

COLOUR CO-ORDINATION

Seb Patrick wonders why different clubs have such inconsistent rules on changing their kits

Recently, watching West Ham v Liverpool, I noticed that Pepe Reina was wearing Liverpool's away goalkeeper kit – an all-yellow number with a slightly weird black “yoke” around the neck – while the referee and assistants were also decked out in yellow shirts. I can be unnecessarily pedantic about many of football's minutiae but here was a situation where surely I was completely in the right; the officials had paid little heed to Law 4's decree that “each goalkeeper must wear colours that distinguish him from the other players, the referee and the assistant referees”.

Common sense would dictate that neither goalkeeper on a pitch is ever likely to be confused at a glance with a referee but the choice of yellow kit seemed odd, particularly as Liverpool's home goalkeeper kit of green would only have clashed with that of West Ham keeper Jussi Jaaskelainen. Unless either side mounted a late charge that saw their keeper attack the opposing penalty area, surely this would have been the “safer” of two clashes?

Decisions such as this – whether taken by the club, the player or the officials – are evidence of an increasingly contradictory approach that Premier League teams seem to have towards kit colours. On some occasions sides are so petrified of a potential clash that they switch kits for no good reason, yet at other times obvious clashes that should never be allowed to happen end up doing so.

The problem seems to lie in the fact that whatever the Laws of the Game might say, different clubs end up interpreting them in different ways. When it comes to shorts clashes both Everton and Manchester United have dedicated “alternate” home shorts – in blue and black respectively – to avoid clashes with a given home club's white. Eminently sensible. Yet Arsenal don't seem willing to return the favour and forego their white shorts for anyone they visit, which smacks of arrogance, frankly.

Sometimes this lack of consistency is evident even within the behaviour of a single club. It can't be easy being a side that plays in stripes, as Newcastle do, but they can never seem to make their minds up what to do when playing against a team

in red and white. It's understandable, and laudable, that neither side would ever want to wear away strips in the heady atmosphere of a Tyne and Wear derby, yet Newcastle retained their home kit when visiting Stoke this season while having worn their change colours the year before – this despite the 2012-13 kit containing considerably more white than the previous one.

It's not difficult to work out that many of the bizarre on-field combinations seen these days result from commercial considerations. It was all so different when away kits were only called upon when needed. Now, in order to justify putting out two or three new kits per year, clubs are obliged to ensure they get sufficient exposure to attract replica sales.

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in any way with the home side's yellow.

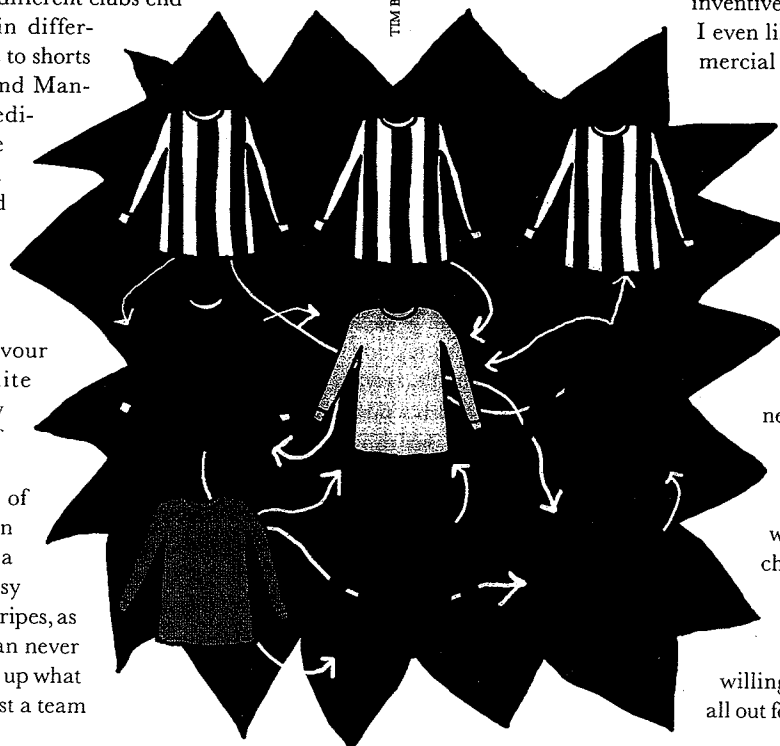
Even more bafflingly, last season Manchester City seemed to think their sky-blue home kit would clash too much with Aston Villa's home kit, so instead brought along a dark-blue change kit that, complete with its white shorts, rendered their players all but impossible to tell apart from Villa's on TV.

I'm not some grew-up-in-the-1970s traditionalist who thinks that away kits should only be yellow and worn twice a season, and that sponsor logos and manufacturer patterns are evil, or anything like that. There's nothing wrong with a bit of

inventive and creative kit design – I even like, as soul-sellingly commercial as it is, that there are so many new kits to pore over each season.

But when it comes to how they're deployed, surely we've got to see a bit more common sense. You imagine that there must be somebody at each club whose job it is to look at what the next opponents are going to be wearing and pick an appropriate combination that won't clash, or that won't feel like change for change's sake. And if they don't want to do it, I can't be the only kit aficionado out there who'd be

willing to sit down and work it all out for them. 



TIM BRADFORD