

How should referees use technology in football?

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(PhysOrg.com) -- As World Cup 2010 looks set to be the tipping point for the use of technology in football a Cardiff University expert argues it's justice not accuracy that's at stake.

Professor Harry Collins, Cardiff School of Social Sciences, looks at the impact of technology on sports umpiring and refereeing in a forthcoming paper in *The Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*.

Professor Collins argues that the introduction of new technology should be done in such a way as to increase the justice of decisions and that this is best done with a restrained use of new technology. He writes that some sports decision aids can be less accurate than they appear, leading to false transparency.

Professor Collins said: “In the case of the 2010 World Cup it's especially important to disentangle the question of exactness and the question of justice. The increasingly vocal calls for the introduction of 'goal-line technology' often confuse the two.

“To get rid of transparent injustice all that is necessary is to give referees direct or indirect access to the television replays that the viewer sees and allow them to use these in their decision-making so as to avoid obvious mistakes. There is no need to try to find technology that will define the 'exact' position of the ball. In rare cases television replays will not be able to determine whether the whole of the ball crossed the line or not - advanced technology could resolve some but not all of such cases but there is no need for it. In such cases, referees, using TV replays, can be seen to be doing their best, especially if backed up with a 'benefit of the doubt' rule such as, 'if in irresolvable doubt, it is a goal'.”

Professor Collins concludes that technology should be used to avoid errors which are obvious to all; but argues that the referee's judgement must remain paramount.

Previous research by Professor Collins and colleagues in the School of Social Sciences has questioned the accuracy of Hawk-Eye and similar line-calling technologies arguing such devices could cause viewers to overestimate the ability of technological devices to resolve disagreements.

More information: Read Professor Collins' [research paper](#)

Provided by Cardiff University

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