

**BEN FINDON is talking  
to former referee  
JIM MCGREGOR...**

# OFFICIAL LINE



**Birthdate/place:**  
July 29, 1954. Mansewood, Glasgow.

**Family:**  
Brother Eric, son Craig, daughter Lauren, son-in-law James and grandson Mason.

**How and when did you first get interested in speedway?**  
When Glasgow reopened in 1964 at the White City, my father, Alex, took me along. He used to go when he was a boy and he took my brother Eric in the 1950s.

**Where did you see your first meeting and what do you remember about it?**  
April 1, 1964, Glasgow v Middlesbrough. Glasgow won 44-34 and Charlie Monk scored a maximum. I loved it straight away, the noise, the smell, the whole atmosphere.

**As a fan, who was your favourite team and riders?**  
Glasgow was my favourite team. Charlie Monk was my favourite rider, along with Jim McMillan, Willie Templeton and Lars Jansson. Charlie was Glasgow's maximum man, 12 points every week, and he competed with and would beat the big boys such as Barry Briggs. He was a Glasgow hero.

I went on to work in the pits, fuelling and oiling the bikes, and would travel to away matches, too. Charlie had his own mechanic at home meetings but away we would all help each other, so I sometimes helped with Charlie's bike.

When Charlie was inducted into Glasgow's Hall of Fame in 2013, I had the honour of collecting the award on his behalf.

**Why did you become an SCB referee?**  
I was a football referee and had got up to Junior level (National League in England). I had one chance to go to senior level. I had five supervisions all with good results. Unfortunately, FIFA changed the age limit that year and I was one year too old.

At that time, the SCB had advertised for referees. I applied and was accepted, as was Tony Steele. We qualified together and became very close friends. I qualified at Arena-Essex v Wolves, April 29, 1994 and Tony qualified at Newcastle two days later.

**Who did you learn from? Who was your mentor during training?**  
Paul Ackroyd was the first referee I worked with and helped me greatly. As did Dave Dowling, Will Hunter and Geoff Dalby.

**What do you remember about the first meeting you took charge of?**  
My first match on my own was Glasgow v Swindon, June 5, 1994, but I don't really remember much about it (Glasgow won the KO Cup match, 66-30). I did a lot of my training at Glasgow, senior referees would hand over matches for me to do, so it must have been a smooth step up.

**How do you prepare for a speedway meeting?**  
This is a side of refereeing supporters don't

see. You get the line-ups from the SCB site about three days prior to the fixture. You insert them into the electronic programme.

You have to check all riders' licences and their averages. You check that all officials you expect to see are licenced. Any new riders you check for start permission if foreign. You just cover all angles so when you arrive at the match most things are done.

**What was the biggest or most memorable meeting you have refereed?**

The 2017 British Final at Belle Vue, won by Craig Cook ahead of Steve Worrall, Rory Schlein and Ben Barker. It had always been my ambition to do a British Final. I didn't get anything for it but I did receive a beautiful clock, which I still have, for officiating an Elite League Pairs Final at Eastbourne.

I have done many good matches. One was an Edinburgh v Workington meeting at Armadale, Peter Carr was probably racing at that time. I just remember the racing was brilliant.

There was a last-heat decider between Glasgow and Edinburgh in 2002 where I disqualified Tigers' James Grieves after he came together with Frede Schott on the last lap. I awarded the race with Peter Carr in the lead. It gave Edinburgh a 4-2 and a 45-45 draw.

I was given a police escort out of the stadium, which was a little bit frightening, but when I went back to Glasgow to referee their next meeting, it was all calm and as if nothing had happened.

I also did a match in Sweden, at Masarna, when on holiday which I really enjoyed.

The Ben Fund Bonanza this year, at Oxford, was my last meeting as a referee and it was emotional. I had been hoping to go on to 73 but the SCB decided to instead lower the retirement age from 70 to 67. All good things come to an end but I really enjoyed my time as a ref.

**Do you think refs should be miked-up, as they are in rugby? If not, why?**

I don't think they need to be miked-up. They could explain their decisions via the announcer.

**Which ex-rider was the most difficult to deal with?**

Two riders come to mind. But only for not sitting still at the gate. They are Lubos Tomicek and Jason Garrity.

**What advice would you give a new referee?**

I always gave trainees as much help as I could. After all, we were all trainees once. Concentration is key, along with preparation.

**What one single thing can speedway do to make itself more attractive to new fans?**

I would say cost. It's expensive for young people. I was in Poland a few years ago at Pila. Crowd was about 6,000 and the number of young supporters was much more than you get in Britain. The cost to get in was £6.

**What was your day job?**

I worked for one of Britain's largest car dealers, Arnold Clark, for 31 years. I did various jobs: service manager, contract hire maintenance manager and warranty manager. I retired four years ago and have loved it.

I had a mini heart attack in March, five days after the Ben Fund meeting. I had three weeks in hospital and had four stents fitted but I'm back home now and getting back to normal.

**How do you relax away from speedway?**

I like going to the football with my son. We are season ticket holders at Rangers. I like going to the theatre, particularly musicals. My favourite is Blood Brothers, which I've seen eight times. But most of all I like spending time with my grandson, Mason. He is 18 months old and is a star.

