



April 2025 - Issue 710

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Chairman's foreword

First of all, apologies for the last minute changes to our plans for the March meeting. Our Guest speaker was unable to attend due to unexpected work commitments -and I hope those attending enjoyed the Quiz – kindly prepared by Steve Maguire and the discussion on recent match incidents with those present and Steve/ Geoff Turner.



For this month Geoff has arranged a new guest speaker and details of this are included later in this edition. I will try to make sure we have some time for match incidents and/or more general discussions. Bearing in mind that this is the last “normal” monthly meeting this season (the next being the Annual General meeting), please let me or any of the Committee members know if there is anything you would like to discuss or raise regarding the Society and its activities.

The recent victories against Albania and Latvia bode well for further progress through the qualifying stages of the FIFA World Cup 2026..... still a long way to go to the finals next summer. Let's hope for more wins as the Competition progresses.

I look forward to seeing you on Thursday 3rd April 2025 at 7.30pm for a 7.45 pm start at our usual venue.

Best regards
David Norman -Chair

Report of the March Meeting - Match Incidents & Quiz

With our intended guest speaker, Harry Lennard, unavailable (in part due to one of the match incidents we discussed) we used the opportunity to talk through recent match incidents from televised games and enable members to give their thoughts on what the officials did, should have done or could have done better.



there is always a possibility that a guest speaker will be unable to attend and have in reserve some quiz questions to test both the refereeing and general knowledge of members present and that was used to complete the evening.

Match incidents

Challenge on Jean-Philippe Mateta

During the FA Cup fifth-round match on 1 March, Crystal Palace forward Jean-Philippe Mateta suffered a severe injury following a reckless challenge by Millwall goalkeeper Liam Roberts when Roberts, attempting to clear the ball, raised his boot and struck Mateta's head.

This resulted in a deep laceration to Mateta's ear, requiring 25 stitches and immediate hospitalisation.



The referee, Michael Oliver, dismissed Roberts after a VAR review, and the Football Association later extended his suspension to six matches due to the severity of the foul. This incident sparked

discussions about player safety and the need for stricter enforcement of rules to prevent such dangerous challenges in football.

There was a wider discussion at the meeting covering the following:

- Head injury - would you play on?

Simple answer to that was NO, if you see that a player has received a blow to the head it is beholden upon us, as match officials, to stop the game and summon appropriate treatment for the injured player.

- Why did the referee allow play to continue in this instance?

Some attendees had actually been at the game and had commented that the position of the sun could have hampered the view of the challenge and that, despite appearing to be positioned to view the challenge, he may not have been able to see it clearly.

At the higher levels of the game advantage can be important and not appreciating the severity of the challenge may have meant that the referee prioritised the opportunity to play an advantage.

- VAR Review

The fact that the referee only initially cautioned Roberts, would reinforce the view that he did not appreciate the seriousness of the challenge.

VAR is there to assist match officials in making accurate decisions for key incidents where there has been a Clear and Obvious Error or act of Serious Foul Play that has gone unpunished.

The intervention of VAR was appropriate and ensured that the severity of the foul was correctly punished.

VAR delay at Bournemouth

The FA Cup quarter-finals saw the first use of semi-automated offside technology (SAOT) in England yet in the Bournemouth vs. Brentford match there was a very long VAR delay of some 7 minutes.

This was reportedly due to technical challenges with the SAOT as the congested penalty area made it difficult for the system to accurately track player positions, leading to an extended review process.



Whilst VAR is in place to ensure that clear and obvious errors are corrected the fact that it took more than 7 minutes to reach a decision shows that this was not clear or obvious. The consensus on the evening was that if VAR cannot deliver a decision within a set period, perhaps 2 minutes, then the on-field decision should stand.

Additional note: In writing this article I did some additional research and now realise that, unlike the systems used by FIFA and UEFA, which rely on dedicated tracking cameras, the Premier League opted for a hybrid system. This incident highlighted the limitations of the technology in complex scenarios, sparking criticism about its efficiency and reliability.

Law changes for 2025/26

The stand out change announced by IFAB is that goalkeepers will be required to release the ball within 8 seconds of gaining possession and aims to reduce time-wasting and improve the flow of the game.

If a goalkeeper holds onto the ball for more than eight seconds, the opposing team will be awarded a corner kick.



This rule replaces the older six-second rule, which was rarely enforced due to its indirect free-kick penalty being considered too harsh. Trials of the eight-second rule in various competitions have shown positive results, with goalkeepers adapting quickly to avoid conceding corners.

The one area of concern for us is that referees will “assist” by initiating a visible countdown with their hand after three seconds of possession - so providing a countdown from 5 to assist.

It will be interesting to see what guidance is issued ahead of the implementation of the 8 second rule regarding when the goalkeeper is deemed to have “possession”, does the countdown have to be visual, vocal or both and how much additional management of player expectations will a referee, particularly those operating a grassroots, have to do?

Post meeting note: Our President, Dave Roper, did wonder if Crystal Palace would now change their theme tune of “Glad All Over” by The Dave Clark Five to “5-4-3-2-1” by Manfred Mann.

Red card at Shrewsbury

Geoff Turner raised the issuance of a very quick red card at Shrewsbury that occurred during their League One clash against Peterborough United on 1 March.

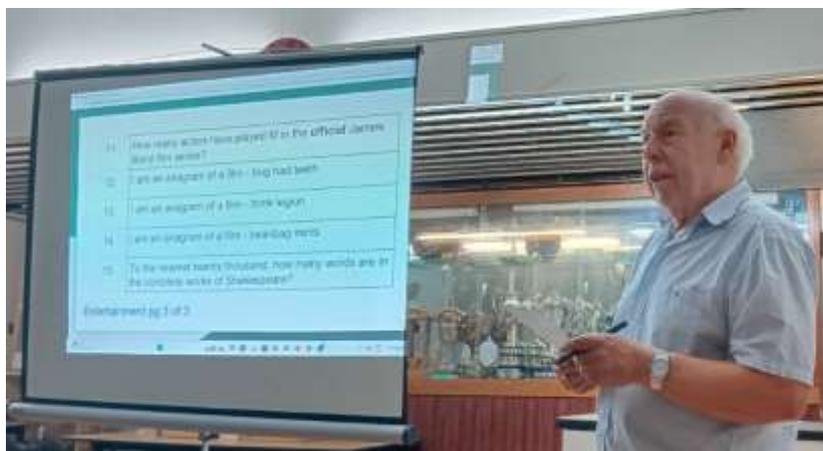


Shrewsbury captain John Marquis was sent off just 13 seconds into the match for elbowing Peterborough defender Sam Hughes. This dismissal equalled the record for the fastest red card in English professional football, originally set by Sheffield Wednesday goalkeeper Kevin Pressman in 2000.

Geoff highlighted the need to be switched on from the first whistle to the last as something can happen at any moment.

Quiz

The evening ended with 4 rounds of quiz questions, assisted by our Chairman Dave. The winners were committee members Geoff Turner, Steve Tyler and Steve Watson.



Article by Stephen Maguire

And now the first of a new monthly feature.....

Meet the Ref – Rod van Niekerk

I played two codes of football, Saturday was for Rugby, and Sunday was for Association. I gave up playing both when I was 40. As well as being a qualified F.A. Coach, I played Rugby for Old Wandsworthians and Sunday Football for two park teams Longstaff in the Invicta Sunday league and Dundonald Sports in the Morden & District Sunday league.

In 1998 I took the Referee's course and reffed my first game three days after I passed on the Invicta. Having spent two years at Class 3, I was promoted in successive years from Class 2 to 1. In today's money that's Levels 7, 6 and 5. I have officiated on the now defunct Invicta, West Fulham, Sutton, and Mitcham leagues.



At present I am on the Leatherhead, Southern Sunday and Line on Combined Counties F.L. I have been lucky enough to have officiated in finals on all the above mentioned leagues as well as having been on five Surrey County Cup Finals. Apart from being a member of Croydon I have also been a member of Wimbledon and Sutton Societies both of which have both gone to the wall. So watch out this one could be next!

Over the past twenty seven years or so Refereeing has kept me busy but I can still find time to quaff as many strangely named real ales that I can find.

April Meeting – Adam Shimmin

Adam is a level 4 referee. He operates on the Combined Counties and assistant referee on supply leagues such as South Central Premier League.

Last May he officiated at the Middlesex Senior Charity Cup Final (played at Bedfont Sports FC) between Uxbridge and North Greenford United. Uxbridge (in red) won 2-1.



He was originally from Hull but prior to moving to London, lived in Melbourne Australia where he was coaching for Melbourne Victory as well as officiating on the Victorian National Premier League (NPL Victoria).

He now lives in West London, working for Queens Park Rangers.

This season, he has officiated in numerous FA Youth Cup and FA Vase ties as well as being appointed as an assistant referee on the FA Cup 2nd Qualifying Round game between Welling United and Chatham Town.

Formal Notice of our Annual General Meeting

In accordance with our current Society Rules, we hereby give formal notice of the upcoming Society AGM. This will be held at the Croydon Bowling Club on Thursday 8th May 2025 at 7.30pm for a 7.45pm start. All members are very welcome to attend.

If you have any Committee/Officer nominations, proposals, or Rule amendments, please submit them, in writing, to the Society Secretary- Geoff Turner, before FRIDAY 25th April 2025. They will then be included in the May edition of the RAY and discussed at the AGM.

[Future Committee Members](#)

If you would be interested in joining the committee and contributing your thoughts and ideas please contact the Society Secretary for further information.

Surrey County FA - Referee Long Service Awards evening

On 27 February the Surrey County FA held a gathering at the Harbour Hotel, Guildford to celebrate the service of referees and congratulate those who have been appointed to officiate in County Cup Finals this year.

The awards were presented by PGMOL referee Andy Madley, who refereed the FA Cup Final last May, and he provided a talk on what has helped him and would be beneficial to those looking forward to their own Cup Final.

Long Service Awards

As has been published in the RAY previously a number of our members were eligible to receive 15, 25, 35 and 45 year awards from the County FA with a number of us attending on the evening.

Refereeing is not merely about enforcing rules; it requires a deep understanding of the sport, the courage to make tough decisions, and the ability to maintain composure under pressure.

All recipients have shown dedication and commitment throughout their years of service and made an invaluable contribution to football through their tireless efforts.



Andy Madley presentation

Having refereed the greatest domestic Cup Final Andy was well placed to provide advice about having a presence on the biggest stage and being 'Prepared for Kick Off?'.

Biography

Andy was born in 1983 in Huddersfield and began his refereeing journey in local Wakefield leagues and quickly progressed through the ranks. By 2008, he became a Level 3A referee, enabling him to serve as an assistant referee in the Football League.

He was promoted to the Panel List in 2009 and in 2011 advanced to the National List of Referees, officiating in the Football League. His Premier League debut came on March 31, 2018, in a match between Watford and Bournemouth and in June 2019, he was promoted to the Select Group 1 Referees list. Throughout his career, Andy has officiated significant fixtures, including the FA Vase Final in 2015, the EFL League One Play-Off Final in 2019, and the FA Cup Final in 2024 between Manchester City and Manchester United. He is also a FIFA-listed referee, representing England in international competitions.

Preparation

Andy began by displaying a quote famously attributed to Abraham Lincoln that emphasises the importance of preparation and planning before undertaking a task and is a powerful reminder to focus on the groundwork to ensure success. The quote is: “Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe”.

He also likened refereeing any Cup Final as being akin to a theatre production with the different participants being:

- The Stage - the venue: do you know where it is, have you been there before
- The Audience - the crowd
- The Performers - the teams: have they played each other this season, have they players that need to be managed
- The Conductor - the referee

Cup Finals are a one-off and it is important to plan not only aspects of your game but to allow for the additional requirements that are associated with them such as:

- Time Management - will teams need to be ready earlier than normal
- Team Leading - you will have a 4th official, possibly for the first time
- Guests - family and friends have got you this far so you may want to have them with you and there may be sponsors or other special guests to meet
- Contain the Nerves - it is a prestige appointment and you will be nervous but if you prepare properly you will be able to manage them better

Andy talked briefly about what had helped him and the use of mental visualisation in helping him to prepare. This included picturing the day and sticking to what you have practiced as, in his words, ‘Practice Makes Permanent’.

Andy’s final pieces of advice were:

- Don’t fluff your lines
- Bring the production to a safe close
- Let the audience go home happy
- Don’t let them talk about ‘The Composer!’
- A smile goes a long way

Surrey FA, and in particular Craig Hicks and Harry Yellen, staged a memorable evening and their efforts that went into making it a success were appreciated by all those present.

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or email Peter at Standardbuildingmaintenance56@gmail.com

Society Dinner

The end of season dinner will be held at Coombe Wood House (formerly The Chateau) on Friday 23rd May for 7pm, sitting down at 7.45pm.



The cost will be £30 per head. This comprises a three course meal (including bread and butter) in a private room and includes the service charge. We have provisionally booked for 20. Can you please let Dave Roper know if you would like to attend at the earliest possible opportunity with your choices to ensure we have sufficient interest to secure the booking. [See menu below.](#)

STARTERS

GREEK PRAWNS, FETA CHEESE

FILO PASTRY VEGETABLE ROLLS, SPICY TOMATO DIP

PORK BELLY ON BABY GEMS, CARROTS, MOOLI RADISH & SOY REDUCTION

MAIN COURSES

ROSEMARY GRILLED CHICKEN BREAST, BALSAMIC GRAVY, SERVED WITH VEGETABLES AND POTATOES

PAN-FRIED FILLET OF SEABREAM, ROASTED FENNEL, CHERRY TOMATO & NEW POTATOES

MUSHROOM AND LEEK PIE, VEGETABLE GRAVY

DESSERTS

STICKY TOFFEE PUDDING WITH VANILLA ICE CREAM

CREAM CATALANA

MANGO PANNACOTTA

TEA / COFFEE

BOOKINGS - via bank transfer to:- Croydon Referees Society
Nat West Bank Sort code 60-50-01 Account No. 43896669

Please add your name and number attending in the REFERENCE field

Please send your menu choices to david.roper130@btinternet.com

No later than 12 May 2025

Further venue details can be found on their website at www.coombewoodhouse.co.uk

Puzzle Corner – Who am I

Can you name the referee from these clues?



- A professional football referee who retired in May 2023, after a 23 year career
- Based in Solihull West Midlands
- A member of the Birmingham County FA
- Career began in 1992, progressing via the Birmingham Amateur Football league and Southern Football League.
- Became a Football League assistant referee in 2000
- Promoted to the list of Select Group of referees in 2005
- Refereed the FA Youth cup final in 2005 (Southampton v Ipswich)
- A FIFA referee from 2009 to 2017
- In May 2013 took charge of the FA Cup final between Manchester City & Wigan Athletic
- A full time VAR official from the 2023/24 season



Answers for March's Puzzle Corner

No winning entry as yet for our Crossword, answers deferred until the May issue. The prize of a bottle of wine is on hold.

Ed's & tales

I was recently doing a schools under 16 match on a 3G pitch in Bromley. There was high wire fencing around the pitch and at the school end was an even higher bank.



In the second half, a home player shot from about 20 yards, I heard a deflection as I was close, just a few yards to the side and the ball looped over the keeper but ended up behind the goal, between the net and the fence/wall. I paused a second or two, nobody appealed for the corner?

I waited another few seconds (it seemed like longer), everyone had stopped? It was then I saw the home players calmly celebrating. The ball was actually in the net and not behind it. I pointed towards the centre circle. Sometimes a player's reaction can be very useful. That avoided me the embarrassment of a bad call.

It's your last chance to write me an article before we close the Newsletter season. Any new reporter who can get me an article by 22nd April will give me enough time to get it in the May Ray. Thank you.

Steve Watson

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V2