



# THE NEUTRAL ZONE

## BAFRA's newsletter for clubs and teams

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### Welcome

Welcome to a special end of year issue of *The Neutral Zone* – BAFRA's newsletter for clubs and teams.



[www.bafra.org](http://www.bafra.org)

### BAFRA end of year report

With Christmas approaching and football ended until 2010, it is appropriate to bring everyone up to date with some recent developments.

Most importantly, we're making progress in discussions with BAFA and the other organisations about how to recruit, train and schedule more officials.

I'm pleased to report two significant initiatives:

1. Firstly, BAFA has won another round of funding from the Sport England Impact & Improvement Fund, and some of that has been earmarked for officiating recruitment and training. The final details are yet to be worked out but we expect to focus on two geographic areas where there are shortages of officials (North East England and South West England) and probably one other area.
2. Secondly, BAFA has identified officiating recruitment and training as the highest priority for its 2010-11 budget. We are currently discussing the details of how much money will be committed and a final decision will be made at the beginning of February.

Who are these initiatives going to train and what are they going to be trained in?

I think we've finally won the argument that BAFRA (as the BAFA officiating department) should remain responsible for all officiating training and standards, and that the leagues should remain responsible for running their competitions. Instead of the potentially divisive split between "fully fledged" officials and "team judges", we will instead simply be having "officials". If some of them happen to be associated with particular clubs and some of them not, then fair enough, but they will all be trained and registered as officials even if they are also registered with BAFA as players, coaches, volunteers or in other capacities.

We are proposing to reshape our induction training programme to make it easier for people to do it. This will involve special one and two-day training workshops being run in targeted parts of the country, as well as the one-to-one face-to-face training we do currently. In addition, we will offer our induction training in "distance learning" mode, using technology to

deliver training material to people and allowing them to discuss and ask questions online too. Training for flag football will follow that for contact football.

A meeting of BAFA's new Workforce Committee was due to be held on 12<sup>th</sup> December to sort out the details of this, and what leagues and teams will contribute to the recruitment campaigns, but unfortunately had to be cancelled due to the unavailability of other organisations to attend. Hopefully this meeting will be rescheduled for early in the New Year. The Rules Committee when it meets in January will be looking to tighten up the rules to ensure that the safety of participants is not compromised and that the sport's insurance premiums do not leap up.

BAFA has also established a Competition Committee whose role is to ensure that the schedules of both leagues and the availability of officials all coincide to optimum effect. This will meet at the same time as the Workforce Committee.

Our indications for 2010 are that we will be able to put out a similar number of crews as in 2009, spread regionally as follows:

Scotland	1.5
North West	1.5
North East / Yorkshire & Humberside	1
West Midlands / East Midlands	3
Wales (South) / South West	1.5
South East / London	6
East	3
TOTAL	17.5

A half-crew in this context really means that depending on availability on a particular week we may be able to put out one more or one fewer crew in that region. We will be advising the leagues that they can schedule one more game than the quota in a region providing they schedule one less in an adjoining region.

The above reflects that the second half of 2009 has not been quite such a good year for recruitment as the same period in 2008 was. With BAFA, we are talking to a new firm of consultants who will be advising and assisting on recruitment strategies and campaigns, among several other things. However, we need to mobilise the efforts of someone in each locality to put up posters, liaise with local media and other contacts, and to generally promote *participating* in the sport rather than just *playing* it. BAFRA isn't everywhere, so we need to involve clubs and/or other partners in this to at least some extent.

2010 may well be a big year for technology in BAFRA. In addition to moving some of our training online, we are also looking at introducing a new online scheduling system. We will be setting this up during the early part of next year, with a view to introducing it for the 2010-11 BUAFL season if everything goes smoothly.

As a sport, we faced many challenges in the past year, but I'm pleased to say that we have worked through them and are looking forward to meeting the new challenges that 2010 will inevitably bring.

We all know that British American football is a work in progress. We are not the NFL and never will be. The vast majority of our players play for the sheer enjoyment of it, the camaraderie of being part of a team, and the distinct levels of fulfilment that both participating and winning bring. BAFRA provides a perfect foil to all this – as officials, we all share a unique bond, and we get to see the action (good and bad) in all its close up glory, while

ensuring that games are played as fairly and safely as possible. Increasingly we are seeing the benefits of working together with leagues, teams, coaches and players to help the sport grow.

I'd like to give a big thank you to everyone who is working on BAFRA's behalf. That certainly includes all the BAFRA board members (Dan, Ben, Pete, Andrew, Davie, Paul and Steve), plus all the other people who serve on our committees or who do dedicated work for the Association.

On behalf of the BAFRA Board, I would like to wish everyone involved in British American football a merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Jim Briggs.  
president@bafra.org

## Team pack

BAFRA's team pack is available on our website. It contains resources on rules, useful information about BAFRA, as well as some material to help you help us recruit officials.

## Feedback

If you have any feedback or questions about anything you've read here, contact us at [nz@bafra.org](mailto:nz@bafra.org). We look forward to hearing from you, and thank all those who have already contributed.

If you want to be added to or removed from our mailing list, simply let us know. If your team or club's game manager didn't receive this edition, please let us have his/her email address so that we can be sure to send them the next edition.

We hope that clubs will pass on the contents of *The Neutral Zone* to all their members. If a club wishes to reproduce articles in their game day programme or on their website, permission to do so is given, provided the use is for the good of football and does not seek to criticise BAFRA or any of its members. Commercial use requires explicit copyright consent from BAFRA.

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