

FIFA seeks better tech for offside, cheaper video review

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Referee Martin Atkinson checks the VAR screen after Aston Villa's John McGinn scoring a disallowed goal during the English Premier League soccer match between Arsenal and Aston Villa at the Emirates stadium in London, Sunday, Nov. 8, 2020. (Andy Rain/Pool via AP)

FIFA is working with technology firms to develop better visuals of offside lines and improve decision making by referees, the soccer body said Tuesday.

FIFA provided an update on its innovation panel's work to also study semi-automated offside calls that can help match officials and develop cheaper video review systems for less wealthy competition organizers.

A priority for the panel is "improvement of the visualisation of close offside incidents," FIFA said.

The increasing use of video assistant referees has seen goals ruled out for marginal calls—including "armpit offsides"—that called into question the accuracy of on-screen graphics used to judge them.

The innovation panel has received proposals from tech providers who will be supplied with data to help develop improved visuals, FIFA said.

In addition, three providers are working on semi-automated offside calls. The research, however, has been delayed by the coronavirus pandemic.

"The aim of this development phase is to further improve the algorithms of the systems based on a collection of datasets from hundreds of different offside incidents," FIFA said.

FIFA also wants "to create more affordable VAR systems to enable the use of VAR at all levels of the game" while keeping minimum quality standards of the technology.



Bayern's Robert Lewandowski scores a goal that was disallowed for offside during the German Bundesliga soccer match between Borussia Dortmund and Bayern Munich in Dortmund, Germany, Saturday, Nov. 7, 2020. (AP Photo/Martin Meissner, Pool)

The "VAR 'light'" concept is being tested by Asian Football Confederation, UEFA and the French soccer federation.

The FIFA update came before its rules-making panel, known as IFAB, hosts meetings next week.

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