

Officials are only human

NICE work if you're lucky enough to get it. The news that a handful of Scottish referees escaped the Arctic winds to take part in a Uefa-sponsored experiment in Cyprus was greeted frostily by those of us left behind.

For those of you unaware of the story, Uefa, acting at Fifa's behest, are currently conducting trials with no fewer than five officials active in matches. In addition to the usual three, a further two assistants stand behind the goals. Presumably if it was ever adopted seriously, there would be a sixth policing the dugouts.

You see where we're going here. At this rate there could soon be more referees than players. Or more referees than spectators at some lower league games.

The trials in Cyprus, which started eight days ago and concluded on Wednesday, were conducted on a European Under-19 Championship qualifying round mini-tournament featuring the hosts, Denmark, Georgia and the Czech Republic. Thus Dougie McDonald, Iain Brines, Calum Murray, Graham Chambers and Derek Rose found themselves in warmer climes as they took charge of three of the games.

This was the third such experiment, following earlier ones in Slovenia and Hungary. The role of the two extra assistants is to help control incidents in and around the penalty box by informing the match referee via microphone of anything he has missed.

It doesn't require a formidable intellect to appreciate that two extra pairs of eyes, even for men sponsored by Specsavers, can only help stamp out some of the dark arts perpetrated by defenders and strikers. The Scottish referees enjoyed the experience, as well they might.

Also present in Cyprus, and one of the organisers of the trials in his role as a member of Uefa's referees committee, was Hugh Dallas. A report on the use of five officials is

now expected to be presented to the International Football Association Board (IFAB), but Dallas is fairly certain that it isn't likely to be implemented any time soon. Even if it is eventually adopted it is likely only to be for major championships. Not the Scottish Premier League or the vast majority of the world's domestic leagues.

The reason, of course, is that there wouldn't be enough referees to go round. It would also be more costly. But in a World Cup or European Championships, where a pool of 32 officials is assembled and often under-utilised, you can see the attraction. It would, at a stroke, drastically cut down the unseemly jostling and shirt tugging which disfigures corners and free-kicks.

Referees were under instructions to clamp down on such activity at Euro 2008, with English official Howard Webb taking decisive action when awarding a late penalty to Austria in their game against Poland. But realistically there's so much illegal stuff going on that it's often very difficult to police properly.

The man pushing the trials, with Sepp Blatter's approval, is Michel Platini. Here it starts to get a bit murky. Dallas is insistent that the extra two assistants, if adopted, are not intended as an alternative to the possible introduction of goal-line technology. The events of the last IFAB meeting appear to be at variance with that view.

It was there, in the lavish grounds of Gleneagles in March, that Platini and Blatter sunk the hopes of two companies which had been testing goal-line technology with the IFAB's active encouragement. Simultaneously, the Uefa president announced his wish to experiment with two extra officials.

The two companies were, naturally, incensed. Hawk-Eye Innovations, whose technology is used in tennis and cricket, had spent £500,000 on football trials at the board's urgings. The other, Cairios



Extra referee's assistants may help in some cases but in others technology would appear to be the answer

Technologies, a German company which had developed a system of underground cables and a microchip inside an Adidas ball, took a seven-figure hit.

According to those present, the fate of the two companies was sealed before they arrived at Gleneagles, but they were still required to give their presentations. Both companies claimed their trials had been successful and that the reasons advanced by Platini and Blatter for rejecting the new technology were spurious.

Last week I asked Paul Hawkins, the inventor of Hawk-Eye, if his company has been compensated by Fifa or Uefa for their considerable

investment in the project. It hasn't. And it won't.

Instead, Platini's favoured method is to place human cameras, in the form of assistants, behind the goals. It will work for spotting infringements but, according to Hawkins, even this close up it will be impossible for the naked eye to determine whether the ball has crossed the line in very marginal cases. Both companies say their systems would have been 100% accurate and the information relayed immediately to the referee. No waiting for video replays.

Football – or at least those who control it – seem

strangely reluctant to embrace technology that has greatly enhanced decision-making in other sports. Instead, Uefa and Fifa are tinkering around the edges and experimenting with a human alternative which may, in time, improve major championships but seems destined never to be applied universally.

Having marched Hawk-Eye and Cairios to the top of the hill before abandoning them just as a genuine solution to goal-line controversies appeared to have been found, Platini and Blatter stand accused of shirking their responsibilities to improve the game.



ON THE SPOT
ALAN CAMPBELL

Soca Warriors still chasing World Cup cash

THE INSIDER
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THE 2006 World Cup generated billions of dollars – but not a cent has been paid to the heroic "Soca Warriors" from Trinidad & Tobago who say they've been ripped off by Fifa vice-president Jack Warner.

Twenty-eight months after the final whistle, the team from the smallest country ever to qualify are still being denied their share of revenues from sponsors and other sources, despite defeating Warner at an arbitration hearing.

As soon as it looked likely Trinidad would qualify for Germany, the Warner family put their money-making machine into gear. Son Daryan began acquiring, illicitly with daddy's help, 5000 tickets later sold

for an estimated \$3 million profit. Other son Daryll was put in charge of a private company which would vacuum up millions of dollars in fees from sponsors. Warner Snr, who terms himself "Special Adviser" to the Trinidad Football Federation, would negotiate directly with the players about their share of the proceeds.

In January 2006, Warner met the players. They wanted to know, what had sponsors paid? What other income from tickets, TV and the government? "I'll have a spreadsheet drawn up," promised Warner.

The months passed but the spreadsheet didn't appear. "Soon" promises Warner. Days before the first game, against Sweden, goalkeeper Shaka Hislop asks Warner yet again. "Sorry," says Jack, "no time now until after the tournament is over."

The team hold Sweden to a goalless draw. Then the anger boils up. Every time they touch the ball they're making money for Warner – and getting nothing themselves.

One player told me, "Warner still hadn't told us how much sponsors were paying and what our share was going to be." Warner must have realised that if he didn't calm them fast, he might not have a team to play England in three days time. OK, he said. I'll give you 50%.

The Warriors lost 2-0 to England and by another two goals to Paraguay – and then packed their bags. More months passed. Then in October 2006, Warner's accountant produced the long-awaited spreadsheet. It was surprisingly short.

"Consistent with normal accounting principles we have made estimates in such instances where specific documentation was unavailable." There were more holes. Sponsors appeared to have paid less than earlier press releases claimed. Some sponsors – and their money – had fallen off the page.

And another surprise. One third of their money was being withheld to fund the next campaign, to qualify

for 2010. Warner insisted that sponsors had insisted – until the claim became so lacking in credibility that he abandoned it, gracelessly.

But the bottom line was: Warner had sold their bodies for millions – and their share was £494 a man.

The majority of the squad hired London sports lawyer Mike Townley. Warner promptly blacklisted them. For players needing regular international games to keep work permits, it was a disaster.

Townley turned to Fifa. Was this a case for Fifa's Ethics Committee, chair Seb Coe? No, Townley was told, it's an internal matter, we refer you to Jack Warner to sort it out.

Townley made a Freedom of Information request to the Trinidad government. That brought another surprise. Warner had neglected to reveal an £18m contribution by taxpayers – freeing up more money for the players.

It wasn't looking good for Warner at home so he agreed to switch the

dispute from a Trinidad courtroom to arbitration in faraway London.

That hearing was at the end of April this year and its confidential decision was passed to both parties on May 19. The Warriors won all they asked for, disclosure of all contracts and revenues raked in by the Warners and 50% of the total. The Warriors were looking to get – at last – the big money they are owed.

Within hours the report was leaked to the Trinidad Guardian whose sports editor has written two paid-for biographies of Warner that find no fault in him – ever.

Warner claimed to be shocked. The other side must have leaked. Such an outrageous breach of confidence must nullify the arbitration decision.

So he still won't pay and he still won't disclose. Warner is now going to court in Trinidad in January to get the arbitration award cancelled.

It will be a chilly Christmas for some of the heroes of 2006.