

Reading Referees' Association

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READING REFEREE

Editor - Brian Palmer

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Assistant Editor - John Moore

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Editorial

It's a confession of my great age, but I can remember when refereeing seemed to be just about getting the decisions right! Now, while we may not agree entirely with the doomsday conclusions presented by Ken Clark at the February meeting, the scenarios he described were all too familiar. In the professional game it now seems to be *routine* after any important decision, for as many as possible of the offender's team - and possibly the opposition too - to get involved in the business of confronting and abusing the referee, and sometimes worse. The attack on Edward Martin, Assistant Referee at Portsmouth was a salutary warning.

There are two implications for us. The game on the local parks has always been influenced by what happens on TV, so unless effective action is taken with the professional game, we will have similar problems. Of course, *technically* referees have the power to deal with mass harassment - caution all the players involved. Just once might be enough. Unfortunately that brave Premiership or FL referee would probably be removed from the list for over-reacting. Too much money at stake.

The second problem for us is the one underlined by Ken Clark. In a stadium the officials are surrounded by potential assistance, including stewards and the police. Who protection do we have on the local park?

As ever, we await firm action by the FA and the courts

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MONTHLY MEETINGS

January

First meeting of the new year and not a record turn-out - about 40 members present.

The Secretary reported that

- Ken Clark's suggestion about an earlier start for County Cup games owing to the problem of extra time in failing light *will* be discussed by the Berks & Bucks FA - at their *March* meeting! [Sounds rather like those suspensions players receive for the closed season. Ed]
- NRA will take up with the FA the question raised about players being allowed to wear jewellery in televised games.
- The Chiltonian League had sent some corrections/amendments to its Handbook.
- Members are asked when reporting pitch/ground/changing room problems to the League/Competition to send a copy to our Secretary.

Membership has reached 141.

The new training course started on 13 January with 14 candidates (10 adults). A few more are expected. The innovatory course for the Sunday League would start on 26 January with 26 candidates and was expected to be followed by a second course, starting some three weeks later. George Mills reminded members of the need for examiners and asked for volunteers.

Keith Simmonds (Sunday League) was investigating three cases of abuse of referees. If proven, the League would be taking action.

Malcolm Garstang reported that a new Reading RA tie is to be ordered. Design options will be available for consideration by members before a choice is made.

Problems with a supplier of kit called *Frontline Grimsby* were drawn to members' attention.

Andy Awbery and other local referees had been interviewed by Meridian TV about the abuse of match officials.

Ken Clark reported a problem over attendance at personal hearings. Because of his business commitments he needs several weeks notice. He had to decline the first date offered but the B & B FA declined to accept the dates he wished to offer. He would be offered a second and final date in due course. It was agreed that the matter would be raised at the February meeting when the General Secretary would be at the meeting to answer questions.

PROBLEM SPOT

With a difference. Training Officer, Peter Pittaway, had chosen the controversial ending to the Reading v. Middlesbrough FA Cup game, at which he was a spectator.

Peter thought the referee, George Cain, had had a good game up to the 3rd minute of 'time added on' with the score still 0-0. Then it all happened.

It started with two hefty tackles against Reading just in the Middlesbrough half. Morley says something to the referee who stops play. Yellow card. A Middlesbrough player is injured so the referee summons the trainer and stretcher. Fracas starts in the centre circle; referee goes to sort it out. Meantime Lambert is berating the Assistant Referee. Mr Cain goes across to sort out Lambert. He then picks up the ball and sets it down near to where the incident occurred and stood over it facing the Middlesbrough goal. The Middlesbrough players back off. Then Morrison of Middlesbrough comes up, kicks the ball through and with two quick passes it's in the Reading net with everyone standing watching.

Some RA members had been at the match, others had seen the incidents on television. Interestingly, there was not complete agreement about what actually happened. However, all agreed that the referee had been at best unclear in indicating his decision (presumably an indirect freekick against Reading for the dissent, though he neither indicted the direction nor the type of freekick. (That was generally agreed!).

Everyone shared the view that the goal shouldn't have happened and that the referee got it wrong, but the analyses varied. Peter's summary was that the referee undoubtedly had a great deal to cope with and appeared to forget what he was to do next. As he picked the ball up, he possibly had a dropped ball in mind and then changed to the freekick. His position facing the Middlesbrough goal appeared to indicate a kick that way and so the players were at least confused and probably misled. The referee should - it is always easy from the stand - have indicated the type of kick and direction and, when he was sure everyone knew what was happening, given the earlier confusion, have blown his whistle for the kick to be taken.

The **Guest Speaker** was Frank Groves, Training Officer of Slough RA and no stranger to Reading.

Frank warned us with his Irish lilt, that report writing was boring - and then went on to demonstrate that it doesn't have to be - and in any case is very important if justice is to be done. Bad reports too often led Disciplinary Hearings to throw cases out and then the guilty player gets away with it.

Frank would be using material prepared by the County Training Team and wanted comments, corrections, suggestions and additions which would be fed back. He first discussed three made-up reports, then we all had to work on three that had actually been submitted. We proved pretty good at spotting the errors and omissions, though naturally we would not all have written the reports in exactly the same way.

Frank listed the sources of help available:

- The County and League Handbooks/Competition Rules
- FA Booklet: *A Guide to Report Writing* (being revised)
- FA Checklist
- Experienced colleagues
- Family member or friend

Think who would see the report County FA (maybe FA)
 Offender (family and friends)
 Club officials etc.

If bad reports are received we all tend to get tarred with the same brush, and it can easily lead to 'Case not proven'.

Frank suggested the report should contain

Correct identification of offence
 action by referee
 sufficient detail
 time of offence
 position of referee and offence

It is also helpful to *name* the offence and describe the attitude of the player. The report must be signed and submitted promptly. (In reply to a question, Frank accepted that reports could now be faxed, though he personally preferred to send copies by post).

As an aide-memoire, Frank finds Kipling's *Six Wise Men* helpful: Who? Why? What? How? Which? When? [Dick Sawdon Smith thought it was Where? not Which? and that would work even better. Ed]

In conclusion Frank displayed 'corrected' versions of the three genuine reports and gave a final summary. Chairman Derek Reigate thanked Frank for an enjoyable and informative evening.

February

A pleasant evening (weather-wise) and nearly 50 present to welcome our visitors from the County FA - Chairman, John Christopher, recently appointed General Secretary Brian Moore and Referees' Secretary Ray Claridge.

Secretary Martin Albury reported that

- the RA Insurance is valid for all sanctioned games. Important to follow correct procedure to the letter: first approach is to County FA. Members are warned against considering private prosecution before they have had legal advice.
- the national RA Conference will be held at Newport on 20th June this year and is open to all members. Details from the secretary.

Membership stands at 142 - probably a record for fully paid-up members.

Life Member George Mills reminded members about the forthcoming Royals' Cup (starts 6 May). Teams of three officials per evening will be required as last season. Games 20 minutes each way at 6-15, 7-15 and 8-15 p.m. Fee £17 per evening. Semi-final: £12/£8; final: £15/£10. Please contact George direct.

Problem Spot

Ken Clark presented, as he said, not a problem he had had, but one he thought any of us might experience in the near future.

Ken first considered incidents during four professional games on one particular weekend, which showed both a blatant disregard for the Laws and a total lack of discipline. Ketsbaia's over-elaborate celebrations of the winning goal in the Newcastle v. Bolton game: could it have incited a riot? In the Blackburn v. Aston Villa match, when the striker misses a sitter, disgusting and volatile spitting at the crowd. Could it have been aimed at us after a yellow or red card? Coventry v. Arsenal: the Vieira handball.

Vieira objects and is cautioned; continues to abuse Stephen Lodge who rightly sends him off. Then it starts: players surround and jostle the referee. At Highfield Road he ultimately has the protection of two assistant referees, stewards, police etc. What about us on the local park? We have nobody. Finally, Spurs v. West Ham. This game best illustrates the point. Abou kicks Vega behind the referee's back. The incident is seen by the Assistant Referee who draws it to the referee's attention and Abou is rightly sent off. But Abou doesn't go. He threatens David Elleray and pulls his arm. Elleray apparently asked Redknapp to help. He fails, Calderwood tries, Redknapp pushes Calderwood. The Hartson gets involved from 10 yards away. Who would come to our aid on the local park? Maybe the club officials, maybe the subs, but more than likely no-one will want to get involved.

Ken then quoted three local games, handled well by experienced referees, but, he asked: what could have happened with less experienced colleagues and what does the future hold?

In the first game the referee rightly cautions three players and ends up sending four off. He is abused and has to run the gauntlet of players to reach his dressing room. In the second game the referee sends a player off for offensive and abusive language. At the end of the game, he is further abused and obstructed by the manager and then abused in the dressing room by the son of the offending player. The final example - watched by Ken - was a humdrum game which flared when a player ended face down in the mud behind the referee's back with his nose 'mashed'. The referee warns both captains. An equaliser followed by the final whistle. All hell lets loose with the referee accused of allowing too much time. A red card is shown and the offending player has to be restrained. The player follows the manager to the referee's changing room where he is informed of his right to appeal. He is removed by the manager, having obscenely questioned Ken's arrival.

Ken concluded that it is time the FA realised that intimidation is on the increase and that we do not have the protection of stewards, police, security cameras etc. 'We need help before someone gets seriously hurt'.

Member's applauded Ken's vigorous and fluent presentation but, while they clearly deplored the incidents he described, it was suggested from the floor that the scenarios were not fully typical and that the vast majority of games did not present any particular threat.

The second half was devoted to the **County FA Panel** which had received a number of questions in advance from the Society. In opening the proceedings Chairman Derek Reigate commented that things are happening at the County FA and in particular mentioned the 'star list' for referees.

John Christopher hoped to dispel a myth about the County - that 'it did nothing for referees'. He said that since 1989 expenditure was up from £2-300 to £10,000. The Berks and Bucks FA was also one of the first to have paid assessors; it helps societies with training; it holds regular meetings with the County RA.

In answer to the question: why does the County FA charge referees a fee? John detailed the direct costs to the County of servicing referees, providing the Handbook etc. While complimenting John on the answer, Brian Palmer suggested that it was to the wrong question. The County could clearly afford not to collect even £7 from each referee, thanks especially to the windfall of fines since the Law changes of the last few years. The question was about recruiting and retaining referees, making them feel valued and supported. Approached from that angle the answer had to be to waive the fee.

Brian Moore, who mentioned his professional background in 'quality', hoped to bring a change of philosophy as the new General Secretary. The County FA was thought to be 'uncaring' with the Secretary 'behind a wall of silence'. He intended to make himself as available as possible and was going round to show himself. He was aiming to make the administration better and more user-friendly. He mentioned the computer database shared with surrounding counties which will lead to better liaison and greater ease in dealing with offenders.

A question had been asked about reports: why are we all castigated when those who send poor ones could (and should) be told direct? Brian assured members that they are (but said they had only sent three letters in the last three weeks, having received over 300 reports per week. (Unless I misheard the figures, that is a wonderfully low percentage of poor reports. Ed). Brian did not actually say whether we were to go on being castigated as well.

Ray Claridge mentioned that many referees do not respond to appointments within the statutory three days. He pointed out that the FA has abolished the examination fee for trainees and that those who qualify after January 1st, pay just £7 for the rest of that season and the next.

The next question asked why the County FA did not register only members of the RA. The (not-unexpected) reply was that the County FA could not agree to compulsion, to 'a closed shop'. When the panel was asked from the floor whether that meant we did not need to join the County FA to officiate on the local leagues, no further comment was offered.

In response to a question about personal hearings (and particularly the problem of short notice) Brian reassured us that he tries to contact the referee first and to give a minimum of 4 weeks notice,.

John Moore asked whether the County FA was concerned about leagues withdrawing a player's registration before the County FA had had a chance to take action. John Christopher, in a very diplomatic answer, clarified the rights of the leagues and their relationship with the County FA. All were keen to see offenders punished.

Mike Costello asked why referees no longer received a note of disciplinary action taken against players they had sent off. John pointed out that the practice was stopped at the request of the County RA.

Martin Shearn's question about reply paid envelopes for reports led to a general discussion of dealing with report forms. It transpired that two

copies are stipulated by the FA. The County FA has tried to get the FA to produce them with 'automatic carbon' but so far without success. A faxed copy is acceptable. Two copies are liked by the County FA to save photocopying time. The reply paid envelope idea was being considered but the problem was that clubs would also expect them.

The Chairman and members thanked the panel warmly for their attendance and contribution. Their interest and commitment were obvious and there was a sense of wanting to make progress. It seems that the remaining problems between the RA and the County FA are differences of perception and philosophy. The CFA seems unable to understand that the referees' role and relationship to them is quite different from that of the clubs. When we asked about removing the fee for referees joining the County FA, the response was in terms of *cost*. Not *What would the benefits be?* (because we, the CFA, can afford it). And in respect of 100% membership, not *What would the benefits be? How can we make it happen?*

One day perhaps

EVE-OF-THE-FINAL RALLY

This annual event is organised by LONSAR (the London RA) the evening before the Cup Final. The Guests of Honour are the appointed officials for the final. The gathering is for referees from all over the country, together with spouses and friends. Entertainment will be provided by comedian Allan Mills and Tim Glynne-Jones, editor of *Match of the Day* magazine. Have a good night out with friends and colleagues from all levels of football. Venue: the Russell Hotel, London. 7-30 p.m. Friday, 15 May. Tickets £8 each from Mr A. Porter, 106 Whitehouse Avenue, BOREHAMWOOD, WD6 1HE.

MORE FACTS FROM THE PAST

1955-56

Floodlights were used in the FA Cup for the first time - on November 28 at Newcastle for a second round replay between Carlisle and Darlington. The first league match under lights was on February 22 between Portsmouth and Newcastle. The game was held up for 30 minutes when they failed.

Derby County, then in the Third Division (North), were beaten 6-1 by non-league Boston United in the second round of the FA Cup.

Brazil lost 4-2 to England, having missed two penalties. Stanley Matthews created three of the goals.

Accrington Stanley, Third Division (North), fielded a team of 11 Scotsmen several times during the season

Manchester United won the First Division title by 11 points from Blackpool. The average age of the 'Babes' was 23.

Manchester City beat Birmingham City to win the FA Cup. Hero of the final was goalkeeper, Player of the Year, former prisoner of war Bert Trautmann who completed the game with a broken neck. Amazingly he resumed playing before the end of the year.

1956-57

Scunthorpe beat Crewe 2-1 on September 19 and did not win again until April 13. They achieved the unfortunate League record of 30 games without a win.

Leeds centre half and Welsh international John Charles was transferred to Juventus for a record £70,000 - more than double the previous record. He was to be paid a basic wage of £60 a week, four times the maximum allowed in England.

Stanley Matthews played his 54th and last international for England at the age of 42.

In spite of objections from the Football League, Matt Busby took his young champions into the newly-established European Cup. They had to play the early home games at Maine Road because Old Trafford's floodlights were still to be installed. They were finally knocked out by Real Madrid in the semi-final.

United also failed to achieve the Double after goalkeeper Ray Wood had to go off with a broken cheekbone (returning to be a passenger on the wing for most of the game). Jackie Blanchflower went into goal because no substitutes were allowed, and was unable to keep out the winning goals. In fact the FA had discussed substitutes the previous day and had rejected the idea.

Tom Finney of Preston North End was elected Player of the Year for the second time, the only player to have achieved that honour.

WE DO HAVE SOME FRIENDS IN THE MEDIA

Michael Henderson writing in *The Times* (2 Feb 1998) about the Chelsea v. Barnsley game.

. . . . Wilson [the Barnsley manager] has an engaging manner, but he was unwise to harp on about the refereeing. Not a week goes by without some manager adding his two penn'orth and, although Wilson offered his comments clearly, it cannot be good for the game when the competence of officials is questioned so repeatedly.

If people within the game really think that paying men - and in this case, a woman, since Wendy Toms ran the line - will help to raise standards of decision-making, the question must once again be put: how many professionals are willing to do the job? They should also remember that

referees, "inconsistent" as we are told they are, are a good deal less so than the players who malign them.

It is no use Wilson or Ruud Gullit blaming Jeff Winter for decisions that angered players at Stamford Bridge when their players try to make monkeys of referees. Two minutes from time, Petrescu fell to the ground as Morgan challenged him, got to his feet sheepishly when Winter refused to buy his dive, and was booked, quite properly, a minute later, when the ball went out of play. The reaction of Graham Rix, the Chelsea coach, to Petrescu's deceit was to laugh, or else somebody had just cracked a particularly funny joke. Cheating, evidently, is a light matter with him. The anger that he vented at the referee afterwards would have been better directed at his man.

NO COMMENT

[Patrick Barclay in *The Sunday Telegraph*, 22/2/98]

. . . . I watched the semi-final from Stamford Bridge on television and, despite the splendour of Chelsea and their goals, my enjoyment was rather spoilt by one aspect of the commentary. Alan Parry criticised the referee, Graham Poll, for doing no more than caution players who asked for it. Meanwhile, the normally admirable and instructive Andy Gray began by endorsing bookings, then ridiculed them as they mounted up. And we are told referees are inconsistent!

With the exception of Patrick Vieira's first yellow card - unfortunate in that his second led to dismissal - every punishment was not only justified but necessary, given the recent history of aggravation between the teams. Mark Hughes's ridiculous belligerence in the opening minutes was warning enough. Poll should have been praised for his control. The question of why players and managers so often get away with their mistakes while referees are attacked for good judgment is one that testifies to the game's increasing madness.

THE OLD ONES ARE THE BEST

Patrick Barclay's last comment reminds me of the classic one-liner:
You don't *have* to be mad to be a referee - but it certainly helps!

THOSE QUOTES OF 1997 (thanks to *The Times*, 29 December 1997)

It was a festival of bad passing. In fact, United were more dangerous when we had the ball than when they had it.

Ruud Gullit, *Chelsea Manager's assessment of their Charity Shield match against Manchester United.*

We couldn't pass water.

Geoff Chapple, *Woking manager, on his out-of-touch charges.*

It's a disgrace. It's so heart-breaking to go out to such an unbelievable decision. That official has got to go home and take a long hard look at his performance tonight.

Martin O'Neill *criticises Mike Reed's penalty decision that lost Leicester City their FA Cup tie against Chelsea.*

I was absolutely furious at the decision, but I would not like to see the game stopped and started all the time because of waiting to see videos of incidents.

O'Neill *thinks further about the Reed incident.*

He's just another flash football star, a flash boy racer with too much money and not enough brains. It's boys like him that keep me in a job.

Kim Wright, *car mechanic on Georgi Kinkladze of Manchester City, who wrote off his Ferrari in a motorway accident.*

I told him he was playing and he smiled. I told him he was marking Juninho and he went white.

Martin O'Neill, *Leicester manager on giving Pontus Kaamark his instructions.*

I've stopped touching wood. I got splinters and was out for three games.
David Hurst of *Southampton*, on his tendency to get injured.

If we draw Iran, we'll go to Fifa and ask them for an Iraqi referee and watch the fun.
Alan Rothenberg, head of the *US Soccer Federation*, before the *World Cup finals draw*. They did draw Iran.

The Italians must have choked on their spaghetti when they heard the result.
Paul Ince, after *England won in Poland during World Cup qualifying*.

It was a great gesture by Fowler and I would like to give him an award of fairplay. But if he got that I would also have to give the referee an award for stupidity.
Arsene Wenger, the *Arsenal manager*, on *Robbie Fowler's [protests to referee Gerald Ashby that he had not been fouled by David Seaman at Highbury]*.

A lot of people thought I was more likely to end up on a park bench than in Europe.
Steve Claridge, who scored the winning goal for *Leicester City in the Coca Cola Cup final*, admits to a wayward past.

God gave Gascoigne so much football talent that he took his brain out at the same time to equalise it a bit.
Tony Banks, *Minister of Sport*

Alan Sugar was once quoted as saying he would like us to make Spurs the Manchester United of the South. But he has turned us into the Manchester City of the South.
Yvonne Dixon, *Tottenham supporter in a letter to The Sun*.

The kids we had on the line against Middlesbrough last week were so young they were giving out jelly babies between them.

Gerry Francis, Tottenham manager bemoans injury problems

We must have had 99% of the game. It was the other 3% that cost us the match.

Gullit *after Chelsea's defeat at Coventry City.*

STATISTICS BUT NO 'DAMN LIES'

Since 1987, the Reading RA has held its membership details on a computer database, and at intervals a digest of comparative statistics has appeared in this magazine.

Although the data collected have been reduced and changed a little, a comparison with 1990-91, when membership was similar (136 against today's 142) is quite interesting.

Of our 142 members, 120 are active (84.5%); 86% in 1990.

The age bands of present active members are as follows: (The numbers in brackets are from 1990, but relate to one year older e.g. 26-30 rather than 25-29)

Age	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Total
Under 25	2 (2)	0 (0)	19 (8)	21 (10)
25-29	3 (1)	0 (4)	5 (3)	8 (8)
30-34	2 (7)	1 (4)	5 (6)	8 (17)
35-39	8 (8)	1 (5)	6 (11)	15 (24)
40-44	11 (18)	2 (5)	8 (12)	21 (35)
45-49	15 (9)	5 (2)	6 (5)	26 (16)
50 and over	13 (3)	2 (3)	6 (1)	21 (7)
TOTALS	54 (48)	11 (23)	55 (46)	120 (117)

Although the comparisons have to be made with caution, we do seem to have a generally older age profile with a larger group of young beginners. Good that referees are lasting longer, but not so good that there is an increasing gap in the 26-35 age group. (It would be interesting to do an exact comparison of age groups and also to check how many of the under 25s are very young. Hint to the Membership Department!)

Other things. We now have 5 women members including a class 1; then we had one - a class 2. more class 3s and fewer class 2s; 21 current members have offered to coach new referees; 16 in 1990; 87% of us (active and non-active) trained in Reading (76%);

Finally, most of our members come, as always, from the old RG3 postcode area (now RG30/31). I used to think it was the air. Maybe there are just more people out there.

WE MUST BE TOLD

The International Board has let us down with their re-written laws says Dick Sawdon Smith.

Last season several clubs in Hampshire complained that they were losing match balls after games. This came to light because the clubs reported referees for not taking the ball back to the dressing room. And quite right too!

I know that some wise old heads will tell you that keeping hold of the ball is the best way of ensuring that you get paid after the match. The players might forget you, but they will always come looking for their ball. However, until this season I have always justified insisting that the ball is returned to me at the end of a game by saying, 'because that's what the Law says'. As a reminder, this is what International Board Decision on law 2 used to say:

"The ball used in any match should be considered the property of the Association or Club on whose ground the match is played, **and at the close of play it must be returned to the referee.**"

Now **I** don't have to remind anyone that the Laws have been rewritten this year, and if you look at Law 2, you will find that this Decision has been completely removed.

Personally, I will continue to ask for the ball at the end of the game, but am I doing right? Perhaps the International Board has left out this particular ruling because it feels that collecting the ball is the natural thing to do, and referees will do it automatically (not true down in Hampshire of course). Perhaps it doesn't think it matters any more whether the referee collects the ball at the end of the game or not. But perhaps it doesn't want the ball to be returned to the referee at all, perhaps it is something that we now shouldn't do.

Those are three different conclusions that can be drawn from the omission of this Decision, but what is the right one? Other years when alterations have been made to the Laws of the Game, there have usually been some indication of the thinking behind them which helps our interpretation, but this year nothing. We need to be told the intention for this, and the other omissions in the re-written Laws.

For the problem is that this is not the only unexplained omission. There are many throughout the Laws including a number in Law 12. Perhaps one of the most important is where handball is now described simply as '**handles the ball deliberately**'.

Previously the Law added 'i.e. carries, strikes or propels the ball with the hand **or arm**'.

Are we now to take it that handball is only with the hand? Should we allow players to control the ball with their arms without penalty? Is it OK if they prevent a goal by elbowing the ball over the crossbar?

The International Board may say (and I'm only surmising) that everyone knows that handball includes the arm, but of course that isn't true. Those of us who have been refereeing for a few years will no doubt continue to penalise a player who uses his arm to stop the ball (rightly or wrongly), but what about new referees qualifying from this year onwards. Incidentally what are the instructors on the courses telling them?

The International Board must take a close look at this year's changes and omissions, and tell us exactly what they mean, instead of leaving every referee to make up his own interpretations. If they don't, we can easily imagine the inconsistency that this will lead to in the years to come. We as referees will get the blame, but we know now whose fault it will be.

CARELESS WORDS

We all do it, don't we? And we never seem to learn from our mistakes. Open our mouth and put our foot in it, I mean. I suppose it is a form of nerves. We arrive at the ground and want to appear friendly or at least approachable and then make some comment that rebounds on us later.

I remember a referee once who, having had a team several times in quick succession, was appointed to them again. When he arrived he jokingly said, "I'll sort you lot out today. Any trouble and you'll all be off." Of course, he didn't mean it at the time but he did send three players off. They asked for a personal hearing and, producing witnesses who'd heard what the referee had said, tried to make a case that the referee was 'out to get them' before the match even started.

Then there was the referee who, arriving for a cup match, was asked if there was extra time. "Extra time", he said, again jokingly, "I don't play extra time. If it's a draw after 89 minutes, I give a penalty." I understand it went down well at the time but, when he gave a penalty that decided the match in the closing minutes, problems occurred and appeals were made.

What we have to remember is that from the moment we arrive at the ground until the moment we leave, we're on duty and must act accordingly. Everything we say or do will be remembered and the higher up the ladder we go, the more careful we must be. So, remember, whenever you feel inclined to make that wise-crack, however innocent, think again, it may save you a problem.

Tony Murphy writing in the *Basingstoke Bleep*

APOCRYPHAL?

At a World Cup game between England and West Germany, the referee was a Brazilian who spoke very little English. He had occasion to warn one of the England players for tripping. When this happened a second time the Brazilian referee said angrily, "You trip again! Now is no more tripping or is yellow card for you!" Ten minutes later the English player committed yet another blatant foul. The referee rushed up in a rage and, as he approached, the English player said, "Oh, bugger off!" The referee said, "All right! As you have apologise, no card this time. But next time - off!"

[seen in the *Basingstoke Bleep*, so it must be true. Ed]

What's On (for the rest of) This Season

March 19 Guest Speaker:
Mick Pierce,
Nationwide Football League referee

April 16 Guest Speaker:
Ted Smeaton
Chairman, Leicester City FC

May 21 Annual General Meeting