

READING REFEREE

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Editorial

Cup finals, sunshine and cricket on the village green, and you know another football season is definitely drawing to its close. It promised to be different and it has been. 1994/95 may well be remembered as the post-World Cup season of the mandatory instructions and the hugely increased frequency of cards. Has it all been for the better of the game? The only important question.

On the positive side, those bone-crunching tackles from behind have all but disappeared; the blatant unfair destruction of goal-scoring opportunities has become much rarer. The price we have paid? More accusations than ever of 'referees not using common-sense' from the players, managers and fans, and at the same time accusations of 'inconsistency'. But, thankfully, most local players seem to have coped with the changes and still go out there to get on with the game. Some achieve very high levels of sportsmanship as we know from our own Fair Play competition (this year's results on page 32).

In our own ranks there has been concern that some referees have still 'not been doing the business', though nowadays, with FIFA's clarifications, they are less likely to get away with 'alternative refereeing' Maybe next season

Congratulations to all our members who have completed another year of service to the game, but especially to those who have been rewarded with plum appointments and/or promotion.

Have a good summer whether it's going to be a (relatively brief) break from you-know-what, or a change to small-a-side games - for many of us, as good as a rest. And such commitments do mean you miss the shopping on sunny Saturday afternoons! Whatever your choice, enjoy it. See you at the August meeting - Thursday the 17th.

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MARCH

Monthly Meeting

Some fifty members were present and stood in memory of Life Member Don Sarjeant, who had died recently at the age of 92. [An obituary appears on page XXX]. The Chairman announced the evening's sale of kit - an attempt to reduce our stock to realistic levels (at bargain prices we were promised). More seriously, the weekly training sessions at Arborfield had had to be suspended by the committee, primarily because of a problem discovered with the insurance cover. When that situation was clarified and the new level of fee negotiated at a reasonable level, it was hoped the sessions would be resumed, though other venues and possibilities were also being explored.

The Secretary announced several appointments to Senior Cup and Trophy games [John - we need to get details from Pat Monaghan]. Notice was given of two 5-a-side competitions: 27/28 May at Bearwood; 8 July, Reading Fives at Palmer Park (contact person: Peter Hitt).

Membership has closed at 126.

From the County RA it was reported that there will be a meeting with the officers of the County FA as last year. The County RA 5-a-side will be held on 21 May at the Montem Sports Centre, Slough.

Andy Brown was able to report some improvement in the Whistlers' 5-a-side fortunes: They would be finishing about halfway up the table in spite of all the problems of fielding a consistent side or sometimes any side at all. Andy hopes more members will come forward for next season.

The Reading Football League has responded to the RA request: next season the County FA will be shown for each team (so that we can send disciplinary reports to the right address). There will be no excuse in future of course . . . There was a plea for support from referees for help in clearing the 90 matches outstanding.

On behalf of the Sunday League, it was pointed out that clubs are responsible for seeing that nets are put up, *not for putting them up* as the Editor wrongly reported in the last issue. (Members pointed out that clubs do have to put nets up at Laurel and Woodford Parks).

Ted Cambridge reported that the promised second Assessors' Seminar would be held in August.

Problem Spot

Martin Albury was in charge of a league game with neutral linesmen. A top-of-the-league side of experienced players was losing 1-0 at half time to a young away side. After the restart the ball was played out to a home team player on the right wing. Andy caught sight of a young defender flat on the ground but didn't see how he got there. Instinctively he blew his whistle.. The ball was in play and he hadn't seen a flag from his linesman. What next?

There was consensus that he could only punish what he had seen. Did he consult his linesman? Yes. He had seen nothing. Should he have blown the whistle? Only if he suspected serious injury. The allegation was that the young player had been kicked over. Convinced that it was true and unable to impose any sanction, he restarted with a direct free kick against the home team (and got away with no dissent).

Guest Speaker

The Guest Speaker, I think for the first time ever, was female: Jill Wigmore-Webb, who runs the Tilehurst ??????????, seemed quite unfazed at the prospect of talking to her predominantly male audience.

[Here I must interject a HEALTH WARNING. Although I have tried to report accurately what Jill said, I can take no responsibility for any errors and omissions. Ed]

Jill used a flip-chart and covered a vast range of topics. Sports injuries - prevention and cure. As a nation we are unfit as most people do too little exercise. Footballers and referees are less unfit, but how well do we know our own bodies? Knowledge helps you to take more responsibility. In the composition of the body, the connective tissue is important, and footballers often suffer soft tissue injury, but the possibilities of injury range as far as disruption of vital organs.

The treatment of sports injuries is no different from other treatments. Most that footballers suffer are to the lower limbs, 25% to knees, especially medial ligament strain. The good news is that most injuries are minor.

For injury prevention it is important to know the dangers of your particular sport/activity. Typical soccer injuries are: cuts, bruises, broken bones, footballers groin, adductor strains (muscles on inside of legs), quads pull and expansion, patella (kneecap) problems, torn cartilages, ligament problems, especially anterior cruciate leading to instability of the knee joint, front ankle joint strain, lower back problems.

Injuries are classified into 'extrinsic' (e.g. accidents, broken bones, twisted ankle) and 'intrinsic' (e.g. from overuse, traumatic, like stress fractures) By definition there is not much control over the extrinsic, but the intrinsic you can do something about. Continuation usually leads to further problems. For prevention and control, avoid overuse.

Pre-disposing factors are: fatigue, especially muscle fatigue; previous injury; muscle tightness; muscle weakness; muscle imbalance; joint limitation; poor, inefficient technique; inappropriate equipment; inadequate body preparation; inappropriate choice of sport.

There are also medical conditions to be taken into account. You must NOT exercise if you are ill with a fever - it can lead to inflammation of internal organs. With a bacterial infection e.g. tonsillitis, exercise only if the fever has subsided and the infection is controlled by antibiotics.. Over exercising when unwell can lead to over-training syndrome. Don't push yourself too soon. Beware of glandular fever, ME and fatigue syndrome.

Exercise can induce asthma. Asthma sufferers must be vigilant and use their Ventalin. Controlled epilepsy can be disturbed by illness, so exercise becomes a risk. Dehydration is not normally a problem for footballers in this country, but do take plenty of fluids. Anaemia reduces the capacity of the blood to carry oxygen and so you fatigue more easily. People suffering from stress may be exercising for the wrong reasons and therefore not benefit.

Training: try to make sure it is *balanced* - for strength, endurance, flexibility, and psychologically. Always aim for natural movement. Sport tends to train you out of it, and after injury it is worse as you try to protect what has been damaged.

Injury treatment: rest, ice, compression, elevation.

The physiotherapist. The stages of consultation are: assessment, diagnosis and treatment. Many treatments are available, e.g. massage, manipulation, mobilisation, re-positioning, acupuncture. Equipment includes: ultrasound, laser, interferential, H-wave. Ultrasound is good for stimulating circulation, laser is also superb for wound healing; H-wave for pain relief and muscle re-education.

Jill was listened to attentively and also responded helpfully to questions. She was warmly applauded and thanked for her most instructive talk

APRIL

A lot of new faces this month as many of the successful candidates from the recent training course had been invited along. They were presented with their Reading RA certificates by society President Brian Palmer, who congratulated them and welcomed them to refereeing and the RA.

Chairman Stephen Green next congratulated members with plum end-of-season appointments and those who had achieved their promotion (details on page xxxx).

Among the latter was Alison Chapman, who received special mention as the first female Class 1 in the history of the society (see pages xxxx)..

The Training sessions organised at Arborfield could not be re-started because the facility was no longer being made available. Secretary Pat Monaghan offered his assistance to any member willing to take on the organisation elsewhere, with Reading Town and Palmer Park being possible venues.

Candidates for promotion next season were reminded that the onus is on the individual. Form R3 must be obtained from the County Office and returned as instructed before the deadline.

After the difficulties in raising full sides this season, there would be no Whistlers team entered in the Reading 5-a-side league next season. 11-a-side matches would be arranged during the summer with the first against Bracknell (in spite of last year's events) for the Graham Stockton Trophy. Contact Pat Monaghan if you are interested and play for enjoyment.

Jim Fleming reported that there had been fewer than 40 in attendance at the Dinner and Dance, and a minority of them members. The future of the event was in doubt and the Social Committee would always welcome other suggestions. Jim was thanked for all his efforts to make the event a success, as it was for those who did attend.

The Sunday League is concerned that a number of games have been abandoned by referees after injury to a player. They hope that referees will continue the game wherever possible.

On the topic of abandoned games, the Chairman reported instances where other games had been abandoned for inappropriate reasons, e.g. players had been sent off (but both sides had more than seven remaining), spectator nuisance. He reminded members that abandoning the game was the ultimate sanction and should be avoided unless absolutely the only solution.

Ted Cambridge reported a successful training day for assessors, attended by six from our society. Peter Pittaway was thanked for a major contribution.

The second half was a **Managers' Forum**. Several local club officials had been invited to attend and act as a panel - both to answer questions from members and to make statements and put questions in return.

The panel of Kurt Corbin (Manager, Quicksilver FC), Simon Pentland (his Assistant Manager), and Rory Gavin (Manager, Cookham Dean FC) were first asked for their comments on referees and refereeing, especially this season. As ever, they were concerned about 'inconsistency' which, they accepted, had been worse at the beginning of the season. There was a problem in the clubs because the information about

changes did not filter down. Players did not know the Laws. In spite of their wish for 'consistency', they still wanted referees to apply 'common sense'. On balance, this season's mandatory instructions were felt to have brought 'confusion rather than improvement'.

The referees they liked (and players respected) were those who 'come out on the same level as the players', have a sense of humour and explain their decisions when necessary (though they accepted the problems). [Here, John Moore got an unsolicited and glowing reference, which I report as he was not present to hear it. Ed] They liked referees to enjoy the game too. The referees they and the players *dislike* are the officious, the dictatorial. On being asked, Rory confirmed that he had reported referees who, in his view, had a bad attitude.

At this point it became clear, as could have been expected, that club officials too have different views, with one arguing for no change in the Laws, the others happy to see innovations such as the 10 yard sanction for dissent and a lesser punishment for foul language.

The Forum proved both interesting and useful in allowing each 'side' to hear the other point of view. It was heartening to know that some clubs at least have such capable young officials who understand what it is all about, have standards of discipline and conduct for their members and generally support us in our role - though of course they admitted to referee-spotting and suggesting best responses to that week's official.

The session concluded with thanks from the Chairman and a bottle of wine each for the panel members. They left us on good terms, especially the two who went on to win prizes in our monthly raffle.

Don Sarjeant, Life Member

At 92 years of age, Don was unchallenged as our oldest member, but he never lost his interest in what we were doing. In fact, Don was active in the Reading RA for more than 60 years, a record unlikely ever to be broken. In spite of all his achievements Don remained modest and softly spoken in manner, friendly and courteous.

Don Sarjeant was known literally to generations of football players and referees. He refereed locally but was also officiating on the Football League in the 1930's and 40's - before the majority of his fellow members of the Reading RA were even born. He had the unique achievement of being involved in the formation of two local County FAs - Oxfordshire and the Berks and Bucks - and was then a B & B County Assessor. He served on the Reading RA committee and was an Honorary Auditor for many years. Don had a particular link with the national RA: he was a member of the organising committee for the Referees' Association National Conference when it was last held in Reading - in 1934.

To celebrate his 90th birthday, when he was still attending the society monthly meetings, Don was presented with an engraved glass tankard and commemorative parchment by the society's youngest member at the time: Ritchie Condon, just 75 years his junior!

HEARD ON THE HIGH SEAS **(And they talk about *us* being inconsistent)**

Relaxing in the captain's office of the VLCC *Latia* as she steamed quietly down the east coast of Africa, I was listening to the Saturday afternoon match live - on Radio 5 relayed by the BBC World Service for those of us in distant parts.

Match at Anfield, commentator Alan Green. Cut to Highbury for news of the Arsenal game. 'Hartson has just been sent off, and deservedly so, for an outrageous lunge at an opposition player'. Cut back to Anfield to hear Alan Green saying: 'That's two off for Arsenal. *I don't know what referees are doing these days*'. Do commentators ever consider what actually happened? On reflection, I guess they wouldn't want to let the facts upset their prejudices

My reaction was loud - always blame the ref! Not my day. Newcastle lost as well.

Geoff Donnelly

[Geoff's frequent absences from meetings are quite genuine - his job as captain of a merchant ship does make regular attendance (and refereeing) more than usually difficult. Ed]

INNOVATIONS BY OTHER FAs (reported in the UEFA Official Bulletin, March 1995)

Encourage not Punish (use the Green Card)

Four years ago, the General Assembly of the FA of Finland adopted a code of ethics for all football activities in the country. The code was given the name 'The Green Line' and emphasized camaraderie and positive thinking, interaction, unity, internationalism and responsibility at all levels of football development.

The Green Card was adopted as a symbol of the Green Line way of thinking. The card complements the yellow and red cards used in football to sanction players who infringe the Laws of the Game. The Green Card, on the other hand, is used to encourage players to practise gestures of Fair Play. The card is primarily intended for children's and youth football, but it can also be used in any football activity, from official matches to the general assemblies of clubs and associations. The idea of the

Green Card stems from the simple psychological fact that objectives are achieved more effectively through encouragement rather than punishment.

The Green card has been welcomed in Finnish footballing circles. It is used not only by referees, but also by youth coaches and trainers. It is even rumoured that priests have shown the Green card from the pulpit who have come to church to hear the sermon

Esko S. Lahtinen

Fair Play Gesture

For the start of the second half of the Bundesliga championship, the German FA (DFB) is encouraging the adoption of a Fair Play gesture introduced with much success at the last World Cup in the USA.

From now on, the final whistle is no longer a signal for all those on the pitch to hurry back to the dressing room; instead the players of both teams and the match officials will gather in the centre circle to take their leave of each other and to salute the crowd together. In other sports, such as ice-hockey and volleyball, this ceremony has been practised for a long time and represents a well-established tradition, which can also be practised in football. In Germany it also represents a tribute to the best Bundesliga crowds since the league's creation, with the average match attendance at present standing at 28,500. The players and match officials therefore enter the pitch together and leave it together too. And is there any other kind of performance at the end of which the actors do not thank the audience? A positive side-effect of this small but very effective recommendation by the DFB is that it gives heated tempers the time to regain their calm before the first post-match interview; each player can put his thoughts into order before facing the television or radio microphones. Thus, after the pre-match warm-up, there is now also the post-match 'cool down'!

Every club as well as the television stations has accepted this innovation, which the DFB would recommend other countries to adopt.

Wolfgang Niersbach

IT BRINGS ITS OWN PUNISHMENT

[Seeing one of our senior referees getting involved in a bit of argy-bargy reminded me of this piece of non-fiction I wrote for my second issue in 1983. Ed]

'Whatever you do, don't get involved if the fists are up' says every referees; training officer. And quite right.

Five minutes to go in a placid match. A bit of obstruction near the penalty box - nothing nasty - but the (experienced) referee is well placed and immediately blows for the offence. The attacker now takes his attacking really seriously - fists up and away. The (experienced) referee is right there and, with a rush of humanity to the head, moves in. Tries to restrain the pugilist. Scuffle but nobody hurt.

Referee quite properly takes the player to one side, puts his hand to his pocket. No pocket! Well, not exactly. The stitching on his elderly shirt was admittedly past its best. In the fracas the pocket must have been caught and was now hanging sadly, stitch- and content-less. No notebook, no pen. They never tell you how to record a sending-off with nothing to write on or with

But no problem. Quickly the referee calls to the other players to find his notebook and pen. Meantime he confidently feels for his spare pen - he always carries one - in his other shirt pocket. Remonstrating with the offender all the while, he pulls out the mortal remains of a pen. Remembers with horror the incident in the first half when he was struck hard on the chest by a miskick at close range. Murphy's Law? The notebook arrives - together with another muddy, shattered pen. Referee now has a grip on the situation. He removes the bendy plastic refill from the less damaged pen and, with considerable difficulty, formally records his action. Player departs for (slightly) early bath. and play resumes.

After the final whistle the referee is joined by an (experienced) referee colleague who has been watching the game from the far side. 'He had to go' says the referee, somewhat apologetically. 'Absolutely right' says his spectating colleague, 'but whatever took you so long? I thought you must be giving him a personal hearing.'

Just nobody seems to understand the problems of the man in the middle