



Amateur Football Combination

Respect 

Spirit of Football

Respect 

www.amateurfootballcombination.com

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Spirit of Football - 2011/2012

Season 2011/12 will be the sixth since the introduction of the Leagues 'Spirit of Football' initiative now running alongside the FA Respect programme which should have been fully introduced by Clubs last season. The principles and aims of both are very similar although Clubs should be reminded that these now formally extend to non playing club members, supporters and spectators in addition to playing club members.

Although the initiatives have been adopted by most, if not all Clubs, to a greater or lesser degree, complacency seems to be creeping in as evidenced by some 50% of Clubs receiving a lower average mark for last season than for the year before, a trend that the AFC (a Respect League) does not want to see continuing next season. This suggests that these Clubs might have taken their eye off the ball – if so, they need to concentrate their minds on refocusing their efforts when planning for the new season, establishing the reason(s) for the downward change and developing a strategy to turn it around. As we all know, a lowering of standards can happen easily and under the radar – to recover the situation and raise standards is difficult, time consuming and hard work. At the outset of the new season, all Clubs should target an improvement year on year with the satisfactions that success would bring.

Comparing 2009/2010 with 2010/11 (bottom 20 positions this year)

1. Special mention should be made of those Clubs whose efforts led to their moving away from the bottom positions with pleasing improvements in their league rating:- Davenant Wanderers, Old Tenisonians, Old Kingsburians, Enfield Old Grammarians, Old Parmiterians, Birkbeck College and Fitzwilliam Old Boys – as always, such improvement needs to be maintained in the future.
2. There were five Clubs which moved from outside the bottom positions to inside at the end of the season as follows:- Wood Green Old Boys, Nat West Bank, Old Buckwellians, Mill Hill Village and Bealonians.
3. The following Clubs started and finished in the bottom 20 positions but all with an improved average mark at the end of the season :- Old Manorians, Old Danes, Old Uffingtonians, Old Camdenians, Old Josephians, Old Bromleians, Egbertians and Globe Rangers. These Clubs should redouble their efforts so as to be outside of the bottom 20 by the end of the 11/12 season.
4. Lastly, there were a number of Clubs that started and finished in the bottom 20 positions with an average mark lower at the end of the season than at the start:- Chertsey Old Salesians, Old Isleworthians, Standard Chartered Bank, Lea Valley, Old Edmontonians, The Comets and Ravenscroft Old Boys.

ALL THE CLUBS IN 2. & 4. NEED TO BE AWARE THAT A POSITIVE CHANGE IN THEIR APPROACH AND CLUB CULTURE NEEDS TO BE INTRODUCED IF THEY ARE TO OVERCOME THEIR PROBLEMS.

For the benefit of all Club Officers but particularly those taking on a position for the first time, it's worth reminding ourselves of some of the points from previous seasons that remain as relevant now as they were when first published:-

Not Interested? – There Are Other Leagues!

The League and the FA have decided how our football is played is important, and we're still attracting new clubs, so clearly, we're doing something right – people want to join the League and play football the way it should be played. If we do have Clubs who simply aren't interested, then they may have to face up to trying to find their football somewhere else, and we're not afraid to put club membership before the AGM as has been recently evidenced. All Clubs should think carefully about their membership, and who represents them. Your Club's reputation is at stake.

It's Not My Fault

All too often we hear excuses for bad behaviour. "We want to win", it was the referees fault". Let's be clear about this – everyone in the AFC is responsible for their own actions. Winning and good sportsmanship are not exclusive. Referees will make mistakes, and do make decisions you don't agree with (the two things are not the same!) and that's part of football. Spirit of Football – Respect is about how you behave, and how you expect others to behave towards you.

Playing in the Spirit of Football, Promoting Fair Play and Respect for All

Taking Responsibility

Clubs and Club Officers need to understand that responsibility for behaviour ultimately falls to them. Clubs need to acknowledge where problems lie and take steps to identify and deal with troublemakers. Don't shy away from making tough decisions simply to prevent a loss of members and/or seeing a reduction in playing strength of teams. If you have "problem players", be brave enough to kick them out, and contact us to ensure such players are listed on the website as players banned by Clubs so that the bad apples don't resurface elsewhere (this has not always been the case in the past to the detriment of some Clubs!)

If Clubs and League Officers are firm but fair, the referees/officials are competent and in control and captains work with them and set a good example by taking responsibility to deal with players indiscipline at the time it takes place, behaviour will improve and the level of sportsmanship will return to the high but realistic level that this League has set itself. Players should compete in the spirit of respect, friendship and fair play which is all-important when it comes to playing the game usually within the Laws. Captains and officials have a major responsibility to ensure that the game is played within a framework of goodwill and competitiveness.

Clubs – The Essentials

As a 'Respect League' it is expected that codes of conduct are read, agreed and signed by all club members, playing and non-playing, including spectators and supporters. New players recruited into the club during the season should be dealt with likewise.

The new registration requirements/procedures are to be explained at the SGM on Friday the 9th September.

Captains and vice-captains to take responsibility for their players' actions and behaviour – please make sure they see a copy of the 'Respect Guide' and 'Captains Responsibilities' on the website.

Captains and vice-captains must wear a Respect (or Spirit of Football) armband. A stock is held by Danny McConnell and in the League shop by Rob Gibbs.

As usual, two SOF-Respect posters will be received by Clubs for suitable display if at all possible.

Clubs – Optional Extras

In addition, we would encourage clubs towards the following:-

- Please consider including Spirit of Football – Respect branding on club headed paper. This being another indication of support and adoption of the dual campaigns.
- Remind your captains/players as to the likelihood of appointed referees' pre-match briefings mentioning the way in which they intend to officiate and making reference to SOF – Respect. Please encourage your club referees to do likewise.
- Please mark your opposition carefully each week, considering all elements of 'SOF-Respect' – be objective, assessing solely the game in hand and without, necessarily, being swayed by a particular unsavoury incident normally dealt with by the issue of cards. If you consider a poor mark appropriate please give it and explain why – as most, if not all, of you should now realise, we do act on reports, both bad and good, but this is dependant on our receiving realistic and unbiased feedback.
- Club marks, together with those given by appointed referees (and club referees please) are important elements when considering the annual 'SOF-Respect' awards. Last season, two footballs (worth over £60 each) were awarded to the top clubs in the usual three categories – 1-2 team clubs, 3-5 and 6 and above. Reminders of the importance of the programmes should be issued from time to time to keep the momentum going.

PLEASE PASS COPIES OF THIS NEWSLETTER TO YOUR CLUB REFEREES, OFFICERS, CAPTAINS/VICE CAPTAINS, TEAM MANAGERS AND ANYONE ELSE INVOLVED WITH THE RUNNING OF THE CLUB with the aim of trying to ensure that the content is conveyed as widely as possible.

Spirit of Football Co-ordinators

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If you have any queries, comments, thoughts or suggestions about the dual Spirit of Football – Respect programmes, please contact your co-ordinator or Rob Gibbs (overseeing role) – 02088662033 (H), 07958061555 (M), robgingbbs@hotmail.co.uk who will be more than happy to discuss any aspect with you.