

READING REFEREE

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Editorial

The start of a new season and you always wonder how it will be different.

As I write this editorial, there is concern about the state of local grounds because of the prolonged intensely hot and dry weather. The first concern is whether we will be allowed to play the matches at all, but then, as Stuart Gentle pointed out at the August meeting, there is a question of safety - a rock-hard pitch needs to be examined whether the cause is frost or the sun. And for the referee there is more risk of injury and dehydration (rather than hypothermia)
(Of course, we may well have had floods by the time you read this!)

The Law amendments this season seem to an honest and reasonably promising attempt by the International Board to make the words fit the reality. And I guess we are all grateful to see the back of 'seeking to gain an advantage'. As ever, we shall have to see how it works out. I take the optimistic view. Given that the players generally don't know the Laws, I have always found it quite useful to quote a bit or quickly refer to a 'Law amendment this season'. Baffles them completely and by the time it's sunk in, I've gone anyway!

Concern about our own national organisation was increased rather than diminished by the annual conference (report page XX). After our failure to gain one, a seat on the FA Council should now become a priority for tough and resolute action - the time for pussy-footing is surely past. We await the report in the *Football Referee* and the NRA's proposed future tactics with bated breath.

Have a good season! Hope to see you at the monthly meetings: an interesting and varied programme is already in place (see page yy).

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AUGUST

Monthly Meeting

Nice to be back and to see old and new friends in numbers. Chairman Stephen Green gave everyone a special welcome to the first meeting of the new season. He reported that Ted Cambridge was convalescing after his recent quadruple heart by-pass operation and expected to 'back in business' in the near future. Our best wishes had been sent. Our relationship with and co-operation from the Sunday League had improved over the last season after the Chairman's harsh words last August, and all were thanked for the real progress made.. The programme for the season was largely in place with a good mix of speakers who should attract members to the meetings. Unfortunately, no-one had yet come forward to be secretary so we had a serious on-going problem. A renewed plea was made with the offer of help and training. Stewart Mills had passed his second year course and was now a Licensed Referee Instructor. He was warmly congratulated in absence. [Off on holiday yet again. Ed] Finally, the Chairman reported that Iain Williamson had received the most prestigious award at a summer International Soccer Tournament in the US - he was pronounced the star referee of 300+ and was in the middle for the top final. Full details revealed in his conversation with the editor pages AA)

Correspondence received included the season's disciplinary statistics from the County FA.: 1961 sendings-off (1525 in 1993/94)
8654 cautions (6279)

[What *are* they going to do with all the money from the fines? Ed]

Membership - so far 57 members had signed up for the new season. All present were urged to re-join if they had not done so - we are not insured until the sub has been paid.

The new training course will start on 19 September. As usual, it is hoped that everyone will give the course maximum publicity. Sessions for promotion candidates were scheduled for late August/early September..

At the County AGM, Brian Richards of the Chiltern society had been elected Secretary to replace Gerry Taylor after his many years in office and Bill Chamberlain, our County Training Officer, would take Gerry's place as Representative to the County FA.

Brian Palmer gave a brief oral report on the National RA Conference which he and our other members in attendance had found very disappointing. (More detailed report on pages xyz)

Under League Reports, Andy Awbery appealed for more officials for the Saturday Reading Football League. The pitch situation was serious owing to the prolonged dry

spell and routine renovation. A limited number of pitches were expected to be available at the start of the season. The Chairman reported the problems the County was having with officials for the first round of the County cups and invited anyone with a free date to let Ray Claridge know. The South East Counties League is going to use Hewlett Packard's ground in Bracknell.

Fitness training. Cliff Watkins had arranged for sessions to be held at the Recreation Centre, Theale Green School. Some 15 members are already attending but more are welcome and needed to keep the cost down to £2. Details from Cliff.

Stuart Gentle thanked referees who had officiated for the Berkshire Association of Young People and sought volunteers for the new season.

A letter had been received from the organiser of the Westwood 6-a-side Competition expressing gratitude to referees of the Reading RA.

Finally, on a less complimentary note, an allegation was reported that a member refereeing a cup final had not sent in disciplinary reports on a sending-off and two cautions. This would be investigated and, if found to be true, the RA would support severe punishment.

The Problem Spot

Andy Awbery related an incident brought to his notice when an inexperienced (6 months qualified) referee asked for help in writing his report.

The referee had cautioned a player after 30 minutes for a bad tackle and noted his number (3) as well as his name.. Before the end of the half he had to administer a caution to a second player and was given the same name, but the player was wearing a number 5 shirt.

Andy paused here to ask what the referee should have done. The two approaches offered were: accept the situation and point it out to the County FA when you send in the reports and let them sort it out if indeed there is a problem. Or try to sort it out with the help of the captain.

In fact the referee approached the number 3 who confessed he had given the wrong name and now (allegedly) gave the right one

Andy paused again. What do you do next?

And again two lines of suggestion: report it all to the County FA without further action or, send the number 3 off for committing a second cautionable offence (which some would call 'dissent', others 'ungentlemanly conduct').

The referee actually did the latter: he sent the player off and his decision was accepted by the players.

In the concluding discussion most experienced referees seemed to think they would simply have administered the caution to the second player, the number 5, and left it at that. However, the new referee was complimented on his correctness and courage in sending the player off having discovered his deceit..

The second part of the meeting was devoted to the **Law amendments** and this year John Moore gave the presentation.

John's overall impression was that the changes were subtle and designed to bring the terminology into the 90's. He went on to discuss the more relevant and important changes in Law order, allowing pauses for discussion.

Law 1 The rewording here and in Law 5 attempts to limit the referee's liability for injuries to players but you must still give the pitch a thorough examination. Markings are allowed 11 yards along the goal line to help us judge encroachment. (Enthusiastic groundsmen may put them on the touchline as well. Disregard).

Law 3 The substitute goalkeeper idea has gone. Just 'up to 3 subs' now. The competition rules must state how many can be named and the names *must* be given before the game. *Get them if they haven't been given and save yourself hassle.* In friendlies up to 5 may be used, by mutual consent and if the referee is informed.

Law 5 This rewording attempts to remove the referee's liability for injury to players but has yet to be tested in the courts. Take care as always in dealing with injured players and don't forget to use the trainer.

Law 7 The half time interval shall now not exceed 15 minutes - the actual length to be determined by competition rules.

Law 11 Useful rewordings to bring it into line with last season's practice.. Now 'gaining an advantage', not '*seeking to gain*'. Emphasis on 'active play'.

Law 12 Now re-written with *ten* penal offences. 'Intent' is out (except for 'deliberate' handball).. The new emphasis is on what actually happens, and the key words are 'careless', 'reckless' and 'disproportionate force'. Helpfully, it is now designated a foul if the player contacts his opponent before the ball. 'Intentionally obstructing' has become 'impeding progress'. Finally, we are reminded that a player tackling violently from behind *must* be sent off.

Law 14 A player cannot be offside at a penalty because all players must now be behind the ball (and a whole set of favourite quiz questions is lost to future generations!)

For the first time the 4th official is formally brought into the game as his role is now spelt out in the Laws.

Finally we are reminded that players *must* be sent off for using foul or abusive language.

Thanks no doubt to the clarity of his presentation and possibly the quality of the Law amendments themselves, John had few questions to answer and there was rather less controversy than on some previous August evenings!

Don't forget to buy your copy of the Laws this year even if it will be the first time since you qualified. . . .

John was warmly thanked by the Chairman and the bar continued to do a roaring trade on a very hot evening.

NATIONAL RA CONFERENCE

Hove, 17 June 1995

Last year I missed Conference for the first time in years (for family reasons); this year I did attend and wondered why.

As Conference was to be in Hove, the stalwarts - Life Member George Mills, Vice-Chairman Derek Reigate and yours truly - decided to go down just for the day. The first mistake. Up at 5 a.m. (George at 4) to arrive nicely in time at Hove Town Hall. The weather had been brilliant, but we were greeted my rain and mist (and it lasted all day). No wonder the Brits go abroad for their holidays we thought. We didn't know then that the weather was an omen

After the customary introduction and opening of Conference by the Lord Mayor of Hove, the first surprise - and, as it transpired, one of the most interesting events of the day - was his wish to stay to see what went on. President Peter Willis started by informing us of the fate of the proposal to give us a seat on the FA Council. It had been rejected, mainly on the grounds that the RA doesn't represent all referees in the country. We got only a third of the votes and needed two thirds. [Isn't this Catch 22? The FA opposes compulsory membership of the RA, and then, because not everyone belongs to the RA, our request for a seat on the FA Council is turned down. The President promises and urges continuing effortsEd]

Geoff White of Southport, who had proposed the 1993 motion requiring the RA to examine the election of Council members, challenged what he believed to be changes in the original motion in its implementation. The President did not accept his view.

One of the highlights for many is the presentation of Life Membership and Meritorious Service Awards. Ken Mulraney of Swindon received Life Membership for over 30 years of outstanding service and among the MSA recipients was ex-Football League and FIFA referee, Neil Midgeley, always an RA enthusiast.

This year the accounts raised no problems. A refund of £47,000 VAT is expected but there is still some ambiguity about possible tax liability. Our financial position is fairly stable but still relies heavily on the annual lottery.

Colin Downey of the FA spoke (as usual) on assaults. Numbers are almost the same as last season: 361 against 356 - and obviously *any* assault is too many. Most in fact were 'technical' e.g. the hand placed on an arm, a bit of a jostle leading to no injury, but a small minority were serious. Assaults are always of interest to the media, so care is necessary to get balance. The wrong publicity damages recruitment. Need to keep things in proportion - there are some 2,000,000 matches in the season. Useful topics for society discussion might be: How should we deal with inflammatory situations? Do we sometimes provoke an assault by what we do?

Subscriptions to National RA. Good news, bad news. In future we will get nearly a season's notice of change. The bad news is that the sub is to go up by 50p to £5.00.

Unbelievably, the bulk of the time for debate was spent in agreeing changes to the wording of some of our existing rules e.g. from *no later than* to *on or before*. It was difficult to take it seriously (and nobody did I suspect). [I had another difficulty: I was not even sure of the difference between the two forms of words. Ed].

The final change of rule related to voting in Branches, where in future actual votes will have to be recorded and submitted. Potentially this will lead to greater representative democracy in avoiding the possibility of a block vote.

For us the best part of Conference this year was the contribution by Ken Ridden. Ken is always well informed, articulate and interesting. His talk was largely to bring us up to date on recent events.

The FA had paid out £36,000 in **incentive money for recruitment** in 1994/95.

The Law changes for 1995/96. Ken thought they were surprisingly few, and, although there seemed to be major changes of wording, he believed the application on the field had not really changed. Ken then went through the changes in some detail. [As we have had our own commentary and discussion at the August meeting (reported on page abc), just a couple of points he stressed: there is a mistake in the Law amendment sheet, so do buy a copy of this year's book on the Laws. Secondly, remember that last season's mandatory instructions still apply.

The Promotion Scheme for Referees. The FA, like referees, would love to see quicker promotion through supply and contributory leagues. A high-powered FA working group has been looking to rationalise the present anomalies. Some areas have too many supply leagues; one supply league had three former premier league referees. There were five supply leagues in one CFA that needed only one. We only need enough to give referees a reasonable number of matches.

Proposed changes include:

- separate referees' and linesman's lists
- every eligible Class 1 to be nominated on list provided by CFA
- selection meetings to be held and run by the FA
1 March will be the uniform date for promotion
- there will have to be age limits:

contributory - referees and linesmen 45 max
Supply - referees 42
 linesmen 45
- contributory and Supply league referees to do at least five games in the highest division and at least 10 in their promotion year
- contributory League meetings to have an FA representative present to see fair play. If eligible by age, a referee dropped can back in a later season.
- supply leagues now have to be approved by FA
- Youth Leagues like the South East Counties will now be included
- to avoid confusion and duplication, a fitness test from a higher league will be accepted lower down
- in future 9 contributory leagues
- All the reforms are designed for the young referees of the future.

Ken got a well-deserved ovation. The FA is taking a clear, firm and very necessary initiative at last. [I am particularly pleased because some years ago when I suggested to Ken that the FA should take more initiatives, should in particular require CFAs to include practical training for referees, he protested that the FA 'couldn't tell the CFAs what to do'. The FA didn't 'wish to be dictatorial'Ed]

Conference closed before the 5 o'clock deadline with a warm invitation to Stoke-on-Trent next year.

We didn't really need to know *where* the next conference is to be held,, we needed to know *why*? I frequently bemoan the lack of younger colleagues but this year I was delighted they were so few. What confidence could they have in an association that spends most of its debating time on petty and largely unnecessary changes of wording of rules? We can't see the wood for the twiglets. Radical surgery and transfusion of new blood may well be the only hope.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

18 May 1995

At 7-45 attendance was looking pretty thin but then the room filled nicely. Derek Reigate, as Vice-Chairman, introduced the President, Brian Palmer who took the chair, promising, as last year, a speedy but not indecently quick meeting.

The President welcomed members, but had a special word for Sybil Newma, who was again to present the Bert Newman Fair Play awards in memory of her late husband, and then for those who had come to receive the awards. The presentations were made and concluded with Sybil herself receiving a bouquet from the President.

The business started with last year's minutes and the Secretary's report for the season. Pat Monaghan was complimented on both its contents and style and the President spoke in some detail of Pat's valued contribution over the last three years and explained that his reason for not standing for re-election had nothing to do with disaffection - increasing demands of his business activities. The Society's worry had to be the lack of nominations for a successor.

The next item proved contentious - proposed changes of rule. There were several bits of tidying up, including the rationalisation of our name to reflect usage - the Reading Referees' Association. The contention was about a proposal which would have stopped the practice of sending out 'spare' copies of the *Football Referee*. Brian Wratten, on behalf of the Committee, pointed out that we could never guarantee to get a copy to every member. We had to guesstimate in advance how many members we would have on the arrival of each month's supply and did not wish to over-order because of the cost. Also, some members took more than one copy to help a friend but didn't inform us; some non-members took a copy. Since we were not conforming and could not conform to rule, the Committee was proposing the change, but intended to send copies of the *Football Referee* to those who apologised for absence. A spirited and well argued debate ensued, stimulated by the forceful opposition to the change of Life Member George Mills. The proposal was overwhelmingly defeated. Democracy in practice.

The Treasurer presented his report and, no doubt because the accounts were so immaculately laid out and explained, there were no questions, for the first time in anyone's memory. Brian Wratten was warmly thanked and congratulated on all his work in his first year as Treasurer and presentation of the accounts. He was congratulated again when he proposed no increase in subscription.

As a result of resignations and the elections, there were a number of changes of officer and committee members. A vacancy remained for Secretary and *pro tem* the Chairman and Treasurer would share responsibility for any administration during the close season. Jim Fleming who had been acting as Assistant Secretary was confirmed in that position, Brian Weatten re-confirmed as Treasurer; Gary Webster elected Membership Officer. New Committee members elected were Alison Chapman (another first for Alison - the first time a woman has been elected to the Committee in the history of the Society), Malcolm Garstang and Mark Mason. Andy Awbery, who had stepped down from being Membership Secretary was also elected to the Committee..

The official business of the meeting concluded with the presentation by Vice-Chairman Derek Reigate of the Society's awards to two outstanding members of the year. Andy Awbery was the winner of the Major Sainsbury Award for his outstanding contribution as an active referee and in his many other roles; Malcolm Garstang received the Fred Porton Award as the most promising Class 3 referee in his first or second season..

The President was congratulated on his conduct of the meeting which was then closed. The evening concluded with refreshments, both solid and liquid and a reminder about the first meeting of the new season.

AN AMERICAN DREAM COMES TRUE

[The Editor interviews Iain Williamson]

BP Iain, I understand from a usually reliable source that you won the star award on your recent trip to the States. Is it true?

IW Yes.

BP The modest, as well as strong and silent type! Our readers will expect more Iain. What was the competition?

IW It's an annual competition that's been going on for 11 years and this was my fourth. It's a youth tournament with over 700 teams this year coming from all over the world.. It's said to be one of the biggest: nearly 2000 games in six days.

Bp So you weren't the only referee?

IW Not quite. There were 365 male and female officials, including 65 from the UK, of all levels - from fairly inexperienced up to 6 on the FIFA list. I did twenty two games in the week, not all 90 minutes. It was a youth competition, ages 12 to 19, with both boys' and girls' teams.

BP Where did all this happen?

IW Everything took place at the National Sports' Center in Blaine, Minnesota. 43 full-sized pitches and a stadium, as well as the accommodation for 400 where we stayed.

BP Before we come to the award, what about the actual job of being in the middle or on the line over there? Were you officiating to one of the American versions of the Laws?

IW No, the competition was under FIFA Laws including the 1995/96 amendments, so for me it was good practice. In the middle, communication was a major factor with a lot of foreign teams there. You use a lot of body language and they do understand the red and yellow cards!

BP What about lining?

IW We had to line as well as have linesmen. Instructions to linesmen had to be very basic even if they were Americans who spoke English - they're a long way behind us. (That's the average - there were some national referees of a high standard). All they are expected to do is ball in and out of play and offsides.. Everything else is the referee's.

BP So you treated them like club linesman?

IW Yes. With Europeans officials the standard was a lot higher. But briefing the linesmen was sign language again.

BP What about your own lining?

IW There were a lot of different games. I would give the referee what he particularly wanted. So with an American referee I wouldn't do the sort of game I would do here. I might undermine his authority - he likes to run the show.

BP What about the actual play and the problems for the officials?

IW Obviously it depended on the teams. With an English team against an American team you had two different types of game. The English are hard and strong, the Americans like to slow it down, play it to feet, and are very acrobatic - if there's contact they tumble over. You had to have your wits about you. If I had two European sides it normally helped me. It took the best part of 10 minutes in each game to tune in.

BP Wasn't there also a difference between the lads and the girls?

IW The girls are certainly different when they go out - they put nail varnish and make-up on, their hair's nicely done

BP I fell for that one. But what about the football?

IW I felt the standard was very high. A lot have English coaches and they were playing some good football. Again you have to adapt. There was more clumsiness than foul play.

BP Now to the award - 'best out-of-state referee' and the top championship final. How did you come to be chosen?

IW They have an international panel of assessors. I was assessed six times. They pick out the promising officials on the early games and concentrate on them. On the basis of the assessments they allocate officials for the final and play-offs, with the Under 19 boys' final as the top championship game.

BP Had you had any finals in previous years?

IW Yes. I've managed to do better each year, starting with a line on the Under 19 final in 1992.

BP Now what about the final itself? Anything more to say about the seven yellow cards, the one red and the dodgy penalty you mentioned earlier?

IW Well, it all started on the Friday night, like our own eve of (FA Cup) Final rally, with an awards' ceremony, presentation of a plaque, gold medal and a brass whistle in a case, and photographs. I still went to bed early, although the kick-off wasn't till 3 o'clock on the Saturday.

BP OK. The final.

IW Well, everyone seemed to think it went very well. It was on cable TV and I was interviewed for the equivalent of News at Ten. About 2000 spectators in the

stadium - not as many as expected because it was pouring with rain after all the incredible heat of the week. And I'd drunk gallons of water the night before to avoid dehydration! The teams were from the US and from Canada (a bit to everyone's surprise). We started with processions just like at a real international, and then we got on with the game. A fast game, fit physical players and no love lost between them. Very close, 2-0 in the end to the Americans. Then more presentations. I was interviewed with video playback after the game about the penalty decision, and I admitted I was wrong. Fortunately it didn't affect the result. I'd seen the incident as in the penalty area and my linesman agreed. It was marginal and down to the angles. But the cards were all justified and possibly a few more!

BP Have you got a video of the game yourself?

IW Not yet, but I will be getting a complimentary copy.
Can I finish with a tribute?

BP Why not?

IW It's to Kevin Jones of Merthyr RA. He's acted as my counsellor and friend each year and he's taught me so much that really helped me to do so well. Thanks Kevin.

BP Thanks to you too Iain for revealing all. And again congratulations from all of us on an outstanding achievement.

[Iain will be delighted to give more details to anyone interested. He is unlikely to be going to Blaine himself in 1996 but hopes others will go and enjoy themselves as he has done. It's good experience as well. Ed]