Gordon (if I may be so bold)

I admire your attempts at bringing sanity to the mad house that is Scottish football on the Clyde 1 Superscoreboard Phone In.

In fact, I tuned in to Superscoreboard tonight to listen to comments on the Celtic v Livingstone game and to hear what you had to say on the referee decision on the Abada goal ruled off side and I wasn't disappointed. You had done your research, thank you.

However, (there's aye a "but") there is a consensus that referees interpretation of the rules is the problem, exacerbated by the introduction of VAR and there the conversation about what can be done to improve the competency of referees does not go far enough.

I think Transparency is part of the answer and making conversations public, during or post-match, would be a positive step in that direction as transparency leads to accountability.

I believe a higher aim should be to improve the competency of referees to such a professional level they will be sought to referee in UEFA matches to a greater degree than currently.

If enough Scottish referees do not reach that standard then they should not be refereeing SPFL games and any gap filled by bringing in referees from other associations as a matter of course.

The carrot of earning more and the stick of not being able to do so would apply.

I believe from experience an internal culture change to the way referees are recruited, trained, appointed and competency measured is required.

I have set out how that can be achieved in the attached Appendix which first surfaced as far back as 2010 and events since have only strengthened the case that fundamental change is needed.

It may take a while for the idea contained to take root but Clyde SuperscoreBoard can help in that respect perhaps in hosting a special programme with PFA Scotland CEO Fraser Wishart, His Referee Association Equivalent, a representative of football supporters from the Scottish Football Supporters Association currently active and The SFA Head of Referee Operations Crawford Allan.

At the very least it will avoid the same dead-end conversations that are inevitably reached on Clyde 1 Superscoreboard almost week after week.

You can reply by e mail to e mail provided.

Small corrections to original posted by land mail to Radio Clyde early January 2023

Appendix

2021. Updated Version of an Article on a Refereeing Service first published in 2010 on line.

Given the recent heightened focus on the refereeing standards in Scotland, I was asked to update a previous article from 2010 that included suggestions for changing the way refereeing is managed in Scotland .

So I'll just repeat the suggestions made then but with an added comment on the proposed use of VAR

The Referee Service
Note the word "service" for this is the way that much of what the SFA do should be viewed. The SFA provide a number of services to the clubs who play in Scotland. They should not be seen as their masters but their servants.

In modern terms the clubs in their professional leagues are the customers and the SFA the service providers. This change of approach and attitude would allow competition to provide such services to enter the scene and so improve them.

The Detail
The approach requires a split of functions with the SFA doing the recruitment, training and development of new blood to FIFA football officiating rules standards.

However, the performance evaluation and match appointing would be the responsibility of the SPFL, using SFA trained referees or ex refs to mark to a standard agreed by the SPFL and SFA.

This split of responsibilities would prevent any one person being able to exert his own influence on referees as a result of being part of the appointment and evaluation process.

It would safeguard the SFA from the kind of suspicion that is the source of many complaints that referee appointments are influenced by a referee's past club affiliations. It would lead to a higher standard of referee because the customer would be setting the standard not the supplier (as happens everywhere in business but football).

Integrating VAR.

VAR is just another service. Use the current dissatisfaction with it to end the same recurring debate and open up public discussion by looking at splitting responsibilities as suggested:

A VAR supplier becomes.

1. Provider of Var officials for games.
2. Evaluator of referee performance to FIFA standards for the SPFL to whom it reports.
3. The SFA become trainers and developers starting at lower levels of **professional** referees and work with the enhanced VAR service to supply the best of their trainees under a contract that rewards both parties.

The SPFL would need to put the VAR service and the refereeing evaluation out to tender whilst the SPFL take over responsibility of appointing match referees from a pool of professionally qualified referees.

Seed funding for a new service could be found in The Solidarity Payments to the SFA that UEFA make and support for change would be required from FIFA if a case of the benefits were made to them.

Future funding could come from same source with a modest adjustment between Solidarity Payment and what clubs receive. Supporters might want to pay a little more for a ticket to watch a game competently refereed to a professional standard.

(Revised 20 March 2023 since original posted early Jan)