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**EDITORIAL**

A very Happy New Year! Hope you had a good Christmas and that you've managed to get over any excesses of food and drink - not that I would expect any of our members to be so self-indulgent of course. There can be a post-Christmas problem - with too few games and too much pudding and ale, but you do find that out for yourself!

The weather has been a problem as it often is at this time of the year, but the problem is not usually excess water. Perhaps worth reminding ourselves of the two questions about pitches: is it safe to play? would the game be a lottery? (in that order).

I guess you saw the recent game on TV with water standing just about everywhere. I thought I wouldn't even have started the game and, sure enough, the first and third goals for the same team had an element of luck in them because of the conditions. A lottery. But of course it's more difficult to call off a league match for public order reasons. If **we** say 'no', perhaps 30 people are inconvenienced, not 3,000 or 30,000, so the pressure is different. I think it's still wrong to run risks. At local level we must always err on the safe, sensible side. After all, it is only a game . . .

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## **PRESIDENT'S PIECE**

### **I Have a Dream**

On 1st January, amongst the biggest shake-up in commercial television since its inception, the television company that covers the south, and which is watched by many of our members, changed hands for the second time when Meridian took over from TVS.

Many years ago the predecessors of TVS, Southern Tele-vision, approached me to write a script for a series of incidents to take place during a football match. The incidents would then be shown one at a time during a weekly sports programme. Viewers were to consider what action they would take if they were the referee, and after a break they would be given the right answer according to the Laws of the Game.

To me, television is a powerful educational medium, and here was a great opportunity to present the Laws of the Game in an informative and hopefully entertaining way. The only time I can recall any of the television companies trying to give an authoritative view on the laws was when the BBC invited World Cup Final referee Jack Taylor, to be part of their panel at the following World Cup. What they forgot was that referees are first and foremost football fans, and that Jack wanted to have his say about the games and not just confine his comments to decisions made by referees.

The experiment was not repeated and we now have to put up with the uneducated and often inaccurate statements from commentators and interviewers, such as Barry Davies wanting a free kick for handball 'even though it was accidental', and Tony Gubba suggesting that a push should be treated as obstruction. And of course Alan Hansen and Garry Linekar almost condone protests by players about decisions which they don't like.

This brings me to my real dream about the use of television. I would like to pick out of the Match of the Day films, **correct** decisions by referees which are subject to loud dispute by

players. For example, recently the camera showed a referee correctly awarding a goal kick in a Leeds match followed by an animated protest by Gordon Strachan. There is plenty to choose from. The film should be shown to professional clubs all over the country with the message that just because they think the referee is wrong, it doesn't mean they are entitled to protest.

No doubt it will remain a dream like my spots on Southern Television, for when I went back with the scripts, they had a new Sports Editor who wasn't interested. Perhaps Meridian might like to know I still have the scripts . . .

A Happy New Year and may all **your** dreams come true.

Dick Sawden Smith.

## **MONTHLY MEETINGS**

### **November**

A really exceptional evening. How often have we had about 90 members/potential members there to sing "Happy Birthday" to a 90 year old colleague? Don Sarjeant (tribute last issue) was there and enjoyed it.

The first decision of the meeting was to make it and future meetings 'non-smoking', though addicts were free to indulge at half-time . . .

Andy Awbery, Membership Officer, reported 151 members, a remarkable achievement.

Senior Training Officer, Stephen Green, again went over the change of law relating to goalkeepers - still some concerns, especially about 'tricks'.

Among numerous items from the leagues were:

From the Reading Football League:

- A reminder that any assault should be reported to the Berks and Bucks FA; a letter sent without delay to the League, not a copy of the report; a copy of the letter to our secretary.

From the Reading Sunday League:

- Match cards must be given to the referee before the game (but you can then give them back till the end).  
Subs names must be on the card if they have played.  
Note the subs names yourself before the start.
- Facilities are deteriorating again. Keep the leagues informed of problems - they are doing their best.

From the Reading Indoor League:

- The player who gave his name as 'Jeremy Beadle'. (It was). Advice from Terry Gibbs: take the name, it's not your problem.

From the Reading Challenge Cup:

- Referees still crying off at the last minute. Close your dates; honour your commitments.

The Reading Whistlers 5-a-side team goes from strength to strength. The manager, Stewart Mills, reported eight wins from the last ten games. In ninth position out of sixteen in the league. Terry Fallon top scorer with 16 (out of 28).

The first half closed with a tribute to Don Sarjeant by George Mills and the presentation of an engraved tankard and certificate by youngest member, Ritchie Condon.

Guest Speaker was Mark McGhee, most recent of the managers of Reading FC who have come along to talk to us. Although his accent was distinctly Scottish, his messages came across perfectly loud and clear.

He would talk from his experience as a footballer who had played in every European country but Finland. Refereeing? He understands the problem of TV and frequent playbacks, and accepts that the referee has to make an instant decision. Nevertheless he did think the recent sending off of the Birmingham City goalkeeper rather harsh, as did the players, because three defenders were getting back.

Throughout his career he had been advised to try to get the goalkeeper sent off (it started with Alex Ferguson). The

change to law has made it more frequent and not for the good of the game - it spoils the game especially for the fans. Why not give the referee the power to award a goal and keep an 11-a-side game?

Problem of TV. Mark does not want a television referee and doesn't like lengthy TV analysis and judgments; he certainly wouldn't want action replays on a large screen. Yet the game needs the money from TV and sponsorship.

He thinks referees are too picky about colour clashes.

Mark believes players should do everything they can within the laws to win the game and seemed to be agreeing with Alex Ferguson who set someone up to pressurise the referee. What he believes we have lost is the humour that used to exist between fans and players, and players and referees. There's no rapport. He's against the involvement of the police. It's a game, relaxation

He doesn't believe in managers being fined - they don't earn enough (he said).

What does he think about youngsters playing the game?

Mark has a son playing 100 games a season. Crazy. Agrees with Andy Roxburgh and Alex Ferguson who favour non-competitive 7-a-side play on a small pitch up to the age of 12 or so. That would improve our players technical skills where we have deficiencies.

Foul and abusive language?

If towards the referee it should be dealt with severely. With so few spectators at Reading they hear it - he was used to crowds of 30,000. He has never heard a referee use foul language.

Professional referees?

Mark doesn't think it's a viable proposition. Referees certainly need more support and training, fitness etc - the FA has that responsibility. Professional footballers as referees? Certainly not all, but the suitable ones do start with some advantage and could expect to have some reduction in their 'training' period. Do it on an individual basis.

The referee in the stand with power to intervene? No, but Mark does believe in video evidence after the game since he got off a 10-week suspension after being (incorrectly) sent off in a pre-season friendly in Germany - thanks to an amateur video of the incident.

Like his predecessors Mark kept his audience interested and was warmly thanked by the Chairman.

### December

No guest speaker of course, but the excitement of the Grand Christmas Draw to look forward to, so a quick scamper through a number of items of business to make space for drink and draw.

- The Berks & Bucks FA reminds us it is still concerned about foul and abusive language. We must act according to law.

- FIFA do not anticipate any major changes to law for next season [even the minor ones haven't been too bright in the last few years. Ed]

- The Chairman reported that Ted Cambridge had written to say that his statement about the RA hoping 'to take over assessing' had been based on rumour.

- The next Training Course will start on 18 January at Berkshire County Sports. Members are asked to encourage people to attend.

- Andy Awbery reported a membership now of 163. More congratulations.

- a trip is being arranged to Wembley to see the England v. Holland game. 28 showed immediate interest.

- Bracknell RA holds its Dinner and Dance this month. Details from the secretary.

- Park pitch helpline - ring 750511 to find out about conditions. Don't wait for the club to inform you.

- Some Sunday Youth League referees have just not turned up for games. Unprofessional - you must either go or contact the home club and apologise (with maximum notice).

- Request for training in first aid. John Moore commented very favourably on the sports injuries course run by John Haselden at Reading FC. New course soon (details to be announced).

The Draw (from among all paid up members at the end of November) was made for the two Cup Final tickets the RA receives. Pauline Tuttle's name was first out. First reserve: Ian Tilbrook; second reserve: Michael Ashton.

After a congenial and suitably liquid half-time, the Grand Draw was made for the array of prizes, beautifully displayed as ever.

A full list of winners appears elsewhere. (After failing to win the Eurobreak I was mightily relieved to miss the Bob Marley music set. Ed]

Our grateful thanks go to those who donated prizes: Andy Awbery, Neil Isham, Graeme McLay, Pat Monaghan and Bill Wallace; to those who helped on the night; to all those who sold the tickets; but especially to John Moore who master-minded the whole thing and does most of the hard work (with help from his wife). The balance of profit to the society, even in these hard times and with excellent prizes, was a remarkable £585.

Top picture: George Mills pays tribute to Don Sarjeant (centre). Bottom picture: Ritchie Condon makes the presentation

#### **FAIR PLAY AND LINESMAN'S AWARDS**

Now is the time to make sure you are up to date with your marks to Alan Turner, who collects and processes them on behalf of the society. He has a supply of forms if you have run out (or if you don't know anything about the scheme).

#### **THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN**

Meet Stanley Pickle, Secretary of Nohope United, a long established club who field two teams in the local Saturday league.



Stanley, a club secretary of many years' standing, took on the onerous job on a temporary basis some 15 years ago. A national shortage of gullible volunteers has secured Stanley's position for the foreseeable future - on a temporary basis of course.

This season has proved to be typical for the club, with the first team fifth from bottom in Division 1, and the Reserves holding their own in ninth place (second from bottom) in Division 4.

Stanley's footballing week starts on a Monday evening with a quick look at next week's fixtures: first team away, Reserves at home. Like all good secretaries, Stanley sets about confirming the game with Saturday's (home) opponents and with the match referee.

First phone call:

'Is that Fred Smith, secretary of the Dog & Duck FC?' 'Yes, this is Fred Smith, but I'm not involved with the playing side. You need our manager, Bert Jones.'

Second call:

'Is Bert Jones in please?' 'NO'.  
'Can I leave a message then?.' 'NO'.  
'OK. I'll ring back later'.

Some calls later, Stanley eventually manages to confirm the the match with the Dog & Duck FC.

Final call. Confirm the match with Mr Whistler, the match referee. No problem here: Mr Whistler is keen and raring to go.

Monday through to Friday, Stanley has almost contacted all of his players, including the squad for the reserve team. 7-00 pm Friday evening Stanley sits back in his armchair with a glow of satisfaction - all confirmations made, players all contacted, kit checked and ready, only the pitch markings to be done and the nets erected. Fortunately old Sid looks after both of those, so nothing whatever for Stanley to worry about. For 15 minutes.

Friday 7-15 pm. Phone rings. 'Sorry Stanley, can't play tomorrow, the dog's got a bad cough and I really can't leave him on his own.' Stanley pleads: 'we're down to the bare eleven for both teams. For some reason (could it possibly be the England v. France rugby match live on the box?) we're desperately short this week . . .' To no avail - the dog cannot be left alone.

Saturday, the big day has arrived. 10-35am phone call. Referees' Appointments Secretary: 'Sorry Stanley, but I've had to pinch your referee for a higher division match. Can't understand why I'm so short of refs this week.' (Nothing to do with England v. France . . .)

Dejected, Stanley reflects that at least he has still just about got a team and makes his way to the ground. Looking anxiously at his watch and even more anxiously for old Sid who's supposed to be marking the pitch, Stanley decides that time is getting on and he had better make a start himself. With just the penalty marks left to do, Sid arrives. Perfect timing. 'Sorry I'm a bit late.' (2-10 for a 2-30 kick-off). 'Let me do the penalty spots', offers Sid, 'I can't let you do it all on your own.'

Stanley returns to the dressing room and to his amazement and delight, he finds the referee's room is occupied. Stanley looks inquiringly into the room and to his great pleasure a knight in shining armour has arrived - a replacement referee. Introducing himself, the referee apologises for his late appointment and explains that his own match had been postponed and this was the only game left. Stanley is elated.

The players have by now started to drift on to the field and the referee is ready to brief his club linesmen. He looks in Stanley's direction. Stanley in turn looks everywhere, surveying all four corners of the ground. Sid, who can sometimes be persuaded to run the line is on this occasion conspicuous by his absence. Stanley agrees to accept the flag, taking a resigned view that the line would be the lesser of two evils - had the replacement ref not arrived, he would by now have been holding the whistle.

With (almost) everything in place, Stanley suddenly makes a hasty return visit to the dressing room - the first aid kit which usually finds its own way to the match has failed to turn up. Even worse, the self-inflating match ball which the

players have come to rely on, is soft. (The players are now becoming a little restless at these delays which are clearly Stanley's fault).

The match gets underway. Five minutes into the game a bruising tackle leaves the United full-back reeling in pain. The players hail the first aid kit. Alas, the magic isn't working and the first aid kit remains firmly rooted to the spot. Once again Stanley comes to the rescue and carries the white box and bucket on to the pitch.

Problem over, the match continues. Half time arrives and Stanley's role as caterer is now put to the test. 'Where's the oranges?' demands the centre forward. 'Have you any tape?' requests the goalkeeper, having found that his 15-year old boots are pleading to call it a day. Stanley duly performs, handing out the oranges and producing a reel of tape from the depths of his pocket .. Half time over, Stanley rounds up the orange peel, and the keeper's boots will live to see the second half.

The match goes well, with the Nohope United squad only losing by the odd four goals. Back in the changing room (designed in the early 80s, apparently to accommodate an under 12s five-a-side team) chaos prevails. Stanley, armed with his cash tin and notebook, is desperately trying to collect sufficient match subs to pay the referee, and at the same time, finish filling in the result card.

His voice straining to be heard above a fierce argument between the goalkeeper and the full-back, with the centre forward complaining that's he's not going to play any more, he decides it is time to visit the referee who has by now changed and is waiting for his fee. Stanley thanks him and duly offers the fee and result card. The ref delves behind his large black holdall and produces the match ball, reminiscing over the time he didn't get paid and how he always hangs on to the ball now until the card and the fee arrive . . . .

Having bid farewell to the ref, Stanley returns to the deserted dressing room - deserted that is apart from a pile of dirty kit, a selection of discarded tape, plasters, bandages, a few bits of orange peel and a generous helping of mud. Stanley sets about clearing up the debris and attacks the floor with a large broom. At last it's clear. Nothing else to do. Stanley's footballing week is almost over.

A final check of the dressing rooms reveals only the dirty kit, match balls, kick-around balls, and the magical first aid kit (and bucket). Stanley reverts to his role of pack horse and loads up. Struggling to fulfil his final duty of locking the changing room door, he is relieved that another footballing week is over. A busy week but a sense of satisfaction prevails.

What next? Perhaps a quick pint with the players at the club followed by a quiet evening watching Match of the Day. Stanley is fully loaded and just leaving the ground when Mrs White, never a particularly friendly lady, walks past with her small dog. From under his camouflage of bucket, balls and (magical) first aid kit, Stanley bids her a good evening, to which she retorts: 'I hope you're not planning to leave those nets up all night. My poor little dog has just got all tangled up in them'.

Anyone for Club Secretary?

Phil Lewis

[Volunteers direct to Phil please. He's expecting a rush. Ed]

#### **DOES THE PUNISHMENT FIT THE CRIME?**

Arsenal have been in the news recently with George Graham's outburst about Alf Buksh, the referee, and Ian Wright's right hander which he said he didn't throw, that is until he saw the TV evidence and then admitted to having 'acted instinctively'. Some instinct.

Though both offences were clearly proven, what happened? Wright misses three games, whereas Vinnie Jones was fined £20,000 for **talking** about violence and given a suspended 6-month ban. (Not that I have any sympathy for Vinnie Jones of course). A year ago Michael Thomas was fined £3,000 for criticising Graham in a newspaper; now Graham is fined £300 for criticising the referee (with his criticism quoted in all the papers). It must make sense to someone. No wonder referees feel unprotected.

#### **COUNTY QUIZ**

To be held at Aylesbury on Monday 1 February. Try to go and support our team. Details from the Secretary.

## CHRISTMAS DRAW 1992 - WINNERS LIST

Prize	Ticket no	Winner
£250 Eurobreak for Two	04883	C Green
Remote control TV	03009	M Craven
Sega Megadrive set	01305	L Rainer
Croft Port gift pack	08904	D Reigate
Jack Daniels gift set	13361	D Moore
Red Venom toy set	14295	G Snow
Bob Marley music set	10615	J Turner
Christmas crackers	12019	J Young
Christmas crackers	09701	N Kerry
Pair of videos	11455	A Welstead
Pair of videos	09655	M. Deacon
Pair of videos	08456	J Pope
Pair of videos	03275	A Wills
Cuddly toy	11399	M Watkins
Cuddly toy	07768	R Nice
Cuddly toy	11829	R Swain
Cuddly toy	06917	D Hincke
Camera	01068	I McNelly
Tin of Quality Street	11798	J Wade
Tin of biscuits	08269	C Pike
Tin of biscuits	11706	S Hughes
Telephone answering machine	07952	S Parsons
Case of beer	04796	T Daom
Case of beer	09924	P Stream
Two bottles of wine	01093	C Ward
Bottle of spirits	10873	F Ashman
Bottle of spirits	00978	A Baker
Bottle of spirits	04267	D Lancy
Bottle of champagne	07724	N Nice
Bottle of sherry	03252	K Davies
Bottle of sherry	04686	R Cole
Scalectrix set	02920	B Dibley

Double cassette

10434

G Rolfe

**CONNECTIONS!**

What is the connection between Law 7 and the recent amendment to Law 12? There isn't one you say? On the contrary, I think there is.

Law 7 states that "the duration of the game shall be two equal periods of 45 minutes . . .". The amendment to Law 12 introduced this season refers to any occasion when a player deliberately kicks the ball to his own goalkeeper and the action to be taken by the referee, should the keeper handle or pick the ball up. The purpose of this addition to the law is to eliminate time-wasting.

But does it? While this may be sound in theory, I am sure we are all agreed that, in practice, it has created a completely different type of game in the vicinity of the penalty area, resulting in fact in far more time being wasted because goalkeepers and defenders kick the ball out of play much more often as a defensive measure. This is particularly noticeable on the local parks where there are no stands to stop the ball going very far, and few spectators willing to retrieve it from 50 or 100 yards away. It used to be the case that a defender passed the ball back to the goalkeeper who then picked it up without fear of being penalised and without, in my opinion, too much loss of time.

I carry two stop-watches when refereeing: one I stop at appropriate times, eg for injuries, ball out of play for any lengthy time; the other I keep running.

Some weeks ago, out of curiosity, I started to record the difference between the two watches at the end of each half - with some surprising results. Taken over six matches, the shortest difference (for one half) was 4 minutes, the longest 9 minutes, with an average for the (full) games of 11 minutes. In other words, if I hadn't stopped my watch at all, each game would on average have been of 79 minutes.

Law 7 enables the referee to make allowance for time lost for various causes. I wonder how many of us have given this any thought.

Perhaps next week the players will be allowed to play the full 90 minutes!

Stuart Gentle

**DID YOU SEE THESE?** (in the Daily Express)

A top Russian official, Alexei Spirin was suspended after awarding a penalty against Moscow Dynamo - when two of their own players collided.

John Hartman, of Sutton Coldfield, writes: "I was refereeing a match between two rivals and nearly every decision was questioned. I sent off two players for fighting and had to call the captains together to tell them to calm their teams down. Despite this I thought I was handling the game well until a stray dog ran on to the pitch. One of the players shouted. 'The game should improve now lads. The ref's guide dog has arrived!'

And a Few **Quotes of the Year** (from The Guardian)

**Football is all about football.**

Coventry manager Bobby Gould.

**At the end of the day we've got a 0-0 draw away from home and you can't ask for more than that.**

Alex Ferguson on Manchester United's FA Cup fourth-round match at the Dell.

**You can't even talk to referees now. You go into their room and they tell you to go away. You ask them a question and they won't talk to you.**

Blackburn's chatty manager Kenny Dalglish.

**We made him an offer he should have refused.**

Torquay chairman Mike Bateson appointing Ivan Golac as manager.

**There couldn't be much wrong with me if he kept sending me off with the youth team to play at places like the Outer Hebrides with about 50 sheep watching.**

Frank McAvennie on his problems at West Ham.

**If I wasn't the manager I would have gone home early.** Hibs manager Alex Miller.

**I've just given our chairman a vote of confidence.**



Brian Clough.

**He must be a mosquito brain.**

Wimbledon chairman Sam Hamman about Vinnie Jones.

**I've just introduced Nigel Martyn to a clean sheet. The last time we had one, Kenneth Wolstenholme was the commentator.**

Crystal Palace manager Steve Coppell.

**I blew for time spot on the whistle.**

Kettering ref Brian Hill answering charges that he ended the Luton v. QPR friendly nearly three minutes early.

#### **COUNTY FIVE-A-SIDE**

The Reading RA will be hosting the County competition at the South Reading Leisure Centre on **16 May**.

Please put the date in your diary - helpers and spectators wanted. Further details later.

(Simon Barnes - The Times)

**ANNUAL DINNER AND DANCE**

**STOP PRESS**      **A date for your diary: Saturday 22 May. This year at the Ramada. Tickets £20 each.**