

October 2001

The next meeting of the North Middlesex Referees' Society will be held at 7.30 pm on Friday, 12 October, 2001. Our new venue is Cockfosters FC, Chalk Lane, Cockfosters, Barnet, Hertfordshire, EN4 9GL

Society members were among the many thousands of referees who called for a minute's silence before their games, following the carnage in USA on that fateful Tuesday in September. The hackneyed phrase, "it's only a game", was never truer. Chairman, Tom White also asked for a minute's silence before the September meeting.

A good crowd turned up at our new venue, Cockfoster's FC, for the September meeting. We were made welcome by the club and after a few teething problems, mainly with the setting-up of equipment etc, a good time was had by all present.

Newly appointed National List referee, Joe Ross, who was to be September's special guest, couldn't make it as he had a game at short notice. Fortunately, Lockie Bramsell, Training Officer for London FA, stepped in and his presentation is discussed elsewhere in the magazine. We are grateful to Lockie for standing-in and look forward to welcoming Joe at a later date.

I wrote in last month's editorial that last season was best forgotten as far as the weather was concerned, as it was literally a washout. We're all looking forward to a more normal season where matches are actually played, not abandoned. But, as I write, the rain is coming down in sheets and I am already concerned about my AFA Cup game this weekend! Why can't we play in summer?

Additions and amendments to last month's edition: Paul Taylor is still on the Nationwide List of Referees – sorry Paul. Also, Peter Dace's name was left off his amusing article about getting to games by tram. Again apologies – but as you emailed the article to me, Peter, why didn't you add your name – or did we lose it at the bottom? Keep on sending them in, mate, it makes up for some of the others who have difficulty writing. And, for those with really sharp eyes, next year's Dinner and Dance will be held in 2002 and not 2001 as printed!

Following last season's Quiz, look for the advert in this issue – 3rd November is a must for your diaries.

I understand Society member, Phil Sharp, has been added to the list of FA speakers.

The North Middlesex Young Referees have again responded to my request for articles for the magazine. In this issue, Michael Mackey and Graham Samuels write about their experiences in the Schwans USA Cup 2001.

Percy Brown, our Supplies Officer has mislaid some cash, which he feels certain he had at September's meeting. If anyone can throw any light on the situation please ring Percy, whose number is on the inside cover of this magazine.

The RA Annual Conference – still no report, as yet, from our representative.

The closing date for the next magazine is 19th October



IS THAT A FACT?

by Mick Osborn

- 1869 Goal kicks were introduced
- 1872 Corner kicks were introduced.
- 1878 A referee used a whistle for the first time.
On October 14. more than 20,000 people watched a match played under floodlights at Bramall Lane, Sheffield.
- 1882 Throw-ins had to made two-handed
- 1884 Accrington and Preston were expelled form the F.A. Cup for professionalism.
- 1886 International caps were awarded for the first time.
- 1891-92 Penalty kicks were introduced.
John Heath of Wolverhampton was the first person to score from a penalty in the League on September 14, 1891.
- 1895 The British Ladies' Football Club played its first match.
- 1900-01 Goalkeepers could only be charged when they were holding the ball. Previously they could be charged when they were playing the ball.
- 1901-02 Penalty area and goal area took on their present form at the start of the season. Previously the goal area was two adjacent circles forming a kidney shape and the penalty area extended the full width of the pitch.
- 1902-03 The Arthur Dunn Cup (still in existence,) for amateur Old Boys' clubs fell foul of the F.A. because competing teams refused to take penalties, arguing that awarding penalties was not sporting.
- 1903-04 International Board ruled that goals could be scored direct from free kicks awarded for intentional fouls. Referees were given the discretion to play the advantage. F.A. ruled that "footballers' knickers must cover the knee."
- 1905-06 It became mandatory for the outer case of the ball to be made from leather.
- 1906-07 Fee paid to international footballers by the F.A. was quadrupled to £4.00
Numbering of shirts was suggested but the idea was rejected.
- 1908-09 F.A. ruled that goalkeepers should wear a different coloured jersey to the rest of the team.
- 1911-12 Law changed so that goalkeepers could only handle the ball in their own penalty area.
- 1912-13 Distance players had to retreat from free kicks was increased from 6 yards to 10 yards.
- 1913-14 Ten yard rule extended to include corner kicks.
Dispute between the A.F.A. and the F.A. ended when the amateurs agreed to affiliate to the F.A.
- 1920-21 Belgium declared winners of the Olympic Games final when it was abandoned after Czechoslovakia walked off upset by what they thought was overly strict refereeing by Englishman, John Lewis.
- 1924-25 After law change, Billy Smith of Huddersfield Town, playing against Arsenal, became the first player to score direct from a corner kick.
- 1926-27 First Division match between Arsenal and Sheffield United on January, 22, was first to be broadcast on radio. A diagram of the pitch, divided into numbered squares was printed in the Radio Times. One commentator described play while another called out the number of the square so listeners knew where play was taking place. Thus the phrase, "back to square one" came into being.
- 1935-36 Despite several successful experiments in friendlies and amateur matches, the League rejected the proposal to have two referees controlling a match.
- 2001-02 F.A. stated that the experiment to use two referees in a game would not be continued.
(Information compiled from the Sunday Times Illustrated History of Football.)



September's Special Guest – Lockie Bramsell

As the London FA's Training Officer, an FA Assessor and possessing other qualities and qualifications too numerous to mention here, Lockie Bramsell has a wide-ranging knowledge of football and the Laws of the game. All of which made him an ideal speaker for the first meeting of the new season. Lockie proved it by entertaining, instructing and, to use that increasingly important word, "coaching" us during his presentation.

For starters, our guest explained that he was not going to talk to us or rather he was not going to give a talk. Rather, he was to discuss various aspects of football as witnessed in a video he had brought along to share with us. The video was of a "parks" referee preparing, arriving and controlling a game. Due to time constraints, we only watched 7 minutes of each half of the match, but it was sufficient to stimulate much discussion among those present.

Lockie handed out an FA Referee's Assessment Form to each member present. After much discussion following each segment of the video and for interruptions during and after, we were all invited to complete the form and to discuss our findings. An analysis of the marks revealed how difficult an Assessor's job was, and what qualifications and qualities were needed to become an Assessor. Also, we learned more about how to assess fairly and without pre-conceived ideas concerning the match official, particularly with regard to mannerisms and appearance.

After carefully examining all the aspects of the referee's performance, and much scratching of heads, we gave our Assessments, which Lockie recorded for all to see. An average was taken and we were pleased as a group that a reasonable consensus had been achieved.

More discussion and analysis took place concerning the wider issues of refereeing and match control, which gave us all much food for thought. Excellent, Lockie!

Bob Hall gave a vote of thanks to our special guest before President, Mick Osborne, presented Lockie with a North Middlesex Society, 50th Anniversary Book, which details the history of the Society, as a gesture of our appreciation of an evening well spent talking football.



Have a Laugh with Vince

A footballer had a date with a referee's daughter - she penalised him for handling, interference and trying to pull off a jersey!

A couple of fans turned up at Sheffield Wednesday FC and handed over £20.00. "Two please". "Right", said the doorman, "what would you like, Strikers, Defenders or the Goalie?"

Last week an underwear company brought out a new brassiere called "Spurs". It had plenty of support but no cups!

A very rich man wanted to give his three sons presents. He asked what they wanted. "A train set", said one, so he bought him London Underground. "A CD Player" said another, so he gave him Virgin Radio. The younger son asked for a cowboy outfit, "Here's West Ham United, boy" said the dad!

Vince Yeudall



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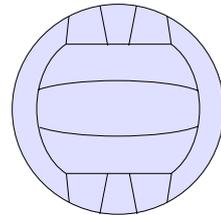
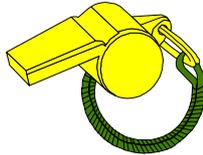
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Are again pleased to support North Middlesex Referees Society in Season 2001/2002



North Middlesex Referees Society

would like to express their appreciation to



for a Donation of £250 this year under their
Community Cashback Awards scheme for staff

100 CLUB - CURRENT MEMBERS - SEASON 2001-2002

Allocation of numbers for the forthcoming season - for draws from September onwards - is as follows:-

1 Les Barnes	18 Bob Hall	35 Peter Smith
2 Daniel Barnett	19 Terry Hayne	36 Peter Smith
3 Percy Brown	20 Terry Hayne	37 Peter Smith
4 Russell Brooks	21 Geoff Jacobs	38 Stan Szplit
5 Matthew Bryant	22 Robin Jagot	39 Paul Vosper
6 Simon Bullock	23 Robin Jagot	40 Michael Ward
7 David Chapman	24 Les Kyprianou	41 David Williams
8 David Chapman	25 Max Lea	42 Robin Willis
9 Gary Cobden	26 Charles Lifford	43 Andrew Withams
10 Gary Cobden	27 Bob Martin	44 Tom White
11 Graham Couzens	28 Kevin Millett	45 Tom White
12 Martin Callaghan	29 Mike Neary	46 Vince Yeudall
13 Trevor Crouchley	30 Mick Osborn	47 Stan Rosenthal
14 Andy Dobson	31 George Panayi	48 Arthur Stewart
15 Tony Dorling	32 Chris Proud	49 Arthur Stewart
16 John Faithfull	33 Stan Rosenthal	50 Peter Peters
17 Paul Gidley	34 Mike Sibley	51 Peter Peters
		52 Carlo Boggia

At the time of writing, the results of the August draw are not to hand, and these will be published in the November magazine.

If you would like to join the 100 Club for the coming season, complete the form below.



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Membership Renewals:-

A considerable number of members have still to rejoin from last season. This is your final reminder, and you will find a further Membership Form enclosed with the current edition of the Normidian. In the event that you fail to return your Membership Form and remittance, this will be the last magazine you will receive. In the event that you choose not to rejoin the Society, it would be appreciated if you could let the Society know the reasons why.

Gary Cobden
Honorary Treasurer

Gear Supplies Price List – Season 2001/2002

Matchday Kits

We can supply both Umbro and RA Kits. Both ranges are available with either long or short sleeves, and can be supplied with your County FA Badge pre-embroidered for a small additional charge. Socks are available with either plain white tops, or with hooped tops. Cushioned feet socks can also be supplied. Boots and Tracksuits are also available to order.

Prices are as follows:-

Umbro Short Sleeve - £32.00	Umbro Long Sleeve - £33.00
Umbro Shorts - £23.50	
RA Short Sleeve - £18.50	RA Long Sleeve - £18.50
RA Shorts - £12.50	
White Topped Socks - £5.00	Reinforced Foot - £5.50
Hoop Topped Socks - £5.50	

County Badges added to Shirts - £7.25 extra on Umbro Shirts; £8.50 on RA Shirts

We are also able to supply Middlesex County FA Badges, and Referees Association Badges, for Kit use - £3.00.

Flags

Touchline Flags and Flagsticks are available in various combinations. Choose from Quartered or Super-Quartered, Plain, or Premier. Premier and Super Quartered are manufactured from high visibility solid warp knitted polyester yarn (125gm). Plain and Quartered are manufactured from high visibility warp knitted polyester yarn (52gm).

Flags and Flagsticks are also available separately. Alternatively, why not buy a complete set with Flag bag. If your existing Flagsticks are damaged, and require replacement end-caps or inserts, these can also be obtained (in pairs). If you are looking for Flags, but do not wish to pay quite so much, the RA's own flags and sticks are also available- in quartered or plain styles.

Prices are as follows:-

Touchline Flags:- from £11.50 (Plain) to £15.50 (Premier)

Touchline Flagsticks (pair) - £14.95; singles - £8.50; End-caps - £2.25; Brass Inserts - £1.25; Flag Bag - £5.25

Touchline Sets – Flags and Flagsticks – from £21.50 (Plain) to £25.50 (Premier)

Touchline Complete Sets – including Flag Bag - from £23.50 (Plain) to £27.50 (Premier)

RA Flags Plain - £4.75; RA Flags Quartered - £7.00; RA Flagsticks - £3.00

Matchday Accessories

We can supply Match Record Cards and Holders; General Purpose Postcards; Red and Yellow Cards; Wrist Lanyards; a selection of Whistles including the ever popular Fox range, and some with finger grips. Pressure Guages are available to order.

Prices are as follows:-

Match Record Pads - £0.70	Match Record Pad Holder - £0.70
Red and Yellow Cards and Wallet - £2.00	Red/ Yellow Cards/Wallet/Pencil - £2.30
All Purpose Postcards - £1.10	Red and Yellow Cards (set) - £1.10
Pencils - £0.10	
Plastic Whistle With Grip - £1.30	Plastic Whistle - £1.20
Plastic Finger Whistle - £1.40	Metal Whistle - £3.40
Pealess Whistle - £1.30	Lanyard - £1.60

Other Items available as follows:-

Boot Laces - £1.15

NMRS Ties - £6.00

RA Tie - £5.50

FA Diary - £4.00

RA Baseball Cap - £5.00

"Football Referee" Magazine - £0.75

Coloured Shirts - £5.00

Sock Ties - £1.10

NMRS 50th Anniversary Tie - £7.50

LOAF (Referees Chart) - £3.00

NMRS Credit Card Holder - £3.30

RA Crested Holdall - £15.00

Coloured Shorts - £5.00

Christmas Specials

Christmas Wrapping Paper - Packs of 10 Sheets £2.00

Birthday Cards - Packs of 12 Cards £2.00

All Prices subject to fluctuation and change without notice.

Contact Percy Brown - 01707 851369 or 07801 985912



NORTH MIDDLESEX REFEREES SOCIETY
will be holding their
ANNUAL QUIZ NITE
at
ELLENBOROUGH TABLE TENNIS CLUB
on
SATURDAY, 3 NOVEMBER 2001
Starting at 7:30pm
Tickets £5.00 per person (including Buffet)
Teams of Six People
Tickets Available from Terry Wilson

Peter Dace reminisces - the Normidian of October 1991

Dave Dickinson once again represents the Society at R.A.Conference - this year at Torquay. Dave says Torquay is 'a thoroughly delightful seaside resort with excellent shopping facilities and numerous hotels which the Conference Committee had selected for the delegates. Consequently the usual get together in the bars was widespread, meaning that the delegates could not get together to chat'. Conference was opened by the Lord Mayor who, when time allows referees and is a Member of the RA. Dave adds ' I heard all the usual standard problems about recruitment and retention, as they were aired again, but nobody came up with the right answers'.

Roger Jones writes to Robin Jagot and says 'its another Monday evening and suddenly theres no referees course to attend or exam to take which seems strange after the last nine or ten weeks'. In writing to thank Robin and Dave Dickinson for teaching the laws of the game he also prints a picture of the two of them which he entitles "Some people lose their hair, others go grey ... but how come some go blind as well!

Robin Jagot writes 'Promotion - why bother? and attempts to get those who have failed to gain promotion to seriously consider another application - especially those whose excuses include

I am too old

I only want junior football

I am just putting something back

I don't want the hassle

The assessors are idiots

In-Service Training - 2001

A large gathering of promotion hopefuls from Middlesex, London, and the AFA, joined forces for training, from highly qualified staff of all three Counties, at the Bank of England Sports Ground, Roehampton SW16, on Sunday, 2nd September.

On a cool day, ideal for the optional fitness test taken by most of the referees of both sexes attending, the well-packed programme began at 0930 and finished at 1630. The programme for the day is shown below.

The fitness test consisted a 2700 metre run in 12 minutes, followed by two 50-metre shuttles runs in less than 7.5 seconds each. Gold, Silver and Bronze Certificates were due to be awarded, based on the level of performance – what happened to mine? If one had to be shattered, what better surroundings in which to suffer than the excellent Bank of England Sports Ground!

TW

	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group E	Group F
	6-5	7-6	7-6	6-5	7-6	7-6
0930-1000	Registration					
1000-1010	Introduction					
1015-1055	Fitness	Fitness	Topic 5	Topic 2	Topic 7	Topic 8
1100-1140	Rest	Rest	Fitness	Fitness	Topic 5	Topic 6
1145-1225	Topic 3	Topic 8	Rest	Rest	Fitness	Fitness
1230-1310	Topic 1	Topic 6	Topic 7	Topic 4	Rest	Rest
1310-1340	Lunch					
1340-1420	Topic 2	Topic 7	Topic 6	Topic 3	Topic 8	Topic 5
1425-1505	Topic 4	Topic 5	Topic 8	Topic 1	Topic 6	Topic 7
1505-1600	Recap, Review and Questions					

Registration

Keith Slogett

Level 6-5 Groups A and D

Topic 1 — Disciplinary Procedure — Trevor Syms

Topic 2 — Working with Assistants — Jim Hale and Steve Tate

Topic 3 — Judging Challenges — John Cooke

Topic 4 — Advantage — Andy Taylor

Level 7-6 Groups B, C, E and F

Topic 5 — Lining Techniques — Russell Evans

Topic 6 — On Field Communications — Ray Herb

Topic 7 — Set Play situations (Free Kicks and Corner Kicks) — Lockie Bramsell

Topic 8 — Positioning and Movement — Robin Jagot and Richard Telfer

All Groups

Fitness — Dave Dixon assisted by Mike Brown and Gary Skinner

LINING -NOT ME!

How many referees consider lining to be a bit beneath them? They think it is not quite of the same importance as refereeing? How much rush through a season lining on a higher league, officiating only in the hope that it will lead to a job in the middle of the following season? Running a line is not an easy option. Physically it can be hard work, most teams rush out quickly to try and catch the attack offside and there's always one forward who attempts to break through the line of defenders like Linford Christy off the blocks. Mentally, it is equally demanding. Do you not need three pairs of eyes? One to watch for off sides. One to watch for ball in and out of play and to see which side put it there. Then third pair in the back of the head to spot those off-the-ball incidents that all officials are expected to see. Of course, you're that much closer to the spectators. Even **at** junior level of football, there is often enough of a crowd to barrack, advise and get in the way all at once.

Once you've accepted a lining appointment do you officiate with the same vigour as you would if you were the referee? Many referees suddenly become unable to keep a straight arm when holding a flag.

If the arm is straight, it is often held horizontally, where it is more likely to hail a passing bus than attract the attention of the referee.

You should be flagging to make a statement, not an apology, so be positive. If you wave your flag, do so sharply to make a cracking noise. If the referee is moving away from you, this may be the only clue he gets and prevents the spectators' gleeful cries of "look at your linesman, ref!"

Finally, once you decide to raise your flag, stand your ground and keep flagging until the referee acknowledges you. Make sure he has understood what you are telling him, he may think he is over ruling an offside, while you have witnessed an off the ball thump.

Remember that bad co-operation with the Assistant Referees can cost a referee dear on an assessment. Gaining a reputation as an unreliable Assistant will do your own career no good at all.

OBSERVER



Peter Dace writes.....

Did you know, the first time a whistle was used in a top-level match was at Nottingham Forest, in 1878? Before that, referees ran up and down the pitch, waving their handkerchief, shouting or whistling through their fingers.

Peter adds although it is generally thought that our Life Vice-President, George Basten, refereed the above game, he can officially confirm that George was injured at the time!



North Middlesex Young Referees USA CUP 2001

Graham Samuels

After receiving confirmation that we were going to participate in the USA Cup and its warm-up tournaments, there were still several months to wait until the day came when we would board the plane to Minneapolis, to officiate in the world's fourth largest football tournament, and the largest youth tournament in the western hemisphere.

Those months were generally a time of research to see what I was letting myself in for. By finding the tournaments website on the internet, I was able to find out some rather daunting facts about the tournament, which left me feeling a bit unsure as to what I, a referee with one year's experience, had let myself into. The tournament and its warm-up tournaments, in which we also refereed, had 22,000 players competing in them, and some games were televised. The thought of officiating in 4 games a day in blistering heat was also a scary thought, especially as the tournament is right in the middle of the pre-season, and whether I would keep the fitness that I had during the season until then was also a concern.

The day finally arrived. After a long flight via Reykjavik in Iceland, where we stayed for an hour and a half, we arrived in the muggy humidity of Minneapolis, Minnesota. There were many other referees at the airport, some of which were on our flight. The two Michael Mackeys (Senior and Junior) and I were then greeted by a certain Percy Brown, so at least there was a familiar face.

Then we (the referees) were greeted by a big yellow school bus that was to transport us to the National Sports Centre, which was the venue of the tournament, and was where a large number of referees were staying, in the dormitories at the Sports Centre.

On arrival to the Sports Centre, the most noticeable site was the amount of football pitches, side by side as far as the referee's eye could see. I had read that there were fifty pitches there, but it is hard to believe and visualise until you experience it. Once boarding our rooms and getting unpacked, it was then time to register and then receive our games for the following day, which was the opening day of the two warm-up tournaments, the 'International Kick-off' and the 'All American Girls'. Many referees got two or three games, personally, I was given two lines. That evening, everybody's first interest was to go down to one of the local bars, 'Tasties', for a drink and to meet up with other referees.

The following day (Thursday) the two warm-up tournaments began. They were very big, with many players, both boys and girls, with mostly American teams for these tournaments. I had two relatively easy games, both Under-11 girls, where the pace was very manageable, but I recall watching Michael senior having a line in an Under-17 girls game between a Japanese team and a Canadian team in his first game, which was of a very high standard and very high paced, and the standard stuck me as being amongst the best that I had seen in youth football, and after later seeing many boy's games involving American teams, I discovered that the girl's football was equal in standard, if not better than the boy's game. These two teams consequently met in the final.

After the day's games, each referee was given their games for the following day about seven o'clock in the evening. This was a daily routine. Another daily routine seemed to be going to Tasties or another local bar every evening, as there was a high social side to refereeing in these tournaments. The transportation for referees to get to local bars and even distant pitches (because of the size of the complex) was brilliantly organised as were all of the tournaments.

The warm-up tournaments finished on the Sunday, and it was on this day that the main 'USA Cup' tournament also began, and it was then that I realised that the warm-up tournaments were actually relatively very small towards the USA Cup itself, which was huge. There were many people walking around the complex, and there were also many activities for players to do when they were not playing. Large international companies had invested largely in sponsoring this tournament, and it created \$15 million worth of revenue for the State of Minnesota.

The teams competing in the USA Cup were of a more international background, a large majority of teams were American, of which a high proportion were from Minnesota, but there were many teams from other countries, mostly South America but there was a number of Asian teams and quite a few Europeans. The standard in this tournament was also very high, but mostly, the standard of the girls was higher than that of the boys. There were four teams from England, all boy's teams, and all of them did reasonably well at least, but a U18 team from Norwich won the Under 18 boys bracket.

As far as refereeing was concerned, it was varied and a very interesting experience. Different referees from different parts of the world referee very differently. Many American teams called the official 'sir', rather than 'ref' or many of the other names that English referees are accustomed to. Most referees that participated have stories of strange experiences that they had in some of their games. I refereed with many American referees and I can say that

those people who think that the standard of refereeing in England is poor do not know what they are talking about. Many American referees were, in my opinion, below average, and I am taking 'average' as the average referee in England. Many 'state' referees were no better than some Class 2 or even in some cases Class 3 referees in this country. There were of course quite a few very good American referees, very good, but generally, an 'average' English referee is actually a good referee over there, when compared with many of the Americans.

The tournament managed to attract some top officials, there were four past or present FIFA referees participating in the tournament, one of which I did a game with, and a few football league and even Premiership officials. There were some games that I was assistant referees for, where the referee was absolutely brilliant, and others where the referee was not quite so good. In the USA Cup, the average amount of games distributed to referees every day was probably three or four, which was quite difficult but manageable in the heat, as most of the games became shorter because of the heat, a typical game was twenty minutes per half with a two minute break in the middle of each half for water, this however was not the case in the final. However, I must praise Percy for his fitness, as he was often given up to five games a day, and he never seemed to be tired, when the rest of us seemed to be taking short sleeps whenever we had the chance, but Percy just kept going.

The tournament's official rules stated that the referee's shirt was to be yellow, but the tournament preferred the three officials in any game to all be in the same colour, so refereeing in a yellow shirt was a strange experience, but slightly cooler than the black shirts in the severe heat.

Many English referees became friends with others from all over the country, and even other referees from other countries and there was always a good relationship between referees. There were more than one hundred English referees in the tournaments, more than from any other nation, and so there was already a common link between many of the referees.

Of course at the end of every football tournament, there are the finals, and of course referees were allocated accordingly to finals on ability, so that the best referees would get the best finals, but to get a final anyway was a privilege, as there were five hundred referees in total and only about one hundred and forty were needed for the finals. The best thing of all was that all of the four NMRS referees got finals, and pretty good finals in each case. After each final, there was a presentation in the sports hall for each age group and gender, where the referees and players were given their medals on a stage.

The tournament was a very good experience for all involved, and a very enjoyable time, and we are already planning for next year's tournament.



SCHWANS USA CUP 2001 Michael Mackey

The USA Cup seemed a long way away when my son, Michael, Graham Samuels and myself booked our flights in January 2001.

This would be our first trip to the USA Cup and we really didn't know what to expect. However Percy Brown was able to give us lots of useful information from which we all benefited.

On Wednesday 11 July we found ourselves at Heathrow Airport, Terminal 4, amongst a contingent of over fifty British referees all going to the Schwans USA Cup in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

On arrival in Minneapolis we were met by USA Cup representatives and transported to our accommodation, on site, at the Blaine National Sports Centre.

We were all refereeing for both the All American Girls Tournament and the USA Cup. This meant that our first appointments were on Thursday. As there were fifty-one football pitches, referees were transported around the centre by golf buggy. The All American girls tournament lasted three days. All the teams were very enthusiastic, well behaved and polite. After the matches we got requests from the Team Captains for English badges and pins. Thanks to Gary Cobden, who had given Percy pins and keyrings to distribute, all the Team Captains were delighted.

Sunday 16 July was a welcome day off. We all found the hot, humid weather hard going. We now fully appreciated why the football games had two minute water breaks in each half.

We all attended a very colourful opening ceremony for the USA Cup, together with hundreds of teams from all over the world and their families and supporters. This was followed by the worlds biggest pizza party (so we were told) Over the following five days we each refereed between three and five games a day -both boys and girls aged from 11 to 18. It was a great experience to work with referees of all nationalities and standards (including FIFA). Finals day was on Saturday and we were all lucky enough to be involved in one final each.

Our evenings were spent in Tastys bar enjoying the company of fellow referees. Michael and Graham regularly e-mail people they met at the tournament - both from the UK and America.