

Insights

TECHNOLOGY TAKES CENTRE STAGE AT UEFA EUROS 2024

DIGITAL SPEAKS SERIES / SUMMER OF SPORTS TECH / EURO 2024

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SUMMARY

The UEFA Euro 2024 men's competition is reaching the business end of the tournament, with teams from across the continent battling it out in the knock-out stages to be crowned champion of Europe.

In the second instalment of our Euros series ([please see our article on the use of IP at Euro 2024](#)), we are focusing on the advanced technology being used at the tournament - such as the deployment of connected ball technology and semi-automated offside technology to expedite the review process and improve the accuracy of VAR (Video Assistant Referee).

BACKGROUND

VAR has been mired in controversy since its introduction, with initial debates centring on concerns about its disruption to the natural flow of the game and negatively impacting upon the fan experience.

Irrespective of those debates, VAR is undeniably here to stay. The pressing question now is: how we do improve efficacy and the interaction between the technology and the officiator. Euro 2024 exemplifies the technological advancements in play to upgrade VAR's accuracy and transparency.

CONNECTED BALL TECHNOLOGY

The match-balls rolled out at Euro 2024 embed a motion-sensing microchip, transmitting ball data 500 times per second. The technology inside the ball is equivalent to the 'snickometer' technology used in cricket, whereby the external force to the ball is presented in the form of a heartbeat-like graph that spikes when a ball clips a bat. In football, this translates to detecting ball contact with a body part, particularly helpful for handball claims, which the connected ball technology registers within approximately two milliseconds. The images and results then appear for the VAR and referee

to review, as well as being made available to viewers to enhance the drive for transparency in officiating.

Tournament officials have stated how sophisticated the technology is in providing precise and advanced information on every touch, and consequently improving the speed, accuracy and insight of VAR decision making.

SEMI-AUTOMATED OFFSIDE TECHNOLOGY

Euro 2024 is also using semi-automated offside technology (SAOT) and goal-line technology. SAOT employs 10 specialized cameras in each of the host stadiums to track 29 body points on each player, able to determine offside positioning within half a second and to aid and enhance VAR decision making.

Meanwhile, goal-line technology has ended debate over marginal calls, and – we hope - glaring oversights. Some reading may remember Frank Lampard's 'ghost goal' in the 2010 FIFA World Cup tournament, and technology should make the debate of whether a ball has crossed the line a thing of the past. Seven cameras are used per goal to notify referees instantly if the ball has entirely crossed the line. With these technological improvements, debates over marginal calls are ending, and indeed enhancing arguments for the benefit of VAR in producing an equitable and fair end result.

WEARABLES

Wearables have long been part of elite sport and player management, providing essential data to help measure and personalise training, load-management, injury prevention, recovery, rehabilitation and performance. Some eagle-eyed England supporters will have spotted that the England squad are wearing smart rings this summer, which are designed to be worn 24/7 to collate 360 degree data – although they are perhaps proving to be an item too far for match day uniform, with the more traditional tracking vests being used to collect match data for each player. This is a fast developing area of sport which goes beyond the tournament, and football in general, of course – but it is fascinating to see what teams are doing to gain a competitive advantage.

FINAL WHISTLE

The integration of connected ball technology, SAOT and goal-line technology at Euro 2024 aims to enhance the accuracy and transparency of VAR decisions. These innovations address criticisms of VAR by providing precise and timely information, ultimately improving the integrity of the game.

UP NEXT

As exciting as it is to see technology play its part in developing the game, in our next article in the series, we look at the repercussions of when the technology does fail and more specifically what

options athletes and teams have in challenging decisions made by VAR. Stay tuned!

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MEET THE TEAM



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