

# Reading Referees' Association

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# READING REFEREE

Editor - Brian Palmer

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Assistant Editor - John Moore

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## *Editorial*

For me, every year, there's a time when the season begins to feel on its way out. It's to do with lighter mornings, glimpses of Spring, later rounds of cups, the announcement of the far-too-early Worthington Cup Final and so on.

It can be an exciting time for referees with keenly played games on which a lot depends. Semi-finals always seem to be the most challenging because one of the sides is going to be bitterly disappointed at having got so far and yet be going away empty handed. For those aspiring referees in for promotion it can be an anxious time too although, if the assessors have been frank enough they will have a good idea how well they have been doing.

There is a different sort of anxiety for the officers and committee as our AGM approaches and we look for new members of the team running the society. Like most societies we have too few younger members involved in spite of our best efforts. In case there is anyone who thinks the older members are clinging to office, let me assure you that they are not. All positions are genuinely open and I for one would be delighted to be relieved of office (as I have said previously). Not only that, I will give any assistance requested to a new editor to make the transition easier. Just have a word with me and make my day!

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# JANUARY

## Monthly Meeting

A lovely sight – our best attendance for some time with almost 50 members present, including four female colleagues. Our highest ever?

A sad opening was a minutes' silence in memory of Keith Simmonds (tribute on page X).

News: the player who had assaulted David Kinch had not turned up for the hearing December and remains suspended until he does.. The issue of referees who don't send in misconduct reports had been discussed at the County RA/FA meeting, but they had declined to do a 'field audit'. A reminder might be sent. The criticism of the new slim-line LOAF, with essential material for officials being put in other publications of which they may not even be aware, has been brought to Ray Payne's attention. It is hoped that the FA might take some action.

The County FA still requires two copies of misconduct reports, though one is acceptable by fax.

Training. Brian Wratten reported that the course due to start on 28 January was full (20 candidates) and that the course provisionally arranged to start on 7 February at Kendrick School would also run, with 10-15 candidates.

Brian Palmer, as a member of the Management Consultancy Team, spoke about the questionnaire sent out to a random sample of members and to societies. As Reading RA could not fit in a corporate filling-in session, each member present had received a copy and one was being sent to those not at the meeting. He stressed that all had to be returned to him for collation to protect the Team from being swamped. Societies had also been asked to

establish (a) think-tank(s) of younger referees (and nine members volunteered, subject to availability, for a meeting).

In response to a question from Stuart Gentle about new referees without mentors, Mike Rowley assured him that the literature would be out in the next few days.

Reading Football League Chairman, John Dell, made the presentation to Ken Clarke that he had missed at the end of last season – for his service to the RFL.

Martin Shearn reported that the Clayfield Copse situation was now even worse. He also mentioned penalising a particular goalkeeper's loud calling to his defence to "Move out!".

Guest Speaker was Tom Bune, former member and Football League referee. He reminded us that he qualified at Katesgrove School in 1955.

Tom's theme was 'How much do we need cards? Man-management. referees at the top levels were told at the beginning of the season to caution less and they are doing.

Tom has several jobs: the training and co-ordination of assessors' training (marks from new assessors on one training session varied from 4 to 8); serving as an assessor himself ('observer') on the Premiership (reporting on the referee, and on the club's 'fair play') and, for the other half of his life, acting as one of the six coaches to Premiership referees. His group is: Paul Alcock, Graham Barber, David Ellery and Barry Knight.

Tom started with a series of overheads:

Management or Cards? Tom believes there are now two games: an industry at the top and our game on the parks. Is it a sport or a business? Significant that only two countries allow clubs to pay dividends to shareholders – Italy and ourselves. Technology is helping to divide the game and even the referees using it are unhappy with it. Full-time ('professional') referees? Although

half the Premiership referees would like to be full-time (and some like Graham Poll have given up their job) only two Chairmen are in favour and they run the game. *That is why referees don't get support at the top level.*

Referees claim to like their observers/assessors. On the Premiership club marks are not taken into account in giving games; on the Football League two thirds of a referee's marks depend on club assessments.

The FA needs to be more independent than it appears to be. Apparently in the recent Rob Harris incident, the Tranmere manager's view prevailed over the reports of the officials.

Are all cards necessary? Some are, e.g. if a mandatory instruction. But handball in the middle of the park? No *orange* cards – decide. And if you card, be dignified and correct. Tom is much in favour of sin-bins and seemed surprised to get support from the floor. He accepted that it would be easier to handle at top level with four officials (at least in theory!).

Different levels of management: game-management; self-management; man-management. League associations attract only 1/3 attendance at present. Premiership and FL are going to make them compulsory, though the legality is being questioned. In New Zealand the membership of the RA is compulsory as is at least 75% attendance at meetings.

Self-management. There is a lot to do if you are to get to the top. Get a personal fitness programme, e.g. for sprinting. Control your diet e.g. 3000 calories on Friday, 2000 on Saturday. Your oxygen uptake is important. Get a coach/mentor; someone who is there to give helpful criticism and guidance.

Man-management. Careless, reckless, excessive force = red card. But there is scope still for man-management. Do you warm up on the pitch? Walk tall, project confidence. If showing a card make sure the player listens and sees it. Distinguish between disagreement and dissent: a question of manner.

Do your signalling properly (7 seconds); keep your composure; remember 'proximity' – a decision made near the action most likely to be accepted; and always keep your sense of humour.

Good to have Tom back with us and plenty in his talk for everyone.

# FEBRUARY

## Monthly Meeting

Yet another rainy evening, but no football on TV and the prospect of a good guest speaker ensured that virtually all the seats in the Kennet Room were filled by kick-off time. It was good to see Bill Billingham from Bracknell Society among our guests following his recent return to Berkshire from Saudi Arabia.

As now seems customary, most of the business part of the meeting was concluded swiftly. Alan Turner had expressed disappointment at the reluctance of some referees, including a number of very experienced colleagues, to return the blue Fair Play/Club Linesman forms. There was also concern by the Reading Football League that some match report cards were not coming back (but there some suggestion that there could be shortage of supplies).

Details of two of the RFL Cup Finals were now settled:

Intermediate Cup 14 April 7.30pm

Junior Cup 19 April 7.30pm

Both to be held at Reading Town FC.

There was excellent news from both local leagues on coverage of matches by qualified officials. All but 8 of the 621 RFL games between September and February had referees allocated. The Reading Sunday League had also seen a marked improvement. It recently had a week when only 6 games were left uncovered – one of the benefits from the RSL sponsored training courses run by the RRA which have provided Gerry Chapman with a larger pool of

qualified officials. Hopefully there will be more when the 35 students attending the two courses currently being run by RRA qualify.

Future of the RA - Members were reminded to return the questionnaire without further delay. A RRA 'think thank' led by Dick Sawdon-Smith was to meet on 24 February.

One of our Vice Presidents, John Waters, drew attention to the fact that only about a quarter of the RRA membership now attended Monthly Meetings. This prompted a short discussion on how times had changed and, that although the larger attendances of old may not be repeated, this should not necessarily be seen as a sign that the RRA was failing.

### **Problem Spot**

Terry Chamberlain outlined a 'hypothetical' incident where the referee discovered that a player who scored in the second half had come on without permission as a half-time substitute. Members were quick to confirm that the player concerned should be cautioned, but the game should not be abandoned. A few people (including our main guest!) thought that a caution for this technical offence was harsh.

Guest Speaker, Premiership referee Mark Halsey, gave a very entertaining and frank talk about his career and life at the top. He was ably assisted on the video controls by the Chairman of the Mid-Herts Society.

Mark started refereeing in 1989 after injury cut short a semi-professional playing career at the age of 28. He quickly progressed through the Herts County and Isthmian Leagues before doing the 'double jump' to the Football League line and Panel middle. Until then he had regarded himself as a 'players' ref', but once he was assessed on every game at the higher level he realised he quickly had to adapt his style and do things by the book. This obviously worked because after just three seasons on the National list (FL

middle) he finished 2<sup>nd</sup> out of 56 and was promoted to the FA Premier League for 1999-2000.

The path to success had meant some sacrifices. In particular, when regular midweek games clashed with his work as a warehouse manager he was faced with a stark choice - football or his job. He 'gambled' and took the first option and has never looked back. He now trains 3 mornings a week with Barnet FC and, not surprisingly, is a supporter of the idea of full-time referees.

By the use of video clips spanning his games over several years, Mark cleverly demonstrated both the good and not so good decisions and incidents. He was the first to criticise some of the fouls/penalties that he had not given and gave us a frank insight into what it's like having to make decisions against highly paid and demonstrative players (and managers!). He described the worst moment of his life as the game at Fratton Park when one of his Assistants was knocked unconscious by an irate 'supporter'. On a lighter note he denied that the stalker who interrupted the toss-up at his very first Football League middle was the assessor!

Before Chairman, Derek Reigate, had to bring the over-running proceedings to a close, Mark concluded by saying that, despite all the pressures, the buzz of refereeing at the top was fantastic and he commended the career to young, aspiring members.

Colin Pike

## **SIN-BINS +**

Listening to Tom Bune tentatively putting forward the possibility of sin-bins, I was reminded of a piece I wrote for our *Evening Post* series.

One thing I have thought more about since I wrote it, is the problem of sin-bins on the local parks. It is assumed it would all be too difficult. But would it? Why not put the onus on the managers/hangers on in this way: the referee imposes the sanction - 10 minutes in the bin for, say, language. He notes the time. The responsibility thereafter is with the club to get the player back on.



They have to signal during a stoppage as for a substitute. Referee checks his watch, lets the player back on. Clubs will play tricks? If they do, the referee increases the time. As Tom was suggesting, cards are too frequent, but a good part of the problem, I argued in my article, relates to the Laws themselves.

### **But does the punishment fit the crime?**

It's not only Gilbert and Sullivan who ask that question. Referees do. The Laws of Association Football were designed during the last century to ensure, amongst other things, that the Corinthian sort of 'gentlemanly conduct' prevailed in the new code. This led to a scale of sanctions to deal with misdemeanours of different levels of seriousness, to act both as punishment and deterrent. Some of our sanctions raise no controversy, e.g. the throw-in the other way after a foul throw, the indirect free kick for offside or accidental dangerous play, the more serious direct free kick (or penalty) for a deliberate trip. After that it all becomes less straightforward. And the well-intentioned FIFA mandatory instructions of recent years have in some ways complicated the problem for all of us.

#### *Little disagreement*

Few object in principle to a player being sent off for 'denying an obvious goal-scoring opportunity' (but when it's your player, it doesn't always seem that obvious). Similarly 'a tackle from behind which endangers the safety of an opponent' clearly merits a red card, that is until you wonder: 'did it really endanger ...'? Whatever the argument about the referee's judgement in these cases, there is basic sympathy with the Law. A deliberate foul to stop a clear chance on goal and injury-threatening brutality both deserve harsh punishment. But what about other cases?

#### *Technical and verbal offences*

In my experience, it is the technical and verbal offences we all find it hardest to accept.

Players who fail to retreat the required 9.15 metres (10 yards) know perfectly well what they are doing and what the Law says, but still seem to be astonished if the referee shows the yellow card. A player who tackles over-vigorously and is rightly cautioned, may not like it, but he and the others can see the basic justice of it. But when a team-mate protests with a few obscenities in the heat of the moment and has to be sent off, the sense of justice evaporates, and the referee, who is simply doing his job, becomes the scapegoat.

### *Other sanctions are possible*

In both these cases the punishment is not perceived to fit the crime. And yet other sanctions are available. We referees have been asking as long as I can remember for the move-on-ten-yard sanction Rugby referees have in cases of protest or failure to retreat at a free kick. For dissent and ‘offensive, insulting or abusive language’, I personally would favour a ‘sin-bin’. Dissent has to be punished firmly because the referee has to be seen to be in charge - the alternative is worse. But a caution’s weakness is that it leaves the player on the field. Much better surely to remove the source of the dissent temporarily and give him time to cool down. Similar sanction for inappropriate language. The attraction of the sin-bin is that the effect is immediate, both on the player and the team. The length of time can be varied too. Sin-bins are used in Germany, for example, and are considered highly effective.

So why don't these changes happen? We can only surmise that the great and the good in football are unwilling to be seen to be influenced by another code

[But see Dick’s article below for progress on the ‘10-yard rule’]

## **10 YARDS TO PARADISE?**

**Will we finally get free kicks taken quickly and quietly?  
asks Dick Sawdon Smith**

Where were you on the night of 8th December last? I know where I would like to have been. A professional institute of which I am a member was holding an evening of fun and games at the Berkshire Brewery with free booze and food. Instead I was at nearby Madejski Stadium watching Reading FC play Leyton Orient, bottom of the third division, in the first round of the practically meaningless Auto Windscreens Shield.

Why did I become one of the 1500 spectators lost in the stadium's 25,000 capacity? The reason quite simply is that this competition was chosen this season to experiment with the so-called '10 yard rule'. This is of course where, if players don't retreat the required distance at a free kick, or show dissent of the referees award of the free kick, the kick is moved 10 yards further towards the offending team's goal line. This is an alteration to the laws, stolen unashamedly from the oval ball game, that many of us in refereeing have been advocating for years. I felt that being a strong supporter of its introduction and having written an article on it for the Society's column in the *Evening Post*, I had to take this opportunity to see if it actually worked.

Was the evening worth giving up the free beer? Did the threat of losing 10 yards work? The answer is either that it worked a treat or that it was a non-event. In other words, the referee did not move the kick forward once over the 90 minutes. There were a couple of occasions when Leyton Orient might have been penalised for being slow in retreating but the Reading players decided to take a quick free kick, so the referee wisely allowed play to continue. Martin Williams of Reading, who always stands in front of the ball at any free kick given in his proximity, did so on about half a dozen occasions, only to suddenly realise the rule was in operation and quickly back away.

So much for encroachment; what about dissent? There was none. Whether this was the effect of the rule was difficult to judge in such a lack-lustre game which neither side seemed desperate to win. The only goal was an indication of the rest of the match. The ball inadvertently headed downwards, bounced over the goalkeeper who had already dived, perhaps fallen is a better word, to the ground. Whether the attitude of the players would have been different had it been a more full-blooded and meaningful game was difficult to assess.

The report on the experiment overall, however, seems good. At the time of writing there had been 40 games containing 850 free kicks of which only 16 were advanced the 10 yards. For referees at least the response has been very positive. One referee is quoted as saying 'It was unreal. The players ran away like scalded cats every time a free kick was given.'

It has been leaked that the International FA Board has decided that it will be introduced next season for all games but only in this country. This should stop the blatant cheating at free kicks, particularly in professional football, which will speed up the game. To my mind, however, one of its greatest benefits is that it should reduce the amount of harassment and intimidation of referees that we have seen happening at the highest levels. As we all know, this will so easily spread to junior football losing the game even more officials. These ten yards may not take us to paradise but will certainly be a major improvement to the game and not just for referees.

My only plea is that when it is introduced, the ability to move the ball forward for encroachment will do away with the mandatory caution which was retained for the same experiment in Jersey. The loss of 10 yards should be punishment enough and it will also remove one of those 'technical' yellow card offences which often only serve to niggle.

### **Keith Simmonds**

Keith Simmonds, for many years a loyal member of the Reading RA, died on the last day of the old century after a quietly determined fight against cancer.

Keith officiated up to Football League level and, when he gave up his refereeing in the 80s, he brought his professional skills and wide experience of the game to the administration of local football. He held various administrative roles with the Reading and District Sunday League and then the Newbury Sunday Football League. He also played a major part in establishing the administration of AFC Newbury when the club was founded in 1996.

Keith will be most remembered by Reading members for his quiet and dignified manner, which concealed a man of firm views and high principle, and for his constant and invaluable work to strengthen links and understanding between the Sunday league and its referees, predominantly members of the RA. He always had constructive comments to make at meetings of both groups to improve relationships which he rightly saw as in our shared interest.

He will be sadly missed both by his fellow referees and those in local football, and we extend sincere condolences to his family.

## **POUR ENCOURAGER LES AUTRES?**

Ever since coaching from the touchline has been allowed, there have been problems in the Premiership and Football League - created by the managers and their apparently unlimited numbers of hangers-on, not by the officials.

How often have we seen the assistant referee and the 4th official being hassled, harried, intimidated even, and, one suspects, deliberately distracted? Ask our own John Moore, who was 4th official for that infamous Chelsea v. Coventry game last season, what mischief goes on in and, improperly, outside the technical area.

Premiership referee, Rob Harris, who was having a good season whatever the popular press would like us to think, committed the grave refereeing sin of allowing a sent-off player to be substituted.

True. But as I saw it, admittedly on TV, there was rather more to it than that.

It was two minutes or so from the end and Tranmere had a two goal lead. Having ordered a Tranmere player off, Rob was busy contending with a volatile situation on the pitch and, wrongly, accepted the substitution. Like

any referee he relied on his colleagues and, pre-occupied with his immediate problems, did not spot that someone had got it wrong.

So how could the officials have committed such a blunder? The technical area was in turmoil - turmoil not created by the officials. The accounts of what actually happened do not agree, but it seems from the suspension of Rob and the censure of the 4th official, David Unsworth, that their account was not accepted.

This was a ritual sacrifice waiting to happen. It is no secret that the power in football is in the hands of the Chairmen of the major clubs. They have been publicly unhappy with the discipline their players have been subjected to and so the FA has shown its sense of fair play by disciplining its officials when they got it wrong. Or has it?

Can the FA really be unaware of what is happening in and around the technical areas? Significantly, there seems to have been no report of action the FA is going to take about that problem - just a statement about the action they are taking with the officials. Do they condone the improper behaviour indulged in by the managers and their entourage, or do they really want the officials to be able to do their job? Could it be that they would rather take on the officials than the chairmen of the major clubs?

There is a simple answer – remove the dugouts and the nonsense that goes on near the touchlines. *In consultation with referees* create circumstances in which they can actually do their job efficiently. A cynic might be forgiven for thinking that our high-earning super-stars might be expected to manage to cope for 90 minutes on their own devices and the previous week's coaching.

Yet another case where referees at all levels will feel the lack of sympathy and support of the body they serve.

[First appeared on the Reading RA website, January 2000]

**MORE ABOUT FEWER CARDS – the letter from the FA**

Apparently, senior referees on the Football League and Premiership were told in October by Ken Ridden, the Director of Refereeing, to reduce their use of red and yellow cards. It was then passed down to County FAs and reached Oxfordshire referees mid-January.

2 December 1999

TO: The Secretaries of County Football Associations

Dear Sirs,

Recent events have focussed attention on the number of red and yellow cards recorded at all levels to date this season and the approaches adopted by different match officials. The Laws of Association Football require referees to show cards for appropriate offences. The mandatory use of the cards was introduced merely as a simple aid to better communication. The Director of Refereeing has recently felt it necessary to remind National List Referees of their responsibility in this respect. The Football Association Referees' Committee, at its last meeting, considered that it would be appropriate to remind all referees of the current procedure.

Could you disseminate the following information to all referees registered with your County?

"Referees are reminded that the correct procedure for cautioning a player is to state to the player that he is being cautioned; enquire his name; warn him about his future conduct and finally show the yellow card.

The card should not be shown in an aggressive or provocative manner likely to inflame an already emotive situation, nor should the card be used in an over-demonstrative manner which may humiliate a player and perhaps cause him to over-react.

In connection with the use of red and yellow cards referees are reminded of the obvious benefit of isolating offenders so as to avoid any possible confusion as to the recipients of the disciplinary measures. It is essential that it is made quite clear which player has been cautioned.

You will note that the procedure does not permit the card to be shown first. Dispensation to this procedure has only been granted to referees on the National List whilst operating on The FA Premier League or The Football League, when in

exceptional circumstances, the immediate use of the yellow card could serve to diffuse [sic] a possible flashpoint or prevent acts of retaliation.”

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R.C. Guest', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

R.C. Guest  
Refereeing Administrator

## **DOUBLY SPECIAL**

This year's Worthington Cup Final between Leicester City and Tranmere Rovers was doubly special, and that's not counting the unfortunate retirement of referee Alan Wilkie, injured.

It's about the Assistant Referees. Most publicity naturally went to Wendy Toms, our most senior female referee, who was officiating at Wembley for the first time.

On the other line, however, was our local 34-year old Paul Armstrong of Thatcham, an Assistant Referee on the Football League, already with 12 years Isthmian experience behind him.

And congratulations to them both on doing the job well.

## **ANARCHY RULES, *NOT* OK**

There was a time when we looked abroad for examples of mob indiscipline amongst players. No more any need.

It is to be hoped the weekend of 12/13 February passes into history, never to be repeated. The brawling players of Tottenham, Leeds, Chelsea and



Wimbledon are captured on video so they can hardly plead innocence (although some did). And as if that were not enough, the referee reported violence in the tunnel after the Stamford Bridge match. Amongst the individuals charged with misconduct is Dennis Wise, who had the effrontery to smile broadly at the cameras after his misdemeanour.

At least the FA's new chief executive, Adam Crozier, seems determined to try to put professional football's house back in order (after inviting referees to go easier on their sanctions of course). He quickly spoke to the press and followed up his remarks with a letter to the professional and semi-professional leagues, County FAs, PFA, RA and the League managers' Association:

. . . . The Football Association is particularly concerned over recent incidents in F.A. Premier League matches where a number of players gather around a Match Official and act in an intimidating way. This behaviour cannot be tolerated.

It is the responsibility of the Match Officials, particularly the Referee, to ensure the proper conduct of a match. Decisions of the Match Officials must be respected. Where a number of players confront a Match Official, or in a situation where a mass confrontation takes place between large numbers of players of the two teams, the Match Officials have to make judgments as to how to deal with the many persons involved. This may mean that they cannot act in relation to all who are involved.

Whilst the Match Officials are responsible solely for dealing with incidents on the field of play relating to the laws of the game, it is the responsibility of The Football Association to set standards and ensure that they are upheld. You will be aware that under Rule 24 in the Rules of The Association, clubs are responsible for ensuring that players conduct themselves in an orderly fashion and refrain from violent, threatening, abusive, obscene or provocative behaviour, conduct or language whilst taking part in a match. Clubs should be aware that The Football Association will in future act against a club under this provision where there is evidence of intimidation of a Match Official by a number of players. This may well be in addition to any action taken at the time by the Referee under the Laws of the Game. Match Officials need the support of all involved in the game, and we expect clubs to take their responsibilities seriously.

Verbal support came too from Mike Lee, a Premier League spokesman:

"Standards of behaviour on the field are a shared responsibility. Referees, governing bodies, players and managers all have a role to play. At a time when there is all-round praise for the way that referees have been officiating, it is particularly disappointing to witness some of the events of the past weekend.

. . . . Ultimately, disciplinary problems can only be tackled with the full backing of players and managers. We want to see a situation in which unacceptable behaviour is identified and stopped."

## **TECHNOLOGY TO THE RESCUE**

There have been too many occasions over the years when goals have been allowed or disallowed incorrectly because of uncertainty about whether the ball fully crossed the goal line. Even those officials who resist the assistance of technology seem to welcome the possibility of help with this decision.

Of course we are talking about the professional game and stadia. The aim seems to be to produce video pictures that the referee 'would see immediately', though one newspaper talked of an audio system like the Wimbledon bleep for faulty serves 'to save clubs money'!

Perhaps the players could stump up a bit from their reasonably ample pay packets to help the officials get the better system.

[If you think you have seen the above three items before, you could be (nearly) right – two and a bit appeared on the website at the end of February]

## **IMPORTANT REMINDER ABOUT INSURANCE**

### **Official statement from the General Secretary of the national RA**

‘As from 1<sup>st</sup> April 1999 any member who was registered with The Association as at 31<sup>st</sup> March in any given year will be deemed to be a member

on renewal of that membership on or before 30<sup>th</sup> June in that year. Members who have not renewed their membership as at 1<sup>st</sup> July in any given year will cease to be in membership of The Referees' Association and therefore will not be entitled to the cover under the Personal Accident Insurance Policy until their membership is renewed.'

## **POACHER TURNED GAMEKEEPER**

### **Newcastle keeper Steve Harper has a double life as a ref . . . .**

Those St James' Park season-ticket-holders who routinely delight in venting spleen at match officials will presumably be disturbed to learn that their team's goalkeeper is also a qualified referee.

"I love refereeing," insisted Harper, who spends most Sunday mornings working in the Peterlee & District League in his native southeast Durham. "But after getting decisions wrong myself, I understand how hard the job is; I now realise how good the top fellows in the Premiership really are. It would be great to test myself at that level and the Referees' Association have given me a lot of encouragement to climb the ladder.

"But, realistically, if I'm lucky enough to continue playing until I'm into my thirties, I'll probably be too old to stand a chance of qualifying as a Premiership referee." . . . . .

"People say a lot of common sense has gone out of refereeing, but they should remember officials are under a lot of pressure to enforce Uefa directives and are constantly watched by assessors. Then the television cameras seem to show every incident from three or four angles.. Referees can't possibly see everything."

Louise Taylor, *The Sunday Times*, 16/1/00

## GIRLS VOTING WITH THEIR BOOTS

Helen Rumbelow, *The Times*, January 2000

<p>Football could become the sport of choice for English schoolgirls after a study yesterday showed its success at luring them off the athletic sidelines.</p> <p>From September all secondary schools across England will begin applying the lessons of a year-long project into reversing the declining fitness of teenage girls. The most</p>	<p>Youth Sport trust and Nike, said:</p> <p>“Above all, the girls wanted alternatives to the traditional hockey and netball. When combined with rejecting embarrassingly short skirts, and encouraging teachers and older girls to get involved as role models, this had startling results.</p> <p>“Undoubtedly the most popular new sport was</p>	<p>extent, tag rugby.”, she said.</p> <p>But only a handful of secondary schools allow girls to continue the football skills they learn at primary level. This could prove damaging to the health of the nation, the report said, because research indicates that school sports make girls less likely to have eating disorders, reduces</p>
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surprising finding was how many girls were eager to play football. Clare Claxton, director of the research for the	football. Girls voted it number one, after that was basket-ball and, to a lesser	unplanned pregnancies and makes girls less likely to drop out of education.
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# What's on for the Rest of this Season

- 16 March                      Andrew Melrose, a member of the RFU Training Team for Referees – insights from the other code
- 20 April                        To be confirmed
- 18 May                         Annual General Meeting and your opportunity to vote on issues affecting the future of your society