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EDITORIAL

I can't remember reaching this point in the season without having lost a game through frost or snow - I happened to be out of Reading the one Sunday it did snow. It should mean a less frantic end of the season for the leagues and especially clubs who have had good cup runs.

This issue includes rather longer reports than usual of what our visiting speakers have said at the last two monthly meetings, because they managed to say so much that seemed worth recording. Do tell me if you would prefer briefer comments. Nice to have two letters too.

There is also a fascinating article spotted by Geoff Way in the 'Times'. A 'two referee system'. I have refrained from comment quite deliberately, though tempted. I hope one or more of our readers will rise to the bait and make a reasoned critique. Our present diagonal system with three officials has stood the test of over 50 years but is creaking. How can match control be improved? Easy to blame the players, the Laws, the FA, the PFA, society and the rest. Could we or our system be improved? It's a fair question. Send your answers in a plain brown envelope to the address below.

What about England then? Is this the new beginning? I thought the defence just a little bit dodgy, except for Shilton of course. Still it was a win.

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PRESIDENT'S PIECE

Shouldn't we be 'user friendly'?

At one of our meetings earlier in the season, the subject of late starts was brought up, and what we, as referees, should do about them. One of our more experienced referees, Peter Pittaway, made the suggestion that perhaps it wouldn't be a bad idea to put your head around the club's dressing-room door a few minutes before kick-off to remind the players that they are due out on the pitch shortly. Somewhat to my surprise this suggestion was rounded upon, on the grounds that we weren't there to mollycoddle teams. It wasn't our job to get them out on the pitch on time. If they didn't keep track of the time and they were late kicking off, that was their fault.

Unfortunately, pressure of time on that evening prevented any further discussion on this matter, but I'm sure that if it had continued, Peter, with all his experience in senior football would have pointed out that in the upper echelons of the game, you are actually required to give the teams warning that kick-off is approaching. Certainly in my days in senior football, and I doubt whether it has changed today, referees had to ring a bell which rang in the players' dressing room, signalling that there were so many minutes to kick-off and then a second ring when you actually wanted them out on the pitch.

So the first point is that you are not being unprofessional, or mollycoddling teams by informing them that they have so long to go before they should be out on the pitch. It is standard practice in senior football.

The other point that comes to my mind is our whole attitude towards refereeing. What are we there for? Why are we refereeing? Surely it is to give 22+ players an enjoyable afternoon's or morning's game of football. We are not there like some spiky traffic warden trying to catch people out.

This same sort of attitude goes for those games where substitutes have to be named prior to kick-off. Do we resolutely wait to be informed of the names, and if they haven't been given to us, then that's the team's bad luck? Isn't it more practical, more friendly, much more in the spirit of the game, to make a check

with the skippers when tossing up, if you haven't been given them already? 'Any substitutes today chaps, because I need their names?'

Sometimes after a match, referees themselves expect to be mollycoddled. We get complaints from time to time that the home team didn't come and see us with the fee. In local football, the club officials have 101 things to do - pack the kit away for washing, collect the subs, attend to any injuries, see who is available for next week. We only have to take care of ourselves. Is it any hardship to put our head round the door when we are ready? I know that, if you have had a difficult game, the last thing you want to do is put yourself voluntarily amongst a team of critical players asking for your money. Generally, however, a simple call: 'Mr Secretary, I'm ready when you are,' is sufficient to remind him that he hasn't paid you. The other dodge, of course, is to hold on to the match ball. After all, the Laws do say that it should be returned to you at the end of the game. With the price of balls what they are today, they will come and see you before you leave.

Now I'm not suggesting that you become familiar with the teams or the players, or that you neglect any of your duties such as reporting late starts. However, in modern computer parlance, is there anything wrong in being 'user friendly'?

Dick Sawdon-Smith

READING FOOTBALL LEAGUE

It has happened at last - a single Saturday league for Reading. The rivalries and sometimes conflicts of the Combination and District Leagues have been put aside to found the new league which will operate from next September.

The reasons are many and various, but clearly something had to be done to stop the flow of clubs and players out of the town into leagues offering what they considered to be better competition. Pooling of experience, resources, officials and players could only make good sense.

The organization, with a senior division controlled ('where possible') by three officials, is of obvious interest to referees and will give opportunities only available at the moment by considerable travel. There will be a chance to officiate locally at a higher level with neutral linesmen, or to run lines on a more regular basis than has been possible since the Sunday League stopped appointing three officials some years ago.

The new league has already clinched a sponsorship deal totalling £9,000 over the first three years with Ceiling System Supplies, present sponsors of the Combination League.

We wish the Reading Football League every success (and we will be ever grateful if its policy of ground and facility improvements becomes a reality).

MEMBERSHIP

When most societies are reporting yet another down-turn in membership, we have closed our books for the season with 152 members - our second highest ever.

A tribute to Peter Hitt, our Membership Officer, the training team and all those of us who went in for a bit of persuasion!

MONTHLY MEETINGS

January

A cold, foggy early evening - sufficiently threatening to keep the attendance down to some 50 stalwarts.

There was little correspondence and routine business. Membership was up again to 151 and was near to the all time record. The new training course had reached 14 members, but George Mills reminded us he had written to over 200 clubs. Do they even try, he wondered. The Chairman recounted the story of the presentation of the plaque from our colleagues in Christchurch, New Zealand and it was there for members to see. A photo and account had already appeared in the Evening Post and the Chronicle was expected to publish the story too.

Rather appropriately, given the evening's topic, the recently published booklet 'So You Carry the Sponge' was on sale @ £2-50p a copy. Written by the Society President Dick Sawdon Smith and Life Member Terry Gibbs, it is an illustrated basic first aid manual for the 'sponge man', but of course is of great value to referees, even those with some knowledge already.

Our Guest Speaker was Roger Beavis who was back to conclude the talk on 'First Aid' he was giving in November when he was interrupted by a real emergency. In fact he did better than that. He gave a new version of his talk which acted as revision for those present on the previous occasion, but still made sense for those who had missed the November meeting. He reminded us that he couldn't give a course on first aid in an hour. He would highlight

some points to make us more aware and would try to relate what he was saying to the sort of incidents we might encounter as referees.

Roger again started by stressing that the **priority is always to preserve life**. No good treating a fracture well if the patient has stopped breathing. Brain damage occurs after three minutes without oxygen. Simple things can stop breathing. When someone is unconscious, muscles relax. The tongue can drop into the back of the throat ('swallowing the tongue'). With patient on back, lift under the neck with one hand, push the forehead back with the other. The airway will open. Brain damage can stop the breathing mechanism; then use mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Make sure there is a pulse (the one in the neck is the most reliable). Important to get patient into 'recovery position' (demonstration later), so that vomit, bleeding can get away.

Head injuries. Always a problem. May be concussion, but bleeding inside skull may lead to compression - really dangerous because pressure inside skull can lead to paralysis if untreated. Always be careful. Do use the finger test. Ask questions and check rationality of answers. Concussion usually leads to pallor; compression to redness and pupils of eyes may dilate differently. Get patient to hospital

Unconsciousness is always dangerous. Discourage player from continuing; strongly recommend professional medical aid.

Eye injuries. Seek aid. A burst blood vessel can lead to blindness (you can't see what's happening behind the eye).

Bleeding. People tend to panic. A little blood goes a long way. Bleeding is controllable and the body helps itself. Most bleeding not immediately dangerous, but urgent action required if it is spurting, e.g. from an artery or varicose vein.

Simple rules. Apply pressure and raise the limb. (Sit the patient down to avoid a fall). Release the pressure for a few seconds after about 10 minutes, then reapply (to avoid starvation of the extremities and the danger of gangrene). If something in the wound, don't even try to remove it. Apply pressure alongside, against the foreign body.

Nose bleed. Pinch soft part of nose and tip head forward for 10 minutes. (Forget about cold keys etc). Tell the patient not to blow his nose!

Remember the need for **anti-tetanus jabs**. Doctor will provide on request.

Fractures. Although painful and worrying, not the priority - first confirm the patient is breathing. Different fractures need different treatment - act within the limits of your own knowledge.

Recovery position. Roger demonstrated (on Stuart Gentle). With the player on his back, kneel at his side. Place player's near hand under his buttocks, palm uppermost. Fold his other arm across his chest and his furthest leg across his nearer leg. Then with a hand under his face and gripping his waistband, roll him towards you on to his side. (This is much easier if you see it done, or look at the illustrations in Dick and Terry's book!)

Shock. This occurs when the vital organs are deprived of blood. Don't give a hot drink or alcohol or a hot water bottle - they have the wrong effect. Keep the patient warm. On a football pitch, put something warm underneath the player as well as on top. Lift the legs (if no injury) to help the circulation.

Roger then responded to quite a number of questions. Many members had learned enough to understand the priorities and their own limitations. Good sales for the new booklet ensured!

FAIR PLAY AND LINESMAN'S AWARDS

Marks to Alan Turner please.

February

Unusually good weather for the time of year and a good turn-out of members, including Graham Stockton who had recovered well from his recent heart attack and was made very welcome. Among the business was a discussion of the proposal carried at last year's conference for insurance to provide legal assistance in the case of assaults. It was agreed that in the Berks and Bucks there was already adequate provision and so no need to add a compulsory premium on to the National RA subscription.

Peter Hitt was congratulated on the near-record total of 152 members. In response to a proposal from the Sunday League, members agreed that we should extend our Fair Play Award to include the Under 16 and Under 17 divisions of the Sunday Youth League.

Our Guest Speaker was David Hutchinson, Football League referee. David started by complimenting us on our business meeting. He had visited 33 different societies and it wasn't always possible to be complimentary.

David's theme was to be teamwork. He would share his experience with us, but it was up to us to decide what was useful and to take what we wanted. Teamwork for referees, like teamwork

for players, has to be worked on. 'Failing to plan is planning to fail'.

David's talk was to be a simulation of giving match instructions (to neutral linesmen). He wants his linesmen to understand. Any team needs a leader but the referee is still part of the team. When do you start thinking about teamwork? When you receive the appointment. When he had a line to Pat Partridge he got a call the day after he got the appointment to arrange to meet at 11 a.m. on the match day.

Teamwork. Avoid pre-match 'instruction'. Why not call it a pre-match 'talk'? Know the names of your linesmen. Our tactics. Be careful if you know the linesmen already - easy to be complacent, to take things for granted. Get out there early; relax; talk football/refereeing; explore the ground.

Decide who is senior. David always asks his senior linesman to take the line in front of the bench. Decide diagonal (and make it clear). Next, on to the pitch. Walk and talk at appropriate points.

Offsides. All yours, but explain why and what. Be selective to keep the game flowing. Show that you, as referee, understand their problem.

Corner kicks. Far side, 10 yards in; your side, behind flag. How do you cover whole penalty area? You, on the line, be responsible for everything outside the 6-yard box. Make eye contact just before the kick. If I indicate reverse, you take 6-yard box.

Nets. Look at one as you pass.

Flags. Minimum flag with maximum effect. Don't take control from the referee. Give the flag for infringements, but first count 1 - 2.

Free kicks on your diagonal? If any problem about 10 yards, you help. Come on to pitch if necessary.

Incident right in front of you? Flag straight away. It's expected of you and you won't be able to help it anyway.

Ball in and out of play. Flag every one your half and 15 yards into other half. Beyond that, follow me.

(Watch the words you use in your talk: 'we', 'us'. 'I will support you'. 'When I am on the line' . . . 'We are a team').

Foul throw. Whoever sees it, gives it. As linesman you help the thrower with position. I will too.

Ceremonial free kicks on the edge of the penalty box. I pace 10 yards backwards for communication. You watch my back.

Goal. Run back beyond centre line. Flag up if a problem.

Penalty. Important to check: keeper movement; ball over goal-line; serious encroachment. Referee to goal-line; linesman joins players, when assembled, on edge of penalty area.

Off the ball incidents. If I suspect I look to you. If you can help, flag. If not, shake head. I want 100% Tell me who and where. Teamwork leads to trust.

Recording. 4th official records with me. You are needed to watch what's happening please.

Time. Give me 5 down or later.

Right, we come on, you check the nets, come to the middle. We come off together. Dressing room etiquette? It's the gaffer (the referee) who decides who comes in. Any questions?

A fascinating talk with something for members of whatever experience or standard. Even a lengthy summary cannot do it full justice.

ANOTHER SOCIAL SUCCESS

The Annual Dinner and Dance was held on 3 March and a good evening was had by all. The venue - Wokingham Town FC - has an appropriate atmosphere. Everyone agreed the caterers had done well and Stuart Gentle at least was glad we didn't have the magician again. The 'cabaret' proved to be a comedian with some material a bit near the knuckle - well, not the knuckle exactly. . . Most people seemed to enjoy it to judge by the laughs!

Thanks to Jill Young for devising the raffle with all its prizes and to Steve Green who organized and ran the whole evening.

THOSE TINY HANDS

I still haven't had chance to try out my special cold-repellent, fingerless gloves. Very frustrating, all this pleasant weather.

The Goalkeeper

[first published in the Reading FC programme 2/10/85]

Older readers will remember how goalkeepers regularly used to be bundled into the net and sometimes badly injured. On the other hand, they had the freedom to travel freely round the penalty area as long as they were bouncing the ball.

Because the keeper is so vulnerable, especially when going for the very high or very low ball, the laws now give him a good deal of protection. Some non-goalkeepers would say **too** much.

The keeper can still be charged fairly if he is holding the ball or obstructing an opponent anywhere in the penalty area, and also if he is **not** holding the ball, so long as he is not in his own **goal** area. The particular problem for referees is to spot the forward who is really jumping to get the keeper rather than the ball, and the keeper who is going for the forward

The law has been changed more than once in recent years to curb the freedom (and therefore the timewasting tactics of keepers. But even the limitation to four steps has been got round by having a defender in close attendance to receive and return the ball.

This season [1985/6], the law has been changed again: the keeper can now take the ball back into his hands, after the sequence of up to four steps, only from a colleague **outside** the penalty area. He may of course handle or kick it again if it has touched an opponent either inside or outside the area.

The International FA Board was concerned that timewasting has continued in spite of the changes in 1982 and 1984, and trusts that 'the spirit of the law will now be respected'.

For the sake of the game, it is to be hoped so. We shall see.

Reading Referees' Association

SOME MORE TIPS

Check where 5ft comes up to on you - easy then to judge corner flag posts.

Practise pacing a true yard or, at least, know the length of your normal stride.

When you get to the centre circle, unobtrusively pace the distance to the centre spot. That should be your 10 yards.

Make sure you outpace a player early in the game to show your fitness. (Choose the one running with the ball if you must).

DEAR COLLEAGUES

Rather belatedly I feel moved to write and explain why I have not been seen at Reading RA meetings since the AGM in May 1988.

In June 1988 I was successfully interviewed for a position as Materials Manager with Celtite in Alfreton, Derbyshire - a challenging position with responsibility to the Chief Executive for all production, warehouse and distribution, and purchasing.

One problem. I placed my house on the market and thanks to the Chancellor's fiscal changes, there it sits, awaiting a buyer. Any offers? Since August, I seem to be living on the M1 - up on a Monday morning and returning Friday evening. Not an ideal situation.

I have continued refereeing every Saturday, although I haven't been too happy with my performances this season. A number of factors spring to mind, but I guess mainly the added pressure of new employment and temporary accommodation away from home haven't helped. Still, I have resisted the temptation to take a season off, because that would be the negative easy option, and I still gain enormous pleasure from the game we all enjoy.

As usual, I have been extremely lucky this season with some superb appointments from Oxon FA. During September I received an FA Cup 1st qualifying round line appointment with Kim Chapman from Henley in the middle. In November I was appointed to referee the unofficial 'match of the round' in the Oxon Junior Shield between two sides strongly tipped to reach the semi-finals until they were drawn together. Mr Byles, the County Chief Assessor, watched the game and was helpful in his comments. Assessments don't stop at 40 and Class 1!

I wondered why Mr Byles watched me. Then, perhaps the real reason became apparent, when during January I was appointed to referee Kidlington vs Clanfield in the 2nd round of the Oxon Senior Cup with official linesmen (a great privilege and benefit). Oxon FA have been extremely good to me during the four seasons I have been registered with them.

Well my friends - sincere good wishes to you all. I have many fond and happy memories of my time at Reading RA and the good times we have shared. Special thanks to George Mills, John Lambden, Terry Gale, Keith Dade and Steve Green for your kindness to me. I have valued all your friendship at Reading RA.

Happy whistling!

Malcolm Mackenzie

[Coincidentally, the following letter is from one of Malcolm's friends. Ed]

DEAR EDITOR

[One of our regular non-referee readers responds to my call for responses. Ed]

I refer to your request for feedback and to the comments on page 11 of the 'Reading Referee' Dec 88/Jan 89.

As a spectator and seeing, as it were, both sides of the fence, may I make what I hope are positive suggestions?

1. When a particularly bad foul has been committed, some referees seem to show anger and summarily call the players to them, giving the impression of the petulance players themselves show. I feel no anger should be shown.

2. When a player is being cautioned by a referee, many players bend over and look at their feet. This infers 'dumb insolence' from a spectator's viewpoint. Can the player not be made to look at the referee?

3. Cannot a code of official signs be instituted so a spectator knows exactly what offence has been committed? Many times spectators do know, but recently a player ran into the back of a referee and bowled him over. It was obviously accidental, but the player was booked. To all of us it seemed like over-reacting, but it was not until I read the newspapers that I learned it was for 'lip'. And how do I know why a direct or indirect freekick has been given without some clear sign?

I expect there are reasons for the offside law which I cannot fully understand, but it would be more understandable to spectators if offside was given only when the ball is received, not struck, and it would avoid defences rushing forward.

Finally, may I assure referees that there are spectators watching to see if linesmen are placed away from dugouts or other distracting influences, and watching to see the referee has his back to spectators when a reprimand is given - both skills that are appreciated amongst many others. I only wish there was better communication, both written and on the field between 'you' and 'us' to enhance the game we love.

Frank Viner, Henley

