



THE REFEREES' ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at the St John's Hotel, Solihull, on Friday 4th June 2010

Opening of the Meeting (Pre AGM)

The Chairman, Alan Poulain, opened the meeting at 3.00 pm by welcoming delegates to the AGM of the RA.

The President

President David Elleray addressed the delegates on various matters. He spoke of how far the Association had progressed in the past six years, pointing out that the decline in membership during recent years was now being arrested. All referees now received a magazine that was not a drain on Association resources; the Association now had a seat on the FA Council; Conference weekend had been transformed; and now we had again The Referees' Association title after several years of The Referees' Association of England.

The creation of RA-FA would cement the relationship between the RA and the FA. This new collaboration was not a membership organisation and there would be no RA-FA emblem. The former FAMOA number for each individual referee would be replaced by a RA-FA number. The only effective change is that The Referees' Association would now know about every referee in the country, so that the opportunity to invite each one into full RA membership would present itself. There would be positive encouragement given to new recruits to join the Referees' Association at various stages during initial training.

The possibility for RA members to benefit from physiotherapy as part of the insurance scheme, if introduced, could cut down noticeably on periods of absence from refereeing caused by injury, and this would benefit both the member and the game in general.

The President explained that the FA was putting its weight behind the RA through RA-FA and it believed all referees should be members of the RA.

The current FAMOA incentive scheme for the acquisition of refereeing supplies would become the RA-FA scheme, but only full RA members would be eligible to benefit.

In concluding his address the President emphasised that vital support for referees was available via the RA and the FA. He cited the example of a young referee who had the great misfortune to be assaulted three times. Thanks to solid support from the RA and the FA working together on his behalf he was not lost to refereeing and is now back in action. There would be no rest from the RA and the FA until all assaults on referees were stopped.

The Referees' Association Emblem

The Chairman told delegates that the Board had been approached by a member with appropriate professional branding experience about the possibility of a new crest/logo for The Referees' Association. He introduced Stephen Green, Chairman of Reading RA, to address the meeting.

In an illustrated presentation Stephen explained that the RA was experiencing change and that in his profession he assisted organisations to manage change. He said that if the Association reverted to its old, traditional badge it would not reflect the situation which we now had as an English organisation. He asked what we wanted our badge to say to people as a modern, forward-thinking and progressive body. We must not be 'stuck in the past'. We were an independent organisation that had a valuable relationship with the FA but was not controlled by it. Few referees nowadays wore the traditional RA badge, instead preferring the FA crest or that of a particular competition.

Delegates were shown a possible new badge which retained the traditional shape but which made the name of the Association more prominent. It carried the cross of St George and an image of a lion that might suggest bravery. There was a discreet whistle within the design. Stephen demonstrated that this crest/logo was usable on a black or white background and would be suitable for use on publications, letterheads and shirts. The presentation was received with applause by the gathered delegates.

Opening of the AGM

The Chairman introduced the Board Members to delegates and the General Secretary read out the Calling Notice for the AGM. The Standing Orders and Rules of Conduct for Debate were approved as printed in Appendix 11 of the AGM agenda document. A roving microphone was made available to delegates.

Apologies for Absence

A number of apologies for absence and messages of good wishes had been received and recorded at the RA Office. These were accepted by delegates.

Obituaries

The deaths of twenty-five members had been notified during the past year, including one Life Member, namely John Bunn. An apology for one typographical error in the printed list was recorded, the delegates stood in respect of their late colleagues and were also asked to observe the passing recently of the mother of the President David Elleray and the father of the Chairman Alan Poulain.

Scrutineers

Delegates approved the appointment of a team of scrutineers under the guidance of Roly Croysdale, who was thanked for his service as the senior scrutineer over the years.

Adoption of the Minutes of the 2009 RAE AGM

The minutes of the AGM held on 10th July 2009 at Solihull, as printed in Appendix 2, were subjected to an amendment to the date of the Management Consultancy Report from 2001 to 2000. The Minutes were then formally proposed, seconded and approved.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

RAE Chairman's Annual Report 2009 – 2010

The Chairman presented the Report, as printed in Appendix 3. The matter of the lack of rotation around the regions for the staging of Conference was raised by a delegate, to which the General Secretary responded by explaining that a four-year deal with the St John's Hotel, which met all our requirements, had enabled a very attractive rate to be obtained. The central venue was also beneficial to those counties sending young referees to the Annual Conference. A review of the situation would be made after next year's Conference. Another delegate expressed concern that the Board appeared to prefer all contact with and payment by societies to be made electronically; societies had the right to make their own decisions about e-mail contact. The Board would like the quickest and easiest methods of contact but would certainly feed information by hard copy if requested. The Board was investigating a new type of customer record management database that might eliminate the use of membership cards, these being currently printed for the Association at no cost to the membership. One delegate said his society used the BACS payment system for making payments and he commended its use on the grounds of simplicity. The Report was formally proposed, seconded and approved.

Adoption of RAE Annual Accounts for 2009 – 2010

The Accounts, the Accountants' report and the Treasurer's notes, as printed in Appendix 4, were formally proposed, seconded and unanimously accepted without comment from delegates.

Appointment of Accountants for 2010 – 2011

The Board proposed that Walker Thompson of Coventry be appointed as accountants to prepare and verify the accounts for the year 2010-2011. This was seconded and approved unanimously.

The Chairman's Annual Report to the Board of The Referees' Association for 2009-2010

The Report, as printed in Appendix 5, was presented by the RA Board Chairman Richard Blackman. It was duly approved and no comments were forthcoming from delegates.

The Report and Accounts of The Referees' Association 2009-2010

This Report and the Accounts, as printed in Appendix 6, were presented by the Treasurer, Alan Poulain. They were duly proposed and seconded and unanimously accepted.

Report and Accounts of the Benevolent Fund of the RA 2009-2010

This Report and the Accounts, as printed in Appendix 7 of the AGM Papers, were presented, along with a list of donations made during the past year. They were formally proposed, seconded and unanimously approved.

Life Membership and Long and Meritorious Service Awards

Before reading out the lists of recommended award recipients the Chairman, on behalf of the Board, offered most sincere apologies that some names had appeared in the printed lists that had not been conferred. There was also a sincere apology to one of the Life Members honoured for a misprint of his surname in the main Conference brochure..

There were five recommendations for the award of Life Membership, namely Rodney Smith (Huddersfield), John Maxson (Oldham), John Wilson (Driffield and Bridlington), John Fenning (Ashford and Weald) and Gordon (Frederick) Richards (East Devon). Seven awards of the Long and Meritorious Award were recommended: Brian Miller (North Riding), Derek Allen (Walsall), Victor Cooke (Sedgefield), Richard Melinn (Bridgwater), Robert Harbour (Hemel Hempstead), James Drysdale (Ashington) and Roy White (Bolton). The delegates unanimously approved all these nominations and also accepted the Board's apology for a few errors in the lists printed in the Conference booklet.

Thirteen members were listed to receive the Fifty Year Membership Award, and the centenaries of five societies were recorded, namely Barnsley and District, Doncaster and District, Lincoln and District, Wigan and Wolverhampton.

Proposed Amendments to the Rules

Five proposed amendments to the Rules were listed in Appendix 9 of the AGM papers. *(These should be read in conjunction with these Minutes)*

Amendment 1 was proposed by the Board and the case was presented by Board Member Colin Harris. The proposal was that the dates concerning the annual electoral process be amended to allow Board Members to retire at the AGM and for newly elected Members to take up office immediately after the AGM in order to maximise the operating efficiency of the Board. The electoral process would only vary in respect of amended dates and the timescale would be the same as at present. There were no comments from delegates and the result of the vote was as follows:

**Result of Vote 1: FOR 6,844 AGAINST 79 SPOILT PAPERS 0
CARRIED by 98.85%**

Amendment 2 concerned associate membership of The Referees' Association and the proposal by the Board was put by Board Member Bart O'Toole. He explained that the proposal, involving three separate rules and one schedule, would make two fundamental changes, firstly that it would confer associate membership of the RA on all registered referees at zero subscription, and secondly that it would require all societies to provide education, training and development for referees. Giving associate membership to all registered referees would support RA-FA and form a valuable liaison between the FA and the RA. On registration with a County FA new referees would automatically become RA Associate Members but not full members of the RA or any of its societies. These referees would have three distinct benefits: (a) public liability insurance through their County FA; (b) being added to the mailing list of the 'Refereeing' magazine; and (c) invitations to RA-FA training days organised by County FAs in liaison with local societies.

Associate membership for all registered referees would provide many benefits to the RA, such as helping the Association to promote the benefits of full membership; promoting sales of RA supplies to associate members, thereby helping to keep subscriptions at lower levels; all-round FA and RA encouragement of full RA membership because of the many benefits for referees; and importantly it would give the RA greater authority when representing the Association at the FA and at County FAs, speaking for the interests of all referees and not just those in full membership.

The FA decided during the RA-FA negotiations that the FAMOA Incentive Scheme, being renamed the RA-FA Incentive Scheme, would be restricted to those referees who have taken up full RA membership with their local society. This change of policy by the FA should strongly incentivise associate members to take up full membership.

Regarding the role of societies in providing education, training and development for referees, it was accepted that many societies already included such matters in their rules and it was included in Rule 4(g) of the Referees' Association. Rule 6(c) already required societies to maintain rules consistent with the Rules of the RA. The proposed rule change would merely formalise this principle and reassure the FA and County FAs that the RA and its societies hold education, training and development as a top priority.

Ten comments were forthcoming after the proposal had been tabled. Among concerns expressed were excessive pressure on all societies to provide a package of training for all referees; the lukewarm involvement of many people and their potential opting out of full membership if automatic associate membership were granted; the closing of any loopholes that provided for easy opt-out from full membership; the potential loss of many members in certain areas of the country. One delegate asked the Board to clarify the title 'Associate Member' because this term was already used by many societies for a different kind of member from the one now envisaged. Comments in support of the proposed change included the effective RA/FA cooperation already existing in many areas with regard to training matters; the growth in the development of young referees; further opportunities to encourage all referees into RA membership.

**Result of Vote 2: FOR 6,162 AGAINST 829 SPOILT PAPERS 0
CARRIED by 88.14%**

Amendment 3 concerning insurance was proposed by the Board and its case was presented by Board Member Ray Mallery. If successful, the amendment would enable the Association to investigate the provision of extended group insurance cover for physiotherapy treatment for its members. Such cover would extend to an injured member whose return to officiating might be accelerated through treatment. The cost of treatment for up to four sessions against any one claim and up to four injuries in any one year. The Board would investigate the lowest possible premiums, with an opt-out clause for former referees, level 10 referees and other non-active referees. Already convinced of the good value of the existing insurance cover, the Board saw the value of injured colleagues being more quickly able to return to officiating through physiotherapy.

In response to a concern expressed by a delegate that cost may be a prohibitive factor, the Chairman said that initial negotiations suggested a premium of around £5.00 per year for up to sixteen treatment sessions involving four injuries might be the additional cost to individual members. Negotiations, he emphasised, was of course not yet finalised.

**Result of Vote 3: FOR 6,381 AGAINST 556 SPOILT PAPERS 0
CARRIED by 91.99%**

Amendment 4, proposed by Gordon Kirby on behalf of the AFA and London Society of Association Referees, called for the three highest placed election candidates to be elected to the Board rather than allow for regional preference as it present. Each year the election held regional preference allowing two regional candidates to be elected with the third place going to the highest among the remaining candidates. This could lead to a situation which the proposer claimed was undemocratic as it was possible for out-of-the-region candidates to receive far more votes than the within-the-region candidates, yet still not be elected. The proposed amendment to rule would ensure that those with most votes would be elected. Anyone elected to the Board represented all RA members across the country and not just those in his region. Additionally, the Board, operating on the basis of continuity of service, might have three senior members contesting the one place available after regional preference had been effected, with the result that two of them would have to stand down. If accepted, this amendment would allow the Board to have the best candidates available rather than some of those who happened to live in the right region at the right time..

The proposed amendment was seconded by Paul Field (Bromsgrove), who said that the Board operated nationally and not regionally on behalf of referees He also spoke of a need for stable consistency rather than regional preference.

Concern was expressed by four delegates, all of whom were opposed to the proposed amendment on grounds such as the need for a spread of representation across the country, the high number of members living in the south of the country which could lead to an imbalance, and the adoption of a 'first past the post' system of voting.

In his right of response, Gordon Kirby remained convinced that a change like the one proposed would be in the long term interests of the Association because of more consistency and quality of service to the Board and the membership.

**Result of Vote 4: FOR 3,965 AGAINST 2,878 SPOILT PAPERS 158
CARRIED by 56.63%**

Some concern was expressed among the delegates at this result as it did not show approval by a two-thirds majority. Bart O'Toole for the Board explained that only a simple majority was required according to the rules regarding Schedules (15i and 15j), An opinion was expressed that this should have been explained to delegates before the vote was taken to which that it would not be practicable to refer to the printed rules before every vote was made.

Amendment 5 was proposed by the Board and presented by its Member Richard Blackman. It called for an increase from £11.00 to £12.00 in subscriptions for Full Members to ensure that the Association would have sufficient income to meet its financial obligations. There was also a need to increase the subscription from £10.00 to £15.00 for Overseas Associate Members resident outside the UK in order to cover the cost of circulating the 'Refereeing' magazine to them. Such increases, if agreed, would be effective from 1st April 2011.

The last increase in subscriptions was at the 2007 AGM, taking effect on 1st April 2008, since which time the membership figures had declined while operating costs had continued to increase. RA membership at the 31st March 2007 was 11,829 and at the same date in 2010 stood at 10,871, which meant a loss in income over the period of around £11,000 Relocation of the RA Office into newer and larger premises had meant that additional funding was required for such future investment; the existing premises did not meet modern health and safety standards and the cost of appropriate improvement would be higher than relocation as well as being a less attractive long-term investment.

In response to a delegate's question it was stated that members in the Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey were all UK members.

**Result of Vote 5: FOR 6,463 AGAINST 705 SPOILT PAPERS 0
CARRIED by 90.16%**

Notices of Motion

Notice of Motion A, tabled by Albert Astbury on behalf of the Eastleigh and District Referees' Society which considered that a less formal structure would be preferable to the current bureaucratic structure of County Referees' Associations, was withdrawn with unanimous agreement by the delegates.

Notice of Motion B was tabled by the High Wycombe and District Referees' Society and requested that the Board should publish a proposal by the 31st December 2010 for a new corporate identity logo which clearly reflected the English national identity of the Association and portray the Association's relevant connections within the game of Association Football. In presenting the case Bill Cleere referred to the earlier presentation by Stephen Green. The Motion was seconded by the Chiltern District Society. In the circumstances, the proposer requested that the Motion be withdrawn on the grounds that the Board was already pursuing the matter. This was granted with the unanimous agreement by the delegates.

Conclusion of the AGM Business

The Chairman mentioned the impending resignation because of work pressures of Board Member Iain Davies to whom he expressed the thanks of the Board for his conscientious efforts for the Association. After requesting that County Representatives sign the appropriate attendance form, and that all delegates fill in the feedback forms and consider making contributions to the Benevolent Fund, the Chairman declared the business part of the proceedings closed at 5.20 pm.

Honorary President

The meeting then took the form of a panel to accept questions from delegates. President David Elleray introduced Neale Barry and Ian Blanchard, the two FA Heads of Refereeing.

- On the question of *CRB and Child Protection* matters, Ian Blanchard said the FA was in discussion with the new Government to review the impact on those people who might be affected by any Independent Safeguard Authority rulings and who might need to be CRB-checked. The situation was in a state of flux at present as the Government reviewed legislation, but delegates were assured that the FA was keen on achieving a balance between protecting people and losing referees.
- The FA was asked what was being done about those *officials who were qualified but did not bother to register with the FA*, yet continued refereeing in local football. It was emphasised that this was exactly the kind of situation where the FA and the RA worked together for the good of refereeing in general. It was not an easy situation with such referees and they needed to be made fully aware of what was currently happening in the refereeing world. Leagues had a responsibility in matters such as this to ensure that proper procedures took place.
- The question of a *lack of reward for referee mentors* was raised. What action was being taken to stem the flow of such volunteers from the game? Every new referee should have access to a trained mentor, and there was need for formalisation and financial investment in such schemes in order to make volunteers feel valued. Ideally, at least two of a referee's first six games should be mentored.
- Regarding any *payment to people such as assessors and mentors*, one delegate stated that it was classed as earned income and must be declared. The taxation authorities may intervene though it was clear that the approach by the Inland Revenue was 'patchy'.

- There was a strong suggestion that the *standard of refereeing in women's football* needed improving, to which Neale Barrie stressed that there was a need to improve attitudes to women's football. There was a shortage of female referees and some male referees refused to officiate in women's football. He asked the question: Was it better to have no referee than one who is simply not interested?
- The question of the *renewal and updating of technological equipment for referee training* was raised by a delegate concerned at the costs involved. There was often a logistical problem involved when such equipment was stored by County FAs, and it was sad that there had been no really positive response when help was sought from the FA. In one instance a young referee had raised some £700 for his society by running a sponsored marathon. Ian explained that £600,000 had been granted collectively to County FAs, and this included help for such situations as the one outlined. County FAs had to make their priorities each year, and it would be best to speak to the Referee Development Officer and ask him to prepare an appropriate business plan.
- *The minimum number of attendees required on training courses* was questioned on the grounds of difficulties in rural areas especially. Ian said there was no problem as the minimum number was only a suggestion and flexibility applied.
- Requesting *top referees as speakers* had sometimes met a nil response in some areas. The President urged societies to work together with neighbouring groups within their County in order to create a larger audience, when top officials might be more available to attend as speakers.

The Chairman closed the discussions by thanking the three members of the panel for their valuable contribution to the session which had of necessity been briefer than originally envisaged.

Date of AGM in 2011

The next Annual General Meeting would be held at the St John's Hotel, Solihull, on Friday 15th July 2011, with the Annual Conference held the following day, Saturday 16th July 2011.

Close of the Annual General Meeting

The Chairman declared the 2010 Annual General Meeting closed at 6.00 pm.