

Is the release of VAR audio the solution to controversial refereeing in the Premier League?

The recent Monday Night Football broadcast of Leicester City v Liverpool on Sky Sports featured a moment of history. In the pre-match build-up, PGMOL chief refereeing officer Howard Webb joined the show and shared audio of conversations between match officials and Video Assistant Referees (VARs) during various key incidents in matches this season.

It's the first time the public has ever been given access to the inner workings of referee communications in the Premier League, and it's fair to say that the audio clips certainly gave a keen insight into how decisions are reached between on-field referees and VARs.



Webb showed some incidents where the correct decision was clear and obvious, and also an incident where the VAR had failed to follow the correct process to reach a decision, showcasing how VAR intervention works well and also when it doesn't.

The footage certainly painted officials in a slightly different light, but it's unclear whether regular release of audio around contentious decisions would have an impact in terms of how referees are perceived by football supporters.

In an age where football has never mattered more, both financially and in terms of global popularity, it's more important than ever that referees are making the right decisions the vast majority of the time. The statistics show that the overwhelming majority of decisions made by officials are the correct ones, but it's the occasions where they get things wrong that cause a lot of hysteria.

Those who love the game, and analyse the [sports betting UK](#), just want to see a game free from controversial moments, but

that is a difficult goal to achieve.

Webb's mission is to create a more open and transparent PGMOL, so it will be interesting to see if sharing match audio becomes a regular feature in the Premier League. It's been another season where controversy has reigned, and you feel that a change in approach could benefit referees moving forward.

"We made a commitment to be more transparent," [said Webb](#). "We know and recognise that people want more information about refereeing processes, particularly with the advent of VAR.

"We want to show spectators what goes into making the decisions on the field and then how the VAR works as well. We've got a professional group of officials working hard to have a positive impact on the game."

There will always be a vocal minority who abuse referees and seem incapable of understanding that match officials are human, and will inevitably make mistakes.

Allowing us to hear the referees' thought process and the way the team of officials communicate could help to humanise them, potentially leading to a reduction in the levels of abuse referees receive, and a more positive view of match officials altogether.

We're now more than five years into the VAR experiment, and there's no getting away from the fact it's here to stay. While many fans feel that its usage is still clunky, and disrupts the flow of the game, you only need to think back to the chaos at the 2018 World Cup to see how far VAR has come.

The important thing is that there are far fewer major errors now compared to the time before VAR's introduction.