifications.

If you were to ask the average match official what he understood by the term 'physical fitness' his answer would probably include some mention of the word 'stamina' or 'endurance'. It is here that the initial problem lies since many of our colleagues admit that they referee to keep fit. So what then is the true meaning of this phrase that we all take for granted? Recent works on physical fitness have used the following framework:

Cardio-Respiratory The ability of the lungs to extract oxygen from the air and the heart to pump blood around the body. The trained referee can maintain high pulse rates over a long period of time and will find that his recovery rate is much quicker than that of an untrained colleague. During a recent match in one of the lower divisions of a local league a player claimed that the reason for me getting about the pitch was that I was recently qualified. Further discussions revealed that the general impression was that all newly qualified referees showed their enthusiasm by charging around the pitch like young pups for several matches, after which they retired to the safety of

the centre circle. I wonder how many of us this refers to - not as a result of attitude but as a result of lack of fitness?

Muscular Strength The ability to lift large weights is not really part of the referee's brief. However, having seen the waistlines of some of my colleagues, I'm not so sure whether . . .

Muscular Endurance Sometimes it is necessary to make repeated movements of small muscle groups. These muscles need to be trained so that the performer can achieve the maximum efficiency. In a recent FA Challenge Vase match so many offside decisions were made that the players joked that the linesman must have sore arms. They didn't know how right they were!

Body Composition The most visible component of a person's fitness. As we age most of us find that we acquire a higher percentage of fat. As long as that percentage stays below fifteen we remain within healthy limits. As soon as it exceeds this amount we start to place an unnecessary strain on the body's vital functions.

Flexibility My own personal feeling is that flexibility is the most important component of physical fitness but, unfortunately, the area most often ignored. Games players are notorious for their lack of flexibility, yet it is an area that can be improved quickly and by carrying out a simple programme within the home. Poor flexibility will increase the risk of all types of joint and muscle injury - injuries which take longer to heal as we get older.

The five components dealt with so far are related to health, whereas the six that follow are related to skill:

Speed The good referee will have the ability to move quickly into important positions. How many of us as players were only concerned with one half of the pitch? As referees we are expected to give decisions in both halves. To do this we must be able to cover ground quickly and efficiently.

Balance To maintain equilibrium whether static or on the move. A good referee always appears to be well balanced (mentally as well as physically).

Reaction In any game we have to react to a whole range of stimuli. Speed of reaction is vital as is the ability to choose not to react.

Agility Most sportsmen (yes we can classify ourselves in the same category as those in our charge) must be able to quickly change their direction of movement. The referee must quickly get into a position from which he gets the best view of incidents as they occur. If he officiates from the centre circle he probably has to demonstrate great agility to avoid being hit by the ball.

Power The ability to generate force quickly. Normally the only time this applies to the referee is when he performs on a very heavy pitch.

Co-ordination During all sports it is necessary for performers to co-ordinate the senses with the movement of various parts of the body. A referee who, on hearing an obscenity, placed the whistle in his right ear would not be displaying good co-ordination skills.

Some activities will require training in only a few of the previous areas of fitness. However it does appear that the good referee does need to have developed a wide ranging level of fitness.

So what of the person who referees to get fit? In these times when we are crying out for all the referees we can find, who am I to knock a person with this attitude? On the contrary we must commend the ex-player who strives to put something back into the game. A game cannot take place without the referee and, although I wouldn't want to detract from their intellect, most players will not notice the lack of mobility within the match official.

The referee that concerns me most is the man that is on the way up who does not see the importance of training. By the time we reach senior league level we are involved with highly organised clubs, most of which reward players in some way and insist on regular training. How can the referee who has to control these players and who commands a reasonable fee, officiate without attending to his physical fitness? At this level the referee must work hard on his positioning in order to be able to make accurate decisions. A good level of fitness will mean that this positioning comes much easier.

Most referees react strongly to the word 'cheat' and would take action against a player using such a word. It is my own opinion that the senior referee who doesn't train is, in fact, cheating the players. How many senior referees do we hear say at the start of the season that their fitness will return once they have had a few games? This is true up to a certain point. However, during training sessions we are able to 'overload' the body's systems which, after a regulated training programme, will delay the onset of fatigue. This developed level of fitness will serve the referee well during those crucial last ten minutes or in that game which is a bit quicker than normal.

Many may argue that the Fitness Test used in senior leagues ensures that all officials have demonstrated the required standard. To my knowledge most of the tests are administered in either late June or early July. In the long, warm summer evenings it is much easier to find the motivation to put in enough work to get through the annual ordeal. Many people fail to realise that the training effects are reversible and that a period of inactivity will cause all the good work to be undone. If the test was to be administered in the middle of the season during the 'cheat's' alleged fit period, there would be many more failures.

Of course there will be a thousand and one excuses as to why training cannot be fitted into a busy schedule. Yet it does seem odd that this referee, who is too busy to train, can find the time, often at short notice, to do a midweek game.

The job of the referee seems to be getting harder as time goes on. The match day officials are coming under greater scrutiny from all sides of the game. It is, therefore, important that we do our utmost to ensure that we maintain high standards in all aspects of our duties. It is in the area of fitness that, I feel, we can do most to improve the overall standard of our officiating. But this improvement will only take place with an appropriate change in attitude. We live a country in which health matters are becoming increasingly more topical. If we do not owe it to the players to become fitter, we owe it to ourselves.

Andy Perlejewski

(spotted by Richard Highfield)

REFEREES HELPING THE CHILDREN

On Boxing Day some 13 of our members, organized by the Whistlers manager, Martin Deacon, took part in a charity match versus Tilehurst. 1-1 at full time, but the referees lost 5-4 on penalties (in doubtful circumstances). The Children in Need Fund benefited by over £50. Players and officials (and possibly spectators) thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Congratulations, especially to Martin. Looks like becoming an annual event.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

February 15 Keith Cooper,
Football League referee from Swindon

March 15 Roy Merryweather,
Manager Wokingham Town FC

April 19 Training Evening

SOCIAL EVENTS

February 10 Skittles evening 7.30 p.m. kick-off
Millers Arms, Caversham
Tickets £4 each (limited to 40 only)

April 27 Annual Dinner and Dance
Reading Trades Union Club
Tickets £13 each

SOC CER DIARY Ian Ridley (The Guardian, 23/12/89)

