



THE NEUTRAL ZONE

BAFRA's newsletter for clubs and teams

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Issue: 7
March 2010

Welcome

Welcome to the seventh issue of *The Neutral Zone* – BAFRA's newsletter for clubs and teams. Our aim is to bring it out regularly during the year to keep everyone up to date with what is happening in BAFRA, to officials and officiating, and other things that are going on in British American football.

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Training courses for new American football officials

Following the successful bid to Sport England for Impact and Improvement funding, BAFA are planning to hold a series of American football Official training courses. These courses are aimed at the beginner official. The goal of the course is to train attendees to a level where they are competent to officiate American Football.

The courses will each consist of one day of face-to-face learning. Three of the courses will be for those interested in officiating contact football; the fourth will be for officiating flag football.

The courses will be held on the following dates:

- 13th March (contact football) Newcastle-upon-Tyne
- 27th March (contact football) Hatfield, Herts
- 27th March (contact football) Bristol
- 27th March (flag football) Meriden, Warwickshire

Attendees will receive a Rulebook, Mechanics Manual and an Induction Training Manual.

The shortfall in suitably qualified officials has been identified as one of the key priorities within BAFA, and with planned tightening of regulation regarding who can officiate in games



teams are encouraged to support in the identification of people who could attend these courses.

Leading the contact football courses will be Britain's international panel officials, Davie Parsons and Jim Briggs. EFAF flag official Martin Cockerill will be among the presenters at the flag course.

For more information and to book go to <http://www.bafra.org/book.htm>

A flyer advertising the events is included with this issue. Please print it out and pin it up wherever you think a potential American football official might see it. We would appreciate any help clubs can give with publicity on their websites and in local media.

BAFRA freezes costs to teams

BAFRA has announced that the fees that teams pay for officials will be frozen for 2010-11.

In view of the current financial climate, the BAFRA Board has agreed to keep the fees for officials and the administration fee it charges teams in all BAFA-affiliated competitions at the same levels as in 2009-10. Discounts will continue to apply for clubs who host a double-header - only one administration fee will be charged.

BAFRA reviews its fees each year, and the current officiating fee for a qualified official of £40 has remained constant for several years. A reduced fee of £25 is charged for an official who is undergoing training but has not yet reached "qualified" level. This would include a player or coach who was also registered for officiating but not yet met the qualification criteria. The administration fee is £65, but is halved for youth or junior games.

In one change to the Terms & Conditions, BAFRA has made it easier for teams whose game is at risk because of weather or pitch conditions. If game management notifies BAFRA more than 24 hours in advance that a game is "at risk" due to bad weather or unplayable field conditions, we will accept cancellation without charge at any time up to the time when the officials set off to travel to the game.

BAFRA's Terms & Conditions for the provision of officials can be found at <http://www.bafra.org/rulesctee/rulebook/2010/terms.pdf>. The Annex that sets out the fees can be found at <http://www.bafra.org/info/handbook/tcannex2010.htm>.

Queries may be directed to BAFRA's Director of Operations (operations@bafra.org) or Director of Finance (finance@bafra.org).

2010 BAFRA Convention nearly here

BAFRA will hold its annual Convention on Saturday 20th and Sunday 21st March in Coventry.

The 2010 Convention seems set to surpass the 2009 event. At time of going to press, 70 members had registered, with a great number set to travel and attend on Friday night. 75 members attended the 2009 event, which was widely seen as a great success, and it appears that there is every chance of the event being even bigger and better in 2010.

The main theme of the Convention is training. Over the two days, members will attend a thorough programme of training activities, covering all aspects of officiating. There will be plenty of game film from a number of sources to watch and it's used extensively, including during the breaks. The 2010 rule changes will also be covered in detail, and the Annual Exam (which all BAFRA members must take) is traditionally issued to members present, which marks the start of the exam period. Some members have been known to save themselves a stamp by receiving the exam paper on Saturday, and then completing and returning it to the Exam Committee by Sunday afternoon!

Each year we invite a guest speaker from the USA. This year it will be Jim Jackson, who is currently Co-ordinator of Football Officials for the Ohio Valley Conference. He is in charge of

recruiting, training and developing the OVC's officiating staff. He also makes game assignments and oversees the conference assessment program. Prior to taking the OVC job, he was an on-field official of many years' standing, most recently as Referee with the Sun Belt Conference, during which time he was the Sun Belt's highest-rated official in 2002. He was also assigned to work a Silicon Valley Football Classic and an Alamo Bowl during his time with the Sun Belt.

The weekend also incorporates the Annual General Meeting of BAFRA Ltd., which (among other things) this year will see the election of a new President in the wake of Jim Briggs's decision not to stand for re-election in order to spend more time with his family.

Aside from training and business, the Convention is an unmissable opportunity for officials from up and down the country to meet up, socialise, and generally have a very enjoyable time. Feedback from last year's event has shown that it was very useful on some level to all members, from those who have been members for 25 years to those who at the time had been members for 25 days.

Teams should note that no officials will be scheduled on the weekend of the Convention.

BAFRA position on BAFA issues

BAFRA continues to support BAFA's position as the National Governing Body for the sport in Great Britain.

There are many things in the sport that can be done better. Referees have to get better; coaches need to get better; players need to get better; administrators need to get better; clubs need to get better; facilities need to get better. We all need to be better at getting better. We can only accomplish these goals by working together.

We remain willing to talk to and work together with everyone else who is helping to build the sport. Many of the issues have been close to resolution for some time and, in some cases, recent events have brought resolution of them closer.

BAFRA remains committed (as it has done for over 25 years) to the development of American football in Britain and will do everything in its power to ensure that it takes place in an open and inclusive manner.

BAFA Rules Committee meeting

The BAFA Rules Committee held its 2010 meeting on Saturday 23rd January in Luton.

Full details of the 2010 rule changes will be issued by BAFA in due course. All changes made by the NCAA to Rules 2-10 were accepted. In addition to this, the remaining differences between BAFA rules and NCAA rules were discussed by the Committee in detail. The committee considered a number of changes to Rule 13 (which sets out game management requirements) and discussed the creation of some guidelines regarding the safety and quality of fields.

The committee also accepted the recommendation of BAFA's flag working party to adopt the rules for flag football created last year by IFAF, and authorised the working party to create a very small number of exceptions to those rules, which will be issued shortly along with a list of differences between BAFA 2009 and IFAF 2010 rules. None of the exceptions will be to playing or conduct rules, only to rules that deal with administrative issues.

New BAFRA induction manual

Over the past two years, BAFRA has been substantially revising, updating, and improving the Induction Manual that is issued to all new members in order to make their initial training as easy as possible.

The process was initiated by BAFRA Director Dan Bridgland, who has also taken considerable responsibility for training new members in Kent. The Board created a Working Party to revise the manual, which was chaired by Bridgland and also included Pete Parsons, Steve Tonkinson, Paul Sutton and Jim Briggs.

The revision process covered all aspects of the manual; from the number of sections, to the order in which new officials are asked to learn the different aspects of officiating. The end result is a much-improved document that will only improve BAFRA's ability to train new officials.

Dan wishes to thank Pete, Steve, Paul, Jim, and everyone else who assisted with the process.

Members' survey

Every year, BAFRA sends out a survey to its members with their renewal forms, asking all manner of questions on a number of subjects.

The survey demonstrated a generally high level of satisfaction with BAFRA's current situation and activities. Approximately 95% of the membership believes that the work done by the directors is "satisfactory" or better. Over 80% of members said that they were given sufficient notice of most of their assignments.

Perhaps the most encouraging part of the survey was that everyone who attended the 2009 Convention said they gained from it. Virtually the entire memberships either attended and gained, or wanted to go but were unable to attend for some unavoidable reason. BAFRA members are also satisfied with the current fee structure (over 90% described it as currently being "just right"). However, over half would prefer to work on 5-man crews (rather than 4) even where this involves splitting £160 five ways instead of four.

BAFRA has been conducting annual surveys since 2006. The results and suggestions that are generated are taken into consideration by the Directors when deciding on BAFRA policy.

Prattley joins BAFA

From bafa.org.uk

BAFA is pleased to announce that Richard Prattley has been appointed as its new Finance Officer.

Richard replaces Pat Mapleston, who has overseen BAFA's finances for the past year. Gary Marshall, BAFA Chairman, paid a warm tribute to Pat Mapleston, saying, "Pat took over at a difficult time for BAFA, but has done an excellent job. The whole sport is grateful for the stability he has brought."

Marshall continued, "We were happy for him to carry on, but he has decided he wishes to pursue other endeavours outside the sport. We wish him the very best of luck with these."

Marshall also welcomed the new appointee. "Richard brings a lot of experience as a chartered certified accountant to this crucial role. In addition, he knows his way around football, having been involved in it for over 20 years as an official, working several bowl games in that time."

Feedback

If you have any feedback or questions about anything you've read here, contact us at 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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