

Flag & Whistle

Newsletter for the BC Soccer Referees Association - Holiday 2010



SEASON'S GREETINGS!



Football cannot exist without referees – we need to take better care of them

Scottish referees are on strike this weekend. It is a warning that England should heed

By David Lacey, The Guardian, November 26, 2010

(Ed note: Referees in the Scottish Premier League (SPL) went on strike in November. Perhaps this article is, in this season of peace and goodwill toward men, a paradox. But it was felt a great way to show how much we have in common with our fellow officials around the world.)

A couple of seasons refereeing on the playing fields of Brighton were enough to leave a lasting conviction that blowing raspberries on the sidelines was much easier than blowing a whistle out in the middle. But at least there were no death threats.

A point has been reached in football when it seems reasonable to ask how much abuse, verbal and sometimes physical, referees can be expected to tolerate. Officials in Scotland have already provided an answer by boycotting this weekend's programme, fearing that because of mounting criticism their safety is at risk.

This season one Scottish referee, Willie Collum, received death-threats after he had been in charge of a Celtic-Rangers game. It is the lot of officials in Scotland that they will inevitably upset one half of Glasgow or the other on a regular basis, but clearly the refs up there feel that things have got out of hand.

Admittedly, one of their number, Dougie McDonald, did not help by telling porkies after he changed his mind about awarding Celtic a penalty against Dundee United last month. But neither did the Celtic chairman, the former cabinet minister John Reid, when he declared, in as many words, that McDonald was not fit for purpose and called for his removal, which did little to improve the deteriorating relations between referees and clubs.

So this week has found the Scottish Football Association sounding out referees across Europe in the hope of persuading some of them to cross the picket lines. It is to be hoped that the efforts of the SFA in ensuring that football stays on television screens will be matched by more support for its disaffected officials, which means taking strong action against their abusers rather than just making sympathetic noises.

At least the manager of Aberdeen, Mark McGhee, has had



Above: Celtic Manager Lennox talking (?) to a referee after a SPL match

the good grace to admit that he was wrong to criticise Collum last weekend for sending off Rory McArdle for a foul during the 1-0 defeat by St Johnstone. Originally McGhee called the decision "unbelievable" but said he would admit he was mistaken if replays proved the referee was right. They did and he did.

For decades losing managers have criticised the performances of referees, often as a means of distracting attention from the inadequacies of their teams, but when this is combined with increasing demands for TV playbacks to be brought into the decision-making process then it is clear that the authority of match officials is being steadily undermined. When Jimmy Hill began analysing controversial incidents on Match of the Day, football complained about trial by television. Now it is happy to use TV to put referees in the dock.

The recent suggestion by the manager of Stoke City, Tony Pulis, that clubs should vote at the end of each season to decide which three referees should be relegated to the Championship and which trio promoted brought a spot of light relief (strange, but Pulis has gone quiet on the subject since Stoke won three games) and was never worthy of serious consideration. Clubs used to give refs marks after each match and often up- or downgraded them according to whether they had won or lost.

So far referees in the English Premier League have not talked about going on strike, although there must be times when they are sorely tempted to down whistles. There was a serious threat of industrial action in the 1967-68 season after

See "Football" pg 7



FALL COUNCIL- NEITHER SLEET OR SNOW SHALL STOP US

This year's Fall Council meeting saw something that hasn't been seen in some time- snow. Had it been a match there may have been grounds to call for a postponement. However, like the entertainment business, the show must go on!

Due to the sudden inclement weather, the meeting did not feature a quorum- but only just. Members could be excused in the extraordinary circumstances for not wanting to risk life and limb to attend. As such, no business was transacted and the minutes of the Spring Council Meeting will have to be approved at the following Council Meeting in November. However, members were informed on the latest progress of the three projects in the Business Plan: Head Referee, Marketing and Mentorship. Project Managers Laurie Miller and Phil Fasciglione, head of the Marketing and Mentorship projects respectively, were present; President Elvio Chies read out a prepared presentation from Head Referee Project Manager Mohammed Janief. In addition, the BC Soccer Referee Committee was able to send a representative: CSA Referee's Committee and fellow RA member Bob Sawtell.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE FOR NEXT YEAR'S ELECTIONS

Ron Schaeffer is heading up the Nominating Committee looking into the elections for the coming Annual General Meeting, tentatively to be held in early May 2011. The positions up for election are as follows: Vice-President and Treasurer/Registrar. Each spot on the executive is for a 2 year term. Per the By-Laws, prospective candidates must not be serving currently on an Area Association executive.

The Area Association-appointed Directors, unlike Table Officers (i.e. President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer/Registrar) may be serving presently on an Area Association executive and are ratified by a show of hands. Directors from the Fraser Valley and Vancouver Island Area Associations are up for re-ratification.

NAME CHANGE COMMETH

It's official: BC Soccer's Referee Development Committee has now been re-christened as the Referee's Committee. The Committee is made up of the following members: Chairman: Rick Connors, from the BC Soccer Board of Directors and also a Referee Association member (RA), Arnar Bernhardsson, Roy Branco, Tiberio de Frias, John Nielsen, CSA Referee's Committee Bob Sawtell. RA Past President Pat Harkness serves as the Committee's Secretary and BC Soccer Referee Development Coordinator Jose Branco is the staff person on the Committee.

At the Fall Council Meeting of the RA it was reported that any items that should be made known to the Committee's attention should be forwarded to Jose Branco for inclusion on the agenda for the next meeting.

UNIVERSITY (CIS) and College (CCAA) FINALS

Congratulations to those members who were appointed to the Men's and Women's CIS finals this year.

Women's Finals- Michelle Pye
Men's Finals- Mauricio Navarro

In addition, CSA Referees' Committee and RA Member Bob Sawtell was appointed as the Supervisor of Official to the Women's CIS.

Participating in the CCAA finals in Edmonton was Alain Ruch and Martin Reid.

We congratulate members on their respective appointments!

CORRECTION:

The names of those members participating in National Club Championships was incorrect stated in the Autumn edition. The names should have read as follows:

- U-14 Nationals-NewBrunswick: Marco Arruda
- U-16 Nationals-Ontario: Alain Ruch
- Men's & Women's Nationals: Andy Foster and Martin Reid
- Bob Sawtell was also appointed as the Supervisor of Officials, U-18 Natonals in Newfoundland.

We apologize for the error whilst congratulating those members on their appointments.

MENTOR COURSE COMING SOON

At a recent meeting of the Vancouver Area, Roy Branco of the BC Soccer Referee's Committee outlined a mentor course being developed to aid would-be mentors enter into this area. Roy, who heads the Assessment Portfolio on the Committee, mentioned to those in attendance that mentoring and assessing are two different aspects. As such, the course would be developed to help differentiate the two and provide guidelines of what the Committee would like to have would-be mentors say to a referee, and importantly what not-to-say.

In speaking to Roy personally, the Flag and Whistle was informed the proposed rollout would be early 2011 along with future Head Referee meetings. Furthermore, because of different nature between mentors and assessors, all current assessors would be required to take a mentor course if wishing to mentor as well.

Bad news means learning to start anew

Christmas is, despite the hustle and bustle, a happy time of year. I'm sure we all have plans to spend more time with family and friends, time that we couldn't make happen during the earlier part of the year.

With that in mind, what I have to say is very hard to not only announce but also sad to say.

I am informing you that Kamloops-based members of the refereeing fraternity have voted to withdraw from the umbrella of the BCSRA. We respect their decision and there are no hard feelings- deep down they are fellow referees and we still feel a connection in mind even if the body has been severed. And it's that severing that brings a tinge of regret that they will not benefit from the opportunities that result from being in a society of one's peers. Hopefully, many will still choose to join as Direct members when the Interior Membership Year comes up for renewal in the spring.

As of this writing, many weeks before this issue of the Flag & Whistle has come out, a letter is being drafted to announce this to all members. Obviously, due to the timing of this publication, I don't know what the content of that letter will be. However, allow me to put my heart on my sleeve.

The Referees Association (RA) is a quasi-professional, service-related, volunteer organization. The basis for the association's existence, according to our founding fathers is to help fellow referees, no matter what classification they have and no matter where they reside. Inherent in this mission/vision is the existence of a succession plan- i.e., there is a circle of life to a referee's career and those that come after us need to be nurtured so they can be prepared to take over once we have passed on. In short, referees are a family, and family helps family. Given the size of our province, our founding father's had big dreams indeed.

With that end in mind, I remind everyone we've developed a Business Plan centering on three initiatives: Head Referee Project, Marketing Project and a Mentoring Project. Each has a Project Manager and we are working on developing timelines to start the next phase. To be successful, it will take all of us to be united into a "referees team."

To put it in perspective, one is reminded of a TV ad created by the Bauer hockey equipment company. You may remember the visuals of a clean sheet of ice, a metaphor for an open book of blank pages, waiting for a new chapter to be written of which the content isn't fully known. The announcer finishes the commercial by saying, "The Stanley Cup weighs only 30 pounds but takes a team to lift it."

Will you, fellow referee, jump over the boards and help write a new chapter on our clean sheet of ice?

WEB FORUM ON HOLD

Due to the number of spammers that have been accessing the RA's web forum, the site has been temporarily shut down. In order to maintain security for members, accounts must be manually activated. Spammers have been clogging the site with account start-up requests causing untold misery for the administrators of the forum. The fear of letting one spammer loose in the site caused the need for an indefinite shutdown.

A solution is in the works which will allow all members to access the site without having spammers trying to gain access. Due to the size of the membership and the need to test drive the solution, a full roll-out will not occur until at least the end of January.

TAKE THE PULSE OF YOUR AREA-

BE AN AREA REPORTER TODAY!

Are you a people person? Do you like to tout fellow colleagues/friends accomplishments? Then maybe you're cut out to be an Area Association Reporter!

The Flag & Whistle is looking for members to talk about other members and what's happening in their refereeing lives. The work is not onerous: you just talk to people, get to know them, ask if they have anything about their refereeing that they feel proud about and, should they feel okay with letting the world know, tell everyone about it. And the best part of all- you only have to write something once every 6 weeks or so!

Why not give it a try? It's better than a kick in the head! If you're interested, let the following people know:
Editor Jon Seeley (jonsee@telus.net) or President Elvio Chies: (Lvo@direct.ca)

"TOM SPEAKS" will return next issue.



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since 1969**



CSRA MOURNS PAST PRESIDENT BASIL GILL

It is with deep regret that the Canadian Soccer Referees Association Executive announces the passing of Immediate Past President Basil Gill. Early on the morning of Sunday, November 21st, Basil was taken to hospital after complaining of not feeling very well. He passed away a few hours later. He was 80.

Basil was President of the CSRA from 2001 to 2006. He was also a Past President of the Ontario Soccer Referees Association's Scarborough branch. A funeral was held on November 30th at Giffin Mack Funeral Home



LATE BREAKING NEWS

Howard Webb awarded MBE

Premier League referee Howard Webb has been awarded an MBE in the UK New Year Honours List.

(as appeared in www.premierleague.com)

The first Professional Game Match Official (PGMO) to receive such an honour, he has been given the award for "services to football".

The award caps a remarkable year for the 39-year-old from Rotherham, who in 2010 became the first referee to officiate both a UEFA Champions League and FIFA World Cup Final. Webb refereed the Finals along with assistant referees Darren Cann and Mike Mullarkey.

Webb said: "This is a great finish to what has been a remarkable year. I am very proud to receive the MBE and think it belongs as much to Darren and Mike as it does to me. It's a bit humbling to get it, but a nice accolade for refereeing in this country.

"Football is very much a team game and that extends to the officials. My refereeing colleagues at the PGMO have been a tremendous support, as have all the management and back room staff. A lot of hard work has been put in by PGMO in training and development over the last decade and we now have a set of officials who I think are some of the best in the world.

"I'd also like to thank those who have shown us tremendous support this year: the Football Association, the PFA, the LMA, players and managers throughout the game, the media, the many fans who have wished us well, and of course my wonderful family."

Having impressed with his officiating in the UEFA Champions League Final between Inter Milan and Bayern Munich at the Bernabeu in May, Webb also won plaudits as he took control of four matches at the FIFA World Cup in South Africa.



When he was chosen to take charge of the Final between Spain and Holland, Webb became the first Englishman to referee the showpiece since Jack Taylor in 1974.

Mike Riley, general manager of PGMO, added: "This is a tremendous honour for Howard and reflects well on the achievements of his team of Mike and Darren in their superb performances throughout 2010, but particularly in becoming the first referee team to take charge of the UEFA Champions League Final and FIFA World Cup Final in the same year.

"Howard is a great ambassador for refereeing and football in general and this award is a fitting recognition of the dedication and commitment he has given to refereeing throughout his career. As a role model for so many aspiring referees this recognition will be welcomed by the 28,000 referees who take to the field each weekend, demonstrating that their often unheralded service to the game is valued and appreciated.

"I am absolutely delighted for Howard and am pleased that this award will enable Howard to share the celebrations with those who have supported him in his achievements, his PGMO colleagues, friends, and most importantly his family."



Confessions of an Amateur Referee

By Trevor Ward, Sabotage Times, Dec 7, 2010

(Ed note: the reader is warned the article contains some salty language at one point).

You wouldn't allow it in any other job, so why is it ok to constantly rip the piss out of refs? The 'bastard in the black' bites back. All smiles, until the game starts that is.

I knew it was time to retire from being an amateur league football referee when I squared up to Crown Inn's number four outside a disciplinary hearing and challenged him to repeat the choice phrase he'd directed at me on the pitch a few weeks earlier.

He cowered into his ill-fitting suit and couldn't look me in the eye.

"Don't you remember?" I prompted him. "You called me a fucking prick. Then you spat at me. Go on, why don't you say it to me here, now that it's just you and me?"

It was at that point the door to the committee room opened and a roomful of stuffed blazers could see me leaning over Number Four in a less than conciliatory manner. I didn't bother waiting to hear the result of the hearing...

Imagine being in the pub and a load of blokes you've never met before start moaning about the way you drink your beer or eat your crisps. Then it escalates and one or two of them start giving you some serious verbal abuse. One might even square up to you. In these circumstances, I think you'd be entitled to chin the fucker, don't you?

Well, that's more or less what happens to hundreds of amateur refs every weekend on public parks up and down the country. Some stocky short arse with bad breath thinks that because he's wearing a football strip and has 10 of his mates on the same side, he's entitled to be in your face and question your decisions incessantly for 90 minutes. My rather naïve belief – and my ultimate undoing outside that disciplinary hearing – was that I don't have to accept it in a bar or other public place, so why should I have to put up with it on a football pitch? After all, if I didn't bother turning up, there wouldn't be a football match in the first place. But that kind of logic defeats some of the greatest minds of a generation first thing on a Sunday morning.

"Imagine being in the pub and a load of blokes you've never met before start moaning about the way you drink your beer or eat your crisps."

Not all amateur league players are twats. It's probably only about 10 per cent of them, but they give the rest a bad name. And as they're spitting and snarling in your face because you've



Above: the author at left in his referee kit

just adjudged them offside, you can't help thinking: "Actually, you're quite a pathetic little human who probably drinks alcopops and thinks BBC Three is intellectually challenging and yet here you are picking a fight with someone you wouldn't dare answer back if you weren't in the company of 10 of your mates."

As Robbie Fowler told me when I announced my plans to take up the whistle: "I really feel sorry for refs. When I'm on the pitch, I'm only playing against one team. You're playing against two."

It's not just the players, it's the subs, the manager and the spectators, they all believe they have a God-given right to heap abuse upon someone who is merely doing their job and being paid £24 for the pleasure. In one game, a spectator questioned my parentage after I'd allowed a corner to be taken when the ball was, apparently, outside the quadrant. At the next break in play, I invited him to offer me a full and unreserved apology. He responded with another choice expletive. So I told him if he and his mangy dog didn't fuck off back at least 50 yards from the touchline, I'd abandon the game. When he realised I wasn't joking – his team were winning at the time – he reluctantly retreated, but I could still hear him muttering obscenities from behind a hedge he could barely see over for the rest of the game.

During a top-of-the-table clash in the Forfar and District Sunday League a spectator shouted at me: "You are a fucking disgrace referee". The ball was out of play so I took the opportunity to debate this assertion: "Who the fucking hell are you to talk to me like that?" Far from shutting him up, it provoked him – all five feet nothing of him – even more: "You can't swear at me, you're the referee!" You can't swear at me! It's OK for him to call me every name under the sun, but I wasn't allowed to respond using similar vocabulary. That's **(See "CONFESSION" pg 12)**



Scottish Referee Strike- stories from afar

Ed note: You may wonder, "Why would we want to print something like this? First, it's not a call to arms to do likewise. Secondly, it is to inform people of what fellow referees from around the world are facing. Lastly, it's make us think. As one of our founding members likes to say, "Thinking is Refereeing."

Scottish referees' strike: timeline-

Key dates which led to the current crisis in Scottish football.

By Pos Lambrianide, as appeared in The Telegraphs 3:47PM GMT 26 Nov 2010

17th October: In the game between Dundee United and Celtic at Tannadice Park, referee Dougie McDonald rescinds a decision to give Celtic a penalty, changing his mind after consulting with assistant referee Steven Craven.

After the game McDonald tells Celtic manager Neil Lennon that Craven heavily influenced his decision; however the referee realised his own error immediately and only told Lennon this to protect himself. McDonald later receives an official warning from the Scottish Football Association for lying over his reasons.

24th October: Neil Lennon's side lose 3-1 in the Old Firm derby against Rangers, leading to criticism of referee Willie Collum's handling of the game. Speaking about the penalty Collum awarded for Rangers' opening goal, Lennon said: "I feel let down on the penalty incident for sure. I'm not sure [Collum] saw it and I'm not sure why he has given it. He has got a lot of questions to answer."

Later that evening, Collum receives a series of threatening phone calls at his home.

25th October: Steven Craven, the assistant referee at the centre of the controversial penalty incident at Tannadice Park, resigns from refereeing after feeling he was the victim of "harassment and bullying" from his SFA superiors.

28th October: Former top-flight official Kenny Clark warns that several referees are considering quitting the game amid a backlash over decisions.

10th November: Neil Lennon is sent to the stand during Celtic's 2-0 defeat by Hearts after complaining over referee Craig Thomson's failure to award his team a penalty. Lennon accuses Thomson of making "scandalous" decisions.

21st November: It is confirmed that 31 of the 33 category one Scottish match officials have voted to refuse to referee the matches they have been allocated on Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th November.

The decision follows the abuse that has come their way this season, with referees claiming their personal safety is under threat, both on the pitch, and from fans.

23rd November: The Scottish Football Association reveals they have sourced foreign officials to referees for this weekend's games.

24th November: Talks are held in a bid to persuade the officials to call off their proposed strike.

Plans to recruit replacement referees are hit after referees from Iceland, Norway and Wales indicated they would not be willing to cross the metaphorical picket line.

25th November: The SFA announce category one referees have refused to back down over strike action and seek stand-ins from Poland, Israel, Portugal and Malta.

The SFA later confirm that all six games in the Clydesdale Bank Premier League, the three scheduled Scottish Cup replays and Sunday's ALBA Challenge Cup final will go ahead as planned, as well as the Irn-Bru First Division match between Morton and Falkirk which was chosen by ballot.

26th November: Having previously confirmed they would supply referees, Polish FA officials withdrew their men citing domestic responsibilities. As a result Morton's game against Falkirk match is postponed.

MORE STORIES ABOUT THE SCOTTISH REFEREE STRIKE CAN BE FOUND ON PAGES 7 and 8



Aberdeen boss says referees may be putting jobs at risk

Aberdeen manager Mark McGhee claims that Scottish referees may be putting their jobs at risk after voting to go on strike over the weekend of 27-28 November.

Category-one officials have decided to down tools over worries that their integrity is being questioned as well as fears that they may be attacked by disgruntled fans who are angry at their decisions.

McGhee will still be able to lead his men out against Kilmarnock on Saturday 27 November as all Scottish Premier League games will go ahead after the Scottish Football Association was able to bring in referees from other European associations. However, many of the scheduled Scottish Football League games will be called off due to the action.

Although McGhee's own job is under threat following a string of poor results which have seen the Dons slip to 11th in the table, he claims that the referees are putting their careers on the line with the impending strike as the foreign officials could prove to be more than adequate replacements.

He told reporters: "The most important thing is the games go ahead whether the referees are from Scotland or abroad. But I think it is a dangerous precedent if foreign referees were to come in and do well. There would be a lot of clubs who might feel in certain situations they might prefer that option. Officials could be doing themselves out of work so they need to be careful. Refs need to look for what's in their interests." The officials opted to withdraw labour after being criticised for their decisions in several high-profile incidents.

Celtic have been perhaps the most vocal critics of the referees, after an incident in a game against Dundee United at Tannadice which saw them awarded a penalty only for the match official to reverse his decision. The Hoops were also angry when manager Neil Lennon was dismissed from the technical area after protesting for a penalty he felt his side should have been given in a defeat to Heart of Midlothian at Tynecastle.

About-turn by Portuguese stand-ins adds further chaos to referees' strike

The Scotsman

Published Date: 27 November 2010 By STEPHEN HALLIDAY
THE Scottish Football Association's desperate bid to rescue this weekend's SPL card encountered fresh chaos last night when several foreign match officials opted out of breaking the strike by Scottish Grade One referees.

It emerged that referees from Portugal, who had been among those the SFA believed they had persuaded to cover the local withdrawal of services, changed their mind and boarded return flights home immediately after arriving in Glasgow.

There were suggestions last night that other officials who had been drafted in were having second thoughts about their participation, casting doubt over whether all of the weekend's remaining fixtures can be fulfilled.

The SFA had earlier announced that all six SPL fixtures and the ALBA Challenge Cup final would go ahead, despite an earlier setback when 12 Polish referees and assistant referees, who had agreed on Thursday to travel to Scotland, pulled out. Although the Polish FA claimed they were now required for matches at home, it is believed the U-turn was performed as the match officials decided they should show solidarity with their Scottish colleagues.

The SFA later announced that six officials from Israel, four each from Portugal and Malta and three from Luxembourg had confirmed their involvement, making up a complement far short of the 44 chief executive Stewart Regan had envisaged on Thursday night. In addition, three of Scotland's Category Three specialist assistant referees have agreed to act as fourth officials. But the dramatic action of the Portuguese officials last night undermined the SFA plans. The quartet of Cosme Machado, Joao Ferreira, Luis Ramos and Inacio Pereira had been due to take charge of Hibs' home game against St Johnstone today and the live televised match between Motherwell and Hearts at Fir Park tomorrow.

FOOTBALL (cont'd from page 1)

Norman Burtenshaw, one of those officials whom controversy dogged like a bloodhound, was knocked down and kicked by fans as he left the field at the end of a game between Millwall and Aston Villa. In the event the refs carried on while Millwall were merely fined and ordered to post warning notices.

Now Scottish referees have posted their own warning notices and it is an example England should heed. Without refs football cannot be played, no matter how many camera angles are available, and the more officials are reviled by those within the game who should know better the fewer will want to take up refereeing as a career.

Managers and players can say what they like about referees in private but public criticism needs to be met with more than the occasional fine for misconduct. Otherwise the game will one day search for first-class refs only to be told it can whistle for them.



Scottish Referee Strike- stories from afar (cont'd from pg 7)

Scottish referees' strike: expert view

These men, who earn pittances relative to those they regulate, have more power than they think

By Rob Bagchi, The Guardian, Nov 26,2010

Scottish referees have refused to call off their weekend strike. Photograph: Mike Egerton/EMPICS Sport The shift in the standing of professional football referees may be charted from the titles that some have chosen for their autobiographies over the years. Whereas in decades past these were jocular – Give a Little Whistle from Arthur Ellis or Oh, Ref! by Pat Partridge – now they are far more pungent – Who's the Bastard in the Black by Jeff Winter, or Seeing Red by Graham Poll.

Match officials have, of course, long been the scapegoats of fans, but criticism from managers and protests from players is now endemic in the game, and spreading to other sports, too.

The strike by Scottish referees could just be the start. Imagine if similarly abused officials in England, condemned for not awarding a penalty at Old Trafford, follow their lead. Or even those men in white coats currently deciding the cricketing fates of England and Australia down under.

These men, who earn relative pittances by comparison with the players and managers they have to regulate, have more power than they think. If their colleagues in other countries were to show solidarity, they could put a halt to the Premier League, Champions League or the Ashes. With Sky as sport's paymaster, it would surely not take long for conciliation to be brokered if the broadcaster was threatened with being deprived of the live action for which it has paid so handsomely. Not to mention the effect on clubs' precarious coffers if match-day income was in jeopardy.

In the playwright Jack Rosenthal's *Another Sunday and Sweet FA*, the referee, Mr Armistead, gave a memorable homily at the start of a game. "What we're now about to witness is called a football match," he said. "Not the beginning of world war three, not the destruction of the human race; a football match."

Officials everywhere should cherish that perspective. And recognise they really do have the power to achieve their goal of common courtesy.

Scottish referees should ignore, not strike over verbals

A couple of seasons ago, I had my first experience of refereeing. About 20 minutes in, I decided it would also be my last.

By Jim White as appeared in The Telegraph 5:09PM GMT 25 Nov 2010 10

The team I coached were playing an under-16 fixture against a side notorious for their roughhouse.

Unfortunately, just before kick-off the appointed ref rang to say he had been otherwise detained (some feeble excuse about his wife and labour).

As there was no one else about, and as the opposition coach said he would rather be seen dead than caught reffing, I stepped in.

So followed 90 minutes of snarling, spiteful – albeit occasionally inventive – insults of a kind that would make Russell Brand blush. And that was just from my own team.

My most vociferous critic, it turned out, was the opposition coach. After one particularly florid rant, I went over to the touchline and reminded him I had only stood in to ensure that 22 lads could have a run out and perhaps he should cut me some slack.

"If you take the job," he said, "then you should be able to take the flak."

I was reminded of his logic at the news that Scotland's leading referees planned to strike this weekend. It seems they have finally got fed up with the level of institutionalised abuse to which they are routinely subjected.

The Scottish Football Association had hoped last-minute talks would avert the action, but since a referee's decision is final, it will go ahead.

In order to ensure the weekend's Scottish Premier League fixtures take place, the SFA has recruited officials from Poland, Portugal, Luxembourg and Malta to break the strike. Presumably they will be obliged to run the gauntlet of silver-haired pickets manning braziers outside Parkhead, shouting "scab" at anyone who looks vaguely Maltese.

Though none of the militant whistle-blowers has come out and said so, it is thought the tipping point for industrial action

came after Celtic chairman John Reid used his club's annual meeting to question the integrity of referee Dougie McDonald.

The official had overturned his initial decision about a penalty awarded during a recent game against Dundee United, then used what he called "a white lie" to explain why.

In England, Stoke City manager Tony Pulis is convinced there is a referees' conspiracy in favour of the big teams. In certain parts of Glasgow, it seems from Reid's outburst, the conviction is the other way round: it is the big boys getting the wrong end of the whistle.

The instinct, in any argument involving the charm-free former Home Secretary, is to take his opponent's side. But in this instance, it is hard to be convinced that the referees are right to withhold their labour.

Listening to their complaints about grief, I am inclined to think my fellow coach abusing me on the touchline may have had a point: isn't it part of the referee's job description that he will be cast into the public stocks with every decision?

Besides, they are hardly alone in being a target. Have they heard the stuff that heads in Arsène Wenger's direction every time he steps out at Old Trafford? Have they deconstructed that chant about Emmanuel Adebayor the Arsenal fans sing?

And neither of them is threatening to strike (though maybe that would explain Adebayor's approach to training). Rather than turning into a bunch of Bob Crowes, shouldn't the amalgamated union of card-flourishers be a little more robust in its response?

Indeed, a strike seems to me entirely counterproductive. Not only will it alienate those naturally sympathetic to the refs' cause, but it will also, by drawing attention to their sensitivity, surely encourage more of the same.

Water off a duck's back seems to me the most fruitful way to counter verbals.

That said, the Scottish refs' cry for help should be heeded on both sides of the border. In particular, the manner in which managers systematically undermine officials in order to deflect from their own shortcomings needs to be addressed.

The after-match interview in which the ref is cynically blamed for defeat should simply be outlawed.

And it would help officials to pull the rug from under their complainants' feet if they were afforded more technological help. Because no one can seriously blame a camera.

But ultimately, when analysed, most of the vitriol heading their way is meaningless. Part of football's robust appeal is that it provides shout therapy every weekend. And the ref-



"The only thing I can figure is that a game took place without a single fan criticizing the officials."

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eree has traditionally been the first target. People were shouting "maim the ref" in Victorian times.

And so it continues. At White Hart Lane on Wednesday, for instance, there were so many referees and assistants that when they came off at the final whistle, what with their microphone headsets, their fluorescent shirts and their tight formation they looked like a superannuated boy band leaving the stage, a feeling enhanced by the fact they were high-fiving each other as they went down the tunnel.

Rightly, perhaps; the team had done a good, wholly uncontroversial job.

Yet the man in the seats next to the press box unleashed a withering torrent of filth in their direction. What, I wondered, had provoked his ire?

"Well," he replied. "It's the ref, innit."

No amount of industrial action can ever alter that fundamental truth.

Ed note: a quick rebuttal to the above paragraph: *While it may be true that to be a referee one needs to have a thick skin, it's not the only pre-requisite. Respect for the position by all participants for the referee is another. Mr. White, perhaps you should read Mr. Lacey's article on page 1-it serves as an adequate rebuttal.. The game needs us more than we need the game...lest we forget.*



Zimbabwe: Bulls Shed Crocodile Tears

As appeared in THE HERALD Published by the government of Zimbabwe

By Robson Sharuko 23 November 2010

THE Mighty Bulls probably left Rufaro on Sunday evening feeling that the football gods live in a blue house, where they spend their tea sessions plotting strategies of how best to aid the Dynamos championship campaign, following the controversy that rocked the two clubs' stormy top-of-the-table Premiership showdown.

Joey Antipas and his Motor Action troops had a golden chance to make a huge statement, on their championship credentials, with a victory over the Glamour Boys taking them seven points clear at the Premiership summit with just four games to play and shifting the destiny of the race firmly in their hands.

For long periods in the contest, playing at home in a stadium where the majority of the fans were hostile to their cause, the Mighty Bulls played with flair and focus, unnerved by the magnitude of their mission and the hostility of the crowd and inspired by the beauty of the magnificent prize they were chasing.

They defended with a stubborn streak, making both Benjamin Marere and Evans Gwekwerere look ordinary until the latter escaped their attention to nod home Dynamos' opener, were dominant in midfield where the towering Bekhi Ncube was in control and were dangerous going forward.

Like a good championship winning team, they had the heart to fight back from the setback of going behind when Gwekwerere — profiting from a Marere dummy header that fooled the defence and carved open the chance — headed home a lovely cross from the improving Thabani Kamusoko in the 35th minute.

Barely had the fans taken their seats, for the second half, when the Mighty Bulls were rewarded for their adventure with a penalty when Guthrie Zhokinyi handled inside the box, after a fumble by goalkeeper Washington Arubi, and although Ruzive was unsighted, with the defender giving his back to the referee, his call was correct.

Attacking midfielder Allan Gahadzikwa, one of the best players on the domestic Premiership this season, coolly converted and the courageous Mighty Bulls were back in the game and their positive spirit had received just the right benefits.

Fortune favours the brave and Motor Action rode their luck, moments later, when leftback Milton Ncube handled inside his area but the Dynamos players' appeals for instant justice — given weight by the explosion of optimistic emotions on

the stands — were ignored by Ruzive who, for such a big game, was having a good ride.

And when lively substitute Archieford Gutu burst clear of the chasing pack and negotiated his way into the Motor Action penalty box, he had only goalkeeper Marlon Jani to beat, and his full-blooded shot crashed against the big 'keeper and looped away for a corner, it looked like the football gods had settled for a 1-1 draw (in favour of Motor Action, of course).

Then, nine minutes from time, it all exploded.

A Dynamos attack, down the left channel, created chaos in a Mighty Bulls defence that, until that moment, had been superb and when Sam Mutenheri, of all people, handled right on the line, it was a penalty and Ruzive was right to award the spot-kick.

The pandemonium that followed was an eyesore with the rebellious Mighty Bulls players taking matters into their hands and charging at the referee, in a show that was so horrible it made the Premiership look like a jungle version of WWE, with Jani and Edward Tembo leading the charge.

Ruzive was to blame for the chaos in that, when an opportunity had presented itself for him to stamp his authority, he let it pass and it helped plant the seeds of doubt, among the players, of his ability to take control of the situation and Jani and Tembo took full advantage.

For the referee should have sent off Mutenheri, for deliberately preventing a goal-scoring opportunity for the opponents, and there were times, during the skirmishes, when it was clear that Jani deserved the red card for the madness.

But, somehow, they all escaped the punishment.

Murape Murape took responsibility, when sanity finally prevailed, and he sent his shot hopelessly wild of the 'keeper's left-hand post but Ruzive ordered the penalty to be retaken, judging that Motor Action players had strayed into the box before the ball had been kicked, and further infuriating the Mighty Bulls' players. There was a further twist to the tale, with Dynamos replacing Murape with goalkeeper Arubi, who then converted amid protests from the Mighty Bulls camp about the legality of that switch.

What is clear from the drama on Sunday is that one can forgive the Mighty Bulls for the pain they endured, after fighting so gallantly, and their protests were probably normal, in the given circumstances in a heated environment, although Jani clearly crossed the line.

Interestingly, had the drama unfolded on the other end, with the Mighty Bulls being given a late penalty, the kick being retaken after it had been directed wide and players being switched in the process, it's a sure bet that there would have been pandemonium at Rufaro and unrest in the stands.

But Ruzive can't be blamed for getting a big decision right and there was no questioning the penalty, which he gave to Dynamos, and his decision to make them have a second bite of the cherry was spot-on given that the Mighty Bulls' players encroached into the penalty area.

The Laws of the Game, in particular Law 14 which deals with penalty kicks, are clear on what should be done in such a situation.

"If the Referee gives the signal for a penalty kick to be taken and, before the ball is in play, one of the following situations occurs:

A teammate of the goalkeeper infringes the Laws of the Game:
The Referee allows the kick to proceed.

If the ball enters the GOAL, A GOAL is awarded.
If the ball DOES NOT ENTER THE GOAL, THE KICK OF RETAKEN."

Similar Cases In The Past

At the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, Tunisia were awarded a penalty in their match against Serbia and Mohamed Jedidi was ordered to retake the spot-kick FIVE TIMES because players kept moving into the penalty area.

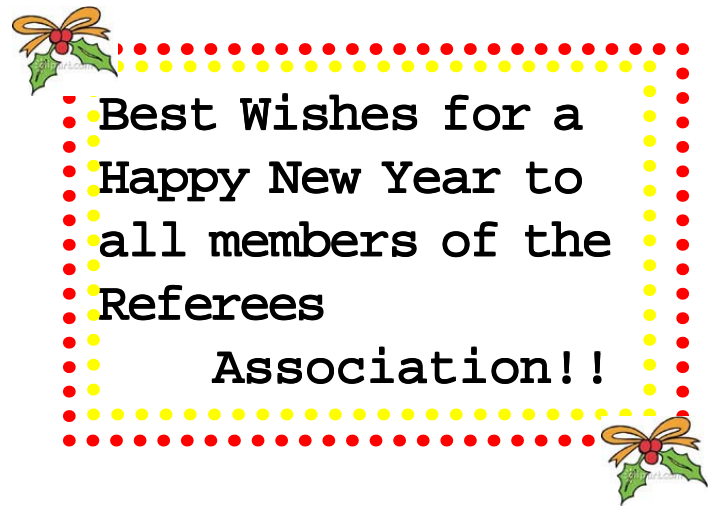
During the last English Premiership season, Chelsea midfielder Frank Lampard was ordered by referee Mike Dean to take his penalty THREE TIMES because players kept moving into the penalty area during their tie against West Ham.

At the last World Cup finals in South Africa, Spanish midfielder Xavi Alonso converted a penalty, in a quarter-final tie against Paraguay, but was ordered to retake the penalty because players had moved into the penalty area and he missed.

But was Ruzive right to let Dynamos change the man to take the penalty when he ordered that the spot-kick be retaken?

Felix Tangwarima, now a Fifa referees' instructor who worked with referees at the 2010 World Cup, yesterday said there was nothing wrong with changing a penalty kicker.

"Yes, the team can change the kicker as long as the player taking the kick is properly identified to the referee," said Tangwarima who is now based in Botswana.



The United States Soccer Federation Referee's Programme lists a similar incident that happened in June 2008 within its jurisdiction.

"This situation happened in a Under-16 girls' semi-final match. The offensive player was fouled in the penalty area and a penalty kick was awarded. The player took the kick before the referee blew his whistle. The 'keeper saved the shot. The referee decided that the kick should be retaken," reads the USFRP website.

"The team switched kickers, waited for the whistle and scored. The game ended 1-0. The referee dealt correctly with the player who kicked the ball before the referee had blown the whistle. THE TEAM IS ALLOWED TO CHANGE KICKERS IF THE KICK IS BEING RETAKEN."

The website Answers.Com also addresses the issue:
"Question - Retake of a penalty kick. Does it have to be the same player who took the original kick?"

"Answer - No! A different player may be elected to retake a penalty kick. An exception would be penalty shootout where no kicker may repeat until all his teammates have already kicked."

Ruzive stuck to the Laws of the Game, even under hostile conditions, and rather than treat him as an outcast, the football family should celebrate the emergence of a young referee who can make a difference to the game.

He wasn't scared to give the Mighty Bulls a penalty, because the decision was correct, and neither was he intimidated by the bullying tactics of the Motor Action players to change the rules to suit their agenda.

He might have had a rough ride, and it's hard to understand how he failed to stamp his authority to stop the madness, but he emerged out of the chaos at Rufaro with a lot of credit because he got the big decisions right and you can't fault him for deciding the outcome of this game.

“CONFESSIONS” (contd from pg 5) the Sunday league mentality in a nutshell. But here’s the punchline. I found out after the game my vocal assailant was the secretary of the League! And of course when I wrote him up in my match report, my Referees Association – who met every month in front of a podium of senior Stuffed Blazers wearing their chains of office as if they were auditioning for the Wizard of Oz – told me in no uncertain terms that it was me who was at fault.

But there is one species of weekend football participant who is worse than all the rest, who spends Monday to Friday trying to evolve a couple of extra brain cells beneath a rock in a damp, dark corner. He is the parent of little Johnny who will be turning out for his school under-12s on Saturday morning. While little Johnny will – like all the other schoolboy players – invariably be good as gold without even a hint of dissent, his dad – it’s nearly always, though not exclusively, the male half of the parents – will resemble a suppurating boil brimming with venom on the sidelines.

“Call me old-fashioned, I just didn’t like being insulted and abused by a load of strangers week after week.”

I was once stalked from the pitch to the car park after an under-15s game by a bespectacled, middle-aged man who was under the impression that it had been my “pathetic display” rather than his son’s team’s woeful defending which had resulted in their 0-1 defeat. He droned on to this effect for nearly 10 minutes. It really pissed me off. To qualify as a ref, I’d had to go through ten weeks of training and a criminal record check. I’d then had to sit two exams, followed by a couple of weeks being observed by an expert. I’d had to pass regular fitness tests and had been successfully carrying out my job for the past couple of years. I’d even reached the heady heights of Assistant Referee for the Forfar Roof Truss Cup Final at Gayfield, home of the mighty Arbroath (that’s me on the left of the photo above, smiling through gritted teeth). Above all, I’d only ever striven to do an honest, competent job, even when circumstances (or lack of corner flags) conspired against me.

So it was a shock to the system to suddenly find myself on the receiving end of this sustained and ill-thought out volley of abuse, especially as I’d changed out of my work clothes and was looking forward to getting home for a beer and the live footy on Sky. It was a bit like a bus passenger following the driver home and delivering an abusive critique of his cornering skills. Or a customer giving his newsagent a mouthful because he had opened up a couple of minutes late one morning.

So that’s it, after four years with the whistle on the killing fields of Merseyside, Manchester and Scotland, I realised I didn’t have the mentality. Call me old-fashioned, I just didn’t like being insulted and abused by a load of strangers week after week. There were times when a Sunday league football match resembled a classroom of special needs kids being let



loose with several pairs of scissors. When I reflexively started clenching my fists instead of reaching for my cards, I knew I had a problem.

That’s why I have the utmost admiration for Howard Webb and his ilk. How they can remain immune to all that abuse and petulance is beyond me. How Martin Atkinson kept his cool after Arsene Wenger blatantly shoved him in the back last week is a mystery to a more sensitive soul such as me. How referees can remain aloof and in control when some skinny, half-pint Argentine midfielder is yapping in their ear from start to finish is truly impressive.

If it was me, I’d deck the bastard.

(Ed note: please, don’t try this last part at home).

Do you have a submission for the Flag & Whistle?

Please email all material to either
jonsee@telus.net or lvo@direct.ca
or F&W Staff Writer - stdy@shaw.ca

**Note : Deadline for submissions in the next issue
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