

READING REFEREE

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Editorial

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MONTHLY MEETINGS

September

Started slowly and thin but about 70 members by half-time. Among the business items:

- discussions were continuing with Reading FC but we had reduced our potential figure to £8,000 as a result of discussion at the August meeting.
- the position about small-a-side competitions and sanctioning - raised after the assault on Stewart Mills - was far from clear. Further clarification was to be sought and the matter to be raised at the next County RA meeting.
- Rick Augur was congratulated on having got a line on a Senior Trophy match
- new member Graham Poll has been promoted to the Premiership list
- Andy Awbery reported a membership so far of 121
- Kevin Parsons is again going to supply kit

It was reported from the leagues that the Reading Football League is increasingly concerned about dog dirt on pitches and asks referees to inform Andy Awbery of any instances. The Sunday League is suffering from a serious shortage of officials this season (but is unable/unwilling to change its system of notifying referees via the local paper, which certainly makes some members refuse to officiate for them).

On the (Problem) Spot

Pat Monaghan told of his difficulties when he decided to run (unusually for him) the right diagonal. After a short time he became utterly confused. Unfortunately as it turned out he had neutral linesmen who were taking over. What should he have done?

The problem was obviously not uncommon, but most of us it seems stick to one diagonal (the left) pretty religiously for one very good reason: club linesmen just can't cope with left wings. Members knew the 'right' answer: get proficient on both diagonals. The best expedient on the

day would have been to swap as soon as it became difficult, but in real life most of us would have waited till half-time as Pat did.

[Remember that occasionally you need to change your diagonal - if the sun is bright and low over the right diagonal, it is least distracting to run into it. Ed]

The Guest Speaker was Ray Payne, FA Area Adviser (Beds, Berks, Bucks, Oxon) He is an active referee, qualified referee instructor and his task is to co-ordinate training activities. Ray would offer suggestions about what makes a good referee.

Correspondence/administration Give open and closed dates; within 24 hours confirm appointments, confirm a request from a club.

Smart appearance One way to gain respect. Looking the part helps you feel the part.

Knowledge of the Laws Has to be good and sound. Read your chart regularly - you can't afford to forget it. You also need the amendment sheet and the FA Memorandum (revised 1993).

Assert authority early A loud blast on the whistle; a firm handshake. Be constantly aware; ignore nothing.

Recognise and punish offences A good referee gets decisions right, then punishes accordingly

Clear signals Don't always use/overdo the whistle. Use clear arm signals.

Common sense For example in dealing with player who uses foul language about the goal.

Man-management skills Difficult to define but experience helps. Be calm; be courteous; sometimes use a smile.

Good positioning and movement "Reading the game". Being where the action will be. Aim to see clearly from within 20 yards. Don't get too close; do run backwards.

Physical fitness Referees must train.

Linesmen co-operation Onus is on the referee: up to him to get maximum performance by motivating/instructing them.

Consistency On 27 occasions the Chart says "In the opinion of the referee". Be consistent in your own performance. Every game is the same in terms of what you have to do.

At this point Ray paused and confessed that the points were in random order. Now our turn. In groups we had to put them in *priority* order, then remove the least favoured and add a new one of our own.

The upshot was a number of lively and at times heated discussions. a number of additions were proposed, most in the area of self-criticism/evaluation. The results were then logged and averaged and 'our' consensus priority order was as follows:

1	Knowledge of the Laws	7	Consistency
2	Recognise and punish offences	8	Clear signals
3	Good positioning and movement	9	Linesmen co-operation
4	Physical fitness	10	Assert authority early
5	Common sense	11	Smart appearance
6	Man-management	12	Correspondence

Ray was an excellent speaker and members enjoyed an interesting and instructive evening.

October

The new layout of our room at the Rendezvous Club seems helpful in giving everybody a good sight of the proceedings and the officers good eye-contact with members. It does seem a bit deceptive on numbers however - makes us look fewer than we are. There were over 60 present in fact.

In the absence of Chairman Stephen Green, Derek Reigate, our Vice Chairman, officiated. He mentioned under 'matters arising' that the deal with Reading FC was still under consideration, though the sum in question had been reduced to £8,000 as a result of discussion with members. The Committee were finalising our proposed terms of agreement before getting Reading FC to draw up a draft document in legal terms which we would then get legal advice on if the intent was acceptable. The Chairman assured the meeting in response to a question that members would have sight of any proposed 'contract' in advance of being asked to accept it.

Then more discussion of the Reading 5s, the assault on Stewart Mills and the whole business of 'sanctoning'. It is abundantly clear that the whole business is unclear - or, rather, illogical.

1 We must only officiate in 'sanctioned competitions (as we knew). 2 the County FA/FA will however sanction a co-competition even if unaffiliated clubs are involved.

3 Even though they can only discipline players registered with affiliated clubs.

4 In other words, in real terms referees are pretty exposed in competitions (the majority) like the Reading 5s (which in the event was unsanctioned in spite of their statements).

Through the County RA The Reading RA is seeking further clarification direct from the FA *and change*. Members were very concerned and a motion was passed that we should consider declining to officiate at the Reading 5s and by implication any similar competition including unaffiliated clubs.

From the local leagues:

Reading Football League: - no fixtures (on park pitches) on Christmas and New Year's Day

- expenses **20p a mile**. Some referees may have been overcharging (inadvertently of course). Don't.

Reading Sunday League - captains must be informed of a late start and who you hold responsible. You can tell them *when* you like but you *must* do it.

- LANGUAGE is still a major problem in spite of the FA directive. The public is complaining. This is one we can't duck - THE RESPONSIBILITY IS OURS.

Are you doing your job?

Life Member and Quiz-Question-Setter George Mills asked for volunteers to make up our team for the County RA Competition on 22 November at N.Berks RA, Esso House, Abingdon.

A Guest Speaker with a difference after half-time. Bob Morrison who is in charge of news and sport at local independent radio station, 210 FM.

Bob explained the origins of the service which now has 125 commercial stations. All 210's money has to be made from advertising and they've been in profit every year since they started in 1976. Since the early days they have expanded and now are in partnership with GWR which extends coverage westwards to Bristol and south to the Andover area and beyond to the Isle of Wight. The different wavelengths (210 and 1-2.9FM and 97MW) have slightly different material as it is important to feel and be 'local'.

Sport is an important part of the programme and popular but expensive because it is people-intensive in a way canned music is not. Bob (naturally) takes a particular interest in sport and even claims to read copies of the Reading Referee I send him. He aims to cover local as well as national football and the local league results service was started as a result of contacts made at his last visit to the Reading RA. He also revealed an unexpected role in supplying league tables to the local press as they derive naturally from the results he processes. He regrets he can't do the same for the Sunday League because there is no air time available.

Bob made it quite clear that commercial considerations - size of audience and consequent advertising are critical. Thereafter, 210 is as responsive as possible both to news items and ideas.

Bob concluded his fascinating talk about our local station with more insights into their activities. Although he has now been with 210 since the start he remains enthusiastic (as was obvious) and loves the unpredictability of the job ('though the money is not too bright'). President Brian Palmer expressed the Reading RA's thanks and made a presentation on behalf of the members.

It Happens At Every Level

[This and the following eight items are taken from 'Soccer Shorts' by Jack Rollin, Guinness Books 1988 - a good buy for Christmas. Older members may spot the four have published before]

The Coventry City v Southend United match in January 1962 had been in progress for three minutes before it was noticed that both teams were playing in blue and white. Referee Arthur Holland stopped play and Coventry changed into red shirts on the field.

Promotion?

Former Football League referee George Reader became chairman of Southampton after retiring from the official list. But three other referees became Football League club managers: Herbert Bamlett (Manchester United), Albert Prince-Cox (Bristol Rovers) and Jimmy Jewell (Norwich City).

A Hint For The B & B

In January 1955 Trinidad footballer Selwyn Baptiste was suspended for 1,000 years after playing in a cup game the day after he started a two-year suspension.

How Mean Can You Get?

On 13 February 1982 Reading announced as an economy measure that the referee and linesmen at home matches would no longer be given biscuits at half time. Nicknamed the Royals, Reading had previously been known as the Biscuitmen because of the close proximity of the Huntley and Palmers factory.

Beware \Of The Dog

On 8 October 1955 during the Third Division (Southern Section) match between Aldershot and Brentford, a small dog grabbed the flag carried by linesman Ronnie Chappell, ran off with it and disappeared. [We are not told what happened next. Ed]

A Good Reason To Call The Game Off?

In August 1967 there was a junior game in Lisburn, Northern Ireland between Bridgeport and Collin Glen. The two teams arrived along with Jimmy Neill the referee and his two linesmen. But there was no match. Somebody had forgotten to bring the goalposts.

Thet (really) Wuz Robbed!

In April 1952 Huddersfield Town were beaten 1-0 at Tottenham by a freak goal. Eddie Baily played the ball twice when taking a corner-kick. The referee had placed himself five yards from the flag and had been struck in the back by Baily's first kick before the Spurs player ran forward to centre the rebound which Len Duquemin headed into the net. Despite protests from the Huddersfield players the goal was allowed to stand. Huddersfield were relegated at the end of the season.

The Odd Things Referees Do

Barnsley referee Keith Styles named his house 'Nay-Ref', Leo Callaghan the Welsh referee called his 'Offside', Mike Kirkhof (Bicester) gave his the tag 'Goal', Jim Finney went continental in his naming of 'Arbitro' and George McCabe (Sheffield) decided to commemorate being selected to control matches in the 1966 World Cup by calling his dwelling 'Jules Rimet' after the trophy itself.

Whistler's Bother

On 17 December 1955 at Highbury, Arsenal left-back Dennis Evans on hearing a whistle thought it was the end of the game. He flicked the ball casually into his own net only to discover it came from the crowd and the referee awarded a goal as the match with Blackpool was still on. But Arsenal won 4-1.

CONFESSIONS OF AN EX-PRESIDENT READING WHISTLERS A DREAM COMES TRUE

He had always fancied doing a game at Aldershot, even if they are only in the Diadora now So much so that he told Barry Simmons, the Appointment's Secretary, (joking of course) that he'd even do a game there for no fee. How right he was.

John Moore was delighted when he got the appointment and invited Graeme McLay to go along too. Good game, really enjoyable occasion, so John is driving away with his mind on higher things. However there was a speed limit and a motor-cycle policeman with a radar check Fair cop in every sense. As he questions John and finds out what he has been doing, he shows a keen interest in football and temporarily raises John's hopes. But all the while he is busily writing in his little book. While Graeme is silently amused in the passenger seat, John is thinking about the 3 penalty points and the fact that he had always said he would do a game at Aldershot for no fee . . . On balance, that was just how it turned out!

PROBLEM CORNER

One of the most useful ways to develop your refereeing is be self-critical - to analyse your problems and do something to avoid making the same mistake again. Or if you got it right, making sure you remember how you did it for the future. You can also help and be helped by sharing experiences with fellow referees. This is why we have the problem spot at meetings.

This `Corner' is simply an extension of that idea to allow *any* member to share a problem situation, anonymously or not, for everyone's benefit. There's no need for me to invent them - they happen all the time, but I would prefer to hear from you about yours. By letter, phone or fax.

`It was one of my early games after qualifying, so I felt inexperienced. One of the linesmen came to report to me announcing "I am a Class 1 referee and know what you want." and turned to go. I wasn't prepared for that and just asked him to wait as the other linesman was coming. I gave them the usual briefing for club linesmen.

From the start the `referee' tried to dominate me from the line. He flagged for what he saw as fouls when I hadn't included that in the briefing (and when I had a perfectly clear view of what had happened). When I waved play on, he would keep his flag raised even after I acknowledged. I also suspected one or two of his offside `decisions' so checked him at a set piece. He was blatantly wrong (in favour of his own side), so I acknowledged but disregarded the flag. I had a very uncomfortable game and longed for a less competent but honest and unobtrusive club linesman as the other was. What should I have done?'

Ed: Not easy. I have had similar opening gambits and also recognised linesmen as fellow referees but officials of the particular club. My suggested response (with a smile of course) is : "Well you'll understand why I want you both to have the same briefing and do the same job for me." In fact I expect and accept more from the fellow referee as long as it stays helpful and unobtrusive. What you do about a Class I who is, in efect, cheating, is dismiss him. BUT you would have to be very sure and very strong-minded to do that if you were so inexperienced. :Damage-limitation is probably what most of us would have settled for in real life.

GETTING STARTED

Not easy in life generally, but this is about our monthly members' meetings. Every so often we ask whether people want to change the 7-45 starting time and the majority want to stay with it. Successive Chairman have tried to ensure we get a prompt start especially when we

have a Guest Speaker to consider. With mixed results. Stephen Green and the Committee are keen to get and keep things moving. Please help us.

CZECH THE DIFFERENCE

[I didn't think I knew anyone in Prague, so I received the letter with some surprise. However it was from friend and colleague Gary Webster who remembered his editor's standing invitation His title! Ed]

Armed with a supporting letter from Colin Downey, who kindly took the time and trouble to fax through a letter of recommendation on my behalf to the Czechoslovakian FA, I began my (new) refereeing career in the middle of March this year (the second half of their regular season). This was after I had completed the 'Cooper Test' at the beginning of January, a few pounds heavier after the usual Christmas puddings and New Year celebration drinks.

During the second half of the regular season, the senior League was still made up of teams representing the Czech and Slovak Republics (Sparta Prague, Dukla Prague and Slovan Bratislava etc) even though the two countries officially split on 1 January 1993. However, this new 1993-4 season has now meant that there are two completely separate 1st Divisions for the Czech and Slovak Republics, unfortunately to the detriment of the leagues, as inferior clubs have now been automatically promoted to make up the required number of competing teams within the leagues.

During the time that I have spent officiating within the surrounding area of Prague, I have found the majority of the Czech referees to be older than you would typically find in England, but less experienced, particularly in running the line (although a statement has recently been issued telling all referees when acting as linesmen to keep the players and referee in view at all times. I have also found that the red and yellow cards are used too freely, in particular for niggling fouls, where a quiet word in the ear of the offender would in most cases be more than sufficient.

I'm not proficient in the Czech language, although the odd words that I have picked up and the fact that I keep a smile on my face helps me to communicate to the players, without any undue problems of dissent during the games. One phrase I immediately picked up when I began my refereeing over here was "Nehraj Divadlo", which means "Don't play the theatre", as a lot of players tend to try to fool referees into awarding free kicks. I guess that this is possibly due to the fact that the Czech border is so close to Germany.

The match fees are completely different to those in England, as there is a diverse wage and cost of living difference in the country. However, for a comparison, my 150 Czech crown fee would enable me to buy fifteen pints of beer, so the after-match discussions are usually very enjoyable.

Most of the amateur level games get three officials, with the kick-offs arranged for 10-15 am or 3-00 pm on a Saturday or Sunday, with the match fees paid immediately after the match. The Senior League appointments are obtained by purchasing a local football magazine called "Gol" which is available weekly within the Czech Republic. [Could that be where the Reading Sunday League got the idea from? Ed]

One arrangement that I have found to work to my advantage, is the fact that all the players have their own registration card complete with photograph and written confirmation of the clubs that they are representing. This information is then added to the A4-size match sheet, which requires that the registration numbers and names of the players corresponds to the shirt numbers they are wearing during the game. In addition, yellow or red card incidents are written on to the match sheet by the referee immediately after the match against the player's name. A brief description of the incident is more than sufficient and there is no sending in of match reports as we have to do in England.

Before every game you inspect the players' equipment as they stand in two neat lines at the centre of the touchline. The players then follow the three officials to the centre mark and then file in one long line to shout "sporto", which is basically a greeting to the spectators who are attending the match.

The standard of the local football grounds within the Czech Republic is exceptional, especially as the local village people tend to treat the stadiums as their "church". Typically the pitches are roped off or separated from the stand by metal railings, so as to enable the linesmen to move up and down the touchline without any harassment.

Although I am obviously missing the English game, I'm really enjoying the experiences of refereeing in another country and feel that I am an ambassador of England, representing the training team and my colleagues of the Reading RA.

Best Regards.

Gary Webster

**CHRISTMAS RAFFLE
FIT FOR LIFE**

What's On

ENDPIECE (with thanks to Tony Murphy, editor of the `Basingstoke Bleep')

`I was linesman at a Football League match. Both teams were lined up for the kick-off for the second half and it was very quiet when a voice in the crowd shouted, "You know linesman, there are three million unemployed in this country and we get you three jokers . . ."