

THE BIG CLEAN UP : A Review

Referees Meetings

Considerable publicity was given to meetings of Football League referees which took place after the opening of the season. We now have the opportunity to publish the circular issued by the Football League and, for the information of fans, here it is:

"Meetings of Football League Referees were held on Sunday August 15 at five venues throughout the country. The Agendas, which were identical for all meetings, were the result of over six months' deliberation by the Training Panel of past and present International Referees, working under the auspices of The League.

Particular attention was paid to matters on which Assessors had reported that there was a lack of uniformity in Referees' interpretations and where, because of this, Referees who operate in accordance with the Laws of the Game were being unjustly criticised.

In spite of many rumours to the contrary, there have not been any

changes of the Laws of the Game; this is not within the province of The Football League.

The emphasis was put upon the necessity for controlling violent and dirty play, and the correct interpretation of the Laws of the Game in an effort to minimise the possibility of differing interpretations. The meetings also discussed the instructions given to Linesmen, whose job it is to co-operate with and support Referees.

These meetings do not mean that The Football League games are going to be refereed in a similar manner to those in the World Cup in Mexico; nor does it mean that the tackle from behind is to be outlawed, as has been previously reported; it simply means that The League is asking Referees to be firm in their control and operate in accordance with the Laws of the Game.

The action taken by The Football League is in line with the Memorandum which The Football Association issued for display in the players' dressing rooms."

The other man's viewpoint . . .

DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR

In the end, a referee must control a game by the strength of his personality, his good sense and humanity. Flourishing the laws like a bludgeon is no answer.

My own sad feeling is that there is no easy, comprehensive corrective for the present mess. Football in England is an over-ripe fruit, in grave danger of going rotten. Now that it is so much bigger, richer, more successful, more full of self-importance than any other sport, it has become a little like Hollywood or ancient Rome—menaced by excesses from within and by enemies from without.

I do not suggest that we should let the terracing rowdies (those contemporary Goths and Vandals) overrun the citadel, sack it and leave us to rebuild. But I am sure that, in the sense of general well-being, football will get worse before it gets better.

When it does get better it is likely to be a more modest phenomenon and much less of a man-eater. The most fluid, imaginative and spontaneously graceful of ball games deserves to be rescued from delusions of grandeur.

HUGH McILVANNEY, *The Observer*