

FIND OUT ABOUT THE PRDG'S STORY SO FAR, AND HOW IT HELPS YOUNG PEOPLE TO DEVELOP AND ENJOY REFEREEING.

AGE

Chairman

Kevin MOORE

Former Class 1 referee Kevin Moore had the dream of a local group to develop young referees. After 40 years in the game, Kev retired and finally approached the FA about the idea of a formal Referee Development Group. Upon discovering a similar idea had been trialled in Lincoln, he decided to set up his own in Portsmouth. In his own words, he reflects on how it all began.

I started my refereeing career in Plymouth. It was July 1970 and here were no courses in those days. I was in the Royal Navy on a Submarine so I had to go and see our PTI and tell him that I wanted to be a referee. He gave me a Laws of the game book, and said "take it away, read it and when you have learned every law: come back and we will examine you." I did what he said, went back did the exam and then I was told well done you are now a Class 3 ROYAL NAVY REFEREE (the equivalent of a Level 7 today).

I progressed, and in 1974 I was a Class 1 (Level 5) and then decided I would like to become a Referee Instructor. I applied through Navy Channels and in 1980 I became a referee instructor in Portsmouth. The longer I coached the more aware I became in the lack of after care once you had passed the course. The only help new referees got was through their local Referees Association, which for me was Portsmouth. They held Monthly meetings during the season and one of the sessions would be 'law discussion'.

In my opinion that was not enough.

The FA made the decision to drop the age 16 to 14 for young referees, we started getting many more youngsters wanting to become youth Referees. Premier League clubs along with Football League clubs started their own football academy, around the time I became Portsmouth referees Academy Director and so I began appointing young referees to the academy. Every game the young referees took charge of, they had a mentor. The referees we appointed had all expressed an interest in progressing with their refereeing. Because of this, I was even more driven to help them do just that.



was a level 5 referee and, with the same drive to help young referees, used his skills and enthusiasm to take us forward and up to the next level – with enthusiasm and professionalism. A short time later, RDG referees Oscar Whiting, Keiran Forrest and Kai Morgan began to organise and run their own sessions, before officially becoming RDG coaches.

Today – we are happily based at Hampshire FA's Front Lawn Community Hub in Havant, with training sessions now taking place not just in the classroom – but on a state-of-the-art astroturf.

I am so proud of what we have achieved so far as a group, and very excited about the future. One of the things that I like to see more than ever, is the youngsters commitment every Monday – they come, all of them, in all kinds of weather. Deep friendships have been formed amongst our referees – and that is a bonus that gives me a deep sense of pride.

My dream of a Portsmouth Referee Development Group, has come true.





There have been over 45 successful promotions within the group, and all have achieved gradings above the national standard while progressing up the refereeing ladder.

Referees within the group have progressed to become coaches and mentor each other, putting together a variety of sessions.

Members have participated in fundraising initiatives and raised just shy of £2000 for the RDG sessions.

Nine referees selected for the FA CORE Programme.

Founding PRDG coach Declan Hellyer appointed Referee Development Officer at the Hampshire FA.

Former member and PRDG coach, Keiran Forrest, appointed Referee Development Officer at Birmingham FA.

PRDG member Joe Crockett awarded Most Promising Academy Referee for 2018/19 season.

Founding RDG coach Jacob Wright awarded Young L4 of the Year in 2019, and is the longest holder of the accolaide.

PRDG members have raised £200 for the Society of St James Charity.

PRDG referees were appointed to local cup finals on twenty occasions in 2019/20 and 2020/21.

Ten FA competition (FA Cup, Vase, Trophy, Youth Cup and Women's Cup) appointments for PRDG referees.

Two referees achieved 100% in both Level 7-6 and 6-5 Laws of the Game Promotion Exams in 2020/21 season.

Opportunity



PRDG Officials have been recognised with honours both domestically and internationally, with Ten referees selected to officiate at the Premier League Truce Tournament and officials winning both the Best Referee and Best Assistant Referee awards at the most recent Ibercup, which took place in Denmark.

The PRDG have since been invited back to officiate at the next Ibercup. With ten officials set to travel to Denmark to officiate in a competition featuring elite teams in Europe.

We are proud that our coaches have been recognised too, and have been given the opportunity to work with EFL officials through appointments to pre-season friendlies between National League and EFL clubs.





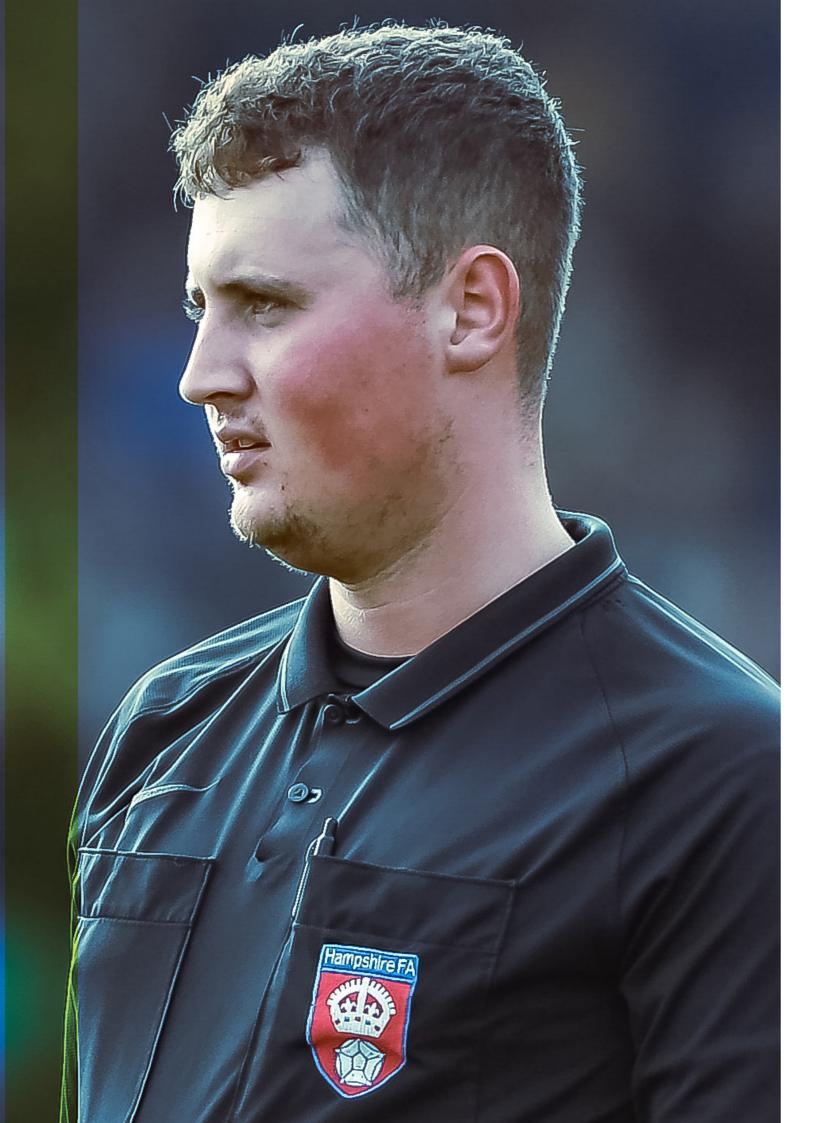
your colleagues handwork! The Development Group is creating a network of referees that can share their learning for the betterment of the group as a whole. There are so many possibilities of what can take place in a game off football that you will never come across every eventuality, however the more people you engage in discussion with, the more lessons you will pick up. And the closer you work with them, the more likely you are to retain this information for when it is needed most.

Example: A good friend of mine from the Portsmouth area once awarded an indirect free kick on the edge of the penalty area in a Wessex League match. An attacker stepped-up and casually placed it straight in the top corner following the referee's whistle to restart. The problem being that an arm had not been raised to communicate it was indirect. Cue pandemonium and an incorrect restart in law (I will leave you to check what it should be). Despite not being present at the game and only having their words to go by, I have built up such a clear and hilarious image of events that day that I shall never repeat their mistake myself.

Finally, comes the lessons you can take away from the wider footballing family, particularly those officiating at the highest level. Watching these games/incidents in isolation can be a useful development tool although it can be tough to remember such instances with any clarity. Again this is where the PRDG and your peers help out. Sharing, reviewing and debating footage, whether in structured meetings or causally over Whatsapp for example, will give the greatest chance of logging it in your memory for future use and is something I've seen work well firsthand amongst the group.

Example: I watched a video clip some time back of a substitute warming up behind the goal line in a Bundesliga match. A tame shot is heading a good few yards wide when the substitute, who happens to be from the defending team, casually knocks the ball to the keeper for the goal kick. Unfortunately he did so before the ball had fully crossed the goal line and as this was inside the penalty area had just committed a penalty kick offence! It was only when I saw this video again recently when shared around a group of friends that I truly learnt the lesson - I know this to be the case because I'd watched the whole thing again before even realising that I had seen the exact same footage before. Without interrogating the situation with my colleagues, like you do as a group, I had not retained the scenario to call upon should the same happen to me one day.

You are presented with a fantastic opportunity here, grab it with both hands and do not let go. Without any effort you will naturally learn from experiences throughout your own matches and watching others, however, from what I have seen of the group so far it is about taking these development chances as far as possible. So whether it comes from refereeing as many games as possible, watching other referees and talking to them afterwards, discussing match incidents with your peers, or even playing FIFA and mocking it for incorrect assistant signals or decisions wrong in law, recognise every opportunity to learn and share it with the group. I can guarantee you that the better the group, the better you will be as an individual.



"My second family"

Joe CROCKETT

Joe Crockett is a 21 year old qualified carpenter, who's been a referee for nearly four years. He joined the Development Group two years ago, having fallen in love with refereeing shortly after taking up the whistle to earn some pocket money over the weekends.

When I first joined the development group i was immediately overwhelmed with the support they gave me on my arrival.

Throughout the years they have not only helped me with my ability on the pitch they have also helped me with my social skills helped me grow as a person and thrive in my personality and confidence. When we have our meetings they allow me to go there and be myself. We have group discussions and activities helping our knowledge of law, and practical work to help our fitness so we can reach the best of our ability.

We have one to ones with our coaches, where they ask how we are and see if they can help us with anything. My coach has helped me massively as im dyslexia so I struggle to read and write so when it comes to report writing they will sit you down and go with you to write one. My coach has set me up a template so when it comes to report writing I have a template to go off, then I would send it to him before I send it off to make sure everything is ok.

I always look back and think where I would be if it wasn't for the development group, I would probably have given up refereeing as I would of had no support and was left on my own. I would of probably taken the route a lot of my friends from school went what was taking drugs, and probably wouldn't be in the job I am in now.

The development group has given me structure in life. To allow me to be myself and for whatever stress I have going on in my life to not think about it for a few hours of the day it has become my second family.



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'Beyond the basics'

Sam WRIGHT

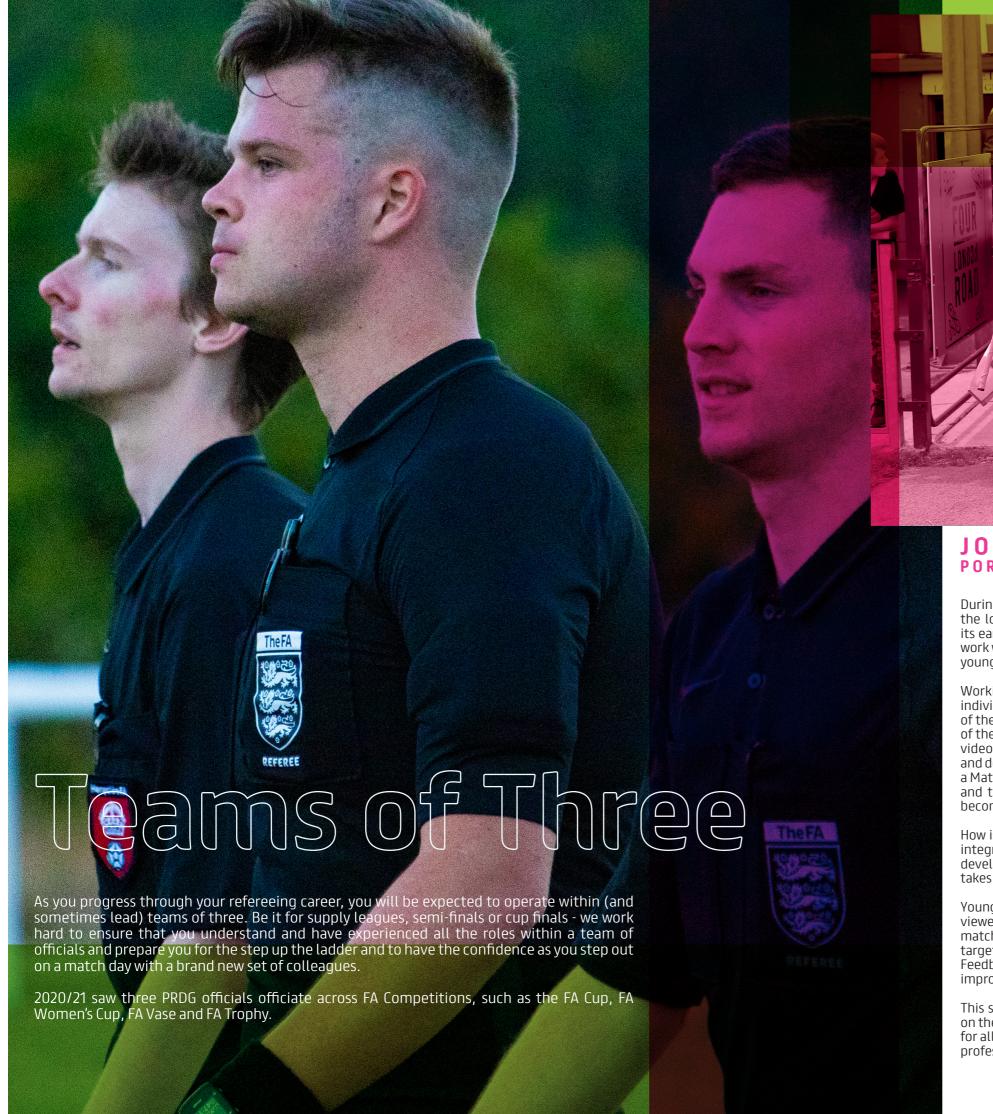
Sam completed the referee course in 2017 aged just 14. He joined the PRDG in the summer of that year having heard about it from a friend.

I joined the PRDG after being told about the support and help they would give me every week as a referee in the local area. This support is fundamental to building the skills to be a competent referee beyond the theoretical basics of the initial course. The PRDG provides expertise and mentoring that enables me to improve and develop as a referee and ultimately progress to more challenging games and leagues.

A huge part of being a successful referee is being able to apply the laws of the game accurately but to also integrate 'what football expects' so laws can be applied with common sense and within the 'spirit of the game'. In order to be able to do this, understanding the laws of the game is vital so on a matchday the right steps can be taken to let the game run smoothly within the laws. In weekly PRDG sessions I take part in various activities to build my understanding of laws and how to apply them during a match. The PRDG uses various techniques to successfully achieve this from quizzes to discussions using video clips. Key also is time spent reviewing set up matchday examples, these are extremely helpful, as possible matchday situations are explored in a learning environment so that when these occur in a real match I am already equipped with the knowledge and skills to handle the situation and ensure the correct procedure and law is implemented. Refereeing is often intense with managers, players and spectators all having opinions. It is therefore important that as a referee I am competent, confident and calm in my decision making, the PRDG sessions enable me to continue to develop these skills and ensure matches run smoothly.

Being a member of the PRDG has not only developed me as a referee but also as a person learning countless skills over the past three and a half years. I am naturally a confident person however the PRDG has really enhanced this over time giving me opportunities to challenge myself further. I have been taught lots of organisational and management skills which have benefited me in both personal and refereeing life. Working with different people on different tasks discussing different solutions to possible matchday experiences has really helped me with teamwork and communication which helps greatly on the pitch with assistants and players but also in everyday situations.







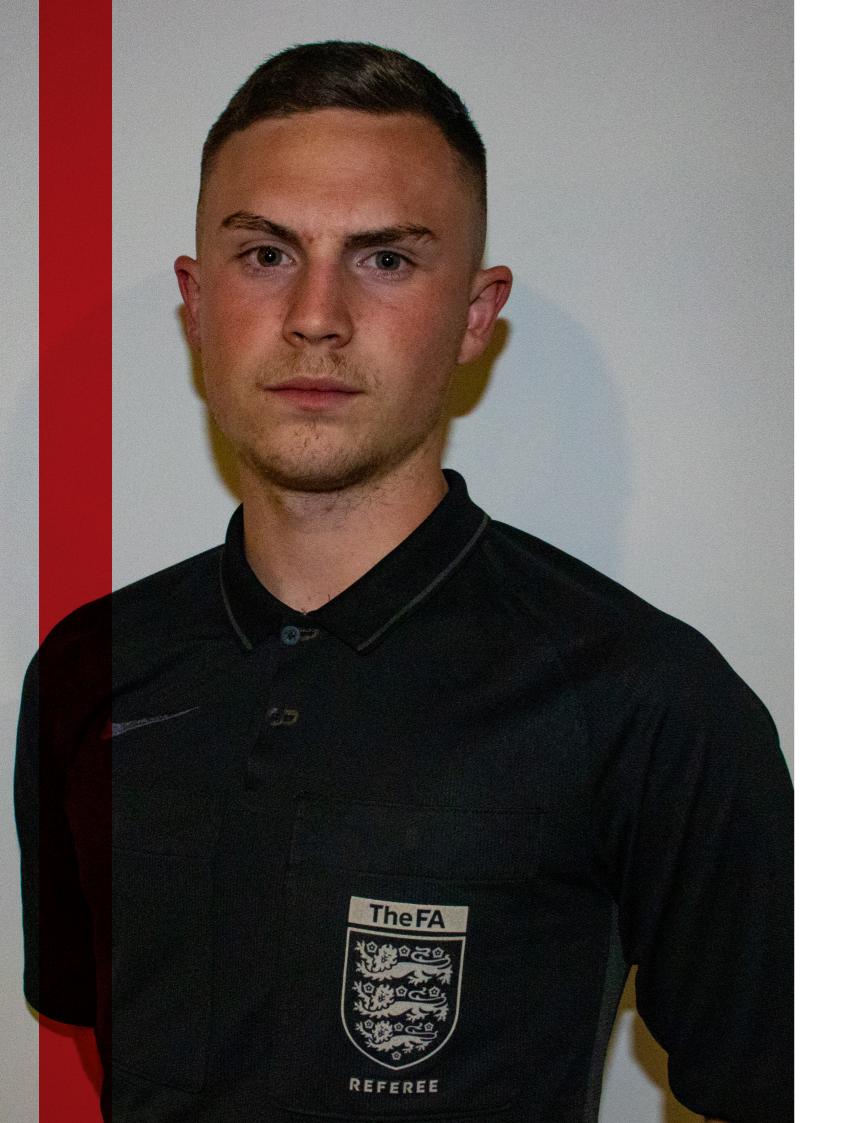
During my time working at the Portsmouth FC Academy one of the major success stories has been the longstanding working relationship with the Portsmouth Referee Development Group. From its early days, under the guidance of Kevin Moore and the late Alan Robinson, to the more recent work with Chris James, the group has always provided a safe environment to develop the growth of young match officials through the various levels of the refereeing pathway.

Working with the Academy has seen young inexperienced, newly qualified match officials receive an individual programme to guide them within the game. This does not only include the development of the skills of match officiating for both referee and assistant referee, changes and interpretation of the Laws of the Game, opportunities to address a physical fitness programme and also to access video footage to review their performances in matches. The programme also addresses the growth and development of each individual in relation to developing certain Life Skills as part of the role of a Match Official. These have included preparation for the match, dealing with experienced coaches and team managers who can be very challenging at times, developing self-confidence and to become a professional, confident young person.

How is this delivered? By working with a professional football club, the group brings together the integral parts of football – players, coaches, spectators and match officials who are all working to develop the 'whole game'. The common goal is to provide a quality experience at every match that takes place.

Young match officials can learn and develop in a safe, monitored environment where 'mistakes' are viewed as opportunities to learn and develop from. By working with a mentor, each time a young match official officiates a game there is a clear learning plan for the person to aspire to. Simple targets are set for each match and then reviewed and then either re-visited or new challenges set. Feedback after every period of the game mean that each official is constantly learning and hopefully improving.

This scheme gives a full learning, developmental pathway for young people who wish to embark on the first steps in group a match official. My experiences over fifteen years has only been positive for all stakeholders in the programme. Without a steady stream of high-quality match-officials the professional game will struggle. This programme is the first steps of the journey.



'I faced challenges early on'

Kai MORGAN

Aged 14, while playing as a goalkeeper, Kai was offered the chance by his local club to qualify as a referee. It's on the course, he met Kevin Moore.

Kev was the secretary of the Portsmouth Youth Football League at the time. I'll never forget the first time I met him. He gave us an insight into the life of a Referee, the role he had within the industry, and the importance of 'CLOSED DATES' which I can still hear him bellowing now.

I came across a number of challenges early on [as a referee]. I remember abandoning a game due to a very difficult parent that took a disliking to my refereeing. This was very overwhelming, having that sort of authority in your hands at 14.

A letter came through the post from the newly formed Development Group, inviting me to their monthly meetings. From the moment I joined, I felt I had the best possible support. Within a month of being there I was invited to the Portsmouth Academy, where I was being mentored in every aspect of my Refereeing. Chris and Kev encouraged me to take Refereeing seriously and look to carve out a career in the role, as it was becoming clear to me I wouldn't make it as a player.

Before long, I was on the promotion ladder and on the plane to the IberCup Denmark to where I and ten other Referees were selected to represent and officiate elite football academy teams in a worldwide tournament. The experience changed my perspective on Refereeing entirely and I walked away with "Best Assistant Referee", alongside Oscar who was awarded with "Best Referee" in the tournament out of 40+ Referee's from all over the world. This spurred me on to achieving my promotion and was awarded with the "Alan Robinson Young Referee Of The Year Award" in the 2018/19 season.

From this massively successful year, I accepted the role of 'Specialist Assistant Refereeing coach' at the PRDG. Supporting, developing and delivering sessions to the up and coming officials that are in the same position I was in when I first joined the group. In the 2019/20 season I was nominated by the group to be selected by the FA's Centre Of Refereeing Excellence (CORE) program, something that has provided me with elite coaching from current and previous professionals in the Refereeing industry and further allowed me to achieve multiple promotions to current Level 5-4 candidate for the on-going season.

As a team at the PRDG we have been able to coach and support multiple individuals through their Refereeing, getting the best out of every single person whether that's inside or outside of football. Throughout the years, the PRDG has provided me with a support network of amazing people that have influenced me in my Refereeing, Coaching as well as my social life. Without the PRDG being introduced to me, I probably wouldn't be in the position I am in my life now, being a Referee on the pitch, a Coach off the pitch and just myself as a person outside of Football, something I am truly grateful for everyone who has been involved.

The PRDG has truly taken me to the next level in more ways than one.

HAT THE PARENTS SAY

DAN WARD PARENT

I first heard of the Development Group after watching Sam play. A young referee called Joe Crockett had reffereed the game to a standard, well above what I'd seen before in grassroots football. I approached him after the game to say how well he'd had done and Joe mentioned on the group.

The following summer I again come into contact with the Group, this time as a manager at Portchester 6-a-side where I met Chris {James}. It was also around this time Sam was looking at becoming a referee himself and he had already booked on the Hampshire FA referee course.

A few months later, at his referee certificate night, Sam was approached by Kevin Moore "How do you fancy reffing Pompey on Sunday?" at Collingwood. I was surprised and Sam was even more so, but delighted that Sam's potential had been recognised. With reassurance from Kev that Sam would be OK and well looked after, he went along and reffereed at an EFL Academy. The rest, as they say, is history.

The Group has helped Sam progress a great distance as a referee already, both with the whistle and with the flag running the line.

They've also helped him develop life skills and he's matured well above his age. The progress he has made with the Group over the last two seasons, even hindered by the pandemic, has been amazing. Sam was appointed to run the line on two mens semifinals and cup finals, and been appointed to being part of the officiating team on a Hampshire County Cup final. Along with many more Pompey Academy games.

I have seen first hand how the the Group have taught him above the standard in refereeing, and he's streets ahead of where he would be had he been left on his own to learn. While running the line in a cup final, he was confident enough to award a penalty, by making the signal the coaches on the Group had taught him.

Would I recommend the development group to any new referees and thier parents? Without a doubt. The results will speak for themselves.





'I don't know where I'd be'

Callum ALLEN

Callum is a newly promoted Level 4 referee, having been promoted from Level 7 in just three seasons. He took to the whistle when he found out the football club he played for was folding.

My refereeing career started in 2017. I wanted to get into refereeing, because my football team were folding at the end of the season, and there were no football teams local to me that I could join. I wanted to remain involved in football and, that's when I came across refereeing.

I applied for the course, but as there weren't many being run at the time I had to wait a year for a space to become available. During that time, I became very overweight as I had no football games to play or any weekly training structure. As a 14 year old, all I was doing was sitting on my XBOX after school with little to no physical activity. As I gained weight, I started to get bullied in school and my confidence decreased. I was in a very low point in my life before refereeing.

After finally passing my refereeing course, I was invited to join the Portsmouth Referee Development Group. I remember my first session like it was yesterday, it was in early summer and the weather was really warm - but even then, due to my confidence, I wore a tracksuit that I felt would hide my weight. During my first session, someone had made a comment about my weight and this made me feel low initially, but after the session I knew I wanted to make a change about my weight.

Went home and spoke to my Mum about how I could lose weight, and she worked out a diet for me. At my next session Chris James arranged for me to have a mentor (Dan) to support me with my overall fitness and refereeing. Dan and myself would split off separately from the group and do our own individual training.

As the months went by, my fitness was noticably improving and my weight was decreasing. With it, my confidence started to increase and fully came out of my shell on a social trip to Wembley to watch Non-League finals day. The help from the Development Group really supported me with my weight loss. When we had an outdoor session at HMS Temeraire they were mainly fitness based from working on Sprinting, Stamina & Conditioning.

Within a year of being at the PRDG, I lost two stone, and I have been able to maintain that level of fitness since, and I continue to work on improving it more.

I don't know where I would be without the support of the PRDG and I can't thank them enough.



'It's changed the game'

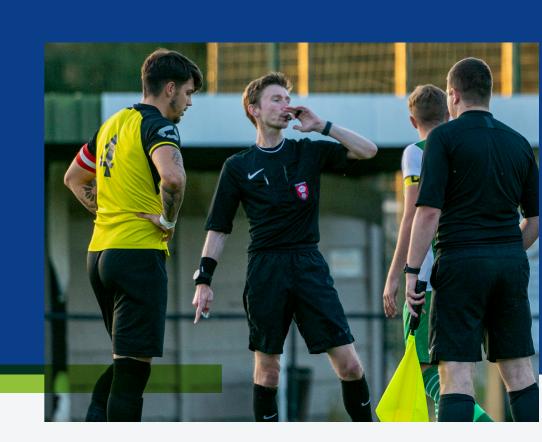
Sean RIDLEY



MORE THAN JUST REFEREEING

It's more than just about refereeing. We also have a big focus on the social elements in life, and we regularly hold social events throughout the year - such as a yearly Christmas dinner (cooked by our chairman and Royal Navy chef: Kevin Moore!).

In 2019 we took a trip to Wembley for non-league finals day, sitting with several refereeing colleagues from around the country.



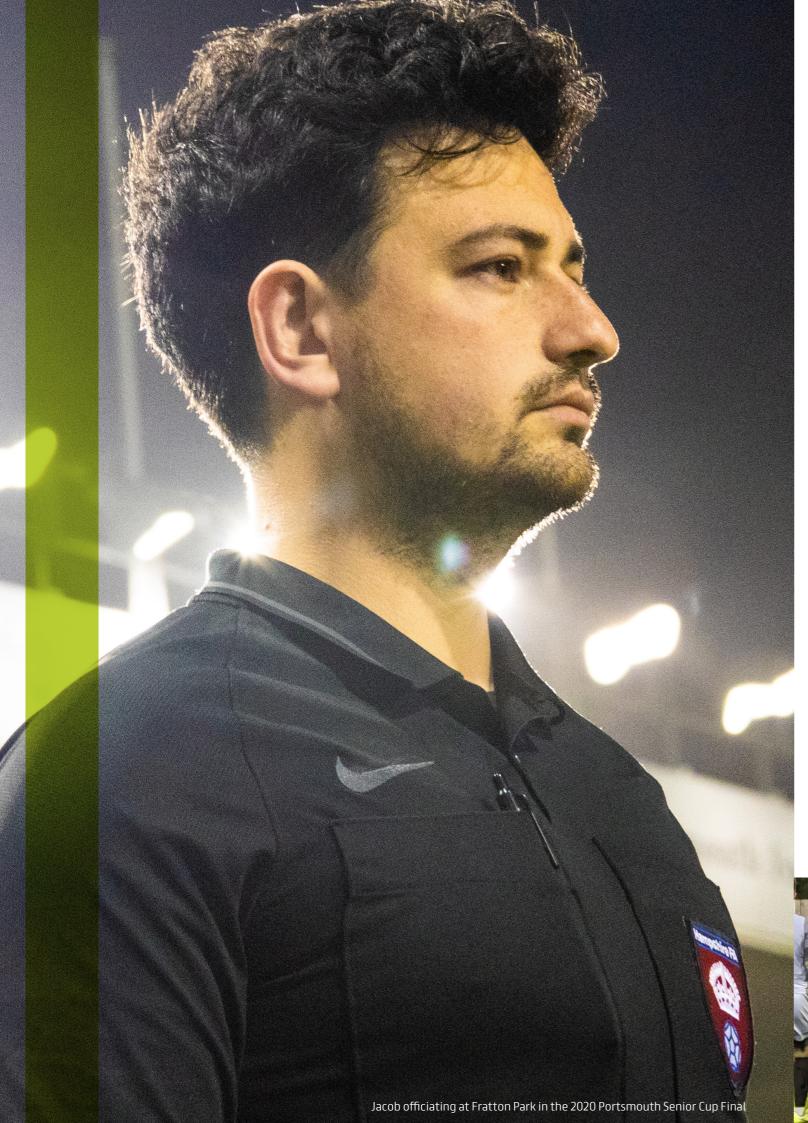
Joining the refereeing world as an older head was a huge advantage for Sean in some respects. Coming from a career largely spent in management positions and within football, he certainly had the people skills and football brain to step out into the middle with confidence. His two-handed advantages stopped there, though, as his larger than life theatrical nature was the part that didn't translate across so well.

"That needed toning down" Sean chuckles. "I had the banter with players, I had the ways to manage and diffuse... but I'm not the star of the show here. There's times you need things to be a little more 'public' and times being a bit sly is just what the doctor ordered. And that's the biggest thing my coaches at the PRDG had for me to start with, and that's before they'd actually seen me blow the first whistle!"

But that wasn't the only thing the coaches picked up on for the keen (then) 27-year-old - while they noticed his natural ability to get everywhere on the field without breaking a sweat. "I managed to cover every blade of grass on the field, so the coaches worked with me on positioning and movement that was effective and adds value to the game. Value is a huge thing for me, and it's changed the game for me. Not just as a referee but in every day life. If it doesn't add value, then the big question is why am I doing it?"

"Refereeing is often mooted as being one of the lonliest jobs in football, but the PRDG has proved it's anything but that. Through the group I have met some of my nearest and dearest friends, who have supported me through everything on and off the field."

"Thanks to the group, refereeing isn't just a hobby I have a passion for - it's become a genuine career path and a career in Refereeing Development is something I am incredibly keen to pursue. I can't be any more grateful to them and what they have given me. So I want to give back as much as I can."



'It became a family'

Jacob WRIGHT

Jacob is one of the Development Group's original coaches. A Level 3, he operates on the Southern League and on the National League South line, and has been awarded several high profile fixtures in FA Competitions. In 2019 he suffered the loss of his father, and seriously considered hanging up the whistle.

2019 was the hardest year of my life.

In May my father was diagnosed with a rare form of liver cancer and from that moment I watched every day my dad slowly lose every ability he had and after six tough weeks, on the 12th of July, he passed away. To say this was the hardest moment of my life is an understatement.

I questioned everything I was involved in, and seriously debated if I should continue refereeing, but during this the PRDG became much more than a Development Group, it became a family. I was surrounded by my friends where we talked about football and recalled stories that made us laugh and allowed me to remember sweeter times.

The meetings gave me a chance to escape the grief I was experiencing every day and provided me with the drive and motivation to carry on. In the days immediately after his passing I received constant messages of support from everyone in the group, it was obvious to see that everyone cared about how I was emotionally and mentally.

They were more than understanding and willing to do whatever they could to make sure I received all the support I could. It is without any doubt that if I did not have the support and friendship I have found within the development group I would have finished my refereeing career and been in a terrible place now.

I could not be more thankful for everything they have done for me over the last two years.



The PRDG Team

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Selected St Mary's Match Photos provided kindly by Andrew Ormerod Hopping Around Hampshire

Other photos by And various Groundhoppers who have been kind enough to lend their photos (too many to mention!) We give a huge thanks to them all.

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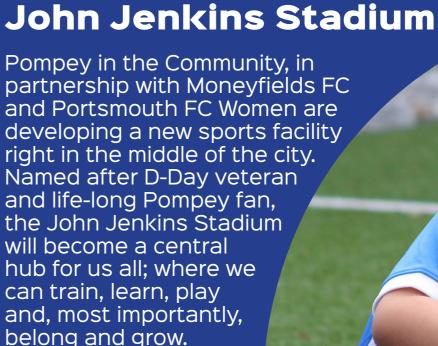
We are an **award-winning** charity that harnesses the motivational power of **Portsmouth Football Club** to promote achievement among vulnerable and disadvantaged people of all ages



During COVID-19 we were one of Portsmouth's first respondents to the emergency and became the main hub for distributing over **4,000** food parcels to vulnerable and isolated residents.



Every week, during term time we engage with over 6,000 individuals. Our youngest participant is 3 and our oldest is 101.



How to donate:

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