

# READING REFEREE

Editor - Brian Palmer

February/March 1994/95

Assistant Editor - John Moore

Volume XXXVIII No 4

## *Editorial*

Life, football and this season continue to be full of surprises. After the World Cup and the increased pressure on referees to apply the Laws more stringently, it wasn't really a surprise that FIFA issued its mandatory instructions. The first surprise was the reaction of astonishment on the part of the clubs and players when referees actually began to apply them. It's a bit like Euroscepticism - the changes are assumed to apply to everyone else but somehow not to us.

But that hasn't been the real surprise for me. What has surprised me most is that 7 months into the season, there are still so many looks of surprise on professional players' faces when they are shown a card, even when the situation was unarguable and the referee's decision incontestable. Also, the comments of our friends, the commentators, especially if they happen to be ex-pros. I have always suspected that some players were slow learners but I am still surprised. The last defender in front of goal who takes the attacker out and waits for the referee as if he is wondering what will happen next. The player already on a yellow card who tackles late from behind without, apparently, giving it a second thought. And so many other examples. I've come to think our pro footballers must be very religious and believe in miracles.

And the goalkeepers? Quite astonishing. Always thought at least half mad (I used to be one), some seem to have flipped completely - with their spectacular tackles outside the box as well as in. (I've started to wonder whether allowing the goalkeeper substitute has made them even more reckless).

But let's be optimistic. Maybe by the end of the season fewer cards will be necessary. (Have you noticed in the media that it's never the players who are guilty of foul play, it's the referees who are card-happy. Since when did we commit the fouls?)

Republic of Ireland v. England? My only comment is that I deplore the media's use of headlines about 'English *football fans*'. They may be English, but their interest in being at a football match is certainly not the same as yours or mine or any real fan's. So why not 'English *thugs*'?

---

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

[Editor's address: 16 Stevens Lane, Peppard Common, Henley-on-Thames RG9 5RG.  
Telephone/answering machine/fax: (01491) 628008.

## **JANUARY**

### **Monthly Meeting**

A good start to the New Year. In spite of the gales over 60 members turned up for the meeting.

Jim Fleming has taken over as acting Assistant Secretary from Brian Wratten who will continue to act as Treasurer. In this context, Chairman Stephen Green reminded everyone to start thinking about potential officers and committee members for next year. As part of his brief report, the Secretary, Pat Monaghan confirmed that he would not be standing next season. He stressed that he enjoyed the role but increasing pressure of business had forced his decision.

From the leagues:

*Reading Football League:* Members were reminded that names of substitutes had be given before the game. A recent incident could have been avoided if the referee had made sure he had them. Take the initiative if necessary - don't stand on your dignity.

*Sunday League:* Clubs are now required to put up the nets. The referee's responsibility is, as always, just to check them. Match cards and their completion are again under discussion. Watch this space

*South Chiltern Minor League:* Members were informed that *three* outfield substitutes plus a goalkeeper are to be allowed. This was challenged as contrary to Law but, apparently, they have received a special dispensation. Nonetheless it was reported the matter is under discussion still with the County FA.

Martin Shearn (who else?) shared his concern about studs and has come to the view that it is no longer possible *in practice* since the weakening of the Law. He would like the matter to be taken up at national level as the County RA has simply referred the problem to individual referees.

Ted Cambridge reported that the new seminars for assessors will start in the Summer. Attendance at one will be compulsory and satisfactory completion will lead to a certificate.

### **Problem Spot**

Ken Wiltshire volunteered a problem which he freely admitted he had got wrong A cup replay last season between a Chiltonian team and a Reading League side with plenty of potential for problems. Three cautions during the first half seemed to settle things down. Home side scored three quick goals after the interval and by the last 15 minutes the game had died.

Ken was leaving the field with his (club) linesmen congratulating themselves on how well it had gone when it happened. A commotion behind them. They turned and some 20 yards away, one of a group of home team players had obviously been punched. They pointed out an opposition player they said had done it. He was 15 yards away by then but looked guilty and Ken had no doubt at all from his demeanour, body language, the look in his eyes, that he was guilty, but what do you do? Ken spoke to him but he just refused to respond. Ken hadn't seen anything, but a player had certainly been punched and he had the home team calling for action.

Ken paused for suggestions. Martin Shearn would have tried to get information from the captain of the alleged culprit and, in any case, would have reported the incident to the B & B FA for them to sort it out. There was general agreement that the suspect could not be reported personally but that the report of an after-match incident should be sent in.

Ken responded that he had seen avoiding further trouble as a priority and had escorted the alleged culprit to his dressing room (as one member had suggested) and the rest of the team followed. They all claimed to have seen nothing. He gave the player in question a b\*\*\*\*\* (severe talking to), then went to tell the home team what he had done. In fact, for some reason he can't now understand, he did not report the incident to the County FA, in spite of reporting his cautions. The moral? Ken has learnt to do what happens routinely in senior leagues: he waits and watches the teams leave the field and tries not to turn his back. Remember, when you blow that final whistle it still isn't over.

Our Guest Speaker, Paul Jenkins, is a Warrant Officer in the army and a licensed referee instructor, We were promised a character who would be entertaining and instructive, and Paul more than lived up to his reputation.

Paul was going to talk about *Gamesmanship*. That is, in between the funnies, though to be fair, they were all relevant to refereeing and his theme. He started by putting the word *Gamesmanship* vertically on his flip chart. For each letter we had to offer someone who indulged in Gamesmanship in football With his help and a bit of fiddling, we managed it. **G**oalkeepers; **A**ttackers (**A**rsenal); **M**idfield; **E**asy - **D**efenders; **S**ubstitutes; **M**oaning Managers; **A**ll Scouses, Geordies, Mancs; **N**aughty club officials; **S**pectators; **H** (left blank for the moment); **I**njured players; **P**rofessionalism. He provided examples, serious and amusing, for each category and encouraged us all the time to help - and we did. The missing letter **H** stood for **H**ow do they get away with it?

Paul suggested (and we agreed) that we let them. He argued that allowing Gamesmanship damages our control - the most crucial aspect of officiating. Lack of **C**ontrol **H**inders (pleasure), **E**rodes (your) **A**uthority (which) **T**hreatens (an) **I**ncrease (in) **N**astiness (in our ) **G**ame.. **CHEATING**.

In fact *we* are cheating. Not cheating as players do. (Here, Paul was reminded that Alan Robinson was punished by the FA for saying that, but we all agreed that players do cheat whatever the FA says). By allowing Gamesmanship we cheat ourselves, we cheat the Game, and we cheat our colleague who follows us next week.

Paul's next picture on the flip chart was the word *Cheating* and a discussion of the various manifestations: **C**ontest every decision; **H**old up play (when they're winning); **E**ach Law - circumvent; **A**ppel for every single thing; **T**ry and steal ground; **I**nsult opponents - might retaliate; **N**ever smile at refs - sign of weakness; **G**o back only 6 yards at free-kicks.

Paul's final diagram showed Gamesmanship and Cheating in the form of a cross - what they often mean to our/less experienced colleagues.

The applause and thanks from the Chairman were well merited.

## **FEBRUARY**

### **Monthly Meeting**

The weather was nasty and it was February, but it was disappointing that fewer than 50 members were going to enjoy our Guest Speaker, who had been told the right night this time (sorry, Pat),

An item of particular interest reported by the Secretary was that the RA is to be proposed for a seat in its own right on the FA Council - something we have been after for years. We haven't been given it yet, but at least we are now in with a chance. You may be forgiven for thinking that it unbelievable that we have never had one.

10% discount has been negotiated for members at ?????? on kit, and at Woodley Sports on any purchase. (Show your membership card).

The membership now stands at 127 for the season and we have 18 people attending the current training course for new referees.

Ted Cambridge on behalf of the B & B FA asked members who sent in disciplinary reports to check with the office if they had not received an acknowledgement within 21 days. He also announced the first Training Seminar for Assessors to be held 25 March at Beaconsfield.. Under the new arrangements, all assessors are required to attend this seminar or one to be arranged at the beginning of next season. Those attending will receive a fee of £10 plus travel @ 20p a mile. A fee of £8 will be pad for each assessment. Members welcomed these arrangements by the County FA and look forward to the improvements in the assessments that should follow.

Pat Monaghan reported on a recent meeting of the Football User Group convened by the local Council. Referees are asked to report inadequate tying of the nets to the home team who have the right of redress.

### **Problem Spot.**

Darren Naish reported on a recent problem he had had with one of his linesmen. A Sunday morning game on which he was being assessed. He met and instructed the club linesmen. He asked for ball in and out of play and offsides, if the 'offside' player was within, say, 15 yards of play.

One of the linesmen, the sub, gives very little help, the other has his flag continually in the air. With only ten minutes to go, the over-active linesmen flags to attract Darren across and complains that he has been shown dissent. What should Darren have done?

He ascertains that the players were complaining about the 'decisions' being made by the linesman which he had overruled, and particularly the last one.

Colleagues accepted that it was difficult - "Catch 22" said one. No-one thought any player should have been shown a card, though the situation had to be dealt with - by a few sharp words. The real problem was properly recognised as not the players but the linesman. While the referee has to try to cope with the strengths and weaknesses of the club linesmen he gets - and subs were seen as the commonest problem - he has, most critically, to make absolutely sure he stays in charge and is seen to stay in charge. Otherwise he would be plagued by dissent and totally lose control.

**Guest Speaker - Dennis Hedges.** Those who saw him referee on the Football League or who have heard him speak before, would not have been surprised that he kept his (somewhat reduced) audience captivated and involved for well over an hour. A talk with participation he warned, and it was.

Dennis was on the Football League for 18 years, not without controversy, and has been retired for four. He is now among the new elite as a Premier League match assessor. He still looks bronzed and fit and has that wonderful rural Oxfordshire burr (though I was disappointed to hear that he lives in Headington). His sense of humour remains intact. His main worry? The lack of enjoyment in football nowadays.(and this was the day after the abandoned Republic of Ireland v. England game). "Keep a smile on your face and go out and enjoy it". He has always enjoyed his time in football, but not as easy to do it now even on the parks. In his local paper recently a report of a match abandoned on a local park. The referee was quoted as saying that "one team got out hand with constant moaning and groaning" at everything he did. He decided to pack up his gear and call it a day. "Why should it be like that?" Dennis asked

Dennis confessed to being a twin. One day in a supermarket he'd forgotten his banker's card but hoped to be recognised and accepted by the manager. He was recognised - as his brother, a senior policeman. "Good job it wasn't that b.... brother of yours, the referee"

Dennis was putting his glasses on and off, and told us a few funnies about those. He claimed he usually wore contact lenses when he was refereeing (I think he said 'usually'). Once at Kidderminster Boys' Club he presented 500 trophies and came to the last, the biggest. He discovered at the last minute he was expected to read out the winner's name. He couldn't see it and refused to put glasses on. He told the Chairman. He couldn't read it either - he'd left his at home. (Dennis didn't actually tell us how they got out of it.).

He moved on to a story to illustrate how and why we lose referees. He turns up for a game on a local park with 18 pitches. Two games on, his and one with a young, new referee. Both teams insist on choosing the same pitch. Dennis sorts them out. One team is in blue, three are in yellow.. All three refuse to change. The teams the young lad has take him to the cleaners and, in spite of Dennis's efforts, he has packed it in.

A problem with linesmen in the local Sunday :League. Linesman flagging - two players prostrate. "Thumped each other". What do you do? A number of different suggestions, including one member who would have shown yellow cards on the assumption they had struck each other, but the referee hadn't seen it. Dennis asked quite reasonably what the member would have put on his report. Some would have shown the red card n spite of not having seen the incident. Dennis did what most would have done - gave them a b . . . - . But it didn't end there. One of the players promptly went off the field to get a drink and then came back on. He was cautioned. This provoked a tracksuited person nearby to f . . . and blind about referees in general and this one in particular, but when questioned denied he has anything to do with the club. Later he tried to come on as sub. Dennis didn't let him on (for fairly obvious reasons), but it was clear from the responses that some of us were less sure.

Nice problem from Dennis's first year on the Football League. A player leaves the pitch without permission and the sub comes on, also without permission. What do you do? Some interesting suggestions. What Dennis did (and he was glad to discover he got it right) was: showed the first player the red card and he stayed off. Showed the 'sub' the yellow card and he left the field, as a sent-off player cannot be replaced. But it didn't end there. The 'sub' came on later as real sub and encroached at a free kick. He went for committing a second cautionable offence! Sounds easy when it's not happening to you.

Among a number more of fascinating, humorously told and instructive (true) stories Dennis told, just one more. Four minutes into the second half of a game between two local village sides, Dennis is told the reds had 12 men - and they had. What do you do? The responses were many and various and Dennis kept us going by slipping new

ingredients in to complicate it. "Restart second half" was suggested. "A player had just been sent off - can he come back on?" Dennis asks. "And what if a goal had been scored? Go back to the half-time score as well?. And what if a player suggests going back to half way through the first half when it was 1-1"? That clinched it. We all agreed he was right to abandon the game, although it was his fault it would have to be replayed in full. (Fortunately the players agreed they couldn't restart there and then, they were shattered as it was. And Dennis got away in one piece apparently)..

Those who couldn't come along to hear Dennis missed a special treat, and they will never know the secret of 6 The Crescent, Plymouth, unless they ask one of us who were there (at the meeting that is).

### **SAFETY IN NUMBERS?**

It was reported in a recent issue of UEFA *FLASH*, that ' The Norwegian FA has submitted a proposal to the Executive Committee for the appointment of two referees per match. In the proposal, each referee would be in charge of each half of the pitch. This measure would help match officials to follow the play at close quarters, and also takes into account the physical development of the game. Demands on referees as regards fitness have increased considerably in recent years. The proposal has been passed on to the UEFA Referees' Committee, and may also be submitted in March to the highest authority on the Laws of the Game, the International FA Board.'

Watch this space.

[I wish I had £1 for each time this has been proposed since I became a referee - and as many for the number of times the proposal has been rejected! But who knows? It works in other sports, so maybe the time has come for a change. However promising though, it could founder on supply and cost. In England 50% more officials would be needed at local level, 25% more at the top. Where would they come from? And if they were found, could local football afford to pay? Ed]

### **THOSE GREMLINS AGAIN**

Who spotted the glitches in the last issue? We normally blame either the technology or each other. This time however . . . Apologies first to Gary **Webster** who was the tyro official in the dramatic production. The other Gary left us years ago. You probably spotted that one. Did you notice the magazine claimed to be a *January/February* issue? It was of course December/January. Finally, not so much a sin of commission as a sin of omission: John didn't sign the centre piece *The Rub of the Green*. Natural modesty (of course). Normally it wouldn't matter but I wouldn't want anyone to think *I* was getting 4th official appointments! Ed

## **THE BOOT IS ON THE OTHER FOOT**

Ever since the disputes of our founding fathers in the last century, the policy-makers of Association and Rugby Football in this country have scrupulously avoided each other. That is why the 10-yard rule for dissent seems unlikely to come into our game, in spite of repeated advocacy, including Stephen Green's in our last issue.

All the more surprise then that Rugby Union adopted the red and yellow card system for the Five Nations' Championship.(but perhaps less surprising when you know the English Rugby Union resisted the proposal carried in the International Rugby Football Board)

The strange thing is that there doesn't seem to have been much controversy when the cards were actually used. Maybe one day we will put our heads together to improve the Laws of both codes.. I think we need all the help we can get judging by recent events on and off the field.

## **RA NATIONAL CONFERENCE, Saturday 17 June**

This year the National Conference is to be held down the road at Hove. This is the once-a-year opportunity for referees of all ages and stages from all over the country (and a few from abroad) to have part of a weekend together.

The Saturday is the real Conference day when there is business to be done and issues like the future of the National RA to be discussed. This year we should be able to get quite a contingent together if members will give up a Saturday. The only cost would be travel, food and drink (they always have plenty of bars). A few regulars - George Mills, Derek Reigate and yours truly - have been going for many years and will go down on the Friday and return on the Sunday, but that is optional (and a good deal more expensive).

Organise yourself with a few mates and let's have a real Reading presence. You will certainly enjoy the time outside the meeting hall and might even be interested in the rest. All the details from Secretary, Pat Monaghan.

## **DINNER AND DANCE, Friday 7 April**

Again this year the major event in our social calendar will be held at the Royals Rendezvous Club (and we are assured that Mike and his wife will be personally in charge of the catering - so have no fear). Tickets £16 each from Jim Fleming. Be quick - there is a strict upper limit on numbers.



## **ANOTHER PROBLEM LINESMAN**

Darren's Problem Spot at the February meeting reminded me of a different type of problem linesman I once suffered.

I was a new Class 3 doing my fourth or fifth game. Pitch checked, linesmen identified and I called them over. The first to arrive, smart in tracksuit, took my proffered hand and announced "I'm a Class 1, so you'll be all right with me." and made as if to go. I think I got this bit right. I said "Well you'll understand why I want you to listen to the instructions with the other linesman, so we can all work as a team". The second linesman arrived, apologised for not being very good at it, but he seemed honest. I explained that I would like help with ball in and out of play and offside, which I also explained for the benefit of the unqualified linesman. My first mistake: I assumed he would present the problems.

Game started and I'm staying a bit out of position to check and cover the inexperienced. Very clear and confident off-side signal from my Class 1. I've dropped lucky this week, I thought. Both teams pushing up as a tactic, so plenty of flag. Free kick from the halfway line so I can afford to be in position for the offside. Forward times his run perfectly, receives the ball five yards beyond the defence. Class 1's flag goes up, I acknowledge. Ball's in the net. I turn to run to the centre circle, his flag's still up. Generous to a fault, I assume he hasn't seen my acknowledgement and say so. "I saw you but he wasn't offside" in the manner that says "I'm a Class 1 and you're an inexperienced Class 3." "Sorry, that's not how I saw it. The goal stands". Was he going to throw the flag down? No, before he could say or do anything I was gone. I glanced across and he was still there as black as thunder.

At half time he had little to say when I asked if I had missed either of the flags. His team was two up. In the second half, he started to give me (alleged) fouls I hadn't asked for, which I gave if I agreed or acknowledged, which produced more black looks, and comments, no doubt, to his cronies on the line. I got plenty more offside flags, some of which were distinctly dodgy and which I overruled if I was in a good position.

I had a very uncomfortable game - my positioning was questionable, 'our' decisions not immaculate either. Fortunately the result reflected the play, the teams didn't seem to have noticed anything (and the Class 1's team won).

The problem? I had assumed a Class 1 would be both competent and honest and discovered too late that he was competent but bent. My mistake? I didn't take the flag from him and dismiss him from the line. A pity he hadn't thrown the flag down when he had the chance. I think I would have had enough confidence and bottle to deal with that properly.