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EDITORIAL

With the season well under way and those early problems with pitches behind us, it's perhaps time to take stock.

The new Reading Football League seems to have settled down, but predictably Brian Papworth has not found it easy to get enough officials every week to cover every game and have linesmen for the Senior Division, which remains his ambition. In Sheffield, apparently, there is a fear that Saturday football is on the way out in favour of the Sunday Leagues. Presumably that just shifts the problem.

Our society meetings so far have been a bit less well supported than usual. For all its obvious advantages, the Trades Union Club doesn't feel as congenial to some members as the Oddfellows' Hall used to be. Maybe our previously successful formulae for the meetings need revamping. Only you, the members, can tell us. I personally favour a greater emphasis on training and participation, punctuated by a variety of visiting speakers. What would you prefer?

Reading FC are taking stock too - in a manner of speaking. We shall miss Ian Branfoot as we missed Maurice Evans when he was pushed. What a nerve to ask Maurice back - assuming the press reports are true that is! Let's just hope it improves the football.

Finally, Nabisco have not so much taken stock as left it. What a marvellous and generous gesture to give so much of the original Huntley and Palmer land and buildings to the town. Football benefits handsomely with Kensington Road. Up to us to make sure it doesn't disappear.

Opinions expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Reading RA

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PRESIDENT'S PIECE

Rights and Responsibilities

It's a funny old world we live in. I'm not the first person to make that observation, but I do find it odd in an age when the theme is self-reliance, that people still seem to want others to do things for them, to claim their rights rather than accept personal responsibility.

This thought crossed my mind at our first meeting of the season when a discussion on the state of park pitches arose. To start with it seemed a little strange to me that we should start complaining about the pitches when the season hadn't even begun, but perhaps I missed something there.

It was requested that the committee should take some action against the state of the pitches, but it was put to members that, when and where they encountered pitches which did not confirm to requirements or that were dangerous, they should report them to the competition under which the game was played. We are after all servants of the competitions that appoint us, and our duty must be to those competitions and their clubs. If on receiving such reports those competitions wish to take action, then it is for them to do so.

This, which seemed sound advice to me, was rejected by some members, one of whom said to the committee: 'No, YOU must take action, that is what I joined the RA for - for you to take action on my behalf.'

Is that what you joined the RA for? I believe of course that the RA is there to fight referees' battles. Most referees know that I made enough bad friends in the establishment trying to get better deals for referees. But are we to use our collective body to tackle issues which should more correctly be the concern of other organizations, and which can be more properly be undertaken by personal action?

Perhaps when we are faced with a situation like this we should ask ourselves: 'What personal responsibilities do I have, and have I exercised them?'

Dick Sawdon-Smith

FAIRPLAY AND LINESMAN'S AWARDS

Overall a disappointing response so far this season. Do get your forms from Alan Turner, fill them in and return them, preferably at regular intervals.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

September

A somewhat disappointing attendance of 50+ after the promise of the Autumn meeting. A lively opening to the business was a challenge to the accuracy of the minutes! Members had expressed concern about the state of park pitches, but it was obviously unclear what action had been decided upon. It was repeated that it is the Leagues and clubs that have the power to take action; referees must just act correctly and call off games if the pitch is unfit for play. The Press Officer made it clear that he was very keen to write about pitches to the local papers, but only if he had specific cases to mention.

John Lambden, Training Officer, reported a disappointing number of only six candidates in the training class. He put the slump in numbers down to the earlier starting date (mid-August).

The next item was a training spot by John on 'foul or abusive language'. By skilful questioning, John got members involved in trying to clarify how they interpreted the Law in practice. There were plenty of comments and some differences of opinion (and the Law does say 'in the opinion of . . .'). John summarized by suggesting it might help to consider, not so much what the words were, but whether they were used in an 'insulting' manner.

The Guest Speaker was Peter Molyneux, Secretary of the Southern Division of the RA. He started by explaining the structure of the RA: from local societies, to County RA, to Southern Division, to the (national) Council, with each level represented at the next. He and Jim Jenkinson, the Chairman of the Southern Division, sit on the Council with representatives of all the other divisions, plus the President,

Peter Willis, General Secretary, Jim Taylor and Magazine Editor, Paul Gresty.

Council includes a wide range of ages and refereeing experience from Football League downwards. Peter is the oldest member and still active in youth football.

Peter described the committee structure and then picked up particular issues for comment:

- the insurance scheme always provokes discussion but is still the best we could get at the price.
- income tax. A problem for referees in some areas with (over) zealous inspectors. The RA has an expert to advise. If you are contacted by the tax man over refereeing, get in touch with our secretary, Derek Reigate.
- assaults. Thanks especially to Peter Willis, the RA has got action from the FA (see September's 'Football Referee' for details).
- foul or abusive. Peter recalled that the RA had once asked the FA to state the actual words to be punished. FIFA and the FA declined, apparently because of the difficulty of all the different languages in use.
- the RA gets asked by the FA about possible amendments to Law, e.g. red and yellow cards. England is the only country not using them at all levels. The RA is against change.
- the 'sin bin'. Considered a quite useful possibility at FL level, but impossible on the local parks.
- the Rugby punishment for dissent (move the ball ten yards on). The RA considered it too difficult for park referees to administer [but our members were not convinced. Ed]
- accelerated promotion. RA against.

[I had the impression by this point that the lack of (helpful) change to Law, which I normally blame on the FA or International Board, is actually the fault of our own RA. Ed]

Other matters. Peter is delighted that Alan Robinson, the RA Public Relations Officer is justifying his appointment and

raising the profile of referees and refereeing, though there is plenty more to be done.

- RA supplies are now plentiful and good.

- The national lottery produces some £10,000 for societies as well as £10,000 for the RA.

- The English RA is no longer trying to get together with the Scottish RA for practical reasons but will keep up contacts.

To conclude, Peter returned to practical refereeing. After reminding members of their responsibilities under Law 5 he talked about encroachment. He started with a 10 yard test. We had to estimate 10 yards by taking up a position 10 yards from his assistant, new associate member Jim Peskett. Peter checked with his measuring string. I thought we did pretty well. A lot were very close and almost everybody within a yard. Peter reminded us to use the pitch markings and suggested practising judging 10 yards during training - and then insisting on it on the park.

After questions, Dick Wilkins as Chairman for the evening, thanked Peter for his interesting talk.

October

The evening opened unusually with a Special General Meeting called to consider a change of rule in relation to the AGM. Papers are supposed to be sent out at least 14 days prior to the meeting but this had proved impossible latterly for a number of practical reasons, especially getting the accounts completed and audited. The proposed change to 7 days was carried with over the two thirds majority required.

The monthly meeting followed with over 50 members present. Under matters arising, John Lambden expressed his concern for last month's speaker who was left to address only half the members who attended the first part of the meeting.

It was reported that John had been elected County Training Officer and PRO at the recent CRA meeting. A team was chosen for the RA Quiz: Steve Green, Ivan McNelly, John Moore and Graham Stockton. All six members of the recent training course for new referees had passed the examination.

The Chairman invited the meeting to discuss a suggestion from the committee that, to make a financial saving, we should stop sending the Football Referee and the Reading Referee out to those who did not attend the meeting. There was little support for the proposal and a good deal of opposition from the floor. The circulation was seen as a valuable service and link with members. The committee would consider the matter at its next meeting in the light of members expressed views.

The Chairman reminded members of their responsibility for reporting late starts. The Sunday League had been asked to include an appropriate space on their match card as the new Reading Football League does but unfortunately they have two years supply of cards! Brian Papworth, on behalf of the RFL, asked referees also to report 'bad attitudes' so the League can take action - the League is losing referees who have had enough.

The meeting agreed to donate £25 to the Radio 210 Children in Need Appeal in memory of the son of former member, Ben Gater, who died tragically in an accident.

The rest of the evening was devoted to a session run by the training team. Two brief scenes were enacted and members were divided into groups to discuss the incidents and the ensuing reports.

The first concerned a goalkeeper penalized for steps who turned, threw the ball away and said 'f--- off' as he moved away. Three possible punishments emerged - fierce talking to, caution, sending off. A few members justified the talking to on the grounds that the expletive was reaction and not really directed or intentionally insulting.

Rather more members would caution, considering a sending off too severe, broadly for the same reasons. The question of what words went on the report produced different answers (and a promise to raise the matter with County officers at November's Forum). Some would leave the words out, some would not. Some would caution for dissent by action (the throwing away of the ball) and so not need to mention the words, believing them to be the lesser offence if offence at all.

Most members would send off. A useful distinction between 'f---ing hell' and 'f--- off' was offered by Jim Peskett. It can be argued that the former is not directed, but the latter surely is.

The second incident created less difference of opinion. This time a player is cautioned for persistently infringing the Laws. After the caution he makes a remark about the referee being 'bent' to the trainer - who fully and audibly agrees with him. The player is sent off and the trainer reported for misconduct.

The problem here was not making the decision, it was getting the report right. Most members would have sent in two reports on the player. John Lambden argued, however, that one would suffice, there being only one continuous incident as the ball remained out of play. (Another one for the Forum). The involvement of the trainer allowed a reminder that only players can be cautioned and sent off.

The session served its purpose in creating lively involvement of everyone there. The first incident illustrated very well the problem of administering the Laws, showing the importance of context, of intent, and of the importance of the words 'in the opinion of the referee'. It was uncomfortable for anyone who wants easy and absolute answers.

YOUR MAGAZINE

No issue in December. Happy Christmas to all our readers!
IT HAPPENS OVER THERE TOO (from the Albuquerque Journal,
3/10/89. Thanks to Philip Lewis)

SNIPPET (from the Reading Chronicle, 20/10/89)

Players of Reading and District Sunday Football League teams GRIFFIN and ABBEY RANGERS had quite a surprise when they turned up for their Harold Lusted Shield second round tie and found they were to be controlled by a female referee. It was Mrs Marie Barnett, who had received a late call after the originally nominated official dropped out. They had never seen a woman referee before and there were some hurried last minute instructions for both sides from their managers on you can guess what! Whether it was the instructions or the sheer presence of the official it would be difficult to say, but everything went swimmingly and Mrs Barnett received high ratings for her handling of the match. But there were some anxious eyes being cast in her direction throughout the game from the referee on the adjoining pitch where Mapledurham were playing

Christchurch - it was none other than her husband, Mike. It certainly is a unique situation to have a husband and wife refereeing team. What's more it doesn't stop there because their son is also a whistler - the whole family took and passed the referee's course at the same time . . .

[Nice to know you're appreciated Marie. I don't believe all that stuff about Mick. I bet he never looked once. Ed]

[From the Daily Telegraph, courtesy of Bill Wallace]

The AFA Referees' Magazine

[Thanks to (Major) Peter Pittaway I recently received a copy of the excellent AFA referees' magazine. The following article, which originally appeared in the RNFA Referees' Magazine, seemed particularly helpful and timely. Ed]

THE ASSESSOR'S ROLE

A common belief amongst junior referees is that the assessor may view decisions made, relative to what decisions he (the assessor) would have given if in control of the game.

Provided the assessor is doing his job in the proper manner, this is a complete misconception, as only the referee controlling the match can appraise the circumstances, judge the player's intent and consider the alleged offences before making a decision.

The assessor's prime task is to consider the application and interpretation of the Laws of the Game and the referee's control.

What then, is the assessor really looking for, after ensuring that referees arrive at the ground in ample time to prepare for the ensuing game? Remember, some assessors will be at the ground to watch for this. The first impression that players and the assessor have of the match official is his appearance and approach at the start of the game.

The kit should always be clean and pressed; the boots and laces clean, and socks not only clean but not spend half the time around their ankles. Match control needs not only sound interpretation of the Laws, but effective control over players and situations in an efficient manner without being flamboyant.

Two ingredients for this element of control are the use of the whistle and the referee's mannerisms, and it is essential to refrain from making flamboyant gestures when giving decisions or talking to players. When the necessity arises to caution or send-off a player, compose yourself as you approach him and be sure that you deliver a coherent retribution and remain calm, but in control.

In this respect, the assessor will be looking to see how your decisions are received by the players, with the emphasis on your reactions. Do you allow players to crowd around you and, above all, are you in control? Good positional sense is a major feature of the referee's game and the assessor will watch firstly your fitness with a view to the manner in which you pace your running, as it is essential that you have the ability to maintain your speed at the end of the game as well as in the first 10 minutes.

Good acceleration is also a feature of fitness and there will be many occasions when your immediate presence at an incident may well prevent more serious actions being taken by players.

Fitness will ensure that with good running and acceleration, the positioning at subsequent events will add to your overall control. A common fault with some referees is their approach to the penalty area. The final point on positional sense can be judged by the referee. If, during the game you find that you are becoming involved with players or the ball, then immediately adjust your line of running to keep the play in view but not to be involved in it.

The use of intelligent signals forms part of the match control and the assessor will be looking to see that the signals used are clear and informative. There is nothing worse during a game of football than continual interruption and delaying tactics, so an assessor will watch to see if your decisions are given promptly; that the subsequent events move quickly at the taking of a free-kick; that the 10 yards is complied with, and that those who wish to take a quick free-kick are allowed to do so.

The manner in which a referee applies himself to an injured player is also important, remembering that players should not be treated on the field of play if they can be moved, and the action taken in this respect will certainly be watched.

Alan Robinson

A FEW MORE OF THOSE TIPS

After teams change round, remind yourself who's going which way for the first few minutes.

If you can't remember instantly, don't indicate the direction of the kick or throw, shout the colour.

When you're going to caution or send off, **back** away from the incident with the culprit(s).

Look at a player's eyes if you can, to judge intent.

Keep the ball at half time; try to keep it at the end. A good way to make sure you get paid.

IT'S HAPPENED AGAIN

The Reading FC manager is asked to report to the chairman's office and he's out - fired. History repeats itself. It's not quite 5 years since I was reporting the unceremonious departure of Maurice Evans to make way for Ian Branfoot, and now it's Ian's

turn at the hands of the same chairman Roger Smee. It's not much consolation to know that's how it goes in professional football, especially when Ian has probably been the most successful manager Reading has ever had.

Ian has always been a good friend of Reading RA. Even when critical of refereeing decisions (rather than referees as such), he didn't rush to the microphone or into print, and his criticisms were always honest (and frequently justified). We wish him well (and Reading FC under their new manager).

THE MANAGERESS

A new series is being prepared we hear with the help of our members who were lucky enough to be involved last time. Let's hope they are allowed to make better decisions! Apparently an Equity member (a qualified referee) has joined our lads. Could be there's going to be a verbal encounter too. Can't wait.

ID CARDS

They haven't gone away. In spite of opposition from just about everyone inside and outside the game, Government plans to force English and Welsh football fans to carry identity cards now seem certain to become law. The Football Spectators Bill which includes the requirement has now got through both Commons and Lords and only needs the Royal Assent. Fortunately it seems that snags with the proposed electronic turnstiles will put it all off for another year. Also when Lord Chief Justice Taylor's Hillsborough Report is published in February, Parliament will have the chance to reject the scheme (but not to amend it apparently).

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS DRAW

By now you should have received your books of tickets for the draw. An abundance of prizes as usual. Our job is to sell the tickets - all the profits come to the society. John Moore, this year's organizer, would like the counterfoils and money back to him as soon as possible. Even with helpers he can't do everything on the actual night.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

November 16

County FA Forum:

Ray Claridge, Referees' Secretary

Stan Gigg, Cup Competitions Secretary

Bill Gosling, General Secretary

December 21 Christmas Meeting
with Grand Draw and supper

January 18 A Presentation by our own David Keen
FL Assessor and former FL Linesman

SOCIAL EVENTS

February 10 Skittles Evening 7-30 p.m. kick-off
Millers Arms, Caversham
Tickets £4 each
(number limited to 40 - so apply early)

April 27 Annual Dinner and Dance
Reading Trades Union Club
Tickets £13 each

NO COMMENT

The former England midfield player, Peter Reid, has been fined £1,000 and given a two-match ban by the FA after being found guilty of making "foul comments" to the referee, George Tyson, after Queen's Park Rangers had lost 1-0 to Manchester City.

The Times, 14/10/89

TAILPIECE (The Independent, 4/11/89)

