



YOUNG REFEREES' SUPPORT GROUP

August 2006

Founded: 2005

ISSUE: 6

Season 2006-07

The new season is now already upon us and it hardly seems like any time at all since we put our refereeing kit away for the summer break. However, it is important that we all get back into the swing of a new season as soon as possible, with off the field organization just as important as our actions on the pitch.

Issue 6 contains a variety of articles on a wide range of topics. Our main feature is written by Dan Burke, one of the London officials who attended the FA's third Young Referees' Conference at Staverton Park. I hope that this first installment will inspire all our members to attend this event in the future.

Regular articles such as 'Trouble in Law' are included and our 'Back to Basics' segment returns with a focus on the backbone of refereeing: administration. In addition, Aji completes his look at the assessment scheme and we bid a fond farewell to one of the YRSG founders.

Matthew Hopton (Editor)

Contacts

Aji Ajibola – 020 8480 8576 / 07956 638969

aji.ajibola@o2.co.uk

Matthew Hopton – 020 7756 8320 / 07763 488966

matthew.hopton@kcl.ac.uk

youngrefs@londonfa.com

Young Referees' Conference

The Young Referees' Conference, now in its third year, was the brainchild of former FIFA referee David Elleray. Aji and Matt were amongst the first intake and since then, four other London FA officials, Richard Jaye, Matthew Hopton, James Kelly and Dan Burke have all attended. The Conference is already helping officials gain promotion, including Richard who has been promoted to Level 3. Ed.

MY VIEW: DAY ONE

As my alarm went off at 6.30am on Saturday 20th May, I sat in bed wondering what was in store for me that weekend at the FA Young Referees' Conference. Everyone I knew who had been to the previous conferences had raved about each one. So in theory I should have trusted them, yet I was still sceptical. How could a whole weekend of presentation after presentation (a nightmare for any university student), coupled with a fitness session with one of the Select Group's fitness coordinators be so much fun? On paper, it didn't seem to fit with what I'd been told by my friends.

Nevertheless, they were all absolutely correct. Two days of extremely motivating presentations given by some of the country's most senior refereeing figures and a fantastic venue combined to provide me with a weekend that will advance the quality of my refereeing immensely. I therefore feel obliged to pass on the many words of wisdom given to us so that all London FA officials can benefit from our attendance at the conference.

The weekend of presentations was kicked off by Ray Olivier (pictured right), a vastly experienced Football League referee and FA Regional Manager for the Midlands. Ray spoke to us about the importance of managing both successes and disappointments. He told us it was important to consider why we had failed. Did we fail because of something someone else had done or said, or was it because we didn't work hard enough? Ray pointed out that the former wasn't going to help with the process of moving on and improving, whilst the latter was that of a self-critical referee, someone who isn't afraid to criticise themselves in the knowledge that they'll put it right next time round.



Ray also asked us to think about why we had succeeded? Was it because we were too good for that level, or was it because we worked really hard? Clearly the former is the opinion of an arrogant referee whilst the latter shows a referee who is confident and satisfied. Have a think about your season and your successes and failures. How are you going to act to help improve your refereeing this year?

Neale Barry, Head of Senior Referee Development at The FA, followed Ray on to the stage to speak about judging challenges, a vital skill for every referee. Neale set out a simple procedure for us to follow when making decisions. First of all you should *See* the incident which requires good positioning to spot any infringement. Next you should *Recognize* what it is you have seen. Did the player making the sliding tackle get the ball? Was it a dangerous tackle or did he use excessive force? The next step is to *Think* about what decision you are going to give. Neale emphasized the importance of taking your time and considering whether a card is required or if an advantage can be played. Finally we were told to *Act* and carry out the necessary steps to deal with the situation. Again, Neale emphasized the importance of taking your time, being firm but fair and acting in a calm and confident manner.

With the basic tools for recognizing challenges at our disposal, Neale went on to demonstrate the difference between tackles which are careless, reckless or use excessive force. Using video clips Neale explained that a careless foul was one that contained a ‘great deal of honest effort’ but was simply ‘mistimed’ and requires only a direct free kick. A reckless challenge is one where there is a ‘clear risk of endangering an opponent which pays no regard to the possible consequences, safety and/or welfare of an opponent’. This would be met with a direct free kick and a caution. Finally, a challenge using excessive force ‘may be malicious or violent and may be designed to hurt or maim an opponent’ and should therefore result in a direct free kick and a red card.



Lastly, Neale (left) spoke about how to identify the denial of an obvious goal scoring opportunity. You should again ask yourself several questions before you act. You should consider the position of both the attackers and defenders and where they are on the pitch. Was the attacker in full control of the ball and was he heading towards the goal? All of the information must be considered before any card is produced.

After lunch we split up into groups and Ian Blanchard, Head of National Referee Development at The FA, showed us several video clips. He asked us to think about what action we would take as the referee, what sort of help we’d like from our assistants and what the consequences of our decision would have on the game. For example, if it was a serious foul we might expect a reaction from the team-mates of the fouled player towards the offender.

This was a particularly interesting session for me as it showed just how open to different interpretations the laws are. One of the clips in particular certainly divided the room. A tackle on Bolton’s Stelios Giannakopoulos by Tottenham defender Michael Dawson produced some interesting decisions and opinions as there was so much to think about. My group couldn’t decide whether a foul had actually taken place or whether (as one person suggested) Giannakopoulos had just suffered a bout of cramp. Furthermore, amongst those who were saying penalty there was a difference of opinion on whether it was a yellow card, red card or neither!

One person suggested that it had to be a red card if you considered it an obvious goal scoring opportunity or nothing if you thought it did not prevent a goal being scored. Another suggested that having given a penalty we would be expected to take some action but with the lack of an obvious goal scoring opportunity we should settle for a caution. However if this tackle was merely careless and did not deny an obvious goal scoring opportunity then it would only warrant a direct free kick (or in this case a penalty) with no card. This just shows how an incident can be interpreted so differently from referee to referee.

We were soon out into the country air (and rain) for our fitness session and after what seemed like a marathon to get to the field we met our instructor, Simon. He stressed to us the importance of dynamic stretching (such as shuttle runs with high knees, bum flicks etc.) as opposed to the conventional static stretching. After our dynamic warm-up we split into groups to do a wide variety of intensity training with Alan Wilkie, Keith Hill and Ray Olivier joining in. In the end I actually really enjoyed this session. It showed that fitness training need not simply be hours in the gym or laps around your local park but it can be fun and beneficial at the same time.

After dinner we had our final presentation of the day by the one and only David Elleray (pictured below), Vice-Chairman of The FA Referees' Committee, who spoke about the qualities of a top referee. David asked us to list the three main qualities which we thought made a top referee in the following sections: physical appearance, character, decision-making, player management and man-management. He then asked someone from the audience for their three before given us his own views - the 'C' words.

Firstly, a top referee must be confident but not cocky. You should not shirk when making your decisions and even if you don't feel it inside, try to look confident in your decisions to the players. Next, every referee must be calm but not chaotic. Running in and flashing a card at an opponent may work occasionally but it is likely to inflame a situation where a calmer, more confident approach would work better.



A referee's decision-making should be consistent but he should not get conned. Whilst it is almost impossible to provide consistency across all referees, it is possible to be consistent amongst ourselves from game-to-game and indeed within each game we referee. David stressed that whilst we should use some player management skills, the players are only in it for themselves. They just want to play football and don't always want to laugh and joke with the referee. We should therefore be cheerful but not chummy. Finally, we should be considerate towards other officials and should not be overly critical of our colleagues.

Dan Burke



Back to Basics

ADMINISTRATION

A whistle, a red and yellow card, even a football are amongst the many important items needed for a referee to do their job. However, a referee's role does not start and end on the pitch the game is played upon. Administration underpins everything within refereeing and although the ability to successfully manage your paperwork may never be publicly applauded, poor administration will definitely count against you.

Amongst one of the most important aspects of this topic is closing dates. The amount of work required to help organise a group of 15-20 young officials is enough to keep anyone busy. However, imagine having to manage over 50 officials as a league referees' secretary or even around 1000 referees for County appointments.

Regular correspondence, whether it be by phone, email or fax to keep your appointments secretary fully informed of when you are available not only makes their job a lot easier, but will also mean that you do not give yourself a label of being unreliable and disorganized. This will undoubtedly impact on the number and quality of the fixtures you receive and in the case of County games, may affect your chances of promotion.

You should remember that appointments are made several weeks in advance so it is vital that you close any dates as soon as possible. Acting quickly will ensure that you do not forget and end up with a game on a date you knew you couldn't do weeks ago. Of course, some dates become closed at short notice but it is equally important to inform everyone that you can't make that date in case they offer you a late appointment.

Closing dates with the London FA is very easy and they will be acknowledged promptly. Email is probably the best option, but it is one of the several ways available.

andy.porter@londonfa.com or 020 7610 8362

Sending in your misconduct forms is also an important part of refereeing. If you have cautioned or dismissed a player during a match you must send a misconduct report to the team's County FA. In many cases this will be London but those refereeing on leagues which include teams from outside the capital (Middlesex County League), the reports may have to go to Middlesex, Surrey or maybe Kent.

Technology has made the completion of these forms very easy and the option of emailing the report saves time and it is much cheaper. Although these forms can be completed relatively

quickly when you get home from your game, it is essential that you check the details you have entered before you send it off to the office no later than two working days after your game.

It is absolutely unacceptable to not send a report in because you have either changed your mind or a player has asked you to. Referees across the country who have ignored this rule have seen their cases heard by their County's Referees' Committee and many have faced disciplinary action. Whatever any player asks you to do, always send your reports in and let the County deal with it.

discipline@countyfa.com

discipline@londonfa.com

Match Report Forms or Team-sheets are used in all County games and also on many of the local leagues. The forms, which are usually handed to the referee before kick-off will need to be returned to the London FA no later than two days after the game. It often only takes a few minutes to complete these forms but it is very easy to leave them and forget about them until it is too late.

A post match routine, which includes the completion of both the misconduct reports and team-sheets, is vital if you are to maintain good administration throughout the season. Although you may have had a bad game, if your paperwork is done well, you can put the 90 minutes behind you and move on. However, if you get a phone call from the County asking whether you had any cautions in your game which you did not send in, you may be in serious trouble.

Good administration, like man-management, is a vital attribute for all referees. However, unlike man-management, it is much easier to do successfully throughout the season. It never ceases to become important and the higher you climb up the refereeing ladder the more important it becomes. It may just be the difference between a successful promotion and another season at your current level.

Matthew Hopton

JEWELLERY

Please note the latest clarification of the FA's standpoint on Law 4.

'A player must not use any equipment or wear anything which is dangerous to himself or another player (including any kind of jewellery)'

EXCEPTION

A player, who can satisfy the referee prior to the game that their PLAIN WEDDING BAND is unable to be removed, will be allowed to be cover it with tape.

This only applies to plain wedding rings as these are often difficult to remove. ALL other jewellery must be removed no matter what level the game is being played at.

In Focus

The Promotion Scheme – Ability or Luck?

PART II

The role of an assessor becomes even more vital the higher a referee climbs up the pyramid. At a referees' training meeting in March 2006, Neale Barry proposed his ideal promotion system would be dependent on marks from assessors rather than from the clubs. It was his intention to move the promotion scheme for senior referees in that direction.

His reasons for wanting the change were numerous but Barry felt that referees would be better placed to learn and practise their trade without the worry of what impression they were making on the clubs, which may influence a referee's decision making process. Ultimately, the referees who applied the laws correctly when they should rather than pleading ignorance to appease club officials can be identified and moved to their appropriate level.

The logistics surrounding assessing every referee in senior football are challenging particularly when you consider the ratio of active assessors to referees. The abilities of these assessors also needs reviewing to ensure that individual preferences are replaced by a uniform approach to all referees throughout the promotion season.

As with the referees they assess, assessors are individuals and look for different attributes within a referee. Experience, as with refereeing, will obviously play a key part in the particular skills they look for. However, although these particular points can sometimes benefit officials, it is fundamental that if this system is to be superior to that of the club marks, all assessors must stick to their guidelines to be consistent.

Almost all assessors have been referees and many will have refereed at, or above, the level they are assessing at. This gives them a far better vantage point when watching the game from a neutral perspective and a better understanding of the Law, unlike the majority of club officials. Also, a key factor for referees is that assessors have nothing to lose or gain from the outcome of the referee's performance.

With a greater emphasis for all assessors that they should be marking referees based on the same set criteria, this should create a universal and equitable system.

The objectives of the marking scheme are often debated by referees with the ideal formula rarely achieved. I personally would like assessors to judge performances on the game as a whole rather than getting caught up in the minor issues of a match.

The assessors I have had the opportunity to work with have suggested that the main goal for a referee should be to control the game in parallel to correctly applying the laws. Many have also maintained that this control can be demonstrated by a referee from the moment he arrives at a ground to when he leaves and not just the 90 minutes during a game.

Aspects such as positioning, fitness, communication & signals and co-operation with assistants are strong secondary tools that can be utilized to control and fully apply the laws. These tools should be used proactively to achieve credibility and control effectively. The command of players' respect to minimize dissent and the ability to feel the pulse of the game are also key attributes which I feel should be recognized along with the above.

Some assessors argue that for control to be achieved a referee needs to build credibility with a number of groups including club officials, the crowd, the players and his team of officials. It is important to remember that credibility, like control, has to be gained and is not automatically there. As such, utilizing all of the above tools can help you earn the respect of all parties.

Assessors look at a number of things in a referee but many are fundamental skills which are learnt on the park pitches and which will be refined and developed with experience. In-service training events, including the YRSG meetings are all opportunities to develop these attributes.

However, assessors at all levels maintain that in order for a promotion to be achieved a referee must demonstrate all these attributes consistently to different assessors over a number of games at different stages of the season. Once they have shown this then the referee should have demonstrated they are ready for future challenges.

Aji Ajibola

New Assessment Marking System

The latest *Capital Referee* included information on the new criteria which will be used to assess referees from Level 7 to Level 4. The new system includes the introduction of a final section detailing three strengths and three development points which the referee should try and improve upon. The new marking structure should also mean that there is greater consistency across all assessors which can only be good news for referees seeking promotion.

However, despite the modifications it is still down to the referee to perform on the day and demonstrate their skills to the assessor. As we are now almost halfway through the promotion year it is important that anyone taking part in the scheme keeps submitting their games. Please feel free to contact any of the Group Leaders to discuss past assessments for any advice. *Ed.*

Trouble In Law



Graham Poll: A Three Card Trick

The World Cup threw up numerous refereeing talking points, none more so than the game between Australia and Croatia. Referee Graham Poll, the only Premiership referee at the tournament, showed three yellow cards to Croatian number 3 Josep Simunic. Poll, who was unaware that he had already cautioned the player twice earlier, was not informed of his error by his assistants or the 4th official.

Poll put his mistake down to attributing the Croatian's second caution to the Australian number 3 in his notebook with shows referees at all levels that maintaining an extremely high level of concentration, even when the game is stopped, can help prevent mistakes. Poll was understandably disappointed with his performance in the game but it is important to remember that he has been a consistently good referee for a number of years and should be supported, rather than publicly castigated.

However, although the mistakes tend to hit the headlines more than the incidents of good practice, the World Cup Final officials showed how good teamwork is essential in getting the correct decision. The 4th official witnessed Zidane's head-butt and informed the referee which resulted in a red card. This was just one of the many positive contributions from all members of the refereeing team and shows that even if you do not have the whistle in your hand you still have an important role to play.

Correction

I am very grateful to David Elleray, former FIFA official and current Vice-chairman of the FA Referees' Committee, for correcting my interpretation of the incident mentioned in our last issue involving Jens Lehmann in the Champions League Final.

I stated that if the referee had played an advantage and allowed the goal he would only need to caution the goalkeeper as a goal-scoring opportunity was not denied. However, David pointed out that there had been two obvious opportunities to score a goal. The first was prevented by Lehmann when he brought down the attacker and the second came when the ball fell to another Barcelona player who put the ball into the back of the net. Therefore, regardless of the fact that a goal was scored, Lehmann would have been sent off.

Matthew Hopton

Next Year

Like last year, the YRSG will hold regular meetings on Thursday evenings throughout the year in September, December, February and April. It is also hoped that we can arrange some visits to watch some senior officials in action around the capital so we can all learn from more experienced colleagues.

If there are any particular refereeing topics which could be covered in either the meetings or the Newsletter which would help you and the other young officials then please do get in touch so we can put something together. It is important to remember that the Support Group was set up specifically to help you so have your say and get the most out of it.



Matt Foden, one of the driving forces behind the formation of the YRSG is moving back to Worcestershire where he will continue to officiate at Level 4. I would like to thank Matt for all he has put in to developing the Support Group and for his insightful contributions to this Newsletter, something I hope he will continue to do in the future. I hope all the members of the YRSG would echo my thanks on and would wish Matt luck for his future, and in particular, with his journey up the refereeing ladder.

Matthew Hopton

Next Meeting

The next YRSG meeting will be held at the Civil Service Recreation Centre, Chadwick Street, Westminster, London, SW1P 2EP on:

Thursday 28th September 2006, commencing at 7.00pm

Deadline for articles for the next issue: 10th September 2006