

# A BRIEF LOOK AT THE USE OF VIDEO REPLAY IN OFFICIATING SPORTS

Adam Geller, University of British Columbia



90:00  
2:11 +5

MC

4 | 3

TOT

(4-4)

Manchester City  
(light blue), are  
losing, but win if  
they score a goal



# VIDEO REVIEW



# WHAT IS VIDEO REVIEW?

AKA Video Replay, Instant Replay, TMO, VAR, etc...

Allows officials to re-watch a play to either make or change a decision

Nowadays common in pretty much every major sport (and many not so major sports)



# HOW DOES VIDEO REVIEW HELP?

More angles (sometimes better angles too)

Able to combine

Slow motion, freezeframing, and zooming



# WHEN WAS VIDEO REVIEW INTRODUCED?

Depends on the sport

First introduced to Gridiron (American) Football in 1986 (though many hiccups)

Over sports have slowly adopted it over time

- 1996/2001: Rugby League/Union
- 2012: Fencing
- 2016-2018: Association Football (Soccer)



# VIDEO REVIEW MECHANICS



Flavors	Gridiron Football	Rugby	Fencing	Association Football
Head Referee Reviews Video				
Head Referee Makes Final Decision				
Video Assistants Can Recommend Review				
Competitors Can “Challenge”				
What is open for review				
Automatic Reviewing				
How is Video Replay Used to Make Decisions				

# GRIDIRON FOOTBALL (NFL) VIDEO REVIEW MECHANICS

Governed by Rule 15 [1], 4 pages of details and procedures

“All Replay Reviews will be conducted by the Senior Vice President of Officiating or [their] designee. Reviews are conducted in consultation with the Replay Official and the Referee, who will have access to a field-level video monitor.”



[1] <https://operations.nfl.com/media/4693/2020-nfl-rulebook.pdf>



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# CHALLENGES (ALSO SOMETIMES CALLED VIDEO APPEALS)

In most sports, teams are limited to a certain number of challenges a game

NFL: 2 challenges (plus a third if first two were “correct”)

Use a red flag



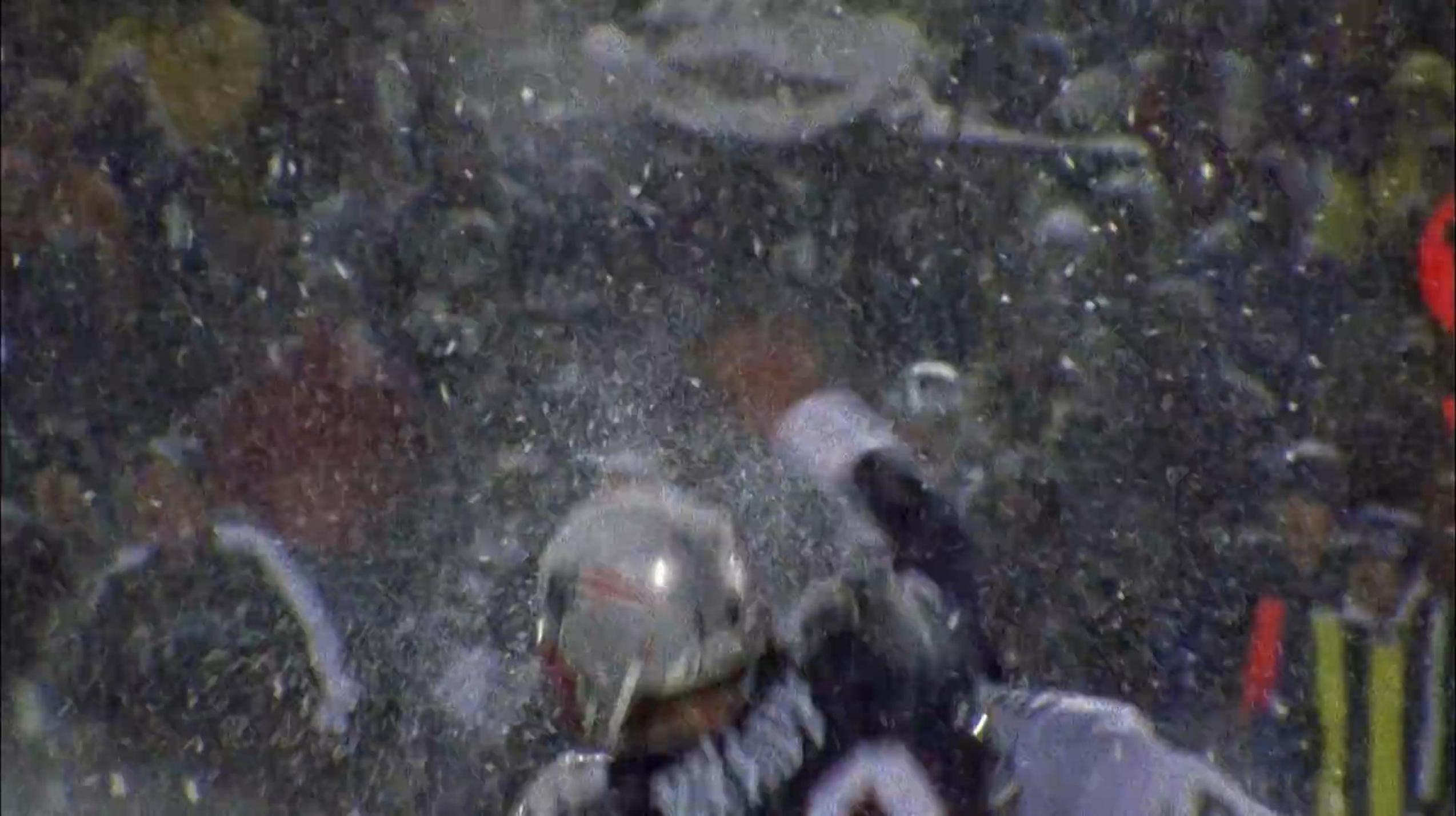


FOX NFL



# BOTTLEGATE – 2001





# VIDEO REVIEW CHANGES HOW CALLS ARE MADE

In Gridiron Football (NFL), the foremost example is the catch rule



14 4TH 19

CIN 24  
NE 38 1:06 4TH FOX SPORTS



#SOUND FX



Sound FX

# RUGBY (UNION) VIDEO REVIEW MECHANICS

Governed by TMO Global Trial Protocol [1]

- The TMO is a tool to help referees and assistant referees. The referee should not be subservient to the system. The referee is responsible for managing the TMO process
- The referee is the decision-maker and must remain in charge of the game
- Any relevant information taken into consideration must be CLEAR and OBVIOUS and in the context of materiality
- The application of the TMO system must be credible and consistent, protecting the image of the game.



[1] [https://resources.world.rugby/worldrugby/document/2020/12/15/cf9ee13c-6ebb-4f3e-9606-2f60cbe2b94e/TMO\\_Trial\\_From\\_August\\_2019\\_EN.pdf](https://resources.world.rugby/worldrugby/document/2020/12/15/cf9ee13c-6ebb-4f3e-9606-2f60cbe2b94e/TMO_Trial_From_August_2019_EN.pdf)

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2nd 41:59  
RUGBY  
2007 ENG 3 9 RSA







# VIDEO REVIEW CHANGES HOW CALLS ARE MADE

In Rugby, an example is the rule determine what counts as grounding



# DEMO



# FENCING (ESCRIME) VIDEO REVIEW MECHANICS

Governed by t.60-t.62

“In the case of an appeal for video-refereeing, the referee will walk over to the video consultant, they will watch the video together and after having analyzed the action, the referee will give [their] final decision.”



Reviews can happen in many ways

1. At the referee's initiative
2. At the request of the athlete
3. In case of a tied score, before the decisive hit
4. At the video consultant's request

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# CHALLENGES (ALSO SOMETIMES CALLED VIDEO APPEALS)

NFL: 2 challenges (plus a third if first two were “correct”)

Use a red flag

Fencing: up to 2 incorrect challenges

Gesture indicates request for review





OMEGA  
UP  
28 01 28

London 2012

JPN  JAPAN 28  
Y. OTA 6

1:58  
6/9

28  
3  
ITALY  ITA  
A. CASSARA



# VIDEO REVIEW CHANGES HOW CALLS ARE MADE

In Fencing, calls are generally a lot tighter with video review



# ASSOCIATION FOOTBALL (SOCCER) VIDEO REVIEW MECHANICS

Governed by FIFA Standard for VAR [1,2]

## Steps

1. Incident Occurs
2. Review and advice
3. Decision or action is taken

For interpretations, head referee must review

For factual decisions, VAR can advise without head referee review



[1] <https://football-technology.fifa.com/en/media-tiles/video-assistant-referee-var/>

[2] <https://football-technology.fifa.com/en/media-tiles/var-process/>

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SYD

2 - 1

MCY

FT



FT - SYDNEY FC 2-1 MELBOURNE CITY

#FOXFOOTBALL

YELLOW CARDS: MCY 3 SYD 0 RED CARDS: SYD 1 MCY 0

# VIDEO REVIEW: ASSOCIATION FOOTBALL EXAMPLE



# VIDEO REVIEW CHANGES HOW CALLS ARE MADE

In Association Football, this includes offsides and handballs





AJA 0-0

04:50



# BACKLASH AND CRITICISMS

WARNING: HEARSAY AND ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE



# SLOWS DOWN THE GAME

The major complaint about VAR in Association Football

This has been a big complaint in every sport, but they've all dealt with it in different ways

NFL – Restricted time to review plays, using tablets so referees

Rugby – Use only when necessary

Fencing – Restricted time to review plays

Association Football – More assistant referees



# NO CORRECT DECISIONS

A lack of ground truth can make decisions appear random

Sometimes it's impossible to make everyone happy

Solutions:

NFL – All replays conducted by league office in New York for consistency

Rugby, Fencing – Not really a problem

Association Football – Tried changing rules



# MORE FRUSTRATING WHEN DECISIONS ARE WRONG

With the help of replay, referees should be making correct decisions

Especially frustrating when “correct” decisions are reversed



# THE EGO PROBLEM

Some referees refuse to admit mistakes

... Or at least, it can look that way

## Solution

NFL – Officials making the initial call do not make decisions on review

Rugby – Used before making a final decision, so not an issue

Fencing – Phase out refs who will not change calls

Association Football – No solution



## DIFFICULTY OF “RESETTING”

If you stop the play incorrectly, how easy is it to reset play?

NFL – Trivial, but can severely disadvantage one team

Rugby – Easy, but can somewhat disadvantage one team

Fencing – Trivial, very rarely will disadvantage a fencer

Association Football – Difficult, often disadvantages one team





FOX NFL

SAINTS

1-0

3

RAMS

1-0

3

2nd

6:14

10

3rd & 7



HERE'S A PICTURE OF SOCRATES TO END ON

