

February 2007

The next meeting of the North Middlesex Referees' Society will be held at our usual excellent venue, Holtwhites Sports and Social Club, Kirkland Drive, Enfield. The guest speaker is Society member and Football League Referee, Paul Taylor. Please make every effort to attend what should be an enjoyable evening.

Last month's editorial comment about January's meeting being held on 15 February might have caused confusion, so we decided to put a slip in with the magazines clarifying the situation. Apologies, and we hope no one was put out!

January's meeting was held as usual on the 18th of the month at Holtwhites S&SC with special guest Ian Blanchard, who was excellent! A report on his presentation is elsewhere in this issue.

The Society sends condolences to Eddie Carter, President of South Herts Society, whose wife died suddenly at the end of last month. The thoughts of all members who know Eddie are with him and family at this sad time.

The FAMOA evening, arranged jointly with London FA, and attended by a number of members, was successfully held on Thursday, 1st February at the Emirates Stadium.

The try by Jonny Wilkinson for England in rugby's Calcutta cup caused some consternation in oval ball circles owing to the much vaunted technology used to decide whether it was good or not. More elsewhere!

George Grant writes about his plum game that went awry. George's article, entitled "Don't try to be too helpful??" is thought-provoking for anyone likely to be caught up in a similar situation. Good one, George.

Normidian team member, Gary Cobden, points out that our "shop for less" advert in January's magazine invited members to use our website, 'especially at Christmas'. I explained that there was nothing wrong in Christmas shopping 12 months ahead. However, we have decided to extol the virtues of Tesco's in this month's advert – and there's no mention of Christmas!

On a more sensible note, Gary has put together his usual list of plum appointments, and NMRS 100 Club results for November and December 06 and January 07 – congratulations to all the winners and to all those who have a plum appointment.

Also in this issue, Society training guru, Stan Rosenthal reminds us of some training courses coming up at Brimsdown FC. To those who are qualified to attend, these sessions are ideal opportunities to develop as a referee, assistant referee or coach. And Observer writes on "Assessors and Referees".

Please support the Quiz Night on Saturday, 24 February – details are in this issue of Normidian. The minutes of the January 07 meeting are also included elsewhere.

Secretary, Robin Jagot, had to attend hospital for treatment, recently. We hope he continues to improve and is soon back to his best form.

Contributions for the next issue of the magazine to the Editor by 1st March 2007, please.

January's Special Guest – Ian Blanchard

Secretary, Robin Jagot, introduced Ian Blanchard as this month's Society's guest speaker. Ian is one of two Heads of Refereeing at the FA, the other being Neale Barry. Their roles differ in that Neale has responsibility for the professional and semi-professional referees, whilst Ian is Head of National Referee Development responsible for 'grassroots'. John Baker, who retired in September 2006 after 5 years, was responsible for both areas, which had grown during his tenure in range and responsibility – hence the splitting of the post.

Born in Aldershot, and now living in Stockport, Ian spent 22 years as a Child Protection Officer in the Sussex and Humberside Police Forces, joining the FA as a Regional Manager in 2001. He had worked closely with John Baker and was promoted to be the National Manager for Education and Training, developing a strong relationship with FA Learning, before taking over his current role and being responsible for some 28,000 referees. Ian said he still referees on Sunday mornings in the Stockport and District league.

Having left home at 4 am in order to visit the new Wembley complex before coming to North Middlesex, Ian said the new national stadium was 'fantastic', and thought it would be a huge success when completed and opened, with its fully-equipped warm-up areas in the dressing rooms and a 1900-seater restaurant amongst all the other high grade facilities.

“What makes a good Referee?” asked our guest. Those present were asked to share their views with colleagues before making known their ideas. A number of suggestions were raised and discussed, including: man-management, confidence (how much!), fitness, decisiveness, personality, enjoyment (difficult at times), and a willingness to learn. Ian added that the best referees also think they could be better!

Handling Pressure is an important aspect of refereeing and something most of those present had experienced in one form or another. Ian suggested that players, officials, spectators and even we, can contribute to how we handle pressure during a game. We were asked to consider being tactically aware, to use our personality, be pro-active, concentrate, be mobile, lead by example, be in good physical condition, apply the laws and reflect – and learn.

Show Tactical Awareness by Reading the Game. The advice here was to be alert, observe the positions of the players, penalise and remember the number of the player – did the offence have an impact on the game (or opponent). Persistent offending is 2 or 3 fouls in quick succession. We were asked to consider the positions of the players prior to kick-off. Were the teams in any particular formation e.g. 4.4.2, 4.3.3, etc.

Use your Personality but be 'you', we were advised. Work to your strengths and being aware what doesn't work for you, our guest advised. We were also told to be 'human', but in control; and to smile if it gets the right response. Referees are now expected to be less robotic than in the past, but to still be in control – Ian suggested that Premier League referee, Howard Webb, is good example to follow.

Prevent Problems by being pro-active. Presence is impressive; we should be no more than 15 to 20 metres away from play, with a good viewing angle. We should also modify our control path and not be slavish to the diagonal. Also be alert to 'hot spots'.

Continued

Concentration – be alert and responsive. All information is valuable and each game is 90 minutes work. We should consider the benefits of refereeing in chunks, checking at say, 15-minute intervals – focus and re-focus. We should be aware when there are low periods of play, immediately after the interval and during long stoppages. The last 10 minutes can be critical and goals are often scored during this time. We were also advised to ‘engage our minds before we engage in performance’, not vice-versa.

Have Good Mobility by covering the ground well, with variation to suit demands – Assistant Referees should hold their heads up. We were told to use an impressive stride – which is not necessarily fast. Movement should be purposeful and we should be stationary when the situation demands. We should ‘blow and go’, giving the message that we want to ‘get on with it’.

Lead by Example by communicating. Pre-match instructions to our Assistant Referees should be no longer than 10 minutes, and we should ‘encourage’. We were also advised to motivate, share knowledge and control with confidence.

Apply the Laws – consistency is a personal target and having only one set of Laws helps us. We should manage situations with effective decisions, which are always ‘in the opinion of the referee’.

Reflect on each game: on our interaction, responses and teamwork. Also did we give a truly professional performance in every respect? We were encouraged to set goals, middle and long-term. The next step is “Am I ready?” Finally, we were asked, “Are you ready?”

Ian completed his presentation by giving his views on situations raised from the floor, including the denial of obvious goal-scoring opportunities, non-offending teams being penalised, the pressure of television on our top officials, the use of video evidence and the ‘intelligent ball’.

Chairman, Tom White, gave a vote of thanks to Ian for a first-class presentation, despite having had a very long day. To typical North Middlesex applause, Tom gave our special guest a copy of the ‘History of the North Middlesex Referees’ Society, as a memento of his visit.



FAMOA Referee Development Evening

A number of members, together with friends and colleagues from London FA and other Societies, enjoyed an evening arranged jointly by FAMOA and LFA, at the impressive Emirates Stadium, new home of Arsenal FC, on Thursday 1st February 2007. Entry was free to FAMOA members, but by ticket only.

The timetable began at 6.30 pm for tea, coffee and drinks from the bar, followed by a welcome by Ed Stone, FA Regional Manager (Referees). David Dixon, FA Licensed Instructor then asked, “What can your County do for you?” before Adrian Shorter, County Training Officer asked, “What can you do for your County?” After a short break, Premiership Referee, Chris Foy gave an entertaining presentation – befitting of his reputation as one of the best speakers amongst the current panel of Premiership Referees – on “Life as a Professional Referee”. Finally, Lockie Bramzell, LFA Committee Chairman, gave a vote of thanks to Chris and everyone involved in making the event a deserved success.



Don't try to be too helpful??

This is a warning to fellow referees.

You have been fortunate enough to be *given a* senior county game, your best “plum” yet. You are excited but apprehensive and make sure all your pre-game bits and pieces are done. Most importantly you check the travel arrangements as the game is at an unfamiliar venue.

The Friday afternoon before the game you receive a call from the referee secretary: “Bad news and Good news”: the bad news is your game has been called off; the good news is you have been given a game of equal standing for the same date and time.

That's not too bad, you think, but then you realise that the revised fixture will be played at another unfamiliar venue. Having already made plans for the Saturday morning before the game to accommodate the journey time and destination for the initial booking, you check the directions for the revised game and see that although “do-able” it will be tight.

Do you try to be helpful and accept the fixture; remember this is the afternoon the day before the match is to be played? Or do you explain that the revised fixture means a difficult journey and you are not sure if you can get there in time and therefore have to decline. (You remember overhearing talk about not turning down a county appointment, whatever the reason, or you won't get another one!)

Well, guess which one I took!

As it happens the journey took twice as long as the AA website said it would, and rather than it being tight, I arrived 15 minutes after k.o. to find the Senior AR in the middle of my best “plum” to date. Thankfully I was able to communicate ahead that I would be late but that didn't help my embarrassment and discomfort at halftime and full time explaining to my fellow officials. Things got worse when I also heard some assessors had been spotted and had left when they heard I wasn't going to make it on time.

On the Monday there was an email from the Assessing Secretary demanding an explanation for the situation. Although my explanation was honest I felt a fool writing it and wouldn't have wanted to be a fly on the wall when the Referee Committee members were reading my explanation.

P.S. Although I have had other county appointments since then, none have been at the level of that “ill-fated” fixture.

So this is a warning for my fellow referees, don't try to be too helpful.

George Grant



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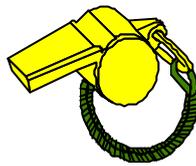
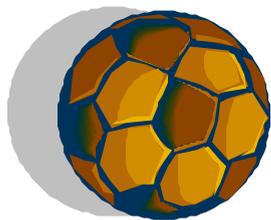
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Quiz Night

The Society will be holding a Quiz Night in the New Year – see elsewhere in the Normidian for details. Teams consist of six players; do not worry if you cannot make up a full team, as we anticipate there will be others in the same predicament, and we will put people together in order to make up the numbers. Tickets are priced at £7.00 per person, and are available now. To book your tickets, please contact either

Gary Cobden - telephone 01992 469153; e-mail treasurer@northmiddlesexreferees.org.uk
or

Robin Jagot - telephone 01707 651461; e-mail secretary@northmiddlesexreferees.org.uk



ASSESSORS AND REFEREES

REFEREES

What does an assessor look for in a referee? Is he smart?

Does he look the part?

Does he look neat and tidy? Has he got white turn-ups on his socks? Has he clean boots?

Do they inspire confidence?

Players notice this and remember, you never get a second chance to make a first impression.”

Once the game has started, the first factor that the assessor looks for is whether and how the referee controls the game. There are different ways of refereeing, some are loud, and some are quiet. The method doesn't matter as long as they have control.

The first ten minutes of a game are absolutely vital, be careful if you apply the advantage clause early on. If you take chances in the early part of the game, the players may see it, as you, not penalising certain offences. Also, early in the match, let the players know that you are there.

Take the first opportunity to maintain your control. Use your cautions wisely. If you start your cautions at too low a level of offence, you can have problems later on. You could end up with a book full, in a game that didn't really merit it.

But, at any time in the match, if the law is mandatory and says 'he shall be cautioned', caution him.

At an injury situation have a word with the players, you can learn a lot about players by their facial expression and reaction to an injury. If the player is aggressive, you may have to try an aggressive approach later on.

An assessor will watch at set pieces, he will check that the referee can see the linesman from the position that is taken up. He will want to see if the referee can 'read 'the game'.

Does he vary his position at corner kicks?

Where does he stand for throw-ins?

Does he vary his running area?

Does he keep his linesmen in view?

Is he within reasonable proximity of an incident?

Can he run backwards when necessary?

Does he have a glance at the goal area after the scoring of a goal? (Very important)

Referees on the local parks must ask themselves are they are still as active in the last minute as the first.

It was not necessary for the man in black to be an Olympic athlete; he has, however, to be able to be close to an incident. An incorrect decision from 10 yards is often received better than a correct decision from 45 yards. An assessor will ask himself if the referee was up with play or 'continually behind the play'.

Continued

If you shirk your training you become less fit. It's that simple.

When the whistle is blown let everyone hear *it*. Let it speak for itself, a long hard blow for a serious foul, a shorter blast for a more technical offence.

The assessor will also give his opinion on whether the voice is authoritative?

Does it exercise control?

Don't worry about playing the advantage. Sometimes it works; sometimes it doesn't, but if you're playing it, let everybody know.

When it comes to stoppages get the game moving as quickly as possible. You will find that you do get trouble when the ball is moving, only when it's stationary.

Always remember to play the full amount of additional time. If there is six minutes additional time because of time wasting and injuries, then play the full amount. You have no right to deprive players of their correct allowance.

What a referee must be aware of is the ever-increasing amount of gamesmanship in today's game. They must be aware of time wasting tactics (throwing the ball away or deliberately going offside) and other tactics designed to delay the game.

You should always treat players with respect at all times.

ASSESSORS

Assessors are guardians of referees' standards at any level. It doesn't matter whether the man in the middle is at the top of the tree or in his first season on the local park.

The purpose of assessments is two folds: -

- 1) As a means for leagues to decide who should be retained (or removed) from their list.
- 2) For the purpose conveying of advice to younger referees. The job has to be done fairly, both for the league or competition, and most importantly for the referee himself.

A young referee is going to be tested as soon as he enters the field of play whether it is the first match or the one hundredth. If the game is to keep these referees, should they not be assessed in their first five or six games? Statistics show that it is in the early days, which are the difficult ones and that, is when they need help. The assessors must help the new recruit as much as possible.

Why not give the newly qualify referees name to the Area Assessing Secretary to see if he can be fitted into being watched on his first match?

A Class 6 referee can adequately assess a Class 7 colleague, though higher up the scale an assessor should have at least had experience at the level he's assessing.

The assessor must be at the ground early, to see how the referee enters the field of play. It might seem obvious, but check you're at the right ground and looking at the right referee. He must find the home club secretary, to check that the referee is the correct one.

If however, it's a different referee, you can still do a progress report. The County Football Association and the referee himself will appreciate it. Keep out of the way and try not to advertise your presence. The assessor would like to see the referee as he is and not him performing for the assessor.

Above all, don't approach the referee, during the match.

If you have a need to, in the case of a Class 7, if it is his first assessment, make yourself known after the game.

Continued

You will have walked round the pitch several times, but don't watch the game, watch the referee. Make notes in a notebook, have it already mapped out with the sections of the pitch and use the sections. It will help create a picture.

Be objective, there are more ways of killing a pig than slitting its throat.

The fact that the referee doesn't do something the way you do isn't important.

Another trap that the assessor sometimes falls into is not giving the referee credit when it has been an easy game. Credit must be given to the referee at all time.

Don't sit on the fence if it's been an easy game to handle and if the referees had a good game, give the referee a good mark.

After the game, the assessor's job is to go away and write the report, do not to hang around. Certainly don't comment to club officials about the referee. Don't speak to others. Be careful if you speak to the referee. Sometimes you might offend him. At other times he might not even know you've been there.

Get something down on paper within 24 hours, then put it away and forget it, for at least a couple of hours. Then look at it again and then if happy, submit it.

Remember

- Be objective.
- Judge on the correct application of Law.
- Make allowances. Are you looking at an experienced referee or a referee in his first season?
- Take the nature of the game into account.
- Look at what the referee can see from where he is. Give helpful advice.
- Don't pose a problem.
- If something is good, tell the referee. Let him develop that aspect.
- If the referee has had the proverbial 'stinker' pick out the important things (maximum four, probably three), and give advice on those.
- Don't ramble on about many too different faults.
- The most difficult aspect is for an assessor to 'pin-point' a particular incident where a game went away from a referee. It's the most difficult, but most valuable contribution you can make to a referee.

Observer



To Video or Not!

The debate on whether to use video recording as a tool to help referees to make decisions in matches in the Premiership, and possibly other leagues, rumbles on. We are told that in rugby, video replays are used and that the technology is foolproof – so why not use it in football?

In the Calcutta Cup match England v Scotland, played at Twickenham in February, Jonny Wilkinson appeared to have scored for England. Call for the video! The 4th official, whose job it is to work these things out agreed the try should stand.

However, after the game the Scottish coach was apparently bemused at the decision, as, it seems, were most other people who saw the video, later. "What a farce. What's the point of having a television official if you get it so horribly wrong...?" he is purported to have said? It now seems that the official is not going to officiate at some future important game because of his apparent gaff. All that glitters....



Middlesex County Football Association County Cup Appointments

Senior Challenge Cup – Second Round

Potters Bar Town v Brook House
Potters Bar Town v Brook House
Potters Bar Town v Brook House
Northwood v Enfield

Nick Rider [R]
Martin De La Fuente [AR]
Steve Reuter [AR]
Steve Conway [AR]

Senior Challenge Cup – Third Round

Northwood v Potters Bar Town
Wingate and Finchley v Harrow Borough
Wingate and Finchley v Harrow Borough

Michael Mackey (Jnr) [R]
Peter Smith [AR]
Steve Reuter [AR]

Senior Charity Cup – Second Round

Harrow Borough v Uxbridge

Michael Mackey (Jnr) [R]

Senior Charity Cup – Third Round

Northwood / Enfield v Wembley / Kingsbury London Tigers
Northwood / Enfield v Wembley / Kingsbury London Tigers
Wealdstone / Yeading v Harefield United / Hanwell Town
Hounslow Boro' / Wingate and Finchley v Harrow Boro' / Uxbridge
Hounslow Boro' / Wingate and Finchley v Harrow Boro' / Uxbridge

Michael Mackey (Jnr) [AR]
Nick Rider [AR]
Steve Conway [AR]
Peter Smith [R]
Peter Jago [AR]

Junior Trophy – Quarter Final

Broadfields United Vets v Harrow St. Marys Youth Old Boys
Broadfields United Vets v Harrow St. Marys Youth Old Boys

John Noblemunn [R]
Barry Kyriacou [AR]

Sunday Junior Cup – Semi-Final

St Marys (Edmonton) v Enfield Rosaneri
St Marys (Edmonton) v Enfield Rosaneri
Oak Wood v Broadway Celtic Reserves

George Grant [AR]
Steve Wildgoose [AR]
John Noblemunn [AR]

Middlesex County Football Association Youth County Cup Appointments

Girls Under 16 Cup – Semi-Final

St. Albans City Youth GU16 v Enfield Town Ladies Youth GU15
St. Albans City Youth GU16 v Enfield Town Ladies Youth GU15

Percy Brown [R]
Nicolas Andrea [AR]

Under 16 Harold Whiddon Cup – Quarter Final

Whetstone Wndrs Yth U16 'B' v Hampton & Richmond Boro Yth U16
Whetstone Wanderers Youth U16 'A' v Hayes Youth U16

Michael Mackey (Snr) [R]
Paul Watts [R]

Under 13 S R Dunn Cup – Quarter Final

Enfield Rangers U13 'A' v Glenister Youth U13

Simon Temerlies [R]

Under 11 Ray Dodds Trophy – Quarter Final

Boundary Park Youth U11 v Spartans Youth U11
Park View Rangers U11 v Whetstone Wanderers Youth U11 'A'

John Noblemunn [R]
Nicolas Andrea [R]

Amatuer Football Association County Cup Appointments

Senior Cup – Fourth Round

Cardinal Manning Old Boys FC (First) v UCL Academicals FC (First)

David Woolf [R]

Junior Cup – Fourth Round

Old Finchleians F.C. (Third) v Chislehurst Sports F.C. (Reserves)
Old Stationers F.C. (Third) v Southgate County F.C. (Third)

Les Kyprianou [R]
Dave Chapman [R]

Amatuer Football Association Youth County Cup Appointments

Saturday Under 11 Cup – First Round

Southgate Adelaide F.C. (U11) v West Essex Colts F.C. (U11)

Natasha Holloway [R]

Saturday Under 11 Cup – Quarter Final

Globe Rangers Youth F.C. (U11) v Whitewebbs Eagles F.C. (U11)

Natasha Holloway [R]

Amatuer Football Association Youth County Cup Appointments (cont)

Saturday Under 13 Cup – Quarter Final

Cheshunt Youth F.C. (U13) v Whitewebbs Eagles F.C. (U13) Les Kyprianou [R]

Sunday Under 11 Cup – Quarter Final

Chase Side Youth F.C. (U11) v Bealonians Youth F.C. (U11a) Natasha Holloway [R]

Sunday Under 14 Cup – Quarter Final

Chase Side Youth F.C. (U14) v Broomfield PL Youth F.C. (U14) Alec Holloway [R]

Sunday Under 15 Cup – Second Round

Iford Colts F.C. (U15) v Waltham Abbey Youth F.C. (U15) Les Kyprianou [R]

Sunday Under 17 Cup – Quarter Final

Norsemen Youth F.C. (U17) v Alexandra Park Youth F.C. (U17) John Faithfull [R]



A Plum for Vince

Vice-Chairman, Vince Yeudall, another of our members who is a triple heart by-pass recipient, now thankfully fit and well again, refereed an AFA Cup quarter-final: Old Owens 4ths vrs Old Bealonians 3rds on January 20 – the former winning 2-0.



Grocery Shopping On-Line

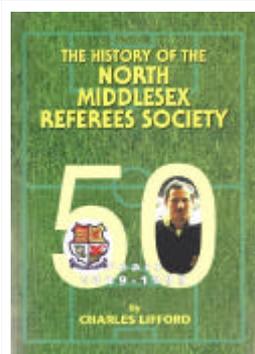
Do you do your regular grocery shopping on line? Do you shop at one of the country's



largest retailers? If so, then note the Tesco has teamed up with www.buy.at/nmrs to help you help us raise funds. At no additional cost to yourselves – and you can still get your Clubcard points – just access the Tesco website through the above link. North Middlesex will then receive £5.00 for each

new customer who makes a groceries transaction and 2% commission on all other products, including purchases including wine, flowers, books and entertainment. So, next time you need to shop on-line, remember www.buy.at/nmrs. Check the site out to find out which other retailers you can shop with, and help North Middlesex Referees Society at the same time.

Gary Cobden
Honorary Treasurer



50th Anniversary Book

In 1999, the Society celebrated its 50th Anniversary. To celebrate this, the Society published a book charting its history over the years including profiles; facts; and photographs. The book was written and compiled for the Society by Charles Lifford.

If you would like to purchase a copy of this book - **NORTH MIDDLESEX REFEREES SOCIETY - A CELEBRATION OF 50 YEARS FOOTBALL** - contact **Society Treasurer, Gary Cobden**, on 01992 469153 or by e-mail – treasurer@northmiddlesexreferees.org.uk



North Middlesex Referees Society

present a
Quiz Night

on

Saturday 24 February 2007

at

Holtwhites Sports and Social Club

Kirkland Drive, Off Holtwhites Hill, Enfield, Middlesex

Commencing at 7:30pm Ticket £7.00 (including Buffet)



NMRS 100 Club – Results for November and December 2006 and January 2007.

The draws for November and December 2006, and January 2007 were made at the January Society Meeting, and the results are shown below. Cheques for the winners are enclosed with this copy of the Normidian; if you receive your Normidian by e-mail, the cheques will be sent to you by post.

November

First	17	Robin Jagot	£18.00
Second	7	Dave Chapman	£9.00
Third	26	Peter Peters	£4.50

December

First	6	Phil Bowman	£18.00
Second	39	Vince Yeudall	£9.00
Third	43	Tony Ward	£4.50

January

First	21	Frank McNeil	£18.00
Second	5	Peter Allen	£9.00
Third	18	Robin Jagot	£4.50

Gary Cobden

Honorary Treasurer



Stan Rosenthal writes:

The following courses are being held at Brimsdown FC: applications to Andy Taylor, MCFA office.

1. A course for those who don't want to be a mentor but would like to help others: 'A Referee Coach', to be held on 8 March 2007.

2. A practical evening for Assistant Referees including watching others in a match situation: to be held on 13 March 2007.

3. Are you under 18 years old? Have you applied to be part of the 'Young Referees Development Scheme'? Come to Brimsdown on 26 March 2007. The theme is 'Judging Challenges'.

4. Qualified as a referee in the last 18 months? Come to Brimsdown on 29 March 2007 for the next stage in your development: 'A recently qualified evening' to discuss what you have been doing and what to do next.

5. 'Grassroots Referee'? A development workshop is being held just for you on 26 April 2007.



NORTH MIDDLESEX REFEREES SOCIETY

Held at the Holtswite Sports Centre, Kirkland Drive, Enfield on Thursday 18th January 2007

Apologies: As per Society Handbook

Chairman's Welcome: The Chairman gave a warm welcome to our Guest Speaker, Ian Blanchard, F.A. Head of Refereeing and new members here for the first time.

Minutes Of the last Society Meeting: The minutes of the last Society meeting held on Thursday November 16th, 2006 were read as a true record.

Matters Arising: There were no matters arising.

Secretary's Report: The Secretary advised members that a meeting between our Society and Middlesex Referees Association would be arranged at the Middlesex County Headquarters in February 2007. No firm date has been fixed yet as we were awaiting confirmation from the parties involved.

Treasurer's Report: The Treasurer reported that the membership stood at: Full Members - 172 and Associate Members - 3

Members were also advised of the Quiz Evening on Saturday 24th February, 2007. Members were asked to make the effort and support this social evening. Tickets are £7 including Buffet.

Other Officers Reports : None

Any Other Business: None

After a ten-minute break our Guest Speaker, Ian Blanchard, was introduced by the Secretary and given a warm welcome by members.

Chairman:

One Assistant Referee

Is it a nightmare scenario or just another 'first' in your career? Have you given thought as to what you might do if only one of your neutral assistants turns up?

Try to prepare in advance of such a situation; take the local handbook with you to call on a possible replacement. Would you seek an assistant from those watching (if anyone is watching!)?

Would you give a club assistant referee 'his own defence' or leave him at the same end throughout? Match day circumstances will dictate what you do, but be prepared!

Be ready to make a phone call if necessary. And check with your colleagues in advance that they will be there.

Observer