

# READING REFEREE

Editor - Brian Palmer

February/March 1993

Volume XXXVII No 4

## *Editorial*

---

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

[Editor's new address: 16 Stevens Lane, Peppard Common, Henley-on-Thames RG9 5RG.  
Telephone/answering machine/fax: (0491) 628008.

## MONTHLY MEETINGS

### January

Some 70 members turned up to welcome our new year. The Chairman started with a quick summary of the reasons for the proposed changes in officers and committee to be discussed in February, followed by an up-date on the deal with Reading FC - also for decision at the next meeting. Our version of the contract had been agreed and all members would have a copy before being asked to vote.

Other items:

- a team was to be entered in the County 5-a-side competition
- the Reading Football League had produced an A3 poster *Watch Your Language* for display in dressing rooms. Designed by our chairman, it had a brief and clear message and depicted a red card being shown (and would be in colour)
- the Christmas raffle had produced a profit of £585. John Moore was congratulated and thanked for his efforts.
- the case of the assault on Stuart Mills was to be heard in Reading Magistrates' Court on Wednesday 9 February.
- at the request of the County RA, we would be balloting members about Ken Aston's proposal - to make foul language a cautionable rather than a sending-off offence.
- in the draw for our two Cup Final tickets, Dave Chambers' number was first out of the hat (Reserves: Ray Weedon, Graham Broadhurst).

*Problem Spot* Peter Pittaway challenged members with the problem of the player lying injured in an offside position. In the recent Stockport v. QPR game an attacker was on the ground in an offside position but the goal allowed (because he was judged not to be interfering with play).. In one of Peter's own recent games, a defender was on the ground, the club linesman did not flag, but Peter disallowed the goal. A show of hands revealed that (almost) everyone else would have allowed it. Why? asked Peter. Logically, if the defender, like the attacker in the previous case, is not interfering with play, he has to be disregarded. So the attacker (in this case) only had one player between him and the goal when he received the ball and had to be considered offside.

A pity there was no time for longer discussion because there was clearly a sharp difference of opinion on this one. Could it be that, in this case and possibly in others, the wish to award a goal overruled other factors?

The Guest Speaker, Wing Commander David Taylor, was no stranger to Reading and pleased to be back. An experienced referee and FA Instructor, he warned us that it would be a workshop with participation.

David started by reminding us that training used to mean learning the laws, but refereeing is about a game and people, so the Services started teaching candidates to referee through discussing match situations, and the laws got covered in and between. Unfortunately the examination was still on law. So they wrote a new examination which the FA took over and adopted.

When you are appointed to a game, what goes through your mind? (He asked for suggestions). Think of colours and potential clashes; about the journey, any back history, league positions and so on

What next? You turn up at the ground in good time (check what the competition requires). Look the part. A firm hand grip says something to the manager, players. Be prepared mentally and physically.

Brief your linesmen and show that you will support them. Expect them to support you - you want their help and will try to take their advice, but you have to be responsible for the decisions. David takes his club linesmen to the middle and introduces them to the captains to show they are members of his team. What do you do with neutral linesmen? No right way - get them to give the assistance *you* want. David likes to run the same diagonal for the whole match. Offsides? Referees give different responsibilities: sometimes 'all offsides are yours', sometimes with exceptions. Do what *your* referee requests. The linesman's duty is to support *today's* referee for today's game. Position at corners? David suggests remaining behind the kicker for nearside corners and coming in to the angle of the 18 yd box for far side corners. Saves a crick in the neck if nothing else. Fouls and misconduct? Advise clearly how much help you

want and with what delay, e.g. 'closer to me, wait longer before you flag.' 'Think what I can see'.

Personally, David prefers the flag to be agitated for offside though this is now frowned upon by some leagues. Keep your flag up until the ball is correctly placed so the referee can move to his new position. Always use the correct hand.

Position for penalties? A variety of possibilities. Whichever you choose, explain why to your linesmen.

Who is the senior linesman? Usual to ask him to stop and start his watch as if he is the referee in case he has to take over. (He can normally also check against the referee's watch before he does so). The junior linesman usually lets his watch run. To call the referee: wave your flag and take two paces on to the pitch. At an incident keep your eyes on the action - the referee should come *alongside*, also watching what is going on.

How do you get players ten yards back? Check by running backwards say. Make sure you can do it by previous practice! Anticipate problems at a free kick by your positioning: 65% of fouls occur before ball arrives; 20% while it's there; 15% after it has gone.

Whatever you do, talk to your colleagues. You can always learn.

David concluded by recommending the FIFA publication on *Questions and Answers* in which, for example, is the categorical statement that an attacker can step off the pitch to avoid being offside.

## **MORE REFLECTIONS FROM OVERSEAS**

[The last in Brian Wratten's series on his return to native shores. This time from nearer home. Ed]

If I have gone on at length about soccer in the USA then it is simply because it was there that I had the most extensive of my overseas refereeing experiences. However, I would not like to end without saying a few words about the 2 seasons that I spent officiating in Switzerland. To be a referee in Switzerland you have to belong to a football club which is affiliated to the Swiss FA. It doesn't have to be big club as long as it is affiliated. I lived in Basel and a colleague of mine introduced me to the secretary of FC Basel - one of the leading Swiss clubs. I was immediately accepted as a member and, being a referee, I was not even required to pay a membership fee. I discovered that all Swiss football clubs are required to have among their membership an active group of referees. The required size of the group is determined by the stature and standing of the club. The higher the level of the club, the more referees that it must have on its books. (I don't know what the penalty was if a club failed to meet its quota.) So FC Basel made me very welcome and throughout my stay in Switzerland I

received 2 complimentary tickets for each of its home games. However, there's another perk for being a Swiss referee. Go to any ground in the country, show your referee's identification card (it has your photograph in it so you can't lend it to a friend) and you'll be admitted without charge to almost any match played in a competition organised by the Swiss FA.

Needless to say the organisation and administration of referees in Switzerland was extremely efficient. As a referee registered with the North West Region of the Swiss FA I received my match assignments each week (Tuesday morning) through the mail. The scale of match fees (relatively low) and expenses to be charged were all set out in the referees' handbook. This handbook also contained examples of how all the various forms and reports which a referee might have to use were to be completed. Since the cost of the referee was shared equally by the home and away teams there were 2 forms to prepare (1 for each team) showing the make-up of the cost and providing for a receipt once the amount had been paid. (Payment was always made before the game when each team manager would come to the referee's dressing room to present his team roster and players passes for inspection.) Another form was the one which had to be submitted if the referee decided that a game should be postponed (e.g. if the ground was unfit, or a team failed to show up). Then there was the referee's match report - the most comprehensive of any that I've seen! This was 4-page document in which, apart from all of the customary items to be mentioned, the referee had to report the ground conditions, the atmospheric conditions and the names of any players injured together with any action taken. In addition, he had to certify that he had seen and inspected the contents of the first aid cabinet which was a mandatory requirement in the home teams dressing room. (Perhaps this was to be expected with Switzerland being the home of the Red Cross). With my knowledge of the German language being next to nothing, my match reports (which had to be written in German in my part of Switzerland) were always filled out on a Monday morning with the invaluable assistance of one of my Swiss colleagues.

The Swiss FA requires its referees to attend a mandatory, annual training session (held on a Saturday) with a program that lasts all day. In addition, there are 2 mandatory training evenings to be attended each year. Travelling expenses (fixed) are paid for attendance at all training events. You may well be wondering about the obvious difficulties of officiating in a country where the referee does not speak the local language. Well things were made easier for me because most of the Swiss either spoke, or at least understood, a certain amount of English. For my part, I always managed to make it clear to the players before going on to the field that I would be blowing my whistle in German! Beyond this, I quickly developed various skills and techniques in the use of body language - something which I still find to be an extremely useful form of communication. I'm happy to say that I had very few problems of any magnitude while refereeing in Switzerland and I thoroughly enjoyed my experiences there. For the record you may be interested to know that the president of the referees' association for North West Switzerland during my stay there was Gottfried Dienst and I had the pleasure of meeting him on a number of occasions. In

case you are unable to place the name I'll simply mention that Herr Dienst refereed the World Cup Final at Wembley in 1966!

If you've managed to read this far, let me congratulate you. I admire you for your tenacity and stamina - such essential qualities for any referee! I will simply conclude by saying that it was always my intention to return to England and I'm happy to be back. I'm also happy to have joined such a friendly group of fellow referees as those I have met in the RRA - including our Membership and Press Officers! Should any of you wish to question me on anything that I have written, then please make a point of speaking to me at one of our meetings. Even though I'm a referee, you'll find me extremely approachable!

## **HOW IT USED TO BE**

A facsimile copy of the front page of the *Reading Referee* of exactly 30 years ago (slightly reduced in size). Not quite the magazine of today: we have the advantage of more technology (and money). Copies were made on a wax-stencil and run-off on a printer's ink duplicator (Gestetner) and usually comprised two folded foolscap-size pages, making eight sides of typescript (a bit larger than the present A5 - hence the reduction. Strictly no adverts and no jokes. In those days it was called a 'Newsheet' and curiously, the error in the spelling which dates from the year dot, was not spotted until 1979 when it was corrected! Note the name of Dick Sawdon-Smith our Immediate Past President, joint editor at that time.

[Photo-reduced copy of faxed copy]

## **OH, TO BE A CHAMELEON (or what has science to offer us?)**

[This is a very slightly modified version of an article I wrote for the *Football Referee* quite a few years ago. Ed]

Unsupported by neutral linesmen (the usual situation for most of us) how is a referee supposed to watch the kicker, the goalkeeper and the other players at a penalty? Or to judge offside after a long free kick? How can he be expected to spot those incidents off the ball outside the range of his limited human angle of view? Oh, to be a chameleon, with independently swivelling eyes one on each side of one's head. And think of the other advantage: just imagine being able to change colour at will and mingle unnoticed with the winning team after a controversial match. Mind you you might find it difficult to keep up with play with those short legs and long body and tail . . . .

Although genetic engineering has not got so far as crossing man with a chameleon, we need not be too downcast - other branches of science may have something to offer.

Let's take as an example the long free kick into the penalty area. Many if not most of us on the local park would take up a position opposite the second last defender. Some would watch the kick and turn quickly to judge the offside; others, apparently more wisely, would turn *immediately before* the ball was kicked and *listen* while watching for the offside. What's the problem? This is where the science comes in. The second method is better only if you know how much grace to give the attackers. Let me explain.

Assume the free kick is from near the halfway line and carries to the forwards just inside their opponents' penalty area - on most pitches, say 45 yards. Now, if the referee listens for the kick and is also some 45 yards from the ball, he must allow about one eighth of a second because of the relatively slow speed at which sound travels in air (1,100ft per second). In other words, by the time the referee hears the kick the attackers could *legitimately* be, say, half a pace nearer the goal than the second last defender. How many of us (in the middle or on the line) deliberately make that sort of allowance or any allowance at all? On the other hand, at a penalty the referee is relatively so close to the ball and therefore the probable time-gap so small that little if any movement by the goalkeeper should be tolerated (in spite of any impression to the contrary you may have got from *Match of the Day*).

Chameleon's eyes would help too in running the line. Imagine being able to run freely, keeping one eye looking directly along the touch-line while the other simultaneously scanned the pitch and, whenever necessary, took a sighting at the regulation 90 degrees.

Law 11 seems clear enough and everyone knows about being level with the second last defender when the ball is kicked. But what is 'level with'? Obvious - the linesman looks across the pitch and can see whether the players are level. Of course - *if* he sights exactly at 90 degrees to the touch-line from exactly the right position, he should give the right decision. Have you ever wondered how much tolerance there is? Here the lesson of science may be surprising - there is probably much less tolerance than you thought.

Let's start by admitting that when an attack moves swiftly, many linesmen could be, say, one pace behind play. Or, alternatively, they might reasonably misjudge their position by the same small margin (2'6") Would it matter so much? The diagram gives you some idea.

On a pitch 60 yards wide, with a defender 10 yards away the linesman would in fact judge attacker 1 *onside* when he is *offside* by *some 4 yards*. Attacker 2 who is only 10 yards from the defender would also appear to be *onside* and yet he too is *offside* - by some two feet

It must be added, of course, that experienced officials make allowances when they know they are out of position; they also use the corner line, the penalty box and the goal area line as visual reference points. And many situations are unambiguous and uncontroversial. Nevertheless, it would be interesting, and not too difficult, to set up practical experiments to test the accuracy of the judgments we are making - keeping it all secret from the general public of course. They have little enough confidence already in our offside decisions. Any volunteers?

Maybe changing into a chameleon wouldn't be such a bad idea after all.

[John - should we use metric measurements for our younger members? I can use either but imitate our version of the Laws]

## **FAIR PLAY AND LINESMAN'S AWARDS**