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READING REFEREE

Editor - Brian Palmer

February/March 1999

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Editorial

Commercialism in sport has been developing for at least 100 years, but in the last few weeks the world seems to have gone completely mad.. The Olympics Committee bribery scandal and hints of more to be revealed, more allegations of drug-taking amongst top sportsmen and women. Drugs used to be about national pride and personal glory, now they are more about financial gain and that seems even worse.

Football's nonsense has included the FA proposal to pay its new 'professional' referees from sponsorship money, but their (supposed) £50,000 a year looks just a little modest alongside the £50,000 *a week* Steve McMannaman is going to get in Italy. And what about the 'signing' of that *six year old* star? A child presumably being used as (hoped-for) financial gilt-edged security by both the club and his parents. But what about the child?

And all the while we are left to discuss the fate of grass roots football, which holds the whole edifice up, in terms of whether we can get the shower working in the squalor we share with the players at such-and-such a local Rec. There seems to be a mismatch somewhere. In reality, football has never before been in such danger of losing its heart as well as its soul.

Fortunately there's still enjoyment out there. Hope you get a good share of it and some nice end of season games.

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January

MONTHLY MEETING

Not a very nice night weather-wise and not quite 40 in attendance.

As usual now, much of the Secretary's and Treasurer's news was on the agenda paper. Martin Albury reminded members about the election of Vice-Chairman in February prior to the normal meeting and of the need to arrive in good time. Alf Webb of the Bracknell RA and a Football League Assistant Referee had agreed to be Guest Speaker at the meeting to replace Keith Cooper who was no longer available.

Andy Awbery, Ken Clark and Tom Walton were to attend a County Assessors' course on 7 March in Faringdon.

Reading Football League

Since November, 93 reports had been received from referees and had been answered individually by the Chairman, John Dell. The League's thanks to referees was reciprocated.

The League was about to distribute printed 'Charters' for Clubs and Referees, and the RA had been invited to comment. The idea was welcomed and suggestions would be fed back.

Reading Sunday League

The League had been investigating complaints about a referee who was not an RA member. Ken Clark pointed out that we had agreed to use our Mentorship scheme in such cases if we had a mentor available.

County FA News

Ted Cambridge reported that exam candidates could be told their result on the night, subject to its subsequent ratification by the County FA. Amongst possible Law changes to be discussed by the International FA Board was an extension of the duties of the 4th official, to include advice to the referee on e.g. feigned injury, and the allowing on of substitutes without a stoppage of play.

Peter Pittaway was delighted to announce that Dick Sawdon Smith and Ken Clark had joined the training team which had been under serious pressure for some time. The course starting in January was over-subscribed because of an internal lapse in communication. The team was still discussing how best to deal with the situation and received ideas from the floor.

Richard Highfield thanked Martin Albury for his work in organising the post-Christmas *Whistlers* Charity Match which realised some £200 for LUPUS.

Problem Spot

(presented by Ken Clark)

A far side corner. Before it is taken an attacker leaves the near post and goes behind the goalkeeper and goal line to the far post, where he pops out and heads the ball into the net.

Ken added that it was Preston's second goal in the game against Arsenal.

The goal was allowed and the majority present agreed.

For good measure Ken added one of his own. He had awarded an indirect free kick to the attackers 2 yards outside the goal area. He was watching for encroachment and the ball ended up in, or rather through the net. He gave the goal, only to have a dispute about whether it had been kicked by a second player. Unproven, says Ken [though I understand video evidence exists. Ed]

The moral for Ken (and all of us) is that in future he will be standing further away from the action in order to have a better view of the kicker(s) as well as of the wall.

The second half Guest Speaker was our old friend and County Training Team member, Frank Groves. He warmed us up in his soft Irish brogue before moving on the serious business of the evening – what he referred to as the ‘taboo subject’ of Assaults.

Will it be said soon that assaults simply reflect society, as has happened with foul language, and we will end up condoning them? That must not happen – one assault is one too many.

Frank described the three legal levels of assault and then divided us into groups to watch and discuss three video clips. These illustrated different situations and different reactions by the (Premiership) referees:

one stood by and watched mayhem before turning away to consult his linesman;

one just ushered the culprit away physically (and got away with it; possibly because it was just after the kick-off);

the third was the Di Canio/Paul Alcock incident.

There was pretty near consensus about the do's and don'ts.

Do

- watch and note the culprit(s) and hope your assistants (having been so instructed) are doing the same
- gain thinking time.
- consult your assistant(s)
- administer the caution/sending-off before showing the card.
- keep your distance when you show it
- watch your body language
- have the player you are sending off between you and the dressing room
- remember to be polite but firm

Don't

- be arrogant
- manhandle the players
- allow players to surround you
- brandish the card aggressively

Frank's final piece of advice was always to abandon the game if you have been assaulted. It is in your own interests in two ways:

- You may not really be fit to carry on
- When the assault is considered by a disciplinary body and/or the police, the fact that you carried on would count against you.

Frank was thanked warmly for an informative and instructive evening.

February

MONTHLY MEETING

A PROFILE OF POTENTIAL

Declan Ford leads a double life – in refereeing that is!

At the age of 26 Declan has already got more than 11 years as a qualified referee behind him.

As a youth Declan played his football for Woodley Hammers (and almost certainly had the pleasure/misfortune to be refereed by the editor. Maybe as well neither of us remembers!). He progressed to Wokingham Town Youth team, then Bracknell Town.

As a referee he got his Class 2 at 20 and Class 1 two years later. He claims not to have been unduly influenced by his dad, our long-standing member Barry, who did however give him a flag in his tender years and get him to run the line for him at various Army games! It was actually Mick Mundy, manager of Woodley Hammers who told him about a training course in Bracknell when he was 15 and he went along. He did Bracknell youth games for 3 or 4 years along with Chiltonian and Hellenic lines.



After he had decided to join the army (REME), he decided to stop playing to concentrate on his refereeing. The Army has its own FA and the country is divided into districts with leagues which have matches on Wednesday afternoons (regimental matches, say local league 2nd division standard). Corps matches are the next higher level and Combined Services games the highest.

Referees are listed to correspond to the three levels. Declan got straight on to the Class 1 list and after one assessment to the Supplementary List. In November last year he was the youngest ever to be promoted to the top list – the Select List – which makes him eligible to do any level of Services match. He is also qualified as an assessor and spends some time helping more junior referees. With characteristic modesty, he feels that he benefits and is always learning something of value for his own refereeing.

Declan has found the Army pretty supportive and usually manages to get the time off he needs. Fitness is no problem as it is part of his normal Army routine.

Now what about the double life? At the weekends Declan is a ‘normal’ referee: he does Saturday football in civvy street and is treated exactly like any other Saturday referee. At present in the Hellenic middle, he hopes to be promoted at the end of the season. Based at Woolwich he goes to the London Society most times, and when in Reading does what any sensible referee does

Declan’s plum appointments so far have included middles in the FA Cup Preliminary Round and in the FA Vase 1st and 2nd Rounds.

And what does Dad think about it all? “I think he’s pretty pleased. He likes to assess me every game and it does help.”

Declan has some words of advice for younger referees just starting: ‘Do try to do a bit of lining on supply leagues. You get good experience by going out with lots of different referees and it definitely helps you in the long run.’

Declan’s ambition is to go as high as possible and he feels that the double experience is of real value. So watch this space.

FOUL PRETENCE TO BE PUNISHED?

Ginola beware! It has been reported in the press that, at its meeting to discuss law changes, the International FA Board is to consider a proposal that, if a player pretends to have been fouled, he should be cautioned and play re-started with an indirect free kick against him. [And I thought we could already caution for ‘unsporting behaviour’ Ed]

OVER TO THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE LAW

Ten inmates of Parkhurst Prison, Isle of Wight, have qualified as referees with the Football Association. They can use their skills when they are released.
(The Sunday Telegraph, 3/1/99)

SPREADING THE NET. . .SPREADING THE NET. . .SPREADING THE NET. . .

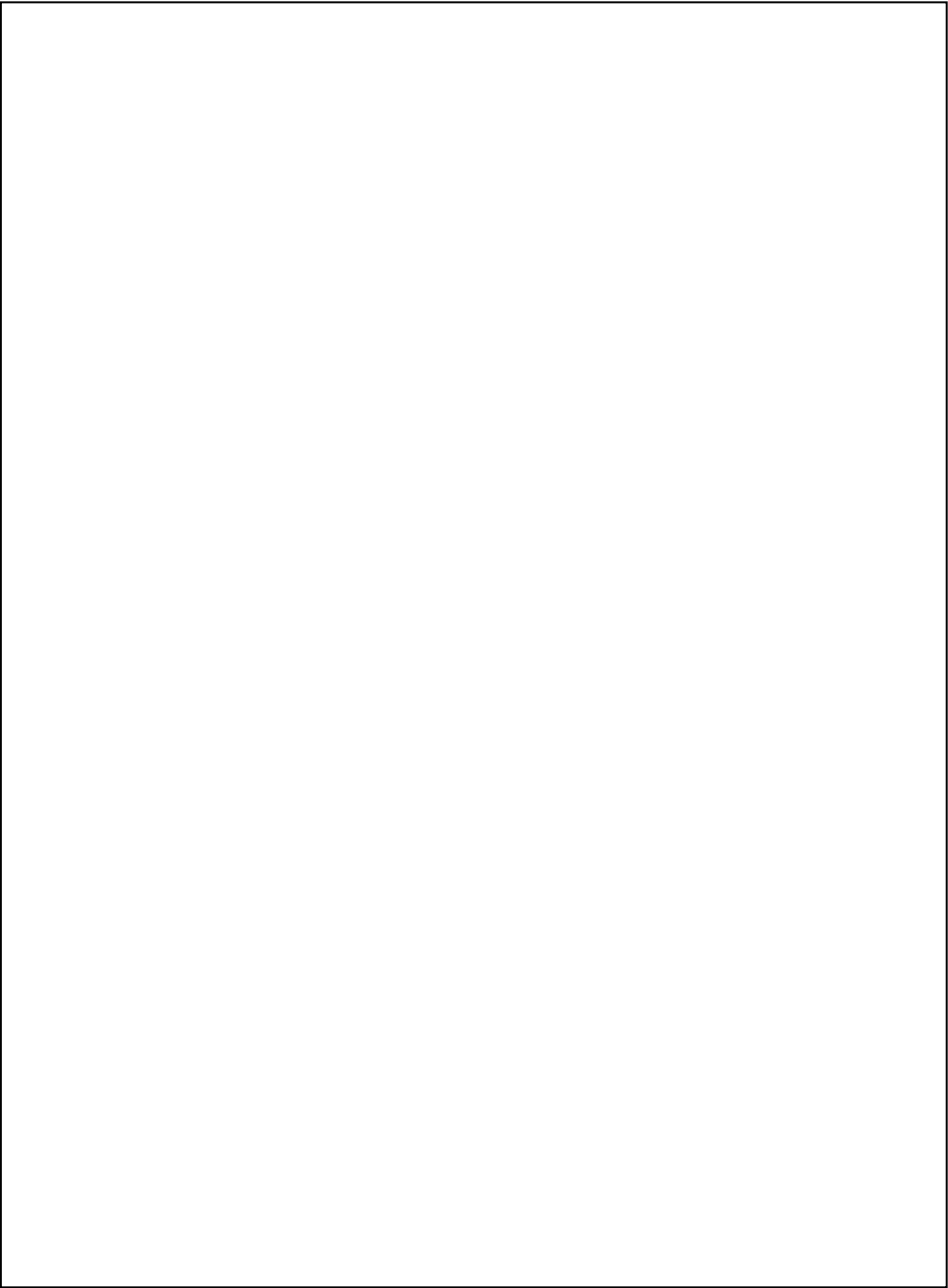
Latest local recruit to the World Wide Web is our area youth league, the South Chiltern Minor League. Although Mike Overton confesses that these are early days, he has got started. The site can be found at

<http://freespace.virgin.net/michael.overton1/index.htm>.

Less good news is that the National RA site continues to disappoint. As we go to press it has not been updated since 27 November and still lacks all the contact details of local societies – the best contribution it could make to recruitment. We can but hope . . .

And our site? Well, I am assured that by the time you are reading this, it will be up and running. URL to be announced.





Let the referees rule their game

Professionalism is welcome, but former World Cup match official **Clive Thomas** says more is needed to raise standards. [Thanks for this article to the Kingston RS magazine. Ed]

The news that the FA Premier League wants to experiment with full-time professional referees is welcome as far as it goes: I have been calling for this very thing for more than eight years.

Yet I am no more optimistic about the future of refereeing than I was before the announcement. The wrong people are handling the changes and, as usual they don't go far enough.

I have watched the standard of refereeing decline over many years. It was as bad as it has ever been at this summer's World Cup, but France 98 is only the latest example of a long-term trend. West Ham manager Harry Redknapp was right to say, after his side had received particularly harsh treatment in their recent Worthington Cup game against Northampton, that bad decisions are "just part of football life". But they need not be – at least not as often as today.

Paying match officials £40,000 or £50,000 a year will not improve matters on its own. Rather, the question is who will drive forward an improvement in standards.

The track record of the Football Association and the Premier League is not particularly good in this respect. It is only through proper control, guidance and leadership that standards will improve. A far more radical agenda thus needs to be addressed.

My own solution, which I which I have put forward in a formal paper to Fifa, the world football governing body, is to put leadership back into the hands of referees themselves. A new governing body is needed – it could be called the Referees' International Football Association or Rifa – to control referees throughout the world.

So long as the structure of refereeing remains in the hands of governing bodies such as Fifa and the FA, there can be no real appreciation of the

problems facing match officials in the modern game. If referees had a proper say in the way their role is organised and managed, for instance, the game would undoubtedly have avoided some of the muddled and contradictory statements made to referees during the World Cup finals.

Rifa's prime objective would be to control; and manage referees throughout the world, in much the same way as Fifa now controls football. Its members would be chosen by referees' associations in countries around the world and it would be autonomous within its own field of activity while still working closely with Fifa.

Areas within the new body's jurisdiction would include interpretation of the laws of the game, innovations such as introduction of a "sin-bin" and television replays; and a training programme to convert former players into referees. At the same time, the retirement age for referees should be replaced by criteria based on fitness. All members of Rifa's committees would be former referees.

The new structure would be expensive to establish, but the Premier League's idea of seeking sponsorship to pay the full-timers' costs is a mistake. Imagine a policeman being sponsored by a company – his dealings in relation to that company could be open to pressures or misinterpretation.

Rifa should thus be financed by Fifa for the first two years and then later from radio, television and other copyright fees, and via contributions from the leagues and cup competitions that would use its referees.

Although I am no longer directly involved in football, I still love the game and follow it closely. My actions are prompted by a genuine concern that unless something is done, the consequences for referees and refereeing worldwide are grim indeed.

The Premier League may believe that, in professionalism and sponsorship, it has found an answer to the problems facing referees. But in truth, it may just be storing up trouble for the future.

Referees have to be in command of their destiny across the world and address all the issues posed by the modern game. The future of football demands nothing less.

FROM THE PAST

1965-66

Keith Peacock of Charlton was the first substitute to be used in the Football League in the match against Bolton Wanderers.

At Elland Road during a third round Fairs Cup tie, Jack Charlton had to be restrained by a policeman to stop him attacking a Valencia player. Charlton was sent off, as were two of the opposition.

Tottenham's fine disciplinary record was spoilt when Frank Saul was sent off in December – the first Spurs player to take an early bath since 1928.

On March 20th, to the great embarrassment of the FA, World Cup hosts, the Jules Rimet trophy was stolen from Central Hall, Westminster where it was on display. To everyone's relief it was found a week later by a black and white mongrel dog called Pickles, hidden in a brown paper parcel in some bushes. Pickles' owner received a reward of £6,000 but the thief has never been caught.

Liverpool, under Bill Shankly's leadership, continued their domination of the Football League. They headed the table from November and ran out champions with a six point lead over Leeds, equaling Arsenal's record of seven titles. They almost did a double with the European Cup Winner's Cup but were beaten during extra time in the final by Borussia Dortmund.

Bradford Park Avenue finished 11th in the Fourth Division in spite of scoring 102 goals. They let in 92 and lost a total of 20 games.

Under manager Jock Stein, in charge for his first full season, Celtic completed the double of League and League Cup. They narrowly missed the treble when Rangers beat them 1-0 in the Scottish Cup final replay.

After being two goals down at half-time, Harry Catterick's Everton side won the FA Cup final 3-2.

After a disappointing opening game at the beginning of the season against Austria, losing 2-3, the England team had a successful international season prior to the World Cup, which England was hosting for the first time. The nation was gripped

by World Cup fever as the competition developed and 12+ million TV sets were tuned in for the final. The still controversial win over West Germany which brought the World Cup to England is, as they say, history.

1966-67

Alan Ball was the first player to be transferred between two English clubs for a six-figure fee.

Alf Ramsey was knighted in the New Year Honour's List.

Scotland beat England 3-2 at Wembley and claimed that they were really the World Champions having defeated the Auld Enemy who had won the World Cup the previous summer.

Billy Fergusson of Northern Ireland was the first player to be sent off in a Home International. England went on to win the game 2-0.

Manchester United won the Championship under Matt Busby's leadership being unbeaten in the League after December 16th. They beat West Ham (with Bobby Moore, Geoff Hurst and Martin Peters) 6-1 to clinch the title.

Against all the odds and Inter Milan in the European Cup Final, Celtic, under Jock Stein, won 2-1 in extra time. They were the first British team ever to win the trophy.

FAIR PLAY REWARDED BY FIFA

At a special gala evening on 1 February, England and France jointly received the FIFA 1998 World Cup Fair Play Award.

The FIFA Fair Play Prize for 1998 was awarded jointly to Iran, the United States and Ireland. Iran and the US were honoured for posing together for photographs before their World Cup match in spite of the political situation between the countries and for exchanging flowers and gifts. The Irish FA was honoured for its 'continuing efforts to reunite the Catholic and Protestant communities' and in particular the playing of the match between Cliftonville and Linfield for the first time in almost 30 years because of the sectarian tensions.

ONLY THE FOURTH OFFICIAL

[This is a slightly modified version of the one of John Moore's articles for the *Evening Post*. For anyone who hasn't discovered them yet, they appear on Wednesdays and we write them alternate weeks. Ed]

It was reported in the *Evening Post* the other week that I had been fourth official at the match between Chelsea and Coventry. The only reason that was of interest was that an altercation had occurred between the opposing bench staff.

I was asked a lot of questions about that day, because being the fourth official is a duty not fully understood, even among referees, because not many have the opportunity to undertake the task.

The appointment as fourth official is given to you by the league in which you officiate, just like any other appointment. In local football it is hard enough to find referees, let alone assistants, so the appointing of a fourth official is only made for prestigious games such as cup final matches. In the Football League and Premiership the case is different. The repercussions of having a match official injure himself or even not arrive at the ground are so serious that a fourth official is always appointed.

In general terms, the fourth official is generally one step below the assistant referee in the pyramid. I say 'normally' because there are, as always, exceptions. In my case, on the Chelsea match, both of the assistant referees and myself are Ryman League referees.

If the appointed referee is unable to carry on, then the senior assistant takes over from him and the fourth official goes on to the line. Even here there is an exception. On live "Sky" matches, the fourth official is another Premiership referee and therefore, in the case of a referee needing to be replaced, the fourth official would referee.

The actual duties of the fourth official are quite straightforward. Naturally that person must be able to carry out the duties of a colleague but also he must assist the referee during the match from his position off of the field of play. These duties are normally to keep a complete record of the match. For example, goals scored, when and who by, cautions or dismissals, with accurate information even as to where the incident happened on the field. Another duty is to assist with the replacement of

players to the extent of controlling the actual substitution. And he has to keep an eye on the conduct of those in the technical areas (which may prove problematical as I discovered). Rumour has it that the International FA Board is considering adding even more duties next season.

A recent change means that the fourth official now indicates to the crowd how many minutes of injury time will be allowed at the end of each half. Contrary to popular belief, the time allowed is still the absolute domain of the referee. At approximately 42 minutes into each half the fourth official will place himself near to the touch line and will be given a signal by the referee as to how much time he has allowed. This signal will be returned to the referee by the fourth official to ensure there is no mistake. Then at precisely 45 minutes from a watch that has not been stopped for any injury etc, a signal will be made to the crowd showing how many minutes remain.

The concentration needed by the fourth official is considerable and you must always be ready for the unexpected, as I was to find out recently!

After the match has finished, there is always a debriefing session where all of the necessary information is gathered concerning the match and details of disciplinary action passed to the press. Unfortunately there are times when more information is requested than you are prepared to give, but then that's another story. . . .

John Moore

NO COMMENT

[SPORTS LETTER to *The Times*, 1/2/99]

Who to blame – the referee or the player?

Sir, Here we go with the inevitable outcry about the “mistake” made by Mike Reed in awarding a penalty for the challenge by Kevin Francis on Frank Leboeuf [Vialli? Ed]. We can expect the usual cant from players and managers to the effect that refereeing standards are not up to scratch and how badly the game is suffering as a result.

Perhaps we could consider another viewpoint. Kevin Francis is paid a good deal of money (almost certainly more than referees) to kick a football between the goalposts. This is a task he singularly failed to accomplish from close range earlier in the game. Had he succeeded, Oxford United would probably have won the game, but I do not suppose his indisputable error will attract half as much attention as Mr Reed's unproven one.

Yours faithfully,

Allen Crisp, Heathfield, East Sussex

CARDS LESSON FOR REFEREES

[*The Sunday Telegraph*, 31/1/99]

The way in which football referees brandish red and yellow cards is one of the areas under scrutiny in a study of the body language of match officials.

Academics in Wales have been commissioned by the premier League to observe the body signals given out by referees as well as their positioning in relation to the play. The research includes an examination of how thrusting out a card in an aggressive manner can actually inflame rather than diffuse awkward situations

Researchers from the Centre of Notational Analysis, based at the University of Wales Institute in Cardiff are videoing two referees in action throughout the season – with their permission – and will present their findings at the next referees’ seminar in March.

Philip Don, the Premier League referees’ officer said: ‘I’ve looked at some of the data they’ve been working on and it’s definitely the way forward. We’re looking at all aspects of positioning and body language, including whether referees are sometimes too aggressive.’

[I would be the last person to deny the need for research into the behaviour of referees, but you have to wonder whether this is precisely what needs doing. Positioning clearly merits examination because the TV cameras don’t normally dwell on where the referee is, but there is plenty of extant video material of referees showing cards and the reaction of players. The Di Canio incident for example. It needs to added that the use of only two referees as a research sample is also difficult to defend. Don’t hold your breath over the findings. Ed]

Knowl Hill Garage advert

more from moore

Red card for brawling ref

[but not an RA member! Ed]

A football match ended in chaos when two players were attacked by the referee, according to an article in the Daily Mail.

Kevin Jenkins, 31, punched a striker who called him “whistle happy”, then headbutted a centre-half who tried to intervene, during a match between Bristol Sunday League sides Sea Mills Park and Backwell Sundays.

Mr Jenkins, a Sea Mills player serving an eight match ban for abusing an official, stood in when the assigned referee did not turn up.

But the game was abandoned 15 minutes before the final whistle with Sea Mills leading 3-1 after supporters ran on to the pitch to stop a fight developing. Backwell Sundays’ secretary, Jack Rebouris said: “His refereeing was actually very good until he started hitting people.”

Sea Mills Park secretary Stephen Hoole said that the referee lashed out after a Backwell player spat at him and called him a cheat. Mr Jenkins was yesterday banned for two years by the Gloucester Football Association for the incident on October 4.

WOULD PROFESSIONAL REFEREES BENEFIT FROM CLOSER CO-OPERATION WITH CLUBS?

Dick Sawdon Smith expresses his doubts.

One of the much vaunted benefits of having full-time professional referees is that they would be able to train and mix regularly with professional players. Supporters of the scheme claim that this would enable referees to gain an understanding about players' problems: to be able to look at the game more from a player's point of view. To me this has always been one of the most important reasons for *not* having full-time referees. The last thing I believe we need as referees is to be sucked into the players' culture.

I was saddened some years ago when listening to Bobby Charlton commenting on a televised football match. A forward had raced through with the ball pursued by defender who couldn't catch him. The forward stroked the ball past the goalkeeper into the back of the net. "A good goal", Bobby agreed," but I don't think the defender's manager is going to be very pleased that he didn't bring the forward down before he could shoot."

Here was one of my great footballing heroes suggesting there was nothing wrong in breaking the Laws if it could prevent a goal. The 'professional foul' rules OK.

Because this view was so prevalent amongst professional clubs, the Law of course was changed to make such a foul a sending-off offence. But this type of thinking still persists. What difference does it make if a player stands well in his opponents' half at kick-off so it's easier to pass the ball back to a team-mate? Surely you can understand that we need to stop a free kick being taken quickly – it could cost us a goal – so what is wrong with standing in front of the ball? Does it matter if we pinch 10 yards here and there at free kicks and throw-ins? What's wrong with a little shirt-pulling? After all our manager would skin us if we let the opponent get away from us. So he swore at the linesman. He was only using the language they use every day on the factory floor.

This is without doubt the thinking that prevails in professional clubs, and referees, by being exposed to it week-in week-out, would I believe start to accept it. Proof of this, I feel, is given by the comments made by Tony Ward, the former top referee recruited by Arsenal to help improve their disciplinary record. After only a short time with the players and management, Ward maintains that the Arsenal players are not at fault at all. It is their opponents, he claims, who are deliberately provoking them into retaliation. Quite clearly he has been brainwashed into accepting the Arsenal players' excuses for their appalling record.

"I wasn't at the Charlton match", he is reported as saying" but I am assured that Patrick Vieira was being pulled back". In his newly opened eyes this then is sufficient justification for the player to smash his elbow into the opponent. Goading opponents does happen, even in local football, but anyone who saw the match on television will know that Redfearn was trying to get the ball. He was not trying to get Vieira to act in such a way that would result in him being sent off. I think it quite clear that, instead of influencing the players and making some positive steps to improve their behaviour, Tony Ward is being influenced by them. This is just the situation that would arise if referees became linked with professional clubs.

This is not to say that I don't believe in referees and players mixing. In my early refereeing days, I drank regularly with a number of Reading players at the old Oxford dance halls on a Saturday night. Even now I always make a point of going into the bar after a game where such a facility exists. When players come up to me to talk about the game, I always tell them I will be pleased to explain any decision but I won't argue about it. Only on one occasion can I remember a manager not accepting this condition so I had to walk away. In contrast I remember another club who were unhappy that I hadn't given them what they wanted on the pitch. After discussing various points in the bar we parted friends and they presented me with one of their rosettes produced for their appearance in the Berks & Bucks Senior Cup Final the following week. (I still have it). And I am still the only referee invited to the annual players' get-together in Reading for former amateur and professional players in the town.

I mention all this to show that I am not *anti* players or indeed *anti* clubs, and I believe it is good to meet and talk . However, we should not let the prospect of mixing with professional players every day become part of the argument for professional referees. Quite simply I believe, sadly, that we have separate agendas.

WHAT'S ON FOR THE REST OF THIS SEASON

18 March

Guest Speaker: Ray Payne, FA Adviser

15 April

Arrangements to be announced

20 May

Annual General Meeting

Your big chance to have a say in the running of your society.
Elections, decisions and the new subscription.