

Early History of Elizabeth & Districts Referees Association

By

Jim Main

In the beginning

The Elizabeth and Districts Referees Association had its humble beginning on the 23rd of October 1967. A meeting was held at the Red Lion Hotel, Elizabeth North with the view to starting up a referees association. Those present at this important meeting were Dennis Moore, Michael Moore, Alec Cowie, Ray Torre, Bill Roche, Bob Harris, Bill Graham, Frank James, Fred Beck, Ernie Middleton and Ron Lant. It was Fred Beck, whom as Chairman of the Elizabeth Vale Junior Soccer Club suggested that they should form an association of referees to be known as the Far Northern Zone Referees Association. At the inaugural meeting Fred presented a single page constitution for ratification by those members present.

The constitution comprised of 17 points, the two main points were to provide referees to the Far Northern Zone Junior Soccer Association (now Elizabeth & Districts Junior Soccer Association) and secondly to further the cause of soccer in the area. At this meeting Fred Beck was elected Chairman, Ernie Middleton was elected secretary and Ron Lant was elected as Treasurer. The title of treasurer was an honorary title only, for the first two years in the life of the association no registration fees were sought, no match fees were charged and so the treasurer had no money to care for. It was Bernie Weeks who provided the association with a suitable badge to wear; the E&DJSA badge, which for some apparent reason I was not able to find out included the logo of a bunch of grapes. After six months, due to work commitments, Fred Beck resigned as Chairman, and Dennis Moore assumed the position as chairman. This was the start of Dennis's long and respected affiliation with the referees association.

Of the original eleven members, eight were bona fide referees and the other three considered themselves competent enough to referee a game of soccer. Prior to the forming of the association the only way teams got referees was through the dedication of some soccer minded people who would travel around the soccer fields asking the coaches if they wanted someone to referee their game. One such person was Alec Cowie, a Scot, who would travel around on his push bike in the Elizabeth West area dressed in his referees uniform looking for a game of soccer about to commence. Dennis Moore who was Chairman of the Elizabeth North Soccer Club would referee games in the Elizabeth North area for teams other than the under 10 team he coached. Frank James refereed in the Elizabeth Downs area and Bob Hams officiated in the Elizabeth Park area. Fred Beck lived in the Elizabeth Vale area and refereed there. Ted Balcombe operated in the Salisbury area and Bill Graham refereed games associated with Salisbury Consolidated.

For the start of the 1968 season, Ernie Middleton as secretary appointed referees generally in the areas, mention above. During the 1968 season Bob Harris suggested that the association should have it's own identity so Bob designed a badge that could be described as a goal area with goal posts and a soccer ball in the middle of it. There seems to be some discrepancy about how long this badge was in use, but it was believed to be for two seasons.

The committee for the start of the 1969 season were Dennis Moore as Chairman, Frank James as Vice Chairman, Ernie Middleton as Secretary and Appointment Secretary and Ron Lant as the "Treasurer" (still there was no money to worry about). Just before the September meeting at the Red Lion Bernie Weeks contacted the secretary to ask if he could address the meeting. This turned out to be a very important meeting in more ways than one, for this meeting pushed the association on it's way to being a formable body. Bernie indicated that as spokesman for the coaches he was relaying a complaint from them stating they were not happy about the standard of some referees' performances. He recommended that the association train it's own referees and at the same time charge the clubs fees to enable the referees association to pay its way. It should be remembered that of the eleven founder members three were not certificated referees.

At the next AGM the members made an important decision, which did not go down to well with all of the members. This decision required that to become a member of the referees association you had to hold a referee's certificate. One founder member Bob Harris resigned saying that he was not prepared to sit an exam for a referee's certificate. So during the closed season of 1969 an advertisement was placed in the local paper seeking interested parties who were prepared to join the first referee's training course. The presenters of the first course were Dennis Moore and Frank James. Those who turned up for the first course included Alec Wilson, Jim Main, Brian Horslen Kim Hutchinson and Peter Coveney. Although Jim Main already had a 3rd class certificate from the Northumberland Referees association he used the course as a refresher. At a Council of Clubs meeting early in 1970 Dennis Moore reported that there were 10 potential referees on the course and this would swell the referees association beyond the twenty mark, but what was most important was that they were all trained referees. Although the referees were trained they were not certified under the Soccer Federation. The EDRA produced their own certificate, which was signed by the Chairman and the Secretary. This certificate was not recognised anywhere other than with the EDRA. During the early years the E&DJSA considered the referees association as being under their control. The referees association at that time did not contest this consideration but as the numbers grew in the association there was evidence of the need to be independent.

The 70's

The referees executive committee for the start of the 70's saw only one change. Kim Hutchinson replaced Ron Lant as treasurer. At the time Kim was only 17 years old and up to the time of this research was the youngest ever committee member. I believe that this achievement still remains to this day. The 1970 season also saw the start of the association charging the clubs for services rendered. The fees were \$1 for under 13's and above, and 50 cents for the under 12's and below. The bills for services rendered were sent to the clubs once a month and returned by cheque. The first year the association kept all the fees. There was strong feeling from some of the members that the fees should be abolished, nevertheless the fees system remained.

The following year the referees were reimbursed fees on a monthly basis. I have always considered the 70's as being the golden era for junior soccer in the area. I recall officiating at Argana Park in the under 13 league with a crowd in excess of 250 spectators. The game was between Elizabeth Downs and Elizabeth West. Both clubs had enormous followings although I must admit the crowd showed extreme bias towards their particular team. There were many off the field fights during the 70's and the disciplinary committee had to show strength of character in their endeavours. Referees were threatened; in particular the cadet referees were intimidated. Following some nasty incidents some clubs were denied referees until they could prove to the association they could safeguard the welfare of the referee attending. This action created friction with the E&DJSA.

There were many characters in the game and none could be remembered more than the stocky and colourful Scot Andy Willock from the Elizabeth West Club. Andy was very passionate about his team and considered by some as too extreme to this extent. Andy gave all referees a serve during the game and at full time he would be the first to come and apologise for his behaviour. Away from the soccer field a more jovial character you couldn't wish to meet. I refereed one of Andy's team games in the under 12. The team had never been beaten since being together from the under 6's. That day they were beaten by an odd goal. For the boys this was an experience they had never felt before. Some were in tears and others went around in a daze. Such was the passion of the team and of soccer at that time. An article in the Salisbury, Elizabeth and Gawler News Review of April 28th 1971 saw the E&DJSA boasting a compliment of 22 individual clubs with 152 teams in junior soccer. Junior soccer in the area was steaming ahead.

The 1970/71 referees course saw a future stalwart of the association attend namely Ted Jackson. There was no change in the executive committee until 1972 when Kim Hutchinson was transferred through his job to Naracoorte. Jim Main took over as Treasurer and Bill McNickle took over as Chairman. Dennis remained on the committee as Vice Chairman. At the AGM of 1972 the members voted to cease the practice of naming best and fairest on the match card. There were three main reasons namely: the referee had enough to do officiating the game; the pressure of the boys to over extend so as to catch the referees eyes and lastly it did little to encourage team spirit.

The Executive Committee following the 1972 AGM were Chairman Bill McNickle, Vice Chairman Dennis Moore, Secretary Frank James and Treasurer Jim Main. Also in 1972 the E&DJSA in their wisdom divided the clubs into the northern and southern zone. Chairman of the northern zone was Ernie Middleton who by this time had resigned from the referees association. By this time, the association was back to wearing the E&DJSA badge, the predominately white badge clashed. aesthetically with the black uniform of the referee. In addition there was a resurgence of the independence movement within the EDRA away from the E&DJSA. As a result a competition was announced for the design of a new association badge that was to come into use for the start of the 1973 season. In February 1973 three designs were considered, two from Alec Wilson and one from Colin Davies. One of the designs from Alec was chosen as the badge for the coming season and the design from Colin Davies became the logo on our letterhead.

Also at this meeting the members decided to show their appreciation to Ernie Middleton for his work with the association on his pending retirement from the association. They presented Ernie with a pair of opal cuff links and an opal tie pin. Ernie stood up, accepted the gifts and then dropped a bombshell by announcing that he would be returning to active duty at the beginning of the next season. I don't recall him handing back the gifts. Just before the start of the 1973 season the Vice-Chairman took over the duties of Appointment Secretary. It was agreed that the Vice-Chairman had little work to do other than stand in for the chairman in his absence. Up until that time the secretary gave out appointments. At the 1973 AGM the members agreed to invest \$200 in the Elizabeth City Soccer Club, as a means of supporting top grade soccer in the area and also to provide a bond with the club and the association. During the 1973 season the association announced a bank balance of \$1500, which in today's terms would be about \$10,000. There was a need to put the excess money into something useful.

Dennis Moore proposed that we should run a soccer competition and call the competition the "Referees Cup". The competition would be restricted to those teams who had not won any honours in any competition run by the E&DJSA. The age group chosen was the under 11's. The inaugural winners of the competition were Elizabeth Downs. Mary McNickle wife of the Chairman of the day presented the Referees Cup and medals. Mary's irrepressible effervescent personality topped off a successful day, especially when she cuddled the smallest player of the winning team instead of the customary hand shake. There were some fears within the association regarding the "take over" of

the association by club officials and therefore influence decisions that may not have been in the interest of referees.

At the 1973 AGM, a motion was passed which disallowed any club Official from being a member of the executive committee. In March 1974 the first interest payment from Elizabeth City arrived and the princely sum of \$3 was added to the Coffers of the association. In 1974 Dennis Moore became the official association referees coach with Mike Allen appointed as the first referees inspector. In May 1974 the terms of reference for the coach was accepted. At the June meeting of 1974, the association saw the resignation of our oldest referee Fred Alves who was in his 70's by the time he decided to hang up his whistle. Len Spriggs in his book on soccer described Fred as the referee who wore Alex James style shorts stretching below the knees and a blazer top. Alas Fred was killed shortly afterwards in a car accident on a Sunday morning, returning home after refereeing at a Fairview Park Carnival.

1974 was not considered a good year for the association. The treasurer reported that there was only \$219 in the bank and the association had out standing debts of \$417. Two members of the association came to the rescue with Dennis Moore and Ted Jackson loaning the association sufficient funds to carry on. The financial situation of the association highlighted the costly and cumbersome method of obtaining match fees. The system provided that the appointment secretary would supply the treasurer the list of fixtures covered by the association. The treasurer would then make of note of who did what matches, then send to the individual clubs a bill for services rendered. On receiving the monies from the clubs each referee was reimbursed the match fee minus a small amount to cover association cost.

There was a breakdown with this system due to the appointment secretary not supplying the treasurer the information on which games were covered and as a consequence no accounts were sent to the clubs and no money was coming into the association. This resulted in a no confidence vote against the appointment secretary of the day. Frank James took over as appointment Secretary. At the September monthly meeting the treasurer Jim Main tabled a new system of obtaining the fees instead of the costly system of billing the clubs. A special meeting was arranged in October 1974 for the proposal to be heard. At this meeting there were two factions at work with the chairman finding it difficult to maintain order. A three minute time limit was imposed on all speakers. Almost all those attending spoke on the subject. One faction insisting that there be no fees at all. The other faction saw that without some funding an organisation couldn't exist. Such was the ferocity of the meeting that at the end of the night no workable conclusion was apparent. It took the executive committee to intervene and to come up with a workable solution in the calm of Dennis Moore's living room. The consequence of the meeting enabled referees to accept, on behalf of the association, fees from the clubs and to pay annual registration fees. In my view common sense had prevailed. In addition it was agreed that match fees from the Queens Birthday Cup and the Challenge Cup including any representative games be retained by the association to offset costs. The association newsletter began in 1975.

For years the domain of the referees association was male dominated. At the September meeting of 1975 it was decided to allow females to enter the hallowed halls of the EDRA. Mrs Val Oswald of Elizabeth North attended the referee's course at the close of the season. Unfortunately she did not finish the course and the honour of the first female referee went to a young sixteen year old by the name of Sandra Burroughs. By now the association constitution required updating. The members instructed the executive committee to come up with a revised constitution. The members accepted a new constitution in March 1975. In 1976 Dennis Moore and Keith Hobbs were appointed inspectors, Len Lotts was co-opted on the committee and Ray Harding was our council of clubs rep. At the AGM the "cards system" was agreed to be used for cautions and send offs. In 1976 the introduction of the "plastic ball" caused a furore with calls saying it was too light and uncontrollable.

The AGM of 1976 saw Dennis Moore as Chairman, Cecil Cooper as Appointments Secretary / Vice Chairman, Colin Davies as Secretary and Jim Main as the Treasurer.

Before concluding this brief narrative on the first ten years of this association, a special thank you should be given to someone whom I consider was the backbone of the association during this period and this special commendation goes to Dennis Moore. Without Dennis' influence on many delicate matters and difficult problems the association may not have progressed as well as it has. Dennis held the association together through some very turbulent years through his charisma, his fine speaking voice and his humour. He once spoke at the annual dinner in the Elizabeth City clubrooms and had every- one laughing in the aisles. Dennis was the first life member the first referee's coach, and the last founder member to leave the association and a mentor to many referees through out the 70's. Dennis refereed his first game in 1949 with the Hampshire league and his last game with the under 9's on 29th, September 1979. Other referee's who made an impact with the association were Alec Wilson, for his badge design, Colin Davies for the legacy of our letterhead logo and Ted Jackson for his input and his performance as appointment secretary. A special thank must go to Betty Moore who made many cups of tea and put up with a noisy lot during the many executive meetings held at her house, Pat Jackson, 'Ted's wife, for being a stand in appointment secretary when Ted worked night shift and I believe Jim Main who made some contribution in the affairs of the association. Lastly to the many referees throughout the years who came and contributed to the success of the association.



Picture (left to right) - Dennis Moore, Michael Moore & Jim Main