

BEN FINDON is talking
to SCB referee **WAYNE**
JARVIS...

OFFICIAL LINE

Birthdate/place

December 9, 1971. Wisbech, Cambs.

How and when did you first get interested in speedway?

I went to Peterborough with my dad, Michael, when I was about four and loved it. We ended up going every week. We also attended King's Lynn every now and again. By the time I was about 10 I was also going to Boston every Sunday night. At university, Hackney was only a 25-minute walk away, so I often went there, along with Rye House and Wimbledon. More recently, Mildenhall was my go-to track for a speedway fix.

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

I don't remember my first meeting but it would have been at Peterborough in about 1975. The first meeting I do remember was the 1978 World Final at Wembley. That was a great occasion – I remember being sat on the wall of the dog track so I could see, with my dad a few rows back in the crowd. I also remember going to several British Finals at Brandon.

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

Peterborough was always my first team. At the time the star riders were Ian and Brian Clark. From a King's Lynn perspective, my favourite rider was Henka Gustafsson. At Boston, it was Steve Lomas. The friend I went with sponsored the track record and I remember presenting a number of cheques to riders on the centre green. Steve asked me if I wanted a ride around on the back of his bike on one of the occasions that he broke the track record. That was a great, if somewhat scary, memory!

Why did you become an SCB referee?

The main reason was wanting to give something back to the sport. Like most fans, I think I refereed meetings from the terraces from an early age. I had to wait several years before starting training, as I initially applied during a period when new referees were not being recruited.

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

The job of the referee is a complex one. Referees have different areas of strength, so you learn things from everyone. Paul Carrington and Chris Durno were my mentors during the two seasons, 154 meetings and over 25,000 miles covered during my training. As a result, I feel I benefitted from the large number of meetings and scenarios that I experienced.

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

My first meeting was the Isle of Wight v Oxford in a challenge match on August 1, 2019. The IOW won 54-36. I refereed Plymouth v Exeter in a challenge match and the Golden Hammer at Cradley (Wolverhampton) before Covid-19 hit and I had to wait until the start of the 2021 season for my next fixture.

How do you prepare for a speedway meeting?

After doing the routine preparatory paperwork in the couple of days leading up to the meeting, the journey can start early in the morning or even the day before. I always try to arrive in the vicinity of the stadium three to four hours prior to start time to ensure that I account for any delays and to give me time to relax after a drive.

My main focus on arrival is to do the track inspection and check the referee panel and systems. This means that if there are any issues there is enough time

to get them fixed prior to the start of the meeting.

On arrival in the box for my first meeting this season at Leicester, I tested the random start system. As I pressed the green light, the start panel (and a number of other fuses in the stadium) blew!

However, as it had been the first thing I did on arrival, the track team were able to rectify the issue within 45 minutes and the meeting went ahead as normal, with few people knowing that there had ever been an issue.

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

I was appointed as referee to the British Final in 2022, exactly three years after my first meeting – on August 1. I was gobsmacked when I got the appointment in my second full season of being a referee. It was a very proud moment and also my first live Eurosport meeting.

The first staging didn't go to plan due to rain during the meeting. Eventually, the meeting steward, the late Tony Steele, called a halt after Heat 12. It was restaged on September 22, three days after the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II, so the rider parade featured a minute's silence and a rendition of 'God Save the King'. Dan Bewley became British Champion for the first time.

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

Speedway is a very different sport to rugby and so I do not see the benefit of a rugby-style system. However, I am in favour of anything that enables fans to understand our role as referees, including why we have come to a decision. Fans may still disagree with a decision that we make but at least they have the rationale for it. The important thing is that the fans in the stadium should get at least the same experience as someone watching at home, so if we were to communicate decisions, I would want it to be broadcast in the stadium, too.

What advice would you give a new referee?

Have patience and dedication. Get to know the regulations inside out as quickly as you can. Then attend as many meetings as possible. The more meetings you go to, the more incidents and scenarios you experience. This helps to gain experience for those odd scenarios that can happen.

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

I don't think that there is one single thing. The product can sell itself when racing is exciting and competitive. For the youngsters of today, social media interactions are vital. In an ideal world, where money was no object, making the sport more dramatic through the use of visual effects and lighting. More entertainment for fans during grading breaks and delays through in-stadium big screens for replays/interviews. And, perhaps, live music by teaming up with local bands and artists to give them more exposure would make meetings more of an event.

What is your day job?

I am a self-employed education consultant working all over the country. I inspect schools, deliver support for school leaders and run training sessions for teachers. My background is in science, so helping to improve the teaching of science in schools is always a pleasure.

How do you relax away from speedway?

I enjoy travelling and experiencing different cultures. I have travelled extensively in southeast Asia during the past couple of winters. I often try to link speedway with the travel and have been to a number of European and Australian tracks to watch meetings outside the UK.

