**Middlesex FA President** John Davies

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

Dear Colleague

**Chairman’s Annual Letter**

This letter comes later this year, due to a change made by The FA to the refereeing “season”. I start with one of the most important points made by The FA.

SAFEGUARDING – this is a very important part of today’s game and we all have a responsibility to ensure compliance. The FA are making it compulsory for Referees, from season 2020-21, to hold certain “qualifications”, so it is a good idea to do necessary courses now or through this season so that you won’t have a problem next year!

So do keep an eye on the website as MFA cannot stress enough how we all have a responsibility to young people engaged in our game. To try to assist everyone, MFA has produced a booklet and information cards, particularly aimed at under-18 officials to assit them in this area.

To make the exact situation clear, the official position of The FA is contained in the following wording issued recently:

***FA DBS***

*Referees in Youth football* ***and*** *Observers, Coaches and Mentors operating below Supply Leagues**are now required to have an in-date DBS* ***at all times****.*

*Referees who officiate in open-age football only and Observers, Coaches and Mentors who operate only in Supply Leagues or above will* ***not*** *be required to have an in-date DBS.*

***Safeguarding Children Workshop***

*Referees in Youth football* ***and*** *Observers, Coaches and Mentors operating below Supply Leagues have to renew their Safeguarding training in preparation for the 2020-21 season, where this will be mandatory.*

*Referees who officiate in open-age football only and Observers, Coaches and Mentors who operate only in Supply Leagues or above will* ***not*** *be required to renew their safeguarding qualification.*

I now move on to another major change.

REGISTRATION – The FA has decided that the “season” for Referees will align with the playing season, running from 1 July to 30 April. This affects all match-related markings for Referees in future, meaning promotion will not be decided until the end of the season.

**Registration** will commence from **June 1**. Due to a shorter period before the season fees are payable on or before **10th July**, the late fine will come in then and that will apply to any registrations after that date – this applies even if your registration is a free one!

It is vital that you register early, particularly if you are going to officiate in any summer tournaments. Failure to register could affect your public liability cover – so it’s in your best interest to be early.

There is a requirement to attend a “sin bin seminar” (details of which you have been and will further be advised) before registration. Additionally, make sure all the other requirements we now have are up to date too, so that registration goes smoothly for you.

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.

Before continuing with 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 you will know, we have moved to Rectory Park, Northolt.

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 and we would encourage you to use one.

If you would like the badge embroidered, Robbie Holland (Sports and Trophies), the Referees’ Association through Sporting Touch – [www.the-rashop.org](http://scanmail.trustwave.com/?c=13415&d=yq_i3OokXCOjKoq1EFmUF4_erCq968esHl7uVEH-VA&u=http%3a%2f%2fwww%2ethe-rashop%2eorg%2f), Imprime and A & H are licensed to do so.

A new staffing structure has come 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.

Your new direct point of contact is Daniel May. He has fitted in very well and is supporting Referees most effectively. Katie Phillipson is also supporting Referees and, together with our safeguarding team of Sharon Porter and Neil Fowler, has worked to produce cards with useful advice. One is an emergency contact card, which you should have received. The other outlines actions in relation to “sin bins” and dissent to try to make it easier to understand. That card is being sent to you.

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

APPOINTMENT NOTIFICATIONS – with most of these now coming through Full Time, one of the important things to do is to check the time of kick-off with the home club. When MFA enters a fixture where the KO time is often unknown, a “basic” KO time is entered – don’t take that as a definite. Similarly, with midweek fixtures, matches will often be listed for the Monday of the week in question – don’t take that as a certainty – CHECK with the home club the exact day!

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. Wells instead of Welles, 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. The first caution as well as the second caution that brought about the dismissal should form part of the send‑off report.

REFEREE SUPPORT – 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. 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.

However, you can still become and Observer while being an active Referee. There will be times when you may not have a fixture or – though hopefully not – injured, when you can keep in touch with the game while filling your time or recovering.

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” but will, in effect, become 1 July to 30 April when the new system is in place.

So if you are thinking of applying for promotion next season, 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 on 1 June – effectively next season for most. There are a number that affect all levels of football – around the ball leaving the penalty area, for example – so do ensure you read them before you go out to officiate next season, it’s your duty. 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 and a link also circulated to you.

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.

Another area that has improved is Referees reading MFA Cup Rules properly. Well done for this during the current season – there are a few changes for next season coming through.

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

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

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 20. Those promoted – 2 out of 5 to Level 5, 7 out of 13 to Level 6.

This year’s MFA Cup Final appointments have been made and published, with many matches completed. I congratulate all those appointed and hope it is a most enjoyable day for you.

A big “thank you” for all your efforts on behalf of MFA, leagues and clubs during the season.

Have a great summer and return as keen as ever for the 2019-20 season.

Best wishes.

Doug Douglas

**Doug Douglas**

## Chairman, MFA Referees’ Committee

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