

# READING REFEREE

**Editor - Brian Palmer**

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**Assistant Editor - John Moore**

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## *Editorial*

A happy New Year! And a hope that all went well for you and yours over the festive season and that you escaped the flu/virus infection which caught many.

What does the New Year promise? Well, as I write this, frozen pitches and postponed games. As always some disruption leading very quickly to the end-of-season excitement, and the possibilities of later rounds of cups and, for the few, the prospect of a final or two. If you don't line regularly, try to get one or two in, in case. So often we are embarrassed to see a colleague on a cup line who, frankly, lets himself and his colleagues down. Doing good middles throughout the season is no insurance.

Last year was an important year for the Reading RA and it finished in style with the 75th Anniversary Dinner and Dance. What of the next 25 years? Is the national RA ready for all that is to change? Very doubtful unless there is something we don't know. My New Year hope - it can't be a resolution - continues to be that the NRA will actually undertake a *fundamental* review of itself and its future. Do an exercise like zero budgeting. You start from nothing - *tabula rasa* - and build it up from there. You have a group capable of doing it - my *think tank* again. And you carry out proper research into what is happening to referees and refereeing in other countries to see if there is anything we can learn (not just assume arrogantly that there isn't). Maybe by 2000 . . .

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**MONTHLY MEETING**

## **November**

The Chairman gave a special welcome to the newly qualified referees present and presented them with the Reading RA Certificate. Congratulations were passed on to the Training Team and thanks too to the examiners.

Among other items of business

the jewellery issue was to be raised with the County FA at the next meeting with officers of the County RA.

the County FA had turned down our request for help towards the cost of our 75th Anniversary Dinner.

the Reading RA team had won the County Quiz (report on page )

21 trainees had passed the recent examination, with two deferred. The next course would start as usual in January.

### *Reading Football League*

had thanked and congratulated Martin Shearn for designing a card for assistant referees' and players' names.

reminded referees that it was the club's responsibility to comply with Senior Division ground requirements and asked members not to get drawn in agreeing that partially roped-off pitches were acceptable.

### *Reading Sunday League*

Peter Pittaway confirmed [this is the definitive answer. Ed] that it was the club's responsibility to produce the match card to the referee before kick-off. However, use common sense and seek out the card if it doesn't appear. The League requires the names of the subs to be listed on the card *before* kick-off.

The 75th Anniversary Dinner and dance had been a great success (report on page Apologies and best wishes had been received from former officers Maurice Baker, Peter Knock, Ray Weedon and Dick Wilkins.

Kevin Parsons made an appeal for donations of surplus kit still in usable condition for the 'Kit Wardrobe' (used to help the recently qualified to get started).

*[In my absence, the following reports were contributed by Brian Wratten, to whom my thanks. Ed]*

### **Problem Spot**

#### **KICKS FROM THE PENALTY MARK**

Dick Sawden Smith started by reminding us that the taking of kicks from the penalty mark never forms part of an actual match - it is only a method of deciding a winner. Nonetheless, the referee has to be conversant with all of the attendant procedures. Are we? For example:

If a player who has been cautioned during the game commits a second cautionable offence during the taking of kicks from the penalty mark, shall he be sent off?

When all the players in a team have taken a kick from the penalty mark, must they follow the same order in taking their second kick as they had for the first series of kicks?

If, during the taking of kicks a goalkeeper is injured and cannot continue, may he be replaced with a substitute?

If, at the end of the match, some players, who are not injured, leave the field of play and fail to return, should the referee allow the kicks to be taken by the players who are left?

After each team has taken 10 kicks, may a team which has had a player sent off, use a player who has already taken a kick, for the 11th kick?

Having posed the questions Dick provided the answers by referring us to the 'Procedures and Check-list for Referees' on pages 56-61 of *Laws of Association Football - Guide for Players and Referees*. To the visible relief of many he did not ask how we made out! Our Chairman, however, was quick to suggest that the Quiz Team would be delighted to hear from anyone who had got all the correct answers!

### **Guest Speaker - Alan Smith**

It is always a pleasure to be at an RRA monthly meeting when, apart from being both informative and entertaining, the guest speaker offers us a selection of food for thought. Those who attended the November meeting must therefore have been delighted with the veritable smorgasbord of candid insights and thought-provoking comments provided by Alan Smith. To his lasting credit, Alan who until recently was manager of Wycombe Wanderers said little of his departure from the club, although he did acknowledge that it had been a great disappointment for him. Instead he exhibited a refreshingly philosophical attitude as he treated his audience to a wide-ranging series of observations and anecdotes from what he described as the "20 great years" he had spent in football with Dulwich Hamlet, Wimbledon, Crystal Palace and Wycombe Wanderers.

In his opening remarks Alan said he was glad to note that Reading RA had clarified his identity, for at some other speaking engagements he had observed that his audience appeared more than disgruntled to discover that they were not going to be hearing from his illustrious namesake of Arsenal and England fame. A name can mean a great deal in football circles and Alan went on to suggest that a good deal of snobbery exists. As an example he cited the time when he was assistant coach at Crystal Palace. He called up a foreign club, gave them his name and asked if he could visit them to discuss and observe their training methods. The answer was a categorical, "No!" A few days later he called again, only this time he mentioned that he was Steve Coppell's assistant. The ploy worked perfectly for he got the answer, "Yes! We'd be delighted to see you!"

As he went on to outline the diversified role of the modern football manager, one could have been forgiven for thinking that what Alan was describing bore more resemblance to the task of a social worker. The manager had to be mother and father to his players as well as look after their wives or girl friends or in some cases their boy friends! He must set the tone and provide the required leadership. He had to be a disciplinarian. He won't necessarily be liked and he can't be

everybody's friend. All too often friendship can be regarded as a sign of weakness. He may have 35 professionals plus 20 or so apprentices to manage. In addition, he has to deal with his board of directors, the supporters and inevitably, the media. In all of his interactions the manager must exercise considerable political acumen and inter-personal skills.

What's the difference between a manager and an assistant manager? Alan's answer - £100,000 per year! Yet it is the assistant manager who often gets the "dirty" jobs to do. Alan recalled an incident when his boss asked him to tell one of the players who had a particularly volatile temperament, that he would not be going to Tenerife with the rest of the first team squad. (The boss said that the player would take the news better if Alan delivered it). Having called the player in, Alan calmly explained the situation. The interview proved to be somewhat explosive with the player claiming that he was being victimised and storming off home. A little later Alan phoned to see if he had calmed down. "I don't think he's very happy" answered the player's mother. "He's just thrown the TV set through the window!" Another case of motherly understatement?

The mind-set of many players was called into question. We were told that at Crystal Palace, 22 of the players read the same tabloid newspaper - the one better known for its page 3 portraits than for its journalistic commentary. This same tabloid also gives a rating of a player's performance. On a certain occasion Alan felt that one of his players had had a most unsatisfactory game so on the Monday morning he told the player that he expected far better things from him. Apparently the player was surprised to receive such a critique. "I couldn't have been that bad" he protested. "Didn't you read the paper? They gave me a '7'." It seemed that in the player's view it was clearly a case of his manager failing to recognise that the tabloid's sports reporter was far better qualified to pass analytical judgement on his performance.

On another occasion, a player was due to attend a disciplinary hearing after being sent off. Prior to the hearing Alan was discussing the affair with the player who seemed completely bemused by the whole situation. "I don't know what all the fuss is about," he told Alan. "All I did was to head butt him!" How do you get through to such a mentality? Incidentally, this same player had been sent off 11 times in his career but was convinced that referees were simply out to get him!

It came as no surprise when Alan suggested that all too often the media coverage of events clouds the reality. Things are portrayed differently for the sake of

having a story that will grab public interest. Heroes are made of those who are totally undeserving of such attention or adulation. The wrong messages are sent to the youngsters who are seeking role models. TV brushes over many of the things that aren't right in football management. While commentators will spend half an hour trying to prove that a referee made a wrong decision, they seem to display little interest in addressing the more fundamental issues of the game.

Dealing with the media can at times be infuriating but the manager has to "keep his cool". During his days with Crystal Palace Alan remembers coming off the field after a heart-wrenching 1-0 cup semi-final loss to Liverpool. Inevitably a SKY TV crew was waiting for him. A microphone was thrust in his face and the reporter asked, "How do you feel?" One can well imagine how he really felt! One can also believe that if Alan had given an honest answer to such an insensitive question he might well have created an uproar. Instead he counted to ten and told the watching millions, "I feel really sorry for the boys!"

By Alan's reckoning there has been no improvement in English coaching over the past 30 years. There is still no qualification needed to be a football coach. Some of the continental countries are way ahead when it comes to requiring a coach to have a recognisable qualification for the job. In fact, the whole approach to the game is more dedicated on the continent. Despite this, little is being spent or done to correct the situation here. Alan voiced various concerns about the state of English football. These included:

The importation of foreign players which has changed the face of the Premiership. But what is happening to the development of our own young players? Some clubs have abandoned their traditional reserve team or youth team. They can't afford them as well as pay the inflated transfer fees and wages of players.

The ever-widening gap between the 'elite' clubs and the rest. Last season, for example, the combined turnover of 5 clubs (Manchester United, Newcastle, Arsenal, Liverpool and Tottenham) was greater than the total turnover of the remaining 87 clubs that make up the Football League.

Disciplinary matters tend to get glossed over instead of being properly addressed.

The inadequate development of facilities.

Insufficient money is being ploughed back into the game.

Lack of liaison between the vested interest groups at the top.

The growing interference with the selection and coaching of the team by Club chairmen and directors.

On the subject of referees Alan - who, we were pleased to hear, had never had an argument with a referee - had little time for those armchair critics who could pontificate for hours over a decision which the official was required to make in a split second. He felt that clubs should do more to assist and support referees by offering them the use of their training facilities and physiotherapy services. He recognised the intense pressure to which referees are subjected and felt that modern technology could be used to develop some form of aid for match officials. With this operating off the field the pressure on those in the middle might well be reduced. Would professional players make good referees? He didn't think so. He also opined that players earning thousands of pounds a week were less than likely to respect the lowly paid referee. He believed that the good referee was the one who, despite having to apply FIFA's mandatory instructions, still did his very best to keep all 22 players on the field.

After keeping his audience engrossed for almost an hour Alan fielded a variety of questions. Inevitably he was asked his opinion on players' wearing jewellery. He saw no reason for them to do so but thought that club managers were unlikely to insist on their players removing it. The manager had enough problems to face without alienating relationships with his players over something the match referee could easily resolve. When asked about his own future he indicated that his recent experience had not left him feeling sour. He looked forward to a continuing involvement in football, at home or abroad, in a managerial or technical capacity. For the moment, however, he remained open to offers.

Those of us who were on hand to hear Alan's excellent presentation must thank him for fulfilling his engagement with Reading RA. It must surely be a measure of the man that he chose to honour this commitment when, given the circumstances, he could well have been excused if he had backed out. We can only wish him well and trust that his aspirations of a rapid return to football will be realised. Thank you, Alan, for such an enjoyable evening! Please come to see us again.

**December**

The different meeting of the year. Over 50 members to be entertained to the Christmas draw.

The business was short and quickly despatched:

the County FA's finances seemed healthy:      current account £68,000  
  deposit account £70,000

[no figure available for investments]

request from the RFL to give details of any irregularities reported.

membership at 122

from the B & B RA November meeting reported that  
Reading is the only society to show an increase n membership  
the Southern Division Quiz will be held at Woking on 2 March. [Support our  
team!]  
our query over jewellery will go to the NRA then hopefully to the FA and FIFA.

Neil Isham asked whether  
the RA had reacted to the High Court decision holding a Rugby referee  
responsible for the injury to a player. The Secretary had not been informed yet  
of any action by the RA.  
the County FA could replace the written report for cautions by a series of tick-  
boxes.

Both issues would be pursued by the Secretary.

The second half was devoted, as is traditional to the Christmas Draw. A stylish  
display of some 30+ prizes, and members of the Committee attending to the  
niceties of the draw. All very efficient, (except that yet again none of my tickets  
won anything. Did I get them back *too early* this year?)

Brian Wratten, this year's organiser was warmly thanked for all his efforts, and  
his wife too for providing us with refreshments. Full prize list on page )



## **ANDORRA**

Well, their first ever international (I mentioned it in the last issue) came and went. Not a fairy tale unfortunately. They got well beaten 6-1 by Estonia. They were drawing 1-1 just after half-time but lacked stamina. 'A bad result, but a promising performance' was the verdict of their coach. They could prove a threat in the World Cup in the fullness of time. Still a nice place to visit.

## **NICE ONE (OR TWO OR THREE) DECLAN!**

Though he never tells me himself, I hear Declan Ford has had a few more nice appointments:

FA Youth Cup: Viking Sports v. Wimbledon (Assistant Referee)  
Combined Services v. Chelsea (4th official)  
Army Youth v. Reading Youth (Referee)

## **ELECTRONIC AIDS OR REFS TO BECOME ROBOTS?**

Of course, some are already arguing that FIFA is turning us into robots, but the new electronic devices being tested really do take us down the electronic track to automation.

Graham Kelly, chief executive of the FA, has given the official view: 'The unique pressures of top professional sport demand that little can be left to chance. The advances of modern technology cannot be ignored and must be incorporated into the game.' What he didn't say is that we are no longer talking of a 'game' in the traditional sense: we are talking of a multi-million pound business where a referee's mistake or alleged mistake can cause huge financial repercussions. The FA has to be seen to be taking some positive action to keep its own credibility in the not-so-brave new world..

The lead in electronic experimentation seems to be being taken in Holland where they are trying out sensors attached to players' shirts to indicate their position on

a grid screen monitored by a 4th official to check offside decisions. Another device is a 'laser belt' which indicates the correct 10 yards for a free kick. Also the Dutch have developed a walkie-talkie in the form of an arm-band which enables referees to communicate reasons for decisions which could then be displayed on a giant electronic screen.

The English FA is going about things more cautiously. An electronic clock which mimics the referee's watch is being investigated and Professor Nigel Allison of the Manchester Institute of Science and Technology has been commissioned 'to investigate ways of monitoring football matches and eradicating human error'. The idea of a fourth official sitting in the stand remains a popular suggestion from those who have seen the success of the practice in cricket, but no-one seems to have resolved how it could work for football, given the speed of play and the need to make instant decisions.

Electronic support is here, inevitable and in broad terms desirable. Just let's hope the views of *referees* are properly heeded. Those in the upper echelons need to remember that most of football is not played in large and sophisticated stadia. The Football League and International scene all derive from a much humbler base.. The real danger of electronic support is not to the ego of referees - it is to the game itself. The pressures for change to suit the media are already being felt. No doubt there will be pressure for the game to fit in with electronic possibilities in the quest for perfect decisions. And surely there could be nothing more boring than predictable perfection . . . . .

## **SUPPORT WHERE NEEDED**

[Extract from the Reading Football League *League News*, December 1996]

**Discipline** Bad behaviour by players, officials or followers, especially when directed towards referees, will not be tolerated by the Reading Football League and will result in disciplinary action in addition to any from the County FA. Disciplinary action has already been taken this season against a player as a result of his unacceptable behaviour directed at a referee. This has resulted in the withdrawal of the player's registration.

## **ONE WAY TO MAKE LIFE LESS STRESSFUL**

A plea for a little tolerance from Dick Sawdon Smith

Just before Christmas, the season of goodwill to all men, a Sunday newspaper published an article entitled 'Fifty Ways people drive you around the bend'. It listed fifty of the author's pet hates, that encourage him it said, to contemplate violence against the perpetrators.

Let me quote a few examples. People who wear baseball caps back to front, people who have personalised car number plates, men who won't accept how overweight they are by continuing to wear jackets so tight that they have to unbutton them before sitting down.

The newspaper invited readers to send in their own 'things I hate'. I took up their invitation, and said that the thing I hate is newspapers who pander to people's intolerance, by asking the. to write in with the things about other people that they hate. The word pander incidentally means 'to help satisfy any unworthy desires', and that is exactly what I believe this sort of article does. Is it really saying that it's OK to feel that you want to punch someone in the face, because they wear a baseball cap with the peak at the back, or because they refer to Manchester United as Nan United, another of the authors hates?

Isn't it just this type of intolerance that leads to all these 'rages' that seem so commonplace today, from road rage to supermarket rage. What is it the bible says, 'Let him that is without sin cast the first stone'. Are we so perfect, do we not have any little foibles that make other people shudder?. What difference do they make to our lives anyway? Cannot we be tolerant of others' failings?

Intolerance takes many forms. I sometimes wince at our referees' meetings when I hear what appears to me, to be intolerance, particularly against club secretaries. I was a club secretary for many years. As I was also refereeing I seldom got to watch my team, luckily having a team of helpers to look after them on match days. But I do know how much these people put in for their teams. How they have to chase around during the week to make sure they all turn up to play, get the kit washed and available on the day, all the administration and a thousand and one other tasks.

Therefore I worry when referees say 'It's up to the club to present me with the team card, or name the substitutes, not my job to go and ask for them'. When you know you have to have it, and the club secretary, with all his other duties, hasn't got around to attending to you, what's the harm in a gentle reminder? I've also heard referees say: 'It's up to clubs to provide linesmen's flags, why should I take them?' Personally I'd rather have a club linesman waving my flag, than trying to attract my attention with a handkerchief because the club had forgotten their flags. Sometimes it seems that referees turn up shortly before kick off and start demanding action. Sure they are things that the club should do, like removing dog mess, but we should get to the match early enough to give the club enough time to deal with any demands.

There are many things that we as referees should not be tolerant about, especially on the field of play. I feel however that a little thought sometimes about the pressures that others are under on match day, helps make life more tolerable for everyone, and less stressful for yourself.

## **REFEREEING FOR YOUNGSTERS**

[Like us, Croatia has a shortage of referees but has adopted a radical new way to increase recruitment. Let's hope they are not disappointed in their expectations. Ed]

' . . . before completing their last season in the youth sector, each Croatian youth player must take a refereeing exam, failing which he cannot play in the championship.'

The Croatian FA believes this will . . . 'provide the refereeing sector with a new generation of young, first rate referees . . . Only two or three players - or three or four at the most from each youth team will be taken on in the first team or reserve team and turn professional. The FA is confident that 'four to six of the others will be interested in becoming referees, thereby ensuring that refereeing's new recruits come directly from the game. New referees who have never played the game will therefore be left on the sidelines and inappropriate decisions will be banished from the stadia [!]. Former youth players who do not manage to become professional players and who pass the refereeing exam will easily be able to become first-rate referees'. It would also be expected that the youngsters who have taken the exam at the age of 17 or 18 'will be able to contribute to the adoption of a sporting attitude towards opponents, the referee, the spectators . . .'

'Sporting culture will develop which is essential to the future of professional footballers' 'Those who do not become either professional players or referees, will have the opportunity to serve as delegates.'. 'After additional training, sports journalist, sports directors and members of football's administrative bodies will also be recruited from among these youngsters.'

[Summarised from an article in the UEFA *Bulletin Officiel*, December 1996]

### 1996 CHRISTMAS DRAW - PRIZE WINNERS

PRIZE	TICKET No	WINNER'S NAME
FERGUSON REMOTE CONTROL 14" COLOUR TV	06332	N. ISHAM
DAEWOO MICROWAVE OVEN	05186	L. DENTON
CHRISTMAS HAMPER	01492	D. COSSEY
CASIO WATCH	10521	?. ELLIOTT
CASIO SCIENTIFIC HAND-HELD CALCULATOR	09089	P. ANDERSON
MULTI-COLOUR GOLF UMBRELLA	07378	A. CHAPMAN
PEN FOLD PRO GOLF BALLS (12)	05607	P. BELCHER
ADDIDAS EUROPA FOOTBALL	09865	?. MASSAM
REMINGTON TRAVEL HAIR DRYER - DUAL VOLTAGE	01006	B. WRATTEN
MORPHY RICHARDS 3-WAVEBAND RADIO/CLOCK	06960	P. MARTIN
BLANK E-180 VIDEO TAPES (2-PACK)	00209	J. LAMBDEN
BLANK E-180 VIDEO TAPES (2-PACK)	04514	R. AUGER
VIDEO TAPE: <i>THE WRONG TROUSERS</i>	05431	L. HILL
VIDEO TAPE: <i>THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME</i>	00445	T. GIBBS
VIDEO TAPE: <i>APOLLO 13</i>	07387	A. CHAPMAN
VIDEO TAPES (SET OF 2): <i>GETTYSBURG</i>	10207	E. CAMBRIDGE
BOOK: <i>BACK PAGE FOOTBALL</i>	08207	M. SHEARN
KRYPTON HAND LAMP	09822	A. NORTON

SET OF 6 WINE GLASSES	06342 R. KERR
BOTTLE OF VAT 69 WHISKY	07434 A. WATKINS
BOTTLE OF HARVEYS BRISTOL CREAM SHERRY	03048 N. BARRETT
BOTTLE OF COCKBURNS PORT	07910 B. DIBLEY
ICED CHRISTMAS CAKE + BOTTLE OF WINE	03654 C. PIKE
LUXURY CHRISTMAS PUDDING + BOTTLE OF WINE	01358 G. EVES
BOWL OF ROSES CHOCOLATES	08617 J. FREEMAN
TIN OF SWEET & CHOCOLATE BISCUITS	07996 C. MILLARD
2 BOTTLES OF WINE	06202 J. PEACOCK
WHITBREAD BEST BITTER (12-PACK)	08209 M. SHEARN
HOFMEISTER LAGER (12-PACK)	01465 J. ALBURY
LARGE TLC. TEDDY BEAR	09904 A. KINGSTON
BOTTLE OF WINE	00849 R. LACEY
GROLSCH PREMIUM LAGER (4-PACK)	01335 ?. SAMSON
GROLSCH PREMIUM LAGER (4-PACK)	08657 J. FREEMAN

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Brian Wratten, promoter of the draw this year, writes:

*I am pleased to report that the 1996 Draw has been a huge financial success, with a profit of £605. [The largest ever I think. Ed]. I would like to thank all members who contributed through the sale of tickets, and also Martin Albury, Cliff Watkins and Bernie Young who generously donated prizes. A list of prize winners is published above, but the biggest winner has to be the Reading RA.*

And thanks from all of us to Brian for all he has done to produce such an excellent result.

## QUOTES OF THE YEAR

By the end he was knackered-o. I think that's the Spanish for it.  
**Kevin Keegan's view of Asprilla's first game.**

The tackles are coming in thick and thin.  
**Alan Brazil, Radio 5 Live.**

They've nicknamed me Ena Sharples, because my head was never out of the net.  
**Ian Thain, non-League Keith's goalkeeper, after conceding 10 goals in a Scottish cup-tie against Rangers.**

Manchester United makes more in programme sales than we take on the gate  
**Lawrie McMeenemy, Southampton**

You know Dennis Wise? He could start a fight in an empty house.  
**Alex Ferguson**

Pearce with the kick. The last throw for England.  
**Brian Moore, England v. Switzerland, Euro96.**

He's a nice man with a nice family so it will make it difficult to kick him.  
**Tony Adams facing Arsenal team-mate Dennis Bergkamp.**

He has been the proverbial brick door.  
**Barry Davies on Matthias Sammer.**

This is an unusual Scotland side because they have good players.  
**Praise for the Under-21s from Javier Clemente, Spain's coach.**

There are some great defenders here. I just don't know their names.  
**David Ginola of Newcastle and France.**

It's sod's law. Now I've got time to improve my golf, it's the wrong time of year.  
**Howard Wilkinson when sacked by Leeds.**

I know where he should have put his flag up, and he'd have got plenty of help.

**Ron Atkinson at Stamford Bridge.**

The referee was booking everyone. I thought he was filling in his lottery numbers.

**Ian Wright.**

[*The Sunday Times*, 22/12/96]

### **WINNERS AGAIN (at last)**

In our 75th year a bit more cause for celebration. Peter Pittaway has led our team to victory in the County RA Quiz. And it was Peter who led the last winners - in 1983!

Not that it was easy. This year's team of Peter, Malcolm Garstang, Dave Osborne and Derek reigate were ranked first equal at the end of normal time after a neck-and-neck contest with the Chiltern Society. In the sudden death play-off our 'champion' Dave Osborne triumphed and the trophy came back to Reading. Congratulations to all our team and especially to Dave.

They now go forward to the Southern Division Regional finals and, if successful there, to the National finals. All to play for.



## MORE IN SADNESS . . .

We might have guessed the Berks and Bucks FA would not rush to make a contribution towards our 75th Anniversary celebration. We could have coped with that. But what about their reasoning for eventually turning us down?

'As you will appreciate, we receive many requests for help towards many functions, in particular, *from Clubs* [my emphasis] celebrating their Centenaries and unfortunately, we do not have funds available for such occasions.'

If one considers that there are over 1,000 clubs registered with the County FA then that statement is understandable. But is it reasonable? There is a surely a major difference between the objectives of a football club and those of a referees' society. Yet in Faringdon the distinction is either not recognised or for some reason ignored. Indeed, it is most revealing to note that the essential service provided to football by Reading RA and, presumably, our brother societies, both to the County FA and its many clubs, can be so readily discounted. Frankly, I find that insulting.

Is a donation really something the County FA could not afford? It hardly seems so if one considers the facts. Judging by the accounts, there appears to be no shortage of money in Faringdon - much of it put there because of the service provided by referees! Now, if we just suppose the County FA saw fit to make a small contribution to the jubilee funds of each of *all* the 11 referees' societies in Berks & Bucks. What would it really cost? The short answer is: very little. A donation of £100 to each society would amount to £1,100. Spread over the 25 years of a jubilee period this would equate to an average annual charge of £44 on the County FA's accounts. Not, one infers from the accounts, enough to break the bank. . . .

There are times when it is difficult to understand the reasoning of the Berks & Bucks FA in its relationships with RA societies. It makes an appeal in its annual Directory for all of its registered referees to join the RA. This at least suggests an acceptance that the activities of societies are

of benefit to the game. The County FA also relies heavily on the RA societies for the recruitment, training and ongoing development of referees - something essential if the needs of its 1,000+ clubs are to be met! How strange, therefore, that when presented with an opportunity to show some practical recognition to a society which has faithfully served both its community and the county for the past 75 years, they prefer instead to turn it down in such a cavalier fashion. Can we hope for change in time for our Centenary?

Brian Wratten

## **75th Anniversary Celebration Dinner & Dance**

What an excellent evening! A worthy celebration of a memorable event. Those who were not there for whatever reason really did miss something. In the capable hands of Immediate Past President Dick Sawdon Smith and his little sub-committee of George Mills and Peter Pittaway, all the arrangements went like clockwork. Excellent choice of venue, good meal, well served, and a bit of usual and less usual entertainment.

Special guests, accompanied by their wives, were: Councillor Jim Day, the Mayor of Reading; Colin Downey, Referees' Secretary of the FA; Alan Robinson, Overseas Secretary of the Referees' Association, John Christopher, Chairman of the Berks & Bucks FA; John Oxley, Chairman of the Berks & Bucks RA.

The plan was for a formal, but not too formal dinner, with a number of nice touches: for example, the ladies all received a table gift and wine was included to oil the proceedings. The speeches were kept to a decent minimum and (relatively) short. The Chairman, Derek Reigate briefly proposed the toast to the FA and Colin Downey responded with a few words about Euro96, and some kind comments on the Reading RA and the FA.

Alan Robinson, representing the national RA summarised with a nice light touch, what he saw as the many achievements of the Reading RA, and was even brave enough to name some of the key members from our first 75 years. He paid a special tribute to his long-standing friend, George Mills, Life Member of the national RA as well as of the Reading RA, sadly and reluctantly absent owing to a previous appointment with a surgeon at the Royal Berkshire Hospital. In his reply, President Brian Palmer thanked Alan warmly for his generous comments, pointing out how carefully we had chosen not only a friend but one with a selective memory, so that he could not remind us of any blemishes (not that we had any). After reminding everyone, seriously, that we were probably a year late with our dinner, given the claims about our beginnings, Brian illustrated the less serious side of our activities with a few referee stories and jokes (which some were kind enough to laugh at - their names have been noted). He went on to thank partners and families for all their support and tolerance, and Dick Sawdon Smith for his contribution of some 45 years to the Reading RA and specifically for his organisation of the 75th Anniversary event.

Entertainment was provided by magician Robert Cox, both at the tables during dinner and in a short presentation afterwards. Dancing for those with sufficient energy and strong eardrums was to Andy Carter's Sunset Band.

Those young enough, please put 2020 (for the Centenary Celebrations) in your diaries now.

## Should responsibility for timekeeping be taken away from the referee?

Did you see the article from **FourFourTwo** published in the December *Football Referee*? I was a bit miffed to see it there because I had it lined up for this issue. But what Paul Gresty *couldn't* publish was my footnote. So here it is. (It fits in too with the piece on electronic aids. Ahead of its time!)

### Footnote

In August 1979 I had an article published in the *Football Referee* entitled 'It's Only a Matter of Time' The article was based on a survey of Reading RA members and how they dealt with time-keeping, including, of course, their reasons for stopping the watch. [Copies of the full article still available on payment of an exorbitant sum. Ed].

..... "time added on" always remains a mystery, known only to the man in the middle. Why? Is this his ultimate sanction? The symbol of his absolute, inalienable authority? Certainly the official independent timekeeper and large public clock, as in basketball, have been successfully resisted.

Why don't we grasp the nettle at long last: clarify our procedures and then capitalise on the micro-electronic revolution to make the referee's timekeeping easier and better, and at the same time let the spectators in on the act? Imagine the referee of the future with *one* watch (quartz chronograph of course) and in place of his other watch and notebook, something like one of the new mini-calculators. In fact it would be a radio transmitter/remote control in contact with the stadium's electronic scoreboard which would display and record the information transmitted. Not only would it be seen when the referee stopped and re-started his "watch", but automatic penalties could be introduced for time-wasting (e.g. by providing fixed time penalty buttons) and flashed up on the scoreboard, with the running time of the match automatically adjusted. The game would end with an automatic signal and with no chance of

controversy. Buttons could also be provided to signal and record players cautioned and sent off, together with the reasons - with everything instantly displayed to the spectators. We have always said communication is the name of the game.

Fanciful? No, we already have the technology. Expensive? Yes, relatively, but what is "expensive" when six-figure transfer fees are common and we have our first million pound player? [You can tell this was written a long time ago! Ed]

But what about equipment failure? What about the referee in the local park? Why not, say, an Ingersoll and a little black notebook and pencil, with a second pencil just in case . . . ?

# What's On for the Rest of This Season

<i>JANUARY 16</i>	Reading RA Training Team
<i>FEBRUARY 20</i>	County Training Team presentation on: 'Lining'
<i>MARCH 20</i>	Guest Speaker: Ray Payne, FA Area Training Co-ordinator
<i>APRIL 17</i>	Guest Speaker: Roger Milford
<i>MAY 15</i>	Annual General Meeting

### **PHYSIOTHERAPY - Everybody's Health Service**

Where do you go if you have a sprained ankle, back pain, or simply need advice on how to get back after injury?

Jill Wigmore-Welsh is a chartered Physiotherapist and practising Acupuncturist based at Tilehurst Physiotherapy, a clinic opposite Prospect Park. Her experience with athletes is extensive, having spent 12 years with the British Judo Association at international level and 2 years with the International rowing team.

The clinic offers a complete and comprehensive treatment for the injured athlete and has a link with Bradfield College which can assist in full rehabilitation using their gym and pool facilities.

If you need professional advice or help, either call into the clinic at 218 Tilehurst Road or **telephone (0118) 959 4099**.

Alternatively contact **John Moore** for further information.

Concessionary rates for Reading RA members on production of a current membership card