Context for research

Contentious decisions have, throughout the years, often caused the ‘Technology in Football’ debate to rear its head. Some famous examples include Geoff Hurst’s goal to give England a 3-2 lead in extra time in the 1966 World Cup final, and it’s hard to forget Frank Lampard’s disallowed goal against Germany in 2010. Domestically, Roy Carroll’s ‘over-the-shoulder’ fumble for Manchester United against Tottenham in 2005 and John Eustace’s own-goal-that-never-was for Watford against Reading in 2008 are excellent examples. Even more can be found on a list compiled by Sky Sports entitled ‘Ghost Goals’, and there are numerous websites dedicated to the subject – further demonstrating the current fascination with the topic in the footballing world. More recently, Luis Suarez apparently handled the ball before scoring Liverpool’s winning goal against Mansfield – if technology had been implemented, we may have seen a historic giant-killing.

Whilst this controversy rumbles on in the world of football, other sports have pro-actively adopted technological advances. Tennis, Rugby (League and Union), American Football, Cricket, Baseball and Basketball have worked technology in to their sports in some guise – and admittedly with different levels of success and with different systems of implementation.

Given these facts, we at DJS Research Ltd thought the time was right to test the water, and conduct research with football fans to gauge their opinions on introducing technology. This report gives a detailed discussion of those findings and how they may impact the sport in the future.

Our approach

We carried out research via an online survey to allow us cost-effective access to a wide-range of football fans. In order to collect a diversity of opinions and reassure respondents, the survey was hosted on DJS Research’s own internal system and was distributed via recognised footballing websites and groups, utilising both their static websites and social media presence, as well as through word of mouth on social media.

The survey was around 5 minutes in length and was generally quantitative in nature. Individuals were given the chance to add any additional comments at the end, and most chose to do so. Some of these verbatim comments are included in this report to add more detail and provide a deeper level of understanding to the quantitative findings.

Please note that due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100% in all cases.
Predominantly male, young; around a fifth held season tickets who we spoke to – demographics

We achieved a total of 251 responses to the survey. Of these, 78% were male, and 22% were female. This is broadly in line with the ‘Football League Supporters Survey’ carried out in 2010, in which a large majority of respondents were male.

In terms of age, the largest single group of respondents we spoke to were aged 18-24 (38%). Almost a third were aged 25-34 (29%) and 18% were 35-44. Only a minority of respondents were aged over 45, falling in to 45-54 (8%), 55-64 (5%), 65+ (1%) respectively.

We achieved a relatively even spread in terms of household income. Around a fifth (17%) of respondents had a household income of £0-14,999; with a similar number (18%) stating their household income to be £15,000-24,999; a quarter (26%) stated their income was £25,000-49,999 and a fifth (22%) said they earned £50,000 or more. Just fewer than a fifth (17%) did not provide an indication of their household income.

Our survey was open to a global base of respondents, and we received at least one response from every major continent except South America. Two thirds (67%) of those answering the survey were from England, with nearly a tenth (9%) residing elsewhere in the UK. Slightly more (11%) respondents lived in Europe but not in the UK. Representation outside Europe was highest in North America (4%) and Australasia (4%); with a further 3% living in Asia and 2% residing in Africa.

The survey asked respondents a wide-range of questions about their involvement in football in order to understand if individuals who enjoy the game in different formats (playing, watching live, watching on television) or who rely on it for different things (gambling, enjoyment) differ in their support for technology. These more detailed findings are outlined later in the report. However, at this stage, we felt it necessary to outline the number of season ticket holders and which teams respondents supported in order to add additional detail to qualitative statements.

Overall, fewer than a fifth (17%) of respondents held a season ticket for any football team. These were split between those who held season tickets for a Premiership team (11%), a team in the Championship, League 1 or League 2 (2%) and a non-league team (3%) respectively.

*Available at: http://www.football-league.co.uk/staticFiles/65/51/0,,10794~151909,00.pdf*

This survey put female respondents at 3,142 out of a total of 36,822.
Manchester Utd, Manchester City, Liverpool, Arsenal, Chelsea & Leeds well represented

Who we spoke to – season ticket status & team supported

We received views from respondents who supported a wide-range of teams, shown below. The larger the text, the more times that team was mentioned. Respondents were allowed to mention more than one team, although few did so. The top image shows all teams mentioned, the lower image has had those teams mentioned the most removed to make some of the less popular more legible.

Fig. 1 – all teams supported

Fig. 2 – most mentioned teams removed
Vast majority support idea of technology in football

The results – technology in football

The results suggest that football fans would like to see the introduction of technology in some guise. The vast majority (72%) felt that officials should have control of technology when it is used, with around one in twenty (7%) feeling managers should be in control and only 2% stating that on-field captains should be in control. An additional 4% wanted to see technology introduced, but in another way – common suggestions involved geo-tagging the football itself, or post-game video reviews. Although a relatively small number (15%) of fans did not want to see technology introduced in to the game in any form, they were the largest single group after those who wished to see technology managed by officials.

Do you think football would benefit from the introduction of technology?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>85</td>
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</table>

“I believe that goal line technology would ruin the spirit of the game.”
Manchester United FC

“Really feel strongly that there should be at the very least some form of goal line technology...”
Tottenham Hotspur FC

“Technology will slow the game down; no need for it.”
Tottenham Hotspur FC

“Could avoid wrong decisions being made – especially in important matches...”
No Team Stated

“I don’t like when technology is used in football. It should stay human!”
FC Basel

BASE: All Respondents (251)
Officials considered best option to be responsible for technology

The results – technology in football

“Technology may become vital as the quality of the game is beginning to deteriorate due to poor decisions.”
Manchester City FC

“Retrospective video decisions for diving.”
Southampton FC

“I would suggest something similar to Tennis where the manager can throw in a flag to ask for the replay, each manager is given 3 flags…”
Tottenham Hotspur FC

“Goal line tech in form of a microchip/sensors.”
No Team Stated

“I would like to see an adaptation of the American Football system, each manager would be allowed to challenge decisions by throwing a flag to alert the 4th official, the next time play was stopped the challenged decision would be reviewed and overturned…”
Hibernian FC

“Review tennis style with Captains allowed 5 appeals per half…”
Charlton Athletic FC/Valencia CF

“I feel technology could improve and support the decisions made by the match officials and gives them backing against the media, club managers/players and fans a like. Too many times match officials have been accused – for example Mark Clattenburg & Chelsea FC situation.”
Arsenal FC

Who should control the technology?

- Officials (%)
- Managers (%)
- Captains (%)
- Other (%)

BASE: All Respondents
Saying Technology Would Benefit Football (213)

85
Goal-line technology a concern for almost all who are pro-technology

The results – technology in football

The results suggest that the key priority for the majority of fans is to ensure that when the ball crosses the line it is given as a goal. There appears to be much less consensus about other aspects of the use of technology, and qualitative statements around fouls, penalties and off the ball incidents make reference to issues with slowing down the game, or limiting the human/judgement elements within it.

In which scenarios would you like to see technology used?

![Bar chart showing percentages of respondents]

“OK for technology to be used on whether the ball crossed the line but don’t want the human error factor taken out of the game to the extreme that every incident is reviewed.”

Liverpool FC

“I would be comfortable with technology being used in matters of fact, such as offside, not decisions of opinion, such as fouls and/or diving.”

Norwich City FC

Base: all respondents saying technology would benefit football (213); multiple responses allowed
More than two thirds had played football at some point in the past

The results – interaction with football & view on technology

The majority of respondents have played football at some point in their life – a quarter (24%) are currently playing 11-a-side football, with over two-fifths (45%) having played at some point prior. The remaining third (31%) had never played football.

There were no notable differences in likelihood to favour technology based on whether or not an individual had ever played the game.

Do you, or have you ever, played organised 11-a-side football yourself?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Respondents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24  45  31

BASE: All Respondents (251)
Majority watched 0-10 hours of football per week

The results – interaction with football & view on technology

We asked respondents the following question to gauge how much football related television they watched each week:

On average, how much football do you watch on television per week? Please include highlights (i.e. Match of the Day), punditry (i.e. Soccer Saturday) and news/entertainment (i.e. Soccer AM).

Of the 251 respondents who make up this report, the majority (71%) watch between 0-10 hours of football related programming per week. A tenth watched between 11-15 hours and one in twenty (4%) watched 16-20 hours. A similar proportion (5%) watched more than 20 hours of football related television a week.

On average, how much football do you watch on television per week? (Hours)
Officials widely viewed as best option for controlling technology

The results – interaction with football & view on technology

The chart below clearly demonstrates that the majority of fans across the board support the introduction of technology in the hands of officials. It also suggests that those at the extremes of televised football consumption are more likely to be against the use of technology in the game. Indeed, among those fans who watch more than twenty hours a week, a sizeable minority are anti-technology.

Those watching fewer hours of football are more open to managers and captains taking control of technology should it be introduced. Verbatim comments from these individuals suggest they watch other sports (perhaps hence fewer hours watching football) and favour a managerial challenge system.

On average, how much football do you watch on television per week? (Hours)/who should control technology?

“[I believe captains should have 2/3 challenges per match which if correct carry over.]” Manchester United FC

“A challenge system like in American Football or Tennis. That way the referees could make a decision and managers could challenge it if they felt it was incorrect.” Leeds United AFC

BASE: All Respondents (251)
Around a quarter attend more than once a month

The results – interaction with football & view on technology

Of the 251 respondents which make up this report, a fifth (20%) never attend professional football matches live (i.e. at the stadium). A further fifth (19%) attend one game a year, with an additional two fifths (37%) attending a few games a year - the largest single grouping. A tenth (10%) attended once a month, with the same proportion going to a live game at least once a week. One in twenty (4%) respondents went to watch live matches multiple times each week.

It should be noted here that the fans who never attended a football game, watch no football television and have never played the game do not represent a homogenous group, and thus their opinion is valid as they have at least some knowledge or experience of the game.

How often do you attend professional football matches live?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>% Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once A Year</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Few Times A Year</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once A Month</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once A Week</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Than Once A Week</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BASE: All Respondents (251)
Those attending live games once a week or more are more likely to be anti-tech

The results – interaction with football & view on technology

Our research suggests that fans are slightly more likely to be anti-technology if they attend football matches more often than once a week. That said, this data must come with the caveat that the small sample size for some of the breaks makes it difficult to come to any definite conclusions, it should be seen as an indicative set of results warranting further investigation rather than a definitive set of findings.

Still, considering both this data and that pertaining to hours of televised football watched, it could be suggested that the most ‘committed’ fans (in terms of hours spent watching football at least) are more likely to be against the use of technology. If this is indeed the case (further research would be needed), it creates a difficult decision for football’s governing bodies - whether to go with the vast majority of fans, or to try and cater more towards the smaller number of individuals who perhaps spend more money, or are more demonstrably passionate.

How often do you attend football matches live?/Who should control technology?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>% Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once A Year</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few Times A Year</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once A Month</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once A Week</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Than Once A Week</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BASE: All Respondents (251)
Majority are positive about officials’ performance on balance

The results – interaction with football & view on technology

Of the 251 respondents who make up this report, three quarters (73%) felt positive about referees’ ability to do their job. A further fifth (21%) felt that referees were neither good nor bad at their job, with only one in twenty (6%) feeling that on balance referees did a ‘bad’ or ‘terrible’ job of officiating on match days.

On balance, how well do you think professional referees generally do their job?

“For me this is far more important than goal line technology. Players have effectively changed the way referees act and handle situations and technology can help referees in the long run. In saying that, referees should also be more educated in the sports mechanics side of the game, how people fall from a challenge, the way they fall, the way they act. Referees are too easily manipulated in the modern day game.”

Glasgow Rangers FC

BASE: All Respondents (251)
Little difference in views on technology in context of view on officials

The results – interaction with football & view on technology

Respondents’ opinions on the performance of referees appears to have little influence on their thoughts about technology in the game. Again, due to the small number of respondents who said ‘Bad’ or ‘Terrible’ these figures should be treated with caution, although the fact that four in five of those who said ‘Terrible’ elected to give the power of technology to officials certainly seems to make sense.

On balance, how well do you think professional referees generally do their job? /Who should control technology?

“Referee’s in this country aren’t up to the task and favour certain teams. For as long as I can remember there have been controversial decisions every week, technology will eliminate this problem. Also people in the game, for example managers, lose their jobs as a result of decisions during a game.”

Manchester City FC

BASE: All Respondents (251)
**Viewers of other sports with technology statistically less likely to be anti-tech**

**The results – engagement with other sports & view on technology**

Our research shows that those who interact with other sports which utilise technology in one way or another evidently feel that football can benefit through its introduction in some form. As has been true throughout this report, most respondents would give control of technology to the match officials. However, those who do not watch any of those technology heavy sports are statistically more than twice as likely to be against the introduction of technology in to football.

**Do you regularly watch or follow any of the following sports?**

**/Who should control technology?**

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“*I have played and followed Rugby Union and appreciate the value that a 4th match official can add to the control of a game leading onto the balance of a season through immediate review and subsequent citing for foul play post match. Most sports have become faster in the Pro era and it is hard for on ground officials to capture all events.*”

Manchester United

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**BASE: All Respondents (251)**
Gambling has little impact on views towards technology or who controls it

The results – football gambling & view on technology

The final structured question of the survey asked respondents whether or not they had recently gambled on professional football. Our respondents were slightly more likely to not have gambled in the last month, with 39% saying they had gambled on football in the last month, and 61% stating that they had not.

Gamblers were very slightly more likely to support officials being given control of technology in football, and were very marginally less likely to be against technology. In the interim version of this report, it was suggested that those who gambled on football would be more likely to support the introduction of technology in football – as the right decision was of financial significance. This does not appear to have been the case.

Have you gambled on football in the last month? /Who should control technology?

![Bar chart showing the percentage of respondents who gambled in the last month and who they believe should control technology.]

BASE: All Respondents (251)
Need for further research

The results – ‘commitment’ & view on technology

The charts below illustrate the difference between those who watch and attend football matches more regularly, and those who only watch football, compared to those who are less ‘committed’.

Due to some small base sizes resulting from cutting the data at this level, it must be noted that only the figures for ‘sports followed or supported’ (far right hand column) are valid statistically. However, there are indicative differences in the number of respondents who are anti-technology in the groups who watch at least some football television and who attend at least some games in person.

In all three cases, individuals who could be considered more ‘committed’ to football appear more likely to be anti-technology – in the case of sports followed or supported, those who are more football-focussed are more than twice as likely to be anti-technology.

‘Commitment’/who should control technology?

[Bar chart showing the distribution of respondents based on hours of football TV viewed, games attended, and sports followed or supported, categorized by level of commitment and attitudes towards technology.]
Conclusions – technology a way to support, not replace, human officials

Conclusions – technology in football

First among the conclusions of this report must be that further research would certainly be of benefit. Still, there is much to take from our data and some potentially very interesting avenues of enquiry have been exposed.

Key among these is the fact that scoring goals, and seeing that they are given, is the key driver behind fans wanting to see the introduction of technology – 94% of fans who supported the introduction of technology stated that this is a scenario in which they would like to see it used. Football is a game based on scoring, and this at least has been verified by the research.

Of more concern to many of football’s key stakeholders is the potential for more ‘committed’ fans - those who watch more football at games and on the television, and those who do not follow other sports - to be more likely to be anti-technology than their counterparts.

If this is indeed the case, football’s governing bodies may be torn between going with the majority of fans, who certainly support the introduction of technology based on the above data, or giving more ‘value’ to the opinions of those fans who are more ‘committed’. It could be argued that those fans who pay for weekly tickets, and watch live football on television (generating revenue for clubs and bodies such as the FA through selling broadcast rights) should have more of say than individuals who rarely attend games and only watch Match of the Day on a Saturday night. That said, it may be that introducing technology would encourage some fans to watch and attend more games which would be perceived as fairer – although that is outside the scope of this report.

Nevertheless, there are certainly some positive findings in the above report. That three quarters (73%) of fans felt that, on balance, match officials did a ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ job is surely something about which they should be proud. Our qualitative findings (extracts appended to this report) also suggest that many fans are aware that referees’ jobs are becoming increasingly difficult as players simulate contact, or teams crowd them. The arrival of slow-motion replays has also led to decisions which have to be made in a matter of seconds at full-speed, being replayed and dissected numerous times from different angles. Taken as a whole, the findings of this research suggest that fans recognise the value of human officials, and see technology as a way to support them rather than replace them.
Technology would be a great attribute to add to the game. But it should be limited to a number of ‘challenges’ as in tennis. People would much rather the game be halted for a few minutes and the correct decision reached.

If technology starts being used for one thing, people will soon be complaining about it being needed for another aspect of the game. I’d rather focus on stopping players diving by punishing them retrospectively if it is beyond all reasonable doubt that they dived. Giving them bans will make them think twice about doing it again. Once players themselves start acting with respect, responsibility and honesty on the pitch I’m sure the referees will get more things ‘right’.

Football is a sport that doesn’t have the natural stoppages that sports like Rugby and Cricket have therefore I believe you can’t compare the technology they use with that which would be beneficial to football.

Given the falling cost of tech it’s not impossible that goal line tech could be used at levels well below pro football in the future which helps to keep the game “the same” at all levels.

I feel technology should be used in decisions that can win or lose games: goal-line technology and penalty appeals. I think reviews should be made instantly and at the referee’s discretion.

I feel technology could improve and support the decisions made by the Match Officials and gives them backing against the media, club managers/players and fans alike.

The FA need to be harder on all the drama that accompanies the game. In no other sport are officials so challenged and abused.

Just leave game as it is as everything evens out in long run. You get some decisions and don’t get some – those moaning are just blinkered and can’t understand rules.

I do not believe that technology should go further than goal-line technology, but that goal-line technology is necessary. It is a simple yes-no question which does not lend itself to interpretation, unlike other incidents.
About DJS Research Ltd: sports market research experience

About DJS Research Ltd – Our sports experience

DJS Research Ltd has conducted research for and on behalf of several major clients in the sports and recreation sector including ASICS, Chelsea FC and the National Sports Development Association.

Matt Bristow is a key member of our sports research team, although Alasdair Gleed and Charlotte Sykes also have vast experience in this area. Matt has 9 years research experience, gained as a consultant for other leading research firms as well as DJS Research Ltd. He therefore has a strong background in sports research, including increasing participation, feasibility studies, branding, opinion polling and new product development among others. Since joining DJS Research in 2011, Matt has worked on a range of projects and has led the development of our sports research offer.

He is skilled in and comfortable with the full range of research techniques and is an experienced group moderator and depth interviewer. He has also managed quantitative projects across the full range of modes utilising analytic tools such as segmentation, conjoint and modelling.

Matt has worked with numerous sporting bodies and organisations, including The FA, Sport England, Sport Scotland, Lancashire County Cricket Club, Premiership Rugby and the England 2018 Football World Cup bid.

Matt has also worked extensively with more than twenty Local Authorities carrying out research relating to sport and sports uptake.
About DJS Research Ltd: wider market research experience & contact details

About DJS Research Ltd – our wider offer

DJS Research Ltd is a full-service market research agency with clients in the public, private and third sectors. The company operates in the UK and internationally, having conducted research projects in over 70 countries and across the full-range of industry sectors. DJS Research Ltd are approved suppliers for a host of industry leading institutions, including:

- The British Council
- The Competition Commission
- learndirect
- OFWAT
- Severn Trent Water
- Engineering UK
- National Archives

The agency have individual memberships with several industry associations, and is a Company Partner of the Market Research Society.

If you would like to speak to a member of our team, please call +44 (0) 1663 767 857 or email esimmonds@djsresearch.com Alternatively, you can visit our corporate website at www.djsresearch.co.uk. We regularly carry out pro bono research in to a range of topics. If you would like to suggest a topic for research, please feel free to do so.