

# READING REFEREE

Editor - Brian Palmer

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## *Editorial*

And a Happy New Year to all our readers!

This is the time when I avoid resolutions but still wonder what the new year has in store for us - referee-wise that is.

In the game itself I am sure we have not heard the last of *elbows*. Of course Fashanu is a suitable scapegoat as he has been involved recently in two particularly nasty and well-publicised incidents, and he plays for Wimbledon, nudge, nudge etc. Kevin Moran and Gary Mabbutt were pretty restrained in the circumstances considering, presumably because the elbow is a common, even accepted weapon but doesn't normally cause quite that much damage. Fashanu apparently remains unrepentant and innocent in the eyes of the FA. For once the media and, one hopes, the public are properly concerned about a real problem and recognise the difficulties the referee faces. Yet when our own Graham Poll sends off Southampton's Benali on New Year's Day for the use of the elbow, he has furious players and spectators to deal with (though the *Sunday Times* at least commended him for his courage).

What of the Referees' Association? This is the season Conference has told the RA to look at itself and report back. I had proposed a think-tank, primarily of young(er) active referees, but the Council has adopted a more conventional approach: questionnaire followed up with interviews. The results so far are what one could have predicted for that style of operation. Most societies support the *status quo*, some don't respond for a variety of reasons and the views of those who express any are frequently contradictory. What is lacking to many of those respondents is a vision of what might be, to which they can react. There is no forum where the more lively and radical young thinkers could interact and *together* produce ideas, possibilities, models for the RA in the 21st century, which could be the subject of real debate. However, the process adopted is not over yet . . . Let's hope it produces something mightier than a mouse for this Summer's Conference.

Whatever happens, enjoy your refereeing in spite of the weather!

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**MONTHLY MEETINGS**

**November**

A pretty full house. The evening started with the presentation of certificates and words of congratulation and welcome to our newly qualified colleagues by President, Brian Palmer.

Business items included:

- the potential deal with Reading FC (about the Rendezvous Club is at the draft legal contract stage. It was hoped that a decision could be made in December for a January start.
- the chairman gave an update on sanctioned/unsanctioned competitions. Publicity would follow the outcome of the trial of Stewart Mills' assailant.
- the coloured kit saga. Clarification at last. The FA has decreed (a bit after the horse has left the stable) that *this season* competitions may choose. Next season we are *all* back to black. (I understand there are some nearly new and expensive kits for sale at knock-down prices . . . . .)
- Keith Simmons was welcomed as a Sunday League representative at our meetings.
- Congratulations were extended to Frank Hawkins and Ebbie Saleh who had been appointed to FA Sunday Cup middles and to Stewart Mills for his FA Vase line. (I learnt later that Malcolm Hopson also had a Vase line but was too modest to tell us - belated congratulations to Malcolm too).
- the Reading Whistlers have had a surge and a trough: 4 more wins to 2 losses in the league but defeat in the cup. It will allow them to concentrate etc.
- two perennials from the leagues: some referees notifying unavailability at the very last minute; some still not dealing with foul language. There now seems to be a consensus that it is worth considering going into the changing rooms before the game and spelling out how you will deal with foul or abusive language. **BUT YOU THEN HAVE TO DO WHAT YOU HAVE PROMISED.**

**The Problem Spot.** Not so much a problem as a question. The pass to the goalkeeper. What if the player *doesn't* pass: he simply traps the ball and moves aside for his goalkeeper to take possession. No argument on this one. It is against the law and is penalised like a pass from foot. It is not, however, considered 'ungentlemanly conduct' so no further sanction.

Our guests for November were colleagues from the County FA invited to hold a mock disciplinary hearing, especially for the benefit of our less experienced members though it was surprising how few of those present had actually been to a tribunal. (Because, no doubt, we all send in such excellent reports there is no possible comeback!).

John Christopher, Chairman of the B & B FA introduced the proceedings and acted as continuity man, with Ted Cambridge in the chair supported by Norrie Hart, and General Secretary Bill Gosling had his usual role as secretary to the tribunal.

It was explained, because referees often misunderstand their role and feel at risk, that the referee is like the police officer in court. He is a witness and is asked to substantiate his written statement. This means that the player and/or his representative and members of the tribunal can cross-examine the referee but he can't challenge or cross-examine them. (And that's why so many referees feel at a disadvantage, whatever the legal logic of the procedure).

Ted went through the way the hearing would be conducted as he does in real life and stressed that the tribunal was only trying to arrive at the truth about what really happened. It was pointed out that statistically most players 'lose' And when they win it is often because of the ambiguity/poor quality of the referee's report.

The actual case for the hearing was about an incident behind the referee's back - he turns to see a player with a bloody nose and to allegations of a head-butt. The referee's report made it clear he had not seen the incident but nevertheless sent off the alleged assailant. Although it was useful to see the tribunal in action, the outcome - finding in favour of the player - was a bit too predictable. What was more interesting was the assertion of a very senior colleague that he too would have sent off in those circumstances, and the discussions about how others would have handled the incident to get justice for the assaulted player. There was a general feeling, only allayed by Norrie Hart that the tribunal did not in fact pursue the truth as tenaciously as it might, and certainly didn't seem sufficiently interested in finding out what actually happened e.g. from other witnesses.

The FA group accepted that the incident may not have illustrated the work of the tribunal as clearly as intended and hoped to come back on a future occasion with the FA video of a tribunal which they didn't have time to show.

A question was asked about tactical appealing at the end of the season to keep the player available for important matches. While it was admitted that it goes on and can't be stopped without offending against natural justice, it was made clear that players guilty of 'frivolous' appeals can have their punishment increased.

## **December**

About 70 members present for the fun evening of the year. New member Andrew Cole was welcomed.

- A card was to be sent to Graham Stockton's widow Maureen and £100 donation to the Heart Foundation *plus* whatever was collected (???? as it turned out).
- the deal with Reading Football Club was proceeding (slowly). There were considering our legal re-draft of the agreement, which would cover us if they did move to Smallmead (as being mooted yet again). The agreed redraft would be circulated to members, hopefully for a decision in January.
- County RA Quiz. Defeated but not disgraced We came third of eight teams, behind Aylesbury and North Berks. Congratulations on their efforts to ????????????
- The Secretary reported from the County FA

- the FA Grant Aid scheme to help clubs improve facilities
- in future assessors will have ID cards
- Senior Cup will be at Elm Park

The Whistlers had played eight more games (against top teams: W2, L3, D3. Total for the season: W10, L10, D4. Terry Fallon still top scorer now with 15 goals.

The Sunday League reported that letters are still coming in with complaints about foul language and no referee action. The Leagues on their side are trying to help.

Stephen Green, as Senior Training Officer devoted the **Problem Spot** to dealing with foul language and made a plea for action but with common sense. Think of the player's intent and the impact of his action. He now favours going into the dressing room before the game but accepted that not everyone has the strength of personality to get away with that. You do of course have to carry out any promises/threats, as explained by one self-styled h.... a.... b.....

Congratulations were passed on to Andy Butler, FA Youth Cup line, and Stephen Green, FA Vase, 3rd round line.

A leisurely half-time with chat and food and drink before the Grand Draw with a huge display of prizes to be won. And they were [but not by me or any of my ticket holders. Again. Ed]

## **(MORE) REFLECTIONS ON OVER THERE**

[Brian Wratten continues the story of his (refereeing) experiences in the States]

Soon after my arrival in New Jersey - my home was about 50 miles west of New York - I became aware of the acute shortage of soccer referees and decided to offer my services. However, at that time there were no established referee associations in the area to assist the newcomer. (More about that later!) Nevertheless, I managed to get my USSF referee's licence quite quickly and from then on allowed myself to be kept inordinately busy both on and off the field. Perhaps I should mention that as a registered USSF referee I was provided with \$1.5 million insurance coverage against personal liability. That may sound a lot but with litigation being what it is in the USA I considered it to be less than sufficient. I therefore obtained coverage for a further \$1.5 million. I'm glad to say that I never had to make use of it.

I officiated in both the adult and the youth leagues, although it was with the youth leagues that I spent the bulk of my time. The referees' fees in the youth leagues are usually in the range of \$20-\$35 depending upon the division. In the adult leagues the fees are likely to be \$40-\$50. Neutral (qualified) linemen (where appointed) normally receive half as much as the referee. Travelling expenses are not usually paid. With fees at these levels (the current exchange rate is about £1=\$1.50) there is, perhaps, more of a financial inducement for a referee in the USA than in many other countries. Quite a lot of youngsters are attracted into refereeing by the thought that they can earn as much on one Sunday afternoon as they can by spending the entire weekend stocking the shelves in the local supermarket. Some referees of senior years may also be there solely because soccer helps them to supplement their income. I

knew one referee in New Jersey who was managing to earn enough from soccer to put his son through college. It meant officiating every Saturday and Sunday as well as several evenings each week, but he did it. I should also add that he also loves soccer and as far as I'm concerned there's nothing wrong in taking the money as long as the referee is providing the right level of service to the game.

Some aspects of refereeing in the USA may be worth mentioning. The provision of changing rooms was the exception rather than the rule. Pre-game activities tended to take longer and had to be allowed for if the game was to start on time. Field markings were often incorrect and seldom did I find the nets to be adequately secured. A knife and a ball of twine was an essential part of my kit! The checking of team rosters and the inspection of the players' passes also took time. The referee had to retain the passes until the end of the game. In the event that a player was sent off the referee would keep the pass and send it to the league administrators with the match report. Instructions to club linesmen needed to be given very carefully, making it clear that a ball on the line is still in play. The club linesman's duty was limited solely to that of indicating when the ball went out of play. This may surprise you, but given that there was no widespread knowledge of the Laws, it was impractical to have these linesman do anything more. All other decisions - including offside - had to be left to the referee's judgement. Substitution rules in the USA were often more liberal. As many as 7 substitutes might be allowed, with open substitution (i.e. players being able to leave and re-enter the game) being permitted on injuries or on specified "dead ball" situations throughout the entire course of the game. However, the referee could quite justifiably refuse to allow a substitution if he considered it was being made simply to waste time - as sometimes occurred towards the end of a close game. But overall, I found the task of refereeing in the USA to be much the same as it is anywhere else. The dissent, the gamesmanship, the abuse, the violent conduct and the hundred and one other hassles which referees the world over have to deal with were all there. So, too, were the good times, when at the end of a difficult game, the players and coaches would come up to me and say, "Well done!" - and I knew that they meant it!

Unlike FIFA and many country FAs, the USSF year runs from January until December. There is no definitive soccer season. These vary according to the requirements of each individual league and have to consider its geographic location. For those who live in southern states like Florida, or California, soccer could well be played throughout the entire year. But if you live in the north the winter conditions are too severe and the grounds too hard for soccer. In New Jersey the "close season" lasted for some 3-4 months from late November till sometime in March. Then, with the arrival of Spring, the leagues would bloom again and keep referees active for the next 8-9 months. The youth leagues usually have 2 separate seasons each year - Spring and Fall. For the youngsters who want to play soccer during the 3-month summer holidays there are plenty of opportunities to be kept busy. A whole variety of special competitions, weekend tournaments, team tours - both home and abroad - regional trials, representative matches and soccer camps are always available. So again, throughout the summer, referees are in constant demand!

Some 10 years ago I got together with a few other enthusiasts, and together we formed the North West New Jersey Association of Soccer Referees (NNJASR). The objectives which we established were very similar to those espoused by the RRA. From those humble beginnings the association has grown and today has a membership of some 160 referees. We recognised at the outset

that if soccer was to expand as it should in our part of the world then we would need to recruit, train and generally help to develop a sufficient number of capable referees to meet the continuing growth of the game. In this context I found myself involved in the organisation of training programmes, the field assessment and counselling of referees and the preparation and facilitating of development workshops for referees and linesmen. Together with a number of other experienced referees I participated in a "mentor" programme, the aim was to establish a one-on-one relationship with our more recently qualified brethren. Then, if the need arose, they knew that they had someone personal to whom they could turn for advice and encouragement. (How many would-be referees quickly fall by the wayside, for the want of such assistance?) But while the importance of continuing referee development and improvement was so obviously essential, we recognised that this could not take place in a vacuum. A satisfactory understanding between those who officiate and the various leagues, clubs, coaches, players and supporters with whom they come into contact, is also essential if good relationships are to be created and maintained.

The problems of achieving this understanding are not peculiar to the USA. They are universal! But in the USA there are several factors which serve to compound these problems. Firstly, a great number of those involved in the running of the leagues and the coaching of players did not grow up playing the game themselves. The same is true of many parents who go along each week to watch their children play. As a result, the inherent feeling for the game which is second nature to most of us who played the game in our formative years is missing. This makes a big difference to manner in which refereeing decisions are seen. Secondly, there is a general lack of awareness of the Laws themselves and the manner in which they must be applied. For example, the concepts of "intent" and "advantage" are foreign to the average American since they do relate them to the rules of their more traditional sports. Thirdly, the soccer played in the schools is not directly governed by the USSF. Another authority has taken responsibility for the game and has established its own set of rules. These rules, while based on FIFA Laws, contain many variations. For example, a game consists of 4 quarters with "time-outs": officiating is by 2 referees (with equal jurisdiction) who cover the field in a manner similar to field hockey umpires: time keeping is handled off the field by the official "timekeeper": referees are required to give a whole variety of signals indicating why a decision has been made: a player may not play the ball while on the ground - irrespective of the proximity of any other player: the position of a player's feet when taking a throw-in must be outside the field of play: a yard-long penalty kick line is marked on the field instead of a penalty spot. I could go on - but I won't! One can argue the pro's and the con's of these modifications but at the end of the day one thing is clear. They tend to breed confusion for players and spectators alike. Players who turn out for their schools during the week have to adapt to a different set of conditions and refereeing decisions when they play for their travelling teams on Sunday. Likewise, the spectators - who are usually oblivious of the situation - can quite understandably get upset and view these differences in interpretation as woeful inconsistencies on the part of the USSF referees. (For these reasons I resisted the many attempts that were made to lure me into refereeing school games.) All the same, this situation existed, and, together with my NNJASR colleagues, I felt that it must not be ignored. If a better understanding of FIFA Laws was to be established then it was up to us, as referees, to take the initiative. As a result, I put together a "Laws of Soccer" appreciation programme based strictly on FIFA. This was offered by the NNJASR to all of the local communities. Many of them welcomed it with open arms and provided the opportunity for us to make presentations to, and have explanatory discussions with, hundreds of those involved in soccer. League officials, team coaches, players, spectators - everyone was invited! Did it resolve all of the problems? No! But it most certainly did help, and it very definitely created goodwill. I'm glad to say that the NNJASR still offers the programme today.

Another of our activities was to hold an annual training school for new entrant level referees. These were 2-day classes - given by USSF Referee Instructors - which were held over the course of a weekend. These classes were invariably oversubscribed with 50, or more, new referees being turned out each year. But even with our "mentor" programme, the attrition rate proved to be very high with something less than 40% of the graduates remaining as active referees after 2 years. There were various reasons for this. Some of those attending the classes were simply there to learn more about the laws and had no desire to become referees. A lot of the younger referees gave up when they went off to college. Others tried refereeing for a while but discovered that the hassle was more than they could handle. It was - and still is - a constant battle to keep up the numbers needed to satisfy the demands for referees in the USA.

Some 2 years ago an approach was made to the NNJASR by one of the major youth leagues, from which the majority of our members received assignments, asking if it would be possible to have 3-man teams of qualified officials for the Under-19 divisions. This would replace the use of club linesmen. Since we could not suddenly produce an additional supply of referees this request presented us with a seemingly insurmountable problem. It took some lateral thinking to come up with a workable solution. The key was to find a way of making more effective use of the available referees. If we could reduce their travelling time then they could spend more time on the field. We therefore suggested to the league that instead of referees having to go all over the countryside, the Under-19 games should be concentrated at a number of selected venues. In this way we could send 3-man teams of referees to a limited number of locations each Sunday and with kick-offs scheduled at 2-hourly intervals, commencing at 11.00 a.m., a team could cover 3 games. Each referee would take 1 game in the middle and 2 games as a linesman. Since the fees for all the games were the same it made no difference how the matches were divided. This proposal was accepted and the results have been highly successful. The number of complaints about referees' decisions dropped considerably. Overall game control was enhanced by the very presence of 3 qualified officials. By working together week in, week out, the referees were able to improve their own teamwork, offer each other some constructive critiques and expand their capabilities as linesmen. Additionally, the 3 referees were often able to travel together to their assignments thus sharing the expense. The last I heard, the scheme was being extended to cover the Under-16 divisions, with a longer term objective of having 3-man teams operating down to the Under-14 divisions.

## QUOTES OF THE YEAR

The End of the year always produces a nice crop of quotes in the newspapers which I like to share.

From the *Independent*, 24/12/93:

I could manage England part-time - and still walk the dog.

**Brian Clough**

Being manager of Barnet was like living with a double-decker bus on your head.

**Barry Fry**, former Barnet and Southend United manager, now of Birmingham City.

Brilliant. Tell him he's Pele.

**John Lambie**, *Partick Thistle manager, on being told that Colin McGlashan had a head injury and didn't know who he was.*

The listening bank refused to listen and the bank that likes to say yes said no.

**Gary Gibson**, *Hartlepool United chairman, on his club's efforts to finance a new stand.*

I don't care who they are, Linford Christie or Ben bloody Johnson, I'll beat them over a yard.

**Mick Quinn**, *Coventry City's rotund striker.*

From the *Guardian*, 28/12/93:

But in real terms I've only spent £10 million here.

*Liverpool's manager, Graeme Souness.*

I like being manager of Wimbledon. I don't think there's much challenge being manager of AC Milan

**Joe Kinnear.**

I can count on the fingers of one hand 10 games where we've caused our own downfall.

**Joe Kinnear.**

They're kicking the ball 50 yards instead of 60.

*Norwich's manager Mike Walker on how Wimbledon have refined their game.*

From the *Times*, 30/12/93:

The Pope would think twice about taking it.

**Roy Hodgson**, *Switzerland manager, on the England job.*

The beauty of cup football is that Jack always has a chance of beating Goliath.

**Terry Butcher**, *then Sunderland manager, before the Coca-Cola cup match with Leeds.*

I've been racing Formula One in a Mini Metro.

**Bobby Gould**, *explaining his resignation as Coventry City manager.*

If Kevin Keegan fell into the Tyne, he'd come up with a salmon in his mouth.

**Jack Charlton.**

The best way to watch Wimbledon is on Ceefax.

**Gary Lineker**, *commenting on a bad Monday night match.*

And just to round off the funnies, a few more *Colemanballs* (from *Private Eye's* no.6):



Football today would certainly not be the same if it had never existed.

**Elton Welsby**

George [Graham] will be happy with a draw - I know how ambitious and positive he is.

**Terry Neill**

When you think about it, there's three games per working week - Saturday, mid-week and Saturday again. **Jimmy Greaves**

Without picking out anyone in particular, I thought Mark Wright was tremendous.

**Graeme Souness**

And Lineker scored the equaliser thirteen minutes from the end - talk about a last-minute goal! **Simon Mayo**

Chris Waddle is off the field at the moment; exactly the position he is at his most menacing.

**Gerald Sinstad**

. . . . and Tranmere Rovers are playing with a 5-man back four. **Commentator**

And so it's West Ham one, Everton nil - and that's the way it stayed all through half-time.

**Mick Lowes**

## **CHRISTMAS DRAW**

Yet another highly successful draw in spite of the recession and thanks to the efforts of those who sold the tickets, but especially to John Moore who again masterminded it all and put in the hard graft. Although John had to miss the Draw - away to replace his spoilt holiday - he left things in the (generally) capable hands of his committee colleagues, led by Graeme McLay. Thanks to them too. (Full list of winners on page XXXX)

## **CHRISTMAS DRAW**

### **Full List of Winners**

## **CONFESSIONS OF AN EX-PRESIDENT**

### **What's On (for the rest of the season)**