



*Eccles RA Informer*

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**January 2012**

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## View from the Chair

Welcome to the first issue of the year. Hope the season is going well for you all. Well first of all, and although being a referee's magazine, I think it would be remiss of me not to mention the shock in learning of Gary Speeds' passing. In fact other players have tried to seek help. We have had of course the German goalkeeper committing suicide and 2 officials trying to take their own life. One of which was Babak Rafati (pic) a German referee. It certainly didn't help that Babak was often criticized by players and the German Sports paper 'Kicker' voted him the worst official. Which brings me on to my point; Are officials under more stress and pressure than players and are the 2 officials mentioned the tip of the iceberg? Referees these days at the top are under tremendous pressure in getting every decision correct, far more than players and with the fraction of the wages the players are on. A referee is under the most intense scrutiny, and that is not even just from the media with managers also badly at fault who



can only talk about an official whether that is the man in the middle or on the line, even though his players may have cost his team the game far more than the officials. It can also lead an official to be put out of the firing line and rested if he is deemed to have had a game where he could have done things better shall we say. So no, for me personally I would rather have made it to the top before cameras were placed everywhere analyzing our decisions, rather than the pressure I would be put under today. I feel the sooner things like goal line technology come into place the better for everyone.

### The Last Meeting

Well done to George in another excellent quiz, and one or two different faces. A superb buffet brought in by members rounded off a great night enjoyed by all present. I was on the winning team along with the usual winner Jason who always seems to find colleagues who are knowledgeable at quizzes.

### The Next Meeting

**Ian Blanchard will be our Guest Speaker. It is open to any of our local referees so please feel free to come along and maybe benefit from his talk. I'm sure all our officials in the area will find it of use.**

### The Strolling Players

George Fawkes, Jason Rostron, Eddie Lomas and I recently took stage at Bootle FC to perform the latest 'Strolling Players' in front of an audience of around 45. George Fielding provided the props. Let's just say with a bit more time and rehearsals, we WILL get it better on the night.

### Yours Truly

At last my dental treatment in Budapest is over and along with Eccles member Patrick Blackburn, we found a pub near Moskva Ter on the Buda side of the River Danube where one or two pints were sunk whilst there. Well at 490 forints for a litre of beer and the exchange rate at 320 to the £, it would be rude not to! My 5<sup>th</sup> and final visit till my check up next year, I found Budapest a beautiful city with excellent cheap local transport which puts ours to shame, some beautiful buildings and a language I am learning the basics of, if not the pronunciation! I am now £5,500 lighter yet still cheaper than here even with flights and hotels.

Over xmas my wife and I visited Benidorm for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time this year and again a lovely break, but with a magazine to produce it has certainly been a rush to get it out this time. Any member who would like to contribute to 'Society News' similar to above, again please feel free. I am sure it is not just me who has been out and about.

### County FA's and Referees Associations

I feel the County Associations should forge further links with local RA's. Not my words, but of Peter Walton no less at a recent 'Have Your Say' meeting in Suffolk. It is certainly a mystery why local RA's are not getting the numbers when there are so many referees in this area. Here at Eccles, we certainly have had some top guests down the years.

### John Aldridge

I read recently that referees this season according to Aldridge have been so poor; he would like them demoted, not to the Championship, but the Conference! What happens then when referees step in and they too make mistakes? Are they too demoted also? At that rate, there would be no games played due to no official being as perfect as John would like them to be! He cites a couple of examples one being Jack Rodwell's sending off for Everton v Liverpool, all of a sudden he is saying all referees this season have been of a poor standard. Surely John will have to realise every referee will make mistakes as they are only human. Just like when John missed a penalty v Wimbledon at Wembley and so costing his side the Cup.

### Eccles RA Appointments

MCFA Challenge Trophy QF has Nik Storey on the line with Danny Roberts in the middle for the game between Maine Rd Reserves v East Manchester 1sts.

### Howard Webb

Well done to Howard on his appointment to officiate in the Euro 2012. I know he will do a great job as usual.

### Salford Boys

Another excellent evening to raise funds for the boys. Great food, comedian and prizes with Paul Merson as the after dinner speaker capping off a great evening. Thanks must go to Pete Dunn of PJD Heating for his sponsorship on the night.

### Arsene Wenger

You just knew he would have something to say regarding the officials after the game v Fulham despite his side missing several chances to have the game well and truly sewn up. But why not lay the blame somewhere else. The sending off was correct as agreed in the studio.

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2012 at the **Brown Cow Hotel, Worsley Road, Winton M30 8BW**  
Commencing at 8.00pm. See website for map for directions to Brown Cow.  
Guest speaker is Ian Blanchard.

## Association Officers 2011/12

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<b>Social &amp; Appointments Officer</b>	Jason Rostron

Answers on Page 10.

# YOU ARE THE REF

by Keith Hackett and Paul Trevillion

**1** A keeper races out and knocks the ball out of play for a throw. He then quickly picks the ball up and carries it with him as he runs back into his penalty area before releasing it to the opposition. Do you intervene?

**2** Before a match you find the goalposts at both ends have been painted in the sponsor's colours. The crowd are arriving. Do you let the game go ahead?

**3** A defender standing on his goalline instinctively catches a goalbound shot. You blow your whistle - but then notice, to your horror, that the ball is a different colour and brand to those you inspected before the game. It's a size 4 ball and has been in play for at least two minutes. What now?

## IAN BLANCHARD FACTFILE



*I commenced my refereeing career in January 1988 with East Riding CFA and progressed through the local amateur football leagues onto the Northern Premier League as an assistant and after one season gained promotion to the middle of the same league in 1990. After one season I was promoted to the National List of Assistant Referees and in 1992 I was promoted onto the newly formed Premier League. I served at this level until 2000 when I retired at the ripe old age of 45. I appeared at Wembley on five occasions, FA Vase and Trophy finals and 3 play off finals. I also had five trips abroad visiting Croatia, Spain, Switzerland and France in Champions League and UEFA Cup games.*

*I qualified as a FA Licensed Referees Instructor in 1993 and I have considerable experience with all levels of referee training both at home and abroad and I have also served on a number of training committees and held a number positions of office within refereeing.*

*As Regional Manager (Referees) for the North West and Armed Services, I had responsibility for the following CFA's, Cheshire, Liverpool, Manchester, Lancashire, Cumberland, Westmorland, Army Royal Navy and Royal Air force. The purpose of my role was to identify with County FA's and Area Training Teams in the region the current numbers and activities of referees at each level against the number of referees required to fulfill the departments aim and to follow the progress of referees in the region and provide training, development, support and encouragement.*

*I was also the National Manager for Referee Education and Training. The purpose of this role was to ensure quality programmes of training are in place to make sure all referees have an opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills.*



Hi Stephen, Commenced refereeing in the 1959 - 60 season as a class 2. Joined a local league the Bootle J.O.C. Stayed with them until 1988 Gained my class 1 in 1964. Refereed my 500th match in 1976, and about 700 altogether before becoming non active 1998. In early days became a member of the Liverpool and District Referees Society when we used to meet at the Swan Hotel (now long gone) in Liverpool. In 1971 a number of us in the J.O.C. league decided to form our own referees society, to cut a long story short we were successful and eventually became the Bootle and District Referees society. Have held various posts ie committee vice chairman, chairman, at present I am coordinating the R. A. draw. Made a life member May 1992. The society has just celebrated its 40th.birthday with a hot pot supper. During the evening I was presented with my 50th Year R.A. membership award. Another highlight was to referee the Bootle Century Cup Final, in 1968 this was created to commemorate 100 years since the formation of the County Borough of Bootle in 1868. (my birth place) Please say thanks once again to the Eccles Strolling Players, My family were there on the evening and really enjoyed your performance and were very impressed indeed, as the rest of the audience was as well. Very well done.

I am pictured here with Eddie McGrath on the left and Jamie Carragher on the right with the presentation to myself.

**Kind Regards Ken Galbraith Bootle Referees Society.**

## SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Eccles RA is seeking sponsors for the website and Informer magazine.

### Headline Sponsor-£100 \*\*\*

The headline sponsor would assume principal sponsorship of Eccles RA, with the company name and logo featuring at the head of the Eccles Informer, the Association's letterhead and in the banner heading of the Association's website, [www.ecclesra.co.uk](http://www.ecclesra.co.uk). Additionally, the sponsors would have a large advertisement within the Eccles RA Informer and an interactive advertisement placed on our website, acting as a link to the relevant company's own site.

### Page Sponsors

Have your company name within the Informer. A full page cost £50 and half a page costs £25.

### Interested parties

Any interested parties should contact the Informer.

**\*\*\*The headline sponsor has now been taken up by Chadwick & Company. Our thanks to them.**



**Ian will be taking money for the 49 Club this year. See him at the next meeting. Alternatively, you can send a cheque to him at 41 Deans Rd, Swinton M27 OJA**

The winner of the 49 Club is determined by the bonus ball from the first Saturday draw following our monthly meeting. Remember, the money raised each month is split in half. The winner gets 50% and the other half goes to the Association.



**Decembers' winner was George Fawkes. No.8 being the Bonus Ball.**

### ***A Look Back in Time...this month with thanks to the late Ron Harding.***

**1969** Con Roache resigns from the Committee with Neil Midgley taking his place. Trevor Edmunds is the new magazine editor.

**1970** Our winter football fund realised £70 profit thanks to the sterling work of John McCabe. Treasurer Jim Boardman a very happy man!

**1971** The Social Committee organised a mystery tour to a club in Glazebrook.

**1972** Our January meeting had Harold Crooks and Gordon Trevett enthraling the members with their experiences of their recent games in Europe. Harold was on the line for the UEFA game between SK Lierse and PSV Eindhoven. Gordon was on the line for the Portugal v Belgium game.

Our 5 a side team emerged as Manchester Area Champions beating Bolton, Rochdale, Oldham and Manchester with many of our members and followers in support. Phil Lacey organised a trip to Bernard Manning's club to celebrate.

The North West Area Championships v Furness, Southport and Chorley and again we emerged as Champions.

A competition to design our front cover of the magazine was won by Max Ainslie.

## The Renegade

The last two newsletters have been about my fully grown mentee who has taken up refereeing so he can get “inside the game” and the common challenges we all faced as we started out.

**Our new referee is having the normal “new referee fears” of:**

- **What if the ball goes out of play and I don’t know whose throw it is?**
- **What if I give a foul the wrong way?**
- **What if I miss a foul altogether?**
- **And any other self-doubts you care to name.**

Last newsletter we spoke about what did happen when he indicated the foul the wrong way. The managers didn’t think he knew what he was doing.

This week I want to talk about one of our new referees at the Academy. Mohammed is 16 years old who came to us fresh from the referees’ course and was – like my adult mentee – very inexperienced in terms of actually playing football.

They both are “suffering” from or at least not being exposed to:

- being kicked
- kicking anyone
- being the victim of a bad call by a referee
- having the red mist descend
- witnessing the red mist descend

In short, both need to continue to develop a “feel” for the game and the underlying messages that the game transmits.

Generally if you played football you kicked an opponent – either accidentally or intentionally.

Therefore you know your feeling of guilt if it was an accident or the expectation of a sanction from the referee and/or a tap on your ankle if your action was by design.

If you’ve not played, then you’ve never been victim of a bad call by the referee and the feelings of frustration when that happens. It follows that when you referee, you’ll be better placed to know how to deal with it when you’re the one doing the bad calling.

Then of course there’s the red mist.

If you and I have played, chances are we’ve been with someone on our team (could have been us) who has “just lost it” for no apparent reason, so when it happens and you’re the referee you at least have a clue how to handle it.

These things are easily identifiable when you’ve played to any level but are a complete surprise if you come directly into the game from the course.

At the Academy we’ve been working with Mohammed for weeks to get him feeling the game and this Sunday we were as pleased as punch as he started to demonstrate empathy.

He’s identifying fouls and taking actions to communicate that he’s spotted them. Sometimes it’s just a whistle, sometimes it was a word and as I allude to later sometimes it was the evil eye!

Obviously, he hasn’t cracked it totally (have any of us?) but he has started to develop his confidence and communicate to the players. Some of his inexperience still shines through but by primarily talking to them he’s gaining in confidence.

The two major signs of inexperience were: shouting “elbow” when an arm offence had been committed and also telling the players to “get up” when they were on the floor but he was happy with the challenge.

We told him to consider using the words “misuse of arms” instead of elbow. As elbow is accepted in football as a word with connotations of a very bad arm offence committed.

We also asked him what if the player who had been challenged was injured and he told them to “get up” which could do further damage?

Good words to be used in this situation are “nothing there” or even “good challenge”.

The other challenge Mo had was always smiling throughout the game – this Sunday he’d developed his glare which rivals Collina’s and we’re hoping that his career does the same over time.

And here’s the thing with his extra confidence he’s gaining - he’ll be talking even more. And that leads to a better relationship with the players and more confidence from him and towards him.

### **WHAT IF YOUR FRIENDS ARE NOT REFEREES?**

According to the Red Cross, referees have an advantage when it comes to being prepared for another bad winter.

Their list of requirements is this:

They say:

“A whistle, a penknife and a three-day supply of bottled water are on the list of items people should have to hand in case of a winter emergency, according to the British Red Cross.”

All of the ladies in our office have a [Fox 40](#) on their key chains as they’re an excellent safety device for attracting attention! Think about it – on a Saturday afternoon when you blow yours it always gets a reaction.

We’ve always believed in the office that everyone should have a whistle – now it’s official the BBC have said so.

Why not grab hold off a few whistles and give them as small gifts this Christmas?

**Here’s the full article**

[British Red Cross lists winter weather survival kit](#)

**AND FINALLY...**

A refereeing colleague – Jock Waugh – has put together a website that raises much needed funds for your club, association or society.

From what I understand it’s a simple concept calling on your skills as a predictor of football matches.

It’s called Just One Standing and if you want to raise money for your RA mouse over to [here](#) and take a look.

I think this is a great idea which needs supporting; I do think strong RAs lead to better referees because we get to meet fellow refs and find out that we’re not the only one making dumb calls.

So I’m delighted to help out and advertise Jock’s idea.

Please visit [www.JustOneStanding.com](http://www.JustOneStanding.com) for further information and to start playing today!

## **Henry Winter: Referees need to talk more or controversies will run and run**

**Tottenham Hotspur had an important visitor to their Chigwell training ground last week, a referee who addressed Harry Redknapp's men, explaining how officials' jobs were becoming ever more difficult because of the ever-quicken pace of the Premier League.**

Phil Dowd showed them statistics of how far refs were running to keep up with players, even exceeding them with a top distance of 13.5 km including almost 2 km of "high-intensity runs". [Tottenham Hotspur](#) players privately noted how the graph highlighting the increase in player speed, season on season, resembled a plane taking off.

According to Premier League figures, the top running speed of players is now 34.6 kph, up almost 2 kph in 12 months, a huge rise. Referees peaked at 33.1, a constant for two seasons. Refs risk being left behind by players, some of whom like Spurs' Gareth Bale, Aaron Lennon and Kyle Walker are real fliers.

Within five days, Redknapp and his players were being enraged by officials, any sense of goodwill fostered by Tuesday's talk evaporating on Sunday in the Britannia. Yet the costly errors made by Chris Foy and his assistants were as much to do with poor decision-making as any lagging behind during counter-attacks.

Foy somehow ignored Ryan Shawcross using his arm to clear Younes Kaboul's goal bound header. Emmanuel Adebayor then thought he had scored but was wrongly adjudged offside by the assistant referee Robert Pollock.

Events at the Britannia simply confirm that greater dialogue is required between teams and officials, managers and authorities. Ignore the Armageddon headlines. No crisis yet envelops English refereeing, as the global respect towards Howard Webb and his ilk attests. All mistakes are honest ones. Spurs had a shocking first half as did Foy in the second. All parties must simply work together to ensure a sensitive situation does not deteriorate. Tentative talks are ongoing about the possibility of referees spending more time at training grounds, attempting to nurture mutual respect. Referees would learn what annoys players, including the pernickety schoolmaster-style of running a game. In turn, players might better understand the laws and the intense pressure on referees, also appreciating the complexity of making a cold-eyed decision in a heated atmosphere. The growing curse of simulation could also be discussed. A referee's life would be so much easier if players didn't dive, feign injury or wave imaginary cards.

Most clubs, and certainly their fans, believe referees are against them. Yet the old cliché that decisions even themselves out in time, if not necessarily over a season, is reflected in the recollection of Spurs' previous visit to the Britannia on Aug 21, 2010.

Foy was again the referee, again involved in controversy, sparking more calls for goal-line technology when Jonathan Walters' header seemed to have crossed the line before being blocked by Peter Crouch, then of Spurs.

It was four minutes from time, with [Stoke City](#) trailing 2-1, but Foy waved play on, infuriating Tony Pulis and his players. "Of course there should be goal-line technology," said Walters. "There's a lot

of money riding on every point and the difference that could make to us at the end of the season could be massive.’ Now it is Spurs ruining Foy’s follies.

The mantra from the Football Association is that “referees get more right than wrong”, which is reassuring, and performances such as Mike Dean’s at West Brom on Saturday have drawn praise in the refereeing community. A squall of controversy over Dean booking Graham Dorrans for diving petered out after replays showed the West Brom player made a meal of a challenge.

Dean had to make an instant decision. Media pundits have access to replays. Even then, indecision can reign: the legitimacy of Luis Suárez’s winning of a penalty for Liverpool against West Brom is still unclear after repeated viewings.

The FA, commendably, is taking steps to drag the game into the 21st century, nudging an initially reluctant Fifa into experimenting with goal-line technology, yet such incidents remain relatively rare for all the frustration seeping through Walters, Frank Lampard and company.

Fifa’s long-term concern revolves around how video replays can assist with subjective decisions, yet offside is surely an objective call now. TV monitors can confirm it within seconds as proven with the Adebayor case.

So what’s to be done? First, referees should explain decisions to TV after matches, clearing up any confusion over interpretation of the rules and dampening any media fires. Jay Spearing’s dismissal against Fulham angered Liverpool fans but Kevin Friend applied the laws in the post-Eduardo world; in leaving the ground, Spearing risked endangering Mousa Dembele, even if he did take ball before man.

Second, the introduction of sin-bins would allow referees some room to manoeuvre between yellow and a red; certainly Kaboul did not deserve a second yellow and his marching orders at Stoke.

Third, given the proliferation of cameras inside grounds, the time may arrive when each manager is allowed two appeals per game, referring an incident to an official in front of a TV monitor in the stands. That might mollify managers while not overly disrupting a game that thrives on its flow.

Fourth, assistant referees – linesmen in old money – should become full time. Players and managers alike admit to substantial concerns about the quality of those running the line. Last month, Rio Ferdinand’s challenge on Newcastle’s Hatem Ben Arfa was a masterpiece of interception but the assistant John Flynn persuaded Mike Jones to award a penalty. Cue outrage.

“The standard of assistant is high,” argues the Premier League, praising offside calls in particular.

“Last season’s proZone data shows they got over 99 per cent of offsides right, up six per cent over last two seasons. ProZone analysed over 12,000 offside decisions in the 2010-2011 Premier League for that 99 per cent figure. ProZone is better than TV replay.” With all due respect to ProZone, the idea of assistants being almost perfect defies belief. Ask Adebayor.

Fifth, officials should be based from next year at St George’s Park, the FA’s National Football Centre near Burton upon Trent; it would be a refereeing hub, with numbers and quality swelled by fast-tracked former players. Not all ex-pros are millionaires flitting between golf courses and television studios. The Professional Footballers’ Association could easily provide a list of those who would follow in the footsteps of Steve Baines.

One of the most thoughtful ex-pros on Twitter, James Scowcroft, observed on @scowy1975 that the refereeing talent pool would be improved by those who have “more understanding of the game.

Don’t think many players would have sent off Kaboul”. True. All sides need to talk.

## The Keith Hackett column - Dealing with dissent



There is no doubt that if allowed to go unchecked in a game, dissent will undermine your authority and will lead you on a path to a loss of respect and control if you are weak. At the first sign of dissent by word or action take this opportunity to assert your authority. I would advise you to take the player to one side and if appropriate issue a public warning that you will not tolerate this type of behaviour.

Players and spectators alike will be in hearing distance and your verbal warning will permeate across both sets of players.

If the dissent is open and public then of course you can act immediately by issuing a caution (yellow card).

If the player is guilty of using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures then a red card and dismissal is the appropriate course of action to take.

### **Mass dissent**

The piece of art drawn by world famous artist Paul Trevillion (above) shows the type of mass dissent which can put you under pressure and even create some doubt in your mind about the decision that you have made that has caused this unacceptable behaviour.

Remain confident and demonstrate courage along with concentration.

If a group of players are heading for you to dispute your decision then hold your ground and lean forward and be firm.

The player leading the pack should be shown the yellow card and I would certainly look to show a second player a yellow card to re-assert your authority and this should make a clear statement to everyone that this behaviour of mass dissent will not be tolerated.

In addition to your report to the authorities detailing your cautions I would recommend that you give details of this mass action by players in an additional report.

So do not let anyone spoil your enjoyment be firm and fair and remember to stamp out the first sign of dissent.

### ***Keith Hackett***

Answers from Page 3.

1. Yes; from the description it sounds like he is committing unsporting behavior by interfering with the restart of play.
2. Not allowed. Get the paint bucket out, or the spare set of goalposts.
3. Stop play, declare the ball defective, replace it and make a report. Assuming you checked the match balls beforehand, this is clearly someone's bad idea of a joke. Presumably you are working in the Sunday morning Hangover League if the players can't tell the difference.

## **It's time for officials to speak out**

Another weekend of domestic football. Another weekend of controversy.

That's not just last weekend though. Penalties not awarded, red cards given, goals ruled out, the list goes on. With officials continually coming under immense scrutiny by managers, pundits and fans alike it prompts the question, why are they not given the opportunity to justify their decisions?

Refereeing is probably the most unenvied job in football. It's impossible at times. Despite their performance, the team that wins are likely to be the ones happy, the majority of the time losing teams will feel they have reason to blame the referee or assistant for a mistake that cost them the game.

The fact of the matter is they simply cannot please everyone.

Unfortunately for referees when they make a mistake it is highlighted because it can not only have an effect on the outcome of the match, but a title race or put an end to a cup run. Especially at the top level, with so much money involved in the current game, every single decision is magnified as it could cost a club millions.

### **Opinions are divided**

Controversial decisions are always shown repeatedly in the studio after the game and on programmes such as Match of the Day and Football Focus; pundits slow down the incident, use angles that the referee doesn't have access to in real time to come to conclusions, and even then opinions are sometimes divided.

Officials have a split second to make a judgment and have one view of the incident; with the speed of the modern game it's no surprise that some decisions cause conflict.

Referees are often accused of favouring the 'bigger' teams, 'bottling' certain incidents in big matches and getting critical decisions wrong. Inconsistency and interpretation is another huge problem with officiating in the modern game as it remains a grey area; some referees seem reluctant to send off players whilst others are quick to reach for their pockets.

Managers interviewed after the game often speak out of turn about the officials in the heat of the moment.

Blaming them and questioning their capabilities suggesting their wrong decisions were the catalyst for them dropping points. Fines and warnings about their future conduct in post-match interviews are often handed out; which may seem unfair considering emotions are still running high.

It's at times like these that referees should speak out about how they feel the match went and to explain how they saw a controversial decision and why they did what they did in the same way that managers are expected to for clarity.

### **Imperfections**

Association and federation officials have taken the concept of respecting officials too far by making them immune to any and all criticism. Their imperfections are inevitable but that doesn't mean that they should be glossed over.

It would be much better to acknowledge and correct them in a more transparent manner. If UEFA, the FA were openly and constructively critical of their officials, then and only then would players, managers and club officials have no reason to take matters into their own mouths.

The bottom line is officials need help. Without technology or some form of guidance it seems they are providing an analogue service in a digital world as the speed of the game sometimes makes it impossible to correctly officiate every decision in every match.

Referees are human, therefore they will make mistakes, it's inevitable. They need to be empowered with technology if football is to become a fair game.

Officials are as much a part of the game as the fans, players and managers, so they should be should not be treated differently and should be given more opportunity to speak out.

*By George Chambi*

## THE RENEGADE

Recently I spoke about my new mentee who is different from my normal new referees at the Academy. That is, he's old when compared to the normal Academy referees who are generally still at school. Since the last newsletter he's refereed an Under 11 game plus he's run a line on an adult's game (with me shadowing him.)

Let's talk about the refereeing appointment. Overall he did well but I heard from the referees' secretary that both clubs complained about him!

Why?

Because he committed the heinous crime of pointing the wrong way!

Obviously, you and I know that clubs complaining about us is par for the course, but do you remember when you first set out? I know my skin was thin and people complaining hurt.

When I was told that both sides complained about him I was shocked as I watched the match. So I asked the question: "What did they moan about?" The response: "He didn't know what he was doing!"

"Sorry, can you explain that a bit more? I was there and whilst he gave a corner instead of a goal kick and probably vice-versa the performance was okay."

That's where I heard he didn't know what he was doing because he pointed on a couple of occasions in the wrong direction!

What does that mean to you and me?

We get the decision correct but our signals MUST tell the teams we don't know what we're doing.

Or our signals tell the players that we're unsure or don't care or can be argued with.

Can you see where we're going with this one?

Players, managers and spectators read our signals for more than the direction, they read them for our confidence, they read them for our enthusiasm, and they read them for our knowledge of the game.

What signals are your signals unconsciously giving to everyone else? And what signals are your signals giving to you? What signals do you want them to give to everyone?

I keep repeating the same old question to referees at societies, at the Academy and at the Referees Mastermind Group: "Did Howard Webb get great signals when he got to the top or did he get great signals and get to the top?"

And here's something else I always add in to that: "What's stopping you having great signals right now?"

You've got to put your arm up when giving a throw-in why not give it some steel and convince the players that you're certain it's that way? That you're not to be argued with? That you're in charge of the game?

I'm not a mechanical engineer or a bio-mechanical scientist in fact I've had not medical experience other than giving blood three times a year but I wouldn't mind betting that in percentage terms that it takes 90% of a great signal to get your arm in the air so why not go the other 10%?

And as the referee formerly known as the Channel Island Correspondent pointed out: "Giving great signals is the easy part!"

Think I'm talking out of my Umbro Woollie hat? Check MOTD this Saturday night for the signals of the Select Group officials – they'll all be pretty good to at least brilliant.