

The referee and the world of football

by Pierre Schwinte,

a well-known football referee, who officiated at the semi-final

of the 1966 World Cup between Portugal and England

Maurice Pfefferkorn, a former journalist, once wrote :

"While football remains a single unit in its doctrine, philosophy and laws, each nation is free to express its personality and temperament within that unit."

The success of our favourite sport merits attention. It is bound up with the very essence of mankind.

Football is firstly a simple game and a means of free expression using physical and technical qualities and one's own judgement.

Every collective sport grows out of the game, which is thus the safeguard of enthusiasm.

"The evasion from our daily lives" of which Bergson spoke.

Football is secondly an organised game, which has become more defensive; it is very rare for an attacker to pass as easily into the defence as did Keegan and Graziani during the European Nations Championships.

The organisation of the defence is made up of positions which are a mirror image of the attack ; it is movement and therefore adaptation, improvisation and creation.

"It is that which is difficult which pleases", Alain said.

Thirdly, it is a sport which involves exerting oneself and, nearly always, competing against others. Competition which calls for fighting.

As Victor Hugo wrote: *"Those who live are those who fight."*

Coubertin said : *"The most important thing is not the winning but the taking part, for the essential in life is not to conquer, but to fight"*: and Aristotle used to teach that *"To act and not to suffer, that is the basis of what is agreeable"*.

If the essence of football, as a game, is enthusiasm, then fighting is the expression of that enthusiasm.

It is the total physical, technical and tactical commitment which makes the crowds vibrate and which enables the players to surpass

themselves, in an atmosphere of truth and loyalty, with total, sincere respect for the written and unwritten rules.

The world of football is an amalgam, a heterogeneous conjunction of persons, equipment, finance and influence ; it is the game of football and everything surrounding it, it is they who give it life, it is they who live it.

The referee is part of this, but he is very much alone, and often has to face being an ideal scapegoat in what should not be anything but a sport.

The world of football lives in a permissive, materialistic society which pays little attention to moral rectitude.

The European championship which has just taken place in Italy, some of the matches of which we were able to watch on television, revealed that modern-day football runs the risk of degenerating, of falling back to the level of pitched battles, which unfortunately take place in the presence of referees.

The hard game has developed at the same time as power and strength have played a determining role in this type of football. It is striking that the British players, because they have physical force, do not abuse it. And also that brutality appears more frequently among those players who are mortified by their lack of strength.

There is a sort of renunciation on the part of all the participants involved, including referees, regarding the hard, aggressive game which is spreading like leprosy, resulting in a decrease in the physical potential of the players.

Aggressivity, lack of discipline, "anti-play", calculation and passiveness are plagues which are not removed merely by altering a formula. They are "signs of the times" and constitute a kind of "rot" in the situation, a continual decline, and we can almost draw a parallel between this and what we can observe in human society.

Technique does not give man any more than the means of taking action. It remains silent

regarding the principles which should guide our conduct. And now more than ever we need wisdom to enlighten us in respect of the aims we ought to be seeking to achieve. And if technique is a necessary means of reconciling power and will, only philosophy can enable us to see clearly into our will.



Pierre Schwinte between the two captains - Coluna (POR) and Bobby Moore (England) - shaking hands, moments before the semi-finals of the 1966 World Cup.

Philosophical reflection can be applied to all the problems life raises. Kant resumed the whole programme of philosophy in his three-part question : "What should we know ?

What should we do ?

What can we hope for ?"

Modern football cannot be conceived without a referee; in other words-if there is no referee, there is no football.

"If human genius managed to bring the slim football out of the shapeless ball used in the game of soule, it is because it has civilised and intellectualised a basic passion which we find in soule as well as in football: the impassioned struggle around the ball for its conquest."

These lines by Maurice Pfefferkorn are witness to the singular metamorphosis of a game which traces its origins back to the most ancient of times.

Introduced into Celtic territory by the Roman legions, the game of soule remained for centuries a furious confrontation which served more often than not for the settling of accounts, and where might was right.

The institution of rules for the game by the Englishman Ellis in 1823 led quite naturally to the Laws of the Games being drawn up. Since man perhaps lacks the wisdom to discipline himself, this football charter decided that the opponents should be submitted to the judgement of a mediator.

Our French vocabulary gives us the word "arbitre", which is doubtless less meaningful than the English term "referee".

The dictionary definition of a referee is a person chosen by the parties concerned in order to decide on any differences between them.

What is more, the referee is not merely the judge, but also the witness of the action which he is called upon to judge.

In actual fact, his role consists of applying the regulations set out in the text of the rules of the game, and it is he who judges and also understands the spirit behind the action insofar as this tends to bring relationships forcefully within acceptable and accepted standards.

But are the Rules sufficient to exclude any deviations ? Unfortunately, they are restricted to forbidding them without actually preventing their occurrence and, certainly in reflection of our conflictual society, modern football is tending to sink into acts which are counter to the game and are of a violent nature.

Although the referee is a sportsman whom a qualified panel has recognised as having the necessary competence and physical, intellectual, moral and technical qualities to referee a match, refereeing in itself is not a sport, since a referee cannot officiate if there are no teams. The reverse is also true-two teams without a referee cannot officially compete against each other without reverting to a pitched battle.

Teams and referees are therefore intimately linked in the practice of football and are therefore undissociable elements of this sport in general and of the structures which already exist.

The referee remains subject to the technical regulations of his sports discipline as expressed by the league or federation to which he belongs, at the same time as respecting the unwritten ethical rules. Did Socrates and Plato not after all exalt the natural law which expresses itself in unwritten moral rules on a higher plane which we commonly call a code of practise ?

We could today define a referee as an amateur sportsman, recognised and assisted, who is a member of an association of clubs

and referees. He is affiliated to a national football federation through its leagues or districts, and holds a licence which is issued after a medical check-up and guaranteed by the organisation which uses it.

The licence confers a title on him and cannot be anything but a *membership contract*, and as such revokable at any time. The referee thus does not have a subordinate position as regards his sports movement.

The referee must ensure that the competitions for which he is responsible take place in a genuinely sporting climate.

This is because the referee is at one and the same time the closest witness of the sports action and its judge regarding the rules of the game.

In fact, his intervention should not merely be restricted to the match itself. It should also be evident before the match, with the referee contacting all the parties involved in order to create a climate of mutual confidence.

The value of the referee in human terms contributes in a decisive manner to both the technical value and the beauty of the game.

Impartiality, self-control, physical and moral courage, psychology, straightforwardness and cordiality are as necessary to him as is his understanding of the game, his attentiveness, his competence and his authority.

He is able to calm the players with a word, a gesture or a look, thereby recreating the conditions necessary for the match to be played as it should be, and give back to the sporting action its true sense of a game.

The referee who is an educator is a solitary man and will always remain so, with his problems, his ambitions and his fears.

His participation in an associative life is indispensable in present-day structures.

Everyone should love doing whatever it is he does, since vocation is above all love, and as a consequence respect.

A player who has chosen football should have a double respect : firstly for the opponent provided by the circumstances, and secondly for the spectacle which he himself provides.

The man-referee should control and be in charge of the game at the same time as ensuring the protection of the player. This role of control and responsibility of the game definitely implies some notions of duty and personality. These notions oblige the referee to take on a very great and heavy responsibility.

But the important thing, and it is something which is so difficult to achieve, is that he be and remain a man in the highest sense of the word.

"The future of mankind depends on culture", Pope John Paul II said recently. "The prime and essential duty of culture in general, and culture of every type as well, is education. This consists in man's becoming more of a man, that he might "be" more and that consequently through everything he has he may know better and more completely how to be a man. To achieve this, it is necessary for man to know "how to be more" not only "with others" but also "for others". Education is of fundamental importance in the formation of inter-human and social relationships."

Like the player, the referee is a sportsman who is governed by two psychological aspects :

- a) his sporting capacities ;
- b) the influence of elements which may be :
 - intra (from himself) : learning, need, determination and joy ;
 - extra (from the outside) :
 - Eigenwelt (personal world) ;
 - Umwelt (the world around him) ;
 - Mitwelt (the associative world) ;
 - Wertwelt (the world of values).

It is above all the players who are responsible for the evolution of the game. By their behaviour, they give the game its desired beauty.

Self-respect implies constant loyalty, a profound generosity of feeling and attitude, the modest acceptance of success, and serenity in defeat.

Respect for the opponent is a fundamental element of the written and unwritten rules. Respect for other people even calls for the giving of oneself ; doing one's utmost to surpass oneself is without a doubt the truest homage which can be paid to an opponent.

Respect for the referee implies the acceptance of all his decisions, even those which are unfavourable.

This permanent submission is moreover the surest method of lessening or even preventing demonstrations of hostility towards the referee by the public. It is therefore one of the fundamental attitudes of the sporting spirit.

Respect for the public forbids the players from taking it as witness or inciting demonstrations.

What a fantastic means of broadcasting the exaltation and encouragement of sport the mass media could be if their use corresponded with the desire to enable man to develop harmoniously in moral and physical terms, but to what mistaken ideas and self-destruction this popular fervour may lead if it is used for political or financial purposes !

The mass media influence the public's general awareness and indirectly its subconscious, its opinions, attitudes and acts in a decisive manner.

The press is there to observe us. to carefully analyse the match. Its role could be a determining one for the progress of our football.

Television, which is at one and the same time an instrument of penetration and broadcasting, grants a large proportion of its time to sports events and attracts more and more active participants. It is therefore also an instrument of propaganda, and in football it highlights the players' exploits. Its action replays show the movements leading up to goals ; unfortunately, they also show up mistakes in refereeing.

We saw during the first matches in Italy two unjustified penalties; the two faults were committed outside the penalty area.

Television constitutes a new aspect of administration, providing proof of error in the case of technical reserves being made regularly.

Personally, I think that technical reserves ought to be abolished, as is the case in Britain. There it is considered that referees are above all people, on a par with the players themselves. They are entitled to make mistakes. In their wisdom, the British authorities have endowed the referee's decision with the authority of judgement.

Since the referee is necessarily the sole judge of the players' intentions and the opportune nature of the sanctions imposed regarding the players' acts, no concrete proof of error or omission can be raised against him. In other words, his decisions are without appeal-even irreversible.

From this point on, the referee is inexorably and pitilessly trapped. He finds himself disconcerted, overwhelmed by the reality of the film. And this visual condemnation merely serves to highlight his human weakness, at the same time as incurring the bitterness, resentment and even the hatred of clubs and the public.

We forget a little too quickly that the referee is still a human being the same as everyone

else, with two eyes and a brain ; his reactions are human, not electronic.

And it is no solution to make use of such a formidable weapon as slowed-down action replays on television to disconcert him and lay him open to television viewers to act out on him the anger they feel in their daily lives.

Finally, television has brought about a change in mentality which does not make the referee's task any easier.

Sport as a spectacle cannot function without participation, support, and crowds, but the crowds often generate excitation and pressures.

Now, when these reactions are based on local chauvinism, nationalism or racialism, they can lead to the worst excesses and upset a match by plunging it into a climate of violence and hatred.

It is in the unleashing of fanaticism that sport takes on its most detestable aspect. It is thus that the noble myth of sport as a means of bringing people together in a union of individuals comes to grief.

The recent European Nations Championships has just confirmed this tendency.

Firstly, the behaviour of the players initially responsible for this situation.

Aggression towards the player in possession of the ball aimed at striking him down rather than dispossessing him in the normal way according to the rules of the game. Blind tackling (prone or both feet first), rushes on the supporting foot or ankles before the ball reaches the attacker. The list of players injured during these matches is a long one :

Antognoni, Oriali (Italy) ; Van de Kerkhof. Nanninge (Netherlands) ; Asensi (Spain) ; Van Moer (Belgium) ; Briegel (Germany).

Secondly, the laxity of Europe's best referees in accepting brutality, bad tempers, indiscipline and cheating from the players. Twenty-eight yellow cards were distributed, which was an average of two per match.

There was no red card, although some aggressive acts merited the exclusion of the players involved. (In the matches between Italy and Belgium and the Netherlands and Czechoslovakia, for example.) Also a lack of authority and severity regarding the lo-yard distance.

The public accepts this banalisation of deliberate violence. The fans go wild when matches are held.

Television has, alas, become a weapon which provides irrefutable evidence of the errors which are made.

The written, spoken and televised press, which do not always provide the public with the genuine explanation of facts, and exploit incidents which referees cannot defend.

Finally, how can one explain that the managers of respectable clubs feel able, in certain circumstances, to insult the referee in a vulgar manner ?

Violence on the pitch and the behaviour of the players in general during the practice of their sporting activities have always raised delicate problems, the most important one being that of the legislation regarding liability which is applicable in such cases.

Blows exchanged on the pitch and doping are offences which arise out of repressive jurisdictions.

But at the same time, each sporting discipline organises its own regulations, sets out categories of offences, and creates a hierarchy of corresponding sanctions, which conform to a statute.

A recent symposium held by the Faculty of Law of Nice had as its main theme "the sportsman and the sports group". For three days, eminent legal experts as well as sports personalities took part in debates on the following subjects :

- the disciplinary powers of sports bodies ;
- the definition and typology of the sportsman ;
- the free exercise of sport ;
- relations between sports groups and public authorities ;
- the social and fiscal status of the sportsman.

An interesting conclusion was reached : sport ought to have a legal statute similar to civil law : sports law.

The sporting life of a referee is regulated by his belonging on one hand to an association, which is his associative life, and on the other to his league or federation, which is the administrative body.

The life of football is linked to the pulsations of the associative life of the components of football in all its forms,

Associative life is therefore a necessary element for the full development of the individual, and for the full development of society.

Referees' friendly organisations represent a dense and dynamic network of associations

which deal above all with the problems of refereeing.

The action led by the French National Union of referees (UNAF), which groups the referees together around their regional sections, is important in the organisation of French football.

The UNAF encourages and supports referees by the initiatives it takes at its annual Congress

The sporting spirit which has developed within it is the corollary of the civic spirit. In the same way, the family feeling of football has also developed there.

It is thus that this associative life of referees makes it possible to trace a path to follow within the world of football and society, which ought to reflect these sentiments.

Refereeing concerns everyone, but its technique is a matter for referees.

The participation of referees' representatives within the departmental committees, the leagues, the French football federation and the group of professional football, is a first step towards participation in the life of football as well as towards concerted efforts within it.

It is up to us referees to give our representatives our support and to behave in a human way, in order to ensure the physical and moral promotion of football, and perhaps even ensure its perenniality.

Yes, we must above all improve the prestige image of the referee-managers should take the necessary steps, referees must be aware of their noble and high mission, players must respect the leader of the game as much as the opponent.

The national union of referees answers for the union members who answer to it.

Finally, all the elements which make up football should appeal to all their members to be aware, to reflect on the evolution of the game and habits ; to put together an overall plan to fight against the violence which threatens our liberal society, since chauvinism and ill-will are football's worst enemies.

We must seek for perfection without stinting, taking for our motto "if a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing well".

For want of audacity, the future of refereeing will be in danger.

P.S.

