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'Setting and encouraging the maintenance of high standards in refereeing'

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THE MATCH OFFICIAL'S THREE R'S

Respect for oneself

Respect for others

Responsibility for your own actions



A TALE OF TWO REFEREES

A short time ago I observed a referee in action. He had a determined approach to his work, insistent that things being done in a sensible manner. He was consistent and totally impartial. He was invariably polite when he spoke to players and club officials, and he was not afraid to allow a little leeway in terms of law-application as and when he thought it reasonable. He was intolerant of players making provocative comments to opponents. He was, I noted, quite natural in the way he spoke to players, and when suitable opportunities arose he was prepared to encourage them to 'enjoy' behaving themselves.

I was impressed by this referee.

By contrast, a few days later I watched another referee who, would you believe it, occasionally insulted some of the players! His nasty attitude extended to the way he spoke to the two team managers. In terms of his decision-making, however, he dithered and showed inconsistency. His sarcasm, I decided, was a cover-up for his cowardice. In the second half he proved to be inattentive to the kinds of tackles that were designed to injure opponents. But his provocative, loud-mouthed comments invited dissent. He grew more and more insensitive to the players' obvious frustrations, and because of his negativity the game erupted into mass-confrontation. All he did after the final whistle was try to offer excuses and blame other people.

I was certainly not impressed by this referee.

Turn the page to read more -----

A TALE OF TWO REFEREES --- continued

I invite you now to read those two extracts again. This time, some of the words have been underlined and are in bold font. All will be explained at the end!

A short time ago I observed a referee in action. He had a **determined** approach to his work, **insistent** that things being done in a **sensible** manner. He was **consistent** and totally **impartial**. He was invariably **polite** when he spoke to players and club officials, and he was not afraid to allow a little **leeway** in terms of law-application as and when he thought it reasonable. He was **intolerant** of players making provocative comments to opponents. He was, I noted, quite **natural** in the way he spoke to players, and when suitable opportunities arose he was prepared to **encourage** them to 'enjoy' behaving themselves.

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EXPLANATION

*Look at all the words underlined and in bold font and think about refereeing qualities. Take note of the first letter of each word in bold font, and keep them in the order they have been used. What two words do they spell out? That's right --- **DISCIPLINE** and **INDISCIPLINE**. One of these referees was his own best friend; the other was his own worst enemy --- and all because of **ATTITUDE**. No more needs to be said, does it? [Editor]*



COUNTY RA QUIZ RESULTS

The 2017 County Referees' Quiz was hosted by the Rotherham Society late in January. A tough set of questions provided by David Bennett sorted out the four teams, each consisting of four members. Questions covered the latest version of the Laws of the Game and the European Championship.

Yet again, Doncaster proved too good for the rest, scoring 72.5 out of 100, followed by Barnsley 53.5, Rotherham 51.5 and Sheffield 44. The Individual Top Scorer was, not for the first time ever, Doncaster's Bob Ayre with 20.5 out of a possible 25.

A highly entertaining and educational evening! What a pity more spectators didn't turn up!



HERE'S A PIECE OF FOOTBALL HISTORY FOR YOU!

On 8th December 1863, the FA published the Laws of Football. This is what those then new Laws said over a century and a half ago.

It is said that one of the real strengths of Association Football is the simplicity of the Laws which control the game, making it easy to follow in all parts of the world. Alright, maybe the wording and interpretation of that section of the Laws concerning Offside casts something of a doubt on that simplicity and some would argue that a simplification of Offside would not come amiss as we approach the latter stages of the second decade of the twenty-first century. If we could only make the Offside clause understandable to the TV pundits and the club managers then maybe, just maybe, we might be on the right lines! OK, call your Editor a cynic if you like, but he does get tired of the stupidity he hears spoken so frequently and also of the often unjustified vilification of match officials. Anyway, I digress --- just enjoy a look at the thirteen laws of 1863. Read on -----

1. The maximum length of the ground shall be 200 yards, the maximum breadth shall be 100 yards, the length and breadth shall be marked off with flags; and the goal shall be defined by two upright posts, eight yards apart, without any tape or bar across them.
2. A toss for goals shall take place, and the game shall be commenced by a place kick from the centre of the ground by the side losing the toss for goals; the other side shall not approach within 10 yards of the ball until it is kicked off.
3. After a goal is won, the losing side shall be entitled to kick off, and the two sides shall change goals after each goal is won.
4. A goal shall be won when the ball passes between the goal-posts or over the space between the goal-posts (at whatever height), not being thrown, knocked on, or carried.
5. When the ball is in touch, the first player who touches it shall throw it from the point on the boundary line where it left the ground in a direction at right angles with the boundary line, and the ball shall not be in play until it has touched the ground.
6. When a player has kicked the ball, any one of the same side who is nearer to the opponent's goal line is out of play, and may not touch the ball himself, nor in any way whatever prevent any other player from doing so, until he is in play; but no player is out of play when the ball is kicked off from behind the goal line.
7. In case the ball goes behind the goal line, if a player on the side to whom the goal belongs first touches the ball, one of his side shall be entitled to a free kick from the goal line at the point opposite the place where the ball shall be touched. If a player of the opposite side first touches the ball, one of his side shall be entitled to a free kick at the goal only from a point 15 yards outside the goal line,

opposite the place where the ball is touched, the opposing side standing within their goal line until he has had his kick.

8. If a player makes a fair catch, he shall be entitled to a free kick, providing he claims it by making a mark with his heel at once; and in order to take such kick he may go back as far as he pleases, and no player on the opposite side shall advance beyond his mark until he has kicked.

9. No player shall run with the ball.

10. Neither tripping nor hacking shall be allowed, and no player shall use his hands to hold or push his adversary.

11. A player shall not be allowed to throw the ball or pass it to another with his hands.

12. No player shall be allowed to take the ball from the ground with his hands under any pretence whatever while it is in play.

13. No player shall be allowed to wear projecting nails, iron plates, or gutta-percha on the soles or heels of his boots.

In 1866 the offside rule was altered to allow a player to be onside when three of opposing team are nearer their own goal-line. Three years later the kick-out rule was altered and goal-kicks were introduced.

Now, well into season 2016 – 2017, we have move on to a situation where the Laws are vastly, yes vastly, different from what were the original thoughts on keeping order in our favourite game. Which version do you think is better, that of 1863 or that of the present day?



ADVICE FOR A NEW REFEREE

Make your mind up from the first minute of your training course that you are going to learn as much as you can about the Laws of the Game. The easiest and best way to do that after the course has finished is to join your local Referees' Association as soon as you can, making sure you attend as many meetings as you can.

When you come to an aspect of the Laws that still confuses you, even if just a little, ask your instructor for clarification. There is nothing wrong with doing so even after your initial training has finished. People in the Referees' Association are always ready to help you.

One of your first tasks as a match official is to ensure that you are as physically and mentally prepared as possible. There are several fitness training sessions available, so do take

advantage of what is available. Further into this article you will come across the word *mentor*. This person is basically a friendly, often informal but invaluable adviser. For now, just consider how valuable a mentor can be in helping you keep mentally prepared for your games.

Be confident, but not over-confident, throughout your refereeing career. Over-confidence leads to complacency; complacency leads to problems on the field.

Answer all your correspondence from Referees' Secretaries and from the home club, so that they know you will turn up for the game. Do this throughout your refereeing career. This way you will create a good impression --- and remember, you only get one opportunity to create a first impression!

For your games always turn out in a clean kit, which means clean boots and laces as well as uniform.

Use the whistle in a way that shows everyone your confidence, but do not use it in such a way that people think you are there to give a solo concert. To learn the twin arts of how and when to blow the whistle, go to watch experienced referees on duty, making your main point of concentration this aspect of his performance. Watch the way the players respond to the whistle, and indeed to the way the referee speaks and calls aloud during the game.

Gain as much experience as you can, both as a match official and as a learning spectator. There is so much to learn!

Running the line is every bit as important and as difficult as refereeing. Be proud to act as an Assistant Referee. It is a vital part of your learning and development processes.

Whenever you have to issue yellow or red cards, do so calmly and confidently. Do not apologise if you have to issue a card. Just do your duty and then restart play. This is a time for calmness. It is never a time to be arrogant.

Always send any reports to the appropriate authority, whether it is the County Football Association or the competition. Remember that it is a serious matter if you do not submit a disciplinary report, and you may be subject to strict discipline yourself.

As has already been mentioned, make sure that you join your local branch of The Referees' Association as soon as you qualify as a referee. Attend as many of its meetings as you can, because that is where you will really learn what refereeing is all about. These are the important meetings where there is much more refereeing experience gathered in one room than in any other kind of meeting.

Make sure you attend all the RAFA training and promotion seminars available to you, as they are specially designed for you and other referees of similar experience. Without attending them you cannot expect to make much progress as a referee.

Make sure you find a few experienced referees and observers who do not mind if you contact them from time to time to seek their advice about any problems you have met in your games. Such a person is known as a *mentor*. This is particularly important if you have had to dismiss a player or club official and you are not certain about how to find the best words for your report. If you are seeking such advice, make no mention of the player's name as it should be of no importance to the person advising you.

If you have to attend a disciplinary hearing it is natural that you will feel apprehensive first time. Seek the advice of an experienced senior colleague before you attend the meeting. Also remember that *you* are not on trial but are attending as the FA's witness. Always tell the truth and do not contradict your submitted report or add to it unless you are asked specific questions by the disciplinary panel.

Remember that every referee has at some time felt strongly inclined to pack in refereeing. Talk through those tough times with your more experienced friends and you will almost certainly be raring to blow the whistle to start your next game a few days later. Such encouragement is what The Referees' Association is all about!

Finally, whenever you watch another referee or assistant in action, do not make comments criticising him that anyone else can hear, even if the only person nearby is a close refereeing friend of yours. You wouldn't like anyone making adverse comments about you, so don't make any about someone else.

Happy whistling and flagging for years to come!



The world's most popular game

LIVELY SIGNALS 1

LAZY SIGNALS 0

Is there any aspect of refereeing that makes the official look unsure of himself more than lazy signalling? We are speaking here not only of referees but of assistant referees also.

Too often do we see a referee offer a directional signal with his arm held slackly out almost as if it contained no muscles to give it strength, and it is also probably a forearm signal rather than a full arm one. Seeing a few such arm-signals, a spectator was heard to say, *"If I were playing in this game I'd start to give this ref a bit of aggro. He looks as if he's frightened of upsetting everybody."*

Lazily given signals --- for that is exactly what they are --- give confidence to nobody. Avoid them like the plague!

When the ball goes out of play for a throw-in or when the referee has blown for a free-kick (again, a signal that wants to be given with confidence), a prompt, straight-arm signal suggests that the referee is sure about what will happen next. Players invariably react positively to such signals. Even if the referee might be fractionally

unsure of the correct decision, it will probably be acceptable to the players if it is given confidently but not arrogantly.

When we consider flag-signals by the assistant referee, again we look for lively signals and not lethargically offered ones. A clear, positive, straight-arm flag-signal indicating direction, maintained for a few seconds for all concerned to understand, gives the right image of someone who is carrying out the important and demanding work of assisting the referee.

It stands to reason that if a team of three is in charge of the game *all* of them must offer positive, confident signals. Call them 'snappy' if you like, but they should not be given over-hastily.

Signals must communicate what you are thinking. Make sure you don't let the team of three down in this way.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Try looking up the word '**sanction**' in a dictionary. It has two basically opposite meanings. '**Punish**' or '**approve**'. Make sure you know what FIFA means when it uses the word '**sanction**'.





HOW SMART ARE YOU?

THREE QUESTIONS FOR MATCH OFFICIALS

Does your kit always look smart on match days?

Is your man-management as smart as your kit?

Is your decision-making as smart as your kit and your man-management?

WHEN PLAYERS CLASH, BIG PRESSURE IS ON THE REFEREE

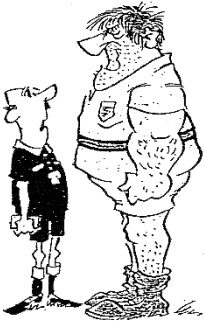
CONFRONTATION

*Rodger Hibbert, a licensed FA Referee Instructor and a former Chairman of the Sheffield RA, spent quite a few years as a Contributory Level Assessor. You'd call him an Observer these days, of course. 'Benchmark' spoke to him about the thorny topic of **confrontations**, asking him to concentrate mainly on the referee operating all alone in the local park. We hope, therefore, that there will be plenty of useful advice here for recently qualified referees, and indeed for referees at all levels.*

First of all, Rodger, tell us what you understand by ‘confrontation’.

Well, basically a confrontation is an argument or disagreement, and though it usually starts verbally, it can often take on a physical nature with players, pushing, jostling and even striking or kicking each other. It is never very pleasant to see or easy to deal with.

How does a confrontation arise? What causes it to happen?



I think referees need to recognise that confrontations do not always happen suddenly. There is often a build-up, with warning signs that the referee needs to pick up on. For instance, a player may feel some pain as a result of a challenge that may or may not have been a fair one. A sense of injustice may bring about some desire for revenge or retribution. Basically, it all adds up to what is the main cause of confrontation, and that is very often frustration.

Go on; tell us a little more about frustration.

It could be frustration that a player has with himself, perhaps if he knows he is under-performing, or it could be with his colleagues doing something wrong, like losing the ball easily or making bad passes. The frustration might easily be linked to the decreasing amount of time remaining to get the desired result at the end of the game.

Players do, of course, react badly at times to the attitudes of their opponents, perhaps on account of their physical approach or their provocative comment, or when they adopt time-wasting tactics.

But shouldn't the referee be doing something to prevent a team using time-wasting tactics?

Yes, he should know the difference between time-wasting and time-consuming, the first of which is contrary to the Laws of the Game, the second of which is acceptable tactics within the law. Recognising that time-wasting is taking place is being alert to one of those warning signs I referred to earlier. A sensible referee will be picking up on such signs as these and challenging them before there is an escalation into confrontation. He needs to be very proactive in a game of football, by adopting good positions from which to impose his authority, to have a quiet word or two of advice, or even to make a more public warning about what he has seen. But it must be stressed that a referee is taking an unnecessary risk of losing control if he becomes over-reliant on the quiet word approach, since some players will see it as a lack of confidence and authority and they will take advantage. These are the very players who are masters in the art of causing confrontations, and they are no friends of referees!

Good referees develop an empathy with the game under their charge, gaining this by virtue of understanding players' movements and body language, noting the way they react to physical and verbal challenges, how indeed they react to the referee's decisions. All of this is very important, and it can be crucial to maintaining control.

You have just mentioned the referee's decisions, Rodger. Can't these sometimes be the starting point of what can soon become a full-scale confrontation?

They certainly can, depending of course on the circumstances. I know that is an easy thing to say and a not-so-easy thing to put into practice in the heat of the game. It is important, as I have suggested earlier, that the referee does not rely too much on warning words only, especially if they are not having the desired effect. That can be a recipe for disaster. There is no bigger 'enemy' of a referee in a flashpoint situation than those players who see him as being lacking in authority. They see him as a soft touch, someone who does not matter. My advice here to the referee is to be alert to people's reactions. Know what the general atmosphere of the game is like and whether it has changed in the last few seconds.

Sometimes the referee will escalate his own approach, moving through the quiet word, to the more forceful one, to a public warning during a stoppage in play, to a well-timed and well-directed caution. If a referee has to caution in circumstances like these it is vital that he cautions the right person, seeking the trouble-causer and not just the one who reacts to provocation. Good and effective refereeing involves being able to raise and lower your profile as circumstances demand, and might include allowing no advantage for a while, punishing every minor infringement until things settle down again, and then gradually allowing a little more advantage.

Thanks for that useful advice, Rodger, but what about those situations where a referee has tried the proactive approach but, perhaps suddenly or for no apparent reason, a full-scale confrontation arises and he simple has to react to what is happening? Any advice on that, please?

Yes, I have plenty of advice, and I base it to a large degree on things that I have seen happening in games where I have been present. I am sometimes glad I am only the observer and the adviser and not the poor old referee out there in the thick of the trouble!

Let me say from the outset that a wise referee is always ready to **expect the unexpected**. In other words, he has to be ready for anything that might happen. When the tempo of the game is fast, attitudes can suddenly change from calm and steady to explosive and hostile. I think that the first reaction of the referee, since he is operating alone, is to stop play, which involves a positive, authoritative use of the whistle. He should not become involved in the confrontation by trying to separate those players squaring up to each other. Again, I know it may be instinctive to do so, but out there on your own as the FA's witness you need to be able to do the right thing. You will not be able to see what is happening around you if you are in the midst of the crowd of players trying to separate the fighters and brawlers. You will

not be able to see if any player, or players, come racing in from fifty yards away to impose their own form of justice. You will not be able to keep an eye on those who should be in the technical areas, for those people can be added dynamite in such a situation. What is more, if a referee gets involved in the throng, he stands a good chance of being assaulted and he may just not know who has done it. I repeat, you are the FA's witness, so make sure you can be just that!

Assuming that the referee remains clear of the brawl and has a reasonable viewing position, what else must he do?

From his position he needs to use his whistle and his voice to give loud, positive signals that say, in effect, *"Stop it right now! I am not going to put up with this in my game!"* I know those won't be the precise words you will use, after you have given a few sharp blasts on the whistle, so you are advised to think about the sort of thing you will say, short and sharp, and you can do this in those hours at home, or in the car, as you constantly recharge your mental refereeing batteries. It is all part of match-preparation, as far as I am concerned. You just have to be ready, to expect the unexpected, but you can certainly do something positive to prepare for the unexpected, when you think about it.

So, as soon as is reasonably possible after the tempers have calmed down and the brawling has stopped, deal first of all with any dismissals and then sort out the cautions. Be systematic and calm about it, taking your time in what is often a strange lull in the game. The important thing here is to make sure you get it right.

Make sure that during the entire process you do not become aggressive yourself. Think about the difference between being positive and being aggressive. You are dealing with aggression in others, so perhaps your own best approach is one marked by calmness allied to firmness.

Of course, you should never manhandle players, especially at times like this. Don't finger-wag either, as this tends to bring out the worst in people. Don't eye-ball people, but certainly be prepared to look them firmly in the face as you deal with them, maintaining a discreet distance from them, just in case there is any lingering aggression that might come your way via a fist! Courtesy and calmness usually achieve the best results and maintain the referee's dignity.

There's certainly plenty for a referee to think about in situations like this, especially if he is relatively new to refereeing, but have you any further advice for the referee before he gets the game under way again?

Yes. Sensibly, the referee should not rush to get the game re-started, as the delay often lets the players settle down mentally. I know that it doesn't take a new very long to realise that a lot of trouble in a game happens when the ball is dead rather than when play is in progress, but the essential thing here is to remember that the game has just suffered a major incident and things need to be on an even keel again before play restarts. Also, you want to make sure that you are in the best position for the next phase of

play. By moving quite a few yards away before you blow your whistle firmly for the restart you will be sending out a clear message that, having remained calm through the whole process and having acted with dignity, you are still in charge. Blow the whistle confidently for the restart, and make certain you blow for the next minor infringement. Be careful about using advantage just yet, and let's hope the rest of the game goes smoothly. After the game of course, you must stay calm and courteous --- and then, of course, you will have some careful written homework to do!

Thank you, Rodger, for an excellent interview full of advice and thoughts for the referee regarding confrontations. It is certainly wise to remember that we should adopt a proactive approach to minimise the chances of a confrontation happening in the first place, but if and when a confrontation happens, then is the time for the referee to show all his management skills and social graces in order to deal effectively with whatever comes his way. He certainly has to be ready to expect the unexpected!

WHICH HEROES KEEP THE FOOTBALL WORLD TICKING ALONG?

Some people only ever “think inside the box”, so you'd expect such folk to look to their Premier League or Championship heroes who turn out to play for colossal financial rewards for their clubs.

Other folk are often willing to “think outside the box” and they might think of local players who play their games on Saturday afternoon or Sunday morning. Lesser heroes by comparison with the rich ones at the top, for sure, but heroes none the less to enthusiastic fans.

There is another **HERO**, and often also a **HEROINE**, to grace our favourite game at the lower levels. It's the person who always puts heart and soul into their club, making sure everything is ready for the weekend game, whether it involves making sure the kit is ready for the players, putting up the goal-nets, ensuring the ball and a few spares ones are ready and available to use, filling in the team-sheets, providing the half-time refreshments, retrieving the occasional ball that goes over the fence, selling raffle-tickets, taking the dirty kit to be laundered ready for next week. There are many other tasks you can think of, no doubt, that go towards making the game take place.



The important thing to remember is that **these HEROES and HEROINES are the VOLUNTEERS** who make our games tick along smoothly. We must never forget the brilliant contribution they make to the game, and we should not take them for granted. All many of them want is a sincere ‘thank you’, because they don’t get paid for their work. Please be the one who says, ‘Thank you.’

BIG QUESTION --- *Could YOU help the cause by persuading a family member, a friend, a neighbour to help out your local community's football team by becoming a reliable VOLUNTEER? Better still, even if you are a player or a referee today, could you set your thinking process in motion by constantly telling yourself that one day YOU WILL BECOME A VOLUNTEER?*

A few final thoughts this time about BENCHMARK

A few days after our last issue was published, the Editor received a message from someone in the refereeing world. This person said he had heard of BENCHMARK but hadn't seen it. What, he asked, is the main purpose of the BENCHMARK newsletter?

It is a question we might all consider at times.

Well, **BENCHMARK** is designed to do what our strapline says: ***Setting and encouraging high standards in refereeing.***

There is no real need for our publication to simply reproduce the excellent documentation that emanates for both the FA nationally and the County FA via our Referee Development Officer *Craig Grundy*. There are also very helpful items produced by the RA nationally, and of course ample solid advice stems from the excellent joint work of both those national bodies in the form of RAFA.

Our job with **BENCHMARK** is basically straightforward in that we try to offer general advice about all those situations in refereeing which you cannot learn about from simply studying the Laws of the Game. We aim to concentrate on matters such as man-management and dealing with problems that arise on the field and sometimes off it as well. We use the experience of many referees over the years as a rich source of advice to share with the next generation of match officials.

In this issue, for instance, we have offered general advice for newer referees, encouraging them to become active participants in their local RA. We have offered extensive thoughts about how you might deal with confrontations, and for good measure we have looked back to the Laws as they were many, many years ago and invited referees to decide if what he have today is better than what used to be available.

So there you have it in a nutshell. That is what we aim to offer you in **BENCHMARK!**

Here's hoping your refereeing gets better by the game, because if it does, so will your enjoyment. And don't forget that the new marking year kicks in at the beginning of March, so be prepared in the best possible ways.

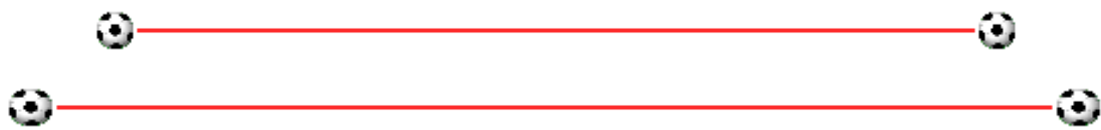
The next issue of BENCHMARK is in APRIL

HOW NOT TO LOOK UNSURE --- ADVICE FOR NEWER REFEREES

How many times have you seen a referee caution or send off an offender? Far too many times to count, of course, and fortunately this procedure is usually well carried out by most referees. Just occasionally, though, a referee will give himself a bit of a problem when he comes to showing the yellow or red card. He knows just when to show the card, and he knows how to hold it aloft for all to see. He also knows how long to hold it there for all to see --- not just for half a second, and also for no longer than about three seconds. But, sometimes, he might just make himself look unsure, lacking in confident, even a little timid. How does he manage this, you might ask?

He lets himself down by carrying both the yellow and the red card in the same pocket. When he needs to display the appropriate card, he either fumbles for a few seconds until he locates the right one or, far worse than that, he brings out *both* cards before selecting one of them. The answer is simple: *keep the cards in different pockets and make sure you know which card is which pocket. It is often the case that a referee carries the yellow card in his shirt pocket and the red one in his shorts pocket. That way, he knows exactly which card is wanted.*

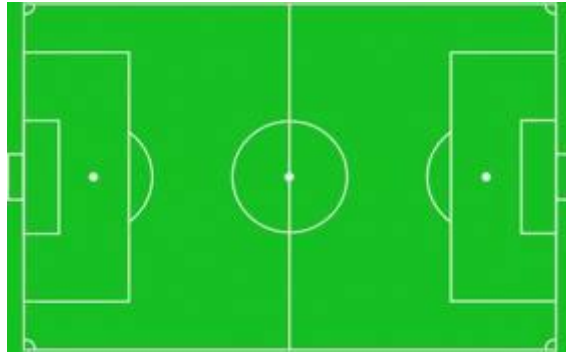
Also, please do not carry both cards in a plastic wallet in such a way that when it comes out of your pocket, both yellow and red can be seen. Imagine how an already half-angry player might react if, expecting a caution, he sees a red card ready for possible use. It might sound rather petty, but even when using yellow and red cards, referees must be professional in the way they do their work.



**This is your
workplace!**

Use it wisely. Learn how much the markings can help you find better positioning and viewing. Know the distances demarcated by the lines.

You spend a lot of time there, so make best use of it.



WHEN *REFEREEING*, ALWAYS EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED!



That's it for this issue from **BENCHMARK**. We hope you've found it interesting and useful.

Our next issue is due in APRIL 2017