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EDITORIAL

This month I am about to be misunderstood - again. I have written about assessors and the national RA.

One of the hallmarks of the set-up in football is that criticism, even when honest and well-founded, is frowned upon. As a group, those in power in our sport seem hypersensitive. You probably remember how last month's guest speaker, Alan Robinson, was condemned by the FA for telling the truth.

My misdemeanour is more modest. I have suggested possible short-comings in assessment locally and in the structure of the RA nationally. I even make positive proposals. No doubt I shall still be misunderstood

The season is well on and has not been without its incidents. At a recent practical I was explaining to one of our trainees why semi-finals are often the most volatile games in a cup-run and, the very next Sunday, one has to be abandoned locally. Spectator nonsense is also creeping back into the Football League after a relatively quiet period, with the assault of a referee. It's no small wonder that we continue to recruit people willing to face that challenge. In fact the number of over 29,000 registered referees last year was the highest ever. Good luck to them all!

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PRESIDENT'S PIECE

Intimidation is Ungentlemanly Conduct

For someone who has been criticised in the past for the economical use of notepad and pencil, (something like six cautions and six sendings-off in 30 odd years of refereeing), I have to confess that I have sometimes wondered whether all the 'bookings' that happen on the Football league are really necessary. I have to admit of course that I haven't refereed in Senior Football for many years.

It's just that it's sometimes difficult to understand why one tackle merits a caution, and another one doesn't. After all, Law 12 doesn't say anything about illegal tackling being a cautionable offence except if it's persistent. If it's serious foul play then the Chart says the player must go.

I remember years ago lining on the old Mithras Floodlit Cup, when the referee cautioned a player for a heavy tackle. In the dressing room afterwards he said: "What offence am I going to call it in my report?" "Put it down as 'Ungentlemanly Conduct'", I replied, "that covers a multitude of sins."

Having listened to Ian Porterfield being interviewed after the Chelsea v Sheffield United cup-tie, the whole thing was put somewhat into perspective. He was asked for his comments on Vinny Jones' record quickest booking. There was no shock, no regret, no hint of disapproval. "We knew they would be tough so we had to let them know we could match them", or words to that effect.

Doesn't that sound rather reminiscent of Chelsea hooligan fans asked to explain a punch-up on the terraces. "We knew they had come tooled up so we had to get in there first." In other words pure intimidation. Let them know what they can expect from us.

This does give a clue to why one tackle may be cautionable and another not. The player is doing rather more than just making a tackle. He is saying with the tackle "Don't get too clever or that's what you are going to get from me."

Intimidation is ungentlemanly conduct, and as such the only weapon in the referee's armoury is the caution. It's just a pity that it has to be used so often.

Dick Sawdon Smith

[Dick really did write six of one and half a dozen of the other. Anyone going to ask the obvious question? Ed]

MONTHLY MEETINGS

January

First meeting of the new year and the attendance was a bit disappointing - only 60+. Maybe they were scared of the quiz on the Laws promised for the second half. Or to be more charitable, the lack of a Guest Speaker, or the 'flu.

There was little correspondence and not much to report from the leagues either. A query about notification to captains that a late start would be reported was sorted. It is required on the Reading Football League, but not on the Sunday League. The latter has also changed its policy on the away team and the card. Referees on that league should make sure they know what has to be done.

Other items:

- The First Aid classes were to go ahead and details would be announced.
- The Senior Training Officer reported that the new training course would start on the 20 January not as previously stated.
- Membership had reached 173, the highest ever and the membership officer, Peter Hitt, was congratulated. George Mills made a plea for members to sign the attendance register.
- Stewart Mills reported that the Whistlers 5-a-side team had had a marked improvement of form and a run of four games without defeat, including 3 wins. Stephen Green was currently top scorer with 10 goals.
- Pat Monaghan asked for interested members to sign up for the 11-a-side team which will have monthly fixtures for the rest of the season.

- The fitness training sessions had been organised and would start on Tuesday 28 January at Arborfield. 8.00-9.00 p.m. The classes would be taken by PTI and FA Coach Dickie Parker, and there would be a £1.50 charge per session.

- It was reported by John Moore that the Berkshire Association of Boys' Clubs' team had reached the quarter finals of the national competition. He thanked all who had officiated, often at short notice, especially Mike Dixon, Bill Wallace and Alison Chapman who took charge of the last match.

- Barry Ford received the congratulations of members on his appointment to the line of the U/18 Schoolboy International, England v, Republic of Ireland.

- Ted Cambridge reported that a local player had been suspended for an assault on a linesman.

Social events:

- The pantomime on Christmas Eve at the Hexagon had been enjoyed by 30 children (and their 5 adult escorts).

- The Draw had made a profit after paying for the panto.

- The Dinner and Dance was arranged for Saturday 16 May. The chief guest would be national RA President and ex-Football League referee, Peter Willis. (Payment for tickets by instalments is possible, see Graham Stockton)

Under any other business the topic of assessors was raised and particularly the vexed question of their visibility/invisibility.

Did colleagues, a member asked, think assessors should hide or make themselves known and comment on the game? It was made clear by Ted Cambridge that there is no laid down code of conduct. Everyone, it seemed, would prefer an open relationship with contact before and after the match and even at half time as long as it wasn't advice to change during the second half. In response to a related question from Ted, the Chiltonian League referees present said they would not object to an assessor being present at their briefing of the linesmen.

After the break it was the promised (dreaded?) quiz. Graham Stockton, the question master, with George Mills, who had

prepared the questions, as time keeper, got his four teams of volunteers on the 'you, you and you' basis. Peter Pittaway, Barry Ford, Ted Cambridge and yours truly were the captains, and the teams were made up of Class 1, 2 and 3 colleagues - in theory at least. That was the easy bit.

We started with the straightforward questions (he said) and they got harder. It was certainly fun arguing whether the questions/answers were right and even trying to answer the odd one and win a few points. What it showed was how few of us remember (if we ever knew), the detailed wording of the Laws.

Not just because my team lost (2nd actually) but I do wonder whether that type of quiz (modelled on the national RA quiz) proves much, other than the fact that some people know the Laws verbatim - and all credit to them. However, if the quiz were to stimulate a more active knowledge of the Laws, why not a quiz based firmly on incidents and 'what do you do next?' How is the game re-started? etc. Certainly fewer of the 'what word is missing?' type. Also, to involve everybody, why not put everybody in a team, have one person to whom the question is directed for full marks but then allow conferring, say, for half marks? So everyone is involved all the time.

Fun it certainly was and I guess quite a number of us were reminded of a few things in the Chart we hadn't read recently. Thanks to George Mills for preparing the questions and keeping his patience and good humour throughout, and of course to Graham for trying to make it all work. We'll do better in every sense next time.

February

A nicely full Rendezvous Club this month - over 80 present including two colleagues from the Ealing RA who were made very welcome.

The local leagues had responded to our query about match cards and Dave Jeanes had come along especially to hear the discussion. The question was about having the same match card for the two leagues and the referee being presented with it before the game, filled in as on the higher leagues.

The problems of local clubs and conditions were stressed and presentation before the game thought by many to be impractical. There seemed to be support for the requirement to present a completed match card reasonably soon after the game, and for

a separate card, a la Berks and Bucks, on which to record problems like late starts, poor appurtenances etc. That would save writing letters. The discussion was not conclusive and the Chairman promised another go.

The Secretary reported from the County RA meeting that the ramifications of the assault on John Machin were still under discussion, and that membership was now 790, the highest for many years.

- Members were reminded that disciplinary reports about managers and coaches must state "misconduct".

- The FA is exploring public liability cover for referees in view of the recent court cases in Northern Ireland (about dangerous pitches)

- Referees have been heard using foul and abusive language to players. Don't.

- One society is to press for the dimensions of studs, now omitted from Law 4, to be re-instated. On a show of hands members were massively in support.

- Martin Shearn requested representations to the Reading Football League to insist on clubs having a change of strip in the Senior League, or change of socks as a minimum. [Well, it makes a change from studs Martin. Ed]

- A plea from the Sunday League for referees to be consistent about foul or abusive language. Ted Cambridge pointed out that we have no option - it is Law.

- A plea from the Sunday Youth League for more referees on Sunday mornings as there are now more matches.

- Pat Monaghan announced the first of a run of fixtures for the Whistlers, our 11-a-side team. Do get in touch if you want to play. Stewart Mills reported the recent success of the 5-a-side league team. After their disappointing start to the season, they were still in the cup and might end up near the middle of the table. [**STOP PRESS:** cup runners-up]

- Members complained about the quality of local park nets and a case of very late calling off of matches.

- John Moore reported that the local team was in the semi-final of the National Association of Boys' Clubs' football competition. He particularly thanked Bill Wallace for two long sessions of refereeing.

The Guest Speaker, Alan Robinson, was introduced by Chairman Graham Stockton. It took longer than usual because of what Alan has packed into his career. Briefly, he qualified in 1956 and rose to be a FIFA referee in 1983. He has done a number of prestigious finals including the Milk Cup, FA Vase and FA Cup. In the RA he is Chairman of his local society, member of the national Council since 1968, Overseas and Services Secretary and has been PRO.

Alan's first task was the pleasant one of presenting the Sunday Youth League Top Referee Trophy (1990/91 - a bit late) to Alison Chapman - to the delight of all present, especially Alison.

Alan said he was going to talk about the Laws of the Game, but I guess we hadn't heard about them like this before.

Alan started by admitting that, although refereeing had been his life, he was still trying to 'unravel the minds' of professional footballers. He then took the Laws in turn and illustrated points from his own refereeing experiences. Here's a somewhat shortened version:

The Field of Play Do you do your inspection properly? Alan mentioned the recent court cases. Told the story of Jack Taylor finding out at the last minute before the World Cup Final in Munich that there were no corner flags. Make your own decisions about a pitch's fitness for play. Game at Swindon when he gave in to pressure to play the game - eventually had to abandon it. In bad conditions changing the diagonal can help, though not easy with club linesmen.

The Ball Story of player who complained about the match ball just after the pressure limits had been changed. Alan asked for a pump at half-time but in fact didn't use it. The player thanked him 10 minutes into the second half . . .

Number of Players Alan regrets the absence of characters like Roger Kirkpatrick and fears we're getting 'robot referees'. [I wasn't sure how this fitted Law 3 but he did go on to tell us about his linesman who pointed out two number 6s (on the same side) and when complimented, admitted the ballboy had told him!].

Players' Equipment How many pairs of boots do you take? Linesman with highly polished boots who fell four times for want of decent studs. Referee who insisted on starting on time though one team's shorts hadn't arrived. It made the local papers.

Referees Your preparation? Alan always had two dextrosols and a double decker sandwich before the game. Story of John Holmewood who walked his two linesman round Paris all day before an international fixture and then refereed it very well. That was his preparation (though the linesmen were shattered).

Watch other referees and learn.

Linesmen Take your flags to every match. Game at Harlow where the club secretary had left the flags at home. So had the two linesman. Fortunately Alan hadn't and never did again. "Just imagine doing an FA Cup game with handkerchiefs for flags".

Observation at all times. Incident with 'Bomber' Harris when the linesman 'spotted' the wrong player after a fracas. Alan learned the truth from TV and said so in his report. "Let them sort it out, I was being honest. I didn't see it".

On a trip to Kenya Alan had been asked to draft instructions for referees to give to linesmen. They sent him a final copy which was accurate but had an addition at the end - telling the linesman nearest the referee at the end of the game to get a corner or centre line flag pole with which to protect the senior official.

Duration of the Game On a park with lots of pitches all the games had stopped but one. It was still going on when the other referees were changed and leaving. It turned out to be a new referee who had been stopping his watch every time the ball went out of play

The Start of Play Say as little as possible. Use a shiny coin (Alan once lost his old penny) Be punctual.

Ball in and out of Play Make it clear in your pre-match talk what you want your linesmen to do - keep the flag up to show ball is out of play. Give good instructions but don't use notes- no way to give your colleagues confidence.

Scoring a Goal Case in Portsmouth of referee scoring. He was in front of the keeper and struck by the ball which went into the net. What was he doing there? Watch your position.

Off-side Horrific experiences in South Africa. Local Derby in Soweto. Two black teams, black spectators, first white officials. Each team had a witch doctor. Decision given for a clear off-side led to pitch invasion. Alan narrowly missed being knifed. All for an offside. In Cape Town it was only the floodlights that failed. Not his happiest tour.

Fouls and Misconduct If disciplining a player, take the name you are given. I. Mutter and Donald Duck both turned out to be genuine

Free-kick/penalty-kick Remember the players are ignorant of the Laws. You stand with your hand raised in the penalty area, and professionals still ask if it's direct.

Throw-in Do you know about the rolling somersault throw-in? It was first declared illegal by FIFA but then deemed OK. You won't see it in wet weather though.

Goal-kick [I think it slipped Alan by - or I was asleep. Let me remind you you can't be offside from a goalkick. You'll see why I mention it when you read about Ivan later. Ed]

Corner-kick What's your position? Be flexible. Don't go right behind the goal. Alan had seen a young referee actually get caught in the netting . . .

Law 18? Common sense. Do what you know is right. Don't think promotion comes from a knowledge of the Laws. Get experience on the field.

Alan was warmly thanked by Graham on behalf of the attentive audience and presented with an engraved tankard as a memento of the evening.

WHO'S IN THERE?

(Thanks to Giles, the Daily Express, and Derek McKenzie)

INCOME TAX

Although we haven't recently had trouble with the Inland Revenue, it may be worth passing on the RA's advice for the benefit of new referees especially. Keep a record, not only of your matches, but also fees received and expenses incurred on kit, travel to matches and meetings, stamps, telephone calls etc connected with the 'job' of refereeing. If you declare the income, make sure you declare the expenses in full. If contacted by the Revenue (it's very unlikely), don't panic and don't respond. Let the Secretary know. We can get advice.

FAIR PLAY AND LINESMAN'S AWARDS

Please let Alan Turner have your marks as soon as possible.

AN EXTRA PLUM (OR TWO)

Congratulations to **Barry Ford**, who officiates regularly for the Schools FA, on his appointment to the line of the Schoolboy Under-18 International England v. The Republic of Ireland on 30 March at Yeovil. Apologies too to Barry, because I have only just discovered his honour at the end of last season: Hellenic League Cup Final line.

Again, congratulations Barry - I'll try to do better this season (always assuming you do just as well).

A plea to all those officiating on leagues outside Reading. At the end of each season I try to publish all the appointments of our members to cup finals, but as a matter of routine get information only from the two Reading leagues and the Reading Senior Cup competition. We have officials on some 23 (yes, twenty-three leagues) and some of them, like Barry, must be getting honours I (and therefore you) never hear about. Help me!

NO COLOUR PREJUDICE AT LEAST

"It takes some believing for a referee to mix up two players as different in appearance as we are. I'm 5ft 8in and white, and he's about 6ft 4in and black."

Tony Spearing, of Plymouth, after the referee booked him and not Tony Witter, the real offender, against Leicester.

Mail on Sunday

(quoted by Whistle Stop, magazine of the Milton Keynes RA)

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

In the February issue of 'The Football Referee' (which all our members receive) was a letter from our national President, Peter Willis. I hope everyone read it. Those who don't know the background might have been a bit puzzled.

The national RA has over 350 branches or local societies of which Reading is one of the largest. From time to time

questions are asked about what the national RA does for its local societies - and its money. £3-00 of our subscription last year went to the centre and each year at the national conference any proposed increase is keenly debated and often resisted, although £2 of it provides us with insurance cover.

Questions about national RA seem to have been bubbling for a few years now and the business of our liability for VAT, which has just been decided against us, has brought matters to such a point that our President felt obliged to write to us all personally as it were.

There is no doubt the VAT issue has proved to have been badly handled. Also, Peter is no doubt right to say that members have been kept informed, but (a) they had been led to think that the threat might go away and so (b) the attempt to raise a levy mid-season was poor psychology. It was an unnecessary test of loyalty which was destined to back-fire. The cost should have been written off and recoupment made within the future overall budget - damage limitation.

None of this reflects particularly badly on any individual and certainly not on the President. It can be accepted that he has always acted in the best interests of the RA as he perceived them. We can ask no more. Also, we elected the Council, and being human, they won't always get it right. I believe what is wrong is something quite different.

Peter goes on in his letter to describe the structure of the RA and reminds members of their right to propose changes and how he is subject to the membership. All true. However, what is not said and what is never sufficiently questioned, is the whole basis on which the RA is organised and the results of our sort of organisation.

We have what might be called a pyramid system of government. It is strenuously defended as democratic at the top of the hierarchy, because in one sense it is: in theory the voice of any member can be heard at local RA level, transmitted to County level, to Divisional level, to Council level. This is rather like the system in the Soviet Union before perestroika, which was also said to be democratic. In practice, it is inevitably protective of the status quo and robustly resistant to change. Innovative ideas get lost on their way up the system.

The suggestion in Peter's letter is that if you want change, you have to become an elected Officer. Maybe that's an

admission that that's the only way your ideas can get a hearing. We need to do better than that.

Reading RA members are loyal to the national RA, but we have never been afraid to comment critically, either as a society or as individuals. Two particular things cause me concern:

1. The defensiveness of our Council. They give the impression that no criticism can possibly have any validity. Comments and ideas only seem welcome through the 'proper channels' i.e. the filter system described earlier. I believe we need a structure which welcomes and considers every idea we can get, from wherever, honestly and without pre-judgement. Members can make proposals to Conference of course but in practice that is a suitable route only for uncomplicated issues, and Council members frequently oppose the proposed change. Why aren't the members left to make the judgments themselves?

2. As an association we are re-active not pro-active. Where is our strategy for the future? What do we want to/plan to go out and do? (Not simply, how are going to overcome the latest problem). And when we do pass new policies, how can we continue to tolerate a situation in which they remain unimplemented (forgotten?) or frustrated by the FA?

Why not set up an ad hoc strategic planning group to look at the future of the national RA and produce a report for Conference 1993, made up of a selection of members (not officers of the existing hierarchy) representing different ages and stages? (How many of our existing Council members are active referees? What is their average age?) **A pen portrait of candidates to be sent round to societies; election by postal card vote.**

Of course, to be successful, my proposal would probably need to be made or at least supported by Council but somehow that seems unlikely. Also, the fact that I have suggested such a group will look to some like unwarranted criticism

As I was saying

SAFER ON SATURDAYS?

Overall the number of assaults nationally last season was down on 1989/90 - from 394 to 331. (Relatively) good news.

Of these, mid-week football accounted for 36 cases, Saturday football for 112, and Sunday football for 183. More aggression or more games on Sundays? It's still far too many assaults whenever they happen.

PROMOTION AND ASSESSORS

Many newly qualified referees, especially the younger ones, start with the ambition to get up to Class 1 and into the higher leagues and senior football as soon as possible. In the Berks and Bucks rapid promotion used to be prevented - you could go from 3 to 2 only after a minimum of 2 years and then from 2 to 1 took several more, though I don't remember an actual time stipulation. We finally got that changed because it didn't take into account that some people can progress more quickly than others. The system should always allow individual cases to be treated on merit. And now they are, so what's the problem?

As often happens, what was a change to accommodate the exceptional has almost become the norm. I used to record with a measure of surprise and considerable pleasure when anyone went from 3 to 2 to 1 in successive years. It is still a pleasure but now I am less surprised because the numbers have increased markedly. (Before I lose friends amongst the recent Class 1s, I must say I'm not getting at any individual!) There is a 'however'. However, I think we may be doing ourselves and refereeing a disservice by promoting more on potential than on actual. Irrespective of the number of games in the two year period after qualification, has that new Class 1 had sufficient exposure and 'maturity time'? The maturity comes not just from doing games, but from being a referee and thinking refereeing, from watching others, running lines, being involved in the refereeing ambiance (especially through the local RA).

What is happening, as I observe it, is that progress into more senior football has been too rapid in some cases, with disappointing outcomes for all concerned.

None of what I am saying is to blame all local assessors as individuals (the second group of friends I am about to lose), but it may be to question the system. Are the right people always coming forward, being approached to become assessors? Are we being selective enough (or at all)? Good referees don't always make good assessors. Aside from the obvious personal qualities of objectivity, commitment and so on, assessors need to be trainable and to receive training. Referees being

assessed have a right to consistency - what is valued in a particular referee's performance should not depend on the chance selection of the assessor for that game.

Of course I know I am about to be misunderstood. What I am arguing for does not imply 'standardisation', 'uniformity' (or 'carbon copy referees'. to quote Alan Robinson). All referees will continue to be individuals. The trick is for assessors to be able to judge referees as themselves but against agreed criteria which allow for individual difference.

An element I haven't mentioned so far is the choice of game. Here an anecdote. I was a spectator at a game and was joined by a fellow referee about ten minutes after the start. He was assessing the man in the middle. He left just after half time. 'Waste of time giving him a game like that. It refereed itself.'

Two morals. First you have to see the whole thing. In my view the assessor got it wrong. In those first few minutes and also the 10 minutes he had missed before the game, the referee had imposed, in the nicest possible way, his personality and a grip on the game which he was never to lose. It looked easy because he had made it easy.

Second moral. Especially from 2 to 1, the game to be assessed has to be a challenge. Some experienced referees think it should be the local derby. I disagree. The sort of game which would challenge the best and most experienced referees is by definition too difficult for a promotion candidate. The right choice is the game between teams that have the potential for nonsense: a few players, preferably on both sides, known to have a short fuse. That's the game that the less good referee will lose and the potential Class 1 will control.

What does it all add up to? First, more open discussion of the whole business of assessing. Gone, I hope, as we said in our January meeting, are the days when assessing was seen as a covert (anyone still behind the tree?) and rather negative activity. Referees worthy of promotion have to be mature enough to handle constructive criticism; assessment has to be good enough to cope with exposure and discussion. Why not an open review of assessment including, for example: criteria for promotion, choice of games, selection and training of assessors? Nice co-operative project for the County FA officer - who we know is open-minded about improvement - with representatives of the RA?

Soon.

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR COMMITTEE

Our two committee members chosen for this issue are somewhat more mature (older) than the last two, but still active (in refereeing at least). They have a good deal of service behind them - both as referees and committee members. Stuart Gentle is Assistant Secretary and Ivan McNelly, apart from being the star Christmas Draw ticket salesman, is Assistant Membership Officer this season.

Stuart qualified in 1976 and got his Class 1 in 1982. He has been on the Committee since 1982, Membership Officer 1983-88, then Assistant Secretary. He has also been our representative on the Sunday League since 1987. He referees on the Sunday and South East Counties Leagues and is a mentor and examiner.

Stuart, why did you become a referee?

I have always enjoyed football although I haven't played for many a long year. Persistent back problems in the early 70s then forced me into giving up badminton. At the time I used to run the line for Caversham Park and refereeing appeared to be a natural progression. Anyway, it seemed a good idea at the time!

The biggest influence during your refereeing career, referee or other, and why?

The support given me by the likes of John Lambden and George Mills. On the pitch, being linesman to referees like Barry Bellman and Mike Borland. One shouldn't forget either the encouragement given by Norrie Hart, Gerry Chapman and others on the Sunday League.

Your most memorable game or honour as a referee, and why?

In 16 years one can have many memorable games, all too easily forgotten. It was, however, my honour to be appointed to referee the 1989/90 Berks and Bucks FA Minor Cup (U15) Final at Buckingham.

Your worst or most embarrassing moment in refereeing?

Several years ago as linesman to Barry Bellman. Berks and Bucks FA Sunday Intermediate Cup, quarter final at Theale. Theale were 2-1 up with 2 or 3 minutes to go. The ball had been passed back to the Theale keeper who rolled it out to his defender who collected it inside the penalty area. While this was happening, I was busy checking my watch. All I saw was the defender receiving the ball inside the box. Thinking it was from a goal-kick, I flagged because the ball had not passed out of the penalty area. Result? A dropped-ball re-start - and a very embarrassed linesman.

What, if anything, would you like to change in football?

(a) For all assaults on referees/linesmen, a standard penalty of sine die suspension with no appeal under 5 years. Automatic suspension of the player's registration by the leagues.

(b) For dissent and not retreating 10 yards, the introduction of a 10 yard advancement Law.

(c) The introduction of a 25 yard line parallel with the goal line with offside only applying between the two.

Other interests outside football?

Supporting two daughters in their interest in horses etc.

Ivan McNelly qualified in 1979 and got his Class 1 in 1985. He has been a Committee member since 1987. Ivan referees on the local Saturday and Sunday Leagues and particularly enjoys helping new referees as a mentor.

Ivan, why did you become a referee?

I played football for 16 years, injured my back and took up refereeing with my son - to put something back into the game.

The biggest influence during your refereeing career, referee or other, and why?

The help and guidance given by John Lambden, George Mills and Gus Higgins.

Your most memorable game or honour as a referee, and why?

A line on the Berks and Bucks FA Junior Cup final in 1985.

Your most embarrassing moment in refereeing?

I was refereeing Ibis v. Tilehurst in 1982. (I even remember the date). The linesman flagged for offside from a goalkick and I awarded the free kick!

[It is certainly not the first time such a thing has happened to one of us. I witnessed a very respected member of our society in a later round of the Reading Senior Cup raise his flag in similar circumstances - and he caught out another very respected member in the middle I enjoyed it from the other line. Ed]

What, if anything, would you like to change in football?

- (a) The offside law.
- (b) Blatant and unnecessary backpassing to be penalized.

Other interests outside football?

Gardening and DIY.

D & D ticket picture

Tickets from Graham Stockton. Deferred terms available.

IT JUST HAD TO HAPPEN

The Guardian, 28/2/92

THE LADS DONE GREAT

This year we hosted the County RA Quiz, so we started with home advantage. Ian Bogart of High Wycombe was question master with George Mills as timekeeper.

Two teams failed to show - Maidenhead and Newbury - so there were six teams of four from Aylesbury, Bracknell, High Wycombe, North Berkshire, Reading and Slough. The Reading team, captained by Graham Stockton, also included Stephen Green, Ivan McNelly and John Moore. As always, Wycombe started hot favourites, having won consistently since the mid-80s. They arrived late after a traffic hold-up, so maybe they would be thrown off their game. They were - in the first round they failed to score.

The questions were all on the Laws of the Game - but from straightforward to complex, detailed or obscure. From the weight of the ball to complicated match situations or the precise measurements for the photographers' line behind the goals (which poor Ivan got, or rather didn't get fully).

Reading hared off to an early lead, but Aylesbury were a single point ahead as the teams entered the last round, with Bracknell at Reading's heels. A tense final session with 6 points on each answer. We got 16 from a possible 24 (excellent considering the questions), but so did Aylesbury to pip us at the post - 44 points to 43.

The quiz was part of the national RA competition and the winners now go forward to the Southern Divisional finals.

Finally, a special word of congratulation to Neil Isham and Stewart Mills who innocently turned up to watch and found themselves volunteered into the Bracknell and North Berks teams who each had a man short. I'm just relieved for Neil and Stewart that neither of their teams won!

The evening ended with refreshments and enjoyable chat with the colleagues from other societies.

CYCLING SHORTS

The RA HQ has received a number of inquiries about cycling shorts and whether the Law has been changed. It has not. Members have spotted (without any difficulty) that players in televised matches, both here and abroad, have been allowed to wear cycling shorts of a colour different from that of their normal shorts. It's like goalkeeper movement, illegal kick-offs and the rest. They do it, the Laws forbid it, we mustn't.

What's on

ALL 22 IN THE BOOK

Earlier this season I published a cutting about the brother of a friend of mine who had cautioned all the players of both teams. We thought it was a record. Not so, it seems. Thanks again to a clip in Whistle Stop (from the Guinness Book of Records I assume), I learn that an unnamed referee cautioned all 22 players and one of the linesmen! It was in a local cup match between Tongham Youth Club and Hawley, Hants, on 3 November 1969.

THE PLAYERS' REVENGE?

What with the police threatening to become more active in the punishment of players' wrong-doing during the game, as well as mischief by spectators on their way to, from and in the ground, and with players becoming more and more likely to sue referees for whatever reason, including the condition of the ground . . . , the cartoonist does seem to have a point.

Financial Times
(thanks to Derek McKenzie again)