

May 2026 - Issue 720

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Chairman's Foreword



It's been a month of progress, perspective, and a fair bit of behind-the-scenes work that keeps the Society running smoothly. There's been plenty to take stock of. As ever, the focus remains on raising refereeing standards, strengthening our refereeing community, and making sure we're ready for what comes next.

Interesting times in professional football remain, with several potential outcomes at the top and bottom of the English Premier League. It was great to see that Bromley FC have been promoted to League 1 for the first time – I know we have some avid supporters amongst the membership - so enjoy the moment.



I am certainly looking forward to the World Cup during the summer months. Looks like we should at least get through the first Group.....but I don't want to jinx it !!!!!

Next Society meeting

The next Society meeting will be our Annual General Meeting to be held on Thursday 14th May, 7.45pm at the Croydon Bowling Club. There is no guest speaker but there will be a free first drink on the Society! This meeting is an opportunity to:-

- receive the Officers reports**
- discuss how the Society is running**
- elect the Officers and Committee for next season**
- hear your views of the Society.**

A full agenda will be separately published herein.

**We will also have the draw for the two FA Cup Final tickets we have been allocated from the FA
Please try to come and support the Society.**

This year we seem to have been very successful in getting Cup Final appointments on the local and county leagues - congratulations to any of you who have received one in the recent weeks that we have not publicized recently.

We had a very successful Society Dinner at the Chateau Napoleon on the 30th April with 20 guests in attendance. Thank you to those who came.



Best wishes to all – see you at the AGM

David Norman

Chair

Report of the April Guest Speaker – David Crick

At the members' meeting on Thursday 2 April, David delivered an engaging and insightful presentation on one of the most fundamental – yet often misunderstood – aspects of officiating: **player management**.



The session opened with a series of clips from David's own matches, setting the tone for a practical, experience-driven exploration of what effective player management really looks like.

What Does a Manager Do – and Why?

David began by stripping the role back to its essentials. As he put it, a manager must “lead, organise, communicate, direct, delegate, discipline, and guides”. These are not abstract ideals but everyday behaviours that shape the tone of a match.

Crucially, **player management starts before the game even begins**. The first interactions, the first impressions, and the first signals of authority all matter.

Managing from the Outset

David emphasised the importance of being pro-active and treating management as a “**2-way process**”. His advice was simple but powerful:

- Be pleasant
- Take your time
- Be insistent when needed

He illustrated this with an example from Colchester vs Peterborough, involving “3 serious fouls” and the need to remain calm even under provocation. Officials, he reminded the room, must be ready to explain decisions “if asked in the right manner”.

Reading Body Language

A significant portion of the presentation focused on non-verbal communication. David highlighted the importance of recognising a player's demeanour and whether they are agitated or calm and using eye contact, space, and time effectively.

He noted that the correct and appropriate use of hands and gestures can lead to:

- Enhanced control
- Clearer outcomes
- Reduced tension

Proximity and Positioning

One of David's strongest messages was the value of being close and well-positioned. He emphasised a basic mantra of "Proximity good – angle best" which:

- Increases credibility
- Increases control
- Decreases adverse reactions
- Helps isolate offenders before taking action

This, he argued, is where match control is often won or lost.

Management beyond the Field of Play

David reminded members that management does not stop at the touchline. Off-field behaviour must also be "strongly managed", as it directly influences discipline and respect on the pitch. Effective intervention:

- Increases control during play
- Prevents players copying poor behaviour from team officials



Critical Decisions

When big moments arrive, credibility is everything. David stressed that critical decisions:

- Must be credible
- Must be managed

Officials cannot afford to appear uncertain or inconsistent.

Consistency and Professional Pride

The final theme of the presentation was consistency. As David put it, "Consistency is a must as it increases credibility" and brings "longer-term benefits". He encouraged all match officials to:

- Aim to be the best they can be
- Take pride in their work

These values, he suggested, underpin every successful career in officiating. The session concluded with a lively Q&A, covering topics such as substitutions, goalkeepers going down injured, temporary dismissals, and advantage/possession.

A vote of thanks was given by Steve Watson.



50 year award

At the members' meeting the Society also marked a remarkable milestone: Geoff Turner's 50-year membership of the Referees' Association.



Secretary's Report 2025/26

Wow, what a season. This time last year Crystal Palace FC had never won a major trophy. Bromley had completed their debut season in the EFL. Would they succumb to second season syndrome? Not many of our referees achieved honours within local football.



Today, I can reflect what an exciting year it has been. CPFC won the FA Cup with a thrilling Eberechi Eze goal against Manchester City. Then added the Community Shield by overcoming the Merseyside Reds as part of 4 consecutive wins against our Northern opponents. What bliss!

Bromley FC not only avoided the dreaded relegation but surprised the footballing world by securing promotion to League 1. A great achievement orchestrated by ex-Palace youth, Andy Woodman.

Croydon FC and Croydon Athletic (Trams and Rams) have each obtained post season playoff matches. Can their good season become very good? Not yet played as I write this.

In our Society we have been blessed by a huge number of our referees being honoured with cup final appearances. They are all fully deserved. I hope you appreciate what you have achieved. I am doubly delighted to see our ladies being recognized. Abi, Juliette and Bella take a bow or should it be a curtsy?

This year our meetings kicked off with Jamie Beal updating us on the changes to law before concluding with some video action which, as usual, split the audience with their decisions. I am sure you will agree that Jamie has developed so much as a presenter. I think he could go far.

In October we welcomed one of our own, Damith Bandara. He was trained at Croydon Society in 2005. On his journey to officiating on the EFL he operated on many of our local leagues, e.g. the Redhill & District (Saturday and Sunday), the Combined Counties League and the Isthmian League. His claim to fame is that he is the only Sri Lankan ever to officiate on the EFL. So definitely a trailblazer!! He thought that Assistant Referees Phil Sharpe and Darren Cann were among the best in the World, ever. A target to aspire towards.

For November we were thrilled to see a return visit from ex-Premier League referee, Steve Bennett. His theme; **"You don't know what you're doing"**

He commenced by highlighting an official performing a handstand during the warm up. Not a good idea. It used to be said that if the players do not appear to notice you during a game, you've done OK. He moved on to incidents around the penalty area – usually the most contentious. And then on

to another 'red area' for match officials - the technical area. And finally, he discussed the fitness needs of match officials and the importance of positioning.

Nowadays, particularly the Premier League, Referees need to be ahead of play now and be in the best place for the next phase of play which requires "dynamic movement" to get ahead of play. Do not to be static waiting for play to build.



December was a social evening with another superb quiz organised by Stephen Maguire. It was a fun evening although my table were once again unsuccessful but finished a formidable fourth.

Into 2026 we were delighted with a visit from Kingston referee Steve Worsley in January His theme - "**What's everyone saying?**". Steve has mastered the art of showing video clips resulting in a very professional and educational presentation. He had fun to clearly illustrate that the pundits (including former players and referees such as Keith Hackett and Mark Clattenburg) could not agree on the correctness of the decision made in the instant. He highlighted the fact that many media outlets will focus on one officiating error, or supposed error irrespective of the impact on the result of the game. Steve is a great source for advice and advises new trainees that "If you wouldn't say it to someone's face don't put it on social media". Also to not go looking for comments on your games because, inevitably, they will be critical Steve finally highlighted the need to "Protect Mental Health"

February was for me the highlight of the year. For a long time, I had been trying to find a high-ranking female referee. David Crick helped me out by supplying contact info for Kirsty. Kirsty Dowle from Ashford, Kent attended the basic referee course in 2013 and 10 years later in December 2023 Kirsty refereed her first EFL game between Morecambe and Doncaster. That is fantastic progress but for her to succeed in the men's game this was a great achievement. She had already received many quality women's appointments. Different expectations between Europe and UK - Kirsty explained that in Europe officials need to be more forceful and signal everything with the Women's Super League more aligned with Europe than the EFL. One interesting difference is that Match Observers stay with the officiating team for the whole period which can lead to some awkward post-match interactions if the feedback differs from expectations. Decision making - sometimes as officials we can rely on process but, at that moment, we need to "trust your gut" and base a decision on what your senses are telling you. It seldom fails.

In March we welcomed ex-Surrey RDO, Tim Lawrence who provided another insightful and thought-provoking discussion around the application of a "higher threshold in the penalty area" when judging challenges. Laws of the Game test. We began the evening with a Laws of the Game quiz. Tim has set these quizzes for a number of years and each time he still catches us out!

Two years ago, the latest thinking about penalty area challenges was fed down to 5 to 4 promotion candidates, the main points being:

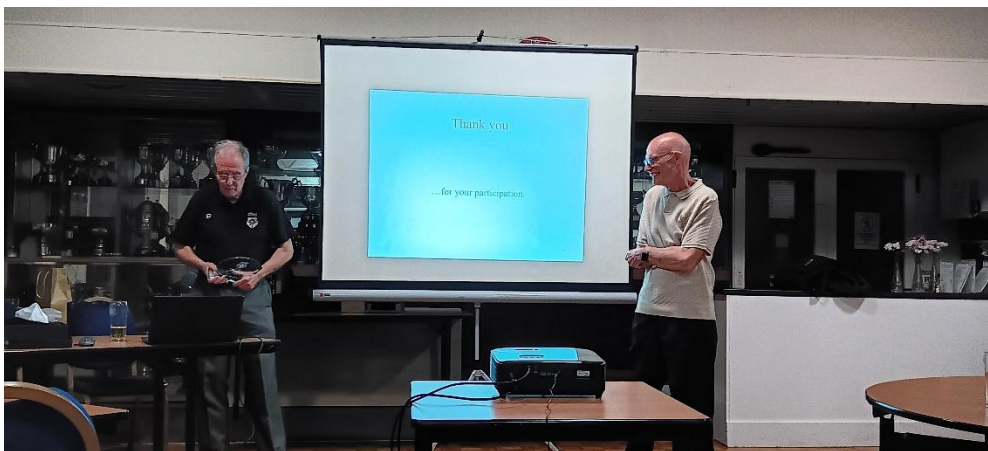
- Football is a contact sport so some contact should be accepted
- Referees should not be penalising minimal contact
- A higher threshold is required when dealing with offences in the penalty area; and
- The emphasis should be on player welfare and safety.

He then asked the audience to consider a number of questions when viewing the video clips before deciding “should the challenge be penalized?” He showed several FA produced clips and we had to assess the severity of the challenges. It is fair to say that it produced much discussion, and disagreement, but it is the way the game has been heading. It was certainly an interesting and challenging evening. On a personal note, I have quite strong feelings about this as, in simple terms, I feel it is playing to the TV audience and not to the laws of the game. Unless you think that wrestling and grappling tactics are an accepted part of the modern game at professional level.



Finally, April saw the return of David Crick. It is always a delight to receive pearls of wisdom from one of Surrey’s most famous and best referees. We received the benefits of video clips from his EFL career as he could describe the action and his thoughts as the incidents developed.

This was, for me, a wonderful ending to my time as Secretary to have such a high-profile guest speaker. I have attempted to find varied and interesting speakers for you to enjoy, learn from their experiences and thoughts. We cannot all agree on the comments from our speakers and it is this which makes attending meetings so very special. The presenters challenge us and can offer views which we had previously not considered. But you have not got rid of me.



Geoff Turner

May Meeting - AGM

The Society's Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held on Thursday 14th May 2026 at 19:45 at Croydon Bowls Club.



The Agenda is as follows:

1. Apologies for absence
2. Remembering absent friends
3. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2024/25
4. Financial statement and presentation of Accounts for 2025/2026
5. Vote of thanks to retiring officers, committee member and verifiers
6. Officer and Committee appointments (all current appointees willing to stand again unless indicated as new nomination)
 - a. President – David Roper
 - b. Chairman – David Norman
 - c. Vice Chairman – Tony Sheppard
 - d. Secretary – Gareth Mays (nominated)
 - e. Treasurer and Membership – Stephen Maguire
 - f. Committee members:
 - I. Jamie Beal – Social Media & Training
 - II. Peter Crichlow – RA Delegate
 - III. Steve Tyler
 - IV. Steve Watson – Editor of the Ray, RA Delegate and Webmaster
 - g. Dane Johnson – Assistant Secretary (nominated)
 - h. Patron – Geoff Turner (nominated)

All to be voted upon

- i. Appointment of Verifier (s) *To be voted upon*
- j. Any other business – notified to the Chairman before the meeting.

Future Committee Members

If you would be interested in joining the committee and contributing your thoughts and ideas please contact Chairman Dave Norman for further information. It would be great to have some new faces.

Puzzle Corner – Which Ref was that?



- 1) Known as Mr Pickwick who officiated in the top flight football from 1966 to 1979. He passed away in 2013.
- 2) Kent referee, officiated in the match known as the Battle of Old Trafford on 21/9/2003 when Ruud Van Nistelroy failed to score a last minute penalty against the team that would be known as the Invincibles, Arsenal. Premier League Ref 1999-2010.
- 3) This referee from county Durham officiated in the Football League from 1974 to 1992. His matches included the 1979 charity shield, 1980 FA Cup final and the 1983 League Cup final. He also officiated at the 1984 Euros and the world cup in both 1986 and 1990.
- 4) This premier league referee from 2003 to 2014 sent off 3 players in the league cup final of 2007 between Arsenal and Chelsea. He was a FIFA referee from 2005 to 2014. His highlight was the 2010 World cup final.
- 5) This Sussex referee was the 4th official at the 1994 European cup final. He was referee at the 1997 League cup final and its replay won by Leicester. He officiated in two FA cup finals and retired as a Premier league referee in 1998.
- 6) This Cheshire and current Premier league referee officiated in the 2020 cup final behind closed doors between Chelsea and Arsenal. He also refereed the 2015 FA community shield, 2015 Football league cup and the 2017 FA Cup final. He has been on the premier league since 2010 and FIFA listed since 2013.
- 7) This referee born in Sunderland officiated for 17 years on the Football League and then the Premier League from 2011 until 2022. He also officiated at the 2015 FA Cup final between Arsenal and Aston Villa.
- 8) This referee from Warwickshire at the age of 25 became the youngest ever Premier league referee on 23/8/2008. More recently, he refereed the FA Cup final in 2025 between Crystal Palace and Manchester City.
- 9) Born in Dublin, he became a Football league referee in 1990 moving up to the Premier league in 1992. He refereed the 1996 FA Cup final between Liverpool and Manchester United and officiated at the 1996 Euros in England. He was FIFA listed from 1994 to 2002 and retired from the Premier league in 2007. Currently he can be seen on TV.
- 10) Born outside of the UK, this referee completed 3 season on the football League from 1994 before making it to the Premier league. He notched up over 300 matches before retiring in 2008. He was FIFA listed from 2000 to 2004. He was described by Keith Hackett as "the fittest referee we have ever seen on the national and world scene".

If you need some help, go to page 14.

Society Dinner

A very successful evening to celebrate the end of another season and also to honour our guest of honour Geoff Turner. If you would like any pics please contact the editor.






CRA Membership Renewals

As you should be aware, the RA membership year runs from 1st June to 31st May each year. The membership renewal process will be commencing immediately after the AGM, so Stephen Maguire will be emailing you later in May. We ask that you assist him in completing the renewal process ESPECIALLY if you are intending officiating in summer tournaments or pre-season friendlies.

FA Registration

As notified by the FA recently, you can register for the 2026/27 season from 1st June 2026 for the 2026/27 season (via the Referee Portal). They have warned that data for the 2025/26 season will only be available until 31st May? Presumably it will be cleared down, I wonder why?

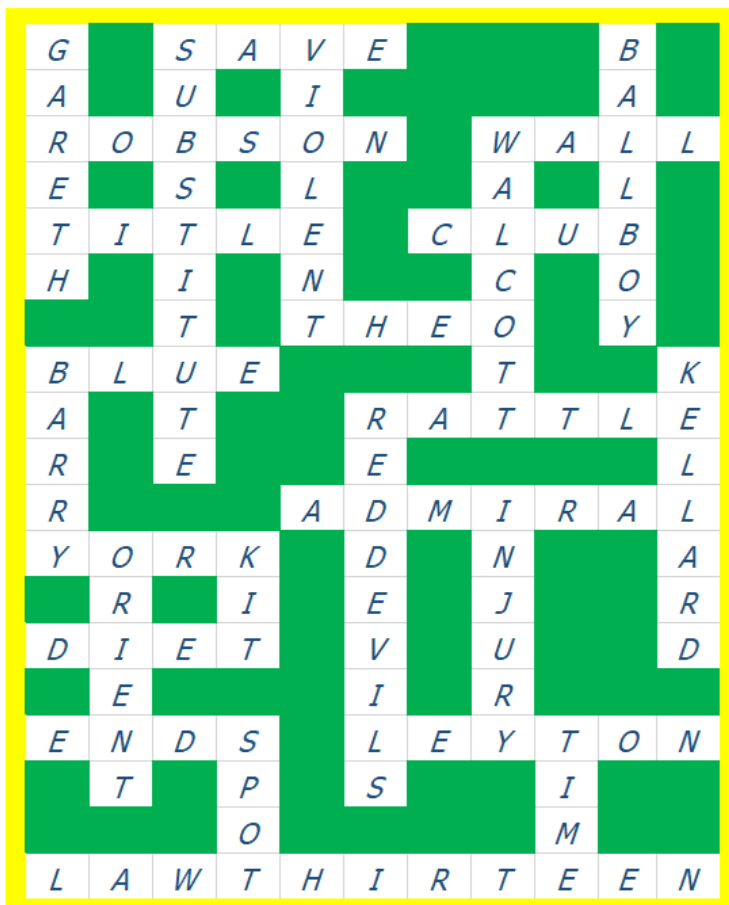
Clues to this month's Puzzle Corner

A. 	B. 	C. 	D. 
E. 	Using these pictures, can you put a name to a face and then match this to the clues on page 11?		F. 
G. 	H. 	I. 	J. 

Answers - Crossword (April's Puzzle Corner)

Congratulations to Stephen Maguire who successfully got every answer correct and won a bottle of wine.

Answers below



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Discount for Croydon RA Members

Contact PETER CRICHLow at our Society meetings
or telephone 07305 929848
or email Peter at Standardbuildingmaintenance56@gmail.com

Ed's & Tales

I had a first at a recent Sunday league game. On my arrival I was told by the home team that the pitch had not been prepared. It needed a cut as there were thousands of daisies but worse, there were very few lines that could be seen. Initially I decided that the game could not continue but both teams were keen to play somehow. A home player said he could go and get some spray cans and off he went. They had various cones too that we could use.

So I paced out the penalty areas and placed down various cones. I also did that for the D's. We estimated where the half way line and did the same for the centre mark. Once the spray cans arrive, two players sprayed the areas, Ds and some of the end lines and we removed the cones. For the side lines we used cones about a meter behind where would have been the painted line, so in line with the half way flags. And it was game on. I only blew for a throw in if it was clear and obvious. ☺

What would you have done?

Steve

Stephenwatson1616@gmail.com

Scan this for the Croydon Referees Society Website >>>

