

PGMOL & The FSA VAR Working Group Meeting Summary 27th October 2021, Zoom

Attendees: The FSA: Neil Dady, Wolves 1877 Trust
Steve Moulds, Foxes Trust
Tony Scholes, Burnley Supporters' Groups
Jane Hughes, The FSA
PGMOL: Adam Gale-Watts

Apologies: Mike Riley, PGMOL

Both The FSA & PGMOL acknowledged the value of these meetings and the importance of establishing a continuing dialogue.

Recent VAR decisions

Several recent VAR reviews were discussed (2nd – 24th October), and clarification sought on the processes involved:

- The two most recent red card reviews were accepted as correct decisions (examples discussed, Ward-Prowse and Pogba red cards)
- If there is uncertainty to a player's identity the on-field referee can ask VAR to confirm the identity of a player before a yellow card is given
- On-field and post-match communication can be improved to explain why a yellow card not a red card was given (Saiss foul on Raphina, Leeds vs Wolves)
- There must be a strong connection between the goal and any 'clear and obvious' error for a decision to be reviewed
- VAR is correctly alerting the referee to incidents that directly influence a goal (Benteke disallowed goal, Crystal Palace vs Newcastle)
- Disallowed goals: There is no limit to the number of passes or amount of time involved in how far back VAR can review an attacking phase of play (APP), but the further a check / review goes back the clearer and more serious the error must be (Werner disallowed goal, Chelsea vs Norwich). Feedback from the clubs suggests that their preference is to keep this window as small as possible and only review things that directly impact on that phase of play.
- VAR must assess if any such error was sufficiently evident to require the referee to overturn a goal
- VAR will not overrule a decision if they feel intervention would not significantly differ from the on-field decision

- The exaggeration of contact is causing concern amongst fans
- Mutual contact is considered in the context of the game and the incident, as are the motivation of the attacker and the actions of the defender
- There are clear areas that VAR can intervene in. For example, VAR protocols do not allow for a corner to be overruled to a goal kick or vice versa
- The time taken to make decisions is causing frustration for fans. Given that there are technical issues, infrastructure problems at grounds and the need to not disrupt the flow of the game, indicating when a VAR review is in progress and for which incident would be beneficial.

Improvements / changes to In-Stadium Communication

- Fans see the use of the pitch side monitor by the on-field referee as an improvement and are more accepting of VAR checks/reviews when it is factual. For Example, off-side, goalkeeper movement
- There is an issue with how match going fans are informed about VAR decisions. For example, Manchester United fans do not feel that in stadium communication is effective at Old Trafford
- A delay in a match provides an opportunity for information to be shared on the screen, i.e., during red card or penalty incidents. It is much more difficult to use the screens if the match is ongoing
- There is still work to done to improve in-stadium communication
- New technologies are under constant review. It is important that any such technologies employed to assist on-field officials seek not to disrupt the enjoyment of the live game experience for match-going fans
- Communication is key. Not everyone will agree, but it is important that fans understand how a decision was reached.

Action: The FSA to consult members on how well decisions are communicated in stadiums, which decisions are not and how each PL club communicates VAR checks / reviews to match going fans to feedback at the next meeting.

AOB

- If missiles are thrown onto the pitch, it would be included in an Extraordinary Match Report by the on-field officials. No physical evidence is required for the incident to be included in the report.