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‘Full authority to enforce the Laws of the Game’: blowing the whistle on women’s soccer refereeing in Wales, UK

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Abstract

Research on sports officiating has increased in volume, scope and geographical reach in recent years, with a growing interest in association football (soccer). However, studies on the officiating experiences of girls and women remain under-represented. This study provides a case-study of women’s refereeing in the hitherto unresearched context of Wales. Guided by a wide-ranging review of the extant literature, key themes and issues were explored in a series of six in-depth semi-structured interviews with active women referees at different levels from within the organizational competitive pyramid. The data yielded a familiar set of results consistent with other studies elsewhere, and a focus on referee recruitment and retention, micro and macro support for referees, the challenges of gaining acceptance as a woman referee, and dealing with abuse. There are clear implications for national governing bodies in terms of effective marketing of refereeing, attrition of referees, talent identification and career development in match officiating.

Key words: women, referee, officiating, sexism

Introduction

Enshrined in the *Laws of the Game*, association football (soccer) matches are controlled by a referee and, depending on the level of the match, other ‘on field’ and video match officials. The referee has “full authority to enforce the Laws of the Game” in accordance with “the spirit of the game”.¹ Yet in spite of that formal authority, as well as an explicit commitment to respect for match officials, there are many reports in the global media of verbal (and more rarely) physical abuse towards referees.² Increased sports participation, and concomitantly the recruitment and retention of officials has been a strategic priority for several sports in recent years.³ All four national football associations of the United Kingdom (UK) have noted a referee shortage and National Governing Bodies (NGBs) have made efforts to address the problem. To highlight part of the challenge for soccer at grass roots level especially, in September 2021, the Kent FA (an English county football association) released an open letter revealing specific instances of referee abuse and how this was leaving competitive fixtures without referees on a weekly basis.⁴

The problem is made more complex in the UK (and elsewhere) because of the prevailing climate of institutional discrimination experienced by many different sectors of society – including, for example, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership.⁵ Despite the growth and professionalization of the women’s game (particularly in playing and coaching), women match officials remain under-represented at all levels – and sexism remains a dominant feature.⁶

As a pioneer for women’s refereeing, in 1997 Wendy Toms was the first woman to be an Assistant Referee in the (men’s) English Premier League (EPL) and in the (men’s) English League Cup Final in 2000. Sian Massey-Ellis became an Assistant Referee in the EPL in 2008, was the first woman to turn professional in 2009, and officiated in at the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Women’s Champions League Final in 2018 and in the UEFA (men’s) Europa League in 2019. Most recently, Rebecca Welch was the first woman referee in the EPL in December 2023 and was the first referee to be inducted into the Women’s Super League Hall of Fame a year later. Their career progress and achievements have been the subject of intense media scrutiny with Toms and Massey-Ellis being mentioned in the now infamous episode from 2011 when Sky Sports presenter, Richard Keys, and pundit, Andy Gray, were recorded making sexist and misogynistic comments about women officials.⁷

Massey-Ellis in particular has been a strong advocate for the recruitment and retention of women match officials, but previous studies in the UK have provided clear evidence of gendered experiences, sexism, stereotyping, discrimination and marginalization.⁸ The aim of the present study is to add incrementally to the body of knowledge around women's experiences of soccer officiating with a particular focus on the hitherto un-researched context of Wales – and specifically to evaluate the success of current NGB strategy and to explore training and development opportunities for women match officials.

There are four further sections to this article. First, a review of literature in two parts presents a broad sweep of research on sports officiating and football refereeing in especially, followed by an overview of the policy context as it applies to Wales and the UK. Second, a summary of the methodological approach taken for the empirical element of the study. Third, a discussion of the results organized around the themes of recruitment and retention, support, dealing with abuse, and gaining acceptance. Finally, a brief conclusion highlighting recommendations.

Sports officiating research

In 2020, Hancock and colleagues published a review of the sports officiating literature from 1971 to 2018.⁹ The results of their study of 386 research outputs revealed an increasing volume of research over the period, greater emphasis on quantitative research design, and the neglect of women-only studies. The proliferation of outlets for research in recent years has also created a wider variety of opportunities for publication beyond sport and exercise sciences,¹⁰ physical education,¹¹ and leisure studies¹² – for example, in gender studies,¹³ psychology,¹⁴ and public health.¹⁵ A dominant theme in research on sports officiating has been abuse of match officials in a variety of major team games. In a systematic review of 60 studies concerned with match official abuse published between 1999 and 2022, Mojtahedi *et al.* highlighted its effects on officials' performance, wellbeing and retention, its impact on interpersonal conflict management, and active officials' attitudes to support.¹⁶

Research on soccer officiating specifically is still developing and has emerged in different countries including Brazil,¹⁷ Canada,¹⁸ Colombia,¹⁹ France,²⁰ Germany,²¹ Iran,²² the Middle East,²³ Portugal,²⁴ South Korea,²⁵ Spain,²⁶ Turkey,²⁷ and the USA.²⁸ A dominant theme in previous research in soccer has been the abuse of match officials focusing on prevalence²⁹ and type.³⁰ In a systematic review of research outputs on the abuse of match officials in several major team games,

38 of the 60 cited studies were from soccer. In addition to pervasiveness and nature of abuse, the review identified effects of abuse on performance, wellbeing and retention, as well as methods of interpersonal conflict management and perceptions of current support.³¹

Importantly for the present study, however, whilst there had been some consideration of referee stressors,³² ‘burnout’,³³ attrition,³⁴ and retention,³⁵ there has been relatively little attention to talent identification and development of soccer referees.

Building on early work on referee training,³⁶ a study by Webb *et al.* made a significant breakthrough in identifying the importance of recruitment activity by NGBs targeting new referees.³⁷ Participants also noted concerns about retention, especially in relation to designated performance pathways, and the relative neglect of those not selected for them. Even for those involved, concerns were noted around the divergence in approaches to the assessment system (which determines referee career progress) as well of the lack of psychological support needed to successfully navigate the physical and cognitive demands of refereeing in elite levels.³⁸

One of the biggest initiatives to deal with referee abuse in the UK was the FA’s Respect campaign. Originally introduced to deal with issues at the grassroots (amateur) level, its popularity was such that it was adopted at the professional level. As Cleland and colleagues remarked,³⁹ the campaign was a smaller piece of a larger policy jigsaw that the then Labour government was using to combat issues around social inclusion and social justice, but as they also noted, its impact was modest (at best) and the issues remained largely unchanged at grassroots level.

Given this context, it is not surprising that around 80% of new sports officials quit before they reach three years of service,⁴⁰ thereby creating a significant retention problem for national football associations who have recently been caught between proactive and reactive strategic decision-making. Recent research has considered attempts to mitigate this trend, also understanding why referees are opting to stay involved. Retention strategies have included creating a community of practice for match officials, enhancing administrator consideration, clarifying role expectations, and reducing/reframing the abuse/stress that match officials experience.⁴¹

Although the experiences of women referees have not been the focus of sustained research attention,⁴² studies have addressed gendered entry into soccer careers,⁴³ marginalization within soccer’s organizational cultures,⁴⁴ homophobia and heteronormativity,⁴⁵ work-family conflicts,⁴⁶

sexism,⁴⁷ and the coping strategies adopted by women when confronted by emotional, sexist and racist abuse,⁴⁸ and more generally in male-dominated spaces.⁴⁹ The most recent exploration of women's refereeing voices examined sexism, abuse and threatening behaviour at grassroots and semi-professional levels in England.⁵⁰ The theme of coping through different self-presentation techniques was again identified as well as the systemic issues that women match officials encounter such as inadequate changing facilities and the policy and governance barriers faced when trying to progress up the refereeing ladder.

A multi-agency policy context

Gendered differences in sports participation patterns in the UK were acknowledged over 60 years in the landmark Wolfenden Report. There then followed a series of policy initiatives that sought to address the relative under-representation of women and girls.⁵¹ However more recent evidence confirms a participation gap with women and girls less active than men and boys.⁵²

Specifically in relation to soccer, UEFA oversees development and growth of the game.⁵³ Its main emphases have been transnational competition, coach education and training, leveraging the influence of television on the game, and training match officials. To support this development, UEFA created its own refereeing department with overarching policy guidance for member nations. In relation to referee recruitment, the ambition was explicit:

... to achieve the desired ratio of one referee for every two teams, the current situation must be analysed in conjunction with the regional referees committees and the local leagues. Attention should also be paid to the desired referee profile".⁵⁴

There was also clear guidance on retention, with a focus on education, training and development for all match officials, as well as exploration of potential reasons for attrition to inform the design and implementation of appropriate countermeasures.

The Football Association's flagship 'Respect' campaign had its inaugural season in 2008/2009. An attempt to improve player, coach and spectator behaviour and conduct at all levels, it had four cornerstones: codes of conduct, designated spectator areas, captains' responsibility (for their teams), and referee management of games. In the first year, evaluation evidence reported a decrease in mass confrontations and assaults on match officials, as well as a significant increase in the numbers of registered referees.⁵⁵ These encouraging data did not differentiate the experiences of women and girls, though the FA did indicate that the campaign was not a tokenistic

‘one-off’ occurrence. In reality, however, as Drury *et al.* noted, the rhetoric got lost in “the ever-pervasive gender discourse of football” – for example, marketing material for the recruitment of female match officials did not include one image of a current female match official.⁵⁶ Compounded by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Active Adults’ survey for 2019-2022 revealed a 1% decrease in the number who had officiated, umpired or refereed at the grassroots level.⁵⁷

In Wales, responsibility for sport, leisure and recreation has been devolved since 1997. Sport Wales is the lead non-government organization responsible for the formation and delivery of sport policy in Wales.⁵⁸ In 2005, the then Welsh Assembly Government (now Welsh Government) released its all-encompassing long term sport policy entitled *Climbing Higher*. The document proposed a 20-year plan where sport and physical activity would take place in the three traditional sport development environments – school, community and elite.⁵⁹ Surprisingly, in a 37-page document, only four points related specifically to women and girls – three of which were about aspirational international sporting success for women’s rugby union, soccer and golf. More modestly, the fourth was an ambiguous consultation among women and girls to devise an offering that aligns with cross-cutting themes of lifelong learning and participation. To be clear, there were no specific aims or targets relating to sports officiating – though this often falls under the remit of the NGB.

In an attempt to implement policy directives from UEFA, the Football Association Wales (FAW) published its Referee Recruitment Strategy in 2022. With a time horizon of 2026, despite the exposure and traction that women’s soccer in Wales has achieved over a number of years, the targets for specific women referee recruitment and retention are underwhelming. To illustrate, the second recruitment target stipulates: “By 2026, we will recruit and train enough female referees to select a dedicated list of female-only match officials, to officiate in the Adran Premier League”.⁶⁰ This unchallenging goal had been met by the end of 2024 with seven women match officials qualified and registered to officiate in the top division of women’s football in Wales. Moreover, in parallel with increased recruitment, the intention was “[to improve] retention through an effective training and development programme, including female-only courses and CPD opportunities”.⁶¹

Materials and methods

The philosophical assumptions of the present study were guided by a social constructionist ontology and an interpretive epistemology. The aim here was to elicit the meanings that people form through their daily interactions and experiences as female match officials. As Berger and Luckman asserted in their landmark text – all forms and levels of knowledge are derived and maintained through social interaction.⁶² To this end, as this study sought to investigate female experiences of officiating football matches in Wales, UK, a purposive sampling technique was employed. In simple terms, Bryman outlines that the goal of this technique is to sample in a strategic way – adding variety whilst still maintaining relevance to the research question(s).⁶³ Consistent with other studies on sports officiating,⁶⁴ through the first author's existing refereeing networks, six female match officials were recruited who officiate at every level of the Welsh football pyramid. Coincidentally, each of the six area Welsh football associations was also represented. Further biographical detail about participants is not provided as this would risk compromising their anonymity.

Data collection and analysis

After ethical clearance was gained through the first author's institutional ethics committee, in-depth semi-structured online interviews took place on Skype and were recorded.⁶⁵ The Covid-19 global pandemic hampered or at least reconfigured data collection in social research, but moving to the online space in this study was a seamless transition. Indeed, even prior to the pandemic, Lo Iacono *et al.* discussed the viability of using Voice over Internet Protocols (VoIP) as a tool of data collection for qualitative researchers.⁶⁶ They noted that online data collection opens the opportunity to sample internationally, which in the present study transpired to be nationally – saving time and money for all involved. They also acknowledged the concern that about the challenge of building rapport with participants when online. Crucially, however, the first author was known to all participants as a qualified match official which helped to dispel any of the initial tentativeness that participants can experience when interviewed by someone unknown to them. Interviews lasted for between 45-75 minutes and informed by the extant literature. The interview guide themes included: recruitment and retention, support mechanisms, gaining acceptance as a female match official, and dealing with abuse.

All interviews were transcribed *verbatim* and were then analysed thematically using Braun and Clarke's framework.⁶⁷ This firstly involved (re)reading the transcripts before searching for initial

codes, which in simple terms, means that interesting ideas were grouped together in a meaningful and systematic way. Next, a coding map was produced so that the researcher could highlight how codes could be grouped together to form actual themes. The relevance of the identified themes was then considered before understanding how they could piece together to form a coherent and progressive narrative of findings. The final stage of analysis (prior to the production of the written output) involved what Braun and Clarke label as ‘define and refine’, whereby the essence of each theme was discerned in terms of what they are and what they are not.

Results and discussion

Recruitment and retention

All participants noted a similar pathway into officiating, either having previously played/coached/administered football – which is often the case for referees in Wales. Concerns were noted over the lack of *bona fide* new participants who simply want to try something for the first time, however the NGB had at least delivered on the strategic intention by providing women-only courses leading to qualified match official status. Promisingly, the NGB has also facilitated a women-only progression pathway for accreditation to officiate on the women’s soccer pathway in Wales – though this could be seen as a disadvantage for women seeking to officiate in the men’s game.⁶⁸

More worrying was a consistent feeling about the lack of succession planning and referee development, especially among the elite match officials. Deirdre, who was nearing retirement, explained:

The lack of women and girls coming through is worrying for me. I’m not going to be around forever, and nothing is coming through at the moment. Because of the age gap between me and the other FIFA girls I’m worried that they won’t get any more games if I leave them in the lurch.

There are two clear issues here. First, recognition of the lack of women and girls on the domestic pathway who have the potential to obtain FIFA accreditation to officiate at international fixtures. Second, the resulting threat to Welsh women match officials such that they would not be appointed

to European and World competitions, as these appointments normally require an entire team of match officials from the same country (i.e. a referee, assistant referee, fourth official, and video assistant referee if needed). This presents a real conundrum for sporting NGBs, for not only is there a blocked pathway to elite level match officiating, but there is also the impact of absence of role models on the trickle-down effect on the talent pool.

All participants noted that advertising of beginner referee courses needed to be more prominent, and whilst the instant and accessible reach of social media was the main channel for advertising, participants in the present study remarked that previous involvement in soccer (as player, coach or volunteer) was more likely to lead to engagement. As Webb *et al.* discovered, there was no direct causal link between social media advertising and new referee recruitment.⁶⁹

In relation to retention, participants concurred that whilst they received the same referee training and education opportunities as men, no bespoke activity was provided for them, and this was contingent on their grading as a match official. As a grassroots referee, Rita elaborated:

I roughly know what's out there for me generally, but there's nothing specifically tailored to me. Maybe if there was tailored activity, I might have been more inclined to try and take it a bit further, but I've missed the boat now which is really disappointing.

As an elite referee, Deirdre's experiences were similar, with the only difference being the specific training and development opportunities women, which were widely dispersed geographically:

The training is ok for what it is, but it's for all of us and I don't feel that any special treatment, nor do I want it. Obviously, I'm a bit spoiled because of the UEFA training I get, and if I'm being honest, I get excellent training in England too, so maybe I have been spoiled to the point that it doesn't bother me.

Unlike coaching, UEFA takes a mainly *laissez-faire* approach to how their member nations recruit, train and develop referees. For coaches, there is an established coach education programme with modular design, learning and assessment related to various facets of the game (psychology, strength and conditioning, technical and tactical knowledge). Whereas for refereeing, qualification is a standalone course and one examination on the Laws of the Game. Progression is then normally contingent on passing fitness tests and achieving acceptable marks from assessors who attend matches and evaluate the performance of the referee (or refereeing team). The only opportunity to receive training and development opportunities by UEFA is by nomination from the NGB, and

even this is determined by the size of the nation and the status of their national competitions (i.e. professional, semi-professional), so not all elite referees in each country are selected.

Micro v macro support

All respondents confirmed that the support available to them as match officials once they had qualified was inconsistent. The primary support network was normally through the regional referee societies which provide training and support for affiliated members across all levels of the game. However, participants revealed mixed practice on their operation, with some societies more proactive than others. Marilyn, a member of a large and diverse referee society, commented:

Everyone has been fab with me since day one. I was really nervous about going along to my first meeting being the only woman, but one of the guys who got me into it came with me and I've never looked back. Everyone was so friendly and only too happy to help, I was a bit taken aback really.

For Rita, a member of a smaller and more rural society, the experience was different:

I really struggled in the early days. Being the only girl, I was surrounded by old men who raised eyebrows as soon as I walked in. On times I felt like their advice to me was condescending. I was older when I qualified and had no aspiration to go up the ladder, and I think that went against me as I hardly had chance to speak to anyone else about things

This kind of mixed practice is not unique to Wales. Webb *et al.* reported similar experiences amongst referees in England,⁷⁰ with newer referees who are older feeling isolated and outside the county/national association's plans, mainly owing to their age.

The National Governing Body now has an extensive training and development programme for women-only match officials but a significant problem appears to be the bridge between grassroots and elite refereeing. Its strategy includes a commitment to:

Increasing the number of female match officials and improving retention through an effective training and development programme, including female-only courses and CPD [continuing professional development] opportunities.⁷¹

This imprecise strategic statement appears to cover all levels of refereeing, but aside from the recruitment of women referees, the training and CPD opportunities were restricted to those with aspirations to referee primarily at grassroots or junior levels. An unintended consequence has been the creation of a talent identification performance pathway but like similar programmes in other sports, it fails to differentiate between the demands and challenges of mass participation and elite

performance⁷² – a particular problem for the recreational level where attrition levels are greatest (Eime *et al.*, 2022).⁷³

Models of sport development focus largely on participation,⁷⁴ but it is clear that sports officiating could utilize such models to stimulate, grow and sustain refereeing in a neglected domain of organized sport.

Gaining acceptance

Participants in the present study spoke candidly about the extensive effort they invested in becoming accepted to officiate in the men's game – a continuing challenge in several different contexts.⁷⁵ They noted that as their careers had progressed, acceptance had followed, though sometimes at a price. Raquel described the resentment directed at her as a result of being permitted to officiate in Wales and England (i.e. refereeing 'dual citizenship') – a privilege not afforded to her male colleagues:

When we're on training days I feel eyes on me sometimes when I make a comment on a clip or a particular way of doing something. If I bring stuff into the conversation from over the border it's like the lads don't want to know and shut down, just because it's not the Welsh way.

This is important because prior to the formation of the League of Wales in 1992 (now the Cymru Premier League), male Welsh domiciled officials were able to officiate in both Wales and England. Since then, UEFA has enforced borders and match official nationalities more stringently, and Wales has had a continued representation of international match officials at European and occasionally at World level competitions.

Within the men's game domestically, participants were agreed that acceptance across all levels was largely positive. Grassroots referee Deirdre shared her usual experience:

Generally, players and coaches are as good as gold. There's a few raised eyebrows when I first turn up as you'd expect, you know they're probably not used to a woman reffing them. But when the game goes on they tend to just get on with it, and I normally get 22 handshakes at the end.

Similarly, international referee Sharon (a successful former player) concurred, though she recognized that playing prior to refereeing had helped her to gain acceptance:

Other than the usual protests/appeals that I used to make as a player, I very rarely have any problems on matchdays. Of course, it was 'big news' when I got onto the Prem being the

first woman and all that, but they soon settled in. In fact, and especially in the early days, it felt like players and coaches were being overly nice.

Anecdotally encouraging, it is difficult to link these experiences to structural influences, and it is quite possible they are attributable (in part at least) to gender equality campaigns, activism and sporting success – for example, the positive impact on participation of the Welsh national women's soccer team, an illustration of the virtuous cycle of sport.⁷⁶

Dealing with abuse

Participants reported different responses when discussing incidents of abuse to which they had been subjected when officiating football matches. Kat recalled a particular incident where she was both abused in person, as well as being trolled online after a refereeing performance in the second tier of Welsh men's soccer:

I felt like shit for days...I was specifically targeted over a contentious decision because I'm a woman. This guy took it upon himself to verbally abuse me and call me horrendous names. There was no mention of my ability, it was just because he obviously took exception to me officiating as a woman in the man's game.

The episode was reported to the relevant authorities, but no action was taken, further compounding Kat's anger and frustration:

It really upset me as there appears to be a different stance with online versus in-person abuse. For example, if I am being abused at a game I can get a supporter ejected from the ground, but not so for online abuse. When I reported it the NGB came back and said that there was no link to any official at the said club and there was no proof that the abuser was fan. They also said that apparently there is uncertainty around what constitutes freedom of speech too, I was very hurt and disappointed after this.

Kat was not alone. All participants voiced their views on lack of support for dealing with abuse. Sharon explained some of the makeshift arrangements for coping strategies that had been employed:

Obviously, there is no official mechanism or support in place for dealing with this stuff. There is always the option to report the misconduct to the discipline department, but all they do is fine the person and maybe ban them. That's all well and good but there is no support for us in terms of checking in and making sure our wellbeing is ok.

Previous studies have shown the need for support, especially psychological support, for referees. Webb *et al.* reported the training emphasis on the physical, technical, and administrative demands

of the game,⁷⁷ whereas the main demand was for support with dealing with the psychological aspects – for example, dealing with mistakes and coping with negative interactions.

Incidents of abuse were not limited to outside forces and influences. Sally was not the only participant who experienced unwanted contact involving male refereeing colleagues:

A few years ago went to the area association fitness testing day, well it was more of a fitness assessment really. We had about three laps left and I was struggling and Dave (older male referee colleague) smacked my bum and said “come on, we’re nearly there”. I was taken aback at first as I thought I don’t want you doing that to me.

Sally was later encouraged to report the incident by a male refereeing colleague, which she did. The offending match official was disciplined and warned about his future conduct by the NGB. The wider context of institutional opprobrium for sexism and misogyny in UK sport was brought into sharp focus by the publication of the Whyte Review,⁷⁸ an independent investigation of systemic abuse, misconduct and the multiple failings within British Gymnastics. Intense media scrutiny uncovered allegations of similar occurrences in other major sports.⁷⁹ Valentine *et al.* have argued that in spite of developments with gender equality policy and legislation, sexist and misogynist behaviour towards women still pervades swathes of organizational life in the UK.⁸⁰

Conclusion

This paper adds to the increasing body of evidence about the experiences of women referees in soccer. With recent data from a hitherto unresearched context (Wales), it provides confirmation of some of the dominant themes that have emerged in previous studies. It is clear from the participants in the present study that recruitment activity requires further attention – especially if the ambition is to attract girls and women new to the sport. These women referees have come through the challenges of being a novice match official and, in some cases, progressing through the levels of the football pyramid to officiate at the elite level. The need for NGB-led campaigns about respecting match officials tells its own story about the experiences of *all* match officials, but for these women the additional factors of sexism and misogyny are part of their refereeing journey. There is no reason to think their experiences are significantly different from any other women referees. With referee attrition a cause for concern, it is also clear that more attention on retention is required – especially at the level of the referee societies. Despite the prevailing climate, however,

there are some encouraging signs. The participants reported a generally positive acceptance of women officiating in the men's game, although some work is still to be done educating fans and users of social media.

The findings of the present study should be of interest to the various stakeholders considered in the paper. In particular, NGBs can use the participants' experiences to inform and promote more explicit women-only recruitment campaigns through an adaptation of the model of sports participation that provides clear pathways for youth, recreational (adult), and elite match officiating.

Notes

1. International Football Association Board. *Laws of the Game*, 2024/25, p. 65.
2. Mojtahedi *et al.*, 'Match officials and abuse'.
3. Cuskelly and Hoye, 'Sports officials' intention to continue'.
4. Kent Football Association. 'Open letter on the retention of match officials'.
5. HMSO. *Equality Act*, 2010.
6. Drury *et al.*, 'I'm a referee, not a female referee'.
7. Pitt-Brooke, 'Somebody's f***ed up big'.
8. Caudwell, 'Gender, feminism and football studies'; Forbes *et al.*, 'Women can't referee'; Jones and Edwards 'The woman in black'; and Welford, 'Tokenism, ties and talking too quietly'.
9. Hancock *et al.*, 'An analysis of literature on sport officiating research'.
10. Rullang *et al.*, 'Why do referees end their careers'.
11. Zelyurt and Atacocuğu, 'Social pressure factors'.
12. Hong *et al.*, 'Perceived organizational support'.
13. Tingle *et al.*, 'The experience of former women officials'.

14. Devis-Devis *et al.*, 'The referee plays to be insulted!'
15. Orviz-Martínez *et al.*, 'Analysis of burnout and psychosocial factors'.
16. Mojtahedi *et al.*, 'Match officials and abuse'.
17. Da Gama *et al.*, 'Analysis of the burnout levels of soccer referees'.
18. Reid and Dallaire. 'Because there are so few of us'.
19. Aguirre-Loaiza *et al.*, 'Psychological characteristics of sports performance'.
20. Perreau-Niel and Erard. 'French football referees'.
21. Rullang *et al.*, 'Why do referees end their careers'.
22. Jafarloo *et al.*, 'The correlation of emotional intelligence with burnout'.
23. Hong, 'Exploring Muslim FIFA women referees'.
24. Lima *et al.*, 'Exploring the motivations and expectations'.
25. Choi and Chiu, 'Influence of the perceived organizational support'.
26. Devis-Devis *et al.*, 'The referee plays to be insulted!'
27. Kavasoğlu, 'The construction of compulsory heterosexuality'
28. Ridinger *et al.*, 'Why referees stay in the game'.
29. Cleland *et al.*, 'Respect? An investigation into the experience of referees'.
30. Polat *et al.*, 'Psychological violence and pressure activities'.
31. Mojtahedi *et al.*, 'Match officials and abuse'.
32. Kilic *et al.*, 'Exposure to physical and psychosocial stressors'; Zelyurt and Atacocuğu, 'Social pressure factors'.
33. Al-Haliq *et al.*, 'Levels of burnout'; Orviz-Martínez *et al.*, 'Analysis of burnout and psychosocial factors'.
34. Warner *et al.*, 'Officiating attrition'

35. Ridinger *et al.*, 'Development of the Referee Retention Scale'.
36. Webb *et al.*, 'The impact of referee training'.
37. Webb *et al.*, 'Striving for excellence'
38. See also: Choi and Chiu, 'Influence of the perceived organizational support'; and Webb *et al.*, 'An analysis of soccer referee experiences'.
39. Cleland *et al.*, 'The English Football Association's Respect Campaign'.
40. Stump. 'Youth sports referees across the US are quitting'..
41. Tingle *et al.*, 'Female sports officials and mental health'.
42. Hancock *et al.*, 'An analysis of literature on sport officiating research'.
43. Drury *et al.*, 'I'm a referee, not a female referee'.
44. Şirin and Öz. 'Women football observers' experiences'.
45. Kavasoğlu, 'The construction of compulsory heterosexuality'.
46. Kim and Hong. 'A red card for women'.
47. Forbes *et al.*, 'Women can't referee'.
48. Devis-Devis *et al.*, 'The referee plays to be insulted!'.
49. Welford, 'Tokenism, ties and talking too quietly'.
50. Gubby and Martin, 'Sexism, abuse and threatening behaviour'.
51. Sports Council. *Sport in the community ... the next ten years*; Sports Council. *Sport in the community into the 90's*; and Sport England. *Driving up participation*.
52. Sport England. *Go where women are*.
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54. UEFA, 'Referee convention on referee education and organisation', p. 21.
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