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President Bob Jarvis
Chairman John Taylor
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24 April 2018

To all Referees, Observers, Training Personnel, Examiners, Mentors, Developers

Dear Colleague

Chairman's Annual Letter

Before going into what is always a very lengthy letter (but I really hope you will read it all), I have to reflect on what is a historic time for MFA.

As most of you will know, we are soon moving to Rectory Park, Northolt.

I can tell you that the building has been finished, but currently we have to await the legal processes necessary to see a full hand-over to MFA come about. I think this will be towards the beginning of May. We will then be able to move in.

We have a state-of-the-art facility available to us and I can assure you that Referees and those associated with refereeing have not been forgotten.

Part of the move has seen re-branding – a new badge, for example.

The one for Referees (sew-on) can be purchased via the MFA Office.

If you would like the badge embroidered, Robbie Holland (Sports and Trophies), Imprime and Sporting Touch are licensed to do so.

Among forthcoming staff changes, Isaac Jempeji has left MFA and I would like to place on record both mine and the Referees' Committee's thanks for his work.

A new staffing structure is coming together. I make brief reference to it here and when I mention the word "Referee", I refer to all our volunteers who contribute to the success of MFA in the refereeing area.

Those of you who were kind enough to complete The FA's *Grass Roots Survey* – and I shared my concerns at what was an identified area of poor performance, something I voiced to the Board, who were most concerned – were of great assistance to MFA in highlighting areas where we have dropped off in performance over the past year and where, in the light of your feedback, we seek to regain ground.

Katie Phillipson has been appointed as "Workforce Officer". A considerable part of her portfolio is involved in overseeing Referee development – at all levels.

I had the advantage of sitting on the interview panel and though Katie is not herself a Referee, she has great experience in the area of development and I am convinced she will be able to harness her abilities in assisting the Referees' Committee to achieve something that you all find beneficial in advancing your careers, no matter what level you choose to operate at.

In the front line for Referees is Daniel May, who is to become our "Football Services Administrator, *Competitions and Referees*". He will be in the front line of responses to you with varied areas to cover, not least Youth Cup appointments. He is a Referee, so will understand the problems we all experience. Please try to help him in his new role.

Both started their new roles in early April.

Moving on to what is rather more of a repetitive theme, time has passed quickly and it's time for re-registration again.

As you will be aware, the Whole Game System (WGS) is now available, but rather than go into lengthy explanations here, I just remind you to follow the guidance that will come with your invitation to re-register.

While there were problems with WGS last year, a number of improvements have been made, so I hope for a smooth process this year.

Payments for on-line registrations can be made with debit cards or credit cards (but not American Express), which we encourage for simplicity. MFA will absorb card charges, so you save at least the price of a stamp. The fine for late registration will automatically be applied by the new system (and will also apply to the categories who receive free registration if they are late) if you do not register before **31 May 2018**. So please **act immediately**. Don't just put this aside – avoid the risk of extra cost. Until you do register, public liability insurance will not be applicable – so do it now! The system does not allow for late fines to be waived – so you have been warned – even if your registration is a free one!

Even if you did it last year, ALL those registering will have to complete information on Equality and Diversity, which you will be asked to complete on the Whole Game System before starting the registration process, any offline applications will have a questionnaire on their manual form that they will need to complete.

When registering, please select the category of “active” only if you regularly officiate. If you do not regularly officiate and indicate you are active, it causes a distortion of the actual figures for officials. So please choose an alternative (Level 10) if you are active as a Developer (Observer, Tutor, Mentor, etc.) rather than a Referee.

If you are not directly involved as a Developer but wish to continue registration, please communicate with myself or daniel.may@middlesexfa.com and advice will follow on the best action to take.

If you regularly officiate in Youth football – an up-to-date CRC must be held in order to register.

CLOSED DATES – you can close any dates you know you are not available for on Whole Game when you first register, any additional dates MUST be closed using – closeddates@middlesexfa.com – please remember this.

Similarly, we now encourage use of WGS for discipline reporting wherever possible as this eases the progress of your reports and ensures that any applicable standard punishments are put in place in due time.

With modernising changes to the system used to report misconduct, you can be faced with a list of players for a club or team. If a player is not on that list, you have the opportunity of creating a record for a new player. MFA asks that before you do, you fully examine the list of players and look for the full names. We have had cases where new players have been created simply because the name given has been, Tommy instead of Thomas; Bobby instead of Robert; Jimmy instead of James, etc. Also, if a name is missing a letter, i.e. Lauskin instead of Lauszkín, Referees are creating another record instead of using common sense, so please give full thought to ensuring the name is not already there before finally creating a new player identity.

For Youth football in particular, while you put the match in and get a list of players, it is still essential that you put, for example, Under-16 *Blue*, *Green* or whatever. The reason is that although you get your list of players, when there is a *Blue* or *Green* split, it is essential any punishment is linked to the team the player was playing for when he was reported.

Finally, there have been errors when players are sent off for two yellow cards. If you send off a player for S7 (receiving a second caution in the same match), you should NOT submit the initial caution as well. Details of the first caution as well as the second caution that brought about the dismissal should form part of the send-off report. I can tell you some good news that will reduce workload, it is that straightforward send-offs (simple, on-field offences) should switch to a system similar to how cautions are reported next season.

Within our support operation for Referees, we have a number of challenges and this season numbers of volunteers from the refereeing ranks in two particular areas have fallen.

We still have a need for Observers. We have again struggled to complete sufficient observations on promotion candidates this season. We have just had a recent Observer course and added to our numbers, but I do ask if you might consider taking a course to see how you might still stay in touch with refereeing after your on-field career is over. The new observation forms are far-less onerous to complete than the ones you may have benefited from having received in the past – so do consider becoming a Developer. An incentive scheme that adds to fees and encourages frequent participation has been introduced. It takes the form of the

basic (£15) fee and mileage allowance applying for each of the first three observations. For observations four to six, in addition to the fee and mileage allowance, a bonus of £5 will be paid per observation and for observation seven onwards, in addition to the fee and mileage allowance, a bonus of £10 per observation will be paid.

The FA has imposed a requirement for all Level 7 Referees seeking to enter the promotion scheme for the first time of having refereed at least 20 matches in the “current registration period”. That is defined in FA Regulations as: “Registration will run from the date of registration until the following 31 May”.

So if you are thinking of applying for promotion next January, make sure you have a detailed record of matches where you have officiated so that MFA is easily able to verify them when you apply!

The FA course for new Referees has been updated and now makes it necessary for candidates to be observed/mentored before they can complete their full qualification. This is a straightforward undertaking, without the need for a written form to be completed. It is something that active Referees can undertake when they have some spare time or might have a period out with injury. This role attracts a fee, with a mileage allowance. If you would like further details, please contact daniel.may@middlesexfa.com.

Laws of the Game changes (a summary of which is made available to you) come into effect, I would anticipate, from the start of the World Cup – effectively next season for most. The link on the Referees’ section of the MFA website and within the E-Handbook will be updated as soon as IFAB publishes the new revision.

We had intended to provide all of you with a printed version of the Laws. However, we were advised by The FA that they are encouraging on-line study of the Laws and are limiting the printed versions. So unless we are able to secure a supply, which seems doubtful, I am afraid that on-line will be the way to refresh your knowledge. But please ensure you read them before you go out to officiate next season, it’s your duty.

An area where colleagues who are coming to the end of their careers, or who might have sustained a restrictive injury, have an opportunity to continue in the game is in the world of **Walking Football**. While it is still developing, the need for Referees grows within that form of the game. If you would like further details, please contact daniel.may@middlesexfa.com.

Currently, there is no organised Walking Football competition within the County, but various tournaments do take place. This means that a fee structure does not yet exist. Indeed, while you may actually not wish to play, taking part as a Referee in Walking Football club nights can be great exercise (and the Referee can run, if desired) where you can keep involved in the game and have interaction with others who have kept in touch with the game. So, just giving your time free, may well provide you with a lot of good exercise without the normal demands of matches and it will certainly help fitness. If you are interested, please contact me doug.douglas@talktalk.net and I can advise of any suitable venues around the County.

Each season, the opportunity to progress from Level 5 to Level 4 presents itself. We welcome enquiries and we are happy to explain what is involved. However, I do need to stress the amount of time and dedication that has to be applied once an official becomes involved in the semi-professional game is considerable. It is a massive step up from operating within junior football in the County. Should you wish to discuss the possibility, please contact me.

One area where I would like to thank you is in the area of how you respond to the emails that often go out seeking late replacements or officials for professional clubs’ academy teams. You really have done well in supporting our Appointments Officers and the Office.

If anyone who filled in The FA *Grass Roots Survey* and made mention of any specific problem, I would be grateful if you could let me know what the problem was in detail – an email would be great.

As usual, I have a few moans to pass on from those working within various areas of refereeing.

Unfortunately, a number of Referees have failed to attend disciplinary hearings. I need to remind you that FA Regulations make this a part of your duties. Effectively, any hearing arising from a match you have officiated in is an extension of the match and attendance has to take priority over other matters – like going to watch higher-level football, for example.

A number of MFA Referees, who did not attend, have been charged under FA Regulations. This is not a course the Referees’ Committee likes to take but will do so to ensure adherence to Regulations. So please do attend if required.

Another area that has brought about charges is when Referees simply ignore correspondence. Please respond immediately to any correspondence – don't ignore it.

An area that has improved is Referees reading MFA Cup Rules properly. Well done for this.

Another reminder to please ensure that you close all relevant dates for next season as soon as possible as appointments are made during the summer to early rounds of FA Competitions and also our own MFA Cups. It should be remembered that closing on MOAS or Whole Game System alone DOES NOT inform MFA! So close dates to MFA separately, please. This is a really important thing to do, an area where all Referees can improve on their administration, so please keep your closed dates list up to date – you can always re-open a date if you become available later on. Remember, if you turn down any MFA appointment, you can't officiate on that day – and leagues are advised of that fact! Please use closeddates@middlesexfa.com for this purpose.

For those who have no email address, a paper form is enclosed and the same system as in the past will be used.

Promotions were considered on March 14. Those promoted – 7 out of 8 to Level 5, 9 out of 12 to Level 6.

This year's MFA Cup Final appointments have been made and published. I congratulate all those appointed and hope it is a most enjoyable day for you.

We had intended to hold our usual Cup Final Officials' Evening in February. However, for safety reason, we had to cancel due to the snow. It was impossible to reinstate the meeting but we will hold one next year.

Have a great summer and return as keen as ever for the 2018-19 season.

Best wishes.

Doug Douglas

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