

This year's speakers



David Elleray – Honorary President of the RAE, former FIFA referee and Vice-chairman of the FA Referees' Committee.

When he retired from top level refereeing he began to devote even more time to behind-the-scenes work at FIFA, UEFA, the FA and Middlesex FA, assessing and developing referees at all levels.

We have David to thank again for organising the programme for the Conference. He will be around meeting delegates informally during the event.

Mike Riley – One of England's current FIFA and Select Group Referees who was appointed to the Euro 2004 Championship Finals. A staunch member of the RAE promoting the virtues of membership to all aspiring referees for the support that it gives. He is approaching his 27th year as a referee and was elevated to the National List in 1994 and to the Premier League in 1996. On FIFA since 1999. On the way, he has refereed the FA Vase, Charity Shield, FA Cup and Carling Cup Finals.



Steve Bennett – Another of England's current FIFA and Select Group Referees. An imposing figure who was appointed to the Euro 2004 Championship Finals. He started his refereeing career in 1984 and has moved through the various leagues, reaching the Premiership list in 1999. George Courtenay and Pierluigi Collina were his rôle models.

Chris Foy (right) began refereeing in Merseyside in 1983 and made the Football League Assistant Referees' list 11 years later before joining the Referees' list in 1996. 5 years later he was promoted to the Premier League referees' list.



Martin Atkinson was born in 1971, and is based in Leeds. He started his career at the relatively early age of 16 years old. He was promoted to the National List of Assistant Referees and to the Select Group of Assistants in 2000. Rapid promotion brought him from Conference football in 2000 to the National List in 2003-4 and two seasons' later to the Select List of referees, now also on the FIFA list.

Mark Clattenburg was born in 1975 and comes from County Durham. He refereed his first Football League match at the age of just 25 having served only one year on the Assistants' List. He became a Select Group referee in 2004 and a FIFA referee in 2006 at the age of only thirty. He reached this distinction earlier than any English referee in living memory. He was the referee for Alan Shearer's testimonial match at the end of the 2005-6 season.



Phil Sharp will be a familiar face to you all, regularly featuring on the line in televised Premiership matches. He is a real 'lining' professional and his skills were recognised by his appointment to the FIFA World Cup Final. He has had numerous FIFA and UEFA calls in his career. Of course, he has to do middles too still and operates in the south of England on the Contributory leagues.

Ian Blanchard is a former Select List Assistant who moved to the FA to work full-time as a Regional Manager (Referees). On John Baker's retirement, the Referees' Department was reorganised and Ian was promoted to be Head of National Referees' Development looking after Levels 9 through to 5. An experienced administrator and instructor, he is a persuasive speaker. A loyal supporter of the RAE, he, along with his colleagues, has been instrumental in cementing our closer relationship with the FA.

