

Guest Speaker - *STEVE BENNETT*

On the back of the success of last year's joint meeting organised by the Epsom, Kingston, Sutton & Wimbledon societies it was a pleasure to see approaching 100 attendees to hear select list referee Steve Bennett speaking.

Unfortunately this was balanced initially by the disappointment of IT problems, which threatened to derail the whole in evening. After an initial delay Jim de Rennes stepped into the breach to fill the void. Was this a stand-in? Stand-up comedian more like, as he performed an admirable warm-up for the main attraction.

Steve Bennett must be used to pressure, but probably not of this sort. Still this is man who has officiated at three FA Cup finals and he took matters in his stride and quickly switched to plan B. Steve started by giving advise on judging challenges and with the assistance of the floor suggested that we should contemplate numerous factors: force, position on field, location of ball, persistence, part of body used (studs etc) amongst others.

We were then provided with a wealth of tips that we could use to our advantage

- * Don't pre-judge, but be aware
- * When cautioning, get the card out early to calm the players, to let them know what is coming.
- * Don't cut the grass to turn down the penalty, as you immediately dispense with any assistance that an assistant referee can give you.
- * A comment can get you out of a situation, sometimes....but choose your moment.
- * In a mass confrontation make sure you identify the instigator and retaliator, leave the runners to your assistants.
- * Be prepared to sacrifice distance to get the right angle

There was a discussion about the constant often-unwarranted criticism by football pundits. It was disappointing to learn that Sky will intentionally take up the contrary position to borderline decisions given by officials. Regretfully the possibility of a pundit referee is seen as a non-starter, there being no mileage in the entertainment stakes, as this would simply kill the debate and dispel the controversy.

Finally during a break for drinks our own Vince Hull, appeared to flick a switch a bingo the technology was finally in business, this enabled Steve to share a few well chosen clips with us before he received a well deserved vote of thanks from Gerry Kehoe on behalf of the 4 societies.

Here's to something of similar quality next year.

Rob Allum - Wimbledon RA

WHY SHOULD YOU JOIN THE REFEREES' ASSOCIATION?

At a recent meeting of my society, passing the referees' exam was compared to passing a driving test and the RA was then compared to the AA - there if you ever broke down.

While that justifies joining the RA for its insurance cover, I believe the role of the RA and its local branches is far more fundamental than an organisation you hope never to need.

For me, the RA is like the petrol station you need to visit to fill up on the fuel to keep you on the road, as well as the garage where you obtain your MOT.

Here is where even the motoring analogy begins to fall short, because the RA offers much more.

When you go to the garage, you might take advice from a mechanic, but you do not meet other drivers and learn from their experiences.

Nor do you get reminders about the basics of driving or the rules of the road. That is up to you - and you are on your own to find it out.

It does not have to be like that in refereeing. The RA offers regular chances to be reminded of the basics, to improve your skills, to meet others who have had similar problems and to learn something new.

No better was that demonstrated than at the evening with Steve Bennett.

As you would expect for an international official, Bennett gave us many an insight into top-level refereeing. Many of us will never achieve that, but his interactive presentation reminded us of many basic principles and why they are important as well as teaching us much else - such as how to be one step ahead of the players.

How he took his eye off the ball to watch out for the antics of Duncan Ferguson was a case in point.

A great deal was memorable, and there was a great deal to remember. If nothing else, I shall remember Bennett's demonstration that an elbow thrown in malice - as opposed to being used to help a player jump - is done with a clenched fist.

But where does such an evening leave societies, four of which clubbed together to bring you such an evening?

Epsom, Kingston, Sutton and Wimbledon (with thanks to Surrey County FA for the buffet) pooled their resources for this event. It followed last year's highly successful talk by Keith Hackett.

The branches put this on because they felt it was difficult to justify asking a big name to talk to a handful of people at an individual society meeting.

While not all branch meetings are going to be as well attended as the estimated 90-strong Steve Bennett evening, there is no reason they cannot be as useful or entertaining.

What you get from any organisation is only as good as what you put into it.

So now it is down to you. The RA's motto is service before self - so don't just join your local society, go along, tell them what you want from the group, share your experiences and help to keep the wheels on an organisation that, as of next season, will have been helping referees for a century.

Ian Lamont - Epsom RA



At the start of the evening all present were informed of the recent death of Les Harrington at the age of 78 years.

Les served the Association in many aspects starting as a referee before becoming a member of Division Three. Later, he became Divisional Advisory Secretary, Divisional Chairman, Assistant Referee's Secretary, Referee's Secretary and more recently Chairman of the Referee's Committee. He was made a Vice-President and subsequently a Life Vice-President. He also served on the committee's of Bletchingley FC, Nutfield FC and the Redhill & District FL of which he was a Vice-President.

John Crook, President of Wimbledon RA paid tribute to the dedicated service of Les which was followed by a minute's silence.

It was also intended for Ray Mallery, RA and RAE Board member, to present a 50 year long service award to Phil Newman, formally of Oxted RA. Sadly Phil was too unwell to attend and sent an apology. He was wished a speedy recovery.

A record of the presentation by
STEVE BENNETT
 F.A. Premier League Referee
 Held at Sutton Utd. F.C. on Thursday 13th March 2008



Organised by
 Kingston, Epsom, Wimbledon and Sutton Referees' Societies