

FAQ: Experiments with video assistant referees in football

Last update – 12 July 2016

This document provides information on the steps being taken to conduct experiments with video assistant referees (VARs) in association football following the historic decision of The International Football Association Board ([The IFAB](#)) on 5 March 2016. It will be updated regularly as further details can be confirmed and as the experiments progress.

Why did The IFAB decide to allow live video assistance experiments?

Following a high number of requests from the global football community and considering further technological advances in the sports broadcast industry in recent years, The IFAB agreed in 2014 to analyse how video assistance for match officials could potentially be used in football. Based on discussions with its various bodies as well as initial data collected since 2014, The IFAB, in close partnership with FIFA's Football Technology Innovation Department drafted a detailed experiment protocol for live video assistance experiments and presented it at the [Annual General Meeting](#) on 5 March 2016. The IFAB agreed in principle that video experiments based on the drafted protocol would be the best way to understand the pros and cons of video assistance in full.

Who did The IFAB consult before taking this decision?

The IFAB consulted with football associations and leagues, particularly those that have made efforts to analyse the various steps and implications of implementing video assistance experiments in a competition, namely the Dutch Football Association (KNVB) and the USA's Major League Soccer (MLS). The results were presented and discussed by The IFAB and its bodies, including the Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) and the Football Advisory Panel (FAP), the Technical Subcommittee and the [Board of Directors](#).

The IFAB also looked at various sports already using video assistance, including rugby, American football (in the NFL), and basketball (in the NBA), to name a few. In addition, technology providers supplying those sports with state-of-the-art technology were also consulted.

What is the overall objective of live experiments?

The overall objective is to answer the question of whether the implementation of video assistant referees (VARs) would improve the game. In addition, The IFAB wants to understand the impact on the game for all stakeholders including referees, players, coaches, officials, and fans.

In which competitions will the experiments be conducted?

A number of information meetings and workshops have taken place involving The IFAB, FIFA and over a dozen interested competition organisers (associations and leagues). The main purpose of these meetings has been to inform the interested competition organisers about the requirements that they will need to meet in order to take part in the experiments. At the beginning of [June](#), competitions in Australia, Brazil, Germany, Portugal, the Netherlands and the United States became the first to agree to the requirements drawn up by The IFAB and FIFA to

participate in the experiments. At the same time, it was announced that the FIFA Club World Cup Japan 2016 in December is set to serve as a dress rehearsal before The IFAB authorises “live” tests in 2017. The IFAB remains in close contact with a number of other associations and leagues from all over the world that are eager to host the experiments. They still have time and The IFAB expects to be able to officially confirm additional participants in the coming months.

The IFAB does not select competition organisers; instead, those that wish to conduct experiments will be allowed to do so, subject to the competition organiser’s willingness and capacity to run the experiments as per the approved protocol as well as project management factors such as the implied costs, available human resources, required technological infrastructure, risk assessment for the competition and time schedules for implementation, which are still to be finalised.

What is the difference between “offline” experiments and “live” experiments?

An offline experiment represents a dry run whereby VARs can familiarise themselves with the setup, assess video replays and practice making calls on match-changing incidents but without communicating with the referee. This means there will be no impact on the game, unlike during a “live” experiment when the match officials do communicate with each other and the referee can take decisions based on information provided by the VAR.

What will the experiments involve?

The IFAB believes that the experiments should be kept as simple as possible. Therefore, it has been decided to carry out only one type of experiment. In order to ensure a scientific approach, The IFAB will test different factors within the experiment, with the aim of answering all questions related to the use and impact of VARs. A VAR will have access to video replays during the match and will either review an incident on request (by the referee) to help the referee make the best possible decision, or advise the referee proactively of an incident that he/she may have missed. If there is a very clear incident, the VAR can advise the referee directly, i.e. tell him/her which decision needs to be taken. If the VAR is in doubt, the referee can review the replay him/herself, on the side of the field.

Who drew up the protocol for the experiments?

The protocol was drawn up by the Technical Subcommittee (TSC) of The IFAB together with FIFA’s Football Technology Innovation Department, based on the first key findings of the Dutch Football Association (KNVB) during their offline experiments, which have been conducted since 2013. Input for the protocol was also provided by the various bodies of The IFAB, including the Football Advisory Panel, the Technical Advisory Panel, the TSC and the Board of Directors. In addition, feedback from other leagues, associations, and experts in football as well as other sports was taken into account.

In which situations will officials be able to call on video for assistance?

Only match-changing decisions may be reviewed:

1. **Goal scored** – Revision of potential infringements of the Laws of the Game in the build-up to a goal, including offside, foul, hand ball or any other relevant infringements or offences
2. **Penalty decision** – Revision of potential infringements of the Laws of the Game within or near the penalty area, resulting in a (potential) penalty kick, or in case a penalty kick has been awarded incorrectly
3. **Direct red-card incident** – Revision of potential infringements of the Laws of the Game resulting in a (direct) red card
4. **Mistaken identity**

Will the competitions involved be ones that are televised?

Yes. The key requirement for the use of VARs is a television setup in the stadium. Feeds from multiple broadcast cameras (giving different angles) are required, and only those feeds may be used for VARs. No additional cameras aside from the existing ones that are part of the standard broadcast plan are required. However, additional cameras could be added for the VARs, provided that the broadcasters have access to them and the footage is also used/shown in case the VAR or referee uses these specific camera angles for his/her decision.

How will the experiments be monitored and how will feedback be obtained from the various stakeholders?

The IFAB will supervise each experiment closely with the support of FIFA's Football Technology Innovation Department. This will include a research study involving the participating competition organisers, technology providers and a selected independent institute or university to focus not only on the refereeing outcomes but also the effect on the game itself including the impressions of the various stakeholders. The IFAB's bodies will receive regular updates on the experiments and will be able to provide feedback throughout this process.

When will the experiments begin and how long will they last?

A detailed project plan is currently being established to cover all necessary steps and timelines. Its implementation will be gradual. Participating competition organisers are being invited to workshops where they will have an opportunity to adopt VARs with the guidance and support of The IFAB in order to understand all procedures and experiment details. The [first workshop](#) was held in the Netherlands in May 2016. The preparation phase will also include referee and staff training sessions, the installation of systems, "offline" tests to help with training in the use of the video replay systems and "live" experiments, which will take place in friendly matches initially.

The experiments are expected to start in 2016 and there will be two phases.

- Phase 1: use of the VARs in season one ("offline" experiments initially and then "live" experiments at a time agreed by The IFAB and competition organisers, which is not expected before 2017). Following a review of phase 1, The IFAB and FIFA will look to further optimise the protocol for phase 2 (if required based on the findings from phase 1). The results from phase 1 and a potentially updated protocol are due to be presented at the 131st IFAB AGM in February/March 2017.
- Phase 2: use of the VARs in season two. The results from phase 2 and a final report are due to be presented at the 132nd IFAB AGM in February/March 2018.

When could we expect a decision from The IFAB on whether or not to introduce video assistant referees officially in football?

The decision could be taken in 2018 at the earliest or in 2019 at the latest.

Where can people find more information?

A short summary and explanation of the experiments can be found on www.fifa.com/quality and detailed information will be available once all experiments have been set up on www.theifab.com.