



Amateur Football Combination

Respect 

Spirit of Football
Supported by Carling

Respect 

www.amateurfootballcombination.com

President: Trevor Syms **Chairman:** David Goldring **Treasurer:** Alan Robinson
Secretary: Danny McConnell, PO Box 605, Bromley, Kent, BR2 0YQ. Tel: 020 8325 2448.
Email: secretary@amateurfootballcombination.com

Spirit of Football - 2010/2011

At the start of another season, we want to remind Clubs that the AFC is a 'Respect' league and implementation of the FA programme alongside our own 'Spirit of Football' initiative is a condition for Clubs' continuing membership. The Annual Report for 2009/10 highlighted many of the problems encountered during last season and the positive steps and action that needed to be taken against defaulting Clubs. The standards of behaviour established through hard endeavour since the introduction of 'Spirit of Football' five years ago must be maintained if not improved upon and we, as a league, are looking for each Club to embrace the dual campaign. Each Club should target an improvement year on year.

Comparing 2008-2009 and 2009-2010

Special mention should be made of those Clubs whose efforts led to their moving away from the bottom positions with pleasing improvements in their league rating:- Old Wokingians, Birkbeck College and Wandsworth Borough – such improvement needs to be maintained in the future, however, which has not always been the case in the past.

A number of Clubs saw a serious fall in SOF position last season. Old Edmontonians, Old Kingsburians, Old Manorians, Old Uffingtonians, Egbertians, Standard Chartered Bank, Old Josephians and Old Danes all slipped into the bottom dozen, many of them not for the first time. William Fitt, Temple Bar, Old Bromleians and Old Camdenians remained in the bottom dozen, for the second or third consecutive season. All these Clubs need to be aware that a positive change in Club culture needs to be introduced if they are to overcome their problems, some now unacceptably long standing.

To those Clubs whose average mark, year on year, suggests that there might have been a deterioration in behaviour, it is important that the situation is addressed when planning for the new season, developing a strategy to turn it around.

For the benefit of all Club Officers but particularly those taking on a position for the first time, it's worth reminding ourselves of some of the points from previous seasons that remain very relevant:-

Not Interested? – There Are Other Leagues!

The league has decided how our football is played is important, and we're still attracting new clubs, so clearly, we're doing something right – people want to join the League and play football the way it should be played. If we do have Clubs who simply aren't interested, then they may have to face up to trying to find their football somewhere else, and we're not afraid to put club membership before the AGM. All Clubs should think carefully about their membership, and who represents them. Your Club's reputation is at stake – be careful about who represents you.

It's Not My Fault

All too often we hear excuses for bad behaviour. "We want to win", it was the referees fault". Let's be clear about this – everyone in the AFC is responsible for their own actions. Winning and Good Sportmanship are not exclusive. Referees will make mistakes, and do make decisions you don't agree with (the two things are not the same!) and that's part of football. Spirit of Football – Respect is about how you behave, and how you expect others to behave towards you.

Taking Responsibility

Clubs and Club Officers need to understand that responsibility for the behaviour ultimately falls to them. Clubs need to acknowledge where problems lie and take steps to identify and deal with troublemakers. Don't shy away from making tough decisions simply to prevent a loss of members and/or seeing a reduction in playing strength of teams. If you have "problem players", be brave enough to kick them out, and contact us to ensure such players are listed on the website as players banned by Clubs so that the bad apples don't resurface elsewhere (this has not always been the case in the past to the detriment of some Clubs!).

If Clubs and League Officers are firm but fair, the referees/officials are competent and in control and captains set a good example, taking responsibility for their players actions, behaviour will improve and the level of sportmanship will continue to move towards the high but realistic level that this League has set itself. Spirit is all-important when it comes to the playing of the game. Respect for and trust in the Laws count for everything. Captains and officials have a major responsibility to ensure that the game is played within a framework of goodwill and competitiveness.

Playing in the Spirit of Football, Promoting Fair Play and Respect for All

Clubs – The Essentials

The following points are mandatory for a 'Respect League':-

- Players to sign Club registration forms, including all personal details (clubs have been supplied with a sample).
- Codes of conduct to be read, agreed and signed by all club members, playing and non-playing, including spectators and supporters. Clubs should retain these and provide them if requested.
- New players recruited into the club during the season to also read and sign the codes.
- All players should be registered with the club, having signed a registration form for the current season.
- Captains and vice-captains take responsibility for their players' actions and behaviour – please make sure they have a "Respect Guide" and "Captains Responsibilities" on the website.
- Captains and vice-captains must wear a Respect (or Spirit of Football) armband. A small stock is available in the League shop if there are any shortages – enquiries to Rob Gibbs.

Clubs – Optional Extras

In addition, we would encourage clubs towards the following:-

- Stand-alone 'Spirit of Football – Respect Display Boards as featured at the Annual Dinner are available for League and Club functions, events and so forth. Please ask for more information.
- Please include Spirit of Football – Respect' branding on the headers of club communications and publicity. This is another indication of support and adoption of the dual campaigns.
- Remind your captains/players as to the likelihood of appointed referees' pre-match briefings mentioning the way in which they intend to officiate and making reference to Spirit of Football – Respect. Please encourage your club referees to do likewise.
- Please mark your opposition carefully each week, considering all elements of 'Spirit of Football – Respect' – be objective, assessing solely the game in hand and without, necessarily, being swayed by a particular unsavoury incident normally dealt with by the issue of cards. If you consider a poor mark appropriate please give it and explain why – as most, if not all, of you should now realise, we do act on reports, both bad and good, but we are dependant on your realistic feedback!
- Club marks, together with those given by appointed referees (and club referees please) are important elements when considering the annual 'Spirit of Football – Respect' awards. Last season, kit vouchers of £100 and £50 were awarded to the top two clubs in each of three categories – 1-2 team clubs, 3-5 and 6 and above. When possible, issue regular reminders of the dual programme to all players and supporters. It is essential to maintain momentum if they are to succeed.
- As disciplinary problems can ensue from a lack of knowledge/understanding of the Laws of the Game, these should be publicised to all players, spectators and club officials as appropriate. If your Club has a website, please make sure there's a link to them (you can copy the link from the AFC website). If you'd like a hard copy of the Laws of the Game, please let us know.
- When purchasing new sets of shirts, we ask that consideration be given to displaying in some way the AFC and Spirit of Football – Respect branding.

PLEASE PASS COPIES OF THIS NEWSLETTER TO YOUR CLUB REFEREES, OFFICERS, CAPTAINS/VICE CAPTAINS, TEAM MANAGERS AND ANYONE ELSE INVOLVED WITH THE RUNNING OF YOUR CLUB with the aim of trying to ensure that the content is conveyed to all the membership.

Spirit of Football Committee

This season Rob Gibbs has stepped down as Spirit of Football co-ordinator (though he's still involved with the committee) and we have three new co-ordinators (one per region) filling his role:-

Ben Roberts (North) – 07984 748 538 (M), benmroberts@yahoo.co.uk (E)

James Whitmarsh (South) – 01306 712 446 (H), 07540 567 230 (M), james.whitmarsh@me.com (E)

Martin Armstrong (West) – 020 8642 0226 (H), 020 8661 7878(B), 07836 200 551(M), martin@turpinba.co.uk (E)

If you have any queries, comments, thoughts or suggestions about the dual Spirit of Football – Respect programmes, please contact your co-ordinator or Rob Gibbs – 02088662033(H), 07958061555(M) who will be more than happy to discuss any aspect with you.