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Chairman's foreword



As we come out of the winter and move into (metrological) spring it seems some issues in football are becoming clearer – Liverpool opening a commanding lead away from the others in contention for the Premier League. It is not mathematically big enough to be sure of this outcome yet. The Manchester City legal case rolls on but a substantive points deduction seems very likely - relegation seems a quite likely outcome!

Equally in the professional game it seems to me we are seeing complaints about VAR and inconsistent refereeing occurring more often and more vocally. We know overall that the right decisions are being made more often with this technology, but it doesn't always help referees as much as it potentially could. The fifth round of the FA Cup playing in the first weekend of March will utilise VAR and the new Semi Automated Offside technology system in 7 of the 8 ties. As I am writing this foreword before that weekend, we shall see what happens! It is supposed to bring more automation and reduced time for decision making. Of course, none of us refereeing on the parks have any of these tools at our disposal. This month also sees the Surrey County FA recognising some of its' referees for their long service at a County wide presentation ceremony – congratulations to those receiving them.

Our next Society meeting will be on Thursday 6th March at our usual venue at 7:45pm. I very much hope you will be able to make it.

Looking forward to seeing you then.

David Norman
Chair

Report of the February Guest Speaker – Craig Hicks

We welcomed the Surrey County FA Referee Development Officer, Craig Hicks, to the Society and he was able to provide an update on recent work being undertaken by Craig and Harry on the development of Referees within Surrey.



Craig also provided a training session based upon PGMOL guidance regarding handball.

Surrey FA - Recruitment & Development

How it Started

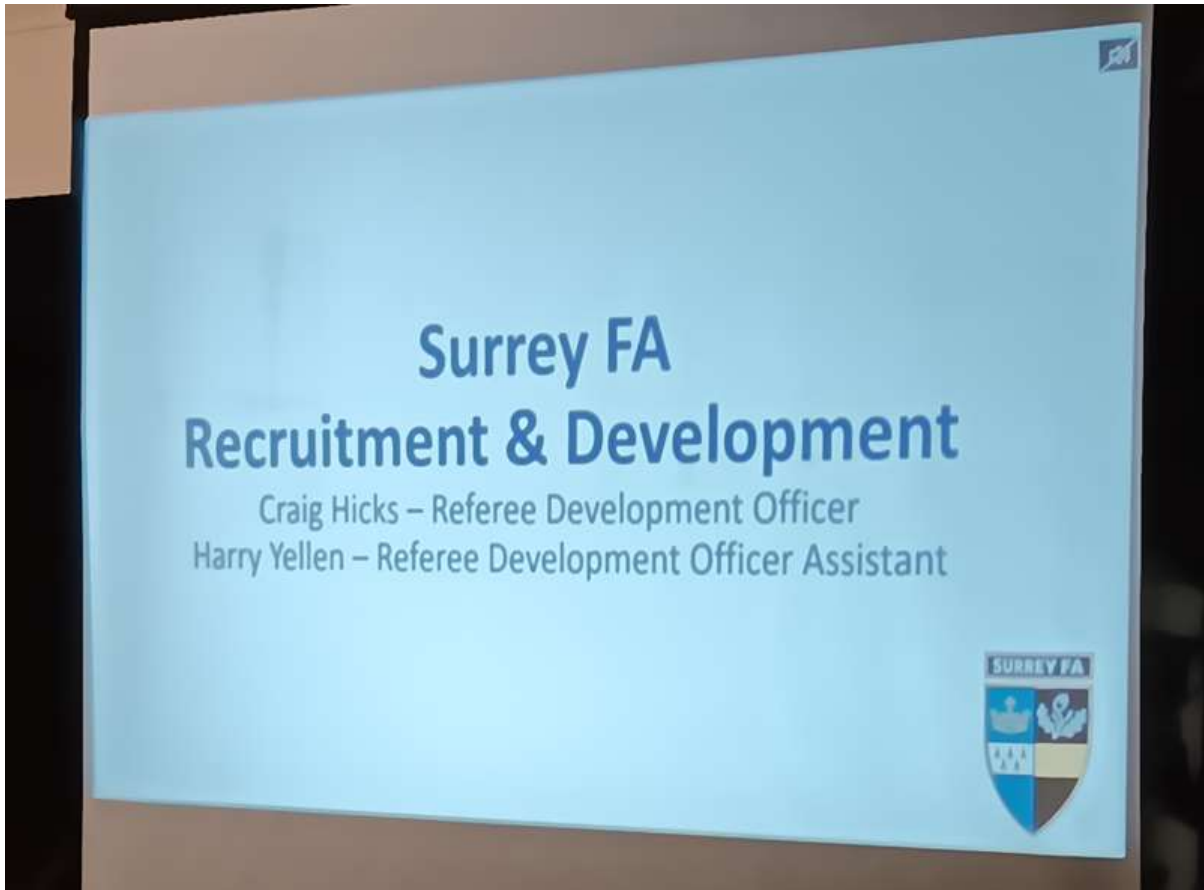
Craig came into post in 2022 but there was no clear process in place on how recruitment and development was managed within Surrey and how it could be improved. It soon became clear that Craig needed support and Harry Yellen was subsequently appointed as the Referee Development Officer Assistant.

Having just come out of Covid, there was a considerable demand for courses which is still the case now and therefore not much work is needed regarding finding new trainees.

In their first full season of 2022/23 Surrey trained 475 referees across 21 courses but only 25.7% of these newly qualified referees converting (completing the necessary games) prior to June 30th 2023.

In 2023/24 Surrey ran 8 courses and from the first 6 of those courses, referees have started completing their five games. We are currently at a 36.6% conversion rate, up 10.9% with plenty more time for those referees to convert and more referees to do courses.

In 2024/25 Surrey FA have 15 courses fully booked this season, 4 with spaces left on them to book and 1 walking football course next month coming up – a total of 20 courses for the season.



Craig and Harry recognised that there were areas of weakness within the process and have been proactive in implementing a range of support mechanisms to ensure new referees within Surrey are supported throughout the course process and that the pathway is clear from the outset, making them aware of how to develop. One such step is to ensure that referees do their 5 qualifying games within 6 months and therefore making sure they focus on their refereeing early on so it doesn't just get swept aside and forgotten about.

Another requirement is that Surrey now mandates attendance at 1 of 3 online Post Course CPD sessions. Here all trainees discuss common issues and share resolutions, this is run by County FA but has developers present on the online call. They had over 70 officials attend the first session on 19th September with the 2nd session held in December.

In addition to public sign-up to training courses the Surrey FA have, in the last 16 months, delivered 9 FA Referee courses for clubs and leagues to get those involved in clubs, into refereeing so Craig and Harry are actively targeting new audiences.

This has included running a course with Palace4Life, training 24 new referees from historically underrepresented groups and 42 new female referees without a female only course.

Development

Training and conversion (getting new trainees to complete their 5 games) is the initial role but the on-going development of new trainees in a more controlled environment has proven to be beneficial.

In the past the development opportunities offered at Chelsea FC Women's and Fulham FC academies had been neglected. As RDO he also inherited Surrey FA CORE, formerly known as the

Development Group (which itself had been neglected after many referees had reached Level 4 and it needed a refresh.

Harry inherited a group of academy referees to work with and support, alongside creating a positive structure to the academy to ensure referees could join, do games for a few months, turn towards adult football when aged 16 and join the progression pathway - which itself had undergone a big shake up in 2022/23 and like all Counties FA, especially one of Surrey's size, had some initial teething issues with the process.

The academy now has a regular set of 10 officials who are doing games week in week out and from that cohort of officials last season, 4 have progressed directly into adult football when they turned 16, and joined the progression pathway and have been getting on well. They are still doing the odd academy games and receiving coaching, but their priority is now getting their Promotions.



With this natural progression from Academy into adult football, when referees are ready Craig and Harry identify promising referees from the course and offer them academy games to enhance the start of their refereeing careers.

It is important to say that this is not invite only and they will work with anyone who wishes to join the Academy, providing they are willing to uphold the standards expected of a referee within a professional football academy. They are also expected to attend CPDs regularly as part of their development and as a result can be invited to attend the Surrey FA CORE.

Surrey FA CORE

For season 2023/24, Surrey created a new Female Only CORE, led by Harry, consisting of 9 promising female officials. This created a really positive and supportive network for these officials, with coaches watching them and regularly supporting them. This opportunity also led to 2 referees being nominated for ETP and 1 for CORE.

Craig and Harry decided for season 2024/25, to merge the groups, refreshing the whole system, and having 9 female officials alongside 9 male officials, and 12 coaches, who meet quarterly. All officials

in this group have been invited, must meet the expectations set out when they join, such as working with their coach and being on the Progression Pathway.

Over the last few years, we have seen almost all member's progress either into FA CORE, Level 4 or both and Surrey want to keep this strong momentum.



Progression Pathway

Following on from the significant changes to the progression pathway, Surrey needed to adapt to the new process and requirements.

They started using *RefSec*, a system used by many County FAs to administer the games that referees are doing. Referees will add their game as soon as they get them and we can appoint a Match Day Coach or Observer as appropriate through the system. All emails will be generated by *RefSec* and ensures a streamlined process for having referees watched and getting coaches games.

Using this process, it has allowed Surrey to get a lot of referees on the scheme and get themselves promoted at their own pace. Surrey are making significant progress having 8 referees on the 5-4 scheme.

Full details of the Progression Pathway in Surrey including the Referee Progression Pathway Booklet can be found at [FA Referee Progression Pathway - Surrey FA.](#)

CPD offering

When Craig came in he was very aware that the CPD programme offered was not good enough for our Referees. Outside of a few events sporadically, there was no structure to what was offered, which gave no real end goal to the CPD offering.

In August 2024, ahead of the season 2024/25, Surrey invited Referees from Levels Trainee, Y, 7 and 6 to a pre-season CPD. This was a full day event including Fitness sessions, LoTG quizzes and support to referees on total control of their game, focusing on both on field and off field aspects

This was the start of a CPD roadshow, a 4 part CPD aimed to develop key areas a Referee at these levels will need to master to achieve their future progressions to the next level. On top of this, Surrey ran the annual LoTG changes CPD online with 90 officials dialling in. Surrey have further sessions being planned with PGMOL officials and representatives, details of which should be shared soon.

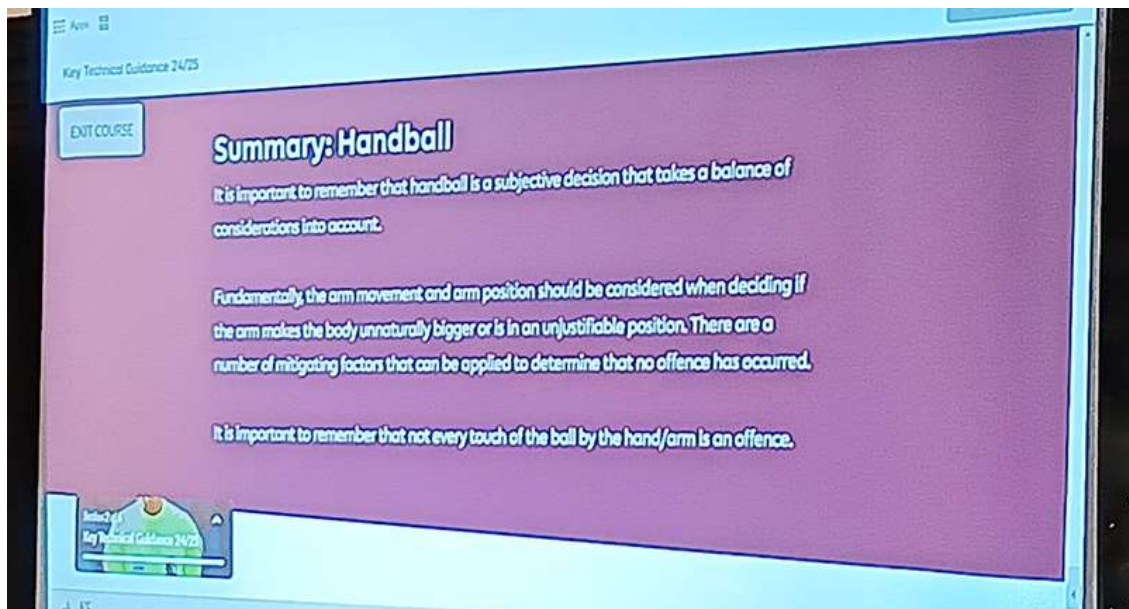
Mentoring

Paul Maskell came on board as lead Mentor to support Surrey in running the Mentor Programme, something that will be developed this season and beyond. With this said, when a Referee requests a mentor, they will receive one ASAP, but Craig was aware most referees do not want or need one.

This concluded Craig's presentation on his work as the County Referee Development Officer.

Guidance

For the second part of the evening Craig gave a presentation on HANDBALL and the guidance being provided by PGMOL.



Craig began by reiterating that not every touch of a player's hand/arm with the ball is an offence but acknowledged that this is a subjective decision.

A player's hand/arm position should be judged in relation to body movement in that particular situation and players are not expected to move with their arms by their side or behind their back.

Some of the key criteria when judging handball listed by Craig included:

- Making the player unnaturally bigger
- Having the arm in an unjustifiable position
- A deliberate action

Some of the mitigating factors would include:

- Arm movement
- Arm position
- Significant change in the trajectory of the ball (clear deflection).

The Vote of Thanks was given by Jamie Beal.



Note: In writing up a review of the presentation I learnt that in recent seasons the Premier League and the referee’s body PGMOL have issued a handbook to clubs which lays out the principles for interpretation of the Laws of the Game that will be applied by referees in the competition [Premier League & PGMOL Competition Guidance Handbook 2024/25](#).

The summary provided below is taken from the “Handball - Interpretation” section of the Guidance Handbook

No handball offence	Handball offence
Justifiable position/action Player plays ball onto own arm	Deliberate movement of arm away from body
Supportive arm Clear change of ball trajectory when touched by same player	Clear additional arm movement
Played by a team-mate Proximity	Arm position - Makes body unjustifiably bigger

Article by Stephen Maguire

County Long Service Awards

Many of our members have been awarded for their service to Surrey County FA this month. A function was held at Guildford at the end of February for all those receiving awards.

Those from Croydon RA getting awards were:

- Alan Donovan - 45 years
- Stephen Maguire - 35 years
- Dave Roper - 35 years
- Rob Allum - 25 years
- Alan Hodge - 35 years
- Nick Robinson - 25 years
- John Catley - 15 years
- Bill Cooper - 15 years
- Steve Dombrandt - 15 years
- Tony Sheppard - 15 years



Jamie Beal, Dave Roper, Andy Madley (Premier league referee), Stephen Maguire, John Catley



Steve Dombrandt receives his service award at our February meeting

March meeting – TBC

We are still hoping that **Harry Lennard** will be able to attend and we have deliberately left this issue of the Ray as late as possible to see if we can obtain a firm commitment from him. He is no longer an active official since his 2024 FA cup final appointment as an Assistant Referee but has obtained employment on the new system to replace VAR. This had its first public airing in the FA cup last weekend. This has caused Harry to be working all hours.

This has proved frustrating for us but we have an alternative plan to whet your appetite. Stephen Maguire has a **Quiz Evening** up his sleeve if needed.



or



There have been the 'normal' issues of controversy over the last two weeks, for example Everton v Man Utd and Crystal Palace v Millwall for you to discuss your thoughts.

However, the new semi-automated system, Football Video Support (FVS) has promised to be quicker and easier to operate. Yet on its debut the Bournemouth v Wolverhampton FA cup tie resulted in a record 8 minute delay as the operators had to revert to the old VAR system to finally make a decision!!

QR code

We now have a QR code which when scanned will take you to our website at www.croydonreferees.org. This will be used on any future material including all issues of the Ray.



Cup Final Appointments

Congratulations to Jamie Beal who has been appointed as the reserve referee in the Saturday Lower Junior Cup final to be played in mid-May at Meadowbank, Dorking.



Essex FA's loss is Surrey FA's gain. For a full list check out the [News item on the Surrey FA website](#)

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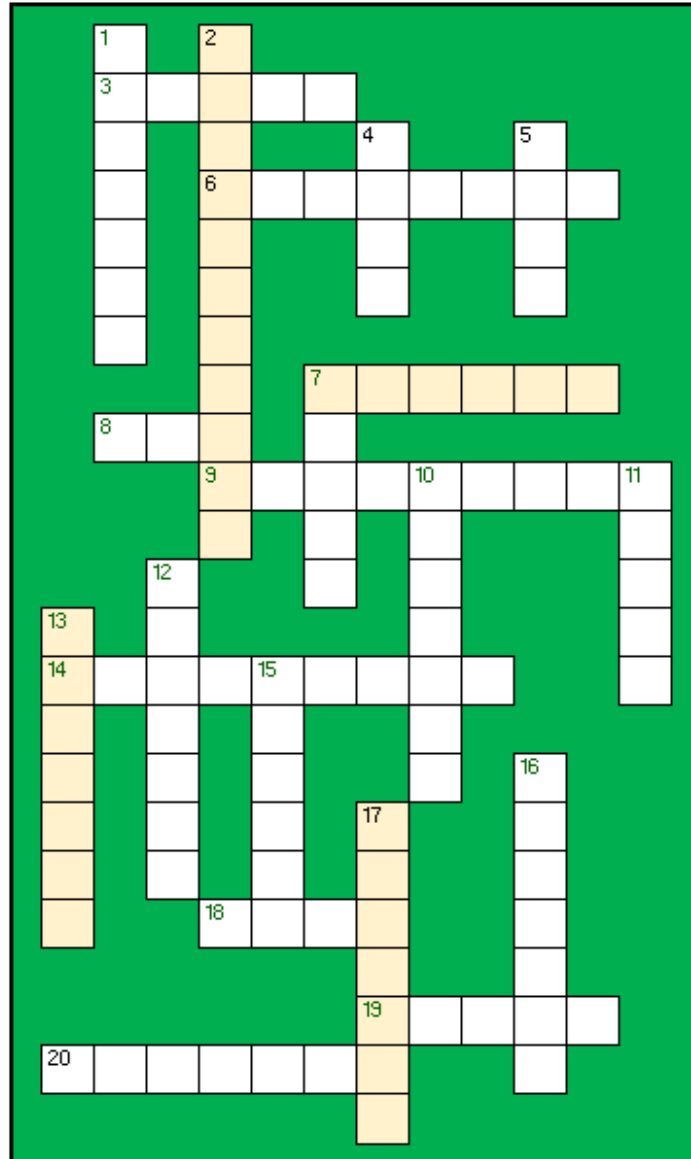
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or email Peter at Standardbuildingmaintenance56@gmail.com

Puzzle Corner - Crossword

The 4 yellow clues are all football clubs, the other 17 are words taken from Laws of the Game (LoTG).



Across

- 3 Law 1
- 6 Law 7
- 7 Oldest London Football Team
- 8 Law 9
- 9 Law 4
- 14 Law 6
- 18 Law 13
- 19 Law 8
- 20 Law 10

Down

- 1 Law 11
- 2 Last winners of the old 1st division
- 4 Law 2
- 5 Law 16
- 7 Law 12
- 10 Law 14
- 11 Law 15
- 12 Law 5
- 13 Winners of the FA Vase in 2024
- 15 Law 17
- 16 Law 3
- 17 The millenium FA Cup winners

First correct entry received by the editor wins a bottle of wine to be awarded at the first opportunity. Either email it in to me or hand me a paper copy at either the March or April meeting.

Answer for February's Puzzle Corner

Who am I –Phil Dowd



Ed's & tales

In one of my recent matches there was a clash between a striker and a goalkeeper. To my mind the striker had won the ball, not dangerously and the keeper had got there a split second later, and come off worse for it. The striker put the ball home while the keeper was on the ground, apparently injured. Do I blow for a foul, albeit late? I signalled for a goal to much shouting and complaining from the defending team. With a number of players challenging my decision, I explained "For me there was no foul, the goal stands". As the keeper got medical attention he complained "I might not be able to go on". After a few minutes he was eventually happy to continue. Some 10 minutes later he was miraculously diving around. I'm pleased I stuck with my initial instinct that there was no foul.

I'm still looking for a new reporter for either the April or May Ray. Go on, give me a little article. Please email it to me by the 22nd of the month. Thank you.

Steve Watson

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