

SPORTS: A HIDDEN HEADACHE FOR MANY SUPPORTERS

Why the offside rule just isn't cricket

Date of issue 9 May 2008

Publication number NWR-225

In the week that the English football season draws to a close, and the nation's cricket team prepares to start their summer season, the Learning and Skills Council's Get On campaign can reveal that football requires more advanced maths and English skills than cricket, and that the off-side rule really is difficult to understand.

Two of the most misunderstood rules of cricket and football - the LBW rule and the off-side rule - were reviewed by the Get On campaign* to see which is truly harder to understand, and found that graduate level reading skills were needed to understand football's off side rule.

However, the Leg Before Wicket (LBW) rule in cricket only needs the equivalent of GCSE English skills in order to be fully understood - this means that nearly 20m adults of working age would struggle with the football rule if they read it cold, and 5.2m would struggle with the LBW rule.

In addition, for the estimated 6.8m adults in England who struggle with maths**, the last week of the season can be an additional minefield:

- The average fan may have made a surprising number of rapid mental calculations - during the last round of Football League matches on the 3rd and 4th May 2008, fans could have made a total of 278 calculations on changes to league positions and goal difference – an average of around 10 for each of the 27 clubs fighting for promotion or survival.

- Fans of Championship clubs could have made 180 calculations in total last weekend and the fans of seven clubs - Crystal Palace, Watford, Blackpool, Coventry, Sheffield Wednesday, Leicester, and Southampton could have made at least 17 calculations over the final 90 minutes of their season.

To fully understand most of the written rules of football requires Level 2 reading skills (equivalent to English GCSE grades A* to C). The arrival of the cricket season brings fewer literacy challenges as following cricket's written rules requires Level 1 reading skills (equivalent to English GCSE grades D to G). It is estimated 5.2m adults have skills below this level.

However, maths can be a challenge throughout the cricket season as scoring is more complex at Entry Level 3; although the cricket "calculator" or scoreboard does most of the hard work for cricket supporters.

Former football legend and current Director of Football Development for the Football Association, Sir Trevor Brooking commented: "I have supported adult learning for years and I'm extremely passionate about sports. To learn that millions of fans might struggle with their skills when watching football or cricket is a sad revelation," he said.

Skills Minister and MP for Tottenham David Lammy added: "We are a nation of sports fanatics, so what makes these findings significant is that many sports supporters could be missing out on enjoying their favourite sports due to a basic skills shortfall.

"The Government provides free maths and English courses to adults across the country and simply by calling **0800 66 0800**, and speaking to a Get On adviser about the hundreds of courses available, the people of England may just enjoy their favourite sports even more."

The Get On campaign recently launched a new advertising campaign featuring "Beryl", a character made from puppeteer's hands. The campaign focus this year is on numeracy, with a target of 390,000 adults to achieve a first Entry Level 3 qualification in numeracy (or above) by 2010.

As well as traditional college based courses, adults can also improve their literacy and numeracy skills in conjunction with 30 top football clubs as part of the 'Heading for Success' project.

Any adult in England can call free on **0800 66 0800** to talk confidentially to an adviser about the options to enrol on a Get On course or find out about a Heading for Success project in their area.

*The Get On campaign analysed the literacy levels of the Lords' Laws of Cricket Leg Before Wicket (LBW) rule and FIFA's Laws of Association Football 2007-8 off-side rule.

** 6.8m adults in England have skills below that expected of an 11 year old (Entry Level 3).

ENDS

Learning and Skills Council:

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world class standards. Our vision is that young people and adults in England have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. We work nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

For more information contact

LSC website: www.lsc.gov.uk

All media enquiries please contact:

LSC

Debbie Newell on 0161 261 0434, deborah.newell@lsc.gov.uk

The Write Angle on 01772 250505

Angela Smith: angela@writeanglepr.co.uk

Hollie Roberts: hollie@writeanglepr.co.uk

Notes to editors

Methodology:

1. The LSC reviewed key passages from the FA's Laws of Association Football and the ICC's Rules of Play Test Cricket to uncover the literacy levels required by supporters.
2. The LSC reviewed all the calculations required as a season comes to a close and the reviewed the scoring system for cricket to compare the number and complexity of the maths equations required to understand both.

Heading for Success (HfS) aims to encourage adults to take up literacy, language and numeracy learning through the power of football. Thirty four professional football and one rugby club are working with local colleges and other learning providers to provide courses often at the football club or in the community. Learning materials and lessons draw upon football, for example learners can brush up their Maths and English by calculating potential team positions throughout the season or help produce features for match day programmes and other club literature.

Call **0800 66 0800** to be put in touch with a local participating football club or college.

Skills for Life

1. The *Skills for Life* Strategy was launched in 2001 to tackle the legacy of adults with poor literacy, language and numeracy skills within England. The strategy aims to help

create a society where adults have the basic skills they need to find and keep work and participate fully in society, through:

- Boosting demand for learning
- Ensuring capacity of the learning provider delivery system
- Improving standards of teaching and learning
- Increasing learner achievement

2. The *Skills for Life* National Needs and Impact Survey of Literacy, Numeracy and IT skills, published in October 2003, estimated that in England, 5.2 million adults aged 16-65 have literacy levels below Level 1 (broadly equivalent in difficulty to an English GCSE at grades D-G), and 6.8 million have numeracy skills below Entry Level 3 (the level expected of 11 year olds). The full survey is available at www.dfes.gov.uk/research.

3. The LSC's "Get On" campaign, which was first launched by the then Department for Education and Skills in 2001, is part of the Government's *Skills for Life* Strategy. The campaign encourages the millions of people in England who experience difficulties with literacy, language and numeracy skills, or would benefit from 'brushing up' on these skills, to enrol on a free course by calling **0800 66 0800**. It aims to help create a society where adults have the basic skills they need to find and keep work and participate fully in society.

4. The Government recently met and exceeded the target to ensure that 1,500,000 adults improved their skills and gained a qualification by 2007. The Government aims to increase this to 2.25 million achievements by 2010. So far, 1,759,000 learners have achieved a first *Skills for Life* qualification.

5. Get On courses are delivered through the Skills for Life strategy and offer national qualifications in maths or English, from Entry Level 1, 2 and 3 and then on to Levels 1 and 2. This means the Get On courses cover a wide range of levels right up to the equivalent level of passing a GCSE at grades A-C.

6. Promotion of literacy Get On courses is maintained through other campaign activity such as *Quick Reads*/World Book Day, Adult Learners' Week, Family Learning Week,

work with libraries and partners such as Move On, as well as the forthcoming National Year of Reading.

7. If you would like to talk to an adult learner who has taken a Get On course, case studies are available. Please call 020 7544 3130 and a member of the team can arrange for you to speak with someone