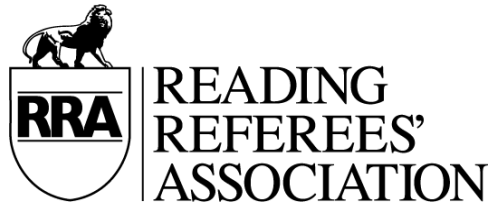


The Reading Referee





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READING
REFEREES'
ASSOCIATION

The Reading Referee

The Magazine of the Reading Referees' Association February/March 2014 Vol 56 No 4

EDITORIAL

Another view of the game

One of the accidental benefits of officiating midweek for Reading FC's Academy at their training ground, is that occasionally I bump into the football club's manager at the time and have been able to inveigle them into becoming guest speaker at one of our monthly meetings.

Members will remember the entertaining evening we had with Brian McDermott when he held the position and now we have had the pleasure of an evening with Brian's successor, Nigel Adkins. To be honest, neither took much persuading and both provided an honest view of their role but in our review of the latest meeting on page 4 you might find one or two surprises.

Another view of the World Cup in Qatar

Isn't the internet wonderful? One of our former members now living in North Wales, John Yorke, has found us on our website and sent in an unorthodox view of the plan to stage the World Cup in Qatar. Not that John is unused to controversy. He was one of the protagonist when we took Berks and Bucks FA to task over their out of touch restriction on referees promotion. John went as far as calling for a strike by members. Find John's personal experience on football in Qatar in our page 2 article.

Another number for RA supplies

Some little while ago I was asked by the RA for some ideas on how to improve the sales of the RA Shop. As a practicing marketeer, I made several suggestions. But it would now appear that they have decided to give up the running of the business and pass it over to another retail company. This may be a wise move for retailing in today's digital market needs professional staff. Details on page 7

Dick Sawdon Smith

SUMMER

REFEREEING IN QATAR

Hear what someone who's done it has to say in our Page 2 article

IMPROVE YOUR PERFORMANCE

Tips from the FA's National Game Referee Manager on page 3

WHAT MAKES A GOOD REFEREE?

Reading Manager Nigel Adkins gives his opinion on Page 4

SIXTY YEARS OF REFEREEING

So what's changed? A review of Dick's experiences on Page 5

WHY HAS THE RA GIVEN UP ITS SHOP

See the new arrangements on Page 7

NATIONAL CONFERENCE AND YOUNG REFEREES EVENT .

Pages 7 and 8 give details

QATAR 2022

John Yorke is one of our former members who has experience in refereeing in Qatar and wonders what all the fuss is about holding the World Cup there in 2022.

We have heard and continue to hear, bleating about the decision to award the World Cup to Qatar. Can I be allowed to offer some simplistic views on the matter based on some experience – something many dissenters do not have.

Between 1979 and 1983, I had the pleasure of working in Qatar as an engineer. My Class 1 referee qualification and voluntary approach was gladly welcomed by the National FA, especially as I was the only English referee operating then in the whole of the gulf to my knowledge. As all club and international games were televised, along with an Arab equivalent of Match of the Day, the kudos for this small state was massive – let's remember English referees are the best.

During those four years I refereed from September to May admittedly. Kick offs were usually around 4 pm with temperatures up to 40 degrees, and with high humidity. Club games were fierce, the international games even more so.

So what you may ask, but all I am trying to get over is that I was a non-professional referee, my fitness was up to standard but not way above, yet I managed to perform very well with minimum health risk - a salt drink before the game was all that I needed.

Why can our highly tuned professional players and officials not deal with the Qatari weather conditions – did we not hear the same furore about Mexico and its altitude many years ago and what of the Brazil humidity that there will be a some centres at this year's tournament.

My stay was many years ago, when massive amount of money was already being pumped into football. The new found wealth of natural gas has funded a vast footballing set-up and my past experience of it, says the country will deliver all its promises.

Date changed to suit the masses? So be it. Why was Berks & Bucks FA not so conducive to our mass criticism many years ago over their lone stand on promotion based on years of service rather than on ability? Younger referees need to read the excellent Reading RA history on the web-site for background, which is too complicated to précis. Why were we so obstructed in our endeavours, whilst next door in Oxfordshire no such restrictions existed? Oh well, hey-ho.

Sorry, here I go again on what got me in hot water all these years ago. My regards to all old stagers of my era and best wishes to all those others who have chosen the best game to participate in.

John Yorke

MONTHLY MEETINGS

What our speakers have said.

January – Ian Blanchard – Improving your performance

We were pleased to welcome back Ian Blanchard, The FA's Senior National Game Referees Manager. Ian is responsible for refereeing in the type of football that most of are engaged in, what is often referred to as the 'grass roots'. Ian has many years' experience as a referee including the Premier League before taking up his present position and still referees in his local football. He was for many years he was an instructor on the national referee instructors (now tutors) courses. We were treated to a new presentation that he had put together entitled 'Improving your performance'.

The first thing you have to accept, Ian said, is that you are never the finished product. You must strive to be the best that you can be, always learning from the experiences that football offers you. However your long term ambition must be to improve. So how can we improve our refereeing? First we must look at our key skills, our techniques and attitudes relating to improvement.

Do you want to be one of those who just turns up, does the job, takes the money and then goes home satisfied? Do you have the right mind-set to develop your self-belief? When it comes to techniques we must always be learning, analysing, and gaining feedback that is positive and honest. Self-confidence will give your decisions credibility but be careful of your acknowledgments, treat players like adults not young children. Your in-field performance will depend on your body language, your decision making and your understanding of the game.

Don't forget that your body language includes the first impressions that you give. It is a vital tool to help you control, communicate and show your authority. Research has shown that when we communicate, 7% is verbal, what we say, 38% our tone, how we say it but 55% is by our body language, how we conduct ourselves. You also need to develop a feel for the game, what's going on. Use your senses Ian said to understand what about you.

As a referee you should be influencing and leading. Remember we are leaders, we must be strong but supportive. Timing is also important, the timing of your involvement. Take your time and of course develop your use of the whistle.

When it comes to our personalities, we are of course different but Ian's advice was; be who you are and not what you want to be, believe in yourself, control your emotions, work on your weaknesses – develop your strengths, and your ability will flourish.

We thank Ian for taking time off from his busy schedule to be with us and bringing this new presentation which we hope will assist us all in improving our performances on the field of play.

MARCH

Don't forget that for the March meeting we have another of the FA's refereeing team, Roger Vaughan who is the FA Referee Manager – Referee Development. An evening devoted to recognising challenges that should help towards developing our skills.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THERE

MONTHLY MEETINGS

What our speakers have said

February – Nigel Adkins – A football manager's point of view

We were pleased to welcome the manager of Reading Football club, Nigel Adkins to our meeting in February. Rather than give a talk, Nigel preferred a question and answer session as he has done with other referee's societies where he has managed and indeed as his predecessor at Reading FC, Brian McDermott did when he visited us.

One piece of good news that Nigel had received prior to the meeting was that Reading's central defender Kaspars Gorkss had had his sending off at the previous match overturned. Members wanted to know what the basis of the club's appeal was. Nigel said that it was a stupid tackle in a stupid place and his first thoughts were that it warranted a sending off. But after viewing the video, he realised that Gorkss had played the ball. He kept his eye on the ball and it was not two footed. It was just a good old fashioned tackle. Members pointed out that playing the ball was not necessarily a legitimate excuse.

Nigel referred to the meeting managers had had with the PGMOL at the beginning of the season and where they were showed various types of tackles that referees would consider being punishable. He said that football has changed and he felt there was a case for taking certain decision away from referees. There could be video referrals of controversial decisions. Perhaps managers could throw a red flag on to the pitch when they wanted an instant review. People would say it would kill the game but they have said it before, for instance with the six second rule for goalkeepers. Sin bins would come he felt and it would make for more entertaining games as clubs would adopt the rugby policy of power play when their opponents were a man short.

Nigel said that he made his players referee training games, in this way he felt that they got a better understanding of how difficult the referees' job is. Whenever you make a decision one team will be happy and one won't. The FA reforms mean that clubs can be fined if more than three players surround the referee to protest against a decision. He certainly wouldn't encourage his players doing that, in fact he trained his players not to get the referee's back up. The list of referee appointments are published and before each game he show his squad for the match a video of the referee in action and a profile of his record, number of red cards, how many penalties etc., so they know what to expect and hopefully avoid incurring confrontations. He said he particularly disliked players trying to get opponent shown cards. He said there were not enough referees or he felt enough encouragement for youngsters coming through. What makes a good referee was the inevitable question to ask Nigel and his answer was simple, consistency. What do the very best referees do? First he said they had presence on the pitch, they were in control but not little Hitlers. They were calm and made clear consistent decisions and didn't try and make up for any wrong decision.

As far as Reading Football club was concerned, we got relegated because we weren't good enough he said but research shows that 90% of supporters prefer Championship football.

Nigel could only make it on a Tuesday as opposed to our normal Thursday meeting night. All members who made the switch will have thought it worthwhile. We can only cover a fraction of the points raised and we thank Nigel for taking the time to be with us and the honesty of his answers.

DICK SAWDON SMITH RECEIVES HIS FA 50 YEAR MEDAL (11 YEARS LATE)



At the January meeting Dick was presented with his FA 50 Year Medal from Ian Blanchard, FA Senior National Game Referee Manager, although somewhat late. To be fair to the FA the inscription on the back reads 'In recognition of continuous refereeing service from 1953 to 2013'

Dick actually started referee whilst in the Army in Austria because he couldn't get into the battalion rugby or football teams (he made it into the cricket XI) He started with rugby but switched to football obtaining a copy of the Referees Chart as it was then called. When he was demobbed in January 1953 he discovered that a referees exam was being held at Katesgrove School, which he entered and passed .to become a Class 3 referee. (Only 3 classes in those days). He joined the Reading and District, the Reading Institute and Reading Wednesday Leagues. (There was no Sunday football). It was a very different world for referees of course but a world he soon became determined to change.

After 18 months he was promoted to Class 2 and he had already joined the newly formed Hellenic League and the Isthmian League as a linesman. However, the following year his application for promotion was turned down but no reason was given. How was he supposed to improve if he didn't know what he was doing wrong, he asked and these were the days when assessors hid behind trees so referees didn't even know at which games they had been watched.

After a heated campaign the County FA agreed to give an explanation for failure but only at the end of the season. The reasons given were next to useless with comments such as 'needs more experience'. Dick then heard of another county FA where the referees received a copy of the assessors report with a week of being assessed. He campaigned for this to be adopted in Berks & Bucks. It became a long a bitter campaign but eventually the County acquiesced to his suggestions but two other anomalies had to be fought. One was that assessors did not have to be referees themselves or former referees. Now of courses assessors have to have experience of the level at which they assess. Perhaps more importantly, Berks & Bucks FA broke FA rules by insisting that referees serve a fixed period before being allowed to apply for promotion.

In 1962 Dick took over as editor of the Reading Referee news-sheet which had started four years before and the next year he was elected as Press Secretary for Reading RA. In that year the Reading Chronicle asked the society if they would like to have a weekly column in its sports pages. This was delegated to Dick as Press Secretary and he continued to write it for the next 22 years in which it was renamed 'Dick Sawdon Smith writes From the Middle'. While working in the North Hampshire area during that time, Dick asked the Basingstoke Gazette if they would like something similar. For three years he contributed an unnamed column. Through the newspaper Basingstoke Referees Society asked Dick to be a guest speaker without really knowing who he was. This was the time when guest speakers were usually the top referees of the day who would regale members with tales of their experiences. Obviously, Dick couldn't compete with that so he devised a session called 'Unusual but it happens'. The members had to say on

prepared sheets what action they would take for a series of unusual incidents he had collected. The answers were then all collated and recorded before Dick read out the correct answers from the Laws of the Game. This was before PowerPoint presentations of course or even before the vogue for flip charts and the whole thing was done with the use of a double sided blackboard. It was such a success that he was invited to present it at societies throughout the southern counties. He later devised other 'educational' evenings.

In 1966 he conceived the idea for the Society's Fair Play Award and changed the marking for the Club Linesmen's Awards. He took over running the Reading Whistlers, the society's football team in 1968, organising five end-of-season matches, two against other societies, and one each against the local press, a team of schoolteachers and one comprised of local club secretaries. To this add our six-a-side team which reached the first finals of the RA national cup competition played at the Albert Hall. From 1968 he also campaigned for better changing facilities for referees at local grounds and he organised for 13 years a successful quiz for clubs on the Laws of the Game held at one of our monthly meetings. Dick became Vice-Chairman of the Society in 1976, Chairman in 1978 and President in 1990. Realising how much he could have benefited from a friendly voice when he started refereeing, when the Society introduced mentors some thirty years ago he quickly became one and is now a FA Registered Mentor.

Dick became a regular contributor to the Football Referee, the magazine of the RA where individual referees had a voice, so ideal for his campaigning. Although memorandums with interpretations on the Laws of the Game was issued, if you were not refereeing at the time you never saw them. Dick wrote articles asking that all these interpretations be incorporated with the Laws of the Game in one book. This was not fully implemented until 2008 but is of great benefit. He also campaigned for changes to the Laws be advised to referees BEFORE the season started, something which did happen after the fiasco with the goalkeepers six step rule but seems to have slipped again.

In 2000 he took over a referees' column in the now Reading Post from Brian Palmer. It remains popular to this day under the title 'From the Middle with Dick Sawdon Smith' and also appears on their website getreading.co.uk. He resumed as editor of this magazine in 2006. When he retired from full time employment in 1995 he undertook the three FA, referee instructors' courses and is now a Level 2 Referee Tutor.

When the Stonick Report recommending age limits in refereeing (now abolished) was adopted it meant that Dick lost his place on the Isthmian League but the Hellenic League kept him on for a few more years and he was presented with a trophy in 1978 for 25 years' service, then a record, by Sir Stanley Rous President of FIFA who was also President of the league. He also officiated on other competitions including the Great Western League, Oxfordshire Senior League and the Mithras Floodlit Cup. His cup final appointments include the Reading Junior Cup, the Berks & Bucks Minor (U18) and Junior Cups and the line at the Senior Cup. He has also officiated many local school finals as well as ESFA national semi-finals and finals. He now mainly officiates for ESFA, ISFA, BUSA, Tricot Sports Under-19 Development league and for Reading FC Academy.

RA-FA YOUTH TRAINING EVENT TO TAKE PLACE AT ST GEORGE'S PARK PRIOR TO NATIONAL CONFERENCE

After the success of last year's training event held immediately before the National Conference, the RA-FA Youth Council have announced that it is organising an event for young referees at St George's Park, the FA's new training centre at Burton-on-Trent on the Friday afternoon prior to this year's conference. Again there will also be an evening event back at the Barceló Hinkley Island Hotel.

It is intended to have an online booking system which members can use to book for the whole event taking place on 11th and 12th July.

NEW SUPPLIERS FOR RA KIT RA link up with online retailer

The RA Board has decided to give up its own RA shop for kit and other refereeing supplies. It feels that members would be better served by making Sporting Touch its kit suppliers. This will then make better use of the space at present being used for its own shop at RA Headquarters building. In addition Sporting Touch has agreed to provide an improved service and will continue to supply individual members and RA Societies. There will be special promotions, as with the new Nike kit and discounts for RA members.

Presumably a new brochure will be distributed and as far as we know all the previous items will still be available. There is a change of telephone number for ordering and you will now need to phone 024 7635 1490 or alternately e-mail sales@sportingtouch.com You can find their refereeing products on www.sportingtouch.com/en/81-referees-association

Sporting Touch is a well-established company. For the last 20 years they have been a high street sports retailer but have now turned themselves into a mail order internet store based in Coventry.

EVE OF THE FINAL RALLY

This is the traditional Eve of the Cup Final Rally where you can mix with the Cup Final officials as well former Cup Final officials and leading FA members. This year the guest speaker will be Graham Le Saux, former England international and player with Chelsea, Blackburn and Southampton. The event is to be held at One Great George Street, London SW1P 3AA and tickets cost £12 or £6 for under 18s and are available from RA Headquarters 02476 420360.

FREE RA MEMBERSHIP FOR NEW REFEREES

It has been agreed that new referees will be given free RA membership for their first year as referees. This means on passing the referees examination they will be given full membership of the RA instead of associate membership as at present.

THE NATIONAL RA CONFERENCE

SATURDAY 12TH JULY



**Barceló Hinckley Island Hotel
Leicestershire**

This is a great development day, not only for younger referees. You will be in company with and working with, the top referees in the country.

The Conference is free for all full members of the RA (except for lunch)
We hope that Berks & Bucks FA will again provide support for young referees making it completely free

It is planned that transport can again be arranged by the Society

**Last year over 500 referees attended the Conference
including a number of our members of all ages
from Reading and from Berks & Bucks.**

LET'S SWELL THOSE NUMBERS THIS YEAR

**In addition
RA-FA YOUTH CONCIL EVENT
FRIDAY 11TH JULY
ST GEORGE'S PARK, BURTON ON TRENT**

**A practical Development Day especially for young referees at the FA's
new national training venue, returning to Hinckley Island Hotel in the
evening for RA-FA Youth Council social evening**