

The Reading Referee





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EDITORIAL

Communication

It is often said, perhaps even too generously, that fifty per cent of the problems in industry are caused by poor or the lack of communication. There are many who would contest that the same could be said of football and at our first meeting of the season, this was the topic we tackled. The meeting was led by Will Finnie from Luton, a name that you will not be familiar with but that will change if his refereeing is as good as his workshop. There is every indication that this is the case for Will may only be 18 years old but he is already a Level 4 referee after three successive promotions in two seasons.

No communication of changes to the Offside Law

As we left the meeting on communication, a member said to me, 'What's all this about a change to the offside law?' For many years I led a campaign for referees to be informed of any changes to the laws before the season started. The FA finally seemed to see the light when the change to the steps a goalkeeper could take, was a complete fiasco with referees only knowing what they read in the newspapers and interpreting it differently. But now we are back finding out changes by chance. It's fortunate that the changes are in the wording rather than the substance but it's no excuse for not informing every referee before the season gets under way.

A dream for young referees

Imagine you are a young referee aspiring to get to greater heights in the refereeing world and you get an invitation to attend a training day led by the top referees in the country, Premier League and FIFA referees. People like Howard Webb, Martin Atkinson, Kevin Friend, and John Moss. Sessions conducted by the PGMO Training and Development Manager Ray Olivier and their Sports Scientist, Simon Brevik. Juliette Forgham and Stephen Saunders did just that and Juliette tells us about her day in our Page Two article this month.

RAFA YOUTH COUNCIL EVENT

Juliette Forgham tells us about her experiences with the games top people on page 2

MONTHLY MEETINGS

How, why and when do we communicate? Review of Will Finnie's workshop on page 3, and on page 4, speakers still to come.

OFFSIDE LAW CHANGES

A view of this season's changes to the offside interpretations – page 5

OUR ANNUAL AWARDS

Who received which of the three awards to members for last season is on pages 6 & 7

WERE YOU FIT TO START THE SEASON

Some of those who took part in our pre-season training on page 8. Are you amongst them?

Dick Sawdon Smith

Last year the RA – FA partnership established the RAFA Youth Council, to give young referees a voice and to provide them with extra support and encouragement. This year it was arranged for its members to attend at a very minimal cost, a practical training session led by Select Group and FIFA referees on the afternoon before the National RA Conference in July.

Here, one of our members, Juliette Forgham, who attended the event, tells us how her day went.

RAFA YOUTH COUNCIL EVENT @ NATIONAL CONFERENCE

On Friday 4th July, Stephen Saunders and I travelled up to Hinckley United FC to partake in a practical training exercise run by the PGMU guys. After an introduction from RA President, Chairman of the FA referees committee and former FIFA referee, David Elleray, we divided into groups and started the training exercise.

My first session was run by Michael Olivier and Premier League assistant referee Adam Watts. It involved an assistant referee offside judgement exercise where we had to judge offside when the ball was kicked and two players ran past each other, which were reviewed on a screen afterwards. Out of the two decisions I had to make I got one correct and one incorrect. People tended to get the decision wrong when they called play offside when it wasn't.

In the second session, we took turns to be the referee and assistant referee to officiate a small sided situation. After each turn in groups we were debriefed by either Howard Webb or Kevin Friend, who pointed out positive and negative pointers. Harry Lennard, a Premier League assistant referee was also on hand to give guidance.

For the penultimate session we were with Simon Brevik, the PGMU Sport Scientist and participated in some FIFA style fitness tests. The first speed test involved sprinting, side stepping and sprinting through lasered gates. This is the FIFA assistant referee fitness test that all assistants need to pass to go to the 2014 World Cup in Brazil. Assistants need to complete the run in less than 9.6 seconds, so it was good to see where we were versus the top people in the UK and the World. The second half of the fitness session involved a yo-yo type fitness test for the assistant referees. It involved running to a cone and back again and then resting, then side-stepping to a cone and back, resting again and completing the cycle. FIFA assistant referees need to reach level 14.

The last session, ran by David Elleray, Jon Moss and Martin Atkinson, involved judging if decisions were inside or outside of the penalty area, starting with the referee and assistant referee on the half way line. We had to decide firstly where the ball was dropped, indicating a foul and also whose decision it was to indicate – the referees or assistant referees or both,

The afternoon was a wonderful experience and was a great insight into training that top referees and assistant referees do regularly to improve their fitness and performance. In the evening there was a Youth Council dinner, followed by a question and answer session with several senior referees, including Howard Webb. It was a great RAFA Youth Council day and I cannot wait for next year. And the next day was conference, so early nights all round.

Juliette Forgham

MONTHLY MEETINGS

What our speakers have said,

August

Will Finnie – Communicating with Players

For our first meeting of the current season, we were pleased to welcome Will Finnie from Luton. Although he is only 18 Will is already a level 4 referee and an FA referee tutor having qualified in February 2009. He referees on the Spartan South Midlands Premier Division and is an assistant referee on the Contributory Leagues. He refereed the under 14 Cup Final at the Dallas Cup in the USA this summer on live US television. It is almost certain that it will not be his last appearance before the cameras. Will is also Head of projects on the RDFA Youth Council.

However, Will was not with us to talk about any of that but to run a workshop on the subject of communicating with players. He started by posing a series of questions; what are your feelings when you are communicating with players, how are you feeling, how is the player feeling? When do you communicate with players? How regularly? How do we communicate, what are our tools? He then split the meeting into three groups each to take some of the questions. Incidentally, it was pleasing to see a good number of young referees in attendance, some of whom left immediately after the session rather than waiting until the end of the meeting, which we are happy for them to do.

The groups then reported back on their deliberations. The first group felt we communicated when something occurred, when we needed to, considering how it will affect our control and we need to control our own feelings. The way we present ourselves must mask our feelings. With players, Will pointed out, their actions often take over from their feelings. Your preparation can help, the way you come across, turn up badly dressed for instance and you already create a barrier. If you have assistants and warm up well before the match, it will give the impression of a confident team. Don't forget that the way you hold yourself, your body language will communicate throughout the match. The way you communicated, another group felt depended on the temperature of the match and it was agreed that you should restrict your whistle to when you needed to draw attention, in other words too much whistle would mean that its effect would be lost.

There was some discussion whether the same is true about talking to players, should you only talk when you need to. The warning was not to get drawn into discussion defending your decisions and when you talk to players know where it is going. What about praising players? Will asked. He sometimes did it to Augment a decision, for example, shout 'great tackle' when opposing players might be calling for a foul. He also asked if anyone warned players who look likely to commit a foul. Could this be counter-productive he queried, could you be accused of coaching the player.

Is there a particular type of player you struggle to communicate with, perhaps because of his behaviour or his personality? For most this was the player who moaned throughout the game but nothing quite bad enough to be considered dissent. Will's suggestion was to give some thought to how you might get them on your side or perhaps involve the captain. Seek first to understand and then to be understood. The group that was asked to consider how do you communicate came up with the following list. Body language, whistle, voice, cards, delegate to captain, positioning selling the decision, pre-match image, presentation. What is the most important? Will asked. What it is that has the most

effect? Research shows he said, that 7% only of what you say, what he called 'words' is remembered. How you say it, what he referred to as 'music' was 54% effective while 'dance' that is body language accounted for 39% of effect.

Wills summed up his excellent evening by saying, remember you are always communicating, understand the individuals, their thoughts, their personalities. Be yourself, be confident, know who you struggle with, remember, words, music and dance.

YOUTH SECTION (prior to main meeting)

A reminder for our younger members that the Youth Section will meet each month at 7.15pm, before the main meeting. They will then have the option of leaving at 7.45pm or staying for the main meeting. Don't forget of course that we always have our speaker on first at our meetings. We then have another break which gives another opportunity to leave before the more formal part of the meeting with its various reports.

SPEAKERS YET TO COME

All our meetings are held at the Home Guard Social Club, Pitts Lane Earley. Easy to find (put RG6 1BS in your satnav) and plenty of parking, comfortable surroundings. We meet on the third Thursday of the month from August to May starting at 7.45 pm except junior members (see above) might like to get there earlier.

September

Our speaker for September is a highly experienced FA Level 4 Tutor and Level 4 Coach, George McCaffney, who is also a Contributory League assessor. George has been heavily involved in tutoring and assessing for many years as well being the FA Support Officer for the assessing scheme and contributory and feeder league levels. He also co-ordinates referees for Premier League youth tournaments and the FA Dallas Cup Development Group.

November

We have as yet no details about our November speaker, Lucy May, but Stephen Saunders tells us she is going to be worth listen to. More details when we have them.

January

Our first guest speaker of the New Year will be Ian Blanchard, Head of National Referee Development, in other words the top man at the FA for the likes of us. Ian also happens to be highly experienced in both refereeing, formerly on the Premier League, and in tutoring so a must evening if you are keen about your refereeing.

OUR THANKS ARE DUE

Can we say a warm word of appreciation to John Beaumont who despite moving to West Wales has continued to produce this magazine for the Society. Now that Rob Maidment has taken over the website and the task of producing the e-version of the magazine he has also relieved John of his task of the paper version. Many thanks John for all your help.



The charity Prostate Cancer UK are trying to draw the awareness of male football followers, players, fans and referees to prostate cancer the biggest cause of death from cancer amongst men. They have been parading this billboard around football grounds. If you would like any more information they can be contacted at info@prostatecanceruk.

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW THE OFFSIDE LAW? Are you aware of this season's changes for instance?

Some years ago I and others campaigned for any changes to the Laws of the Game to be promulgated to referees before the season instead as was the practice, to be sent out after the season had started. The debacle that followed the changes in the four step rule for goalkeepers tended to focus minds and for some years we got our wish. The situation now however seems to be worse with no information at all being sent out this year about the changes to the offside law. I appreciate that referees on the Reading (Saturday) League have been informed at their meeting but that was because I saw the presentation at the national conference and Stephen Green managed to get a copy of that presentation to show them.

So what are these changes? First of all it clarifies what the law means by '*interfering with an opponent*'. The interpretation has been in two parts. Firstly, '*by clearly obstructing the opponent's line of vision*'. That of course is normally the goalkeeper's vision and that remains unchanged. However the second part, '*making a gesture or movement, which in the opinion of the referee, deceives or distracts the opponent*', has been deleted and replaced with '*challenging an opponent for the ball.*' No longer do we have to try and get inside the head of the defender to decide whether he has been distracted or deceived, if the attacker comes from an offside position and challenges for the ball he is penalized for offside. Simple to understand and apply I think everyone will agree.

Deflected or played, that is the question

The other change has caused some discussion amongst referees. We are all now familiar with the situation where a player is penalized for '*gaining an advantage*' from being in an offside position when the ball rebounds to him from a goalpost, crossbar or an opponent. To the word rebounds has been added '*or is deflected to him*'. There is also another line which says, '*that rebounds, is deflected or is played to him from a deliberate save by an opponent.*' To clarify this it adds, '*A player in an offside position receiving the ball from an opponent, who deliberately plays the ball (except from a deliberate save) is not considered to have gained an advantage*'. So now if the ball comes off a defender, we have to decide whether he has deliberately played the ball or whether it was deflected, and if he has played it, was it in the process of making a save. Sounds a little convoluted but surely this is a decision we have always had to make so it is no real change.

Dick Sawdon Smith

OUR ANNUAL SOCIETY AWARDS

The Major Sainsbury Award For an outstanding contribution to local football

The Major Sainsbury Award is our highest honour and is awarded annually to someone who has made a significant contribution to Reading Referees' Association. This can be through the selfless effort put in by an individual towards the running of the association. It can also be for the individual's refereeing performance and the reflection this has had on the association. Of course, it can also be for a combination of the two.

This season's recipient is someone who stepped into some very difficult shoes to fill when Brian Wratten ended his long stint as treasurer. Following on from Brian was some act to follow, however, this person was prepared to take on the challenge. Not only that, he also took on the role of Membership secretary when John Beaumont moved away to North Wales. Both are important and pretty onerous roles but he gets on with them quietly. At the same time he has progressed from becoming a well-respected senior Level 5 referee on the Reading Football League to assisting on the Hellenic League.

It is with great pleasure that The Major Sainsbury Award for this season goes to Jamie Barnett.



Jamie receiving the major Sainsbury Award from Ken Clark

Fred Porton Award For the most promising Level 7 Referee in his/her first 2 seasons

Fred Porton was a great supporter of new and up and coming referees and it was for this reason that this award was created in his memory. Rarely are new referees the finished article and this award is not about outstanding performance. It is about promise. Someone who shows the ability to progress. Attitude plays as important a part as ability. Attitude both on the field and off the field. It is no coincidence that those who rise to the top display an excellent attitude at all times.

This year's recipient qualified as a referee in 2011 having played the game to a good standard, mainly with Mortimer in the Senior Division of the Reading Football League. His knowledge and understanding of the game, coupled with tremendous enthusiasm, marked him out right from the start as someone who could do well as a referee. Always keen to learn, this potential and attitude have seen him recognised by clubs as a referee who understands what's going on under the surface of a game. His performances have

earned excellent marks and this culminated in an appointment as an Assistant Referee on one of the senior finals played at the Madejski Stadium in only his second season. Quite an achievement.

It is with great pleasure that the Fred Porton Award for Season 2012-2013 goes to Alastair Higgs.



Alastair receiving the Fred Porton Award from Ken Clark

The Richard Fisher Award

For outstanding attitude shown by a referee under the age of 21

This award was inaugurated in 2005 in memory of Dave Fisher's son, Richard, who was so tragically killed whilst working in Turkey in 2004. Richard was an extremely promising young referee with an outstanding attitude.

This award isn't about refereeing ability. It is about attitude. Since the inauguration of this award we have been lucky to see so many up and coming young referees in Reading. Our young referees have a lot to live up to.

This year's recipient qualified in 2009 at the age of 14. Since the age of 16 he has officiated regularly on the Reading Football League, mainly as an Assistant Referee and as part of a well-known double act. This season he has also begun to referee men's football, which, as we all know is no easy task for a 17-year-old. He is well known for his love of the post-match hospitality at senior games and, on a serious note, has become a highly dependable Assistant who any referee is happy to have as part of his team. He quietly gets on with the job and has matured in a young man who I feel sure will live up to this award.

We are pleased to announce that The Richard Fisher Award for the 2012-2013 season is awarded to Sam Baldock.



Sam Baldock receiving the Award from Dave Fisher (Richard's father)

WERE YOU FIT TO START THE SEASON?



This is a photograph taken at one of the pre-season keep fit sessions organised by Gary Connolly at Laurel Park in Lower Earley. It provided an excellent opportunity for members to be fit and ready when the season started. Gary promised that the session would be applicable for all levels and ages and this was certainly fulfilled. If you look closely you may spot a couple of members who are over eighty (and others who look it). The sessions were also so designed that you could go away and replicate them even if you were training on your own. Our grateful thanks are due to Gary for his enthusiasm (and understanding) in running these sessions for the Society.

WANT TO GET THE LOW DOWN FROM THE TOP ON FOUL RECOGNITION?

We have a copy of the DVD produced by the PGMCO to show Premier League Managers (and any others) what turns fouls into cautionable or sending off offences plus a little test at the end. If you would like to borrow it to brush up your own foul recognition, then contact Dick Sawdon Smith (sawdonsmith@hotmail.com) or at any monthly meeting.

DON'T FORGET OUR FAIR PLAY AND CLUB ASSISTANT AWARDS



Out photograph shows Damian Scurr, Manager and Secretary of Frilsham and Yattendon Football Club who were winners last season of our Fair Play Award, with Oliver Whatley also of Frilsham and Yattendon who was runner-up in our Club Assistant Referees Award. Damian was so pleased that his club won this award that he asked for a copy of this photograph to proudly display their achievement on their club website.