

The Corsham Referee Newsletter No 44 (February 2007)

1st February 2007 International newsletter covering Football (Soccer) Refereeing matters.

Welcome, with an International perspective.

Welcome to the 44th edition of The Corsham Referee monthly International Football/Soccer Referees' newsletter.

I hope that all of you continue to enjoy your role in the world of refereeing. Please let me have any contributions for the newsletter, as readers are always interested in hearing about Refereeing from around the world. Please let me know if you have any difficulties in receiving or reading the newsletter; or let me have any suggestions on how it can be improved. It is issued free by email in both html (web page format), and plain text format. Previous issues (and printable pdf versions) can be seen by using the 'Previous Newsletters' link on the home page of my www.corshamref.org.uk web site. This newsletter is issued approximately on the 1st day of each calendar month.

Keep up the good Refereeing work wherever you are in the world; and my best wishes go to you all.
Editor Julian Carosi.

This month's (February 2007) newsletter is dedicated mainly to debating **'The Power of Doing Nothing'**.

The Referee - A master of the silent assist (the Power of Doing Nothing)

(By Julian Carosi www.corshamref.org.uk)

A debate that considers whether or not it is sometimes better, for football/soccer referees to 'do nothing'!

Introduction:

When someone asked English World Cup (1974) Referee Jack Taylor to describe what he thought the art of refereeing was, he replied:

"Making your mistakes when no one is looking, and knowing when not to make decisions".

(Jack Taylor's World Soccer Referee book page 12, 1976)

On average, people say 5,000 words a day and speak 125 words a minute. This means that about 2.8 percent of your time is spent talking and 97.2% in silence. It follows, that in a game of football, although the referee spends a great deal of time running around chasing players and following the path of the ball, he rarely needs to communicate anything - vocally or via body language. Yet conversely, there are many occasions when the fact that the Referee *'does nothing'*, actually imparts a message that says much more than any other form of visual message or sound can communicate. On most occasions, all the Referee needs to do is to be there.

The following scenario expands this concept further.

A Referee went to his instructor and said to him, "I'm having trouble controlling players. Whenever I confront them, it always seems to end in a bad tempered argument that leaves both the player and myself in a bad mood for the rest of the game. Can you give me a remedy for it?"

The instructor said, "Certainly," and gave the Referee a packet of chewing gum, explaining, "These are charmed pieces of chewing gum. When you officiate your next games, put one piece of gum in your mouth."

The Referee took the advice given him, and found to his surprise, that there was no quarrelling with players during his next few games.

A month later, after the pack of chewing gum had been used up, the Referee went back to the instructor, and thanked him a thousand times. The Referee told the instructor that he had done such a miracle.

The Referee said, "I do not know what to do to thank you. But I would like you to give me a large supply of that special chewing gum so that it might last me for a long time."

The instructor answered, "The chewing gum is not necessary, silence is all that is needed."

This teaches us that very often, we quarrel and invite conflict only because of our speech or because we do

something when we don't need to. Silence (or doing nothing) is a great peacemaker, and when used during confrontation, can sometimes have a much greater impact in diffusing situations (or to impart a message) than any number of words or actions can. The trick, is to know when to speak (or take action) and when not to; and to understand the powerful effect that a message can have when it is communicated silently.

In the world of sports commentary, Dan Maskell, whose golden rule was; "economy of words is what most viewers enjoy", once caused a near heart attack in an American TV programme with his unashamed pauses during a very brief Tennis commentary stint at Wimbledon for one of the US television networks. And Henry Longhurst, the doyen of golf gassers, apparently once perpetrated a lull so protracted that his director inquired into his earpiece, "Excuse me, Henry, but are you still alive? Longhurst delivered eloquence by merging uncomplicated words with dramatic pauses. He was a master of the silent assist.

Doing nothing is a very powerful tool.

For example:

"The three words "I love you," are so very simple to say. Three powerful and meaningful words. There are many opportunities for you to say them, but none more important and possessing more potential than saying them **now** to the person you love. How many "I love you's" went unsaid, that would easily have healed an aching heart? You cannot store them and build a reserve to tap into at a later date. Their power and their balming effect, quickly dissipates with disuse. They work only in the spontaneous moment that they were intended. Left idle, their potential is gone, the object of their delivery is untouched by kindness or by tenderness.

Conversely, silence can have the complete opposite effect. "I love you" unsaid can become "I **don't** love you" out loud. How many times has silence told a partner or a child that they are not loved? How often has an unsaid word created the opposite powerful effect?

Although the power of the spoken word is mighty, the power of silence can be mightier still; and it is the ability to harness this power of silent communication (*doing nothing*) that can have a positive effect in the world of Refereeing - if used astutely at the right time to maintain control and the ambience of a game.

Within the art of modern Refereeing, '*doing nothing*' has almost become something to avoid at all costs, and when Referees are confronted with match incidents, they feel that they **must** 'do something'. *Doing nothing* unnerves them.

We have become so used to the frantic pace and the ceaseless activity of managing a game of football, we (as Referees) can sometimes feel uneasy about '*doing nothing*'. It is as if in the modern game, '*doing nothing*' has become an enemy. In reality, '*doing nothing*' is one of the greatest friends of a Referee, and can (if it's used at the right times) have a powerfully beneficial effect by increasing the standard of officiating in a game of football.

Let us look at five examples of how '*doing nothing*' can sometimes benefit a Referee. There are many other situations in a game of football where this skill can be used; the examples are listed for **YOU** to consider whether this is something that **YOU** could incorporate positively into **YOUR** style of Refereeing?

1. The journey to the venue:

In this modern world, we have become so unaccustomed to the absence of silence (*or doing nothing*), that we may never be able to relax properly. How much time do you spend in silence each day? Most of us are constantly bombarded by noise of some sort. Maybe it's the children screaming. Maybe it's the background sounds of life in the office or the city. Often, even if we have a chance to experience silence, we turn on the radio in the car or the TV at home.

To gather your thoughts in preparation for the game, try driving to the next venue with the car radio turned OFF. It might (at first) be a shock to your system. By removing yourself from external stimuli, it allows your physical and mental energy-batteries to naturally recharge themselves.

I'm sure that we can all remember our mother shouting, "Be quiet! I can't hear myself think," when the world was exploding around her. In the silence created by the vacuum left behind when all the electronic gadgets are turned off, you should be able to hear yourself think. Shutting off the unnecessary outside noise and listening to the quiet, is simply another opportunity for you to go over your game plan. Your ideas will speak to you; and in turn, this preparation will make you more relaxed as you approach kick-off. It also helps to increase your reaction time in relation to the traffic around you, and thus hopefully making it a safer and less stressful journey to the venue than normal.

2. What should you say to the captains?

In the late 1960's, the English Football League instructed match officials to enter the teams' dressing rooms prior to each game, to brief players on general and specific match control policy. Varied approaches were tried, from dictatorial monologue, e.g. 'You **will** retire immediately at free-kicks or else I will caution you,' - to 'Don't argue with my decisions' - ending in a curt, 'Have a good game, lads'. After a few matches, the practice was abandoned, as it became embarrassing for all (with professional players sitting down in rows like schoolboys receiving a telling off from their headmaster!) Whilst others shouted comments from behind closed toilet doors - all with a sulking compliance.
Better to say nothing.

During the coin tossing ceremony at the beginning of each game, rookie Referees are often at a quandary about what to say to the captains. After about a year, the new Referee is able to reel off a well-rehearsed patter of words that make him (the Referee) sound good and feel comfortable. During the next few years, it slowly dawns on the Referee, that the more he says to the captains, the more trouble he seems to land himself in during the game.

After about three or four years, the Referee finally sees the light! His introduction to the captains is now based on the bare necessities of conversation; a polite introduction, perhaps a request to "keep the language down" if there are houses or children nearby, and a final wish for the captains to "enjoy the game". Flexibility of match control is a valuable asset in the Referee's armoury, so this much-shortened pre-match conversation with the captains bodes well for the Referee, as he is no longer challenged by the players to 'live up' to his instructions. In short, it is important for the Referee not to limit his the flexibility of his match control in any way, by issuing too many pre-match dictates.

The following instance shows how even a single misjudged pre-match dictate can land a Referee in trouble. It **forces** the Referee to take a certain action on a specific incident, even before the incident has happened. It leaves him with limited match-control flexibility.

Referee to captains: *"Good afternoon captains, please let your players know that anyone who swears will be going straight into my book".*

Despite the gallant sentiments of this Referee, this instruction leaves him no flexibility in managing bad language. So when a player accidentally bashes his head on the goal post and lets out a few colourful words - the Referee is in a quandary.

If he cautions or sends-off this player, because he has to 'live up' to his pre-match instructions - the Referee will be negatively seen as a strict dictator.

If the Referee decides **not** to caution or send-off this player, he reneges on his pre-match instruction, and the players will see him as being weak, and unable to keep to his word.

OK - so the situation above is over-dramatised/simplified; but the concept is easy enough to understand. Doing nothing, or (apart from the essentials) saying very little during the coin-tossing ceremony, retains the **full** flexibility for the Referee to 'interpret' and then 'apply' the Laws for each occasion. This in turn, will make the game much easier for him to control.

The higher that a Referee puts his head above the parapet of pre-match instructions, the easier it is for players to take a pop-shot at him! The Referee who leaves his head below the parapet by keeping pre-match instructions to the bare essential minimum, has the ability to look up over the parapet as many times as he likes, without fear of giving the players an easy target.

3. Doing something at free kicks when it is very often much better to do nothing.

There is a simple free kick management concept used by Referees in England called the '**GIVE AND GO**' or '**GIVE AND SORT**' technique.

'GIVE AND SORT' means that the Referee '**GIVES**' a free kick, but has to make his way quickly to the scene to '**SORT**' out a problem by doing something.

The Referee '**GIVES**' the free kick and '**SORTS**' out the problem.

'GIVE AND GO' means that there are no issues to resolve, and the free kick can take place without any need for the Referee to do anything or for him to remain nearby.

The Referee '**GIVES**' the free kick and uses the (*dead-ball*) stoppage time to take up his position for the next phase of play.

The Referee '**GIVES**' the free kick (*does nothing*) and then '**GOES**' to his restart position.

There are great benefits to be gained with the '**GIVE AND GO**' (*do nothing*) element. Moaning players have nobody to moan at; the motion of the Referee running to his restart position encourages play to restart quickly; the absence of the Referee focuses the players' minds on the game (rather than on the Referee); it keeps the Referee alert and focused; and the game is restarted on the Referee's terms and not the players!

Of all the '*do nothing*' opportunities for a Referee in a game of football, the '**GIVE AND GO**' is the most important. In one easy movement - the Referee encourages a quick restart, and prevents the Referee from becoming embroiled with players because of his near proximity. It also encourages the Referee to maintain full attention on the surroundings and to the activities of the game.

4. '**Doing nothing**' can indicate that no offence has occurred.

To indicate that no offence has occurred when shouts from players, of "Foul Ref?" are heard, the old school of Refereeing advocated holding their hands behind their backs. This was supposed to encourage players to continue with play. Surprisingly, the 'holding of hands behind the back' can still be seen occasionally in the modern game, even though it does look outdated! A new 'no offence' signal has developed, where Referees wave their hands sideways low down, and seem to be polishing the dining room table from side to side criss-crossing with both palms facing downwards!

There was a time, when the old adage "*a good Referee is one that you don't notice*" had a great deal of truth in it. In the modern game, the Referee is easy to see, as he has a growing armoury of non-standard signals that seem to be constantly on display.

It could be argued, that the upsurge in modern Referee communication, is a positive step forwards, as far as communicating to the players is concerned. Conversely, the exhibition of a windmill display of arm signals, and body-language movements serve to focus the attention **away** from the players and **towards** the Referee. In other words, these days, it is impossible **not** to notice the Referee! The effect of this is to interfere with the natural movement and thinking of the Referee. Instead of quickly moving and focusing on reaching his new position, the Referee takes time to provide a non-standard signal that says 'no offence has occurred'. The signals are varied depending on which Referee is applying them. It encourages players to look towards the Referee, when there is no need for players to do so. The delay in moving away encourages verbal conflict. The non-standard signals are confusing for players. And new Referees who are looking out for best practises to emulate are unsure which communication style method to adopt; etc. etc.....

What better signal can a Referee give on most occasions when no offence has occurred, than by '*doing nothing*'? This is a simple universal message that all players understand; and covers a multitude of scenarios. '*Doing nothing*' also generates positive reaction from team-mates, with shouts towards their colleagues of, "Play to the whistle". This is something that has worked very well for over a hundred years, but is in danger of disappearing, as players are now looking towards the Referee for some form of positive signal, even when no signal is needed.

Law 5 (The Referee) expects the Referee to enforce the Laws of the Game. If no offence has occurred, then apart from when there is a need to apply the advantage clause, there is very often nothing else to put into force. In short, '*do nothing*'.

Another similar example where confusion can prevail, is when no offside offence has occurred, and the Assistant Referee encourages players to continue by waving them forwards with a sweeping arm signal. This conflicts with the Referee's control of the game, and unnecessarily draws the players' attention towards the Assistant Referee. What clearer signal can the Assistant Referee deliver, than by '*doing nothing*.' If there is an offside offence, the Assistant Referee will indicate this by raising his flag. If there is no offside offence, then no flag will be raised; there is no need for the Assistant Referee to confuse the situation and disrupt the focus and flow of the game by waving players on?

Players should be encouraged to play to the whistle, as this simple communication ensures that everybody reacts to the same thing. If some players are playing to the whistle and others are looking for a positive signal from the Referee, this will cause confusion and may impact on player safety (*by unnecessarily distracting their attention*).

Playing to the whistle by '*doing nothing*', can very often deliver a clearer message than by '*doing something*'.

5. Not reacting to the crowd.

Of all the '*do nothing*' opportunities that a Referee has, the ability to retain focus when distracting comments are received from onlookers, is the most difficult to master successfully.

The ability to seem completely unaware of the derisive comments that are heard from the spectators is a skill that has to be quickly mastered by Referees (and especially Assistant Referees). This can be achieved by '*doing nothing*'. Even the slightest acknowledgement that a Referee has registered a comment, will be enough to entice further reaction. This problem is heightened, the nearer that the Referee is to the touchline and to the boisterous crowd. It can be very tempting for a Referee who has received abuse from the sideline, to react in one form or another.

If a Referee '*does nothing*', it delivers the strongest message that can be communicated to the perpetrators. It clearly shows that the Referee has not been affected by the comments; it demonstrates a professional demeanour; it minimises conflict; it discourages further comment; it displays strength and not a weakness; it allows the Referee to retain his focus on the game, and it encourages the Referee to try even harder to fulfil his duties and responsibilities. Most Referees in their early career will have reacted and learnt from the consequences!

Conclusion:

Try turning the radio off when you travel to your next game. Don't '*shoot yourself in the foot*' when you meet the captains in your next game. When you award a free kick, stopping play with the whistle is normally the only thing you need to communicate. If you do nothing when no offence has occurred, the players will instinctively carry on playing. And when colourful comments are voiced from the crowd, smile to yourself (but only inwardly!)

The massive amount of external communication stimuli that the Referee bombards players with these days makes players' minds more restless and distracted. If there is a lot of Referee noise, movement and activity taking place, then players can't help but give attention to it. Every new piece of Referee communication, which is sent their way, is potentially the beginning of a whole new train of thought to occupy their minds, when players' minds should be focused on the game.

Whilst the increase in positive communication between the Referee and the players is not in itself a bad thing, '*doing nothing*' in certain circumstances, is also a very clear and easy way to get the message over without detracting from the spectacle of the game itself.

Is important for Referees to be very clear what message they are communicating to players. The message should be unambiguous, timely and communicated in the simplest possible language. A Referee should understand the consequences of intervention. There will be times when the Referee will need to intervene, and times when it may be astute to avoid doing so; and the Referee needs to be in the optimal position when doing so.

Knowing when not to make decisions, is just as important as knowing when to make decisions.

Refereeing is more about thinking, rather than doing. There are many match situations where a Referee can become the master of the silent assist by '*doing nothing*'. An astute Referee does not blow the whistle every time the ball goes out for a throw-in or a goal kick or corner kick. He saves up the effect for when it really is needed, thus maximising its impact. On most occasions, the Referee does nothing. Doing nothing at the right time, allows the pictures to tell the obvious.

The same principle applies to body language and verbal communication - '*do nothing*' when nothing needs doing. And '*do something*' only when something needs to be done.

Can **YOU** become the master of the silent assist?

AGE DISCRIMINATION LEGISLATION (FA ENGLAND)

(Review of policy relating to the promotion and retention of Match Officials.)

In light of the age discrimination legislation implemented in the UK in October 2006, The FA has reviewed its policy relating to the promotion and retention of Match Officials. Under the current system there are a number of age restrictions for Match Officials in terms of their promotion into or removal from levels within the refereeing structure operated by The FA. This starts with promotion into Level 4 where The FA only take referees under the age of 43.

As a result of the review, The FA has decided that, in future, decisions on the promotion and/or removal of referees appointed by The FA (i.e. Levels 2 to 4) will be based on a robust performance analysis system that applies to all referees ***irrespective of age and accordingly the current age restrictions will cease to apply.***

Level 1 referees are under the remit of PGMO who are separately considering the issue.

What this means in practice:

1. Nominations from County FAs for promotion to Supply League (Level 4)

Age will no longer be a factor to be considered by County FAs in deciding which referees to nominate for promotion. The FA has redesigned the CL1 (Detail) form so that County FAs will now be required to provide more detailed information about each referee so that promotion to Level 4 is purely on merit based accurate information.

We have introduced a Regional Referee Coaching scheme at Level 3 (Contributory League) to work closely with Match Officials to enhance their performance and develop the skills required to achieve the next level.

NEW COACHING SCHEME:

The Coaching scheme for 2007/2008 will involve two groups of referees.

- The 10 coaches will be working with the newly promoted Level 3 referees to support them as they are trying to adapt to a higher level of football.
- They will also work with around 100 current Level 3 referees who are identified as having the potential to progress their refereeing careers will be selected to form a Talent Group. However, being in this Talent Group brings no guarantee of promotion and there will be flexibility to allow the movement of referees into and out of the scheme.

The criteria for the talent group are:

- a perceived on-field potential to progress through to a higher level of refereeing.
- sufficient time and opportunity to achieve promotion into the professional game (in general terms it would take a referee 5-6 seasons to gain enough experience to move from Level 3 to Level 1, although clearly some referees with exceptional talent will move quicker than that and some referees may take longer to achieve that promotion)
- a high level of commitment and personal responsibility towards the principles of the group.
- an undertaking to establish goal/target setting within an agreed action plan with their coach.
- commitment to attend all the training and education seminars set up for the group.

Those referees selected for the Regional Referee Coaching scheme for season 2007/2008 will be contacted at the end of the current playing season.

NEWS from www.telegraph.co.uk:

REFEREES OUT TO CATCH CHEATS: (17 & 20 Jan 07)

Players, managers and referees are to discuss a radical new idea to speed up matches by allowing physiotherapists on to the field to treat injuries without play being stopped. Already deployed successfully in rugby union and league, the rule would address some of the time-wasting and gamesmanship currently scarring football.

No need to stop? In the future referees could just wave play on while the player is being treated "It's a good idea, and worthy of debate," said Keith Hackett, the general manager of the Professional Game Match Officials Limited (PGMOL), yesterday. "I will bring it in front of the technical committee when we meet in two weeks."

The debate is particularly pertinent after a World Cup that was ruined for many people by the frequency of faked injuries. Empty seats in the Premiership are being put down to supporters' frustration at simulation, as well as high ticket prices. If the proposal finds favour among Hackett's elite referees, the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) and League Managers' Association (LMA) in their forthcoming get-together, the idea will then go before the Football Association referees' committee.

If approved by the governing body, the proposition would be presented to the law-makers of the International Football Association Board at their annual gathering being hosted by the FA in Manchester in March. The reaction of FIFA's president, Sepp Blatter, a driving force behind the campaign for "fair play", may be key to the "good idea" becoming established law. Blatter will be present in Manchester.

Another rule used in rugby, blood substitutes, will also be debated by Hackett's officials and representatives of the PFA and LMA with the possibility of eventually becoming law. The managers are particularly keen on this proposal as it would allow teams to remain at full strength while a player is being stitched up.

But it is the plan to carry on playing while a footballer either hobbles to the touchline, or is treated on the field, that will arouse most interest. Many people in football are concerned about the decreasing amount of time that the ball is in play nowadays, currently down to 25 minutes a half in stop-start Premiership games.

It is hoped that the new rule being considered by the PGMOL technical committee would cut out players feigning injury to waste time or take the momentum out of an opponents' attack. Referees often have to stop play to check whether a player is injured. After cursory attention from the physio, the player jumps up and sprints back on, much to the opposing fans' anger.

The carry-on-playing rule would take the onus off referees having to weigh up how injured a player might be; physios would just sprint on to attend the "injured" party and work overtime to get a player to rejoin his depleted colleagues. Although players are now not supposed to kick the ball out to allow a physio on, they still endure the wrath of fans when desisting. The new rule would take the heat out of the situation.

The technical committee comprises senior figures at the LMA, like John Barnwell and John Duncan, and at the PFA like Mick McGuire. Also involved are leading lights from the refereeing world, David Elleray, Ray Lewis and Neale Barry, the FA's head of senior referee development, as well as Hackett.

Many aspects of the new rule require careful thought by the technical committee, the FA and IFAB, such as the enduring need to stop play for injuries to goalkeepers or to anyone in the penalty areas. If the injury was serious, the physio would signal to officials that a stretcher was required, and only then would play be halted.

One obvious concern is that the ball could hit the physio or prone player, though rugby union and league sides manage to avoid such incidents. Much would also depend on the integrity of the physios not impeding opponents when running on (one referee confided yesterday that he feared some clubs could pull such a stunt). To avoid offside controversies, the "injured" player would still be required to return to action from the halfway line.

Hackett's technical committee has proved a good launch-pad for some of the game's improvements. The better behaviour of Didier Drogba and Cristiano Ronaldo has partly been credited to the technical committee, which voiced officials' concerns about the players' diving to managers and the players' union. Hackett's technical committee has also been involved in easing tensions between managers and fourth officials, who have toned down their fussy approach to policing technical areas.

Supporters' organisations reacted enthusiastically to a radical proposal to cut down on gamesmanship and keep play flowing, but they argued that more changes are required to rekindle fans' passion. In an attempt to speed up

play, and address the increasing problem of players feigning injury or sneaking a quick breather by staying down, the authorities are debating a possible law change that would allow physiotherapists on to the field to treat players without the game being stopped.

"Fans have become frustrated by the gamesmanship," said Ian Todd, the president of the Football Supporters' Federation, yesterday. "So anything that keeps the game going would be approved by the fans. It deserves a chance to be tried, to see what the effects are. Only by trying this new rule can we find out if there are any problems with it."

Fans are wearily familiar with the assorted stunts practised by professionals. Players of teams who are leading occasionally feign injury late on in matches to disrupt the opponents' rhythm and run down the clock. The Football Supporters' Federation have been discussing means of improving the game as it reaches the final stages. "One of the things we have been talking about internally recently is this nonsense about players being brought on as subs in time added on," continued Todd. "It is just to disrupt play and it is very frustrating for fans. Perhaps there should also be a rule after the 85th minute to stop teams bringing subs on except in case of serious injury – but then of course you would get people claiming serious injury!"

QUICKEST RED CARDS (22 Jan 07)

Keith Gillespie became the fastest substitute to be sent off in top-flight football and the second fastest in English football when he was dismissed after 15 seconds at Reading on Saturday 20 Jan 2007. The fastest sending-off for a substitute was zero seconds. Swansea City's Walter Boyd went for striking an opponent before the ball had gone back into play following his 83rd-minute arrival at home to Darlington on Nov 23, 1999. The next quickest was Wigan's Andreas Johansson, who went after 90 seconds, without kicking a ball, for shirt pulling, in a Premiership game on May 7, 2006.

The quickest sending-off in world history from the start of a game is 10 seconds — Bologna's Giuseppe Lorenzo, for striking a Parma opponent, on Dec 9, 1990.

OVERSTEPPING THE MARK? Southend United 0 Derby County 1 (Saturday 20 Jan 07)

The half-yard of grass between the technical area and the touchline at Roots Hall seemed to be more troublesome to new Championship leaders Derby than Southend's spirited, yet ultimately toothless, challenge. From the first minute, Derby manager Billy Davies was in animated discussion with the fourth official, Ian Bentley, who was originally supposed to run the line but pulled out through injury.

Davies said: "He was complaining because I put my foot on the grass outside the so-called technical area — there's only a little bit of grass between there and the touchline, and from that point on, him and I are at it. He's pulling me back, giving me a warning and I'm telling him to use his head and show a bit of common sense." In the eyes of the fourth official, Davies did not heed his words and was dispatched to the stands 10 minutes into the second half.

Derby substitute Michael Johnson also felt the wrath of Bentley, after warming up too close to the pitch. Johnson said: "He [Bentley] said, 'I'm telling you now get off the grass, otherwise I'll give you a booking'. "I said, 'You want to sit in your box and watch the game rather than arguing about half a yard of grass'."

Despite the bad feelings left by the fourth official, it was still a good day for Derby as they overtook Birmingham, whose match was postponed, to lead the race for promotion.

THE NUMBERS GAME (24 Jan 07)

The first matches featuring numbered shirts took place on Aug 25 1928, when Arsenal and Chelsea played The Wednesday (later Sheffield) and Swindon Town, respectively. There was a lot of opposition to the idea from officials, who said the numbers spoilt traditional club shirts and colouring (they had old farts in those days, too). During the Thirties, the convention of numbering 1-11 from goalkeeper out to left wing became almost universal, and when substitutes were introduced in 1965, they were given the No 12 shirt. All with me so far?

The 1954 World Cup was the first event to throw a spanner in these simple works. A squad numbering system was introduced according to positions on the field, although Argentina messed that up in 1978 and 1982 by numbering their players alphabetically, which meant that outfield players could actually wear No 1. And then it went haywire, when in the 1993 League Cup Final between Arsenal and Sheffield Wednesday players not only wore squad numbers but had their names on their shirts (amazing to think it's that recent.) The following year that became standard practice in the Premier League and you know the rest. Replica shirts. Money, money, money.

So these days players may wear any number between 1 and 99, and in the Uefa Cup Final against Celtic in 2003, the FC Porto keeper Vitor Baia became the first player to wear '99' in a major competition. It is said his performance was decidedly flaky.

A FINAL DISGRACE FOR FOOTBALL PARENTS (24 Jan 07)

Sir Alex Ferguson might be known for his hair dryer treatment. But it is hard to imagine him running on to the pitch to argue with the referee in a penalty shoot-out. That was the scene 30 miles up the road from Manchester United's Old Trafford ground when Moston Brook under-13s played their rivals from Knuzden, near Blackburn.

The Lancashire county cup final was all-square at 2-2 after extra time and penalties were being taken when Michelle Woodall, the Moston coach, and her assistant intervened. Their goalkeeper had just been sent off, allegedly for calling the 18-year-old referee "a f***ing cheat".

After her demonstration, she retreated to the sidelines and watched as parents from both teams jeered at the boys from behind the goal where the penalties were being taken. As the boys ran up to shoot, supporters used the flashes on their mobile telephones to put them off. The Moston boys eventually won.

After the game, Mrs Woodall said: "It was a very unfortunate end to the tournament, especially as the team had worked so hard and performed so well."

Inquiries are now being made into the conduct of the supporters. David Burgess, the chief executive of the Lancashire FA, said: "We were not happy with events during the penalty shoot-out and await the referee's report."

THIS MONTH'S HOT TOPICS:

This month, we look at replacing a referee who is not to a team's liking; smoking in the technical area; and a tricky offside question that is sure to generate some debate!

WE DON'T LIKE YOU ANY MORE!

Question: I was watching an incident in an U11s 11-a-side youth league cup match the other day. The referee was an unqualified referee, NOT wearing a referee's uniform, but wearing appropriate sports clothing. He was a parent from the home side. This is customary in that league as there is a shortage of qualified neutral refs. I understand that he has refereed many times before on a regular basis for that team without any trouble. During the half-time break, the away team said that they were withdrawing from the game under protest at the blatant bias being shown by the referee. They claimed that, if the home side did not change the referee immediately, they would not continue and they would get the game replayed. If teams decide that they don't like a referee (whether neutrally appointed or home team appointed) can they agree or jointly agree to change the ref due to poor performance?

Answer: When two teams agree on a Referee before the game, they should not then refuse to play, just because the Referee turns out to be no longer to their liking. If this sort of action was allowed, it would escalate to other games, and in no time at all, youth football would have no Referees who were prepared to take on the task, and nobody else would be willing to do so either! If a team (or teams) refuses to play (for whatever the reason) then that is their prerogative, but they will have to justify their reasons to the league authorities. They should certainly not change the Referee in mid match for no valid reason. If this occurs, then the matter must be reported to the FA.

A volunteer Referee has the same powers and duties as a neutral Referee, and the same backing that a qualified Referee gets from the FA.

FAG ANYONE?

Question: Are Club Officials/Players allowed to smoke within an officialy marked technical area? If not what action would be advised if they did?

Answer: At the lower levels smoking is still seen in technical areas, and any ruling prohibiting this, will be part of respective Competition Rules.

In early December 2003, UEFA announced a ban on smoking in the technical area during all UEFA competition matches starting from the 2004/05 season, UEFA have a list of sanctions that it can use against anyone violating this rule. European football's governing body made the move with the game's image in mind, especially among younger enthusiasts. UEFA Referees and fourth officials continue to play their role in making the technical area a tobacco-free sector. The fourth official is in charge of controlling the technical area, and the fourth official can, if required, call the attention of the referee if it is needed.

Smoking is no longer allowed in the technical area during UEFA matches

OFFSIDE OR FOUL:

Question: An attacking player shoots the ball towards goal and it rebounds off the crossbar. The rebound is chased down into the penalty area by two attacking team players. One of the attackers was is in an **OFFside** position, and when the ball was shot towards goal, runs to chase the ball down from his starting point some 15 yards away; and as he runs towards the ball, he is pulled back (fouled) inside the penalty area by a defender. The other attacking team player who is in an **ONside** position, comes in from a different angle, and looks like he may get to the ball first, but just fails to do so. Should the Referee penalise the (pulling) foul committed on the 'offside' player by awarding a penalty kick, or should the Referee penalise the first offence of offside? The attacking team players are saying 'the offside player' was preparing for the next phase of play.

Answer: You would have to be in the mind of that particular Referee to give a definitive answer on this scenario, as the Referee's opinion is a major factor in deciding complex offside decisions as described in this question.

A player in an offside position may be penalised before playing or touching the ball if, in the opinion of the Referee, no other team-mate in an onside position has the opportunity to play the ball. If an opponent becomes involved in the play and if, in the opinion of the Referee, there is potential for physical contact, the player in the offside position shall be penalised for interfering with an opponent.

So the answer to the question depends on whether or not the Referee thought that the offside player was the only one who could get the ball, or not.

Whether the attacking team players were saying 'the offside player' was preparing for the next phase of play or not, is irrelevant, as it is the Referee's opinion that counts, and certainly not the attacking team's' opinion.

If the Referee decides to play an advantage after witnessing the foul, and because in his opinion, the onside player would have got to the ball first, then it is remotely feasible that if the advantage did not ensue, a penalty could be awarded.

But given the very limited information provided in this question, the first offence of offside should be punished; on the basis that the offside player was actively moving to gain possession of the ball before he was fouled, and the onside player was not 100% certain to get to the ball first. To apply an advantage in this scenario is probably asking for trouble!

Regards Julian Carosi _____

This newsletter remains free to subscribers.



This newsletter will **always** remain free to **all** members.

I hope that you have enjoyed this issue of the newsletter, and that you are all continuing to enjoy your refereeing roles. All the very warmest wishes to you all, wherever you are in the world.

Regards, Julian Carosi (Newsletter Editor):

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(Also - Editor and Laws Editor of [Refereeing Today](http://www.refereeingtoday.com), <http://www.footballreferee.org/> Referee, FA Referee Instructor, and FA Referees' Assessor Wiltshire, England).

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