

Do Referees Support the Feasibility of Video Technology in Football

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Abstract – The present investigation has been conducted with the purpose to know whether introduction of video technology, the basic fabrics of a football game are altered/ tampered, leading to occurrence of variations. The study attempts to find out what are the implications on the game of Football with the advent of video technology.

The data for this study was collected from 20 referees who volunteered to be the part of this study. The results of the study revealed that the referees considered that the advent of video technology will alter the flow natural flow of the game.

The referees controlling the game of Football will be under tremendous pressure in application of the laws of the game. Every decision would be questioned, thereby undermining the position of the referee in the middle. The referees have also expressed the jurisdiction of the video technology, if it were to be implemented.

Key Words :- Football, Referees, Video Technology.

INTRODUCTION

Liverpool Football Club's famous manager Bill Shankly's, classic phrase, "football is not a matter of life and death - it's much more important". Everyone involved in the game of football wants to win, win at any cost, which is one of the key aspects of pressure on the club owners, team managers, coaches, players and even the fans want their team to succeed, whether it means through fair or unfair means, they just want to win.

When something goes wrong in the field of play, the players, coaches, managers and the club owners try to find a scapegoat. Quiet often we see the players, managers say that the referee disallowed a fair goal, the red card given by referee changed the complexion of the game, and Penalty awarded changed by the referee was the turning point of the game and so on. The wrong decisions of the referee are quiet often replayed instantly and frequently. Referee occupies one of the important positions in the game of football. He has a very special position in the football setup. Referees are the center of attractions in all sporting activities since he has to judge and is an integral part of decision making process. A referee is considered as the heart and soul of the game, because be it judgment or the assertiveness, referee is the issue of discussion, criticized and sometimes he becomes a source of inspiration. Referee controls the game of

football in co – operation of the assistant referees by applying the laws of the game. A referee is required to follow the established rule of FAIR PLAY concept keeping in mind the principle of equality of rules without the mind of caste, creed, race, religion, etc. A referee is required to be fair, decisive in his decisions. A referee has to be at the right place during right situations to take the correct decisions which may or may not go down well with the players, coaches and the fans as well. Not only should he be physically very assertive but have the physiological capacity to handle heavy load as he is required to do a lot of running. A referees decision is always under scrutiny because every word uttered by him, his behavior and decisions applied, go a long way in deciding the outcome of game of football. Sometimes there are some uncertain and bad events, moments or attitudes that players often indulge in, which not only brings disrepute to the game but also creates issues for the on-field referees, who have to evaluate the situation, take bold and decisive decisions keeping the spirits of the game. We remember referees more for their mistakes they make, question their integrity, ability, motivations, rather than how well they controlled the game, cooled the temper that flared among the players. Then the question arises whether the referees are so bad and have they got that worst.

Referees are also humans. Quiet often than not there ought to be mistakes or wrong decisions taken by the

referee, but doesn't mean referees always do so. MacMahon and Plessner (2008) grouped sports officials into 3 categories: (a) Those who interact, (b) those who react, and (c) those who judge. As we all know the sports officials of football are those who interact with the players on the field. Referees are often under pressure from the players who try their best to deceive the referees, coaches who show their dissent to every decision taken by the official in the middle and fans who put a sort of additional pressure on the referee by not only giving their touts but also lots of abuses and sometimes physically assaulting them.

These days it is a difficult task of being in referee's profession. Referees are constantly under scrutiny, because of the improvements in the technological aspect of live streaming has brought about more pressure, stress and performing the job to the expected level. When the decisions taken by the referees are not to the expected level or below par, then the questions arises why not embrace video technology to guide the referees in the middle. We all know majority of the sports have used video replays to aid the referees, football is in dilemma of whether to embrace video technology or restrict its use? Before we undertake the necessity of video technology in football, lets us examine certain key aspects or objectivities of football.

- Football is purely a technical and strategic oriented game, which is played under the provisions of Laws of the game, governed by International Football Association Board (IFAB). The players have to sustain for the full duration of 90 minutes (+ Extra 30 minutes in case of match drawn) which is played in 45 minutes of two half.
- Football is game which is both physical as well as physiological in nature. Players who do not sustain the time period due to injury, not performing up-to the expected level are replaced with fresh legs as strategic and potent weapon in the form of substitutions.
- Application of offensive and defensive strategies / principles in relation to performance is directly proportional to the time period.

PURPOSE

The study was undertaken with the purpose to know whether introduction of video technology, the basic fabrics of a Football game are altered/ tampered, leading to occurrence of variations.

SITUATIONS

1. Would the interests of the players as well as public get interrupted / distracted along with the flow of the game through the advent of video technology in Football?

The reason why Football is popular is because it is a free flowing game and entertaining. Football is all about sportsmanship. The game of football is well averse to attacks and counter attacks by both the teams through direct play as well as through flanks. The fans will be distracted when there would be frequent stoppages that would be brought about by the introduction of technology. The tempo at which either team performs will be ultimately affected. The players rather than concentrating on the game would go after the infringements like fouls, play acting, etc which would have lasting effect on the game.

2. Would every decision applied by the referee irrespective of where and when be questioned with the advent of video technology now and then?

If football embraces technology, then for what period of time would the break to review the decision be allowed? Where would the video replays be limited too? Will it be applied only to the goal line decisions or all such incidents that happen now and then during the course of the game will be considered. These are a few areas which questions would arise and asked.

3. Would video technology downgrade the referee's hold on the game?

Introduction of the video technology would obviously harm the referees position's because once bitten, twice shy. If at all the decisions give by the referees are reviewed and the video technology differs with the referee's decision, then there are chances of the players not adhering, accepting the decisions of referee, then in all probability players would show dissent to the referee's decision. One of the laws of the game is offside, which is judged by the assistant referee. What will happen to the offside decision then with technology introduced? If we are to embrace video technology then there would be no necessity of assistant referee as a moving camera could be placed on the touchline and the decisions could be taken by the referee seeing the video replay itself. The laws of the game has to be altered frequently, if we are to introduce video replays which is again against the spirit of the game of football and aimed at subverting the authority of the referee, doing whatever it takes to get a result.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The Study group consisted of 20 (National Cat II - 2, Cat III – 5 and Cat IV – 13) referees who actively participated in the various leagues conducted by Mysore District Football Association during the 2015-16. Survey method was used for data collection in this research for evaluating the current situation in Football officiating. The survey method is a method in research which tries to describe a situation that existed in the past that with the way it is in the present. Thus, a trial was made to describe the incident, individual, or object (that is, a subject of the research) as it is (Karasar, 2005). The Survey components involved the referees age, educational background, job and marital status. The Survey method consisted of 3 questions evaluated the factors that impacted the game of Football with the introduction of video technology. The applied scale has been developed by the researcher based on the experience of the researcher himself in his capacity as a recognized Category - 3 Football referee of Karnataka State Football Association and as qualified Football coach and based on five point likert type.

DATA ANALYSES

Frequency (n) among the described statistical methods was used for the countable data and the arithmetic average (\bar{X}) and standard deviation (SD) were used for the data whose percent values were measurable.

Table No.1:

Distribution of the referees in respect of their personal knowledge

Variable	Sub-category	n	%	Total (%)
Age (Years)	25 - 30	5	25	20 (100%)
	30 - 35	1	5	
	35 - 40	1	5	
	40 - 45	7	35	
	45 - 50	6	30	
Educational background	25 - 30	5	25	20 (100%)
	30 - 35	1	5	
	35 - 40	1	5	
	40 - 45	7	35	
	45 - 50	6	30	
Job	Official	6	30	20 (100%)
	Self Employment	14	70	
Marital Status	Married	6	30	20 (100%)

Table 1 reveals the demographic profile of the respondents taken for the study. The different age groups reveal that around 35 percent of the respondents belong to 40 to 45 years followed by 30 percent from 45 to 50 years and least 5 percent from 30-35 and 35-40 years. Education data reveals that around 60 percent of the respondents are Graduates followed by 35 percent of the respondents are Post Graduates and least 5 percent are undergraduate. Majority 70 percent of the respondents are self employed followed by 30 percent are Govt. employed. The marital status data reveals that 70 percent of the respondents are unmarried followed by 30 percent of the respondents are married.

Table No.2

Frequency of observation and developed scale

Points	Alternative	f (Frequency of observation)
1	Hardly agree	5
2	Rarely agree	6
3	Moderately agree	5
4	Agree	16
5	Definitely agree	28

Table 2 reveals the frequency of observation and developed scale. Majority of the respondents have assigned more weight age to 'Definitely Agree' at the frequency of observation of 28 referees followed by 16 referees who have preferred to 'Agree' and least 6 referees have given the preference to 'Rarely Agree' and 5 referees each have preferred to 'Hardly Agree' and 'Moderately Agree' and least to 'hardly agree' and 'moderately agree'. That means all the referees have very positive attitude towards implications of video technology on game situations, which they say would alter the game of Football.

Table No.3

Implication of video technology on game situations

S. No.	Factor	HA		RA		MA		A		DA		X	SD
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
1	Would the interests of the players as well as public get interrupted / distracted along with the flow of the game through the advent of video technology in Football?	2	10	2	10	2	10	4	20	10	50	3.9	1.41
2	Would every decision applied by the referee irrespective of where and when be questioned with the advent of video technology now and then?	1	5	2	10	1	5	8	40	8	40	4	1.70
3	Would video technology downgrade the referee's hold on the game?	2	10	2	10	2	10	4	20	10	50	3.9	1.41
	Aggregate Mean Value											3.93	

HA-Hardly Agree; **RA**-Rarely Agree; **MA**-Moderately Agree; **A**-Agree; **DA**-Definitely Agree.

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistical measures of implication of video technology on game situations. It was evidenced that the different factors had a high level significance, because the respondents assigned a higher weight age to these factors at 3.93 on "Five-point likerts" scale. It was interesting to note that the respondents assigned the higher mean value of 4 to the factor "Would every decision applied by the referee irrespective of where and when be questioned with the advent of video technology now and then?" with the standard deviation of 1.70 followed by the mean value of 3.93 to the factor "Would the interests of the players as well as public get interrupted / distracted along with the flow of the game through the advent of video technology in Football?" and 'Would video technology downgrade the referee's hold on the game?' with the standard deviation of 1.41. On the whole, the referees have positive responses towards the implication of video technology on game situations by assigning highest mean value with least differences in their opinion.

CONCLUSIONS

Football is a passionate game which is not out of conflict. It is guided by the laws of the game and overseen by four officials. Michaela Tabb, famous snooker official, rightly says "A lot of sports differ in terms of pressure and profile, But across the board it's

a thankless task. There is rarely any thanks for being right, but people jump on you if you're wrong." The referees do an amazing job. They are humans but can't see everything happening on the field of play. They are bound to do mistakes but it is not fair to point out at the referee's mistake in exaggeration. Today we can find that there is an unprecedented and tremendous pressure on referees. The referees are performing to their best in very difficult conditions and situations, but there are mistakes to happen, which has been accepted by the referees themselves. Sometimes the matches are decided on certain mistakes committed by the referees than on the basis of superior play. Referees feel that the natural flow of the game, for which the game of Football is known for would suffer if video technology is abruptly implemented, without any concrete and in-depth research going in to pros and cons about the implementation of video technology. The referees have an concern that if video technology is implemented by the governing body of Football (FIFA), then the question will arise which parameters in Football will be observed. Will only the Goal Line decisions and red card offences be referred to video replay or all the important sequences that occur during the course of the game would be observed. Irrespective of the events certainly the flow of the game would be affected and ultimately how much of it would be affected will be the question. The referees don't completely rule out their support for external help provided in the form of video technology, which they think should be implemented only after taking confidence of all the stakeholders concerned with the game of Football.

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