

BEN FINDON is talking
to referee **SI**
HUMPHREY-KENNETT...

OFFICIAL LINE



Si-Humphrey-Kennett, left,
with machine examiner Dave Robinson

Birthdate/place:

March 25, 1980. Margate (but grew up in Canterbury), Kent.

Family:

Married to Anita, daughters Leah and Katelyn and grandchildren Ella and Evie. Oh, and not forgetting the cockapoo, Cobi.

How and when did you first get interested in speedway?

It was through schoolboy grasstrack and my uncles, Martin and David Hollingsbee. I rode with the likes of Danny King and Scott Nicholls and came across Chris Harris. Then I got the bug for speedway. I did some 'ride and slide' days but soon realised I was too old and didn't like getting hurt.

Where did you see your first meeting and what do you remember about it?

At Lakeside, or Arena-Essex as it was back in the day. I can still remember it like it was yesterday even though I can't remember when it was or who it was against! The atmosphere, excitement and most of all the smell of methanol – love it. Still do, even to this day.

As a fan, who was your favourite team and riders?

It has to be Arena-Essex/Lakeside and the original Kent Kings, as they were my local tracks.

Favourite riders? That's a tough one because there are quite a few but I'd say Lee Richardson, he was British and so popular with everyone, and Tony Rickardsson, for his incredible style of riding.

Why did you become an SCB referee?

When we went to Kent on a Monday night it was our family night out together and I remember on a few occasions the ref would make a call, and I was like: "What! How did they make that decision?" Jokingly, my wife said: "If you can do any better, become a ref." So I did, and here I am today. It's my wife's fault!

Who did you learn from? Who was your mentor during training?

I learnt from all the refs. There were good and bad things I took away from each of them and these have helped me become the ref I am today.

My main mentors were Chris Durno and Paul Carrington during my training, as well as Wayne Jarvis, because we trained together. Tony Steele had a heavy influence on me, too. In fact, I did my last two tests with Tony.

What do you remember about the first meeting you took charge of?

It was at the Isle of Wight on September 5, 2019, their annual three-team tournament. I remember sitting in the box on my own just before the start thinking, 'I'm in charge of this'. The nerves kicked in, I was bricking it, but I knew I could do it – and I did.

How do you prepare for a speedway meeting?

A lot of people believe we just turn up, push a few buttons, annoy people, then go home. Far from it.

Firstly, there are all the pre-meeting checks. Once the teams are declared we check licensing, averages, generate the scorecard and meeting report and ensure we have all the relevant documents for the meeting.

When I travel to a track, I think about the meeting. What rules and regs apply for a particular league or competition. I think about the worst-case scenarios and how I'd deal with them if they happened.

When you arrive, you liaise with everyone from promoters, team managers, captains, clerk of the course, machine examiners, medics and so on. The whole meeting is a team event, we all have to work together to deliver these meetings.

There's the ref's box to inspect, especially since the introduction of transponders and random starts, etc. You need to make sure that everything is working prior to the start. There's the track and pits inspections and the inspection of the riders and their machines.

Then there's the meeting itself, dealing with any issues or incidents that arise.

After the meeting, it doesn't stop for a referee because we are our own self-critics. While you drive home you think about the meeting and evaluate everything. A little like the riders, really.

Then there's the task of completing all the documentation which needs to be submitted. The scorecard, the one that fans see on the British Speedway website, the meeting report and so on. Once that's all done it's time to have a beer and prepare for the next one!

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

The biggest meeting I would say was being asked to do the British Under-19 Final twice, in 2023 and 2024. The most memorable meeting was my first Premiership match, at Peterborough, on August 23, 2021.

It was an incredible meeting from start to finish (Panthers beat Wolverhampton, 49-41, in a last-heat decider). The atmosphere was amazing, the Showground was packed, it was a dream meeting to referee. There were no decisions to make and the racing was fantastic, especially Chris Harris in Heat 15. I even got the DVD as a keepsake, that's how good it was.

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

There are pros and cons. It would be good for the fans to hear how referees make their decisions but on the other side, would it really benefit anybody? I'm not sure.

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

I can honestly say I haven't come across this yet but I'm sure in years to come that will change.

What advice would you give a new referee?

Build your own personality. Don't try to be like anyone else. Be yourself. Enjoy every meeting and be willing to keep learning. The positives always outweigh the negatives.

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

Social media platforms. Get more speedway on TV. With increasing live streaming, let's all share our amazing sport. Talk to people about it, spread the word, invite friends and family to a meeting or two. Let them develop the bug and join the speedway family.

What is your day job?

I have been a civil servant for 22 years. I currently work in enforcement for the Department for Transport.

How do you relax away from speedway?

A nice cold pint of Guinness and lots of quality family time. When I'm not working or at speedway or even sleeping, I like to spend as much time as possible with my family making those precious memories.

