

EDITORIAL

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[Editor's address: 1 Bulmershe Ct, Earley, Reading RG6 1HX
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PRESIDENT'S PIECE**OUR NEW VICE-CHAIRMAN - Graham Stockton**

Graham has been big in local football for many years! He played for his school teams - primary and secondary - and for the Reading representative sides at the U15 and U16 levels. He started in men's football with St Barts and went on to play for Riseley, Burghfield and the All Blacks. I understand that he had quite a reputation but I haven't been able to discover exactly what for.

Graham more or less stopped his playing career in 1980 when he took up the whistle. His progress as a referee was fast - 3 to 1 in successive seasons and straight into the honours lists. After two years running lines on the Spartan League and a measure of disillusionment about progress, he decided to concentrate on the local game which is really where his heart is. His plum games have included several top finals in the Sunday League, a Berks & Bucks semi and a Reading Senior Cup Final line. He has also managed to fit in three years as one of our training team.

He's had a couple of years out for club management (planned) and then an unplanned break after a heart problem which remarkably was only able to keep him out for six months.

Graham has very clear views on most things including refereeing and the Reading RA. He wants to bring about an

improvement in the standard of refereeing locally and would like to make the society's meetings so enjoyable that everyone will join and comes a long. We wish him well in both ambitions.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

Reading RA AGM 17 May 1990

Greater loyalty hath no RA member than this. The night of the Cup Final replay and some 80 members present for an AGM! Unbelievable. And none of us knew what an awful game it was going to be.

Mrs Sybil Newman was especially welcome to present the Fair Play and Linesman's Awards and John Dell, Vice Chairman of the Reading Football League turned the tables on us with presentations of a league badge and thanks to those members who had officiated for the RFL on more than 15 occasions during the season.

Immediate Past President George Mills spoke to his proposed change of rule which would have the effect of **not** closing subscriptions on 31 December. The rule had been introduced to get members to pay their subscription in good time but George believed (a) we were now actually turning members away and (b) that our rule in any case did not conform with National RA rules. The proposed change was carried overwhelmingly.

The liveliest discussion, as always, was about the detail of the Treasurer's Report, although he had succeeded in turning a deficit of £937 into a surplus of £759. The Treasurer survived and his recommendation to keep the subscription at £10 was welcomed and agreed. It was decided, however, to seek a less expensive way if possible to get the accounts professionally audited, as is required by rule.

The President Dick Sawdon-Smith was elected for a further year and the Vice-Presidents re-elected with the exception of Harold Jeffery who has had no contact with the Society for many years. Dick Wilkins, Vice-Chairman was elected unopposed to the Chair to replace Bernie Young and Graham Stockton elected likewise to be Vice-Chairman. The other officers were all re-elected.

There was a ballot for eight committee members from ten candidates. The serving members were all re-elected with Ken Arlett added to fill the vacancy. The President welcomed the

interest shown in serving on the committee and hoped those not elected would not be put off coming forward again.

The Major Sainsbury Award was presented by Dick Wilkins to Brian Papworth 'for his contribution to local refereeing' and the Fred Porton Award for the 'most promising Class 3' was presented by John Lambden to David Crosland. Finally, as Berks & Bucks RA President, George Mills presented framed Meritorious Service Certificates to Derek Reigate and Brian Palmer for 15 and 14 years' service respectively.

OUR NEW VICE-CHAIRMAN

NATIONAL RA CONFERENCE, Scarborough. 23 June 1990

The programme did not look spectacular this year with one important exception. For Reading this was the year of George Mills. Our President George was to be presented for Life Membership of the national RA.

The Friday evening reception by the Mayor in the Spa Complex (re-furbished at a cost of £5 million he told us) was most memorable for the gloomy wet weather and the forgettable "finger buffet". (We heard later that Council members had taken the precaution of having dinner first).

Saturday was the big day and appropriately the sun shone. The early items on the agenda, as always, seemed to take a long time but conversely the Annual Report and Accounts were accepted with little debate though Gordon Isaacs, our old friend from Harrow, had a run in with the President about the way in which the issue of the Legal Protection Scheme had been handled. There was sympathy for Gordon I suspect, but not for the scheme he was trying to get implemented.

The presentations to Life Members followed. This year there were eight members proposed, but of the five present for the award, our interest was firmly focused on one recipient. Jim Jenkinson introduced George Mills of the Reading RA and did him proud. A factual outline of George's service was in the programme but Jim added the human dimension and gave full credit to George's qualities.

After the presentations of the Long and Meritorious Service Awards, the first of the guests invited to speak was John Goggins, the Referees' Officer of the Football League. He was apologetic about the change in the way of appointing the 4th official but said the new method had worked better. He

referred to the criticism over retaining referees past the 'normal' age and claimed that younger referees were not being disadvantaged because over 50% had been appointed within the last five years.

Three minor changes of rule were carried by huge majorities, though the way one was dealt with was technically ambiguous if not worse.

The next guest to speak was Ken Ridden, FA national Training Officer for Referees. He is 'optimistic about referees and instructors'. He commented on our work abroad and mentioned that the FA would be raising the issue of the 'professional foul' at the International Board meeting the following week. The 'Guidance to Referees' and Memorandum would be republished in revised form for next season. The FA had carried out a survey of 3,500 referees who had stopped refereeing. The reasons were many and various but 300 had subsequently re-registered! (Survey every year?) A number of financial incentives were being given to County FAs in respect of recruitment: £2 for each candidate; bonus payment for increase above 10%; FA taking on cost of Referee Instructor training. [If the RA does the recruitment and training, why does the CFA get the money? Maybe I missed something. Ed]

The only notice of motion was to oppose accelerated promotion (eg of ex-professional footballers) unless they went through the normal promotion system and met the same standards. Various speakers all spoke in favour of the motion. Then came the surprise. The President, Peter Willis, intervened to give 'the facts'. He was clearly concerned that members had in his view misunderstood what it was all about and were claiming lack of knowledge when the (national) RA had been perfectly open about the 'proposed scheme'. 'There is no scheme' Peter repeated.

The whole business started with a PFA paper for consideration by the FA. The President attended the meeting and was later criticised because he did talk about the meeting. A sub-committee was set up to take the discussion further and reported to the full FA Council that it would be impossible for anyone to progress to the Football League in less than six years.

The CFA referees' secretaries next met with the President in attendance. They were unwilling to concede any of the basic points. (Still no scheme). On March 12th there was a meeting

at the FA of the FA, FL and PFA attended by the President to discuss a 'proposed scheme'. The PFA was to inform 'interested parties' of the outcome. We, the RA, remain open to any new members who will all 'follow the normal channels'.

The President indicated his support for the motion, the vote was taken and the motion was carried by 11,103 votes to 70.

Colin Downey, i/c FA referee appointments spoke of the cooperation of the majority of referees but the continuing slackness of a minority. The good news about assaults was that serious assaults had declined in number. Assaults overall were increasing however. The FA examines every case. Reference back is usually to question the leniency of the sentence. Some referees' reports are still less than adequate.

Alan Robinson, the RA PRO, spoke about his work and mentioned the problem he had with the FA. He has not yet given up and thanked colleagues for all their support. It was not unnoticed that the three guests from the FA were the only ones in the hall who didn't applaud when Alan finished.

An innovation this year was a session in seminar groups when the main business had been completed. The three sessions were on recruitment, magazines and training. Unfortunately the time available was only 45 minutes and the consensus was one of disappointment that a good idea had been frustrated by the lack of time.

Saturday evening is for dinner, relaxation and the grand draw. Unbelievable. Reading was not in the prizes yet again though we personally put the tickets in the drum! But the car was won by a High Wycombe member - for the second time in recent years. To be fair they do sell a vast number of tickets

Final impressions? As always, good to see old friends and make new ones, but it would have been rather thin without our special interest this year in a particular new Life Member.

REFEREEING BIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE MILLS - LIFE MEMBER OF THE REFEREES' ASSOCIATION

George has kept reasonably busy since he qualified as a referee in 1947 and became a member of the Sheffield RA. His active refereeing was cut short by illness in 1970 but not

before he had achieved the honour of refereeing the Berks & Bucks Senior Cup Final.

During his six years in Sheffield before moving to Slough, he served as a member of the social committee. He was in the Slough RA for just two years before moving to Reading and becoming a member of the Reading RA.

Since 1956 when he was elected to the RA committee, he has always had an official position in the society, including the highest offices: member of the Reading RA training team from 1964 - present; Training Officer 1968-74; i/c referee coaching 1989 - ; 10 years as Secretary of Reading RA from 1964; two periods as Vice-Chairman; Chairman from 1976-79; Life Member of Reading RA; Co-opted member of the County FA from 1968-78; Berks & Bucks RA representative on the Southern Division and member of the national RA Council 1970-87; 1979 awarded the Long and Meritorious Service Award of the national RA; President of Reading RA 1985-88; President of Berks & Bucks RA 1989 -

Some service.

OUR NEW LIFE MEMBER TALKS TO THE EDITOR

Ed As you are the Reading RA's first Life Member I hoped you would share some of your thoughts with our readers.

GM I'm delighted to have this chance. One of the few things I have never done is write an article for the magazine!

The fact is I've been connected with the Referees' Association for 43 years and I can't say that within that time the Association has advanced to the level I would have liked.

There are three bodies in football, the FA, the County FAs and the Referees' Association - and the RA is still the poor relation of the three.

I would like to see the RA take a more important part. Because the FA have money they can dictate to us. The Referees' Association should control all matters appertaining to referees.

We pay £7 to the County FA. If membership of the RA was compulsory and if all referees had to pay £5 to the national

RA, that money would make us independent of other bodies and we could control our own affairs for the benefit of referees. Of 28,000 referees registered this year with the FA, only 17,000 are members of the RA. I don't believe in a Union closed shop but we need to get them in.

I can only preach and hope. Whatever the intention of people who become referees - some want to get on, some will stay in local football - they should all become part of the RA.

The FA are now going to pay County FAs a bonus for recruitment and retention of referees. Is it right for County FAs to take the money? That money should come to RAs - we do the training.

Ed From my recent survey it was clear that the situation does vary over the country and I was told that the FA has no wish to 'impose' on County FAs. Isn't it going to be difficult until the FA has a policy and insists on it?

GM All CFAs are accountable to the FA and should carry out its decisions. CFAs are all different, charge different fees and so on. They are the little FA bodies and they like to keep things as they want them.

When I first heard of the appointment of a National Training Officer I thought it was a breakthrough for the RA. All the training would be got together. But what has happened? He spends his time going abroad. We know that foreigners need help, but what is being done for referees in this country? Surely you get your own house in order first.

Ed It's easy for us to point at the FA. Has the RA itself pushed its own policies? 100% membership is RA policy - you know, you presented that successful motion in 1977. Isn't it our house that needs putting in order? What is the RA actually doing? How can 100% membership be achieved?

GM It has to be by persuasion. We have to encourage people to want to be in the RA, to come to meetings. Then we can tell them what refereeing is about.

Ed So, as we've often said, it's a matter of less business at our meetings and more refereeing. But could we get all 353 societies to do that as well? Don't we need a push from the top?

GM I think it starts in the County RA. We don't have enough links between our societies. In the Berks & Bucks we have 11 societies, but some of them seem to do very little. It used to be different when we were fighting the County FA. Nobody wants to upset anybody now.

Ed Could it just be that society members see the County RA doing nothing and so don't bother to get involved?

GM Maybe. We've got to get to societies. What do referees want? Just to carry on taking matches or do we want a stake in the business? There are things to be done but it's like the national RA with the FA, nothing actually gets done.

Ed Isn't the problem ours? If we don't make proposals and keep putting them forward to the County FA, then nothing will happen. Our delegate can't present what we don't tell him to present.

GM The trouble is that when we have done that in the past, we have just been put down by the County FA.

Ed Can a new Life Member of the Referees' Association do any more to influence policy?

GM I plan to go round societies to thank them for their support but also to find out what they want. Our 1977 motion about 100% membership is still there but nothing's happening. We could put a new motion together. Nothing seems to come from Counties, so the RA Council needs to move policy forward. The RA as a body needs to be accepted more by the FA.

Why don't they have a committee on recruitment. The national RA, like local societies, is too much about business and not enough about refereeing.

The IP Committee at the moment is the only one that has anything to do with refereeing as such. No committee really gets down to the fundamentals of refereeing.

Ed Is the simple answer to propose a motion for a new RA 'Development Committee' which has nothing else to do than to look at the future of refereeing, policy development, refereeing in the 90s and beyond. A committee that isn't just from members of the Council - one that has rank-and-file members on it?

GM I think that's a really good suggestion.

Ed George, you've been pretty pessimistic about what isn't going on rather than what is, and yet at the same time we all know you're a committed enthusiast and optimist. Any last thought to cheer us up?

GM Yes. I am still an optimist. What I hope and believe is that in the future refereeing will be properly recognised. It must be. We've no desire to dictate to the FA or anybody else. I just want referees to be able to take their proper part in the game of football.

Ed Thanks George. Congratulations again from all of us on your richly deserved Life Membership. Thanks for sharing these thoughts with us and all the best in your continuing work for referees and refereeing.

ONE PLUM TOO FEW

It always happens. Peter Hitt's line on the Berks & Bucks Sunday Junior Cup Final did not appear in my May list. Apologies Peter and belated congratulations!

VICTORY AT LAST

It isn't often Martin Deacon rings me on a Sunday morning, but he just had to tell me . . . Ironically our last issue had just gone to press. Well, it was the first time since 1974 that we had done it. Martin, captain and manager, ably supported by the terrible Monaghan twins (father Pat and son Simon), ??? and ?????, had won the County 5-a-side Competition - at last. A tremendous result considering that certain other societies take it all very seriously and had come to think of the trophy as more or less their own. Should inspire the Whistlers XI to greater things this season.