

# READING REFEREE

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## *Editorial*

Welcome back and every good wish for the New Year. What will it bring? This is the point at which I dodge forecasts and resolutions. Let's stick with the hope that things in and out of refereeing will get better there seems to be room for improvement.

My major disappointment of 1994 (to do with refereeing) was not only the fact that one of our members who had been assaulted got no practical support from the National RA in his hour of need, but the *appalling way* in which our request for help was turned down.

Whatever the merits of the particular case and the reasons for the NRA not giving support, no Society should have been sent the letter we received. In it we were assured that there had been a 'very lengthy and indepth discussion by Council' but they could not support our request for help. *Not a word of explanation or justification or any practical suggestion.* Our society and particularly our member deserved better than that, especially as he had acted entirely correctly throughout. And we in the RA continually talk about man-management . . .

Our Chairman was so incensed he wrote to the President. Peter Willis has not only made it clear he is approachable, but has pledged his determination to support assaulted referees. Peter assured us that he and Council 'were upset that one of our colleagues had been assaulted', and 'will always guide and advise members' - *and referred us to Southern Division.* We are now trying to discover exactly what has happened (or rather *not* happened). There is clearly more to be said and written.

Have a good rest of season!

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## **November Monthly Meeting**

A meeting with a difference (or two).

In spite of the promise of an issue of the magazine, the attendance at some 50+ was a bit disappointing. After welcomes, the Chairman announced that the normal order of the meeting would be reversed - we were to have the pleasure of the training item first. The second difference was the item itself. No simple discussion of a thorny refereeing topic - entertainment in the form of the newly-formed (some might have thought *very* newly formed) group of Thespians, the Reading RA Players.

The scene to be enacted was not unfamiliar. The officials' changing room, before, during and after the game. Co-operation between referee and linesmen was the training topic.

Martin (Studsy) Shearn, complete with flat cap, made a credible club secretary, tea man and general dogsbody, making his brogue even less intelligible than usual. Stewart Mills, keen as ever to get it right, was the frustrated referee; Gary Wilkins, the tyro linesmen, also keen to get it right but just a bit wet behind the ears.

The second linesman is awaited, and still awaited, so the pitch inspection goes on without him. At 2-20 enter Peter (I've-seen -it-all-before) Pittaway. "Early for me" is his only response to the polite rebuke. From here on it's laughs all the way, with Peter the natural comedian. He said his lines with such conviction (and with plenty of ad libs), you did begin to wonder . . .

With the continual interruptions of Martin Dogsbody added to those of Peter the Senior, poor Stewart's briefing, in spite of his valiant attempts, was a total shambles. The first half did not go well.

Enter Peter complaining bitterly that the ref kept on missing him/ Funnily enough, Stewart seemed to interpret things differently. . Not so much a discussion as two heated monologues, and poor Gary, on his first neutral line, was trying to make sense of it all. And so to the second half. . .

Back in the dressing room Peter couldn't get dressed and away fast enough. He would not be staying for a drink and post mortems were clearly out. Stewart was valiantly trying to make something positive out of the experience for Gary. The only thing the officials had in common was that they were glad it was all over.

Exeunt to delighted applause.

Stephen Green as Senior Training Officer had little difficulty in pointing out what should and should not have happened - the more graphic for being in the form of a playlet. He stressed that the role of the referee is to be in control and that means both thought and preparation in advance. He didn't need to say much about the 'old hand' Peter.

It was generally agreed that the Reading RA Players should be encouraged to work up their act, which possibly had had to have a little too much spontaneity on this first occasion, and consider going on the road as the Reading RA Roadshow. It was also suggested that a short "right way to do it" scene might have been added as an epilogue, just to drive the points home. Enjoyable and useful training certainly.

The business took second place and less time than usual. The Chairman reported three plum appointments. Members congratulated Roy Maybanks who was to be 4th official at Elm Park for the England v. France U/18 game; Peter Hitt and Martin Albery who were to be on the lines at the FA XI v. Isthmian League.

Membership is proving something of a worry. Membership Secretary, Andy Awberry reported that numbers are a bit down on last year and stand at 109. He has been able to do less chasing and hopes all members will help.

The Reading RA team had come second (out of seven participants) in the County RA Quiz, held the previous Monday at Aylesbury. George Mills congratulated our team of Stephen Green (who achieved the highest score of the night) Stewart Mills, John Moore and Iain Williamson and commended the quiz to members, hoping for more support in future.

### **The Problem Spot**

Alan Wellsted related a problem he had had which related to the night's topic of referee/linesman co-operation.

It was a Diadora game, so he had neutral linesmen. He had instructed them, if they believed they had seen a penalty incident, to raise the flag and check that he wasn't on top of the play and/or waving it on, before putting the flag across the chest.

He was following play towards the penalty box when he saw the attacker with the ball fouled by a defender outside the area. He looked across at the linesman who immediately put his flag across his chest. (Alan paused at this point for discussion about possible courses of action before revealing what he actually did).

In fact he gave the penalty and moved between the players and linesman to cover him (but without speaking to him), telling the approaching players that he would caution anybody who went past.

A suggestion that he might have had a word with his linesman, even though he was going to accept his flag, was generally thought likely to have diminished confidence in the officials rather than defused the situation. Alan's action kept faith with his instructions and kept the officials together as a team; (and, in practice, it also led to no dissent). Unfortunately/fortunately there was no video to show where the incident actually took place . . . .

Not so much a second Problem Spot but a response to an earlier one, was a suggestion from Andy Awberry about instructions to club linesmen in view of the new approach to offside. He has found a lot of confusion which the linesmen blame on (other) referees. So he has simplified his instructions about interfering to just these two points:

Think of a line from the player with the ball to the goal. If he passes the ball ahead or to the right, give me a flag for anyone of his side ahead or to the right. If to the left, flag anyone on the left.

In the 'danger zone' - penalty area or thereabouts - give me a flag wherever, but I may overrule. One exception - the 25-30 yd screamer: flag only for clear interference with the keeper.

Andy has had good support from his club linesmen and they have seemed to appreciate this clear and simple guidance.

## **THAT ODE**

[This piece of verse (or worse) was first heard in the Problem Spot at the October meeting, read by its author, Martin Shearn (alias 'Studsy' because of his long-standing and deserved reputation as the most diligent stud-checker, probably anywhere). He managed to make the verse sound better than it reads.. Whatever it's shortcomings as poetry, it does contain the sniff of a powerful message. Ed]

Evening all! Studsy's my name

And football boots my normal game.  
Tonight, however, this Problem Spot  
Concerns us all (some not a lot).  
Five minutes or so is what's allowed,  
So off I go my head unbowed.  
First of all to set the scene:  
It's Rabson's Rec where most have been.  
'Tween club and ref (friend or foe?),  
Now the title for my tale of woe:  
"Studsy's boot is in it again"

That at least is my suggestion  
So let's start with the pitch inspection  
Check the nets and tie them up.  
'Why worry, mate? It's not the Cup'.  
Walk over the pitch, the lines seem bright.  
Penalty spot *eleven* yards? Oh! that's all right.

Pick up the cans, fill in a rut.  
Part of ref's job? Hello! What's this muck?  
Now that's the limit! I draw the line.  
It's got to go b'fore kick-off time.

Tell club officials it's got to go  
They don't, predictably, want to know.  
Still 20 minutes before the start,  
Officials just think the ref's a nark.

Check again, 10 minutes to off.  
The problem is the pile's still soft.  
Ask yet again: Where's the catch?  
The pitch costs £37 a match.

You want it moved, ref? Don't make me laugh,  
Go and tell the Rabson's staff.  
If you really want to make a hit  
You'll have to go and shift that . . . .

Another decision the ref must make.  
Cancel the game or buck you take.  
So, to rid the pitch of the offending pile  
The choice is yours. You have to smile.

But, seriously folks, what do you do,  
When you inspect and find dog's pooh?

Inform the club and then the league?  
Or go for help who will agree  
To take away the loathsome pooh?  
(And yes, I got some on my shoe).

Should we now all pack a scoop?  
(Or simply think that it's a hoot?)  
A plastic bag with cardboard end  
You pop IT in and set a trend.

So my request to you tonight,  
Is what to do in such a plight.  
The floor is yours. Do you agree  
'Tis the home club's responsibility  
To ensure the pitch is free of pooh,  
So others can't possibly foul their shoe?

One final fling. My time is up.  
Thanks again for the Sainsbury Cup.

[And in case you have forgotten whose responsibility it really is: it is the *home club's*, not yours. They may reasonably wish to pass the responsibility on to a groundsman and get him to deal with the problem, but that is their concern, not yours. You simply have to be satisfied the pitch is fit for play. Ed]

## HAROLD EYEING HALF-CENTURY

### Veteran ref's amazing record

**HAROLD Green has given an amazing 45 years of service to the District League as a referee.**

The sprightly 73-year-old retired maintenance fitter started with the league way back in 1949 when he qualified as a referee.

"I still enjoy it, and my ambition is to complete 50 years with the District League and Gloucestershire FA registration", said Harold.

"Nowadays far too much dissent and verbal abuse has come into the game. The quality of local football has also deteriorated."

Harold still regularly officiates at two games every weekend - either a District League game or Gloucestershire County League line on a Saturday and taking charge of a County of Avon Youth League game on Sunday.

He also had a seven-year spell with the Western League and officiated in the Wednesday League and Bristol Sunday League.

Harold took up the whistle after a playing career as a striker with Eastville Old Boys on The Downs and then the District League.

**73 NOT OUT: Harold Green started with the District League in 1949.**

**SOME QUOTES OF 1994**

(from the Sunday Times 18/12/94)

'Players prefer the FA Cup because it's the end-of-season curtain-raiser.'

*Peter Withe*

'I get letters from Princess Di thanking me for taking her out of the headlines.'

*Graham Taylor*

He nearly went to Middlesbrough but I told him Newcastle was nearer London' Luckily footballers believe things like that.

*Kevin Keegan* persuades Robert Lee to join Newcastle from Charlton.

'If Mickey Mouse had taken charge, it would have given the place a lift.'

*Mike Walker* at Everton

'Right now, I think if I robbed a bank I'd get mugged on the way out.'

Manchester City manager *Brian Horton*

'I have spent more time on the bench than Judge Pickles.'

*Steve Hodge*, having appeared as substitute for the 50th time in a Leeds shirt

'The challenge was so reckless that if he'd missed the Manchester united player he probably would have taken me out as well.'

FA Cup Final referee, *David Elleray*, describes Newton's tackle that resulted in the first penalty.

'At least after the scan it proves to everyone I do have a brain.'

*Jack Charlton* having undergone a health check-up.

'The referee's a muppet.'

*Ian Wright*

That's the story of my managerial life. Buy in Woolworths, sell in Harrods

Wimbledon Manager *Joe Kinnear*

'His position now is sitting in the coach waiting to go home.'

*Alan Sugar* discussing the future of Ossie Ardiles

'We prefer to lose because of the ability of the opposition rather than the inability of the referee.'

*Kenny Dalglish*

'I thought I had a good understanding with Basile Boli. He didn't understand me and I didn't understand him.'

*Alan McLaren* after making his debut for Rangers

## **TAILPIECES**

(from *The Daily Telegraph* 17/12/94)

Patrick Cobbold, who died this week, was an institution on the board at Ipswich Town, along with his brother John. Mr Patrick was renowned for his *bons mots*. "They say it is all wine, women and song in the Ipswich board room," he said once. "But we don't do any singing".

It is the moment you dread: the Tannoy crackles into life, a car registration is read out, and you have to scurry from your seat in mid-match to remove the offending vehicle. Imagine then how Mick Gooding felt when his number was announced at Elm Park. The Reading midfielder was, literally, in mid-match at the time.