



September 2025 - Issue 712

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### ***Chairman's foreword***



Welcome back to all of you returning to the Society for the new football Season. We will be kicking off the first meeting with our own Instructor/Improver - Jamie Beal talking about the Law changes and followed by a technical session. These sessions have been very popular in the past and I hope you will be able to support them with your attendance- full meeting details are included later in the magazine.

Sadly the closed season saw the passing of two refereeing colleagues – George Dickson and Richard Ireson. Further details are included in this magazine.

On the positive side two of our refereeing friends have been promoted – Adam Shimmin - who has gained Promotion to Step 3/4 Referee & Step 2 Assistant. Adam recently made a great presentation at a Croydon Society meeting. Also Jonty Bolland with Woking RA who has been promoted to Step 2 Referee and that we hope will be able to talk his experiences in this coming season at a Society Meeting.

Having been personally very frustrated that the Manchester City legal case is still going on it seems that whatever the outcome there will be an appeal-further protracting the situation. This madness is doing the game no good – I hope someone can get a compromise to get this dispute over with.

At the grass roots level we are trying to persuade the SCFA to streamline/expedite the flow of information to the local Refereeing Societies. We know that in other Counties they are achieving it, but Surrey is not. We will have the latest update on this at the September meeting. Getting a result on this is key to attracting the new members we need to sustain the Society.

I wish you all the very best for the upcoming season and trust that if you need help you could approach your colleagues or Committee members/Officers for the right support.

David Norman  
Chair

## ***Report of the May Meeting / AGM***

At this year's AGM, all current officers and committee members were re-elected for the forthcoming years. There were no rules changes this year. We thank all those for attending.

## ***September Meeting – Jamie Beal***

Our 2025/26 season kicks on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> September with our speaker and Croydon's own Jamie Beal who will be taking through the Laws of the Game changes for this year. The second half of the meeting will be discussing match incidents.

## ***Membership Renewals – 1<sup>st</sup> June 2025***

The RA membership year runs from 1st June each year and I am grateful for those members that have already renewed their membership.

It has also been pleasing to see a number of former colleagues re-joining this season.

For those that have yet to renew I would urge you, with the imminent start of grass roots football, to complete the renewal process and ensure that your insurance cover is maintained.

If you should have any membership queries please contact me at [stephenjmag36@gmail.com](mailto:stephenjmag36@gmail.com).

Stephen Maguire

## ***WhatsApp Group***



If you would like to be added to the Croydon Referees Society *WhatsApp* group then please contact Jamie Beale on 07450 681969 or at [james.beal93@googlemail.com](mailto:james.beal93@googlemail.com).

## ***Improving behaviour in grassroots football***

The Football Association has announced an updated set of measures for the 2025-26 season to help improve behaviour and combat misconduct in grassroots football.

These interventions are aimed at driving a positive culture across grassroots football and act as a clear deterrent against unacceptable behaviours. They also form part of the campaign to introduce enhanced measures and tougher sanctions so that everyone can enjoy the game in a positive and enjoyable environment.

Key updates for the 2025-26 season include:

### **Captains Only protocol**

A Captains Only protocol is being introduced across all levels of English football. This will mean that only the team captain can approach a match official to discuss a decision after it has been made (unless the team captain is the goalkeeper, in which case a nominated outfield player will play this role).

A 'captain-only zone' has been introduced which extends four metres around the referee, and only the captain can enter this space. Other players are not permitted to enter this space and should receive a caution (and

Temporary Suspension or "sin-bin") for dissent if they do.

This new protocol is intended to reduce wider incidents of dissent and intimidation of match officials.

### **Under-18 Referee Armbands**

Starting this season, all youth referees (those under the age of 18) will have the option to wear a yellow armband, which signifies they are not an adult. This will add further protection to our U18 referees, serving as a visual notice to players, coaches, and spectators to treat them with an extra level of respect and patience. These armbands will be distributed to all U18 referees via their respective County FAs, and while not mandatory, The FA are encouraging those eligible to wear them.



### **Bodycams**

In 2023, the FA became the first football association to introduce the trial of bodycams for grassroots referees, which were used in over 4,000 matches across eight leagues last season. In these matches, the bodycams were activated a total of 6 times in response to situations where the referee felt it was necessary, and used as a visible deterrent when required.

Surrey FA was selected to take part in The FA's trial of the use of referee bodycams for the 2024/25 season.

The impact of the expanded bodycam trial is being assessed and feedback is being collated from participants, match officials, and leagues to help shape the next phase of the pilot and any decisions regarding future implementation. As part of this, for the 2025-26 season, bodycams will be used in certain leagues targeted as a result of discipline records.

And, although not something I am aware of being trialled in Surrey.

### **Cooling off periods**

The introduction of 'cooling off periods' will be trialled across selected grassroots leagues as a tool to help prevent escalation during heated moments in a match. If the referee feels the game is getting too heated or unsafe, they can pause play and send all players to their penalty areas.

If this happens, captains and coaches will be required to meet with the referee in the centre circle to discuss the issue and help calm their teams. Other players must stay in their penalty areas during the break, and anyone who leaves without permission would receive a yellow card. After a short timeout, based on the seriousness of the situation and conditions, the referee will restart the match.

### **Grassroots Code of Conduct**

The FA will continue to embed the Respect Standard, supported by Codes of Conduct, which was launched prior to the 2024-25 season, clearly setting out expectations of behaviours in the grassroots game: Enjoy the Game; Give Respect; Be Inclusive; Work Together; and Play Safe.

### **Rewarding Positive Behaviour**

County FAs are running a wide range of initiatives to recognise and reward examples of positive behaviour from their local clubs; with these initiatives including discounts on affiliation fees and local awards.

### **Mandatory minimum fine**

A key part of our work is the continued focus on addressing the most serious of cases. These include offences aggravated by reference to a protected characteristic, threats, physical contact or assaults on match officials and player-on-player assaults. Whilst these offences only occur in 0.2 per cent of all grassroots football annually, we know the serious impact these incidents have on those within the game.



A mandatory minimum fine of £75 will be introduced for individual misconduct charges and a mandatory recommended entry point of between £100 and £200 depending on the level of football

for club misconduct charges where there is a protected characteristic involved. This includes cases of discrimination against race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and disability.

### **Behaviour Improvement Programme**

The FA's Behaviour Improvement Programme will run again this year following its success in the 2024-25 season.

The programme uses discipline and respect score data to monitor clubs for poor conduct, including dissent, abuse of referees or players, and serious misconduct. Clubs accumulate penalty points for repeated incidents and receive respect scores from opponents, creating a league table that identifies both the worst offenders and consistently well-behaved teams.

The FA are continuing the programme this season, which sees County FAs working directly with clubs identified to improve repetitive poor behaviour.

### **Penalty points accumulations to continue**

Penalty points will continue to be attributed to teams for offences that are behaviour-based, such as violent conduct, dissent, or threatening behaviour. When a threshold of accumulated penalty points is reached, bespoke support will be provided to the club, and they will be asked to evidence steps that are being taken to tackle their poor behaviour. Ultimately, ongoing accumulation of penalty points can lead to removal of England Football

Accreditation or even the removal of a team from a competition. Last season, 20 teams either had their affiliation immediately removed or affiliation for 2025-26 was made subject to the CFA agreeing an action plan with them ahead of the start of the season.



### **Continued league points deductions**

Following on from the introduction of league points deductions in grassroots football in 2023, the FA are committed to tackling repeat offenders and points deductions can be applied to clubs where there are repeated incidents of serious misconduct, for example, discriminatory abuse from spectators.

For the FA the tackling poor behaviour at all levels of grassroots football is of paramount importance in creating safe, respectful, and inclusive environments for players, match officials, spectators, coaches, and all others involved in the game. Whilst progress has been made in addressing these issues there is still more to be done to create positive environments and tackle misconduct.



The new set of updated measures are designed to further support a culture of respect, accountability, and promote enjoyment across the grassroots game.

Article by Stephen Maguire

### ***Meet the Ref (No. 3) – Gareth Mays***

I qualified as a referee in (I think) 1983/84 and started my journey on the Southern Area Sunday Football and Thornton Heath & District Football Leagues. I was quite happy to referee at park level and had no real aspirations to go higher up the pyramid until I was encouraged/bullied to do so by a colleague. I applied for promotion from Class 3 (now days Level 7) and moved onto the Surrey Premier League for my Saturday football. I was lucky enough to be promoted to Class 1 (today's equivalent would be Level 4) in successive seasons. I then moved onto refereeing in the Suburban League, Capital League (pro club reserve teams) Southern Youth Leagues and lining on the Southern Football League (Contributory League Level).

It was difficult at the time to get promoted into the middle of the Southern League as, being such a widespread League, every time I was in for a chance of promotion it seemed that the League didn't need more referees in the London area. One good thing about the Southern League was that I received numerous appointments as 4th official at Football League and Premier League matches, including being 4th official when a young (tattoo free) David Beckham scored his wonder goal from inside his own half at Wimbledon. I was later moved by the FA from the Suburban League to the Combined Counties League which gave me a number of opportunities to referee AFC Wimbledon in front of four figure crowds as they came through the pyramid system. When the FA took over appointing match officials for the Contributory League I moved onto officiating on both the Southern and Isthmian Leagues.



Just prior to covid I picked up a heel injury which meant I was unable to take the FA fitness test and therefore had to step down from Contributory League football. Having spent a season as a Level 5 operating on the Combined Counties League and Isthmian Youth Leagues, I was enjoying doing more middles and decided not to re-apply for my Level 4. I do miss Contributory League football but have

more time now to officiate where I want, and I no longer get the FA phone calls on a Monday evening saying we need you to go to Margate, Gosport or Bury St Edmunds etc, tomorrow night. I also now help out refereeing on the Surrey Youth League on Sunday mornings. I am also a qualified referee mentor and have previously been an Assessor/Observer.

My honours in the game include officiating at: the Southern League Cup and Champions cup finals, Suburban League Cup final, Southern and Isthmian Youth League Cup finals, Isthmian Women's Cup Final, Combined Counties Cup Final and U18 Cup Final and Southern Combination Cup final. The Surrey Senior, Premier, U18, Sunday Senior and Veterans Cup finals. My biggest honour was officiating at the FA Youth County Cup final between Hampshire and Staffordshire at Aldershot FC and the replay at Port Vale FC. Having a trophy with the 3 Lions badge on gives me real pride. I also had the privilege of refereeing Guernsey's first ever game in the English Pyramid system.

A lot of enjoyment and honours along the way, but the biggest plus from my refereeing career is the number of friends I have made with fellow officials during this time...long may it continue usually in the bar after Society meetings!!!

*Gareth*

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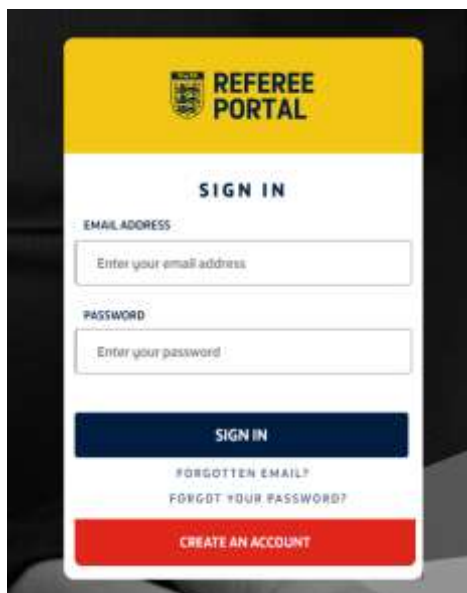
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## Referee Portal

The FA have launched a new system for referees to manage their misconduct reports on the FA Referee Portal. This replaces the Whole Game System (WGS) which has been removed entirely.

If you search (*Google*) for Referee Portal or enter “refreeesthefa.com” you will get a popup over a mostly black image where you will enter your email address and password (from WGS).

A screenshot of the FA Referee Portal login interface. At the top is a yellow header with the FA crest and the text 'REFEREE PORTAL'. Below this is a white box with the heading 'SIGN IN'. It contains two input fields: 'EMAIL ADDRESS' with the placeholder 'Enter your email address' and 'PASSWORD' with the placeholder 'Enter your password'. Below the fields is a blue 'SIGN IN' button. Underneath the button are two links: 'FORGOTTEN EMAIL?' and 'FORGOT YOUR PASSWORD?'. At the bottom is a red button labeled 'CREATE AN ACCOUNT'.

Under the Discipline menu option you can then add matches (on the right), but not before the day. Any match allocated by the “fulltime” system should have been already automatically created for you. Once the match is available you can select Add Match Report, select your role and then Add Incident. You then choose between caution, dismissal or extraordinary.

You can see a fuller example on *YouTube* at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSKDVKMqpyw>



Don't forget to register your Surrey FA membership for the 2025/26 season via the Registration option in the Referees portal.

### ***Ed's & tales***

Good to see the new 8 second law enforced on the first Saturday of the season. Martin Dubravka of Burnley became the first kgoaleeper in the premier league to fall foul of the new law, resulting in a corner to Tottenham. I reckon teams will get used to this virtually straight away. Not like the back pass to the goalkeeper change, when from my memory it took about half a season for Premier teams to get used to that one.



If you have any content (e.g. Anecdotes picked from previous games or your views on the game we love) that you would like me to include, then please email it to me by 24th of the month which will hopefully then give me enough time to include it in the forthcoming edition. If you have any comments on the Ray too, then please let me know, anything will be gratefully received.

Steve Watson

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Scan this for the Croydon Referees Society website

