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EDITORIAL

It looks like being an interesting season in a number of ways, but first welcome back! I hope you had a quiet or a busy summer according to your preference. And a special welcome to our many newly qualified colleagues. Whatever you do, don't be backward in coming forward. Referees are a friendly lot. Critics would say we have to be - united against the common enemy. In reality it's much more enjoyable than that.

On the national scene preoccupation with the structure of the league system seems likely to dominate. Nationally and locally, I guess we are all going to have fun - in fact it has started already - with the latest International Board Instructions. In the Society, our new Chairman has laid out his ambitions for the Reading RA and with a lot of enthusiastic new members and new additions to the committee a deal of positive change can be expected.

In that context, as editor of your magazine, let me remind all our members that your views are welcome for publication. As I say in the Handbook, you don't actually have to write anything. Just give me a ring, send me a few notes, have a chat at the meeting. I can guarantee that what I write (over your name) won't be easily recognizable!

Have a good and enjoyable season.

Opinions expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Reading RA
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PRESIDENT'S PIECE

Service Before Self

It was very gratifying to see a ballot for committee members at the Annual General Meeting in May. When I first took the President's chair, there were not enough nominations for the positions vacant, and it filled me with some foreboding at the time. Here we have one of the most progressive Societies in the land, a Society spoken about with reverence wherever referees meet, but it looked as if our tradition of service was not going to be maintained by the younger generation. It is from our committee that the future officers of the Society will emerge, so it stands to reason that if we cannot attract new blood to the committee, then the Society will gradually stagnate.

This year, however, there were plenty of members willing to have their name put forward, but, as I said at the AGM, anyone wanting to stand for the committee must be prepared to work, as I'm sure they will. To keep a Society like ours going forward, it needs a team of dedicated officers and committeemen.

Two of our members, George Mills and John Lambden, were honoured by the Society this year for the dedication they have shown over many many years. George, already a Reading RA Life Member, was awarded Life Membership of the national RA last year, but had the insignia re-presented at the Dinner and Dance in front of his colleagues by guest Jim Jenkinson, Chairman of the RA Southern Division. John was honoured by the award of Life Membership of Reading RA.

I feel that it is worth recording for all to see, the outstanding service that they have both performed, not only as an expression of our gratitude, but also as a reminder that things don't just happen. Someone has to make them happen. So later in this issue you will find summaries of their contribution, not just to us, but to other referees.

May I commend you to read them, and you will no doubt marvel as I did when writing them, as to how much George and John have fulfilled the Referees' Association motto "Service Before Self". And you will note too, I'm sure, that their first position with this Society was as a committee member.

Dick Sawdon Smith

GEORGE MILLS

Life Member of the National Referees' Association

George Mills started refereeing in his native Yorkshire in 1947, before many of our members were born. After attaining his Class 1 in 1952 he moved to Slough, transferring to our own Society in 1955, becoming a committee member a year later. In 1962 he became Vice-Chairman until he was elected Secretary in 1964, a position he held for 10 years. He became Vice-Chairman again in 1974 and Chairman 2 years later for a 2 year spell. In 1978 he was made a Life Member of this Society, but he certainly didn't sit back for he became our first Recruitment Officer (Membership Secretary these days), and he continued as part of the Training Team, something with which he had been involved since his early days as Secretary.

In 1980 he was awarded the Meritorious Service Award of the Referees' Association, not only for his work with us, but also for the County. He was the County RA representative on the Berks and Bucks FA for 10 years, and the Berks and Bucks Representative on the Southern Division of the RA for 17 years.

The premier appointment of George's 21 years as an active referee was probably the Berks and Bucks Senior Cup Final in 1960, but his refereeing was cut short in 1968 by a serious illness. He was also for three years, Secretary and Match Secretary of the Reading Challenge Cup.

Perhaps George's finest moment was when he received a standing ovation at the 1977 national RA Conference, when he proposed the Reading resolution [in favour of 100% RA membership] with such eloquence that he swung the doubting delegates to a 4 to 1 acceptance.

George has become the first Reading RA member to be awarded the life membership of the National Referees' Association since

the late Charlie Kearse in 1955, and fewer can have deserved it more, for it can be seen that refereeing has truly been his life.

JOHN LAMB DEN

Life Member of the Reading Referees' Association

John Lambden told me he was very surprised to be made a Life Member of this Society as he thought it "a little early". Well, few people can have given such effective service to us and to refereeing wherever he has been involved.

Thanks to his Army service, a review of John's refereeing career sounds like a world-wide travelogue. He first qualified as a Class 3 in Austria in 1953. (By coincidence I started refereeing in Austria the year previously). He became a Class 2 in Scotland in 1956 and gained his Class 1 in 1958 in Hong Kong. He also became Hon. Secretary of the Army FA in the colony as well as the Appointments Secretary, and had the pleasure whilst there of lining to a touring FA XI which included Stanley Matthews. After a further spell in Scotland John went to Gibraltar in 1964 where he became Secretary of the Combined Services RA. From Gibraltar to Malta where again he held the position of Combined Services RA Secretary. Back to Scotland before moving to London in 1968 where he became a linesman on the Football Combination and referee on the Hellenic League.

His globe-trotting days were not over, however, for he was posted for a short spell of duty with the UN peace-keeping Force in Cyprus, where he probably had his most memorable match. This was the national cup final between the two party political clubs (Nationalist and Communist) with a capacity crowd of 36,000 to see a match which had never been played without trouble. However, despite the only goal being scored 3 minutes from time, everything went well, and the players gave John the unprecedented accolade of applauding him from the pitch.

John left the Army in 1971 and within a couple of years leg muscle trouble had forced him to quit active referee-ing. He became a committee member of this Society in 1972, Assistant Secretary in 1973 and Secretary in 1974, a position he held until 1980 when he resigned to concentrate on his other position of Training Officer. He became Vice-Chairman in 1981 and Chairman in 1984 for 3 years.

It is probably in training where he made his greatest contribution. He completely revised the initial training programme and introduced many innovations, including practical training and the 'Mentor' coaching scheme. He has also had two spells as County Training Officer.

Early or not, there are few who have deserved the honour of Life Member as much as John.

Dick Sawdon Smith

MEMBERSHIP

Our new Chairman has laid his ambitions on the line and things have started well. By the beginning of September we had 103 signed up members, 20 more than last year at the same time. Do your bit. Encourage every referee you know to join us. Tell them what they are missing!

OUR NEW CHAIRMAN & VICE-CHAIRMAN

At the beginning of the season I usually do a little pen-profile of our new officers. As our Chairman and Vice-Chairman have simply changed places, I thought I might get away with referring you back to last year's first issue! Then I remembered how many new members we have. . . .
[Older members may turn the page if they must]

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 [now four 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 come along.

Dick Wilkins

Dick was not brilliant as a footballer - he says so himself - but he does have the (doubtful) distinction of having his foot broken in a game in Dar-es-Salaam. That brought the change to refereeing. He took the whistle for a few reserve games, joined the local RA, became a 'probationer', then graduated to the first division of their league.

Home again in England it was back to square one. He was spotted refereeing a local youth game and persuaded by George Mills to take the exam which he passed. He joined the Reading RA and officiated on the Saturday leagues, serving as Players' Registration Secretary of the Reading Combination League for many years before becoming a Vice-President. He was made a Vice-President of the Reading Football League on its foundation. He has been an RA committee member since 1974, then Assistant Secretary before becoming Vice-Chairman in 1987 [and Chairman in 1990].

Dick has had numerous honours as a referee including senior linesman on the Reading Senior and Junior Cups, but the one he remembers most clearly is a Youth Cup Final when he had a narrow escape - even though he was right. The keeper brought down the forward but, as the ball was in the net, Dick awarded the (winning) goal. Surprisingly some 50% of the spectators were unhappy and showed it! Although no longer active in the middle, Dick continues to take a close interest in local football and, of course, in refereeing.

A NEW VICE-PRESIDENT FOR THE B & B FA

Long-serving member and Vice-President of the Reading RA, Ray Stroomer has been made a Vice-President of the Berks and Bucks FA in recognition of his important contribution to local

football and refereeing. Congratulations, Ray. A personal honour which reflects well on your Society.

THE LAW AMENDMENT SHEET

When did you do your first match? When did you receive your law amendment sheet from the Berks and Bucks?

New members must have been more than a little surprised by the sequence of events. Changes were made in June, came into force on 26 July, but reached us late in August (even though the document is dated July). Older members will know how many times the same problem has occurred and been taken up with the B & B, to no avail. We can guess the reason - it costs less in postage to include the sheet in the bumper bundle. That is parsimony gone mad. It shows how out of touch our governing body is. We active referees actually want to administer up-to-date law and instructions. How can we be expected to do our job correctly when we are denied the information? One day perhaps . . .

A MESSAGE FROM OUR NEW CHAIRMAN

[Members present at the August meeting heard our new Chairman outline his hopes and plans for the season and beyond, so much of what follows is familiar. It is well worth re-reading or, for those absent, reading for the first time. Ed]

Welcome to a New Era

Having recovered from the shock of being voted in as your Chairman for the new season, I am now coming to terms with the changes which lie ahead.

Over the last few years we have been losing members who have decided not to re-join the Reading RA for one reason or another. Some of the comments I have heard:

- 'No point in attending. The speakers say the same thing, year in, year out.'
- 'Every time you speak, you're made to feel silly by members who should know better. It puts you off opening your mouth.'
- 'The meetings aren't interesting.'
- 'The thinking is back in the 70s. We don't keep up with the times.'
- 'Too many cliques. New members aren't made welcome.'

If that's what people really are thinking, no wonder they stay away. So would I.

My objectives for the season are:

- * Break away from the shackles of the past
- * Raise the standard of the meetings to a far higher level
 - create a more relaxed, friendly and enjoyable atmosphere
 - stimulate comments from the floor
- * Continue the improvement of the social events
- * Increase our membership to 200, a new record I'm sure
- * **Bring the Reading RA into the 1990s**

First, we the committee members, have to get our house in order. We intend:

- to work much harder
- to have pride in every task we take on
- to build a good team spirit together

and most importantly

- to be much more honest with each other.

The work started three months ago, in June, with a (very) long, open and frank committee meeting held at the Secretary's house. Some very good projects and ideas were discussed:

- * Pre-season training to continue throughout the season at Palmer Park
- * 5-a-side football team (to play in the Reading Indoor League)
- * Designation of a 'Promotion Adviser' to point the way forward for those referees looking to progress through the leagues
- * Group discussions to be re-introduced to enable members to mix and to get to know one another
- * Quiz evenings (open to local clubs if they show interest)
- * Golf challenge against Reading FC

The opportunities for this society are endless: everything is possible if we all pull together. The committee and I are determined to make season 1991/2 a special one.

As Chairman for the year, I aim to put Reading RA in the forefront of local football, working closely with the Reading Football League, the Reading Sunday and Youth Leagues and other competitions, in order to improve the understanding between players, clubs and referees alike.

I would love to see all referees who officiate in the area join our Society so that we could then really speak with one voice, giving support, protection and advice whenever required to all who wear the black uniform.

I count on your help to make it all happen.

Graham Stockton

DID YOU SEE THIS?

Courageous or eccentric? What would you have done? Solutions to the editor please. (You perhaps ought to know that it was a friend of mine who gave me the cutting. The referee's brother.

TRANSFERS

I commented (unenthusiastically) on the first £1,000,000 transfer deal and marvelled when the £2,000,000 barrier was broken. What do you make of this list? (Sunday Times, 11 August 1991) It can't just be the falling value of the £1. And Cyrille Regis went from Southampton to Bournemouth for - nothing. A free transfer. It must make sense to somebody. Musn't it?

MONTHLY MEETING

August

The first meeting to be run by our new Chairman, Graham Stockton, and a good turn-up of about 70 members (including your editor i.e. not on holiday for once). Graham initiated the new lectern by giving members a statement of his objectives for the season (a slightly modified version of his full message printed above). His three prime objectives are to:

- continue and increase last year's activities
- help, protect and support referees
- raise membership to 200 by getting all our colleagues to join the RA.

And of course he wants members to enjoy their meetings and take a full part in them.

After members had shown their approval, business moved on to reports by the Secretary on the national RA conference and the Berks and Bucks AGM.

It was announced that:

- the referees' training courses had been moved to Westwood Social Club because of problems at the South Reading Community Centre and the evening had had to be changed to Tuesday.
- the September meeting would be a discussion with representatives of the local leagues: John Dell, Dave Jeanes, Norrie Hart and Ted Cambridge. A lively session was anticipated!
- arrangements had been made for the trip to the panto on Christmas Eve for members' children. Graham Stockton to be contacted as soon as possible.
- John Moore would be organizing the Christmas Draw
- the Dinner Dance would be held on **16 May next year** at the same venue as in 1991: Shire Hall, Berkshire Suite. It promised to be bigger and even better.
- Reading Sunday League will need referees for youth games (Sunday pm). Contact Paul Jenkins.

The first half concluded with the Chairman describing his attendance at the (national) RA Instructors' Training Course, which had proved an extremely demanding but enjoyable and rewarding experience. He goes back next year for the second instalment but is sure there will be immediate benefit to our training programme in Reading.

After half-time Stephen Green had the task of explaining the Law changes, or rather the additional decisions of the International Board under Law 12 - the law itself hasn't in fact been changed.

Handball is now included alongside the other "professional fouls" and players 'shall be sent off' if a goal or 'obvious goal-scoring opportunity' is denied.

Stephen gave several examples:

- a goal-keeper handling outside his area in order to deny
- a defender who catches the ball overhead on its way to goal
- a defender on the goal-line who saves a goal with hand or arm. (He will give away a penalty and be sent off. HOWEVER, a player who handles but fails to prevent the goal, will concede a penalty and be cautioned as he did not deny the goal-scoring opportunity.

NB If the goal-keeper has to be sent off and a penalty is awarded, he goes before the penalty is taken.

Goalkeepers. After the keeper has control he must not touch the ball a second time until it has been touched by an opponent, or a member of his own team outside the penalty area. 'Control' will be strictly interpreted - after a fingertip save which clearly does not give control, the keeper can pick up, **but patting down etc is out**. After taking possession the keeper has his 4 steps. Chest/foot control is OK; bouncing the ball is still OK too.

There were (predictably) a number of interesting questions and responses. Members were encouraged to draw the players together, especially goal-keepers, on their first outing or two to explain the changes. As ever, it was likely that players would start their season in either total ignorance or confusion.

THE BIGGEST RA?

With last year's membership of 166, the Reading RA was one of the bigger Societies. In fact, it is Sheffield and District RA that claims the prize. Last year their membership stood at 254 - their highest ever. The figure accounts for some 70% of the registered referees in the Sheffield area.

(with thanks to 'The Sheffield Referee' for the figures)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS
Reading RA AGM 16 May 1991

A great turn-out of some 80 members for a meeting that was to prove long and different. (There had been some concern about whether the venue would be available but all that had been sorted out). The President, Dick Sawdon Smith, took the chair, as is customary and the evening began with the presentation of the Fair Play and Linesmen's Awards. Bert Newman's widow, Sybil, made the presentations.

The Secretary apologised for the late circulation of agendas which Geoff Way, the Treasurer, explained more fully. He had only just received the audited accounts. Members were reminded that last year we agreed to dispense with 'official' (and paid) auditors in favour of a qualified 'unofficial' auditor. Ray Kerr, a colleague of one of our members, had done the job exceptionally thoroughly but found the time we allowed too short. The committee would examine the problem. In fact the accounts were found acceptable but, in view of various increases in costs, the Treasurer proposed a rise in subscription to £12-50, which was accepted after an amendment to raise the figure to £15 had been defeated.

Two of our long-serving members were then honoured. John Lambden, whose RA service spans some 44 years and who has been

Secretary, Chairman, Senior Training Officer as well as County Training Officer, was made a Life Member. David Keen, ex-Football League linesman and Assessor, who served many years as a member of the training team and also as Treasurer, was made a Vice President.

Unusually there were then three nominations for Chairman and two for Vice Chairman and after ballots, Graham Stockton and Dick Wilkins reversed their roles. After the other officers had been re-elected, there was a final ballot to replace the four committee members standing down and Andy Awbery, Neil Isham, Stewart Mills and Gary Webster were elected.

All the officers and committee members were thanked for their efforts during the year and new committee members were reminded that their first meeting would be on 20 June at the secretary's house.

A collection in aid of the first 'Special Olympics' - National Athletics Championships for mentally handicapped competitors to be held at Palmer Park - raised £50.

County RA AGM 17 June 1991

Almost a record for brevity - the business lasted some 20 minutes this year.

The various reports were accepted - the financial situation is 'reasonable' and during 1990/91 there were 111 more members than the previous season. As President, George Mills made the presentation to Michael Burrell of High Wycombe who refereed the County Senior Cup Final. The poor attendance of members at County RA meetings was again commented upon. All the officers were re-elected with the exception of John Lambden who had resigned from his position as County Training Officer, An election will now be held.

The latter (and more interesting) part of the meeting was the first of a series of annual lectures to be held on the occasion of the AGM. This innovation is designed to attract members to attend what would otherwise be a very short meeting of limited interest. It seemed to work. More than 40 attended and were treated to an excellent talk by Ken Walker, President of the Slough Society. The general theme of the lectures is football, not just refereeing and Ken fascinated his audience

with the depth of his research - from the early history of the game to the present day.

The evening concluded with a buffet and it was considered all round to have been a great success.

DID YOU KNOW?

FIFA planned two experiments for this season 'to brighten up the game'. Both were to be tried at the Under 17 World Championships and will have happened by now but I haven't seen the conclusions.

First, there was to be no offside between the 18 yard lines and goalkeepers were not to be allowed to handle back passes.

The second experiment was designed to deal with goalkeeper movement at a penalty - legitimize it! Well, not entirely. Only movement forward would be penalized. [Even that would be an increase in referee action! Ed]

HE SAID IT (The Doc - Tommy Docherty)

(About a candidate for a job) 'If you appoint that man you won't get a coach, you'll get a hearse'

NATIONAL RA CONFERENCE Torquay 8 June 1991

A nice ride down but not too promising round the streets of Torquay with Derek Reigate navigating Brian Palmer at the wheel of the leading car. We got there after a few unexpected twists and turns.

There is always some sort of reception on the Friday, but what you get does vary. Years of experience suggested a meal in town rather than the risk of hunger, and it proved a good choice.

Saturday morning could be faced from a position of strength and it was just as well. The Heavens had opened and, as the rain continued all day, we were grateful not to be starting a week's holiday.

Conference was held in the impressive English Riviera Centre and appropriately opened by the Mayor of Torbay. The Chairman, President Peter Willis, soon got through routine items to reach

the Annual Report, the most significant event this year being the move at long last into our own premises. The accounts too showed a healthy state of affairs, though we were reminded not to be complacent.

This year there was only one candidate for Life Membership, the highest honour of the Association. What a record! There was no possible doubt about Alan Robinson's qualifications and the award was greeted with acclaim.

The Long and Meritorious Service Awards were bound to be a bit of an anti-climax after that, but no-one present could fail to be impressed by the huge total of service the RA had received from this group of members.

This year special guests were thinner on the ground than usual because our new date had clashed with other functions. It did mean we got through the business quicker and listened to fewer speeches of thanks!

The two proposed changes of rule - to increase mileage allowances to RA officers and to clarify procedures for proposing Life Members - were carried with huge majorities. The first motion was to press the Football Association to give the RA a full member on their Council. It was pointed out that at present our Association of nearly 18,000 members has no direct membership whereas, for example, the Public Schools and the older Universities do. The majority of members in favour was the biggest I can ever remember: 12,504 to 70.

The final proposal was to start a discussion with the FA to get referees the right to appeal against a Commission's verdict. Much more controversial. The spirited debate showed little sympathy for the motion and underlined the difference of position of the player and referee at a hearing - one 'in the dock', the other, in effect, a witness. The motion was heavily defeated.

Saturday afternoon was devoted to two seminar discussions: Recruitment and Retention and Training. The Reading group split its forces and made positive interventions in both. While George was describing our practical training and mentioning the video (which has led to quite a few requests for copies), Brian Palmer was presenting a systematic model for initial and continuing training to replace a situation he variously described as 'patchy' and 'a shambles'.

Saturday evening is always relaxation time - dinner, dancing, drink and draw. As usual we enjoyed the meal and liquid refreshment but the Grand Draw proved a damp squib for Reading, again as usual. (We must sell even more tickets next year John!). The car went to a lucky lady in Northampton. The nearest prizes to us were consolation prize watches in Taplow and Chieveley.

As we left on Sunday (and the sun was shining) we reflected on an enjoyable weekend. Why not join us next year in Cardiff - there's room for plenty more.

ONE OF OUR FANS

Some years ago, Malcolm McDonald, one of our members who has now moved away, passed copies of the "Reading Referee" on to an interested friend, Frank Viner. Frank developed his interest in refereeing, continues to be an avid reader of the magazine and has attended our monthly meeting.

In a recent letter he says "I write as a lover of football to thank those involved and to inform your membership that they have a very healthy and considerate committee. . . . I am not a candidate for refereeing myself for I am 72! But I do understand what a lot referees give to the game." [Thanks Frank - you remain very welcome and will continue to receive the magazine. No editor could afford to lose such a fan! Ed]

FAIR PLAY AND LINESMAN'S AWARDS

We run these awards every season to the great pleasure of the clubs - especially the winning ones. **Please get your forms from Alan Turner and return them regularly.**

DEAR EDITOR

I refer to the Minutes of the April meeting and the item under Correspondence where it would appear a referee had not submitted a report relating to a player dismissed from a match.

This matter, to put it mildly, is frightening. The referee concerned should be traced and his explanation requested for the non-submission of the report. Maybe he is not a member of the RA and has no-one to turn to for help. If this is so, he should be encouraged to join a Society to obtain the benefits available. I just cannot believe he is already in the RA.

Whatever the situation, it is obvious the referee needs help without delay.

Any official who cautions or dismisses a player MUST send in the report within the prescribed period. By failing to submit the relevant details, the respect of the club and players is lost, and the guilty player will also feel he has got away with it.

Possibly as a referee with little experience of writing reports, you find difficulty in preparing these. May I suggest you prepare a rough draft of the document and discuss it with a more experienced member prior to forwarding it to the County FA. A copy MUST NOT be sent to the League or Competition concerned.

Once the report has been forwarded, unless you are requested to attend a Personal Hearing, your job is complete. How the County FA deal with the player(s) and club(s) involved is not your concern.

The important thing is that you have taken the correct action and been true to yourself as well as to your colleagues.

Jim Peskett

THE NEW "FOOTBALL REFEREE"

Plus ca change. Many years ago the "Football Referee" was in a magazine format with a variety of content etc. There was some pressure to 'modernize' and the tabloid-newspaper-style was the result. There was again some pressure to 'modernize' and a magazine format is the result! When the format changed before, it was remarkable how popular the previous format had been . . . I wonder what's going to be said this time . . . Do give it a chance.

(It's also gone up to 40p from 20p but Reading members still get it free)

'WHISTLE STOP' Phone: 0898 800 636

All magazine editors have been asked by national RA to give regular publicity to the new RA telephone information line.

'Whistle Stop' is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and is regularly up-dated with news and information about all aspects of refereeing. Several top officials have been heard

on the line during its first months of operation - Alan Robinson, Peter Willis, Ray Lewis, John Martin, Phil Don, Ken Ridden, Ron Challis. The service is for the benefit of all referees.

Calls cost 34p a minute, cheap rate; 45p at all other times.

A PUZZLE FROM YORK

Among the many magazines I receive from other Societies is "Extra Time" from York. [I like the new style Dave, whatever anyone else thinks. Ed] At their April meeting a question was posed about the start of play: if the captain winning the toss chooses to kick off, does the other captain get choice of ends? If you look again at Law 8, you will see that it only gives a choice to 'the team winning the toss'. No mention of choice for the loser.

What do you do? What should you do? (Solution below)

DID YOU KNOW?

Officially, retiring 10 yards for a free kick isn't enough most places. The FIFA metric equivalent for 10 yards is 9 metres 15 cm, which is more than an inch further. Of course, when the distance players actually go back is about 8 yards anywhere in the world, it probably doesn't matter that much . . .

THE SOLUTION TO THE PUZZLE

I bet, like me, you didn't know you had a problem. Although there was a lobby for what seems to be the literal interpretation of the Law, namely no choice for the loser, the 'FA Guide to the Laws' makes it clear that the captain who loses the toss can choose ends if his opponent opts for kick-off. That was a relief after many years of doing it!

THE BOTTOM LINE

'Football is a game of skill . . . We kick them a bit and they kick us a bit.'
(attributed to Graham Roberts)

POSTSCRIPT**P O S T S C R I P T****P O S T S C R I P T****Have you remembered**

- to get your new Chart and read it (or at the very least read last year's Chart and your Law Amendment Sheet?)
- to read your League and Competition rules?
- to tell people about the new training course?
- to volunteer to coach a new referee?
- to read your new Reading RA Handbook?
- to make a note of 16 May, date of the Dinner and Dance?
- that as a member of Reading RA you are surrounded by friends? Don't hesitate to ask for help if you need it.
- AND TO READ THE REST OF THIS MAGAZINE?

Hope you enjoyed it.