

**EDITORIAL**

'Football League calls meeting with FA, Professional Footballers' Association, referees and hopefully top police representative . . . .'. Why? The local Procurator-Fiscal had called for an inquiry into incidents during the Rangers-Celtic match at Ibrox on October 17 and four internationals - Butcher, McAvennie, Roberts and Woods - had been charged with conduct likely to cause a breach of the peace. They had been involved in serious incidents in the game, and all but Butcher sent off. The Scottish FA is awaiting possible criminal proceedings before starting its own full-scale inquiry.

Nothing better calculated to cause controversy amongst all involved in football, especially referees. Bert Millichip, Chairman of the English FA, immediately made a statement to the effect that those in football can manage their own affairs, and deplored the police interference.

Of course it didn't start last month. There were the two Portsmouth players ordered out of the ground by police last season for abusing a linesman, and the punishment of Mark Falco (for making gestures at the crowd) on the basis of a police report, not the referee's.

Referees and players want police protection - from each other as well as from the crowd - when it seems necessary to them. They also want (and have) the protection of the courts, as was made clear in an article I quoted from the New Law Journal a couple of years ago. The problem is, as always, one of drawing the line. In the best of all possible worlds, police and officials would co-operate, so that there were no demarcation disputes and the result was a well-ordered situation in which everyone could concentrate on what matters - the game of football.

I don't think it's going to prove that easy.

Last issue before December 25th. Have a good Christmas!

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## **MONTHLY MEETINGS**

### **September**

Vice-Chairman Dick Wilkins was in the chair very soon after taking office and some 60 members responded to his clear leadership. A number of points of interesting business were raised, the saddest being that Gus Higgins had had to resign from his recent appointment as Senior Training Officer because of promotion to a very senior post in his work. Ad hoc and, one hopes, adequate arrangements were made for the forthcoming training course, but a new appointment is needed for the future. The Press Officer reported that the local media had been contacted with a press release and that a paid-for advert, designed for Steve Green, would also be placed in the Evening Post.

Brian Papworth, referee's secretary for the Saturday leagues, appealed to colleagues to be scrupulous about closing dates. In response to a query about late starts, members were reminded that, if the minimum of seven players are available in the changing room, the game should start. Any problem should be reported to the league.

Peter Toft announced that the Radio 210 Saturday sports programme is now at 6.30 p.m. and has a wider results coverage.

As promised, John Lambden spent a few minutes discussing feeder leagues and promotion. The Berks & Bucks feeder leagues are: United Counties, S. Midland, Hellenic, Spartan, Suburban, Combined Counties. John will act as contact person for any members considering any of the leagues.

Guest speaker, Football League referee Mike James, had been listening attentively to our own discussions and started by commenting on a plea for stud inspection. He endorsed the view that there is more to it than studs - rings and necklaces for example. Important to be down to earth, but in charge.

Mike's subject was to be **Advantage**. Although it is difficult to use advantage - you need experience - it is important to try from the start. It is unfair to stop the game when the foul is tactical for example. But be wary. You can't revoke advantage and it can affect your match control. And control is the most important quality of all.

Make sure your linesman, as well as the players, knows when your giving the advantage. Be careful how you use advantage at the lower levels: less skill and poorer pitches, so advantage happens less often. What are the players expecting? Don't use advantage to cop out.

Of course sometimes it goes wrong. Windy conditions can alter things; also take care when the ground is muddy. [Tip: in snow, coat the ball in meths or surgical spirit and let it dry; the snow won't stick] If you're giving advantage you must communicate it by voice and arms (but no need to imitate a bird). See that both offender and offended know. You can caution later when the ball goes out of play.

After his presentation Mike invited questions and responded with wit and frankness and more than a few good stories about some of his colleagues. Like the one cautioning a player called Berry, who, on hearing the surname, responded quick as a flash: Chuck, Black or Rasp? (How many of us could have got away with that?). Mike believes too much fun has gone out of the game, too many referees look as if they are not enjoying themselves. Fitness? Too few referees take it seriously, but it is serious. Even though Football League standards are not very stringent, some referees struggle.

Mike stressed enjoyment and communication throughout and that was just what he provided.

## **October**

The night of the hurricane - incredibly wet and windy - but nearly 50 members braved the elements. President George Mills read out a letter from Maureen, Ken Ives' widow, in which she expressed her family's warm thanks to Ken's referee friends for all their support at the time of her bereavement.

Among the business, members described problems of pitches at Cintra (temporary building too close to the touchline), Prospect Park (builders' rubble on pitch 10), Palmer Park (poor nets) and were reminded of the need to inform the leagues who do take the matter up with the Parks department. Brian Papworth thanked referee colleagues for their response to his plea at the previous meeting and reported good feedback from the clubs on the quality of refereeing. George Mills reported a new training class of 16 members and asked for volunteers to assist with training. Press Officer Brian Palmer thanked Steve Green for the art work used along with editorial copy to advertise the course so successfully.

Guest speaker, Colin Downey has been a football league referee since 1975 after three years on the line. He started by confessing

an interest in our society business. Middlesex is also short of referees and he shares our belief in the importance of training.

Colin had decided to talk on **Match Control**. He quoted Alan Hardaker who always stressed match control, however you achieved it, and accepted that we all do it in different ways because we are different people. Roger Kirkpatrick, for example, had his own particular flamboyant style and was a good referee, respected by players. No-one else could be like that.

Colin believes there is too much use of the book today. The game is no dirtier. Are we referees failing to read intent? he wondered.

What helps control? A good whistle and whistling - give different messages. Hand signals - only use those in the chart and do them properly, even when you're tired. Control yourself. Even if the players can't always control themselves, we must.

What tests your control? Free kicks around the penalty area. Do learn to judge 10 yards - it's further than you (or the players) think. Goalkeepers test you. We do overprotect them now, and that's better than what used to happen, but don't be conned. Colin has a personal solution to those successive fouls on a particular player by different opponents. When he has had enough he cautions the last one, and thinks of it as a 'team booking'. Not in the chart but it's fair and it works. Persistent infringement by the same player is often difficult to spot.

What causes control to start to slip away? Too little pre-match thought and preparation? A big game for a club brings special tension and may bring problems. Difficult moments within a game? Particular incidents like time-wasting; moments following a bad foul, a disputed goal, a foul on the goalkeeper; immediately after half time. Stay aware of changing weather conditions during the game. Complacency is the constant danger. Watch your attitude towards players. Treat them with respect. Avoid situations which can provoke dissent - don't demonstrate or say why you gave a free kick, for example.

Positioning. This has to suit you and your physical condition. Use the dead ball situation to get into a good position. Don't be afraid to get into the penalty area. What is your best 'patrol path' (diagonal)? Colin still prefers to change his 'path' at half time. Positioning is worth working on because it really can be improved by practice.

A few general points. Appear confident - make a decision. Deal correctly with major issues, but don't be fussy about things

that don't really matter. Check whether you have any annoying mannerisms - you don't always know yourself.

Colin responded honestly and frequently humorously to the many questions put to him and, one suspects, would have been kept going all night if the evening had not been closed with a generous vote of thanks.

### **SUBSTITUTES**

There has been a certain amount of confusion since the beginning of the season in respect of the law change about substitutes. There has been conflicting advice about whether it overrides local competition rules. The official FA ruling printed opposite seems clear enough and, note, is dated July. It was sent to Leagues and Competitions by the Berks & Bucks in August.

**REFEREES STATESIDE**

[A conversation between the editor and his son John, just back from a year at Western Illinois University as a Graduate Teaching Assistant and Assistant Soccer Coach. John has played in the Spartan, Athenian and Western Leagues and was in the British Universities representative team for four years]

BP Well, John, it wasn't your first visit to the States, so you must have got some pretty clear impression of American referees by now. Is there any one difference that immediately comes to mind?

JP Yes. Knowing what a hard fair tackle is, as opposed to somebody falling over. They tend to think if a guy falls over, then it's a foul.

BP Is that because they interpret the Laws more strictly?

JP No, they don't understand. The English game is a hard physical game. You find the same problem in America that English teams can find in Europe.

BP Is it because of the background of the referees? Had they been in soccer themselves or learned it from a book?

JP Not really. A lot of the referees at College level are 'soccer ethnic' like South American or European. The American referees seem to have got involved through their kids. The problem seems to be the American approach. And the reaction of the player who ends up on the ground is very different as well. It's the macho male thing. If they get knocked down, they want to stand up and fight. They want instant revenge. They jump up and challenge.

BP Apart from preventing **that** problem, which we don't have on every occasion, any other differences? We hear about referees 'calling the game'. Did you experience that? What about backchat, repartee (or worse) with the referee? Do American referees tolerate more or less than we do?

JP Depends on the referee, just as in England. Players don't really notice referees until they make bad decisions, but generally there was less verbal than over here.

BP Any obvious differences in the actual Laws? They aren't strictly FIFA are they?

JP Substitutions. They've got unlimited substitutions, on and off, from 18 players. To avoid tactical stoppages, they can only be made at certain situations now, like at a goal-kick.

BP How does the referee cope? Is there a game recorder?

JP The referee's only problem is counting up to 11 - it doesn't matter how many times players come on and off. You can have 25 sitting on the bench but only use 18. There's a 'score person' who's timekeeper as well, and a girl at the little desk who keeps the game statistics. The referee doesn't blow the final whistle. At the end of the game, with ten seconds left, the timekeeper stands up with a starting pistol and counts it down - 10..9..8.. Then bang! The game's over.

BP Any other differences in the Laws? Did you have penalty shoot-outs?

JP No, not in College games. A difference in youth football is that the kids all play four quarters. Four 15 minutes, then four 20 minutes. In high school as well I think.

BP We hear a lot about women referees in the US. Did you see a lot more women officials than you see in England?

JP Yes. There are a lot refereeing in school and youth soccer. At College level we did have one female linesman who presumably refereed as well.

BP What sort of background do they have? Presumably they don't have a background in playing soccer?

JP They probably do actually. There's a big interest starting at elementary school level, and lots of girls and young women are keen players.

BP We also hear that referees are well paid. Is that true?

JP Compared to England, they're paid a lot. College referees: 75 dollars a game and 50 each for the linesmen. And you always have uniformed referees at every level. In Talahassee for a 6-a-side youth game, 25 minutes each way, they got 10 dollars. They sometimes do three games. For 11-a-side it was about 30 dollars. At the lower levels, to save money, they sometimes have the dual system: one referee in each half of the field.

BP How does that work? Does it work?

JP It seems to. I've only seen it at youth level, not College. The referees patrol more like linesmen to check for offside and ball in and out of play.

BP A nice positive note to finish on, though I think a lot of our members will be sceptical about that form of partnership. Thanks John.

### **STILL GOOD FRIENDS**

The Stoke City manager, Mick Mills, who last week transfer-listed half his team, calling them a disgrace, yesterday denied there was any rift between him and the players.

(The Times, 24/10/87)

### **THE NEW COVER**

After almost five years of the green cover (first used for the February/March issue 1982), we have a new one designed by our own committee member, Steve Green. I am pleased for a number of reasons. We now call ourselves a magazine We have lost the misspelling of the word 'Newsheet'. (Like 'mis-spelling' it should have two s's and no-one has ever noticed!). And it's nice to have a change anyway. Thanks Steve.

### **PLASTIC PITCHES - IN OR OUT?**

The FA doesn't seem to be able to make up its mind.

Some people were shocked, others delighted last March when the FA announced its action to outlaw plastic pitches. On October



16th, however, the FA issued a terse statement withdrawing the ban in respect of the FA Cup, but emphasizing that the change was for this season only. It seems that the threat of court action by Luton Town may have been responsible. Luton have claimed that the ban constituted a 'restraint of trade' and a High Court hearing is scheduled for November 25th. The situation is complicated by the other controversy - the club's scheme to allow home fans only.

Whatever the outcome of the FA v. Luton duel, a solution to the overall problem is important for British football. However good the plastic surface - and the latest are much better than the earlier ones - there is a problem if only a few clubs have them. Yet, on economic grounds, the logic of having an all-weather surface, which could stand intensive use in a multi-purpose sports complex, is hard to refute. Shouldn't we be willing and able to accept the consequent change in the style of our game, to move with the times?

A Football Association/Football League special working party investigation?

#### **FROM THE MIDDLE**

This piece I wrote for the Reading FC programme is particularly appropriate because it refers to artificial pitches - in relation to fairness.

#### **The Field of Play**

[first published in the Reading FC programme 23/11/85]

Equality, fairness, safety, enjoyment. That's what the laws of football are all about. The laws try to guarantee equality in a number of obvious ways, like having the same number of players on each side. And these 'technical' laws are usually quite rigid: for example the dimensions of the goal are precise and all penalty areas have to be the same size. Yet the laws allow a surprising variation in the field of play - the pitch itself.

In the early days, there were no fixed dimensions - the forerunners of soccer were like some of the surviving traditional village games which have no physical bounds. Then in 1863 with the first set of laws, a maximum size of 200 x 100 yds was stipulated - to be followed in 1897 by today's requirements. Of course, without some limitation of size you couldn't have a stadium, but the differences allowed are still significant.

The length of a 'full-sized' pitch can vary between 100 and 130 yards and its breadth between 50 and 100 yards. Although the length must always exceed the breadth, imagine the difference

between playing on a pitch 100 yards x 99 and on one measuring 130 yards x 50 - both of which are technically possible!

Most Football League pitches are around 115 x 75 yards, but there are quite wide variations and, perhaps surprisingly, it is not always the big club that has the big pitch. Arsenal, for example, have one of the smallest (110 x 71) but Manchester City one of the largest (117 x 79). Compare though, Orient (110 x 80) with Northampton (120 x 75).

Inequality, certainly, but is it unfair? There is little doubt that being 'at home' has a number of advantages, and having an unusual pitch must be one of them. A team learns to exploit the characteristics of its own pitch: for example, a wide pitch is obviously more suitable for developing wing play than a narrow one.

[Graeme Souness's recent antics, as manager of Rangers, in reducing the width of the Ibrox pitch for the key game against Dynamo Kiev seem to prove the point. Ed.]

But pitch differences are not limited to dimensions. A pitch with a pronounced slope, even though the teams change round at half-time, must favour the team more used to it. Then there is the surface. Although natural (grass) surfaces vary enormously from ground to ground and from week to week during the season, the differences can be considered fortuitous and therefore 'fair'. But if just a few teams play on an artificial surface, it could be argued that that is against the spirit of the laws in respect of fairness.

Of course, on local parks the players and referee are grateful if the pitch is clearly marked and all the 'appurtenances' are there and in good order. But it is surprising that in the Football League there is no pressure for greater standardization of pitches to reduce the unfair latitude at present allowed.

### **GOBBLEDYGOOK**

I am still trying to work out what Barry Davies meant during the Liverpool v. Everton game recently on Match of the Day Live, when he assured us that "every tackle is 60/50 - both ways".

### **MEMORABILIA**

Everyone has heard of the 'man with the golden gun', but what about 'the ref with the golden whistle'?

Allan Wellstead keeps an eye on the salerooms and sent for a particular catalogue. Lot 365 caught his eye:

(reproduced with acknowledgement to Phillips Son and Neal)

He went to the sale and was disappointed that even a **gold** referee's whistle, plus book, brought less than anticipated - only £140. We can only speculate as to why it was on offer at all.

In the same sale Lot 368 also caught my eye

I have a drawer full of mainly wood and plastic mementos as a result of my refereeing - must be sitting on a fortune. Well, perhaps not.

#### **NICKNAME**

According to Stephen Bierley, the new nickname for John Barnes at Anfield is 'Tarmac' . . . . the Black Heighway'.

#### **SICKNAME**

At Stockport County they call Asa Hartford (of hole-in-the-heart fame) Marco . . . .

#### **CHRISTMAS DRAW**

You should have received your 12 books of tickets by now from **Pat Monaghan** who is running the draw this year. Please do your best to make the draw a big success and **return the counterfoils and money to him before 9 December.**

#### **YOUTH PLUM**

Congratulations to Barry Ford who was reserve official for the National ESFA U/16 County Cup Final Berkshire v. W.Midlands at Elm Park.

#### **DID YOU SEE THIS?**

Trouble at normally sleepy, leafy Clarence Park last weekend when St Albans entertained Bromley in the FA Trophy. The match was stopped when the visiting goalkeeper drew the referee's attention to a missile that had landed in the six-yard area. There followed a sombre Tannoy announcement. "Will the crowd behind the Bromley goal please stop throwing acorns." St Albans rule, OAK.

#### **OR THIS?**

Steve Coppell was busy giving his pre-match team talk at Shrewsbury when there was a sudden knock on the dressing room door. Outside stood a large man dressed in blue. "Is there anyone here from Crystal Palace?" enquired the perspicacious policeman and, on finding his deductions affirmed, went on to collar Coppell, take him outside, and get him to identify some Palace fans who had arrived with complimentary tickets.

The police were apparently worried the tickets might have got into the hands of hooligans. Coppell was able to set their minds at rest. One of the fans was his dad. Ruined his team-talk though.

(Stephen Bierley, The Guardian, 10/10/87)

#### **OR THIS? (and we think we have problems)**

It takes African football to produce a scene such as that enacted when Gor Mahaia and AFC Leopards met the other week. The trouble began when an official of one side went on to the pitch and refused to leave it, despite complaints from the opposition. He was apparently using witchcraft to influence the course of the match. Things got out of hand, and the police used tear gas, but they did not make any arrests - because they themselves were overcome by the gas. Gor Mahaia won 1-0.

(Simon Barnes, The Times, 10/10/87)

[No mention of what happened to the officials - spellbound?]

### **COMMITTEE MATTERS**

Ben Gater, our new Assistant Secretary, has had to resign owing to business commitments. Stuart Gentle is Acting Assistant Secretary and George Mills, Acting Membership Officer. Kevin Parsons has joined the committee as Supplies Officer.

### **WE MUST TRY HARDER . . . .**

The Southern Division awards a prize annually - the Hubert Parkin Award - to the society with the largest increase in membership. Reading achieved a fantastic 40 member increase during last season - from 105 to 145. Easily the highest. We didn't win.

The award is based on the **percentage** increase. So our 27.5% was easily beaten by Wisbech's nine new members who represent a 56% increase (from 16 to 25). They certainly deserve congratulation and we wish them well. (There wasn't room on George's sideboard anyway).

### **MONTHLY MEETINGS**

<b>November 19</b>	Training evening devised by Brian Papworth
<b>December 17</b>	Christmas Draw; free bangers and mash
<b>January 21</b>	Forum (details to be confirmed)

### **SOCIAL EVENTS**

<b>Friday, March 4</b>	Dinner Dance and Cabaret Wokingham FC (watch for further details)
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Keith Dade is still looking for golfers . . .

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

As Alan Turner announced at the last monthly meeting, he has plenty of blank forms available for your marks. It is an extra duty, even chore, for referees, but it is greatly valued by clubs and their linesmen, who perform a valuable service and often get scant thanks or reward. The scheme only works if we all cooperate and send our marks regularly to Alan. Please play your part.

**IT REALLY DID HAPPEN TO ME (claims Keith Dade)**

I was refereeing a game out at Fairmile (v. Wokingham 'A') when play had to be stopped for several minutes to clear a group of hopping mad spectators from the pitch. However, I didn't feel too much under threat - the large family of frogs left quite peaceably.