

The Reading Referee





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EDITORIAL - Excellent meetings in our new home

For many years we were able to attract the top referees in the country to our meetings as guest speakers. Members were able to enjoy listening to people like Howard Webb, Andre Mariner, Mark Halsey, Neale Barry, now head of senior referee development and now the FA representative on the IFAB technical committee, and who can forget that magical evening with Keith Hackett, manager of the PGMO. Unfortunately, a restriction was placed against approaches being made direct because, we were told, of the extra workload faced by Premier League referees with six officials being required at European matches. A rather convoluted system for requests was put in force involving the RA Head Office, which frankly has never worked and with the problems they face with the new General Secretary leaving after a few months and no replacement yet recruited it is unlikely to improve for at least some time. This doesn't mean however that we have had a series of dull or boring meetings this season. We have still had top class speakers on a variety of subjects. Think of the fun (and learning) we had with Ray Olivier, Training and Development Manager of the PGMO and last month a fascinating insight with Mark Ives, Disciplinary Manager of the FA. Earlier in the season we had another unique presentation from Lorraine Deschamps MBE and then the living legend of lining, Phil Sharp who gave us more than his involvement with Euro 2012. All our other meetings also have had great involvement.

Great credit goes to Stephen Green on who most of the work providing speakers has fallen. There is every indication that we will continue to have speakers who will make it worth spending one Thursday evening a month at the Earley Home Guard Club. Already the new manager of Reading FC, Nigel Adkins, has agreed to be a speaker. He has always done this where ever he has been and Stephen, a Southampton supporter, went to hear him at Eastleigh RA when he was manager of Southampton and he provided an excellent evening. When Sir John Madejski was our guest speaker a few years ago, he asked for questions and the first was, 'why is the beer so expensive in the stadium'. Well, not only is our new venue comfortable and flexible, the beer is a lot cheaper. A little more out of the way for some but most would agree that it gives us a more convivial environment. We have had good attendances in the first year at our new home, let's hope that this continues or even increases next season.

Mal Davies – still giving his views

When I first edited this magazine back in the early 60s Mal Davies, who has written this issue's page two article, was the editor of the Midland Referee and we often corresponded. Now I get a weekly e-mail from him with reports involving referees from around the world. If you would like to receive it, e-mail Mal on Malref @yahoo.co.uk

Dick Sawdon Smith

ENDANGERING THE SAFETY OF AN OPPONENT

Following Nani's Champions League red card, here are some thoughts from Mal Davies

Consider the top players in football. They are played high salaries. Fans pay good money to see their star players in action. Far too often, those players miss games mainly through injury due to opponents' robustness. Sometimes one tackle will see a player miss a couple of games. Quite often an accumulation of poor tackles will lead to a player's absence.

The robust tackle has to be eliminated from the game. The Laws need to protect the skilful player so that football becomes again the beautiful game. At present, football produces a number of ugly incidences; too many. Clubs, managers, coaches and physios ought to appreciate the improving protection the Laws give to their players. Referees are there to enforce any new interpretations. It is better for clubs to see their players appearing on the field every week than on their treatment table.

Without going into detail, referees are on their way to becoming uniform with their decisions on two-footed tackles, any tackle with studs showing or any that endangers the safety of an opponent. An argument against the red card has been, 'But he got the ball.' But people have started to realise that winning the ball is not relevant. The robust challenge, in which the tackler claims he had won the ball first, is a red card if the referee considered it had endangered the safety of an opponent, even though the opponent may have ridden the tackle and got up uninjured. One of the ways to tackle without risking a red card is instep to instep. This can be delivered with a reasonable degree of force without causing injury. But players who cannot get to the ball for such a challenge will lunge at the ball with the body off the ground, with one or both feet and with no control of their airborne body – it is a red card for endangering the safety of an opponent, serious foul play.

Now consider the raised foot; a player who raises his foot above waist high (a guide) will run the risk of a red card. So a player should not do so unless certain his foot will not make contact with an opponent. A player can head or chest the high ball but if he uses his foot, he should make sure there is no player in the immediate vicinity whose safety may be endangered. Players now need to realise they can no longer control a high ball with their foot if the referee deems it has endangered the safety of an opponent. The fact that the player did not mean to endanger the opponent is irrelevant. Intent is no longer in the Laws. The referee does not need to consider whether the player deliberately did it or not, He looks at the outcome, which is contact or no contact. If there is no physical contact, the player can be penalised for dangerous play and the game is restarted with an indirect free-kick. If there is physical contact, then the offence is no longer categorised as dangerous play but as serious foul play and the restart is with a direct free-kick or penalty. A scissors kick is permissible providing that, in the referee's opinion, it is not dangerous to an opponent. If performed in the penalty area it can produce a spectacular goal. But if the player has not made sure that he was not endangering the safety of an opponent then he risks a red card for serious foul play.

Football must move with the times

Compare the player who raises his foot because he cannot get to a high ball to head or chest it, with the player who lunges for the ball because he cannot tackle instep to instep. The raised foot and lunge are both red cards for serious foul play, if the referee considers the safety of the player was endangered. Football must move with the times. The game will be all the better after eliminating all incidents that endanger safety. The Laws and referees have dealt with endangerment with the low foot. Now they need to eliminate the high foot.

Mal Davies

MONTHLY MEETINGS

March – Mark Ives – Discipline and the Way Forward

Mark Ives is the Discipline Manager of the FA but his involvement in football is just about as wide as you can get. He has been with the FA for 12 years and Head of Department for the last 7 years. In this position he has been responsible for the introduction of the new caution report for which we are all most grateful and the new disciplinary system which he was going to cover. He has played football at Isthmian League level; he has been a referee for 27 years reaching level 2, which included 9 years as a National List Assistant Referee. He withdrew from that as it conflicted with his position at the FA but he still referees every Saturday and Sunday and he is also an FA Tutor and Assessor. Before joining the FA he was CEO of a County FA so he has seen the game in this country from almost every angle. Mark's presentation was also wide ranging and he said he was going to look at six issues; Match Based Discipline, Reporting Misconduct, Personal Hearings, Wrongful Dismissals or Mistaken Identities, Social Media and then an Open Forum.

He started with the history of what happened across the country with regard to Match Based Discipline. There had been he said a different system for professional and local football and it also varied throughout the country. Many suspensions were based on number of days, which was not right as it was not an even system. 'Number of matches' suspension, which had been introduced was better and fairer. Also the suspension is now only from the type of football where the offence had been committed, e.g. Saturday or Sunday football. This, he said, only deprived that team of the player's services. There is now no right of appeal on standard charges and could only be made for wrongful dismissal or mistaken identity. Only appeal backed by video evidence can be mounted so in local football personal hearings will be very rare. We were the only country in Europe to have the right to appeal. When you consider that out of 54,000 sending offs, there were 2.2% appeals and only 1.9% were upheld, this does not equate to a great injustice. Competitions can also impose suspensions and players signing for clubs.

Respect, Mark said, begins with the players. If a player shows disrespect after being sent off, he/she would be suspended from all football and for a longer period. Assaults on referees can have decrees of punishment and may be sine die, which means that they cannot request a review for 5 years or even 10 in some cases. If a team commits six disciplinary offences in one match, the club will be fined and action can be taken against the manager and the chairman of the club.

When it came to reporting misconduct, he said, accuracy was imperative, don't pass opinions or exaggerate. There are changes coming in 2012/13 when there will be an online portal for reporting misconduct which should make it simpler. If you should have to attend a personal hearing it is nothing to worry about. Be professional, do not change your story and do not get flustered. There is now compulsory training and assessment for chairmen of the hearings and also a right to appeal to the FA and by the FA if they think a mistake has been made.

Turning to social media, Facebook, Twitter, Mark thought it was a good media when used correctly but a different matter if used incorrectly bringing the game into disrepute. That is if it was abusive, offensive, made direct or indirect threats or is about match officials which imply bias or attack their integrity or are of a personal nature.

This included remarks about ethnic origin or colour, race, nationality, faith, gender, sexual orientation or disability. If someone sends you a tweet that includes anything of that nature and you re-tweet it to someone else you are still regarded as liable. People who set up 'fake' accounts are still liable and it could be considered a criminal act.

In the open forum, Mark was asked about the standard of disciplinary reports which he agreed was generally very poor. When told that this seemed in variance with our recent

instructions on basic courses not to put any emphasis on them, Mark said he was talking to people in the FA about misconduct report training. He was also asked about some of the referees' decisions that had been overturned, such as Anthony Taylor's sending off of two players at West Ham for catching their opponents with high feet. He said that the panel consisted of a member of the FA Council, a club chairman and an ex-player or manager. They were asked to look at whether the referee had made an obvious error leading to wrongful dismissal. They did not interview or receive the referee's report. They could have some guidance by someone conversant with the law but that person would not take part in their deliberations.

Mark was also asked why the very recent case of the Wigan player McManaman's tackle in the game against Newcastle was not taken up by the FA as they had intervened in other instances where the referee had not seen the offence. He replied that there was an agreement with the leagues how to deal with these incidents. Although the referee Mark Halsey had not seen the offence one of his assistants had, so no further action could be taken. It would have needed to have been an exceptional case for them to intervene and although the injury seemed severe, the tackle, if seen, would have only resulted in the standard punishment. It only attracted so much attention said Mark because it appeared on Sky television in front of millions of viewers, had it been in League Two very little would have been said. The members of the FA responsible did not feel it there was sufficient cause to break the agreement. The last thing the FA wanted was to have to re-referee every game. There was another aspect, Mark said. Referees might refrain from making controversial decisions if they felt that they would be picked up later.

Discipline may have sounded a dry subject but what a full evening it turned out to be and we are extremely grateful to Mark to come and put over his subject in such a forthright and open manner.

April - Alf Field, the County Roadshow – Crossing the Line

One of Corin Readett's ideas when he was the RDO for Berks & Bucks FA, was the introduction of a County Roadshow. Something similar happened a few years ago, when a team of referee instructors in the Allied Counties visited branches in Berks and Bucks with a little playlet. Corin's idea was a little different however, as individual referee tutors (instructors new name) would visit branches with a variety of topics; a different branch, a different tutor, a different topic each month. All referees throughout the Allied Counties would be invited, (you probably received the invitations through e-mails) to visit each branch when their roadshow was being presented. How many referees took advantage of these opportunities is not known but we were the last to be visited and conducting the session was Alf Field. Alf is a Level 2 Tutor and a former Level 3 referee from Chiltern RA and his subject had the somewhat ambiguous title of "*Crossing the Line*".

The purpose of the meeting, Alf said was 'To identify what is expected of us as referees to develop our skills and understanding to become better referees'

What do I mean by this? Alf asked. Partly the physical line, but on field offences, off-field offences and our tolerance levels. What tolerance levels should we have and what about officials and spectators. Some members took the phrase crossing the line literally, what happens after you cross the touch line to start the game but it became evident that really what was intended was inappropriate behaviour not only from players but team managers and spectators and in particular, we were looking at dissent.

Alf split the meeting into groups to discuss these questions and rather unusually, they were grouped by level, in other words groups consisted of level 5 or level 6 for instance, rather than the normal mixture of levels. The groups would then be required to report back their

conclusions. Tolerance levels are a difficult subject. Is your level the same if you are refereeing a top game or under 13s? Should there be a different level in the first minute or last minute? Players will always appeal but what can make it different is the manner that it is done, is it aggressive, do they keep coming back to it and of course the language that they use. Most members agreed that those who dispute everything are the worst but usually they will at some time cross the line of what is acceptable. Don't ignore dissent even though it may not be worth a caution but let the player know you have heard it and do not approve. Think of the words you are going to use, what suits one referee may not be suitable for another referee but it may be something like. 'You are really getting on my nerves,' or, 'Are you going to moan all day?' Sometimes it may be worth calling the captain over or even involving a team mate to let them know that the player is getting close to the line when disciplinary action will be taken. Use the stepped approach, quiet word, public word, admonishment, caution but don't forget that you don't have to religiously work through that approach if the dissent is worth a straight caution. There can be occasions when you didn't see an obvious incident and if you use your words carefully the player might tell you what he has done. An early card can stop further incidents but it means that you have to be consistent for the rest of the game.

What about loud disputes coming from team managers and others in the dug-out or what passes for it on the local rec? Remember that your jurisdiction extends to officials and substitutes. Again, with managers, use the words that work for you but you might ask them if they consider their conduct appropriate or ask them to reflect on their behaviour. You may get the situation where the manager/coach won't listen or his behaviour is sufficient that he should be sent away from the touchline as required by the laws but he is insistent on staying, saying that as it is a public recreation ground you have no power to make him leave. Let him know that you will abandon the game if he doesn't do what you ask and his club will have to bear the consequences.

Spectators can also be a menace particularly in youth games but be careful about approaching them, they are the responsibility of the home club and above all don't put yourself in danger.

Know the laws, advised Alf, know the competition rules and don't forget that you must report any misconduct.

Our thanks to Alf, not only for coming down from Amersham to present the roadshow but also for putting together an evening that made us think about the way we react when faced with unpleasant situations.

FAIR PLAY AWARD

The Bert Newman Fair Play Award will be presented at our Annual General Meeting for the forty-seventh time, to the team in the Reading adult leagues who our members have given the highest marks for fair play and sporting conduct in who are as follows:

Winners	Frilsham and Yattenden	9.00
Runners-up	Purley (Sunday)	8.75
Third Place	Westwood United Reserves	8.71

CLUB ASSISTANTS' AWARDS

These are our oldest awards, first being established in 1933 as Club Linesmens' Awards. They are an opportunity to show our appreciation to those club members who take on the often thankless task of running the line for their club in local adult football and in particular those who by the markings by our members have deserved special recognition.

First Place	Keith Archer	Pinewood	9.00
2 nd Place	Oliver Whatley	Frilsham and Yattenden	8.90
3 rd Place	Mike Digweed	Newbury FC	8.83

Our congratulations and thanks to the three club assistants who have topped the list. We would also like to thank all our members who have taken the trouble to mark these two awards and especially Jim McDougall for collecting and collating the markings.

COUNTY CUP APPOINTMENTS

There was confusion after the final of the Berks & Bucks Senior Trophy. In one semi- final it was discovered that both Flackwell Heath and Windsor had played ineligible players and were removed from the competition. The final was therefore played between Aylesbury and Ascot United. It then came to light that Aylesbury had also played an eligible player in their semi-final. They were asked to return the trophy and their medals. The County competitions committee are reviewing the rules of the competition to see if any alterations are needed for future seasons. We hope the referee and his assistants were allowed to keep their medals. Here are local appointments to other County finals.

Women's Senior Cup

Referee Malcolm Hillen
Assistant Referee Steven Williams

Sunday Intermediate Cup

Assistant Referee Stephen Anderson
4th Official Neal Hussey

Youth Cup

Assistant Referee Paul Gaskin
4th Official Chris Forest

Women's Trophy

Assistant referee Geoff Pithers

Sunday Junior Trophy

Referee Kevin Bavington

Girls Under-14 Cup

Referee Mark Raines

Minor Under-12 Cup

Assistant Referee Joe Weatherley

Our congratulations to all and we hope they had enjoyable games.

VISITING THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE

You will find details of the National Referees Association Conference below. As those who have attended before will know, a large part of the conference is taken up with interactive workshops. Normally, these are run by the top referees in the country, people like Howard Webb, Mark Clattenburg, Mike Dean, as well as leading members of the Referees Department at the FA, such as Ian Blanchard, but so far we have been given no indication who will be running which workshop.

The theme of the conference this year, in view of the 150th anniversary of the formation of the Football Association is 'Honouring the Past – Building for the future'. The workshops however are definitely looking forward as their titles suggest.

- The role of the assistant referee in the 21st Century
- The role of the referee in managing the game in the 21st Century
- The role of the referee assessor in the 21st Century
- Dealing with the illegal use of the arms in the 21st Century
- Judging tackles in the 21st Century
- Fitness, lifestyle and training in the 21st Century
- The role of the RA in the 21st Century

You can only take part in three workshops during the day so you are asked to list your preferences. It depends on the preferences shown for each workshop whether you get all your personal first choices.

BOOKING FORMS AVAILABLE FROM OUR WEBSITE

As the RA website is still out of action due to some dispute, we have put the booking form on our own website, readingrefs.org.uk so that if you have been unable to obtain one you can download it from there. The final date to return booking forms is 9th June. Don't forget that the Conference is entirely free except for lunch and you have a choice of four options from £5 for pre packed sandwiches to £20 for a three course meal, or you can take your own packed lunch.

Once you have sent in your booking form contact Dick Sawdon Smith or Derek Reigate if you would like transport to the conference, and if you are a young referee let us know immediately you have booked so we can give your name to the Berks and Bucks FA who may refund the cost of your lunch (we suggest not the three course meal) making it a completely free day.

READING FC SCORE HIGH IN FAIR PLAY MARKINGS

At the time of writing Reading Football Club are second in the Fair Play ratings for the Premier League, behind Southampton. Little consolation perhaps for being relegated but there is a possibility that it could lead to a place in the Europa Cup which might help make up for the missing millions.

INTERNATIONAL FA BOARD'S DECISIONS

At the annual meeting held this year in Edinburgh, the proposed alterations to the offside law were agreed. This should make it easier to understand even for those footballers and league managers who claim they don't understand it any more.



Tickets for the annual Referees' Association grand prize draw are available now from Heather Wellington. First prize is a brand new Hyundai i10 or £5,000. Second prize is £1,000, third prize £500 and twenty five consolation prizes of £100. Make sure that the money for any purchased tickets are given to Heather or our treasurer Jamie Barnett and not direct to the RA as we keep half of the proceeds. The draw will be made at the RA Conference on 6th July.

THE NATIONAL RA CONFERENCE



SATURDAY 6TH JULY
Barceló Hinckley Island Hotel
Leicestershire

This year's theme
HONOURING THE PAST – BUILDING THE FUTURE
A Celebration of Refereeing

2013 is the 150th anniversary of the formation of the
FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION
This will be one of their major celebrations

This is a great development day, not only for younger referees, in company with and working with, not only the top referees in this country but also this year it is hoped some senior refereeing figures from abroad

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 will again be arranged by the Society

Friday 5th July

Afternoon Outdoor Practical Training Session
for young referees with Howard Webb and Martin Atkinson
RA-FA Youth Council Evening Event

The Annual General Meeting of the Referees Association

Saturday 6th July

National RA Conference

Conference Dinner

Sunday 7th July

Finals of the National RA Quiz