



EFAF Officiating Committee News & Bulletin March 2008

- **EFAF/IFAF news:**
 - o Italian Federation and EFAF
 - o EFAF General Assembly in Moscow
 - o German Bowl
 - o IFAF Flag World Championships Senior 2008
 - o IFAF World Championships 2011 and message from IFAF Administration
 - o AFVD President: Mr. Robert Huber re-elected
 - o Women in Sport Conference in Helsinki

- **EFAF Officiating Committee:**
 - o New forms
 - o New Philosophies

- **Officials news:**
 - o Einar Bolstad: Reno Official Camp – European instructor!
 - o Jean Perez-Canto in Spain
 - o BAFRA Convention
 - o Jim Briggs: “about Wembley game”

EFAF News: Italian Federation

Received from Mr. Robert Huber, EFAF President

Decision of the EFAF Board of Directors

The EFAF Board of Directors has convened a meeting on the situation in Italy at Zurich (Switzerland) on February 16, 2008, EFAF has notified towards FIAF with letter from December 30th, 2007 that FIAF is not anymore fulfilling the membership requirements of EFAF and had requested FIAF to submit until January 31, 2008 a plan of action how FIAF would:

1. Re-establish as governing national body for Italy towards CONI
2. If that would not be possible how FIAF could re-establish itself as governing national body for Italy at all.
3. If that would not be possible how a new governing national body for Italy could be established.

FIAF submitted on February 1, 2008 a plan of action which answers to the questions raised by EFAF:

1. There is no chance how FIAF will in any cases re-establish as governing national body for Italy towards CONI at all.
2. FIAF has no intention to re-establish as a governing national body for Italy at all.



EFAF Officiating Committee News & Bulletin March 2008

3. It is the intention of FIAF to support the foundation of a new governing national federation for Italy named "FIF".

In addition EFAF has received a letter from the ASI, a member organization of CONI, which is the national governing body of Italy for recreational sports ("sports for all"). The President of ASI who is member of the Executive Committee of CONI stated that FIAF was terminated by CONI as a national governing body of American Football in Italy. Therefore EFAF Board of Directors comes to the conclusion that FIAF, founding member of EFAF, does not exist a national sport federation anymore. Whatever the legal status of the remains of FIAF is FIAF is not national sport federation anymore and even the remains of FIAF have submitted not a plan of action to re-establish FIAF.

So far there is not anymore any governing national body for Italy at all. The membership place of Italy is therefore currently vacant.

To promote the sport of American Football in Italy and to support the reintegration of Italy in the system of the European and International Sports Community EFAF Board of Directors appoints a EFAF Country Administrator/ EFAF Observer for Italy: Italian Interim American Football Administration ("IIAFA"):

1. The EFAF Ad hoc Studying Group on the Italian situation is assigned as IIAFA.
2. The IIAFA has the right to represent the sport of American Football in Italy as whole country towards EFAF and IFAF.
3. The IIAFA has the right to assign teams from Italy (club or national teams) to European Competitions.
4. The IIAFA is the governing national body of Italy unless EFAF recognizes a different organization.
5. The IIAFA will offer its good service to the Italian American Football Community to re-establish ONE national federation in Italy.
6. The task of IIAFA is provisional and on interim base until ONE national federation in Italy is recognized by EFAF or until EFAF Board of directors decides to end the IIAFA.

The situation of Italy will be re-evaluated on October 11h, 2008 at EFAF Board of Directors meeting.

EFAF News: General Assembly in Moscow

The 2008 EFAF General Assembly will take place at Moscow on March 29, 2008.

Proposed Agenda:



EFAF Officiating Committee News & Bulletin March 2008

1. Registration/ control of voting rights
2. Election of the chairman of the General Assembly
3. Election of the minute taker
4. Election of the scrutinizers
5. Minutes of the precedent GA meeting – vote –
6. Report of the President and of the Board of Directors – vote -
7. Report of the Vice President (Finance) – vote -
8. Receive the auditors report and approve the annual statement of accounts and the budget – vote –
9. Change of the statutes – in effect end of the GA:
 - Proposal of the Board of Directors: Art. 5.15
 - Proposal of AFVD (Germany): Art. 5.1
10. Election of auditors
11. Information on the updated budget 2008
12. Approval of the budget 2009 – vote -
13. Awards
14. Membership applications
15. Termination of EFAF membership of FIAF (Italy) & Approval of the EFAF Italian Interim American Football Administration
16. 2008 and 2009 Competitions
 - EFL & EFAF Cup
 - EJC 2008
 - EC Championship Series 2007-2009 (Update)
 - EC Flag Juniors 2008
 - EC Flag Seniors 2009
 - IFAF World Championships 2011
 - IFAF Flag World Championships 2008
 - IFAF World Junior Championships (Under 19) 2009
 - IFAF World Championships Juniors (Under 15) 2007
17. Models of best practise (various presentations)
18. Place of next Ordinary General Assembly: already decided until 2010
19. Others

EFAF News: German Bowl

Received from Mr. Robert Huber, AFVD President

German Bowl XXX – the German National Championships Final – will be played Saturday September 27, 2008 at the Commerzbank Arena Frankfurt am Main, formerly known as Waldstadium.

Kick off will be at 03.00 PM or 06.00 PM depending on the TV schedule.

The Commerzbank Arena is brand new state of the art multifunctional arena which was used for FIFA 2006 World Cup.



EFAF Officiating Committee News & Bulletin March 2008

We are more than happy to present German Bowl in that stadium!

We are sure that it will help the development of American Football in whole Europe if for reference the European American Football Community can show the German Bowl towards own sponsors, media partners and members as a positive example what the amateur American Football can achieve in Europe.

We will be more than happy to invite federation representatives from whole Europe as VIP guests.

German Bowl will not be Super Bowl but it will be a landmark for American Football on the whole world!

EFAF News: 2008 Flag World Championships

Received from Mr. Robert Huber, EFAF President

IFAF Executive Committee has received an application from Football Canada to host and organize the 4th IFAF Flag World Championships (Seniors) 2008 at St-Jean-Sur-Richelieu, Quebec, Canada. The proposed dates are July 24,-26, 2008.

IFAF Executive Committee and Football Canada are now entering in the final negotiations on the hosting contract.

We are giving you this information to allow you better planning. BUT: the contract is not signed yet. Therefore if you make any flight reservation and the contract will not be signed by IFAF or Football Canada nobody will be liable for those costs.

The LOC package will cost approx. 5000 Canadian Dollar = 3.400 EUR.

EFAF News: IFAF World Championships 2011 and Message from IFAF Administration

Short message from IFAF Administration:

Dear friends of American Football!

Please note the following upcoming events in your schedule:

IFAF Congress and General Assembly July 18, 2008 at Sevilla (Spain)

The Congress will be held as part of the EFAF European Junior Championships which start on July 11 and last until July 21, 2008. The final game is on July 20, 2008. Therefore we recommend that you plan to arrive on July 17, 2008 and depart on July 21, 2008.



EFAF Officiating Committee News & Bulletin March 2008

Sevilla has an international airport SVQ but is mostly served by domestic flights. There are connection flights from all major European hubs.

EFAF and AEFA (Spanish Federation) will provide VIP tickets for all IFAF members attending the EJC.

4th IFAF Flag World Championships July 24-28, 2008 at Canada

The 4th IFAF Flag World Championships 2008 will be hosted and organized July 24-28, 2008 at St-Jean-Sur-Richelieu, Quebec, Canada

The game field is: Campus Du Fort Saint Jean and its subsidiary field

Games will be played July 26, 2008 (Saturday) and July 27, 2008 (Sunday).

The organizer is Football Canada supported by Football Quebec.

1st IFAF World Junior Championships (Under 19)

IFAF is currently negotiating with USA Football.

The tournament is planned as an eight team tournaments. Besides the hosting country everybody else will need to qualify.

It is already decided that the European Junior Championships 2008 will be used as qualifier. The qualification system for the other continents will be decided once the entry deadline for teams has been opened and closed.

4th IFAF World Championships 2011

The deadline to submit letter of intends expired on December 15, 2007. At that time Austria, Denmark and Germany (alphabetic order) submitted LOIs. The final application has to be submitted by April 1, 2008.

So far the only thing which is sure for now is that next WC 2011 will be played in Europe once again.

Open for applications:

2nd IFAF World Championships (Under 15) in 2009

Best regards

Tommy Wiking
IFAF President

Robert Huber
IFAF General Secretary



EFAF Officiating Committee News & Bulletin March 2008

EFAF News: AFVD - Mr. Robert Huber re-elected

AFVD President Robert Huber unanimously re elected

(2008-03-03) The AFVD General Assembly the highest legislative body of AFVD German American Football Federation re elected Robert Huber (38 years old/ Obertshausen/ lawyer) unanimously for a new term of four years. The General Assembly was held March 2, 2008 at the Commerzbank Arena Frankfurt, which will see the German Bowl on September 27, 2008. It is now the fifth term which was granted to Robert Huber unanimously since 1997.

The other members of the Executive Board of Directors had been elected unanimously too:

- Uwe Talke (49 years/ Neuss/ Central Legal Officer of the city of Neuss) as Vice President
- Thomas Meyer (45 years/ Offenbach/ Public Servant Financial Department County of Offenbach) as Vice President Finance
- Josef Andres (48 years/ Mannheim/ Logistic Manager Daimler AG) as Vice President

For Helene Busse which did not run for re election Peter Springwald (52 years/ Marl/ Police Officer) was elected as Vice President.

Helene Busse which served as member of the Executive Board of Directors for nearly 20 years was awarded by the General Assembly as the first honorary member of AFVD in its history.

The Executive Board of Directors is completed by AFVD Sports Director Jan Bublitz (35 years/ Flensburg), Press Officer Dietrich E. Stolze (62 years/ Seevetal) and the Chairman of the administrative counsel Andreas Stehle (Mannheim).

EFAF News: Women in Sport Conference

The EFAF General Assembly launched an initiative to promote the active participation of women in American Football. The EFAF Board of Directors has appointed an ad hoc working group "Gender Development". Your Federation is hereby invited to attend 1st EFAF Women in Sport Conference At Helsinki (Finland) on April 12, 2008.

The meeting is open only to federation representatives; people in charge of development or gender development, member of Board or committee interested in gender development; female executives, coach of women's team.



EFAF Officiating Committee News & Bulletin March 2008

EFAF Officiating Committee: new forms

As announced during the last Clinic, the EFAF OC Board is preparing two different forms for this season: Crew Performance Report (CPR) and Field Audit (FA).

EFAF Officiating Committee: new Philosophies

Blocking

1. Takedowns at the POA, those in the open field, and those affecting the result of the play create special focus and will be called in these situations.
2. If there is a potential offensive holding but the action occurs away from the point of attack and has no (or could have no) effect on the play, offensive holding will not be called.
3. If there is a potential for defensive holding but the action occurs away from the point of attack and has no (or could have no) effect on the play, defensive holding will not be called.
4. For blocks in the back, if one hand is on the number and the other hand is on the side and the initial contact is on the number, it is a block in the back. The force of the block could be slight and still a foul if the contact propels the player past the runner.
5. A grab of the receiver's jersey that restricts the receiver and takes away his feet will be defensive holding, and could also be DPI.
6. Holding can be called even if the quarterback is sacked as it may be the other half of an offset foul.
7. Illegal block in the back can still be called on fair catches, but not if the illegal block occurs away from the play as the fair catch is being made.
8. Blocks in the back that are personal foul in nature will be called regardless of their timing relative to a fair catch or runner being tackled.
9. Rarely will you have a hold on a double team block unless there is a takedown or the defender breaks the double team and is pulled back.
10. When in doubt if an illegal block occurs in the EZ or field of play, it occurs in the field of play.

Line of Scrimmage

1. An offensive player is "on his line of scrimmage" at the snap when he faces his opponent's goal line with the line of his shoulders parallel thereto and his head breaking the plane of the line drawn through the waistline of the snapper.
2. Officials will work to keep offensive linemen legal and will call only when obvious or where repeated warnings are ignored. Don't wait till the 4th qtr to enforce rule.
3. If the offensive player is lined up with his head clearly behind the rear end of the snapper, a foul will be called without a warning.
4. An offensive player who is a wide receiver or slot back will be given leeway in determining if he is off the line of scrimmage, but to be on the line of scrimmage his feet must be within two yards of the neutral zone. Don't be technical. When in doubt, it is NOT a foul.
5. Wide receivers that are the end man on the line of scrimmage must be on the line of scrimmage and break the plane of the line drawn through the waistline of the snapper when the defensive player is in "press" position or they will be ruled in the backfield.
6. Wide receivers or slot backs lined up outside a tight end will be ruled on the line of scrimmage and covering the tight end if there is no stagger between their alignments. If in question, he is not covered up.
7. Defensive linemen moving forward at the snap must actually be in the neutral zone to be called for offside. Moving forward on their side of the neutral zone is not a foul.



EFAF Officiating Committee News & Bulletin March 2008

8. When in doubt regarding player position on movement by the defense into the neutral zone which causes the offense to move, DOF will be called if within two players of the defensive action.

9. Anytime a defensive player shoots the gap, and there is a questions as to contact, err on the side of offside and shut the play down to avoid a free shot on the QB.

10. Formations during the execution of a trick or unusual play have the highest degree of scrutiny and should be completely legal.

11. If the motion man is clearly angling forward while in motion at the snap, this is a live-ball foul unless there is an abrupt forward movement.

Defensive Pass Interference

Actions that constitute defensive pass interference include but are not limited to:

1. Early contact by a defender who is not playing the ball is defensive pass interference provided the other requirements for DPI have been met, regardless of how deep the pass is to the receiver.

2. Playing through the back of a receiver in an attempt to make a play on the ball.

3. Grabbing a receiver's arm(s) in such a manner that restricts his opportunity to catch a pass.

4. Extending an arm across the body (arm bar) of a receiver thus restricting his ability to catch a pass, regardless of the fact of whether or not the defender is playing the ball.

5. Cutting off or riding the receiver out of the path to the ball by making contact with him without playing the ball.

6. Hooking a receiver in an attempt to get to the ball in such a manner that is causes the receiver's body to turn prior to the ball arriving.

Not Defensive Pass Interference

Actions that do not constitute defensive pass interference include but are not limited to:

1. Incidental contact by a defender's hands, arm or body when both players are competing for the ball or neither player is looking for the ball. If there is any question whether contact is incidental the ruling shall be no interference.

2. Inadvertent tangling of feet when both players are playing the ball or neither player is playing the ball.

3. Contact that would normally be considered pass interference, but the pass is clearly uncatchable.

4. Laying a hand on a receiver that does not restrict the receiver in an attempt to make a play on the ball.

5. Although possible contact must be clear and obvious on a "Hail Mary" pass to rule pass interference.

Offensive Pass Interference

Actions that constitute offensive pass interference include but are not limited to:

1. Initiating contact with a defender by shoving or pushing off thus creating a separation in an attempt to catch a pass.

2. Driving through a defender who has established a position on the field.

3. If the pass has not been thrown and the block occurs anywhere down field, call OPI if the pass subsequently crosses the line of scrimmage (except #4 below).

4. If the pass has been thrown and a block occurs in the overlapping third of the field where the ball is thrown, call OPI.

5. OPI for blocking down field can be called even if the passer is legally grounding the ball.

6. A catchable pass is a requirement to have OPI on a thrown ball.

7. Both feet of the offensive player must be beyond one yard of the LOS for OPI to be called if all other criteria are met.

Not Offensive Pass Interference

Actions that do not constitute offensive pass interference include but are not limited to:



EFAF Officiating Committee News & Bulletin March 2008

1. Incidental contact by a receiver's hands, arms or body when both players are competing for the ball or neither is looking for the ball.
2. Inadvertent tangling of feet when both players are playing the ball or neither player is playing the ball.
3. Contact that would normally be considered pass interference, but the ball is clearly uncatchable by involved players.
4. OPI will not be called on a screen pass where the ball is overthrown behind the LOS but subsequently lands beyond the LOS and linemen are blocking downfield.
5. On a look-in pass where contact is shoulder to shoulder.
6. It is not OPI on a pick play if the defensive player is blocking the offensive player when the pick occurs.

Pass Interference Notes

1. If there is any question whether player contact is incidental, the ruling should be no interference.
2. Defensive players have as much right to the path of the ball as eligible offensive players.
3. Pass interference for both teams ends when the pass is touched.
4. There can be no pass interference at or behind the line of scrimmage or if the pass does not cross the neutral zone, but defensive actions such as tackling a receiver can still result in a penalty for defensive holding.
5. Both players have a right to the ball and there must be "an obvious intent to impede" to rule pass interference.

Passing Situations

1. Neutral zone will be expanded one yard when determining if a pass (untouched) is beyond the line, however, don't be technical on this.
2. Neutral zone will be expanded one yard when determining ineligible receivers, however, don't be technical on this.
3. Neutral zone will be expanded one yard when determining if a pass is touched beyond the neutral zone. No part of the player's body shall be within the one yard expanded NZ.
4. For the passer to be ruled beyond the line of scrimmage when he releases the ball his entire body and ball must be beyond the neutral zone.
5. If a receiver who is airborne controls the ball and is either contacted or falls to the ground on his own, whether in-bounds or out-of-bounds, he must maintain control of the ball through his fall to be awarded a catch. If ball never touches ground, receiver can regain control as long as he remains inbounds.
6. When in doubt on action against the passer, it is roughing the passer if the defender's intent is to punish.
7. For contact to the front of the passer, when there are two steps taken by the defensive player before contacting the passer it is a foul.
8. When in doubt if a player has a reasonable opportunity to catch the ball, he does.
9. On passes beyond the line of scrimmage, when in doubt, the pass is backward.
10. On simultaneous catches, who ever comes up with the ball gets the ball.
11. Hits above the shoulder on the quarterback with anything, i.e. hand, helmet, etc. is a foul.
12. The quarterback can throw the ball anywhere if he is not under duress, except spiking the ball straight down. The clock is not a factor.
13. If the quarterback throws the ball within one yard of the line of scrimmage and he is outside the tackle, the pass is considered close enough to the line of scrimmage. Don't be technical.
14. Catch - If the ball touches the ground in the receiver's hands, any loss of control of the ball makes the pass incomplete; if there is no loss of control after contact the ground, it is a catch.
15. Hits on defenseless receivers above the shoulders are always a foul.



EFAF Officiating Committee News & Bulletin March 2008

16. If an interception is near the goal line (inside the 1-yard line) try and make the play a touchback.
17. To be ruled a catch the receiver must be able to demonstrate and maintain firm control of the football. When in doubt if the player establishes firm control, he has not.
18. Be definite on catch before giving catch-fumble ruling. If there is any question, rule incomplete.
19. On passes behind the line of scrimmage, when in question, they are forward passes.
20. If no official sees that the ball has hit the ground, rule the pass complete.
21. If the passer is legally throwing the ball beyond the line to save a loss of yardage, do not penalize the offense for having ineligible receivers down field.

Kicking

1. The kicker's restraining line on onside and short pooch kick-offs will be officiated as a plane and any player (Other than the kicker or holder) breaking the plane before the ball is kicked will be called for offside. For deep kick-offs, we will also use a plane, but do not be technical.
2. If the kicker runs out of punt formation prior to punting the ball he loses his roughing protection unless he re-establishes as a punter. A personal foul may still be called if warranted, but not roughing the kicker.
3. On normal field goals, no more than five (5) seconds will be run off the clock.

Runner Down

1. When in question, the runner fumbled the ball and was NOT down.
2. Don't nit-pick plays at the goal line pylon. If in question on plays at the pylon, rule touchdown.
3. When in doubt, it is a touchdown.
4. The ground cannot cause a fumble but it can cause an incompleteness.
5. If contact occurs before the runner has a foot down out-of-bounds, legal hit.
6. Runner continuing down sideline: If whistle has blown and player has eased up then this is a foul. Be alert and be sure any action is not part of the initial play before calling a foul.
7. A runner crossing the goal inside the pylon with the ball crossing outside is a touchdown.
8. If the runner is being held by only one player, let it play; if he is held by two or more, rule forward progress stopped.
9. When in doubt, the runner did not step out of bounds.

Miscellaneous

1. Side officials don't blow whistles on plays up the middle.
2. Only the covering officials wind the clock on free kicks.
3. No TRY down necessary if time for the game has expired on the touchdown and the team ahead is ahead by three or more points.
4. Only the Head Coach can call a timeout for a challenge. If the Team is inside the red zone (25-yard line) a player can call the timeout for the Head Coach to challenge.
5. Do throw a flag for sideline warning. Call sideline warning at the end of a down without causing an interruption, but be sure the Head Coach has had a prior verbal warning.
6. 5-yard facemask fouls are rare but if it is a grasp and then let go, it can be called. When in question it is a 15-yard foul.
7. The ball can be placed on a yard line to begin the next possession. At all other times, the ball is placed where it is. (Exception: If the change of possession occurs on a 4th down, running or passing play, the ball will be left at the dead ball spot to begin the next series.)
8. When in doubt on QB pass/fumble, we will rule fumble.
9. Teams must be kept between the numbers, the sidelines and the 25-yard lines during timeouts.
10. 5/5 axiom: In order to adjust the game clock when it has been running, there must be more than a 5 second differential if there is more than 5 minutes remaining in either half.



EFAF Officiating Committee News & Bulletin March 2008

Any time lost due to the clock being started erroneously, such as when a dead ball foul is called, the clock must be adjusted.

11. If you think it is a foul, it is NOT, except against the QB.

Personal Fouls

1. If action is deemed to be "fighting", then the player must be disqualified. When in doubt of such actions, the player is not fighting.

2. Contact with the helmet in an attempt to punish is always a foul whether by offense or defense.

3. For late hits away from the ball near the end of the play, lean towards dead-ball foul rather than live-ball foul.

4. When a player is hit after giving himself up, a foul is warranted.

5. Fouls on the runner after the touchdown that are obviously late must be called.

6. Spitting on an opponent requires disqualification.



EFAF Officiating Committee News & Bulletin March 2008

Officials News: Einar Bolstad

Einar Bolstad will be at Reno Clinic as an instructor. You can see the list of instructors here: http://www.footballofficialscamp.com/camp_reno/r_instructors.htm

Congratulations Einar!

Officials News: Jean Perez-Canto in Spain

Few days ago French official Jean Perez-Canto was in Spain on vacations, near to Valencia, the parent's country. Jean asked me about the Spanish league games in Valencia during his holidays and I invited him to participate there as an official. He was assigned for two games, Firebats against Pioners (winner and finalist in the last season) and Firebats against Badalona Dracs, the first one as Back Judge and the second one as Linesman. For the first time Jean (actually Juan) officiated in his country. And as far as I seen, it was a good job, Juan!

Officials News: BAFRA Convention

Received from Jim Briggs

I would like to issue an invitation to you and your officiating colleagues to attend the BAFRA Convention this year.

The event is being held at a hotel in Coventry - nearest international airports Birmingham or Coventry - on Saturday 5th and Sunday 6th April 2008. Airport pickups and drop offs can be arranged. The programme starts at 0900 each day and ends at 1700 on Saturday and 1530 (provisionally) on Sunday.

The speakers include Jeff Flanagan who is a referee in the ACC and worked the Capital One Bowl recently. A number of senior British football officials will also be speaking, as will a top international badminton referee. There will be breakout sessions in small groups, and plenty of film to watch.

The fee for the Convention includes 2 nights bed & breakfast accommodation (Friday and Saturday), refreshments during the sessions, plus all clinic materials. The cost is £90 per person for a share of a twin room or £135 for a single room. Lunch and dinner can be obtained either in the hotel or by joining a group of British officials on a trip to a nearby restaurant, but the cost of these is not included in the price.

Bookings must be made by 13th March to Charlie Dean-Young at finance@bafra.org.

If you have any questions, please contact me or Davie Parsons (training@bafra.org).



EFAF Officiating Committee News & Bulletin March 2008

Officials News: Wembley weekend, Jim Briggs

Wembley weekend

Jim Briggs

At the end of October, I had the honour to be on the field at Wembley for the Dolphins/Giants NFL game.

How did that come about? Well, I was one of seven European officials who were invited to form the chain crew for the game. The others were Einar Bolstad (from Norway), Arnold Buys (Holland), Henning Rieske (Germany), Jean Perez-Canto (France), Michel Strahl (Switzerland) and Tony Pieratelli (Italy). We're all experienced officials at EFAF level, as well as being among the most experienced officials in our home countries. With two exceptions, we all had World League/NFL Europe experience.

We were asked to report to a central-London hotel at lunchtime on the Saturday. Shortly after arriving I bumped into NFL Supervisor of Officials, Jim Daopoulos, who was the officiating observer for the game. Jim is an ex-NFL umpire and worked Super Bowl XXXIII. He told me to meet in the hotel foyer at 1.15 if I wanted to travel up to the stadium with the crew to check the place out. I managed to find the rest of the chain crew, grabbed a quick bite of lunch, and was there on time with the rest of the guys, ready to go.

We met the NFL crew: R Gerald (not Gerry) Austin, U Ruben Fowler, L Ed Camp, LJ Carl Johnson, BJ Bob Lawing, FJ Scott Edwards and SJ Al Riveron, plus replay officials James Wilson and Eugene Cunningham. A couple of the European guys had worked with some of the younger members of the crew in NFL Europe so not everyone was a stranger to everyone else. Ruben is in only his second season in the league, but Al used to be his referee when they were both worked college football in Conference USA. Gerald has been responsible for a lot of Al and Ruben's development, because he is also the supervisor of officials in that conference. According to Al, the officiating philosophy in Conference USA is virtually identical (rule differences apart) to the NFL's, and as a consequence in recent years more officials have been recruited into the NFL from it than any other conference.

Because our hotel was right next to Marylebone station, the train was the NFL's official mode of transport to the stadium for league personnel that weekend. I temporarily became railway travel advisor to the NFL Officiating Department as I was sent across the road to the station to find out the times of the trains. We'd just missed a train, so it was decided to hold the pre-game conference before going to the stadium.

An NFL pre-game consists primarily of watching film from the previous week's games. NFL Vice-President of Officiating (i.e. the boss) Mike Pereira compiles a DVD of interesting plays taken from all games. His voice-over tells crews whether the play was called correctly or not, whether the mechanics used were appropriate or not, and generally sets the standard for all crews to follow. That week's film focused on two aspects of mechanics. The first was the position of the "double umpires" on field goals and extra points. The other was the option that the league has given umpires this season to work deeper than usual to keep out of players' way. Normally the crew would also watch the film of their previous week's game, but the Austin crew had had a bye the week before.



EFAF Officiating Committee News & Bulletin March 2008

The NFL has a much more flexible attitude to mechanics than it used to have. The league no longer produces a mechanics manual, instead relying on the collective experience of crew members to know what's necessary in a given situation. Crews are given the responsibility to refine their coverage and communication – something you can do when, injury apart, you work together for the entire regular season.

At the meeting, we also sorted out who was going to do what on the chain crew. I ended up as auxiliary line-to-gain operator – the one who mirrors the position of the front stake on the opposite side of the field. More on that later.

When we finally got the train to Wembley it took us some time to get into the stadium. Despite it being over 24 hours before kickoff, security was very tight and we all had to go through a metal detector before going in. Once we found our way through to the field, the instruction was given to "keep off the grass". The only people allowed on the hallowed turf that day were a team of four people pushing lawnmowers up and down the field in line astern, each presumably shaving a millimetre off the surface. Under the stands at Wembley is what more than anything else resembles a multi-storey car park, except it's a car park populated almost exclusively by articulated lorries – television trucks, equipment trucks, generator trucks, catering trucks, etc.

Saturday evening was free. The chain crew had a quiet dinner in a nearby restaurant while we chewed over the EFAF gossip. Sunday morning was also free though we agreed to meet for breakfast in a nearby "greasy spoon". There we bumped into the statistics crew for the game, led by Glen Schild, the BAFL Chairman and renowned stats guru. Russ Hewitt, head coach of Southern Sundevils and Portsmouth Destroyers and also on the crew, got it slightly wrong by greeting me with the words "Hello, Keith"!

We left for the stadium on Sunday at 1pm – four hours before kickoff. Gerald decided we would go by coach rather than train. Security was even tighter than the day before, though the security man who asked 14 men what was in their bags and got 14 replies of "officiating equipment" seemed unfazed.

We had two dressing rooms just inside the main tunnel. The crew took one and we had the other, the only problem being that we had to share the room with a large pile of boxed game balls. These were the "K" balls – those used only for kicking plays during the game – and we were given the duty to observe that no foreign objects were employed by the interns from each team who came into the dressing room to rub the balls down.

The league normally allocates 12 K balls to each game, but because Wembley was unable to put nets behind the goals, it was thought that a lot might not get returned, so double the usual number were provided. In the end, I think the NFL got virtually all of them back, thanks to the efforts of the stewards in the crowd.

Sixty minutes before kickoff we took the chains out onto the field. At that stage I was quite worried because the stadium appeared to be half empty. There were whole blocks of empty seats. Fortunately, with the reputation of British support for American football at stake, they all filled up by kickoff time: the upper level seats by people who were hidden in the hospitality areas; the lower level seats by people who had been held up on their way into the stadium.

Being on the sideline during the pre-game ceremonies had its small bonuses. At one point, the Dolphins cheerleaders were in line marching off the field near me. I wasn't



EFAF Officiating Committee News & Bulletin March 2008

sure whether they were intending to head to my left and pass behind me, or pass in front of me, so I stood still next to an advertising board (which I guessed they weren't planning to hurdle!). As they started going to my left they were called back in front of me, and therefore had to wheel and pass within touching distance of me. All my professionalism however kicked in and I clung to the line-to-gain marker with both hands, though I can't say my attention was elsewhere for the next 30 seconds or so!

Auxiliary line-to-gain operator is not a bad place to watch a game from. The down box operator and his auxiliary twin probably have the best view since they get to look down the line of scrimmage, but my position meant that I was sometimes very close to the line of scrimmage and a few times quite a way downfield. It also meant that I was a free agent on kickoffs, goal-to-go situations and extra points – all plays when the chains are not used.

Watching the game on television, you may not be aware of what the NFL mechanics are for painting the yellow line that you see that marks the line to gain. Well, the front stake operator on the chains has the can of yellow paint and when the new line to gain is established, he runs quickly across the field to paint in the new line. At the same time, I, as the auxiliary line-to-gain operator, had to do the same with the green can to rub out the previous line. If you were watching carefully, you would have noticed the play in the third quarter where Miami were too quickly up to the line of scrimmage for me to do my work, and so for one down there were two yellow lines on the field!

The two most important tasks of the chain crew are to keep out of the way of the players and to keep out of the way of the head coaches.

The former was especially true on punt plays. Before each punt, one of the assistant coaches would call out to everyone near the sideline "Watch out for the gunner". The "gunner" is the widest player in Team A's formation on a punt, and his job is to run downfield and get to the punt returner as quickly as possible. However, Team B always assigns one player, and often two, to stop him in that task – the most effective way to do so being to push him as far out of bounds as possible. If he collides with people in the team area, or with one of the chain crew or ball boys, I suppose that makes it even more effective! Consequently, I had to be on my toes to keep out of the player's way, as several times he was pushed in my direction. One time, I actually slipped as I moved out of the way – although I escaped, my marker didn't, but the collision between the player and it was slight.

Rules about the coaches staying in the coaching box are not rigidly applied. So, several times during the game, Cam Cameron or Tom Coughlin walked in front of me. That wasn't usually a problem – they simply passed by – but as you may have noticed on TV, the coaches also wear headsets linking them to their colleagues high in the stands. These are not wireless connections: they require long cables trailing behind the coach to sockets at the back of the team area. Each head coach had a "cable guy" (actually the Miami one was a gal) whose sole job is to feed the cable and stop it fouling on anything. That includes line-to-gain markers. On one occasion, Cam Cameron walked in front of me, so I lifted my feet and marker one at a time to allow the cable girl to pass the cable underneath them. No sooner was the manoeuvre completed, than Cameron walked back the other way and the process had to be repeated in reverse. This is why good footwork is so important in officiating!



EFAF Officiating Committee News & Bulletin March 2008

With all the business of keeping out of people on the sideline's way, and staying alert to players being pushed out of bounds, you might wonder whether I had time to watch the game. I spent some plays watching the game from the field judge's perspective – he usually being the official nearest me. I also watched the referee and umpire quite a bit. Generally, at every level of the game, the pace of the game and the speed of the players are greater than at a lower level. I'm sure you're aware of the differences between BAFL Premier, Division 1 and Division 2 games. In this game, the pace didn't seem to be as fast as I had expected it to be, but perhaps that can be explained by the state of the field surface.

Since the game, and especially since the England/Croatia game, people have been asking me about the field surface. Did the American football game cut the pitch up? My answer is no – the field was in pretty bad condition before the NFL game started. Although it looked superb, there was very little holding the top surface of the turf to the soil beneath it. Coupled with the wet conditions, players were frequently losing their footholds as the ground literally moved beneath them. It affected the officials too; both the linesman and umpire took tumbles during the game, and at one point the back judge had to do a rather artful pirouette to maintain an upright position. A better question for people to ask is why the Croatian players were the only ones to play well at Wembley!

At the end of the game, we got changed and went outside the stadium to find our coach back to the hotel. It was in a group with the teams' coaches and the ones for the cheerleaders. In the middle was a large group of police motorcycle outriders, and I was quite looking forward to a high speed return trip under escort. But it wasn't to be – our coach was sent on its way unescorted and we had to fight our way back into central London along with everyone else.

Once back at the hotel, the NFL officials invited the chain crew out to dinner. Seemingly a table for 26 (we had been joined by several officials' wives) had been booked in a nearby restaurant. By this time I think all 26 of us were pretty tired, but it was an enjoyable meal nevertheless, and a good finish to an excellent weekend. Most people had early morning flights on the Monday, but I had the luxury of a mid-morning train.

My lasting impression of the weekend is just how much is involved in organising such an event. Everything, and I mean everything, that the Miami Dolphins would normally have on the sideline for a home game was brought over – and that included ball boys and a lot of other sideline personnel. I think the only two groups of Miami staff who didn't make the trip were their chain crew and their stats crew. The Giants also brought all their own stuff (including their own ball boys). The extent of the TV coverage, plus facilities for instant replay, was enormous.

The really good news was that everyone from the NFL seemed to enjoy the whole Wembley experience – even the bad weather – so let's hope they come back soon!