

Reading Referees' Association

President	Brian Palmer
Immediate Past President	Dick Sawdon Smith
Vice Presidents	T.G.R.J. Gibbs, D. Keen, P. Stream R.K. Stroomer, J. Waters, R. Weedon
Life Members	M.D. Baker, J. Lambden, G.B. Mills, R. Sawdon Smith

OFFICERS & COMMITTEE 1997/98

Chairman	Derek Reigate
Vice-Chairman	Cliff Watkins
Secretary	Martin Albury
Assistant Secretary	Colin Pike
Treasurer	Brian Wratten
Membership Officer	Andy Awbery
Committee	Martin Gallagher, Malcolm Garstang, Peter Hitt, Darren Naish, Kevin Parsons, Peter Pittaway.

League and Competition Representatives

Reading Football League	Derek Reigate
Reading Sunday League	Peter Pittaway

South Chiltern Minor League Peter Hitt
READING REFEREE

Editor - Brian Palmer

December 1997/January 1998

Assistant Editor - John Moore

Volume XLI No 3

Editorial

Another Christmas over and the time to avoid making resolutions. Just best wishes to all our members for the New Year and happy officiating in 1998.

As I looked back over 1997 and even further, I was pleased to think how much our relationship with the leagues we serve has improved over my years in refereeing. It may seem odd then that in this issue I have published a letter from one of our members who suspected (or suspects) that we have been guilty of favouring one of our leagues. I actually believe it is helpful to voice such a concern rather than just think it, so that the league he has in mind can respond, as it does.

Lest anyone is in any doubt, let me repeat that we always aim to serve all leagues equally. It is part of the RA's job to help its members, to advise them on what leagues are most suitable for them and their ambitions in refereeing, to tell them about the various possibilities *even-handedly*.. We also respond to the various leagues' own initiatives and constantly try to improve relationships with them, and especially the leagues' relationships with its own individual referees. Misunderstandings will occur but can be easily sorted out when there is mutual respect as I believe there is.

Opinions expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Reading RA
Unsigned articles have been written by the editor or assistant editor
Other editors have permission to reproduce any items with appropriate
acknowledgement

[Editor's address: 16 Stevens Lane, Peppard Common, Henley-on-Thames RG9 5RG.
Tel: (01491) 628008. Fax: (01491) 628133.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

November

A relief to see the room filling up - about 50 in attendance including a number of our newly qualified colleagues.

It was reported that:

- we had an assurance that the Royals Rendezvous Club would be available to us until June at least
- response to the Christmas Draw was slow so far
- membership was still increasing - now 119 with newcomers in the pipeline
- of the 46 starters on the recent course, 39 had qualified - and those present were congratulated and welcomed by the Chairman and members.
- as a result of the recent very successful Training Weekend at Aylesbury, three of our members - Dave Osborne, Cliff Watkins and Brian Wratten - are now qualified trainers and will be available to join the training team.

League Meetings:

Derek Reigate reported from the Reading Football league that a letter and poster have gone out to all clubs, reminding them that referees are volunteers, that abuse is the main reason for referees giving up and that the game needs referees.

The League wishes to be informed at once of any abuse and will take action. Substitutes have to be numbered from 12 upwards. The League must be informed of any contravention.

The League was pleased to have received a letter from Neil Isham in which he complimented two teams for their good conduct and sportsmanship.

Peter Pittaway reminded those refereeing on the Sunday League that they too take indiscipline very seriously. Do report any incident to the League who will take immediate and independent action. The FA sanction for common assault is now 182 days rather than 112.

Some teams, when a player or two short, have been claiming to have fewer than seven to delay the start of the game. Watch out for it and report any malpractice.

Other news:

John Bradley, referees' appointments secretary of the Chiltonian League is resigning. He will be replaced provisionally by Peter Floyd.

Berks & Bucks 5-a-side. We won all our games, thanks to the loan of a player from Bracknell. (Slough had to borrow two). In congratulating our team (or 4/5 of it), the Chairman expressed his regret that only three Societies had taken part and, of those, only Bracknell RA could field a full team (or several)..

Ted Cambridge reported several changes of role in the County FA. There would be a further seminar laid on for promotion candidates for those who had not yet attended although attendance had been 'mandatory'. When this U-turn was compared by Peter Pittaway with the refusal to accept a late application for promotion precisely because of the 'mandatory' attendance at seminars, Ted was unable to comment.

The second half was given over to what was billed as 'The Andy and Cliff Show'. Andy (Awbery) explained that they were going to be talking about 'Consistency', but not the ever-elusive consistency between referees *during* the game - consistency in what we do *before the game starts* (at local park level).

We were divided into four groups with the brief to work on various pre-match aspects, before reporting back in a plenary discussion session.

A measure of consensus was achieved, both on what needed to be done and the order in which things might be tackled (though local circumstances could affect matters). The order was what was considered practical, not necessarily the ideal - e.g. it would be nice to be able to brief club linesmen earlier). In summary:

- 1 Arrive at the ground at least 45 minutes before the schedule start time.
- 2 Check the pitch and appurtenances (wearing boots and with a ball if any doubts about the surface).
- 3 Seek out the person in charge of each team.
- 3 Check match details; get match balls from home official and check them; check team/goalkeeper colours.
- 4 Find own changing accommodation.
- 5 Check own personal equipment, including coin.

- 6 Change and warm up.
- 7* Introduce yourself to the teams*
- 8 Brief club linesmen.
- 9 Note names of subs.
- 10 Brief captains (e.g. including any special points from competition rules, especially in cup games).

* This was the first and most serious lack of consensus. Some members were totally committed to going into the changing-rooms, specifically to brief the teams; others (the majority) were against. Those in favour argued that it was an opportunity to introduce yourself to all the players, so they had a sense of what you were about, to check and deal with jewellery, to get the match balls; to get the names of subs. Those against claimed it exposed the referee unnecessarily to intimidation and was a temptation to lecture and threaten. 'A rod for your own back'. Even those in favour accepted there were risks, especially for the less experienced official.

There was discussion under each of these sections and a great deal more helpful experience shared. Andy was brave enough to offer us what he says in the dressing room (he is one of those who go in), to the captains before kick-off, and to his linesmen, though he admitted his problems with his offside instructions since the Law changed. Unfortunately, time ran out before we could have a full discussion of what might or might not be said. However, Andy's words are appended for future discussion.

Will we ever reach that consistency of which our presenters spoke? It will never be easy as we discovered when one of our experienced members challenged the concern over jewellery. He looks the other way (like international referees!) whereas most of us insist. Many years ago we had actually formulated a set of reasonably standard instructions for club linesmen. Maybe that could be a first objective.

Andy and Cliff were thanked for another enjoyable and instructive presentation.

What Andy Says in the Dressing Room

'Good morning/afternoon lads, I am Andy Awbery, your match referee for today. Just a couple of things before you go onto the field of play.

Can you remove or make safe with tape, any jewellery you may be wearing? If you require tape and haven't any, I have some you can use.

If you don't make it safe and I see it, then you will be asked to leave the field of play to remove or make it safe. This means you will be down to ten men as the match will continue without you.

One final point. I do not allow players to abuse my assistants with the flags or myself. Please bear this in mind as any abuse will be dealt with in an appropriate manner.

Finally, have you a match ball and subs for me?
Thanks lads enjoy your match'.

What Andy Says to his Linesmen about Offside

[His briefing also includes an introduction, foul throws, ball in and out of play, fouls and misconduct]

'Offside, the one we all love They get it wrong on the box and we will probably get it wrong today, but this is what we are going to try and do.

Please stay in line with the last defender at all times.

If at the time when the ball is played an attacker is in an offside position and is inside a ten to fifteen yards imaginary circle at the place where the ball is dropping or played to, *please flag*.

If a player is in an offside position and the ball is *not* played to him, please do not flag, as with the player running back taking no active part in play.

Again if I do wave play on, please do not get upset. We will talk about it after the match.

Finally, if we stay as we are, you will be running the line over there. If we turn round after the toss, please go with your own defence and run the line over there.'

What Andy says to the Captains

'Good morning/afternoon lads. I am a referee who believes there is more to being a captain than tossing the coin or calling heads or tails.

From time to time I might ask you to talk to or calm players or officials from your club. If I ask you to do this, please give it your best shot, as the next step may very well be a card.

If I do decide to caution or send off, please do not become involved, as the decision has already been made.

Refereeing is all about getting over mistakes: yours, mine, and my assistants' with the flags. If we do that successfully, we will all have an enjoyable game.

Thanks for listening. Let's toss the coin and get going.'

December

A gathering of some 50+ for the last meeting of the year. Business was kept to the minimum to allow more drinking (and eating) time.

Members who have questions for Berks and Bucks Secretary, Brian Moore, who is to be our guest at the February meeting, are asked to submit them in good time to Martin Albury.

The letter from the County FA about honouring appointments (printed in full on page XX) was read out and discussed. Members were reminded that the correct procedure, if unavailable, is to close the dates in advance. Ken Clark suggested an earlier kick-off time for County cup games, given the possibility of extra time - say 1-45 pm.

Membership stands at 128 and Brian Wratten is still hopeful that it will end up even higher.

Peter Pittaway announced that the next training course will start on 13 January. After the mammoth turn-out on the last course, the training team are concerned that they will get too many! In co-operation with the Sunday League, there will be a special course to enable their clubs to have a qualified referee among their members. The course will be the standard one, leading to qualification for those successful. Interest so far has exceeded expectations - with at least 50 names put

forward. The course will probably start later in January at the South Reading Leisure Centre on Wednesday evenings - details to be confirmed. Peter is also working on re-vitalising the mentorship scheme which will continue to be run by Ken Clark. Volunteers to Peter.

Derek Reigate reported from the Reading Football League that a player who abused a referee after a game had his registration suspended immediately pending further inquiry. The barrier at Kings Meadow will be raised to allow referees and players more convenient parking. NatWest is to sponsor several new awards for referees, not necessarily the highest marked officials who get the finals.

Peter Pittaway reported that the Sunday League is still looking for more referees and, like the RFL, goes out of its way to give its referees every support. Feedback from clubs is that not all referees are reporting abuse. It was pointed out that the league is unable to punish a club if the referee has taken no action.

Finally, Chairman Derek Reigate congratulated Stuart Gentle and presented him with the FA Assessor's Certificate.

Half-time was a little more special than usual with ample and varied refreshments mainly thanks to Brian Wratten and his wife, but with supplementary sandwiches provided with best wishes from Mike Kearney.

Then to the Grand Christmas Draw. As ever the prizes were attractively and tantalisingly displayed and I was convinced this was to be my year for the TV set. It was not to be but I am getting nearer - one of my sons won a watch! As a bonus, four lots of tickets for Reading FC games (generously provided by Avon Food Services) were also drawn. A great night for everyone, not only the winners. Organiser Brian Wratten, who had spent many hours and great energy to make the whole thing a success, was even able to announce a bigger profit than last year's record - **£704.65** (£604.84). He deservedly received the warm thanks of the President and all present.

THOSE QUOTES OF THE YEAR?

No room in this issue this year unfortunately. They'll have to keep. Something to look forward to.

DEAR EDITOR

First, my sincere thanks to Andy Awbery and Cliff Watkins for their presentation at our November meeting. At last we are talking refereeing. It was good to hear so many members putting in their comments. I am sure we all must have learnt something from each other.

I was pleased that Richard Highfield came back on my suggested reasons why there is a shortage of referees and why our meetings are not attended by more members. I suggested it was because of the working conditions most of our members have to cope with now.

First, compare today's life-style with yester-year's. (I speak from nearly 35 years in football administration). In my days of working, most people who worked in shops, for example, had Wednesday afternoons off, with early closing at 1-00 p.m. That is why Reading had a very good Wednesday League (now no longer in being). I, and most others, worked a five and a half day week, which was then reduced to five days, giving us Saturday and Sunday free. In my early refereeing days I nearly always refereed four games: two on Saturdays, two on Sundays. And then all those evening games at the end of the season.

How can today's referee do all that? With shops and other workplaces operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week, even if they don't work seven days, many people have to work 12 hours a day. I was most interested in the comment a member made to me on the way home. His son aged six had said to him: 'Dad, we don't see you much'. He is a referee who gives a lot to the game. Perhaps we should do a survey to find out why members are unable to referee or attend meetings.

Peter Pittaway commented that teams are turning up with fewer than 11 players and trying to trick referees into starting late. So clubs too are having problems getting enough players. Does that mean there are too many clubs - which adds to the shortage of referees?

I remarked that there had always been a shortage of referees as long as I had been in refereeing. Let's be truthful with ourselves - is refereeing everyone's cup of tea? I don't think it is. I know I loved it because I was a useless player and am not a good spectator.

At the meeting it was revealed that the clubs in the lower divisions of the Sunday League have proposed that they should each have to have someone who has taken the Referee's' Examination Course. I first heard this proposal *some 30*

years ago by the late Bert Newman! May I say that the proposal needs very careful examination and debate? I am certainly in favour, but if we are to see qualified referees required as the Sunday League is suggesting, I would also like to see the Rule make teams have a qualified First Aider and Linesman.

To try and evaluate the current situation, I went through the *Reading Chronicle* to check the fixtures for the weekend of 22/23 November:

Reading Football League 38 matches 28 referees

[104 teams: 127 registered referees]

Reading Sunday League 66 matches 30 referees

[149 teams; 58 registered referees]

The message there looks fairly clear. Another statistic may be more surprising.

South Chiltern Minor League 98 matches (from 213 teams).

Although no referees are listed, the League apparently appoints between 30 and 40 each weekend. Also think of all the other leagues around Reading that referees have to officiate on if they are going to make progress.

I still believe there are many reasons, even more than I have mentioned, for the shortage of referees. If we could obtain the right statistics, it might help us to understand the situation. Certainly one of the reasons for increasing lack of discipline must be the shortage of qualified officials.

Terry Gibbs

Berks & Bucks Referees' Association

REFEREES AND COUNTY CUP APPOINTMENTS

The County Referees' Association wish to remind all referees of their responsibilities when appointed to County Cup games at whatever level and at whatever stage of the competitions.

Referees **MUST** acknowledge the appointment and indicate whether or not they can carry it out. Of the appointments made in the early stages of these competitions approximately one third (that is about 310 games) have to be re-appointed because referees are unavailable for genuine and acceptable reasons (holidays, injury etc.). As long as the referee informs the County FA Referees' Secretary, and in good time, then there is no problem - a re-appointment will be made.

However, the County Football Association has noted that there are some referees who fail to acknowledge the appointment, particularly in the early rounds. The Referees' Secretary then has to telephone them to ascertain whether or not they will be there. Worse still, there is a small, but insignificant, number of referees who not only fail to acknowledge their appointment but fail to turn up on the day, leaving the game uncovered.

Such incidents can easily be avoided by making a single telephone call or returning the reply card. If you are on holiday at the beginning of the season (i.e. during the early rounds), then close the dates with the County FA. Please also remember that an appointment to a County FA cup game carries prestige and status, and takes precedence over local league games.

IMAGINE

The newly rewritten laws can certainly stretch your imagination says Dick Sawdon Smith.

The Laws of the Game have been rewritten in order, we are told, to keep them as simple and straightforward as possible. Reading them through, however, there are times when you might need to use a little imagination. For instance, let's take Law 17, The Corner Kick. This is what it used to say:

"If the player who takes the kick plays the ball a second time before it has been touched by another player, the Referee shall award an indirect free kick to the opposing team to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred, subject to the overriding conditions imposed in Law 13."

Very easily assimilated I think you will agree.

What it now reads under 'Infringements/Sanctions' is as follows;

*"A corner kick taken by a player other than a goalkeeper
(my underline)*

If, after the ball is in play, the kicker touches the ball a second time (except with his hands), before it has touched another player:

- *an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team, the kick to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred* (see Key)"*

The old wording of course didn't allow for handling the ball, no doubt thinking that it would be punished under Law 12 (handball) and Law 5 (always punish the more serious offence). However, it's probably as well to clear it up, so there is a new clause covering handball in these circumstances. You won't be surprised to learn it is penalised by a direct free kick.

What about **"*(see Key)"**? You first need to look up The Key in the front of the book and it says **"Unless covered by the Special Circumstances listed in Law 8 - The start and restart of the game."** So you then have to look up Law 8, and find that this relates to the offence taking place in the goal area. Wouldn't it be more straight forward in the first place to say "except in the special circumstances under Law 8"? At least you only have to turn to one other page. Or is that too simple?

At first glance from the wording above it would seem that this part of the law does not apply to goalkeepers, but there is a whole separate section of no fewer than six paragraphs devoted to the unlikely event of a goalkeeper taking a corner kick. Well I suppose we must face it. Other goalkeepers have been following Peter Schmeichel's example and charging up at corners when they have been desperate for a late goal, so why shouldn't we stretch the imagination to a goalkeeper actually taking the corner kick, however implausible it might seem?

A goalkeeper taking a corner kick is in fact liable to exactly the same penalties (or 'sanctions' as they are now called) as any other player, except that if he handles the ball in his own penalty area, it is only an indirect free kick. Can you imagine the scene? A goalkeeper runs up to take a corner, but makes such a hash of the kick, that the ball finishes up in his own penalty area instead of his opponents. He then races back up the pitch, and before any other player has touched the ball, he handles it. The imagination runs riot.

In forty-five years of refereeing I have never seen a goalkeeper take a corner kick but, if such an eventuality has to be included in the Laws, wouldn't it have been simpler and more straightforward if the law said:

"If from a corner kick the kicker touches the ball a second time before it had been touched by another player, an indirect free kick will be awarded, except if the ball is handled which will result in a direct free kick. If a goalkeeper should take a corner kick and then handle the ball in his own penalty area before it has been touched by another player an indirect free kick will be awarded. The kick will be taken from etc."

Or am I just lacking in imagination?

ONE OF OUR RISING STARS

More congratulations are in order for Declan Ford, who has scored a notable first - he has just been put on the Army Select List of Referees. But not only that, he is the youngest ever to achieve the honour which, I am reliably informed, opens wonderful gates in Army refereeing. Basically it means he can be appointed to

the top level of army and inter-service games, and it won't do his 'civilian' officiating any harm either. [I have some idea what 'top level' means as I once watched an Army International as the guest of Major Peter Pittaway, but that's another (long) story. Ed].

It is interesting to contrast the keenness of the Army to support and promote its young referees like Declan with what seems, to be charitable, the more laid-back approach of the Berks & Bucks FA. Compared with a place on the Army Express for young referees of exceptional promise, those members in civilian life still seem to be on the local stopping train. With the active life of officials being progressively shortened by the lowering of age-limits, the situation is becoming less and less defensible and in need of radical action.

I wonder, too, what County FAs generally would think if they knew Declan has already been asked to do some assessing. Given that he is properly prepared - and the Army certainly has a good reputation for its training - it is at least arguable that a keen, young active referee has a lot to offer. He is experiencing the game and its problems and tensions as they are today, not 10, 20 or even 30 years ago. To use the jargon - he is likely to have more 'street-cred' amongst his contemporaries.

And what does father Barry think of it all? "The boy 'dun good'. Of course I'm very proud of what he's achieved so far and I hope he will go on to reach his full potential. I hope too that his progress will encourage other young members of the Society. In spite of the problems, there are still more opportunities than there were 10 or 15 years ago for young referees who show the right commitment and application of their skills."

AND MORE PLUMS TOO

Declan has been kept busy (to mention but a few of his recent appointments):

FA Cup	Assistant Referee	Milton Keynes v Viking Sports
	Referee	Oakwood v Potton United
FA Youth Cup	Referee	Chelmsford City v Borehamwood

	Referee	Walton & Hershaw v Staines
FA Vase	Referee	London Colney v Brache Sparta
(2nd round)	Referee	Potter's Bar v Whitstable

And father Barry hasn't *quite* been forgotten!

FA Vase	Assistant Referee	Hemel Hampstead v
Barkingside		

OUR LADS DONE GREAT TOO - AGAIN!

Our valiant quiz team - Gary Douglas, Malcolm Garstang, Dave Osborne and Peter Pittaway (captain) - emerged victors in the annual County RA Quiz on the Laws of the Game and retained the title they won last year. [It was Peter's personal hat-trick, though not quite in successive years. 14 to be exact!. Still a great record Peter. Ed]

Teams from as far afield as Milton Keynes and Aylesbury gathered at the Royals Rendezvous Club to face question master Gordon Foster and timekeeper Guy Bishop from the Hertfordshire FA. Questions ranged from the correct action to be taken after an incident to the precise detail of a particular word in a particular Law. Not made any easier by the considerable number of revisions for this season (and metric measurements too).

Reading got off to a great start and held on to their lead throughout in spite of plenty of nail-biting moments. They ran out clear winners finally with 72 points. Joint runners-up with 62 points were Chiltern, High Wycombe and N. Berks.

The trophy was presented by Malcolm Hutt of Bracknell RA, Vice Chairman of the Berks & Bucks Referees' Association. Our team now goes on to represent the county in the Divisional finals, hoping for a place ultimately in the national final. [I am assured they are in strict training. Ed]

NOT A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD?

How would you rate your chances of reaching the top in refereeing? Not very highly? You'd certainly be right if you're in England. Not quite the National Lottery but the odds, according to figures just published by UEFA, are **4062.5:1** against. We have just eight of our 32,500 referees on the FIFA referees' list.

But that's not really the interesting bit. At the time of the World Cup the presence of referees from the smaller, less experienced football nations is often questioned. What is clear from the list in this month's UEFA *Bulletin Officiel* (no 161. page 19) is how illogical the whole business of appointments to the FIFA list seems.

We might have guessed that, by and large, the bigger, more experienced countries will have to have proportionately fewer FIFA officials. What we may not have guessed is the size of the discrepancies.

If you have ambitions to be a FIFA referee your best bet is to come from Malta where the odds are **24:1** (yes, twenty-four to one). Of course the odds are often low for small countries because they may have to be allocated the minimum of one FIFA referee - you can't easily deal in halves or quarters - but for some reason Malta gets *four* for its total of 98 referees.

The *worst* place to be (for other reasons as well) is Russia. There the odds are a staggering **8604:1**, closely followed by Germany at **7790:1**. The latter is the more surprising, given the generally high quality of their officials. Of the Home Countries, where you might expect some reasonable similarity, the odds in Northern Ireland are **87:1**; in Scotland **321:1**; in Wales **217:1** (against England's **4062.5:1**)

Of course, the FIFA list is not prepared to suit the ambitions of referees: we assume it is drawn up to ensure that international games are refereed by those most appropriate for the task. Can it really be that these numbers represent the true proportion of sufficiently capable and experienced referees the various countries can provide?

As the *Bulletin* is a UEFA publication, no countries outside Europe are listed. The full FIFA list could well be even more alarming.

MORE FACTS FROM THE PAST

1953-54

England suffered their first ever defeat by a continental team when they were overrun by the famous Hungarian side with Ferenc Puskas. Hidegkuti scored for Hungary in 60 seconds. The final scoreline was 5-3 with Hungary easing up and

giving away a penalty converted by Alf Ramsay. England lost the return match in Hungary 7-1.

With Stan Cullis as manager, Wolverhampton Wanderers won the League championship for the first time. Some compensation for his two major disappointments as a player - runner-up in the 1939 Cup Final and in the 1946-47 championship.

Another Midlands did well too. Port Vale were runaway champions of the Third Division (North). They were the only team in all divisions undefeated at home and conceded only 41 goals in 46 League games. They reached the semi-final of the FA Cup but lost to West Bromwich Albion (another Midlands club) who went on to win the final.

UEFA was formed at the time of the World Cup finals in Switzerland

Sam Bartram made his 500th appearance for Charlton to establish a new League record.

1954-55

Firm favourites Hungary lost in the World Cup final to West Germany - the only match the 'Magnificent Magyars' lost between 1950 and 1956. West Germany cynically exploited the bizarre organisation of the Cup that year by playing virtually reserves against the weaker teams, and crooked Puskas in their encounter at the league stage.

Scotland, defeated only 4-2 by Hungary expected to beat England at Wembley. The England team including Duncan Edwards (Manchester United) making his debut at the age of 18, Don Revie, and Stanley Matthews at the age of 40, ran out 7-1 winners. It was Scotland's worst ever defeat in a Home international.

Newcastle broke several records when they beat Manchester City 3-1 in the FA Cup final. Their 6th victory equalled the Cup-winning records of Blackburn Rovers and Aston Villa; they became the first club to compete in 10 Cup finals and to win the Cup three times in five seasons; their first goal, scored after 45 seconds by Jackie Milburn, was the fastest ever scored at Wembley.

The Football League raised the minimum match admission charge from 1s 9d to 2s (10p).

Stan Milburn and Jack Froggat, Leicester City, were jointly credited with an own goal. They both tried to clear the ball at the same time but it flew into their own net.

Tommy Briggs scored seven times to beat the Second division record when Blackburn Rovers beat Bristol Rovers 8-3.

SCORED FROM GOAL KICK

[FIFA magazine; I saw it in *The Midland Referee*]

Law 16 was changed, so that, from 1st July, a goal could be scored direct from a goal kick. Darren Castle took advantage of the change just a few days later in a tournament near Aberdeen. He booted the ball from the goal-area line straight into the opponents' net at the other end of the 100 metre long pitch, with one bounce on the edge of the penalty area and over the goalie's head. It was Darren's third game in goal. "I'm going to stick to goalkeeping now", he said later, "I score more goals than I did as a mid-fielder!".

Grand Christmas Draw

"Congratulations and thanks to everyone involved: to all those who sold tickets - not an easy task in the face of ever increasing competition; to Martin Albury, Iain Williamson and Avon Food Supplies for the generous donation of prizes. Finally, I wish to record my personal thanks to my wife for her patience and fortitude over the past month - not to mention her help with the procurement of prizes, the answering of phone calls, the folding of (literally) thousands of ticket stubs and the preparation of refreshments."

Brian Wratten

NOT THE *READING LEAGUE* REFEREES' ASSOCIATION

I have been somewhat concerned for a while at what appears to be the parochial stance of the Reading Referees' Society. I have long wondered why the Reading Football League Newsletter was circulated via the RA to all members, irrespective of whether they officiate on the Reading League or not. Even by this simple, if thought by some, helpful act we could be seen to be promoting the Reading League ahead of all others. Saving them the postage? Should they not

send the newsletter only to those referees who officiate on that league? We do not circulate newsletters relating to any other league.

As a colleague said in conversation at the October meeting: 'Is this the reading League RA?' (although his remark was more concerned with an article in the newsletter, which was my main reason for putting pen to paper).

The article concerned the circulation by the Chiltonian League, allegedly targeting 'our referees'. I, personally, have no axe to grind with either league as I have officiated on both at one time or another, and do not officiate on either at the moment. Several points seem apparent:

- 1 No referee is league property.
- 2 The County FA is our 'employer' if such a party exists.
- 3 The referee at local level can choose to which league he gives his services.
- 4 *All* leagues have the right to advertise and recruit referees. This is even more vital in these days of acute shortage of referees. All leagues at the lower end of the pyramid are acutely affected by the shortage. It is only natural that all leagues will encourage referees to officiate for them.

I believe that Reading RA should strive to satisfy the need of all referees and enhance the reputation of the society as a whole. The Reading RA should be neutral and not be seen to support any one league or any one competition more than any other.

Could it be that this parochial attitude was responsible for such a poor attendance even when the Guest Speaker was of top quality - Graham Poll?

Barry Ford

**NOT THE *READING LEAGUE* REFEREES ASSOCIATION -
PART 2 - Response from the *A Quote Insurance Reading Football League***

Following the article in the October edition of *League News*, (the official news sheet of the A Quote Insurance Reading Football League), addressing the Chiltonian referees' booklet, some referees, notably those no longer regularly refereeing at local level, raised some interesting points.

A question was raised enquiring why copies of *League News* are available at Reading RA meetings, suggesting that the League makes a saving in postage. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, printing an additional 60 copies each month actually costs money, it doesn't save any. The copies available at the RA meeting are in addition to those which are sent (by post) to every regular referee on the League. The reason for the appearance of the news letter at RA meetings dates back to around 1992, when the Chairman at that time, Graham Stockton, was keen to forge greater links with local leagues, breaking down the 'them and us' attitude which had prevailed for the previous 70 years. It was at *his* request that copies of *League News* were introduced to the Reading RA meetings, and have continued to be supplied free of charge ever since. Since the League has no wish to offend some members of the Association, perhaps the regular attendees at the RA meetings should decide if they wish copies of the news sheet to continue to be available each month.

It is of course absurd to suggest that any League should 'own' referees. However the Reading League makes no apologies for using the term 'our referees'. From its inception in 1989, the League have made determined efforts to make its registered referees feel part of the League, to involve them in the way the League is run. Over the years, this has been achieved by way of questionnaires, reply cards and a permanent Reading RA representative on the League Council. The combination of these initiatives has allowed problems to be highlighted, and resolved. Is this such a bad thing?

Over the past ten years, links between the local leagues and the Reading RA have continued to be strengthened, with regular interaction between both parties. Do referees really want to be isolated from the Leagues? Is this what the majority of the membership want? Let's not forget that referees cannot exist without leagues, and leagues do not run effectively without referees. The Reading RA are the sole provider of newly trained referees in this area. To turn new referees into competent and experienced officials local leagues are essential - to provide the 'Apprenticeship' needed before referees can move on to higher leagues.

Advertising for referees is of course common practice. The Reading League frequently advertise. However, in the absence of an 'Advertising Standards Authority', we have to defend the interests of the League and its member clubs,

when booklets are produced which contain factually incorrect information, designed specifically to discredit this league. It was for this reason that a *League News* article was written, specifically to address these points. It should perhaps be noted that the League have subsequently received a full written apology from the Chiltonian League.

So to the future. Is the excellent working relationship which the League and Reading RA have established over many years to be jettisoned in favour of a return the 'them and us' culture? Or is it perhaps time to focus every ones attention back to the real issue - Football?

15 November 1997

FAIR PLAY and LINESMAN'S AWARDS

A reminder for all active referees, especially the most recently qualified.

The Reading RA runs an award scheme for the local leagues, based on marks supplied by our members. It is all co-ordinated by Alan Turner.

Either contact Alan (details in the Handbook) or see Secretary Martin Albury at the monthly meeting. Remember it is your support that makes it all possible, and the clubs and their linesmen really appreciate the scheme.

What's On (for the rest of) This Season

January 15

Training event.

We welcome Frank Groves of Slough RA, who is 'even able to make report-writing really interesting'.

- February 19** Guest Speakers::
Brian Moore and John Christopher
Berks & Bucks FA
- March 19** Guest Speaker:
Mick Pierce,
Nationwide Football League referee
- April 16** Guest Speaker:
Ted Smeaton
Chairman, Leicester City FC
- May 21** Annual General Meeting