

FLAG & WHISTLE



BCSRA NEWSLETTER

Feb.2006

Est.1969

BCSRA AGM TO BE HELD IN VANCOUVER

Members Len Bridgeman and John Nielsen to be feted. The Vancouver Area Association (VASRA) has graciously agreed to host this year's Spring Council/ Annual General Meeting and annual Jack Tinnion Memorial 604 v 250 shield. The exact date is pending the verification of the VISL Jackson Cup Final and BCSA Senior A Provincial Cup playdowns but is expected to be either April 29th, May 6th or May 13th. This year's meeting will feature two important presentations: Len Bridgeman will be honoured as the Association's latest Long & Meritorious Service Award recipient and John Nielsen will be on hand to be recognized for his contributions to the cause of referee education and the unveiling of the John Nielsen Referee Education Award. The latter award was enacted by a vote of Council at the Referees Association Fall Council Meeting in November 2005.

BC HOSTS INTERNATIONAL FRIENDLIES

Canada's Men's U20 and Women's National team will play host to two international friendlies each in the first half of this year. The dates are as follows:

March 1: Canada Women v Netherlands, UBC Thunderbird Stadium, Vancouver

March 4: Canada Women v Netherlands, Victoria

May 22: Canada Men's U20 v Brazil U20, Victoria

May 25: Canada Men's U20 v Brazil U20, Swangard Stadium, Burnaby

The referees for the matches are unknown at press time. Once again, the Referees Association will be inquiring about the care of our visiting colleagues including a post-match meal.

BCSRA Hosts CSRA AGM

Canadian Soccer Referees Association AGM a success!

BC hosted the 17th AGM of the Canadian Soccer Referees Association (CSRA) in Victoria on January 21st. By all accounts the event was a success and can be much attributed to the pre-meeting work done by the VISRA Executive. Many thanks to Mauricio Navarro who was the educational speaker for the day. Mauricio presentation was on "What is expected of a referee at the top level." A video will be created from this presentation and a copy made available to Area Associations (ed note: currently the video is being reviewed for editing and presentation to the CSRA Executive for future distribution).

Other notable highlights from the meeting:

-Representatives came from Manitoba, Ontario, and also Alberta/Saskatchewan in the form of Kevin Jones, CSA Referee Development Committee member. Reports were read aloud from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador. Referees in Newfoundland have expressed interest in hosting the 2007 CSRA AGM.

-Tony Troughton (VISRA-affiliated member of the BCSRA) and Eric Evans of Ontario were re-elected as CSRA 1st Vice-President and Secretary respectively, each 2 year terms. Eric indicated this would be his last term as Secretary. The search is on now for a new President as current head Basil Gill reported the last year of his term would indeed be his last.

-Ontario and Manitoba, the only other 2 provinces sending representatives both reported lack of officials for games. MSRA and OSRA reps also observed that their respective provincial associations thought of them as unions, an allegation both reps vehemently disagreed with.

-A pilot project is underway in Manitoba to require youth teams to provide a "Parent Controller" who would be responsible for controlling the sidelines of that youth team so that younger officials can concentrate more on refereeing their match.

-It was agreed to raise CSRA membership fees starting January 2007 from \$3 to \$3.50 (this will not require an increase in membership fee in BC)

TRAFFIC LIGHTS AND THE ANIMALS (adapted from the November 2005 FourFourTwo article entitled "The 30 Most Contentious Decisions Ever")

Ed note: Prior to the invention of the card system, referees were required to verbally inform a player they had been "booked" or sent-off. This worked well if the referee and player in question both spoke the same language. But what about international matches? The introduction of the Red and Yellow cards can be traced back to a single match.

The Match: England v Argentina, 1966 World Cup Quarter-final, Wembley, London. **The Incident:** Nine minutes before half-time and Argentina have probably had the better of it, disrupting England with a series of niggling fouls.

(cont. page 5 see Traffic Lights)

Know Your Fellow Referee

Name: Dr. Suzanne Flannigan

City of residence: Victoria, BC

Years involved in refereeing: 6 or 7

Reason you got into refereeing: wanted to see more female refs

What do you like most about refereeing: creating an environment on and off the pitch that results in a well-played, fair and

competitive match where the players, coaches and fans don't notice the referee - all the focus is on the excitement of the players playing the ball

Most memorable moment in refereeing: there are many

(which is why I continue to ref), but one outstanding memory was being thanked by two U19 boys' teams and their coaches after refing a game where the two teams were bitter and violent rivals, other refs would not ref the teams and I was told I could expect at least 2 or 3 red cards and as many as 6 or 8 yellows. I had no cards and they all had smiles on their faces, even the coaches.

One piece of advice to those starting out in refereeing: love the game and always want to be a better referee



Things are bigger in Texas! Refing in Tournaments

Suzanne L. Flannigan

In May of 2003, I went down south to begin my doctoral studies at the University of Texas at Austin. In the two years it took me to complete my Ph.D., not only did I have a profound educational experience, but I also had a profound soccer experience as a referee. I'd been a soccer player for many years in Victoria and from 2001 to 2003, I'd been president of the women's league, had continued to both play and referee in the local leagues and to faithfully watch Saturday morning soccer. You might imagine then that I fancied myself quite a soccer buff. But, from the moment I mentioned the word soccer in Texas, I knew that I was a babe in the woods about to have a trail blazing experience I would never forget. You see, it really is true - things are bigger in Texas. The folks in Texas just do things in a big, big way. Their facilities are huge - the average park I refed at had 10 fields and one park had 20 fields.

Texas cont.

Their tournaments are jumbo-sized as exemplified by their annual September event with over 600 teams. Their organizational efforts are over-the-top. Within a nano-second of mentioning I was interested in refing in the tournament, I had a schedule, mapquest directions to the park, contact names and numbers, a US Soccer Association coin for the coin toss of my first game, and (they said quite seriously) access to as much food and water as I could eat and drink and a chauffeured golf cart to all the fields where I had games. Their hearts are Herculean. They are incredibly generous folks. No matter what I did, I found myself surrounded by people whose sole purpose it seemed was to help me. Their commitment to soccer is monumental. They don't just like soccer, they live for it. And, the thing is, this enormous and grand love of the game carries with it a kind of pride I can hardly describe. It permeates the field, the players, the coaches and the officials. As I prepared for games, I found myself lifting up my chin, squaring my shoulders, feeling proud and humble at the same time. Each time I stepped out onto the pitch, I found myself wanting to ref the best game I'd ever done. Like the players and their coaches, I too wanted to be the very best.

The players for the most part, were some of the most well-behaved and disciplined I have ever refed. When I told a coach to leave the field five minutes into a championship game, the players were stunned and the team almost fell apart on the field. But, to their credit, they kept their reactions to themselves and what's more, pulled themselves into a much more positive state and won the game. The coaches, some of whom are legends down there, are just as knowledgeable of the laws of the game as the state referees.

(cont. next page)

Texas cont.

So, as a referee it was both a blessing and a curse to have them on the sidelines. I learned very early on that a good offense was my best defense. In one game, I made a bad call and I knew it. I heard the coach's astonished comments from the sideline, followed by silence. At half time, I saw the coach walking toward me so I headed over to meet him and said, "You know, I made a mistake on that call. And, I let play go on which was why I did not change it."

Well, his jaw dropped and his eyes bugged out as he just stared at me. In the next minute, he said, "That's the first time a referee has ever admitted to a bad call. Thank you!" Then, he smiled, shook my hand and walked away. And, one of the best memories I've brought back from Austin was at the end of that game, when his team had lost 1 to 0 and he and all his players came over to me and shook my hand saying they'd heard I was Canadian and they liked Canadian referees. In my two years in Austin, it was hard not to feel and be touched by the emotion that these folks have for the game. From the fans, to the parents, to the coaches, the trainers, the tournament organizers and the guys who drive the golf carts around the parks. These folks want to be the best, and they want everyone around them to be the best. What's more, they are willing to work to make that so. And you know, it is simply not possible to be in that kind of environment and not also want to be the very, very best too.

S.F. January 2005

Area Association Reports

KSRA

As mentioned earlier, the KSRA has elected a new executive for the 2006 year. Executive members include: President - Darren Clark Vice President - Brian Flamank Treasurer / Allocator - Claudio Sama Secretary - Taresa Willk Directors - Ernie Cupello Claudio Klarich Danny Nikolic The KSRA would also at this time like to extend a much owed thanks to long serving secretary Mike Galesloot for his tireless work on behalf of the association over the past several years. Unfortunately, due to personal reasons, we will be without Mike's services in this capacity this year; however, the KSRA wish Mike nothing but the best in his future endeavours. Presently, the KSRA Executive have tried to get an early start on the upcoming 2006 campaign. We are in the process of setting up a KSRA website which will include pages for education, match reporting and a questions / feedback page for players among others. The KSRA are also in the process of designing a permanent logo to help our association gain a bit of identity. This logo will be put on shirts, coins and sweat tops, and the sales of these will hopefully generate some income for the purchase of educational materials. Once again, in 2006, Kamloops will be host to our KYSA Cup youth tournament over the may long weekend, and the Kamloops Invitational Soccer Tournament (Senior) over the BC Day long weekend in August. Once again, we hope to see our fellow BCSRA members from across the province out officiating some of these games with us. Also, this year, Kamloops will be host to the BC Summer Games, so some more high-profile youth soccer will be played in our area. Our membership is eager for the snow to melt, so that we can get back on the fields, and start what promises to be a very successful 2006! Thanks, Darren Clark , KSRA President

VASRA

After the November Council meeting our Christmas Party was upon us and the event sold out. Participants had what was described as one of the best parties yet. So good that tickets for this year have been inquired about. The past six months have been very busy. Also, the departure of John Nielsen and his educational segments, a sorry loss for the province and felt more so for us in the VASRA area as he is a local and attended our monthly meetings. Mauricio Navarro and Jose Branco have taken up the slack and have produced some good topics for discussion. Elections were held at our Annual General Meeting in January and a few changes were made. The Executive for the year is as follows: President: Jose Branco, 1st Vice: Marc Bowley, 2nd Vice Paul Walker, Secretary Bill McNaughton, Treasurer Chris Cyr, Director Mauricio Navarro. One Director is to be appointed to complete the Executive.

Area Association Reports

PGSRA

The PGSRA is currently in down time as most of our members enjoy a couple of months off before the start of the outdoor season, usually in April and May. The 2005 reffing season was * by all accounts * a success with many players and coaches in the North Cariboo Senior Soccer League pleased with the level of officiating they received. We are hoping to continue this positive trend into the 2006 season. The membership last met in early November at our year-end meeting/dinner at a local restaurant where the association bought everyone a nice dinner (drinks * for obvious reasons if you know some of our members * were not included!!). The next meeting to be scheduled will be the AGM, expected to occur sometime in late February or early March. I have also had informal discussions with the PGYSA to continue our successful mentorship program that has seen no fewer than 10 young referees coming up and reffing (at least assisting) in the mens league over the past 3 seasons. This bodes well for the PGSRA, and we are hoping we can retain the services of these young up and comers over the next several years. So for now, the members of the PGSRA are limited to watching EPL and other European leagues which has seen some interesting refereeing decisions that often stir up heated (but civilized) debates amongst fellow referees. We all are very much looking forward to the start of the 2006 season, and the 2006 World Cup which will undoubtedly create many moments of joy, anger, dispute, etc. Hope everything is going well on the Coast.

Alain Ruch ,President PGSRA

FVSRA

Members have been kept busy plying their trade in a variety of leagues. The Valley had their Christmas Party in December which went well and occurred on a night which didn't rain! The Area Association's Annual General Meeting is to be held March 6th. At the moment the Valley is in the middle of implementing new teaching methods which would be conducive to the sheer size of Area Association's catchment area

VISRA

Since October VISRA has been going strong. Our membership has topped 65 (Ed. note : 65 in the South Chapter , almost 100 with North and Central Chapters included)and our monthly meetings are striving. Jason Austin has been coordinating our education sessions and has done an amazing job.

We had two up and coming members, Serge Surdu and Scott Bakker, selected to referee in the Y-League finals in Tampa, Florida.

We also had the honor of hosting the CSRA AGM in January. By all accounts it was a great success. VISRA would like to personally thank Mauricio Navarro, John Nielsen and Joe Branco for putting together an excellent presentation. Our younger members were very impressed. Hopefully it motivated them to continue in their refereeing careers.

Thank you.

Dan Greco

PRES NOTES:

THE WAIT IS OVER – IT'S WORLD CUP TIME

Welcome back to a new year, and a special one at that- the year of the World Cup! While in recent years UEFA's EURO competitions have tied us over for the big footie feast, we can now lick our chops at the prospect of the competition this June. Why should we as referees take notice? Well beside watching how our fellow colleagues from around the globe perform, just as it is our duty to keep up with the Laws of the Game so we must also keep up with incidents that happen in the biggest spectacle the sport has to offer. The World Cup is the gauge which FIFA uses to set the course for the next 4 years. Major decisions and restructuring of referee's mechanics have come about because of what happened in this tournament. Remember Dino Zoff walking the "Spanish steps" in Espana '82? His actions, or our fellow colleague's inaction I'm not so sure, led to the abolishment of a keeper being allowed to "collect his steps." The dearth of goals in Italia '90 caused the International Board to review the Off-side Law. From that point on the attacker could be in-line with at least two defenders where previously we heard the chant, "If he's even, he's offside!"

The players are watching these games as well and if there is one thing we hate as players is when they have the upper hand on us. Our local players, especially kids (if you can pry them away from their Playstations), often imitate the actions of top players on the local parks. What are you going to do if some smart ass decides to try and pull a fast one on you? With the invention of the VCR, there's no excuse for missing a game.

Take the time this June to not only get involved, maybe play a World Cup Pool (hint, hint) but above all else- analyse and learn from what is expected to be the greatest soccer show on earth!

TRAFFIC LIGHTS cont..

As ref Rudolf Kreitlen books a fifth Argentine player, though, their captain Antonio Rattin, sends him off, but the Argentinian refuses to go and with other players threatening to walk-off, stays on the pitch for a full eight minutes before finally being persuaded to leave by English referee Ken Aston, a Spanish speaker who comes down from the stands to help defuse the situation.

The Aftermath: A 77th-minute Geoff Hurst header (ed note: the same Geoff Hurst who "scored" the goal in what FourFourTwo magazine says was the 3rd most contentious decision ever) eventually gives England victory, but not before a period of extraordinary brutality in which even Bobby Charlton is booked. At the final whistle, (England manager) Alf Ramsey prevents his players exchanging shirts and dismisses the Argentinians as "animals" even though England have actually committed more fouls. Meanwhile, as South American teams complain of a conspiracy to favour the Europeans, Rattin insists he was merely asking for an interpreter (an odd excuse, and given his constant protests in the 36 minutes he played not a particularly convincing one), and had failed to understand tht he had been dismissed until Aston explained to him in his own language.

Eureka! Waiting at traffic lights on the way home, Aston devises a system of red and yellow cards to avoid such confusion in the future. (ed note: Ken Aston would later go on to become Chairman of the FIFA Referees Committee and was the assessor for Mr. Werner Winsemann , the only World Cup match refereed by a Canadian: 1974 World Cup , Holland vs Sweden).

What is expected of a referee at the top level?

Soccer is supposed to be a simple game. However, the closer you get to the highest peak of the game, the bigger the expectations are. With this in mind, Mauricio Navarro, Canadian FIFA referee and Referee Association member, presented an analysis of what is expected of a referee at the top level as part of the events surrounding the Canadian Soccer Referees Association AGM in Victoria on January 21st.

Every level has a referees committee which has certain expectations of us. From his experience, Mauricio condensed them into 2 main areas: basic and general expectations. Under "Basic expectations" we can always say something important about positioning, understanding the game, man management, refereeing techniques and team cooperation.

Positioning: At the top level one does not talk about the diagonal as being very strict according to the book. Your diagonal is wherever you need to be to avoid any conflict. It's always the search for the best angle of view, where the game needs you to be. The time in the game is very critical as the temperament of the players is different at the start of match when the score is even than near the end when one team may be desperately trying to win.

Understanding the game: At the top level you must be able to identify situations and actions done by players that could jeopardize your game control. If the referee is able to identify a good action by a skillful player by allowing a good advantage, at that moment you are successfully fulfilling the expectations of the referee's committee at any level.

Man Management: Mauricio emphasized in this aspect what the role personality plays in each individual referee. At this moment we saw a couple of examples that suggested that a strong personality will help the referee fly through a match with fewer problems. The referee's tools, i.e. the whistle, the use of the red and yellow cards and body language must be mastered. There are so many fouls in the game that the referee has must be able to wait for the right moment to show a card. It's very easy to go out each game and flash cards. A referee should enter each game to try and get out with 22 players left on the field (but not at all costs).

Techniques of Referees: one of the most important expectations is with respect to Mechanics: clear signals, proper use of the whistle and controlling/preparing the wall at "ceremonial" free kicks. Without proper mechanics, one's fitness is of no use. Mauricio conveyed, " It's is very important as soon as we are appointed to connect with your other members of the crew because the assistants or 4th official can jeopardize your game control. This cooperation is expected of any referees committee". Case in point, FIFA is adopting the idea of a team of officials; for the 2006 World Cup they have asked every referee to pick 2 assistant referees they want on their crew.

Under the heading of "General Expectations", the biggest point is to avoid controversy. The officiating crew should not be responsible for the result of a match. Controversy is associated with "the moment of truth". The moment of truth is defined as the action at any time during the game and which causes the referee's authority and integrity to be called into question.

Top Level Ref cont.

A referee who is associated with a controversial incident during a game at the top level may find himself not receiving further appointments. This is not because the referee's committee doesn't want to give him another appointment but rather the fact there are others waiting in line for an opportunity.

Being a top referee it is a must that you are physically prepared. Therefore, Mauricio gave some points to assist in avoiding controversy: -Be prepared mentally. Mental preparation becomes the top priority for your upcoming game. Find out as much as you can about the teams you are refereeing. -A good pre-game instruction with your crew discussing possible situations so they can save you rather than cut you up. -Use your common sense and move to the areas of the field where you feel something is going to happen. -Always be thinking about the next phases of play. -Have a feel for the game so that you smell where conflict will occur. For those of us in Canada, we don't have the exposure in participating in professional leagues. It is crucial then to watch games on TV, using it to your advantage to learn. Speaking of TV, it's a different environment when you are in Azteca Stadium in Mexico with 42 cameras surrounding the field as opposed to a local stadium where there is only one TV in this case is of no help to the referee. At this moment it becomes an element of disruption against the referee and your worst enemy. TV has the power to tell millions of people around the world how "bad" you are with a replay from a different angle. Finally, we would be wrong in thinking that every game will include controversial incidents. However, being a top level referee is harder than it looks. Expectations are high and come from everyone involved in this arena. With the information presented the next generation of referees in attendance have a better understanding than many of those of Mauricio's generation. They can be comforted knowing they have a good head-start.

NEWS IN BRIEF: CANADIAN REFS IN MLS FOR 2006

According to CSA Referee Development Committee member and Referees Association member Bob Sawtell, Canada will have three referees and one assistant participating in this year's MLS. The individuals have been invited to the MLS's training camp to be held in mid-March. The MLS is looking at potentially adding a franchise in Toronto in the near future. The expansion is contingent on the creation of a new stadium.

MEMBERS AT SUPER Y LEAGUE FINALS IN FLORIDA

Members Serge Surdu and Scott Bakker from Victoria were appointed to the Super Y League finals in Florida this past November. The 2005 edition of the Super Y League North American Finals was a true continental championship as teams came from as far away as Danville, California and Ottawa, Ontario. The event crowned ten North American Champions. The Super Y League is a youth league featuring different age divisions for both boys and girls.

"Scott and I found ourselves truly involved in a high class event", says Serge. "We had the privilege of meeting several referees from all over the United States. I myself was able to work with two highly thought of National Referees. Scott found himself, as one of the highlights, officiating the one game that was televised on Fox Sports World."

MAURICIO NAVARRO INVITED TO ALBERTA

Mauricio Navarro has been invited by the Alberta Soccer Association as their guest speaker for their February 24th Officials Workshop. In addition to being the guest speaker Mauricio will be mentoring some of the referees in this workshop.

LONG-TIME VANCOUVER ISLAND REFEREE PASSES

On February 1st retired referee Henri Jeanpierre passed away due to a fall he sustained in his driveway on January 23rd. Henri, born in Le Clerjus, France in 1924 was a long-time referee in Victoria respected by players and coaches alike. He was 81.

Henri emigrated to Canada in the early 1950's, first living in Quebec and then St. Pierre & Miquelon. He arrived in Vancouver in 1952 before moving to his eventual home of Victoria in 1953. There he became active in soccer, first as a player then a coach and eventually a referee. He is predeceased by his wife Betty and survived in his immediate family by step daughter Lorelie, sons Simon and Richard, and grandchildren Christopher, Michelle, Devon and Alan. A memorial service was held on Saturday February 11, 2006 in Victoria.



Henri Jeanpierre 1924 - 2006

Know Your Fellow Referee

Name: Tom Babic

City of residence: Maple Ridge

Years involved in refereeing: 7 years

Reason you got into refereeing: I felt that the officiating at my sons' games was sub-standard. I caught myself being critical on the sidelines and thought....."I could do better." Both in being a referee and in keeping quiet on the sidelines. So rather than frustrate the referees and myself, I decided to take some referee training and put my money where my mouth was.

What do you like most about refereeing:

Being able to run with the players and ensuring that Fair Play is maintained. It's my way of contributing to the game. Most memorable

moment in refereeing: About 2 years after I began officiating, I was assigned a higher level game than I was qualified to referee. I thought too much of my abilities and very quickly realized I wasn't prepared for all the "tricks of the game". The players and especially the coaches turned it into a nightmare for me. I walked off the field totally frustrated and ready to hang up the whistle for good. After some consideration I decided it would be best if I started by improving myself and my understanding of the game. I took some additional training and worked on my skills at lower level games. Now I look back on that moment as pivotal to my becoming a better referee.

One piece of advice to those starting out in refereeing: Command respect for yourself as a referee by respecting the game. Go to every game and make it a point to learn something about the game or work on one aspect of your role as a referee. Constant improvement of yourself will improve the game and in turn garner you respect.



A Referee's View by Tom Babic

The soccer world is full of contrast. Recently I was involved as an assistant referee in a match that became quite unruly. The play was fierce and even between two high school teams. The similarity ended there. One team dominated ball movement with tactical precision. Moving from their half into their opponents' half repeatedly. While the attackers continued mounting foray upon foray, the defenders thwarted them with persistent and successful tackling. Each tackle punctuated with a decisive punt of the ball back into the attackers' end of the pitch. As attack upon attack failed to garner a goal, the team favouring offence began to focus its energetic assault on the referee. A tempestuous crowd lined the fence adjacent to the field and added to the verbal assault. Frustration escalated and silly fouls behind the play began to dominate the scene. In turn the referee's whistle became a common sound and the verbal barrage directed at the man in black grew to a fever pitch. Coupled with personal attacks from teammate to teammate, the animosity was rampant. Unable to do the one thing required in these circumstances, namely put the ball in the back of the net, the attackers stormed the field at full time and began a wave

of jostling, intimidation and racial slurs. With a final score putting them out of the finals, their only means of evening the score was to fight. Albeit off the field. I left the park under police escort. As I drove home, I experienced that self-questioning monologue that many referees know all too well. "What is it about this game that makes me want to come back time and again to face this kind of ugly display?" I struggled to answer myself. Not 12 hours later, I was driving again. This time towards the field. I knew the match would be different as the teams were based in the Metro Women's league. But then again the female players can often come up with colourful language to outdo the younger lads. The skill level was a tenth of the previous night's game. One team dominated the other and the score was none too flattering. The weaker team was without a substitute until halftime. When the player showed up, it was questionable whether she would have much energy left to play. She had arrived on a bicycle and it was evident from her appearance that she was quite fatigued from the ride up the long hill to the park. To cap things off, the weather was dismal at best. Damp, cold and dingy grey clouds all making for a miserable morning. I would have thought that the game had all the makings of a repeat of last night. However, much to my pleasant surprise, the game was the most sporting I've officiated. The losing team with missed passes and poor clearing attempts misplayed crosses and weak shots, had every opportunity to demonstrate poor sporting conduct and frustration. However the 90 minutes was example after example of great teamwork, camaraderie and supportive comments. From the coach to the keeper, everyone flowed with a positive energy. I didn't hear one negative remark regardless of their inability to put the ball in the back of the net. To top off the day, as I walked to my car after the match, the losing team's captain taps me on the shoulder and insists that I not leave without a final word from her team. "You did a great job, thanks for coming out to do our game." Often we get so caught up in the moment and neglect to realize how diverse the everyday events of our soccer community can be. I'm glad I was able to experience such a positive contrast.

2005 WORLD SOCCER AWARDS – Pierluigi Collina Referee of the Year 2005 (from World Soccer Magazine)

Pierluigi Collina turns heads. Even in a fashionable London hotel, a world away from the football pitches of Serie A, he is recognized. Whether the Italian likes it or not, he is now one of the most recognizable men on the planet.

As he collects his award from World Soccer, he does not seem bothered by all the attention, but nor does he seem ready to melt away into the background. Yet the man who exuded authority as a referee seems less certain about where his life after football will take him. "I'm not sure what the future holds," he admits. "I have not made a decision yet."

It is over three months since a messy sponsorship row led to Collina definitively hanging up his whistle after a 28-year career, but the world's best-known and most respected match official continues to make headlines. Last month, he unveiled the identity of his favourite club.

"Now that I'm no longer a referee, I can tell you that I support Lazio," said the 45-year-old in a speech to medical students in Parma. "As a little boy, I followed Bologna, but then I warmed to Lazio. Yet, in the first 10 Lazio games I took charge of, they didn't win one."

Inevitably, Collina's "admission" brought out the conspiracy-theory in every Serie A watcher. Italian fans like nothing more than to pontificate about less-than-impartial refereeing. Now they could say: "I told you so."

Collina, the referee of the 1999 Champions League Final and 2002 World Cup Final, reacted with surprise to his Lazio revelation. "I don't understand all the fuss. There's nothing bad in it. Nobody involved in football comes from Mars. Everyone has a team dear to him."

The Italian Federation changed the maximum age for Serie A referees from 45 to 46 specifically to give Collina another 12 months at the top, so this season should have been a glorious swansong. But that all changed in early August when Gazzetta Dello Sport revealed that he signed a lucrative sponsorship deal –rumoured to be worth 540,000 per annum-with car manufacturer Opel, the shirt sponsors of Milan.

The potential conflict of interest was clear cut, federation president Franco Carrero agreed, and Collina was told to sever his links with Opel or officiate only Serie B games. He did neither, opting instead to resign from the Italian Referees' Association. "Without trust in me I could not go on," he declared. A sad exit for the most accomplished FIFA referee of his generation. But we have not heard- nor seen- the last of Pierluigi Collina.

UPDATE ON HOSPITALIZED MEMBER MALCOLM COWIE

Some of you may not know Malcolm Cowie, member and National Referee Assessor, was hospitalized just before Christmas due to complications from a minor heart procedure including a systemic infection throughout his whole body. He had lung surgery today on January 2nd which went okay. As was mentioned at the CSRA AGM in Victoria, VISRA North Chapter Secretary Stu Power indicated contingencies are fully in place in the North Island to cover Malcolm's workload until further notice.

"Malcolm is slowly getting a little more comfortable each day. He is still weak, having lost quite a bit of weight", says Stu. "His appetite for involvement in soccer matters is returning and although his voice sounded very tired, I sensed the enthusiasm with which he spoke as we discussed the possibilities of upcoming clinics. He and Valeria are most grateful for the messages of support they have received during this past month and a half."

Our thoughts are with Malcolm and his wife Valeria as he embarks now on a road to recovery, probably months rather than weeks.

Do you have a submission for the Flag & Whistle?

Please email all material to either
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or

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**Note : Deadline for submissions in the next
issue will be May 31st/06**

Flag and Whistle- BCSRA Newsletter

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