



# Amateur Football Combination

## National Respect Gold Award League 2012

### Spirit of Football



[www.amateurfootballcombination.com](http://www.amateurfootballcombination.com)



@AmateurFC

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SPIRIT OF FOOTBALL 2016/2017

Pre-season circular August 2016

(PLEASE ARRANGE FOR COPIES OF THIS CIRCULAR TO BE MADE AVAILABLE WITHIN YOUR CLUB, BUT PARTICULARLY TO TEAM CAPTAINS AND MANAGERS – IGNORANCE OF IT'S CONTENTS WILL BE NO DEFENCE IF PROBLEMS ARISE)

Although last season, as a League, we maintained the average mark of 7.85 achieved in 15/16, seeing in fact a slight increase in this figure to 7.86, it is clear that for whatever reason it has not been possible to reach the heights of a few years ago when we were able to hit 7.92. Yes we did move, marginally, in the right direction but we need to strive to close this gap with the continuing support of Clubs keeping the initiative always in mind, holding regular and objective briefings as to what we are looking for with regards to on field attitude and behaviour (ignoring ie not copying what the professionals seemingly get away with!) and for captains/managers to remind their teams of this Respect League's requirements prior to every game. It should be reported that there were 44 Clubs meeting the League's average mark or above with 41 below.

As to next season, there is no good reason to change the existing target figure of 7.92 – yes, challenging but achievable as has been seen in the past. This means that 51 Clubs below this target figure will need to raise their game by ensuring that the programme is known and accepted by all playing members, new and old, as is the case with the better performing Clubs who, I am sure, will keep up their good work and continue to raise the bar as far as is possible. It is vital that all playing members, new and old, are subject to a robust vetting procedure (late call-ins as well) – experience shows that there is usually substantial room for improvement in this regard by poorly performing Clubs – DO NOT ALLOW MEMBERSHIP TO ANY PLAYER WHO IS NOT PREPARED TO CONFORM.

Comparing 2014/15 with 2015/16 (bottom 20 Clubs in the 2016/17 constitution):- (RSO refers to Respect Sanction Offences)

1. 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 – HAC, Old Edmontonians, Sinjuns Grammarians (RSO), Old Pegasonians, Glyn Old Boys (RSO), Old Manorians, Hampstead Heathens (RSO) and Nat West Bank (RSO).  
They should endeavour to be consistent in their performance so that they don't seesaw in and out of the bottom 20 as has been seen in past seasons.
2. In the opposite direction, there were 10 Clubs who moved from outside the bottom positions to inside with a lower average mark season on season –

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

Old Woodhousians, Old Sedcopians, Mill Hill Village, Clapham Old Xaverians (RSO), Park View, Leyton County Old Boys (RSO), Heathrow Seniors, Old Tenisonians,\*Old Boilers (new Club) and Sloane (new Club) – plenty to work on for these Clubs.

3. The following Clubs started and finished in the bottom 20 positions – however, all had an improved average mark at the end of the season albeit only just in one case – Old Kingsburians, Old Grantonians and Hinton and Finchley Revolution Old Boys. These Clubs need to redouble their efforts so as to be outside of the bottom 20 by the end of the 16/17 season.
4. It is disappointing to report that there were 7 Clubs who started and finished in the bottom 20 positions with an average mark lower at the end of the season than at the start (the figure in brackets indicates the number of times the Club has been in the bottom 20 during the last 5 years) – Royal Sun Alliance(3),\* Hale End Athletic(4),\* Old Uffingtonians(4), John Fisher Old Boys(4), \*Lea Valley(5),\* Old Isleworthians(5) and\* Old Aloysians(4).

The asterisk indicates that the Club has been interviewed recently by the League Executive and appropriate action proposed.

All the Clubs in points 2 & 4 above (and 3 perhaps) need to take stock of their position and accept that their current procedures should be more effective and need to be reviewed incorporating a change in Club culture as regards SOF. Repeat offenders cannot keep on expecting a sympathetic hearing from the League and fellow Clubs if they are unwilling to make appropriate changes. Why put your Club's reputation at risk not to mention the League's 'Respect' status.

As to the Clubs in point 4, even though a number have been recently seen by the League Executive, we feel that confirmation should be obtained from all 7 that they accept and have actioned the following four points, with responses being sent to their respective SOF Co-ordinators by the 30<sup>th</sup> September:-

- A) All Club members have been made aware and accept the underlying principles of the SOF/Respect programmes. As a 'Respect League', it is expected that Codes of Conduct are read, agreed and signed by all associated with the Club. New players recruited during the season should be dealt with likewise – short term last minute fill-ins should be informed of the League's behavioural requirements before entering the field of play.
- B) Team Managers/captains/vice captains have been made aware and accept their specific responsibilities under the programmes. It is essential that suitable captains are appointed who are prepared to have a good working relationship with the referee/match officials seeking to work with them during the game to maintain good behaviour and discipline, accepting a degree of responsibility for the behaviour of their team-mates.
- C) The Club, as a whole, is now intent on positively addressing the need to improve on-field behaviour and the way games are played.
- D) You have taken on board the information under the heading 'Taking Responsibility' below and that each team captain has been given and read a copy of this circular.

If responses are not to hand by the due date, a fine under Rule 23(b) will be raised against the Club(s) concerned.

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## USUAL IMPORTANT REMINDERS FOR THE BENEFIT OF NEW/ EXISTING CLUB OFFICER

### Is your Club fully committed to SOF/Respect?

The League and the FA have decided that the way in which our football is played is all important. It would be surprising and disappointing if there were still any Clubs which do not positively embrace the SOF/Respect programmes but it needs to be said that there are still some that need close monitoring by the SOF Co-ordinators, presumably because they are still not able to persuade/convince or, in some cases, even inform members to accept the principals and adopt them on the field of play. IT'S AMAZING THAT WE STILL COME ACROSS PLAYERS/MANAGERS WHO ARE UNAWARE OF THE INITIATIVE – CLUBS WILL KNOW IF THIS APPLIES TO THEM – THEY NEED TO SORT IT OUT.

### It's Not My Fault

There are no excuses for bad behaviour/lack of respect to opponents and/or officials. Let's be clear about this – everyone in the AFC is responsible for their own actions. Referees will make mistakes, and do make decisions you don't agree with (the two things are not the same) – that's part of football at all levels. Spirit of Football/Respect is about how to behave on the field of play, and how you expect others to behave towards you.

### Taking Responsibility

Clubs and Club Officers need to understand that responsibility for behaviour ultimately falls to them. Clubs need to keep on top of where problems lie and take steps to identify and deal with troublemakers and not wait for the Co-ordinators or the League to suggest the measures that need to be taken. 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 let the League know so as to prevent them resurfacing at other Club(s) in the League.

If Clubs and League Officers are firm but fair, and if the referees/officials are competent and in control and captains work with them and set a good example by taking responsibility to deal with other team members indiscipline at the time it takes place, behaviour will improve and the level of sportsmanship will be at the high but realistic level that the League has set itself. Players should compete in the spirit of respect, friendship and fair play which is all important when it comes to playing the game within the laws – yes, combative and competitive but disciplined and sporting. Captains and officials have a major responsibility to ensure that the game is played within this framework.

## CLUBS – THE ESSENTIALS

Codes of Conduct as mentioned previously.

The current registration requirements/procedures will continue to be applied.

Captains and vice captains to take responsibility for their players' actions and behaviour as mentioned previously. Each is expected to wear a Respect (or Spirit of Football) armband – one per team will be issued to each Club by the beginning of the season. Rob Gibbs should be contacted for any additions from the League shop.

As usual, two SOF-Respect posters will be received by Clubs for suitable display where possible (clubhouses, training venues, appropriate notice boards etc as well as acting as recruitment aids). Contact Rob if additional copies are required.

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

- Consider incorporating Spirit of Football – Respect League – Gold logo branding on Club headed paper as and when arranging re-printing.
- Remind your captains/managers/players as to the likelihood of appointed referees pre-match briefings as to the way they intend to officiate games – including making reference to the requirements of SOF/Respect. Please encourage your Club referees to do likewise as well as providing marks for each game.
- We should continue our efforts to curtail foul and abusive language which applies to all levels of football including our own –in line with the changes being introduced at the higher levels. Our match officials may well decide to control such language more strictly from players, managers and spectators – any resultant dissent will not be tolerated.
- Please mark your opposition carefully each week, considering all elements of SOF/Respect – be objective, assessing solely the game in hand and without, essentially, being swayed by a particular unsavoury incident normally dealt with by the issue of cards. A historical judgement of a Club should not be allowed to cloud your current thinking in this regard. If you consider a poor mark appropriate ie below average 5, please take the trouble to give it and briefly explain why – as most, if not all, of you should now realise, we do act on reports, both good and bad, but this is dependent on our receiving realistic and unbiased feedback.
- Club marks, together with those given by appointed referees (and Club referees please) are important elements when considering the annual awards including those for ‘SOF-Respect’ for which we usually reward the three category winning Clubs with two good quality footballs.

In summary, if SOF/Respect is to be fully embraced, it is essential that every player in every Club is aware of the expectations of the League and as said at the start of this circular, Clubs should hold regular and objective reminder briefings in one form or another regarding attitudes and behaviour on the field of play. All arrangements mentioned will set us apart from others but to do so we need to have the co-operation of all involved in our football.

Contact details of the Spirit of Football Co-ordinators are as per the website and handbook.

If you have any queries, problems, thoughts or suggestions to improve these programmes please contact your co-ordinator or Rob Gibbs who will be more than happy to discuss any aspect with you.