



Amateur Football Combination

National Respect Gold Award League 2012

Spirit of Football



www.amateurfootballcombination.com

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Annual Report - Season 2017/18

As another season ends and I reflect on the season just passed, it threw up some unexpected challenges and others that seem to appear every season. I must begin my report with what undoubtably was the achievement of the season, that being the AFC Representative team progressing to the final of the FA Inter League Cup Final (on the pitch). This was then followed by the stuffing being knocked out of players and AFC Officers alike, by an FA decision off it, for playing a player that did not have International Clearance, having once many seasons ago played in Ireland. To all the players of the squad and the management of the team, I would like to personally thank you all for the success and the exposure that you gave our League and maybe this magnificent team effort will generate a more resilient attitude in our competitions in futures seasons.

I personally attended all matches other than then 1st round and the spirit shown on the pitch and the excitement generated off it, in all of the games was outstanding, certainly had things been different we may well have been representing the FA in the Euro Competition this summer, instead of the North Riding League, who actually lost two games on the pitch but won two appeals off it. We as a league have certainly learned from our oversight and a number of rule changes will ensure that every FA & UEFA rule is fully complied with, in as much as it affects this league.

The weather unlike the previous season was an absolute nightmare in the final few months of the season. The condition of many clubs pitches together which caused so many postponements, with a very early Easter break, presented the four divisional secretaries with a huge task in ensuring that all matches were scheduled. This together with four additional Saturdays in which most Premier division fixtures were cancelled, due to the FA Inter League success, plus many postponed County & LOB cup finals, really did test the resolve of these four and so my thanks on behalf of the whole AFC to Jamie Brunton, James Whitmarsh & to the retiring James Brickley for the hours of unpaid support they made throughout the season to ensure the season was completed on time.

Clubs once again suffered at the lack of regular available players, due to the seemingly constant reasons - work, family, travel, cost, weddings, stag weekends plus watching any other sport that was showed in pubs and numerous winter sport holidays. In fact Full Time shows that 6794 different players appeared for the 244 teams this season. This shows just how many players are needed a fact borne out by the need of the majority of one team clubs to use 50+ players each.

Exactly as in the previous season 120 games were postponed due to teams having insufficient numbers to fulfil their lowest XI or in many cases their only XI and of these 29 resulted in teams losing points and being fined under rules 10f & 10g. The Fixtures Committee are proposing a change of rule to assist clubs in the new season, where the notice period to ask for a free week reduces from four weeks to three with the number of free weeks increasing from one to two per team. The Fixtures Committee realise that getting teams out each week is tougher and so hopefully this rule change will be positively received at the AGM.

This seems to be the publication to remind clubs of the need to follow the wording of Rule 10f

Any Club needing to cancel a fixture due to a shortage of players must: -

- (i) cancel the fixture of its lowest XI, and***
- (ii) notify its opponents of the cancellation not later than 7.00 p.m. on the day preceding the fixture.***

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

This season three clubs Old Vaughanians, Southgate Olympic and Old Parmiterians all failed to adhere to this rule and the latter had 6 lower teams who suffered fines and loss of points, who played on the day, when on 14th April, they called off their 1st xi just an hour before kick-off. Parmiterians following the AFC charge appealed to the AFA as it did when Old Salvatorians appealed some four seasons ago, once again, despite different mitigation being tabled, an AFA appeal Committee found that the AFC Fixtures Committee had acted within the rules of the competition and that all penalties, despite their number, were in accordance with what was permissible. The biggest learning point to come from this is that all clubs must have all team captains/managers in contact between themselves on a weekly basis and that if one team has issues with player availability then the other teams support that team through team interaction. Rules 8 & 10 are so important and all Club Officers must be fully aware of them above all others and the penalties that they incur.

Discipline and Spirit of Football

The RESPECT Sanctions entered their 3rd season and this year we had 23 teams being issued with one sanction and unfortunately Mickleham 1st XI, Reigatians 1st XI, Royal Sun Alliance & Shene OG 1st XI were issued with two (5 & then 10 RESPECT pts). It is up to a strong club committee to react to this and ensure that team captains are aware of their responsibilities. With the plan for the "sin Bin" to be piloted in season 2018/19, these teams will soon realise that continued dissent will result in playing with reduced playing numbers. Mickleham OB 1st XI with 12 cautions for dissent were the worst offender of the four and by no coincidence had the second worst SoF mark in the league – both being astringently linked.

Whilst the RESPECT sanctions punish individual teams, the AFC Executive and SOF Committee continue to uphold the spirit of the competition and ensure that our League is one that both players & referees enjoy. The AFC Executive, through the SOF Committee, will continue to uphold the ethos of SoF to make our league as enjoyable & fair as possible.

Clubs that were under sanction in 2017/18 for SOF & discipline issues all took notice of the need to improve and it is indeed very pleasing to report and that Spaniards put their poor first season well behind them and improved their discipline record and overall SoF mark. No clubs are under SoF sanction at the moment but the SoF committee will review the teams in bottom ten positions and interview any that they feel require some guidance.

This season saw a welcome decrease in the number of disciplinary charges issued to players & clubs with last season's 2030 reducing by about 200. Of 1908 cautions 502 (26%) were for dissent and so it seems that the Sin Bin pilot will hopefully have the desired reductions in dissent cautions, as it has in the SAL and other leagues nationwide, that have piloted in 2016/17. It is suggested that FIFA will make this law in 2019/20, based on current results from the pilots.

The best record was achieved by Old Whitgiftians with just three cautions all season followed by Somerville Ob & Worcester College OB both with just four cautions, all season. By contrast the worst team by far were Old Manorians 3rd XI with 65 discipline points & 28 separate charges, followed by Mickleham OB 1st XI who had a total of 46 discipline points and 34 separate charges. Clapham & Globe 1st XI's both had over 40 disciplinary points..

The SOF tables are published monthly to clubs & on the website so it is only correct that I again praise the winners of the three awards this season Dorkinians for the 3rd season in succession, Old Pauline for the 2nd season and Rob Roy Reds in their debut season in the AFC who all finished the season with an average mark of 8.50 or more. All teams achieved a mark of at least 7.00 although the bottom ten were all below 7.50 will be interviewed or written to by the SoF committee in due course.

League Constitution

We had our most successful season in my tenure as Secretary as regards teams withdrawing from the constitution during the season, only losing Egbertian Reserves and Citigroup. In addition Southgate Olympic had a number of issues both discipline and financial and ended up withdrawing two of their teams mid-season to start with seven and end with 5. We did not have any clubs who have formally applied to join the AFC in season 2018/19, which again is the first time too, in my time as Secretary. Since the end of the current season three teams have reduced their number of teams for season 2018/19 namely, Old Woodhouseians, Old Pauline & Old Kingsburians (all by one xi), once again due to the regular availability of players. In addition both Hinton and Heathrow Seniors have both now resigned, their single team, due to the lack of regular available players. Heathrow have been in the league for over 10 seasons, never have they incurred a fine

Player Registration & Full Time Update

Player registration & mandatory Full Time match data entry continues for most as standard practice. Next season player registration may be moved to the Whole game System (WGS) so this will require a major tidy up exercise of FT player data before the switch. Whilst many clubs had little difficulty in getting the match data entered by the 7pm Wednesday deadline, the same few continually failed in the recording of match data and fines issued for this failing increased to nearly £3k. Club officers must seriously manage and check weekly, in order to reduce this waste of your hard earned money. With reference to rule 11a the worst club by far were Old Vaughanians, who amassed a total of £220 by failing to update FT on time, followed by Old Manorians & Old Aloysians with £120, and Clapham OX, Old Minchendenians, Old Pauline & Shene OG all with £100.

Running the AFC

Once again I wish to take the opportunity to pay tribute to the army of volunteers who run the league, and also manage the weekly duties for our clubs. Club Secretaries/Match Secretaries have a difficult and challenging role to ensure the smooth running of the League. It is only right & proper that those clubs that have managed to successfully complete the whole season without incurring any fines, are rightly praised.

This season there was an increase of 30% where 23 clubs that have achieved a fine free season:- Yet again special praise to Rob Poole of University of Hertfordshire & Glen Bertram of Heathrow Seniors who have now managed the remarkable achievement of 11 successive seasons without incurring a single fine, both whilst also playing and then refereeing on free weeks. Other clubs deserving praise for a fine free season are :- Altis FC, Bealonians, Dorkinians, Globe Rangers, London Hospital OB, Mickleham OB, MHV, NWB, Old Grantonians, Old Ignatians, Old Sedcopians, Old Strand Academicals, Old Tiffinians, Old Whitgiftians (8th successive season), Old Woodhouseians, Ravenscroft OB, Rob Roy Reds, RBS, Southgate County, UCL Academicals, & Witan. Of special note should be James Whitmarsh of Dorkinians, James Brickley of Reigate, John O'Brien of Ignatians and Mark Dawson of UCL who all manage six team clubs, a remarkable achievement in ensuring matches are confirmed on time, FT data is entered and teams arrive in time and with the correct equipment. The common link is that all enter the FT data themselves – food for thought for the poorly performing clubs.

In the same context the clubs that have failed in this area are also listed as they should seek advice from the Club Support Committee should their failures continue. By far the worst club this season and still under Executive sanctions, are Old Vaughanians, with £660 the highest ever single season total. Old Parmiterians accrued £450 mostly as a result of the 1st xi calling off and playing all lower xi's on 14th April. Old Aloysians still accrued £195 despite being under sanction and London Lawyers accrued just £60 less than last season £180. Twenty clubs were issued with fines totally £100 or more and the league collected £5.3k in total, a continuing downward trend but still far too high.

AFC Officers

John Maskell continued to chair the Executive Committee and David Cross had a magnificent season with the Representative team but unfortunately soured this with some unsavoury online comments after the FA Inter league Final, resulting in his subsequent resignation from that position. Alan Robinson has completed his two year tenure as President and Norman MacDonald steps into that role in 18/19. In fact Norman has chaired the Fixtures Committee in what was a most testing season and time consuming (for that committee) and without his dedication the AFC would be a poorer league.

Alan Robinson took over as Fines Secretary. The Referees Committee continued to suffer with lack of support and it was thanks to Harry Hutchings for stepping in as southern Referee Secretary and subsequently recruiting a number of additional referees to our list. The Dinner Committee was led by Andrew Cashmore-Till and 2018/19 will be his last in that demanding role, a replacement must be found so that the Dinner can be as successful as it was this year and all others.

The rest of the Executive Committee who work on a voluntary basis to ensure that this League is run as efficiently and productively as possible, deserve much gratitude and thanks. On my and the clubs behalf, without you all, the AFC would not have the reputation it is renowned for – our thanks to all.

AFC Dinner and Awards

The 2018 Dinner was another excellent & well attended evening, once again with the Oval roof terrace being opened for pre-dinner drinks. I am sure everyone would endorse the plaudits in congratulating Andrew Cashmore-Till and his committee in organising another excellent evening. Our guest speaker this year was Tony Cottee who provided some interesting stories

Congratulations to our Spirit of Football Winners, as well as to Old Pauline for winning the Ken Elbourne Club Hospitality Cup for the second season in succession. The David McCarthy Memorial Referees Awards went to Jamie Buller, Paul Herlihy & Gerry Franklin.

The Referees

In the past season once again referee numbers started high but many of the new Surrey based referees and new ones to our league then either failed to be available, were not competent refereeing adult football or simply just didn't respond to correspondence. This left us struggling to cover all the games on a weekly basis and despite Harry Hutchings getting many to join the south and London FA pushing all the new referees our way, it was a constant struggle. We were once again indebted to the band of club referees that help us most weeks to get all games covered.

The performance on the field was marked similarly to last season with an average mark awarded of 78.56. Sixty seven low mark reports were received from clubs with a number of referees getting multiple reports. The Referees Committee do take these reports seriously and three referees, who had received multiple reports were actually removed from our list and their County informed. It is still a shame that many of the reports centre on one decision and do not reflect the complete performance of the referee and many just do not follow the marking guidelines in the handbook.

Administration is as important for referees as is their performance and also it is worth noting that of 213 reported late kick offs, 68 were due to the late arrival of the referee, so a 5% increase on season 16/17 and unfortunately the same refs frequently late. In the coming season the league are issuing a club/referee charter and any referee that does not meet the requirements of that Charter will be spoken to regarding improvement.

We did have successes with our referees with three on our current list being promoted to level 4, sadly making them no longer available to us, but to all three we wish you well in your refereeing careers. To all the referees that have committed their time to the league we thank you and hope that you will all re-register very soon for season 2018/19 as at the time of writing only 50% have done so.

Many of our referees were rewarded with County Cup Final appointments as Referees, Assistants or 4th Officials. To all those referees it was reward for their performance over the season and as a league we should be proud of them and 44 Many of our referees were rewarded with County Cup

Final appointments as Referees, Assistants or 4th Officials. To all those referees it was reward for their performance over the season and as a league we should be proud of them and it is further proof that this league attracts many top referees in grass roots football.

Representative Team

The success of the Representative team in the FA Inter League Cup (we actually were the only undefeated team in the competition!!) and the subsequent FA charge and appeal was documented in my opening paragraphs. In other competitions the team did not do well in the past season losing games in the Argonaut Trophy to SAL 5-0, Herts County League 2-0 and losing on penalties to the Arthurian League following a 5-5 draw at full time. We however did defeat Oxford University 2-1 in a friendly match arranged at Parmiterians School in Watford. To all players that played for the Representative Team it has to be said that they were a credit to the AFC in all matches played and that in different circumstances we may have soon been jetting off to Croatia as the English representatives in the UEFA trophy. The player of the year this season was Ryan Bright of Old Meadonians.

On the Pitch

The Premier Division title was won by Old Hamptonians who were never really pressurised towards the end of the season, as their main challengers all dropped points in the weeks of multi games throughout April & May. This was a complete turn-around after almost being relegated last season. Clapham OX found the step up from senior one too big and unfortunately go back down. More surprising is that Old Minchendenians join them, as they failed to secure the point required, in their final game thus being relegated on goal difference. Senior One went to the last match as Wandsworth Borough needing a point in their final game at 3rd placed Reigate, lost 3-0 thereby handing the title to Southgate Olympic, a remarkable achievement from a club that had its issues last season. Relegated are Economicals and Kings OB, both who struggled all season with player commitment at this level and most surprisingly Old Salvatorians, who drop a division two seasons in succession.

Albanian walked away as champions of Senior Two North, winning by nine clear points and were easily far too strong for that division. Amazingly Old Woodhouseians only secured one point from their final five games to end up in bottom place and joined on goal difference by UCL Academicals who lost the crucial game in April to Hale End and went down on goal difference to the same club.

The race for Senior 3 South title was thrown into disarray by London lawyers continued failure to play games due to lack of players and indeed caused both Old Meadonians Reserves & Fitzwilliam OB issues by calling off in the final weeks of the season. The title went to Meadonians Reserves on goal difference with both teams securing a deserved promotion. Lawyers were deservedly relegated.. Finally in the two Senior 3 divisions, Economicals Reserves & Old Minchendenians Reserves both were crowned champions, strange when both their 1st XI's were relegated. Players in the wrong xi's possibly?

Congratulations to all other league & cup winners and it was a strong year for the one smaller clubs with Old Uffingtonians, University of Herts, Mayfield, Parkfield, London Welsh, RBS & Mickleham OB all securing championship titles. On the County Cup it was a poor year with the only County Cup winners, Dorkinians, who defeated Reigate in the Surrey Kent Senior Final 2-0.

Closing Summary

May I offer my thanks to all Club Secretaries & Match Secretaries for their help throughout the season and I hope and trust my badgering for information does not alienate me.

To our many referees thanks for your commitment and again long may it continue in this very well run league. Finally of course to the AFC Officers & Executive Committee who have continued to support me in my role during the past 12 months and without them our league would not be held in such high esteem, as it is in the Grass Roots Football world. Enjoy the summer and 18/19 season starts on 8th September 2018 with the senior fixtures and the rest a week later.

Ian Andrews (AFC Secretary) – June 2018