

The www.CorshamRef.org.uk Newsletter No 69: April 2009

International newsletter covering Football (Soccer) Refereeing matters.

Welcome, with an International perspective.

Welcome to the 69th (and sadly the last) edition of The Corsham Referee monthly International Football/Soccer Referees' newsletter.

Dear many friends from around the world, this will be my last newsletter. Many thanks for all of your comments, contributions and involvement over the years. The first newsletter was issued way back in July 2003, and hopefully since then, I have given you all a few things to think about and to try out in your own Refereeing worlds. My life seems to get busier and busier, and production of the monthly newsletter has become expensive in terms of both personal money and available quality time. My web site also needs a major refresh, as it has suffered at the consequence of newsletter production. I hope that you will all continue to use my web site for ideas on how we can improve the Referees' role. My aim now is to concentrate on refreshing my web site, where I hope you will continue to find new ideas and advice.

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

"SET PIECES"

More 'set-piece' advice by Julian Carosi.

In my previous newsletters, I reiterated how a game of football/soccer consists of many - what can best be described as 'set-pieces', or jigsaw puzzle pieces that add up to form the whole 90 minutes. Each 'set-piece', if successfully managed, will result in the Referee maintaining control. One of the first aims of every Referee should be to use 'best-practice' techniques when managing 'set-pieces'. Once the standard 'set-piece' techniques have been mastered, the players' confidence in the Referee will increase, and they will more readily accept those awkward (non-set-piece) match-changing decisions, which seem to crop up in nearly every game. Subsequently, the Referee will feel more confident in the knowledge that at least he has a structured premeditated way to deal with the majority of situations that can occur in a game of football.

In the article below, I will add to the previous set-piece ideas on (1) how to manage throw-ins, (2) how to issue cards, (3) how to manage goal kicks, (4) how to build a positive image, (5) how to establish a rapport with players by gaining their trust via the TRUST triangle, (6) how to deal with simulation, (7) how to manage a penalty kick, (8) how to approach the kick-off at the beginning of each game, (9) how to manage the first 10 minutes of each game, (10) self-evaluation, (11) how best to apply advantage, (12) Assistant Referee tips, (13) using the Give and Go, Give and Sort technique during Free Kicks, (14) advice on Dealing with a Mass Confrontation Melee of players, (15) giving a standard Pre-Match brief to your Assistant Referees, (16) ideas on what to do at the Final Whistle, (17) How to Deal with Injuries via the S.E.R.I.O.U.S. Method, by providing a more detailed look at managing Throw-Ins.

These ideas are not prescriptive; rather, they will hopefully give you some new things to think about, and encourage you towards adopting a consistent approach by dovetailing them into your own style of refereeing to improve your performance.

All the 'Set-Piece' articles can be found on the www.CorshamRef.org.uk web site using the 'Set-Piece' links at the top of all of the web pages.

The Throw-In:

Introduction:

The throw-in is just one jigsaw piece (constituent part) of the game as a whole that you will have to manage and control. If handled correctly, the throw-in should rarely cause you a problem, but there are a few things that you can do, that will help you when overseeing throw-ins and help you to minimise problems occurring. A throw-in is usually the first decision that you will have to make as a Referee in each half of the game, as invariably, within a matter of seconds, the ball will leave the field of play over one of the touchline boundaries. This offers you a first opportunity to be proactive by unconsciously manipulating players into taking all restarts from the correct position. Below, you will find the following three stages of managing a throw-in.

Stage 1: Involve yourself 100 percent in the very first few throw-ins in each of the two 45 minute periods of play.

Stage 2: Confidant body language and signalling.

Stage 3: Consolidating.

If you can incorporate these three ideas immediately into your game, will get you off to a very good positive start.

Stage 1: Involve yourself 100 percent in the very first few throw-ins in each of the two 45 minute periods of play.

As soon as you blow the whistle to start each half, be prepared to make your first decisions. This will very often be simple throw-in decisions. Commit yourself 100 percent to manage these first few throw-ins as if your life depended on it, as this can be your 'tipping-point' in terms of the players beginning to accept your authority right from the very start.

The aim is to impart an early unconscious message to all the players that you;

- are professional
- are dressed correctly and smartly
- intend to take this game seriously from the very start
- expect restarts to be taken from the correct place
- expect players to look to you for decisions if they are unsure
- expect players to be wary of your ability not to be manipulated or too frivolous with Law application
- expect players to look to you for positional instructions if they are not sure where to take a restart
- expect players to recognise your authority as the official Referee of their game
- are as keen as they are to fulfil your part to the best of your ability
- will strive to reach credible monitoring positions by working hard at all times
- not to see you as an official dictator but rather as a necessary part of their game

When you break down the benefits of involving yourself 100 percent in the very first few throw-ins of each half, as shown in the list above, it is not surprising that at least some of them will inevitably be consumed into the players' unconscious mind. This can only be beneficial to you as a Referee as the game unfolds. The ideas in this advice are things that you will physically and mentally have to do - so don't expect players to respect you without earning it.

Involve yourself 100 percent by:

- anticipating where your first decision will be made
- working hard to be as close as practically possible
- sprinting adjacent to where the ball has left the field of play
- using your whistle clearly and confidently when making your first few decisions
- using your outstretched horizontally held arm to emphasise where you want the player who is taking the throw to stand
- making eye-contact and looking the thrower in the eye as he prepares to take his throw-in

If you can quietly achieve the above, players will not only look towards you automatically prior to taking the throw-in, but more importantly, they will look towards you on subsequent restarts to check your acceptance.

- only use verbal and additional whistle signals as a last resort to achieve correct positioning by the player. It is very rare that you will need to do this, as your positioning and close attendance is normally all that is needed.

Stage 2: Confidant body language and signalling.

The idea is not to BOSS these early restarts by being overly assertive, but rather to quietly and confidently involve yourself 100 percent. If you are too strong when dealing with the minor trouble-less elements of a game (like these early throw-ins), it will lessen the assertiveness impact that will serve you better when dealing with possible serious incidents later on.

To involve yourself 100 percent without being overpowering, you need to achieve a level of authority that does not end up making you look like a dictator who cares nothing about helping players to enjoy their sport.

You can achieve this during the early restarts by:

- not trying to impose yourself by forcing players to do exactly what you want by using domineering commands
- not executing arm, whistle and vocal signals like a Sergeant Major!
- having the flexibility to interpret the Laws without insisting on applying them in minute detail
- wearing a friendly smile on your face in the early stages
- being slightly relaxed yet focused, by using a good upright posture that exudes a good attitude
- making an effort to get into the correct position and not standing 50 metres away
- demonstrating an enthusiasm and positive attitude for the game
- using early stoppages to show in a quiet way, that if you are 'up for this game'
- always being polite
- acknowledging your Assistant Referees support with quick early subtle thumbs-up signals
- not penalising trifling Law breaches or looking to conjure up deliberate faults when there are none
- quietly saying to a player who was near to committing a fault, for example when he took the throw-in, "Be careful with your feet on the next throw-in." Or, "Make sure you take it from exactly the right place next time."

If you can achieve all or some of the above, it will positively influence the subconscious mind of the players before they have had a chance to try and influence YOU! If you can get into their minds before they get to yours, it will be of great benefit to everyone involved. These actions subtly set the scene of the referee's capability in the players' eyes. Effective communication techniques such as these will subtly guide players into taking throw-ins from the correct place, and this will subsequently lead to other restarts being taken correctly.

Stage 3: Consolidating.

Throw-in consolidation:

- when the ball leaves the field of play for a throw-in, once you have shown the direction with a raised angled arm signal, sprint and position yourself square to where the ball left the field of play
- if you can't remember which way the throwing team is kicking, just shout, "Red throw" or "Yellow throw" etc. until you are confident that your arm direction signals are pointing the right way!
- if you don't know which way to award the throw-in, give it to the defending team, unless you want to invite players to exploit your indecisiveness - but aim to get your first few decisions correct (this is even more important if you are an Assistant Referee)
- be proactive and stop players from taking throw-ins from the wrong place
- raise an arm horizontally and hold it there for a minimum of 5 seconds to show everyone where the throw-in should take place
- only use your whistle to signal to stop play for a throw-in if there is any doubt (but use it for the first few occasions)

- if players gain illegal ground use short blasts on your whistle (peep peep peep) to reposition them correctly
- if the short whistle blasts do not work, use vocal instructions and approach a few steps nearer
- once the thrower is in the correct position, sprint to your drop-zone point to monitor where the ball is likely to land when it is thrown

If you do this for the first three or four throw-ins in each half of the game, you will notice that players will start looking towards you for positive affirmation before they take subsequent throw-ins. As the game progresses, you will find that players no longer try to gain those few illicit metres up the touchline. You no longer need to provide any positioning signal apart from standing square to where the ball should be thrown back in. Eventually, you don't even need to stand adjacent to where the ball should be thrown back, instead you will be able to sprint directly to your drop-zone monitoring position without having to indicate where the throw-in should take place; because the players themselves will go to the correct place automatically. Once this level of control has been achieved, apart from giving the throw-in direction, your involvement only needs to be heightened (or re-established) if there is a disputed throw-in, or if the players' standards begin to slip later on. This subtle proactive technique, covertly guides the players into doing correctly what they should have been doing correctly in the first place!

Keeping the anticipated play area in view.

As a general rule, try to keep the drop-zone area (where you anticipate that the ball will be thrown) in good view and the subsequent anticipated play area in front of you when positioning yourself to monitor a throw-in. There are exceptions to this of course; one being when the defending team near their goal line, take a throw-in. In the latter case, don't stand on the goal line but take up a position further up the field towards the middle rather than near the touchline.

Keeping the subsequent play area in view (generally in front of you), gives you a better angle of view, and keeps you out of the players' path. And more importantly, stops you straying into the zone where the ball is most likely to go. There may be the odd occasion when you will need to monitor a throw-in from the touchline or a goal line. But placing yourself at the extremes of your patrol path is always to the detriment of optimum positioning, which should consider all possibilities of where the ball could travel if it breaks away quickly.

Finally, closeness to play is always a major factor in decision-making; more so when Club Assistant Referees are being used. For example, it is wise not to stick too rigidly to your diagonal patrol path when the throw-in is near your Assistant on the far side of your diagonal path. Be prepared to compress play by coming 'way off' your diagonal to closely monitor a throw-in, especially if any trouble is expected. Remember - try to be proactive and NOT reactive. The nearer that you are to a decision-making moment, the more readily the players will accept your judgment and the more credible your decision will be. This is also important if you need to 'sell' a decision that you are not 100 percent sure about. Players more readily accept a difficult decision made from a few meters away; this is not the case if you make a difficult or important decision from 50 metres away. This is very important when you make the first few decisions in each half time period of play.

Summary:

Hopefully, if adopted, the above suggestions will minimise foul throw-ins, and encourage players to look towards you (the Referee) for positive confirmation at throw-ins and other restarts. The overall message is to be proactive and not reactive. Don't wait for a foul throw-in (or any other restart) to occur, when it is so very easy for referees (as guardians and Champions of the Laws) to prevent it.

I have shown how easy it is to be proactive, how to subtly manage the restart positions to minimise infringements, and hopefully, I have encouraged you to be more thoughtful in your positioning and efforts in the very first few minutes of each half. Try using some of these ideas to manage other early restarts and stoppages.

Work hard to quietly/assertively and professionally manage the first few throw-ins in each half by being prepared to subtly guide the players into the correct place to take the throw-in. They will then start to look towards you on subsequent throw-ins, and this is when you can ease off your involvement (but remain watchful).

The overall aim is to show players very early on, that whilst you can allow some leeway and flexibility with restarts, it is you that control the amount of leeway and when to apply it - and not them.

Happy Refereeing. Stay safe.

Regards, Julian Carosi

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THE REFEREE'S SURVIVAL GUIDE

A fantastic referee book written by Jeffrey Caminsky from the USA was featured in the 2007 April edition of The Corsham Referee newsletter, where you can get details of how to buy Jeff's book entitled 'The Referee's Survival Guide'. *Can be bought from Amazon.com*. The book comes highly recommended by me (Julian Carosi) and provides answers to many of your problems on the field of play. Clearly written and easy to understand. The Referee's Survival Guide explains many of the "what's, how's, who's and why's" of life on the soccer field, as well as many of the things for a referee to avoid.

Below is a monthly excerpt to whet your appetite for Jeff's brilliant book.

Deliberately handling the ball

Among all fouls arising during the course of the game, handballs-or deliberately handling the ball, in the terminology of the Laws-mat- well cause the most trouble, especially for beginning referees.

Handling is the only foul not committed against an opposing player, but against the opposing team. It is also the only penal foul that requires deliberate intent by the player committing the foul. The foul is not, after all, "letting the ball touch the hand" but "deliberately handling the ball." As a result, it is often said that if the ball plays the hand it is not a foul, but if the hand plays the ball, then it is.

Unfortunately, this rule of thumb is more easily stated than put into practice. It also conflicts with the more conventional rule applied by players, coaches, and spectators around the world: if it hits the hand of an opposing player, it is a handball. As a result, applying the Laws properly may lead to sharp comments by participants and spectators alike, but they are usually comments born of misunderstanding and should not be taken to heart. It would be unfair to penalize a player for an accidental touch which is neither intended nor avoidable, and a few moments of thought should be enough to grasp the basic concepts involved.

Handling fouls require deliberate contact between the ball and a player's hand or arm. This, in turn, means that the player either chose not to avoid touching the ball, placed his arms in an unnatural playing position to make it likely that he would touch the ball, or that he chose to continue playing a ball after an initial, accidental contact. Perhaps this is best illustrated by studying examples of what handling is not

- Using the arms instinctively to protect a sensitive area of the body from the sudden approach of the ball is not a foul.
- A ball deflecting off a player's hand or arm from a shot or pass taken a few feet away is not a foul-unless the player deliberately placed his arm in an unnatural position to block the pass. (And placing the arms or hands over a sensitive area of the body while standing in the wall at a free kick is not, by any stretch of the imagination, unnatural).
- A ball striking the arm of a player who is looking the other way is not a foul.
- A ball innocently striking the arm of a player does not magically turn the play into a foul by falling in a place that happens to benefit that player.
- On the other hand....a player who continues to control the ball with his arm after an initial, innocent touch is committing a handling foul.
- And a referee may have cause to wonder just how innocent a hand-ball contact is, if the ball just keeps happening to fall in a convenient place for the same player in the same game.

There are many aspects of hand-to-ball contact to note and consider when deciding whether a handball is deliberate or inadvertent. Uneven playing surfaces often causes the ball to deflect at odd angles, making it hard for players to know how it will bounce. Players who are unchallenged in the open field have no incentive to handle the ball, since it will be easily detected. Often, this suggests an unintentional handling, especially on the many fields where the playing surface itself is less than putting-green smooth. On the other hand, since players intending to commit a foul may want to hide their actions from the officials, many intentional handballs will occur just out of sight of the referee, or when the referee is screened from the play, making cooperation between all three officials essential.

Many thanks Jeffrey for giving permission for your articles to appear over the years.

SOCCKERPEDIA

(A monthly extract from the brilliant book 'Soccerpedia' by my friend Andrew Ward. Arranged in A to Z format, this entertaining and authoritative book offers the chance to get to know the Laws of the Game and its history in detail. Publisher Robson . Publication Date 28 September 2006: ISBN 1861059833

Size (h x w) 234x156mm Pages 368 Normal price £10.99 (approx. \$20.35) Can be bought from Amazon.com

THROW-IN

Most throw-ins are routine but some can change games.

In the 1995 Anglo-Italian Cup Final, Andy Legg (Notts County) took a throw-in, and the ball passed through a crowded goalmouth into the net. The referee awarded a goal because he thought the ball had touched someone on its journey - a goal cannot be scored directly from a throw-in - but slow-motion film suggested that the ball had not been touched. The referee's decision is final.

One of Ian Hutchinson's long throw-ins helped Chelsea win the 1970 FA Cup Final replay. Charlton (Leeds) mis-headed the throw, and Webb (Chelsea) bundled the ball into the net. Scientific experiments showed that Hutchinson had an extension of the spine and was double-jointed in both shoulders. This enabled him to perform a 'windmill action' with his arms revolving rather than popping out. But the BBC Match of the Day team's slow-motion footage showed that some of Hutchinson's longer efforts were foul throws as both feet were not always on the ground when the ball was released.

A game can also be changed by a sending-off provoked by a throw-in. Adrian Serieux (Millwall) was sent off when he threw the ball at Lee Cook (Queen's Park Rangers), who was standing the required one yard away (November 2004). The law was then changed so that opponents had to be at least two yards from the thrower until the ball was in play (2005). It is a cautionable offence to be closer (2006).

Albert Jarrett (Stevenage) was standing some distance away from Lee Protheroe (Gravesend) when Protheroe took a throw-in and deliberately hurled the ball hard at the back of Jarrett's head (April 2005). Jarrett retaliated and both players were sent off.

Shaun Smith (York City) was cautioned by the referee after spending seventeen seconds taking a throw-in in the 57th minute of a match against Scarborough (December 2004). It was Smith's second caution of the match so he was dismissed.

In football's earliest days, the first player to touch the ball over the boundary-line was allowed to restart the game with a one-handed throw at right-angles to the boundary-line (1870 London rules) or a kick in any direction (1870 Sheffield rules). Presumably this is why the boundary-line became known as the touchline.

The idea behind kick-ins was to punish the side kicking or heading the ball out. If the punishment was harsh enough, all the players would strive to keep the ball in play to prevent a throw-in. But kick-ins have never proved a deterrent, and experiments in the 1940s, 1970s and 1990s have all ended with the retention of the throw-in. When the Sheffield and London rules were eventually unified (April 1877), the compromise was to accept London's one-handed throw-in but also accept Sheffield's any direction rule. The throw-in was taken by a player of the opposite side from that which last played the ball, and it was taken from where the ball went over the line. Another player had to touch the ball before the thrower could play it again.

There was, however, still inconsistency between the Scottish throw-in (at right angles to the touchline) and the English one (in any direction). This led to a dispute before the 1880 Scotland-England match. These throw-in inconsistencies were discussed at the first-ever IFAB meeting (December 1882). The difficulties were resolved by an entirely new system - a two-handed throw in any direction. This restrained the first generation of long-throw experts. William Gunn (Notts County), John Graham (Preston), Ted Corrie (Everton) and Hugh Wilson (Sunderland) had all been capable of throwing the ball one-handed from the touchline into the goalmouth. Throwing distance was further restricted by a rule compelling the thrower to stand with part of both feet on the touchline (1895). The rule was changed so that the thrower's foot had to be outside the touchline (1925) or on or outside the touchline (1932), and a new generation of long-throwers was born. Spectators were startled by throws into the goal area by Sam Weaver (Newcastle) and Tom Gardner (Aston Villa). Immediately after World War II, Dave Russell (Sheffield Wednesday) and Cliff Holton (Arsenal) developed long throws after practising with medicine balls. In the 1960s, David Mackay (Spurs and Derby County) prepared for his version of a long throw by wiping his hands on his shirt. But players are not allowed to dry their hands on a conveniently placed towel.

The referee keeps a mental check list for what constitutes a foul throw. If the answer to any of these questions is 'No', the throw-in is awarded to the other team: Is part of each foot on the ground when the thrower releases the

ball? Is part of each foot either on the touchline or behind the line (both heels on the line and toes over the line is acceptable)? Are both hands used with equal force? Does the thrower throw the ball from behind and over the head in a continuous motion? Is the ball thrown (rather than dropped)? Does the throw come from behind the head? Is the throw-in taken from the right place? Is the ball thrown without any spin? Is the player facing the field with some part of the body? Has there been no use of a purposefully placed towel to dry the ball?

A foul throw was originally punished by a free-kick. After protests from many clubs, this was changed so that the other team was awarded the throw-in (1931). More recently, a throw-in taken from the wrong position was labelled a foul throw, and the throw-in conceded to the opposition (1987). Previously it would be taken again from the right place. In 1982-83, the Football League treated time-wasting at throw-ins as the equivalent of a foul throw, but this was quickly stopped by IFAB.

Foul throws have been spotted at the highest level. The 1974 FIFA World Cup Final contained a foul throw when a Dutch player failed to take the ball properly over his head, and the 2004 women's under-nineteen World Championship had a foul throw in the Germany-China final.

A goalkeeper was allowed to pick up a team-mate's throw-in for the first five years of the back-pass law (1992 to 1997) but after 1997 a throw-in counted as a back-pass. If the ball brushes the goalkeeper's hand and goes into the net, the referee would probably award a goal rather than an indirect free-kick, i.e. the referee would apply the advantage clause. Players cannot be offside from a throw-in (1920).

An important addition to the throw-in protocol - 'a goal shall not be scored from a throw-in' - was added in 1898. Frank Boakas (Barnsley) took a long throw-in and goalkeeper Breen (Manchester United) deflected the ball into the net for a legitimate goal (January 1938). A confident goalkeeper could have let the ball go into the net and be rewarded with a goal-kick (provided the referee agreed that the ball hadn't been touched).

When Barnsley beat Huddersfield Town 3-1, Huddersfield equalised with a controversial goal (August 1996). The referee ruled that Andy Morrison (Huddersfield) had got his head to Tom Cowan's long throw, but furious Barnsley players claimed that the ball had gone straight in. Birmingham City's second goal against Aston Villa had a similar controversy (September 2002). Goalkeeper Enckelman (Villa) attempted to trap a throw-in only for the ball to roll under his foot and into the net. The referee decided to give the goal on the basis that the goalkeeper had touched the ball with his foot. Otherwise the decision would have been a corner kick as a Villa player had taken the throw.

During Bournemouth's famous 1958 FA Cup run, Ollie Norris (Bournemouth) developed an unorthodox tactic of jumping up in front of opponents when they were taking throw-ins. This tactic was later classed as ungentlemanly conduct (IFAB 1966). Members of the defending side are allowed to stand within two yards of the thrower but they are not allowed to jump up and down, and not permitted to gesticulate or make facial expressions. They must stand still.

If the ball hits two players at the same time and goes over the touchline, referees try to give a quick signal. Some referees consistently give that sort of decision to the defending team; others consistently give the throw to the attackers.

Throw-ins are so abundant that they need to be taken inside the first five seconds if possible. In the 1960s, it was estimated that first-class matches averaged 85 throw-ins. There may be fewer now, but so much will depend on the width of the pitch, tactics, standard of play and weather conditions (especially wind). Somersault throws by Changez Khan (Stafford Rangers) and Steve Watson (Newcastle United) were confirmed as legitimate (FA 1990). Such acrobats usually do a handstand on the ball before completing the somersault and throwing the ball in. Obviously all the principles of a throw-in need to be adhered to.

Other players have throw-in techniques that may need closer scrutiny, in the manner that authorities study the bowling actions of certain cricketers. In EURO 2004, Reiziger (Holland) demonstrated an unusual style whereby he twisted to the right but seemed to correct the motion just in time so that he delivered the ball as he was facing the pitch and brought the ball over his head rather than his right shoulder.

Many thanks Andrew Ward for giving permission for your material to appear in this newsletter over the years.

NEWSLETTER FEATURE:

This full article by Stanley Lover can be found shortly on the www.CorshamRef.org.uk web site.

Hillsborough - 20 years on

You'll never walk alone

Hillsborough Stadium, Sheffield

At exactly 3:06pm, on an infamous date in sports history - Saturday April 15, 1989 - football referee Ray Lewis felt a firm tap on his shoulder. He had just whistled a foul in the centre of the field. Turning to calm a dissenting player Lewis was shocked to be confronted by a tall helmeted officer of the South Yorkshire police force. 50,000 noisy fans at Hillsborough Stadium were hushed and not amused by this intrusion.

"We've got problems, Mr Lewis," stated the grim faced policeman, "Would you please take the players off the field?"

Two hours later a young man sat on the kerb outside stadium, crumpled grey sweater and shirt stretched up his back, revealing the top of his slip - in red and white stripes, the colours of the team he worshipped, Liverpool. Sobbing bitterly, ginger head cradled in his arms, he tried to grapple with the aftermath of an enormous tragedy which had crushed the life out of 96 and injured 200 football loving folk from his hometown. He had survived but probably wished he hadn't.

"Why them, and not me?" - a touch of guilt framing the next question, "Could I have done any more to save at least one of them?" He will never know the answer.

While the young man wept, ambulances and fire tenders continued to race to and fro, sirens piercing the still oppressive air. The screaming and wailing of trapped suffocating fans had subsided into muffled whispers of small groups of survivors, huddled together to share private grief.

From a boyhood experience, trapped in a moving sea of fans, I had some idea of what they had seen and felt. Inside the stadium every square foot of the pitch was littered with the debris of pain and death. Blood soaked cotton wool, strips of bandages, shirts ripped to pieces to cover wounds, odd shoes, scarves, red and white bonnets, bags, crumpled snack wrappings, cans and cartons: the weft and weave of a devil's carpet on lush green grass.

Crowd stewards, faces wet with tears, their bright new uniforms now dishevelled, torn and bloodstained, had witnessed horrifying scenes of screaming young and old, crushed against unyielding steel wire fences. They staggered in a daze, exhausted by frenzied attempts to rescue, comfort, and apply first aid. They, too, were victims.

Before the last sufferers had been removed, the debate had started. Police were everywhere, questioning colleagues, stewards, medics, club officials, any person who might throw some light on the development of the tragedy.

Eleven years later, a bitter litigation ground to a halt, clearing accused policemen of manslaughter charges but infuriating Liverpool families seeking justice. Even today, twenty years on, the bitterness and rage has not gone away.

The tragedy

It had all started on a warm sunny spring day; Liverpool about to play Nottingham Forest in the semi-final of The FA Cup. The prize - to meet Everton or Norwich in the final at the Mecca of football - Wembley Stadium. The kick-off was scheduled for 3.00pm - the traditional hour of the sacred British Saturday afternoon love affair with football. Referee Ray Lewis, a brewery executive living in Surrey, arrived at noon with assistants David Axcell (Essex) and John Brandwood (Staffordshire), just as the turnstiles started clicking to admit a flooding tide of good humoured supporters. Already they created a joyful ambiance, chanting club favourites, waving banners and scarves.

The officials walked the pitch, going through routine pre-game procedures, while soaking in the highly-charged atmosphere of a big match. The surface was in superb condition, hardly needing a second glance. A slight breeze drifted the sweet perfume of damp newly mown grass from goal to goal. Line markings, goals and netting, touch-line flags, layout of subs benches, every minor detail ticked against a check list to ensure a perfect setting for the spectacle.

Without any special advice or instructions from The Football Association - or during a normal briefing with the police, which might have suggested extra precautions - Lewis led the teams onto the playing area at 2:45pm. He was unaware that, at that moment thousands of Liverpool fans, delayed by traffic problems, were swamping the Leppings Lane turnstiles.

Good humour turned nasty as ticket holders vented their frustrations on the too few stewards trying their best to avoid chaos. In situations like this fans become demonic - abandoning all civilities. They swear and rave, jostle and push, desperate not to miss a second of the action. Ingredients for disaster.

To ease congestion, nearby exit Gate C was either opened or forced. Hundreds poured in, rushing through a sloping tunnel to the nearest pens - already overfull.

Some lost balance, fell, or were carried along to press into the backs of others unwilling or unable to move forward.

Between the pens and the pitch high wire mesh fences prevented those at the front from escaping. Those fences were erected in the 'hooligan' era to prevent invasions onto the field. Only very agile young men could climb over. Some did and urged others to follow but those who not move, notably the elderly and children, were crushed to death or badly injured.

Television cameras filmed minute-by-minute live coverage of the carnage to stun a vast watching audience. For referee Lewis the match was a highlight in an already illustrious career. Seconds before the kick-off he had noted some movement of spectators onto the cinder track near the Leppings Lane end but this was not uncommon in his experience. Police and stewards always coped without causing concern of the players or match officials. Only when tapped on the shoulder by the South Yorkshire officer did Lewis know that, this time, it was different - so very different.

Persuading the highly strung players to return to dressing rooms was difficult until the policeman said it might only be for ten minutes and Lewis assured them of a warm-up period before a restart. At 3:40pm the first fatality was reported with fears for many more to follow. The decision to abandon the match was made for the referee. Ray Lewis speaks publicly for the first time. "The tragedy was all around us. Bodies were being carried away on advertising boards. Our dressing room was converted into a first-aid post and many injured were being treated in the corridors. The club gymnasium was used as a temporary mortuary."

With a lump in his throat Lewis recalls, "We moved among the injured trying to help the Saint John's Ambulance volunteers as best we could," adding, "It was difficult to comprehend the events at the time. Only the next day, when the death toll was rising, did I realise what I had witnessed."

Assistant referee Dave Axcell described the scenes as "mayhem, like a battlefield." Each following day revealed gruesome detail. He and his family needed counselling and for six weeks Axcell could not face refereeing another football game.

The referee team and their families had to cope with the intrusive clamour of high powered media - camped on their doorsteps like lip-smacking vultures - searching for juicy headline quotes.

Any reference to Hillsborough, and particularly every anniversary, saddens the hearts and minds of the three officials caught in the middle of the worst tragedy in football history. The 29 April, 2009, marks twenty years since that event but, as for the families of victims, the grief lingers on.

Yours in sport,

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THIS MONTH'S QUESTION and ANSWER TOPICS:

Question 1: I was under the impression that a player kicking out at an opponent off the ball would always be treated as violent conduct. To me a player kicking out off the ball is no different to a slap in the face and would result in a red card offence.

So my question is, are you allowed to consider whether kicking out off the ball is careless, reckless or using excessive force, or would it be treated as an act of violent conduct whatever the force used? In my opinion, it's no different than a little slap around the face, which would be considered violent conduct.

Answer 1: Like most other forms of physical contact, kicking out at a player spans from a tickle (careless) at one end of the spectrum, to use of excessive force in extreme cases. It is also difficult to know when a deliberate trip or a flick of the toes becomes a kick. The Careless lack of attention (verbal warning), Reckless acting with complete disregard (caution), Using excessive force in danger of injuring an opponent (sending-off) formula, is a very good measure of suitable punishment levels to use when a kick takes place.

As a general rule, if a player uses his hand and makes deliberate aggressive contact with his opponent's neck, or slaps/pushes his face, or punches him, he should be sent off for violent conduct.

Using your hand to make contact with someone's face/head only requires a small amount of force or push for it to be considered violent and insulting act. The head is also much more vulnerable to serious injury than other parts of the body, and that is why it is given more weight in terms of how strong these types of offences are punished.

Question 2: Due to inclement weather, a Senior Referee inspected a local venue consisting of several pitches. The Senior Referee concluded that due to snow and frozen surface, that it would not be safe to use any of the pitches, as they were all unfit for a game of football.

In the meantime, and unbeknown to the Senior Referee, a young Referee had arrived, and agreed to officiate in his match, on the premise that both of the Club Managers in his game, signed an agreement that he (the Referee) was waiving his responsibilities if anyone got injured. The Club Managers agreed to this, and a hasty agreement was duly signed.

The halfway through this match, the Senior Referee re-appears and instructs the players from both teams (and the young Referee) to cease playing, as the surface conditions were far too dangerous. The Senior Referee had words with the young Referee, who he subsequently reported. As a result of this, the young Referee was disciplined and is now likely to give up refereeing as a result. What do you think?

Answer 2: Whilst the end result was correct, there may have been a better way of getting there. An experienced Referee is more likely to make a proper decision in relation to the safety of a field of play than a junior Referee with little experience. A Senior Referee is also more likely to fend off attempts by Club Managers to play regardless of the conditions.

A Referee should never sanction signed agreements waiving his responsibilities in relation to injured players, as this already features in Law 5 Decision 1, which states:

"A Referee is not held liable for any kind of injury suffered by a player, official or spectator when making a decision about the condition of the field of play or its surrounds or weather conditions which are such as to allow or not allow a match to take place."

The words alone in the Law book will not necessarily safeguard the Referee, as there have been several cases of Referees being successfully taken to Court by players for wrong decision-making leading to serious injury.

It would have been much better, if all of the Referees due to arrive at the venue had been informed of the decision not to play on this particular day. It is appreciated that this may not have been possible due to (for example); the time of the inspection, the various kick-off times, the size of the venue, the distance that the Senior Referee has to travel and the uncertainty of which Referee had been allocated to which pitch/game etc.

The Senior Referee was correct stop the game when he realised what was happening. Had the Senior Referee not stopped the game, and a serious injury subsequently occurred, both the Senior Referee and the young Referee would have been in serious trouble.

Whether or not the young Referee should have been reported, is probably down to how the young Referee reacted in accepting (or not accepting) the judgment and guidance of the Senior Referee. Otherwise, a lesson well learnt by the young Referee and simple reporting of the facts to the authorities would normally have sufficed.

Question 3: Exactly what is the 6 yard goal area (six yard box) used for? Back in the 'old days', the goalkeeper was 'protected' within this area, but was deemed fair game for a fair charge anywhere outside of it. Referees now seem to fully protect goalkeepers within the entire penalty area INCLUDING the goal area. Is the goal area only there as a spot to place the ball for a goal kick or does it have any other significance?

Answer 3: Before 1998, players were only allowed to (fair) charge a goalkeeper in his goal area if he was holding the ball or obstructing an opponent.

1996/1997 Law 12 stated the following:

An indirect free kick should be awarded for charging the goalkeeper, except when he:

- (a) is holding the ball;
- (b) is obstructing an opponent;
- (c) had passed outside his goal area.

1996/1997 Law 12 International Board Decision No. 16, Advice to Referees also stated the following:

Although an opponent is entitled to make a fair charge on the goalkeeper when he is holding the ball in his hands, it is not then permissible for an opponent to attempt to kick the ball.

In Law 12 1938/1939: under a column, headed, 'Advice to Players' the following appeared.

(g) When playing as a goalkeeper, bear in mind that directly you leave the goal-area, any opponent may charge you. As long as you are within the goal-area, provided you do not hold the ball or obstruct an opponent, you are protected under the Laws. The best advice to a goalkeeper is to get rid of the ball at once.

In the 1997/998 complete rewrite of the Laws of the Game, reference to fair charges was removed (a charge is now either a foul or it is not a foul). Referees now err on the side of caution when protecting goalkeepers.

Therefore, the goal area is now only really used to mark out the area in which goal kicks can be taken. In addition, if a drop ball needs to be taken or an indirect free-kick (awarded to the attacking team) occurs inside the goal area, the restart is taken on a place on the goal line, parallel to the goal line at the nearest point to where the ball was located when play was stopped.

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 (Editor)

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If you want to contact me, go to my website and select the *Contact the Webmaster* link under the cartoon on the home page or on the top left of the page.

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