

Levelling the technological playing field by Stuart Fuller

In 2013 British-based company Hawk-Eye were awarded the contract to provide goal line technology at all Premier League grounds as well as a number of other English stadiums after a unanimous vote by the 20 Premier League chairman to introduce the system. There was no one compelling event, rather a catalogue of incidents, including the infamous Frank Lampard effort in the 2010 World Cup game against Germany, which led to their introduction. The cost, depending on what you read and who you believe, was to be borne by the clubs themselves at a cost of £250,000 which included a mandatory fee to be paid to FIFA...of course FIFA.

The first match to use the Sony-owned Hawk-Eye goal-line technology was Eastleigh versus A.F.C. Totton in the Hampshire Senior Cup final at St Mary's Stadium, home of Southampton FC in May 2013. Since then it has been used to rule on over twenty contentious decisions, each one being correctly called as a goal. Whilst the cost for the clubs was high, each goal in the Premier League in 2013/14 was worth £915,000 according to analysts Sporting Intelligence. Now that's some return on investment.

I don't think we will be seeing such technology at The Dripping Pan anytime soon. But we do have technology on offer of our own. By videoing games, such as the deal we have with Football Exclusives, we are able to use any footage to submit to the FA as part of an appeal against any red cards. We aren't alone in using video. Three weeks ago when the Rooks travelled to AFC Hornchurch, the Urchins right back, Junior Luke, was shown a straight red for a challenge on Tom Davis. Hornchurch had been filming the game and submitted the footage and on appeal the red card was rescinded. Obviously it has no bearing on the result in question but at least Luke was available for the relegation six pointer with Harrow Borough.

But is using video as part of an appeal fair if not all of the clubs have access to it? In the game at VCD Athletic two weeks ago, Jack Rowe-Hurst was given a straight red for "denying a clear goal-scoring opportunity" when the ball struck his hand. He wasn't the last man, nor was he on the line. It could even be argued that the ball wasn't even goal-bound. But the important fact was that no-one was filming the game. And with no video evidence there can be no appeal. So essentially we have one rule for one (or many) team and one for the rest.

Perhaps when the fabled Premier League TV money slowly drips down to the Non-Leagues it could be used to provide all clubs with the ability to video their own games which in turn could be used to right some of the wrongs dished out by officials that we seem to experience on an all-too frequent basis at the moment.