

FIFA Emergency Congress



Committee: FIFA Emergency Congress

Topic: The Future of VAR: Expanding Technological Assistance to Preserve Fair Play in International Football.

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I. Committee Background

The Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), founded in 1904, serves as the world's governing body for association football (soccer).

FIFA's roles include setting the rules of play, establishing refereeing and coaching standards, and managing international player transfers. The organization is also responsible for organizing the men's and women's World Cups and other international tournaments. FIFA's main legislative body is the FIFA Congress, where each national organization has one delegate. The Congress is responsible for electing the president, approving the budget, and choosing the location of future World Cup Tournaments. FIFA also promotes the global development of football.

The use of video assistant referees (VARs) in football was first included in the Laws of the Game in 2018/19. FIFA assesses the technological aspects of VAR systems through the FIFA Quality Programme for VAR Technology.

Two different VAR set-ups are currently permitted: full VAR systems, which use at least four and up to an unlimited number of cameras; and VAR Light, which uses four to eight cameras and requires the system to be fully operated by the VAR themselves. To support competition organisers with the implementation of the technology, FIFA and The IFAB introduced the Implementation Assistance and Approval Programme (IAAP). This allows the same standards to be applied when introducing VAR systems into a new competition, which helps to tackle the challenges of implementing the technology and to oversee training programmes for those involved in using and deploying it.

Despite these technological developments, challenges concerning implementation costs, accessibility, and consistency remain. Differences in financial resources and technological infrastructure can make it difficult for smaller competitions to adopt VAR systems (FIFA, n.d.-c). Consequently, expanding access to technological assistance while maintaining fairness, reliability, and consistent refereeing standards remains an important issue for international football.



II. Topic History

On 1 September 2016, FIFA successfully conducted its first official “semi-live” Video Assistant Referees (VAR) test during the friendly match between Italy and France in Bari. This first ever “semi-live” VAR test is a positive experience on which FIFA is determined to further build its VAR knowhow. ***FIFA President Gianni Infantino was “very satisfied” by the outcome of the first official FIFA “semi-live” Video Assistant Referees (VAR) test held in Bari during the friendly between Italy and France, which finished 3-1 to Les Bleus.*

“With VAR, we help the referees and we protect the game,” President Infantino said. “We turned a new page in football’s history book. After this very pleasant experience, we will see where the VAR tests are leading us. We need more tests. We will continue with testing VAR until 2018 ” (FIFA, 2016).

The International Football Association Board (The IFAB) unanimously approved the use of video assistant referees (VARs) at its 132nd Annual General Meeting (AGM) that took place at FIFA’s headquarters in Zurich.

This landmark meeting, chaired by FIFA President Gianni Infantino, represents a new era for football with video assistance for referees helping to increase integrity and fairness in the game. Prior to taking its decision, the members of The IFAB were presented with the results of the independent analysis of the use of VARs conducted by Belgian university KU Leuven since the beginning of the VAR experiment in March 2016. The implementation of VAR represented a huge talking point during the World Cup, generating fantastic debate about football and its rules. The board voted to incorporate VAR into the Laws of the Game as a permanent option, ending the experimental status. From the 2018-19 season onwards, VAR could be implemented in competitions following the applicable Laws of the Game and implementation requirements. under a unified set of rules.

Building on the success of refereeing and the use of VAR at the World Cup, FIFA continued its efforts to improve and develop overall standards of refereeing and assist all member associations and leagues wishing to implement VAR in their competitions.



Video Assistant Referee (VAR) has transformed football by allowing officials to review key incidents that could change the outcome of a match. Introduced to reduce major refereeing errors, the technology has improved decision-making in crucial situations, but it continues to fuel debate over delays, subjective interpretations and the limits of video review. VAR operates under a strict protocol established by the International Football Association Board (IFAB), which sets the Laws of the Game. Its guiding principle is “minimum interference, maximum benefit,” meaning video officials should intervene only when there is a clear and obvious error or a serious missed incident in a specific category. The technology does not replace the referee or provide a means to review every disputed decision. The referee on the pitch remains in control and makes the final call. (Daily Sabah, n. d.)

The referee will explain their decision to the VAR and what they have seen, if the evidence provided by the broadcast footage does not accord with what the referee believes they have seen, the VAR can recommend an overturn. The referee will then take, change or rescind any disciplinary action, where appropriate, and restart play in accordance with the Laws of the Game. The VAR decision will be communicated to fans in the stadiums via graphics on the big screens, or via a combination of PA announcements and messages on scoreboards in stadiums without screens. Definitive video clips will also be shown where possible for decisions overturned by the VAR. (Premier League, 2019)

Football Video Support (FVS) is the answer to several requests that FIFA has received from those member associations that cannot implement the video-assistant-referee (VAR) system because their human and financial resources are limited and very few cameras are in use in their competitions.

Trialling FVS is in line with FIFA’s commitment to exploring both existing and emerging technologies to positively impact the game, especially in order to help referees to make correct decisions, while ensuring that their potential use is cost-effective, beneficial and practical across the global football community. It also follows on from the interest shown by The IFAB’s advisory panels and the decision taken at The IFAB’s Annual General Meeting in March 2023 to approve the testing of a new approach to the use of replay technology to support referees during matches.



The development of VAR shows how football continues its efforts to make refereeing more accurate and to protect fair play with technology. But it also raises concerns about transparency, consistency, cost, and the flow of matches. These problems are still at the heart of discussions on how to expand technological assistance internationally, while keeping referees in charge and making sure competition stays fair.

III. Current Issues

While Video Assistant Referee (VAR) technology can correct critical errors, the technology possesses its pitfalls. First, the inequality issue prevails as installing the technology involves a high-tech environment, skilled labor, and expensive equipment. Consequently, FIFA introduced VAR Light, an alternative system for competitions with limited broadcasting capabilities, but financial and technological inequality remains a concern when adopting video assistance across competitions. The disparity poses a challenge to FIFA as the organization seeks to increase accessibility to the technology while maintaining reliable refereeing in competitions (FIFA, n.d.-c).

Second, interruptions in match flow impede the game's continuity, testing the patience of players, coaches, and fans. While VAR reviews aim to enhance accuracy in decision-making, the technology risks becoming an annoyance as it interrupts the game's rhythm, compelling officials to pause and watch the incident on monitors. There is no defined maximum time limit for VAR reviews, and the time required varies depending on the type of incident (IFAB, n.d.).

The third pitfall relates to the inconsistency of decisions, as situations such as handballs and penalties require human judgment to interpret the circumstances of each incident. Disagreements occur when officials' interpretations differ, resulting in criticism from teams and fans. While VAR provides additional information, it cannot eliminate the need for human judgment, raising the question of how FIFA and IFAB should improve consistency in decision-making.

Moreover, transparency requires players and fans to understand the reasoning behind a decision and its impact on the game. Without it, confusion arises, especially



when reviewing a goal. Lack of clarity can cause criticism, particularly when supporters feel that a VAR decision has been unfair. Clarifying contentious incidents can help supporters understand decisions and reduce frustration, abuse, and criticism. The Premier League has introduced ways of communicating final VAR decisions to supporters through stadium screens and messages, including public address announcements where applicable (Premier League, 2019).

Another important concern is how technology can be used in officiating without overriding the referee's authority or disrupting the game. Video officials should support on-field officials by correcting clear and obvious errors without stopping the game unnecessarily. However, disagreements may still occur when the referee and the VAR team interpret an incident differently, raising questions about who should have the final say. Excessive dependence on technology could also reduce confidence in the referee's decisions, while limited use of VAR may allow important errors to remain uncorrected. The challenge lies in balancing accuracy, efficiency, and integrity in football competitions while increasing access to the technology without disrupting the game or weakening the referee's authority (IFAB, n.d.; FIFA, n.d.-c).

Another concern is related to the limitations of technology itself. While the use of VAR aims at providing the referees with additional footage to make decisions, the available camera angles and image quality may not necessarily show the exact moment of an incident. Moreover, there are several situations, including handball, physical contact, and offside, which may still be challenging for the officials even with the use of the new technology. Furthermore, the technology may vary depending on competitions because they may use different equipment, meaning video assistance may be more effective in some leagues than others. Overall, the use of VAR technology makes it impossible to guarantee that all decisions will be correct and that no controversies will occur. This raises questions about the limitations of technology and its role in improving fairness in sports (IFAB, n.d.; FIFA, n.d.-c).

IV. United Nations Action

1. FIFA introduced Football Video Support (FVS)





FIFA developed Football Video Support (FVS) as a more affordable option for competitions unable to afford a full VAR system. It is designed for leagues with fewer cameras and limited financial or human resources. Unlike traditional VAR, FVS does not have video officials continuously checking incidents. Instead, the head coach requests a review when they believe a serious mistake has occurred.

2. FIFA expanded FVS trials

In October 2025, FIFA reported that FVS trials had expanded into domestic competitions and FIFA youth tournaments. The system was being used at the FIFA U-20 World Cup in Chile, with further trials planned for youth tournaments. FIFA also reported growing interest from national football associations. These trials help FIFA assess how the system works across different competitions.

3. FIFA and IFAB established implementation and approval requirements for VAR

FIFA and IFAB introduced the Implementation Assistance and Approval Programme (IAAP) to help competition organizers introduce VAR under consistent standards. The programme includes testing and approval requirements, as well as support and training for people involved in using the technology. FIFA also operates a quality programme to test VAR technology for video quality, timing and synchronization.

4. IFAB established rules limiting when VAR is used

IFAB's VAR protocol limits reviews to specific situations: goals, penalty decisions, direct red cards and mistaken identity. VAR is intended to correct clear and obvious errors or serious missed incidents. The on-field referee retains responsibility for the final decision. The protocol also states there is no maximum time limit for a review because accuracy is prioritized over speed.

5. FIFA encourages the application of technology to assist referees

FIFA continues to explore the use of technology to help referees make better decisions on the pitch, such as semi-automated offside technology, which helps officials determine whether a player was in an offside position. This is another example



of how technology can support refereeing decisions and contribute to more accurate and efficient outcomes (FIFA, n.d.-c).

6. FIFA focuses on improving referee training

The introduction of VAR also involves improving training for officials so that they understand when to request a VAR review, know how to communicate effectively with the video assistant referee, and apply the rules consistently. This technical support and training are important for implementing VAR effectively and improving refereeing performance in competitions (IFAB, n.d.).

V. Essential Questions

- How can FIFA make VAR technology more accessible to competitions with limited financial resources?
- Should FIFA expand the use of Football Video Support (FVS) as a more affordable alternative to traditional VAR?
- How can FIFA and IFAB improve the consistency and transparency of VAR decisions?
- How can VAR reviews be made faster without compromising the accuracy of refereeing decisions?
- Should additional technologies be introduced to assist referees in making important decisions during matches?
- How can FIFA ensure that the referee maintains final authority while making effective use of technological assistance?
- How can FIFA help countries and competitions that cannot afford advanced refereeing technology?
- Should VAR decisions be explained publicly after every major review?
- How can FIFA prevent technological assistance from creating further differences between wealthy and less wealthy football competitions?
- What role should players, coaches, and fans have in evaluating the effectiveness of VAR?



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