



## To Sin Bin – or not to Sin Bin

One interesting refereeing experiment, the use of the Sin Bin – or to give the scheme it's formal title "temporary dismissals" – is well under way up and down the country, with 32 leagues participating in the initial pilot of the system for season 2017-18, continuing into this playing season.

Sheffield & District Junior Under 15 Sunday League, Division 2, Dinnington Town v Wath Stars, may not feature on Sky Sports or Five Live, however in the world of local referee Andy Hogg, this was my first ever game which gave me the option of using the 'temporary dismissal' as part of my management toolkit. In preparation, I duly read up on the law, watched the FA webinar (death by PowerPoint, but factual) and then took to the field, determined to remember that this option was available to me. Prior to the game, I had discussed the scheme with coaches, players and referee colleagues whose opinion I value, so I felt well prepared for the task ahead.

An interesting side-line to this is that the local leagues in which I operate have utilised 'rolling substitutes' for several seasons now, and I have frequently used this to invite captains and coaches to 'rest' a player for a short period, therefore allowing him to cool-off if matters had become heated. I know, strictly speaking, not something which appears in advice and guidance to referees, and it may even be discouraged in law; but I utilise my experience in these situations and generally, it worked well and was appreciated by most. So, here's the question, was I utilising a 'sin-bin' already – if so, it's the first time I had been a pioneer for matters of law! With this in mind, I therefore welcomed the opportunity to possibly put in to practice a tactic I had been utilising, but this time with the Laws of the Game to back me up.

A quiet first half, 1-1 at half-time, was superseded by an increased match intensity at the start of the second half as both teams pushed forward for a winner, with the expected increased questioning of the referee's decisions as the game progressed. Remembering that this was an Under 15 game, and also remembering that attempting considered and rationale reasoning with your average 14-year-old lad is about as worthwhile as Donald Trump diplomatically negotiating with the North Koreans, there comes a time when actions replace words. Mid-way through this second-half, having already spoken to Blue #11 for a Robbie Savage like challenge, he gave his opinions on something as vital as a throw-in at the half-way line as only a 14-year-old lad can do! So, a decision to make – do I 'Sin Bin' or do I not 'Sin Bin'. Allowing myself thinking time, I took the player to one side and decided to set-him up, telling him (and the other 21 players) in no uncertain terms that he was on his last warning for dissent,

and a further occurrence would result in 10 minutes off the field of play. Whether you think I am right or wrong, on this particular occasion my decision proved to be correct as there was not a squeak from any other player for the rest of the game, and I give due credit to the coaches who got the message across to their players. Of course, my decision could have back-fired, "You let him get any with it Ref!", but as we often coach, refereeing is about risk verses reward, and the 'risk' I took worked on this occasion. Who knows, next Sunday I may take a different approach depending upon the 'temperature' of the game, but, based upon my very non-scientific sample of one, the pilot gets a thumbs-up from me as it gives me another rung to my stepped approach ladder in managing the players.

One thing, however, concerns me about this scheme. I envisage a possible situation where a referee who lacks the personality and skills to manage the players resorts to becoming 'trigger-happy' with the Sin-Bin and never utilises a considered stepped approach, which will make a mockery of the pilot. The teams will quickly lose the respect of the referee with more than 2 players in the Sin Bin at any one time and we are potentially taking away the learning curve of developing our officials on how to manage the players in a respectful and controlled manner.

One last thought, at Under 15 level, have we thought about a Sin-Bin for parents. Fair play to the good citizens of Dinnington and Wath whose comments towards the match referee were respectful, but that is not always the case. The lack of respect towards the referee in junior football frequently stems from the sidelines, but that's a whole different issue.