



Sheffield Football Club
The BT Local Business Stadium
Sheffield Road
Dronfield, S18 2GD

Sheffield FC – The World’s First Football Club

Intro

Sheffield Football Club is the Oldest Football Club in the world being formed on 24th October 1857. The club is officially recognised by the FIFA and the FA to be the world’s first registered club that is still alive and playing football in amateur competition. Sheffield FC is also a proud owner a FIFA Centennial Order of Merit for its achievements in football history, which was received in 2007 as the only club alongside with Real Madrid.

Having retained its amateur status for over 150 years, the World’s First Football Club holds a number of firsts in football: The First Free Kick, the First Corner Kick, the First Throw-In, the First Floodlit Match, the First Header, the first Use of a Solid Crossbar.

The club and its founders W. Prest and N. Creswick have written the first official rulebook of football. They defined the founding principles of the game as it is still played today. In addition to the definitions of rules, laws and regulations of the game, the founding members also developed the fundamental values of the game of football: Integrity, Respect and Community.

Thus the City of Sheffield can lay claim to being the birthplace of modern football. The two men responsible were Nathaniel Creswick, a solicitor and chairman of a silver-plate company, and William Prest, a wine merchant.

Origins

Football in varying simple and basic forms had existed in England even in the eighteenth century with records showing games between representative teams from Norton and Sheffield in 1793. Members of the fencing club and gymnasium in Clarkehouse Road were also playing football from about 1852. However, in the winter of 1854, the Sheffield Cricket Club and other interested parties held a meeting in the Adelphi Hotel, in Arundel Street, to hear proposals regarding a new ground. The site was a plot of land by Bramall Lane. The club was granted a 99 year lease. The first cricket match at the new ground took place on 30th April 1855, a game in which William Prest took part. In May 1857, Prest and his close friend Nathaniel Creswick, were discussing football, and more specifically the need for organised sport during the winter. With this in mind Sheffield Football Club was born. By October 24th 1857 the officers of the new football club had been appointed. Up until this point, football had been played under laws used by the various public schools and Cambridge University. Following a study of these laws, the Sheffield Football Club Committee laid down its own code in a succinct set of laws whilst setting up temporary headquarters in a potting shed and greenhouse owned by Asline Ward and situated at Park House at the bottom of East Bank Road.

Opposition

Club members organised teams such as the first half of the alphabet (A-M) against the rest, professional occupations v the others, married men v unmarried etc, but soon other Sheffield teams had come into being beginning with Hallam Football Club in 1860. By 1862 there were fifteen organised teams in and around Sheffield. In 1863 the Football Association was formed by a loose federation of clubs in the London area. Although playing under different rules, the members of the FA and Sheffield Club agreed to a challenge match between London and Sheffield at Battersea Park on March 31st 1866. Decisions were taken in advance regarding the rules and so the historic clash took place with London running out eventual winners.

Sheffield FC became one of the constituent clubs of the Sheffield FA in 1877, which also included:- Albion, Artillery and Hallamshire Rifles, Attercliffe, Brightside, Brincliffe, Broomhall, Crookes, Exchange, Exchange Brewery, Fir Vale, Gleadless, Hallam, Heeley, Kimberworth, Millhouses, Norfolk, Norfolk Works, Owlerton, Oxford, Parkwood Springs, Philadelphia, Surrey, Thursday Wanderers and Wednesday. Sheffield Club were also closely involved in 1889 in the formation of Sheffield



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United Football Club at Bramall Lane, providing some players for selected early games in joining in practice matches with the United professionals.

The following years saw professionalism take over the game, and due to Sheffield's insistence on maintaining its amateur status, the club has found itself overshadowed by its city neighbours.

Glory

Sheffield's finest hour came on the 4th April 1904. This was the day that the club, for the only time in its history, won the FA Amateur Cup, a competition for which Sheffield Club had provided a great deal of initiative. The final, against Ealing, attracted a 6,000 crowd to Valley Parade, Bradford. Sheffield ran out worthy 3-1 winners. The Sheffield side that day was:- Bolsover, Milnes, Chambers, Frost, Potts, Green, Forsdike, J E Hoyland, G Hoyland, Bedford and Sylvester. Scorers for Club were J E Hoyland, Bedford and Milnes.

The FA Vase Final of 1977 provided an opportunity for glory when Sheffield travelled to Wembley to take on the previous years winners, Billericay Town. A 1-1 draw at Wembley was followed by a 1-2 defeat in the replay at the City Ground, Nottingham. However, last season saw the club progress to the Fourth Qualifying Round of the FA Cup for the first time since 1959, eventually bowing out of the competition to Conference side Northwich Victoria at Bramall Lane. Under the guidance of Dave McCarthy, by winning the NCEFL Cup, the club also claimed its first NCEFL trophy since the league's inception whilst also finishing in a respectable seventh place in the NCEFL Premier Division.

Home Sweet Home

The nomadic existence of the club has proved to be a long running problem. From East Bank to Newhall Road and the Old Forge ground and to Ecclesall Road, with many of the more important games and the annual Sports Day held at Bramall Lane. Then after many years playing at Abbeydale Park, recent years have seen the club playing at Hillsborough Park, Sheffield Wednesday's Middlewood Road training ground, Don Valley Stadium, Owlerton Stadium and back to Don Valley Stadium. Without an established home, the club have been unable to achieve success within the framework of the Non-League Pyramid. To this end, the then Sheffield FC Chairman, Peter Beeby made it his remit to secure Sheffield Football Club its own ground and premises. In May 2000, after many months of hard work and negotiation, this dream was achieved, when agreement was reached and pen put to paper for the signing of the lease for the Coach and Horses Ground at Dronfield. After several months work the site was approved by the NCEFL Ground Grading Committee and on Saturday 21st April 2001 the club proudly staged its first NCEFL game at the Coach and Horses Ground.

Sheffield Rules

The Sheffield Rules were a code of football devised and played in the English city of Sheffield between 1857 and 1877. They were devised by Nathaniel Creswick and William Prest for use by the newly founded Sheffield Football Club. The rules were subsequently adopted as the official rules of Sheffield Football Association upon its creation in 1867. They spread beyond the city boundaries to other clubs and associations in the north and midlands of England making them one of the most popular forms of football during the 1860s and 70s.

Six years after the creation of the Sheffield Rules the Football Association rules were created. These were influenced by the Sheffield game but ongoing disputes meant that the Sheffield rules continued to be used. During this time many of the elements of the rules were incorporated in to the association game. Regular games were played between Sheffield and London using both sets of rules. This led to an agreement on a single set of laws administered by the Football Association in 1877.

The rules had a major influence on how the modern game of football developed. Among other things they introduced the concept of free kicks for fouls, corners and throw-ins into the laws of the game. The abolition of the fair catch also led to their teams to be the first to head the ball. Games played under the rules are also accredited for the development of



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heading and the origins of the goalkeeper and forward positions. The first inter-club football match and competitive tournament were both played using Sheffield Rules.

The oldest recorded football match in Sheffield occurred in 1794 when a game of mob football was played between Sheffield and Norton (at the time a Derbyshire village) that took place at Bents Green. The game lasted three days, which was not unusual for matches at the time. It was noted that although there were some injuries no-one was killed during the match. The Clarkehouse Road Fencing Club had been playing football since 1852. The city was home to a number of sports clubs and the popularity of cricket had led to the chairman of Sheffield Cricket Club to suggest the construction of Bramall Lane.

By the 1850s there were several versions of football played in public schools and clubs throughout England. Each school played by their own code despite an attempt by Cambridge University to unify them in 1848. Their rules were generally inaccessible outside of the schools. There the football tended to be unorganised and fairly lawless games known as mob football. Although there are matches between small, equal numbered teams it remained a minority sport until the 1860s.

During the winter months in 1855 the players of Sheffield Cricket Club organised informal football matches in order to retain fitness until the start of the new season.[6] Two of the players were Nathaniel Creswick (1826–1917) and William Prest (1832–1885), both of whom were born in Yorkshire. Creswick came from a Sheffield family of silver plate manufacturers that dated back several centuries. After being educated at the city's Collegiate School he became a solicitor. Prest's family had moved from York while he was a child. His father bought a wine merchants that William subsequently took over. Both men were keen sportsmen. Creswick enjoyed a number of sports including cricket and running. Prest played cricket for the All England XI and also captained Yorkshire on several occasions. The inaugural meeting of Sheffield F.C. took place on 24 October 1857 at Parkfield House in the suburb of Highfield. The original headquarters would become a greenhouse on East Bank Road. The adjacent field was used as their first playing ground.

Rules of 1858The first written set of laws were produced at the clubs first annual general meeting on 21 October 1858. The original draft was amended at the same meeting to produce the following set of rules for the 1858–59 season.

1. The kick off from the middle must be a place kick.
2. Kick out must not be more than 25 yards [23 m] out of goal.
3. A fair catch is a catch from any player provided the ball has not touched the ground or has not been thrown from touch and is entitled to a free-kick.
4. Charging is fair in case of a place kick (with the exception of a kick off as soon as a player offers to kick) but he may always draw back unless he has actually touched the ball with his foot.
5. Pushing with the hands is allowed but no hacking or tripping up is fair under any circumstances whatever.
6. No player may be held or pulled over.
7. It is not lawful to take the ball off the ground (except in touch) for any purpose whatever.
8. The ball may be pushed or hit with the hand, but holding the ball except in the case of a free kick is altogether disallowed.
9. A goal must be kicked but not from touch nor by a free kick from a catch.
10. A ball in touch is dead, consequently the side that touches it down must bring it to the edge of the touch and throw it straight out from touch.
11. Each player must provide himself with a red and dark blue flannel cap, one colour to be worn by each side.



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Team photograph of Sheffield F.C. in 1890. The rules had been in use since the establishment of the club. Although a selection of rules from public schools were seen there, the 1858 rules show little evidence of their influence. Many of the original members were from the local Collegiate School, which favoured the kicking style of the game, rather than handling the ball. The kicking game was also prevalent in the local villages of Penistone and Thurlstone. The rules were the first to penalise foul play with a free kick, introduce the throw-in and eliminate the offside rule. They also had the unique feature of preventing a goal being scored directly from a free kick or throw-in.

Significant changes were also noted in the minutes book. The original draft prevented all handling of the ball except in the case of a fair catch. It also prevented all hacking and tripping. Despite the relaxation of these rules the first rules clearly leaned towards the kicking version of the game and away from handling of the ball. The season would start on 1 November and run until Easter Saturday. The numbers on each side were not fixed. The club rules also dictated that any disputes on the field would be resolved by any committee members present — the first reference to a position now occupied by the referee.

Initially the code was only played among Sheffield F.C. members. Games initially teamed players with surnames in the first half of the alphabet against players with surnames in the latter half of the alphabet. They, however, discovered that the most talented players all had surnames in the first half. Various other permutations were tried with professionals versus merchants and manufacturers becoming one of the favourites. In December 1858 they played their first outside opposition, a team from the local 58th Army Regiment. In 1859 the club produced the first printed rule book. Despite this the rules were not entirely fixed with changes experimented with throughout the season.

Two major events took place in 1860. On 31 January a meeting was held where it was resolved that Law 8 should be expunged and replaced with Holding the ball (except in the case of a free kick) or knocking or pushing it on is altogether disallowed. On the pitch the world's first inter-club match between Sheffield and the newly formed Hallam F.C. took place on 26 December 1860. The match took place at Hallam's ground, Sandygate Road. It was reported that "The Sheffielders turned in their usual Scarlet and White" which suggests that club colours were already in use. Despite playing with inferior numbers Sheffield F.C. beat Hallam 2–0.

In 1861 rouses were introduced into the code. The idea was borrowed from Eton and involved a 4 yards (3.7 m) goal (as opposed to 8 yards (7.3 m) used previously). There were also rouse flags placed an additional 4 yards (3.7 m) each side of the goal. If the ball was kicked between the rouse flags and subsequently touched down the team scored a rouse. If the score was tied at the end of the game then rouses could be used to decide the winner. A version of the arrangement remains in Australian Rules Football.

When the club published its second rule book in 1862 the number of laws had grown to 17. The game of the time could still be a violent one. A match on 29 December between Sheffield and Hallam became known as the Battle of Bramall Lane. An incident occurred when Nathaniel Creswick was being held by Shaw and Waterfall. Accounts differ over subsequent events. The original report stated that Creswick was accidentally punched by Waterfall. This was contested in a letter from the Hallam players that claimed that it was in retaliation for a blow thrown by Nathaniel Creswick. Whatever the cause the result was a general riot, which also involved a number of spectators, after which Waterfall was sent to guard the goal as punishment.

The Football Association (FA) was formed at a meeting in the Freemason's Tavern in Great Queen Street, London on 26 October 1863. Sheffield F.C. sent four representatives who acted as observers. The club joined the new organisation a month later in a letter sent by William Chesterman. In it he also enclosed a copy of the Sheffield Rules and expressed the club's opposition to hacking and running with the ball, describing them as "directly opposed to football". This letter was read out at an FA meeting on 1 December 1863. The rules allowing hacking and running with the ball were reversed at the same meeting. The new code became known as Association Football.

The offside rule was introduced to Sheffield Rules in 1863. Their version only required one member of the opposition between a player and the opposing goal to remain on side. Despite this the rule was only used sporadically in actual play. The FA version, which required a player to remain behind the ball at all times, was introduced during the 1865–66 season



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but was disliked due to the lack of goal scoring opportunities it caused. The one man offside was finally used on a regular basis from 1867 until the adoption of FA rules in 1877.

The FA had remained largely dormant after the creation of its rules but in 1866 Sheffield F.C. suggested a match between it and a FA club. This was misunderstood and they ended up playing a combined FA team on 31 March 1866 under FA rules. The game was the first ever to limit the match to 90 minutes and Sheffield F.C. adopted it as its preferred length of match. The rule would make it to the FA rule book in 1877. A second match was suggested by the London FA in a letter sent in November of the same year but never took place, the reason being disputes of which rules should be used. The FA introduced an 8 feet (2.4 m) cross bar used by Sheffield in the same year only for Sheffield to then decide to raise it to 9 feet (2.7 m). The fair catch was also dropped by Sheffield. This completed the transition to a purely kicking game.

By 1867 the Sheffield Rules was the dominant code in England. The FA had still not achieved the national dominance it enjoys today. Its membership had shrunk to just 10 clubs and at a meeting of the FA it was reported that only three clubs (No Names Club, Barnes and Crystal Palace) were playing by the FA code. At the same meeting the secretary of Sheffield Club suggested three rule changes at an FA meeting: the adoption of rouges, the one man offside and introduction of a free kick for handling the ball. None of the motions were successful. Later in the same year, they abolished handling and touchdowns. It was stated that this was to bring them closer to non-handling games.

In 1867 the world's first football tournament, the Youdan Cup, was played under the rules. The tournament involved 12 local sides and was played during February and March. The tournament committee decided on the use of an off-field referee to award free kicks for infringements. The final took place on 5 March and was only the second football match to take place at Bramall Lane. A crowd of 3,000, a world record attendance, watched Hallam F.C. claim the cup by scoring two rouges in the last five minutes to win two rouges to one. The Sheffield Football Association was founded following the tournament. The 12 teams involved in the tournament were joined by Sheffield F.C. to become the founding members. The association adopted the Sheffield Rules without any changes. They were the first of several regional Football Associations that sprung up over the following decade.

A second tournament, the Cromwell Cup was played a year later. This time it was only open to teams under two years old. Out of the four teams that competed The Wednesday emerged victorious. The final was a goalless draw after 90 minutes so the teams played on until a goal was scored. This was the first instance where a match involved extra time. This would be the last tournament to be played in Sheffield for nine years until the formation of the Sheffield Football Association Challenge Cup in 1876.

Rouges were abandoned in 1868 to be replaced by the goal and corner kicks. Sheffield FA limited handling to within 3 yards (2.7 m) of the goal in 1871. The FA, however, introduced a designated goalkeeper who was allowed to handle the ball anywhere on the pitch. In an effort to prevent the Sheffield game looking boring in comparison the Sheffield FA expanded the limit to the halfway line.

In 1870, 16 teams of the Sheffield FA were admitted to the FA but were allowed to continue to play by Sheffield Rules against FA clubs. A year later the Sheffield FA itself became affiliated with the Football Association and matches between the two associations began.

Between 1871 and 1876 a total of 16 matches were played between the Sheffield and London associations. As well as playing under both Sheffield and London rules, additional matches were played at Bramall Lane using a mixture of both sets. Aspects of the Sheffield game were also incorporated into the FA rules. The matches being played between Sheffield and London led to the two sets of rules becoming ever more similar. The corner kick was proposed by the Sheffield Association adopted by the FA on 17 February 1872. They also followed Sheffield's lead in restricting handling of the ball by the goalkeeper to his own half. The Sheffield game reverted back to using an 8 feet (2.4 m) crossbar in line with the FA.



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The FA Cup was inaugurated in 1871, but Sheffield clubs declined to enter the competition as it was being played under FA rules. The first team to enter was Sheffield F.C. in the 1873–74 season. This was after an attempt to enter a Sheffield FA team was refused by the organisers. They reached the quarter-finals before being knocked out by Clapham Rovers. The

Sheffield FA instituted their own Challenge Cup in 1876. The cup was open to all the members of the SFA that now included many clubs outside the local area. The first final attracted a crowd of 8,000, twice as much as the FA Cup final in the same season. It was a record crowd for a cup match that would be held until the FA Cup of 1883. The match was between Heeley and Wednesday and resulted in a 2–0 win for the latter.

By 1877 it was clear that the situation had become impractical. After letters were published in *The Field* deriding the state of affairs it was decided to unite the kicking game under one set of laws. By this time the FA Cup had helped the FA gain a dominant position within the game. The FA accepted the Sheffield rule allowing throw-ins to be thrown in any direction, as opposed to right angles only as prevails in rugby lineouts. In return the FA's use of a three man offside was adopted.

By the 1880s the influence of the Sheffield FA started to wane. Internal troubles began to surface with disputes between the SFA and a new rival association, Hallamshire F.A. The former, led by Charles Clegg, also fought a losing battle against the onset of professionalism. By the middle of the decade several local clubs, including Sheffield and Hallam F.C., were in financial trouble.

The four national associations of the UK met in 1882 with a view to creating a common set of laws. They created the International Football Association Board (IFAB), which first met in 1886. The IFAB's role was further affirmed when Fédération Internationale de Football Association adopted their laws upon its formation in 1904. They have remained in sole charge of the rules ever since.

The corner kick was first developed under Sheffield Rules. Sheffield teams created the first goals with solid crossbars. Heading, throw-ins, corner kicks and awarding free kicks for fouls were also conceived in Sheffield games. One of the most enduring rules of the Sheffield game prevented a goal from being scored directly from a free kick or throw in/kick in. This was present in every version of the Sheffield Rules and was later adopted within the FA rules. It was later refined by the International Football Association Board into the modern-day indirect free kick.

The aerial game was also developed within the Sheffield game. While causing much amusement when the side visited London in 1866, the header would become an important feature of the national game. This was linked to the abolition of the fair catch in the same year that prevented all use of the hands by outfield players.

The 1862 rules also introduced a half-time at which the teams would swap ends. Initially this was only if the game was scoreless as the teams would also swap ends if a goal was scored. The rule was changed to a swap at half-time only in 1876.

Early games did not use any on-field officials but disputes between the players would be referred to a committee member. Umpires were introduced by the end of 1862. Two umpires were used; one from each club. The off-field referee was introduced for the Youdan Cup in 1867 and entered the rulebook by 1871. The umpires would then appeal to the referee on behalf of their team. The concept was later introduced to the FA game and persisted until 1891 when the referee moved onto the pitch and the umpires became linesmen. The umpire's flag was first suggested by Charles Clegg at a Sheffield FA meeting in 1874.

The innovative streak within Sheffield remained after the demise of their own rules. On 15 October 1878 a crowd of 20,000 watched the first floodlit match at Bramall Lane. The exhibition match was set up to test the use of the lights and was played between specially selected teams captained by the brothers William and Charles Clegg. William Clegg's team won 2–0. The experiment was repeated a month later at the Oval.

The concept of a penalty goal for fouls within 2 yards (1.8 m) of the goal was suggested at a Sheffield FA meeting in 1879. The penalty would eventually make it into the rules by 1892. Sheffield players developed the 'screw shot' in the late 1870s. This gave players the ability to bend the shot into the net, a technique now common in the game.



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The Sheffield rules instigated the throw in of the ball at right angles by the opposite side to the one that played it into touch.

Many of the rules in the Sheffield game were adopted by and are still featured in today's association game. Twelve changes were made to the FA code between 1863 and 1870, of which eight were taken from Sheffield Rules. During this period the Sheffield FA had significant influence over the FA and encouraged it to continue when it was close to collapse in 1867. The corner kick was adopted by the FA in 1872 and they restricted handling of the ball to the goalkeeper's own half in 1873. In the final negotiations between Sheffield and London the latter agreed to allow throw-ins in any direction in exchange.

During the 1860s Sheffield and London were the dominant football cultures in England. However, while London was fragmented by the different codes used, by 1862 the rules of Sheffield F.C. had become the dominant code in Sheffield. Nottingham Forest adopted the Sheffield code in 1867 and the Birmingham and Derbyshire FAs became affiliated with Sheffield, adopting its code, in 1876. Most clubs in the north and midlands were playing by the Sheffield Rules while FA Rules dominated south of Birmingham.

There is circumstantial evidence that the rules also influenced Australian rules football conceived a couple of years later. The two codes shared the unique feature of lacking the offside rule. There are also similarities in the laws for kicking off, kick outs, throw-ins and the fair catch. Henry Creswick (possibly a relative of Nathaniel Creswick) was born in Sheffield but emigrated to Australia with his brother in 1840 (the town of Creswick is named after them). He moved to Melbourne in 1854 and became involved in the local cricket scene. He played first class cricket for Victoria during the 57–58 season alongside three of the founders of Melbourne Football Club including Tom Wills, the man credited with creating the original rules.

Despite the loss of their own rules Sheffield remained the centre of the footballing world until the onset of professionalism. The association matches versus London were considered only equalled in importance to the England v Scotland international and FA Cup Final. Sheffield born Charles Clegg became chairman of the Football Association in 1890 leading it until his death in 1937. In the process he became the longest serving FA chairman and earned the nickname The Napoleon of Football.

Early games involved varying numbers of players. Games could also be played with uneven numbers on each side either because some failed to show or one side offered a handicap. The first match between Sheffield and Hallam involved 16 players versus 20. Games predominantly involved larger numbers than used in the modern games. In October 1863, Sheffield declared that it would only play 11 a side matches. Despite this it continued to do so on occasions. By 1867 the vast majority of matches in Sheffield involved teams of between 11 and 14.

One of the first positions to develop within the code was referred to as the kick through. The position was unique to the Sheffield game and developed because of the lack of an offside rule. The job of the man playing in the kick through position was to remain near to the opposition's goal and wait for a through ball, a tactic today called cherry picking or goal hanging. By 1871 this position had become modern-day forwards. Cover goals developed in opposition of kick throughs. Despite their name their job was to man mark the kick through.

According to CW Alcock, Sheffield provided the first evidence of the modern passing style. In October 1863, Sheffield declared that it would only play 11 a side matches. known as the Combination Game. As early as January 1865 Sheffield FC was associated with scoring a goal through "scientific movements" against Nottingham. A contemporary match report of November 1865 notes "We cannot help recording the really scientific play with which the Sheffield men backed each other up". Combination play by Sheffield players is also suggest in 1868: "a remarkably neat and quick piece of play on the part of K Smith, Denton and J Knowles resulted in a goal for Sheffield, the final kick being given by J. Knowles". Contemporary proof of passing occurs from at least January 1872. In January 1872 the following account is given against Derby: "W. Orton, by a specimen of careful play, running the ball up in close proximity to the goal, from which it was returned to J. Marsh, who by a fine straight shot kicked it through". This play taking place "in close proximity to the goal" suggests a short pass and the "return" of the ball to Marsh suggests that this was the second of two passes. This account also goes onto describe other interesting early tactics: "This goal was supplemented by one of T. Butler's most successful expositions of the art of



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corkscrew play and deceptive tactics which had the effect of exciting the risibility of the spectators". Similarly the following contemporary account of passing comes from January 1872: "the only goal scored in the match was obtained by Sheffield, owing to a good run up the field by Steel, who passed it judiciously to Matthews, and the latter, by a good straight kick, landed it through the goal out of reach of the custodian". This match (against Notts) also provided contemporary evidence of "good dribbling and kicking" particularly by W.E. Clegg. The condition of the ground, however, "militated against a really scientific exhibition", suggesting that at other times their play was even more "scientific". Their play in March 1872 was described as "speed, pluck and science of no mean order".

Before the introduction of the crossbar, teams could play without a goalkeeper. The first reference to a goalkeeper appears in the report of the Battle of Bramall Lane in 1862. The position, however, was used as an alternative to sending off a player. Although a recognised position goalkeeper sometimes was also referred to in the rules as the player nearest their own goal (allowing him the luxury of handling the ball). Unlike its FA counterpart Sheffield Rules never restricted handling to one designated player. Despite this by the 1870s teams usually featured a single player in the position.

The match between the Sheffield FA and the FA that took place in December 1871 is notable for evidence of the development of several new positions. As well as the first mention of forwards, sides (now called wingers) were also mentioned. The rest of the team made up the midfield. The Half backs (referred to as centre backs in the modern game) were mentioned a year later. By the mid-1870s it was common to use one goalkeeper assisted by two cover goals and two half backs. The attack was made up of five midfielders and one forward. This produced the 2-2-5-1 formation.

Nathaniel Creswick and William Prest are considered both founders of Sheffield F.C. and creators of the code they adhered to. They continued to have a strong presence at the club, both being members of the committee. It was Creswick, however, who exerted more influence over the rules in his position of Honorary Secretary and Treasurer.

John Shaw was originally a member of Sheffield Club. However another member, Thomas Vickers, also founded their main rivals, Hallam F.C. He also became the vice-president of the Sheffield FA upon its formation and president from 1869 to 1885. In this role he organised many of its first inter-association matches and was involved in the eventual merger of the Sheffield Rule into the national game.

John Charles Clegg (better known as just Charles) became a massive influence on the national as well as the local game. As a player he was involved in the first inter-association match and became the first Sheffield-based player to be capped (gaining his only cap in the first international). He went on to become president of both the city's professional sides (playing a large part in the creation of Sheffield United) and held the same position at Sheffield and Hallamshire FA having overseen the merger of the two rival local FAs. He then moved on to national prominence when he became chairman of the FA in 1890 and president in 1923. He held both positions until his death in 1937.

Although not directly involved with Sheffield football, Charles Alcock had a major role in relations between the local and London associations. He acted as a go between encouraging the FA to accept rules from the Sheffield Rules. When the FA declined an inter-association match in Sheffield on the grounds that they could not play under Sheffield Rules it fell to Alcock to organise a team of London players to fulfil the fixture. The success of the match led to it becoming a regular event in the following years.