

Hawk-eye set for EPL debut

AFP, London

The Premier league is set to test Hawk-eye technology in football with a view to remove doubts over goal-line decisions, the chief of the company that makes the product has said.

The ball-tracking system, which is already used in cricket and tennis, will initially be put to the test at Reading's academy and then tried out next season but not used by the officials.

Paul Hawkins, managing director of Hawk-Eye Innovations, told BBC Five Live's Sportsweek: "We have a contract with the Premier League to develop a system purely to resolve the dispute whether the ball crossed the line, purely for the referee and not for television.

"The process is to be evaluated by the Premier League and then by FIFA, if we jump those hurdles then the end aim is to have it installed in all Premier League grounds hopefully."

Hawk-Eye was brought in for this year's Wimbledon championships although it's reliability has been questioned.

Those in favour of technology in football point to ending the argument in instances such as Chelsea's Champions League defeat to Liverpool when it was unclear whether Luis Garcia's strike had crossed the line.

Hawkins believes the technology could be a part of the Premier League within two years if tests go to plan and it receives FIFA approval.

He added: "It will be tested next month and the process will evolve from there.

"It took a couple of years in tennis from the start of tests to it being used and we can probably expect the same timeframe."

Hawkins hopes his innovation will be used at next year's Wimbledon.

"A few players like Nadal have questioned it but every single time it has been proven to be correct so it's been an overriding success," he said.



PHOTO: AFP

Uruguay midfield hardman Pablo Garcia (C) retains possession despite being sandwiched between Venezuela midfielders Fernando de Ornelas (R) and Luis Vera during their quarterfinal of the Copa America in San Cristobal on Saturday.

Schuster cleared for Real?

INTERNET, undated



Could the Real Madrid-Bernd Schuster soap opera finally be coming to a happy ending? Sports daily AS claims on Saturday that, at last, this is the case.

According to AS, Schuster has told Angel Torres, president of Getafe, his current club, that early on Monday morning he will give him a cheque to cover the 480,000-euro (652,000-dollar) indemnity fee for unilaterally breaking his Getafe contract.

Schuster is under contract at Getafe until June 2008 and Torres has insisted that either the German coach or Real pay this indemnity before leaving the club.

Real president Ramon Calderon - at daggers drawn with Torres - has refused to pay, and As claims that Schuster now realizes that if he does not pay up himself then the soap opera might drag on

all summer - and Calderon might look for another coach.

So Schuster's plan is to pay Torres on Monday morning then be presented to the media as the new Real coach in the evening.

According to AS, Calderon has meticulously prepared a solemn ceremony to welcome Schuster to the club, including a presidential speech in German.

Torres will then announce that Schuster will be replaced as Getafe coach by Michael Laudrup, who has been patiently waiting in the wings for three weeks, keen to be confirmed in his first Spanish coaching job.

This soap opera has been dragging on since March, when Calderon apparently asked Schuster to take over the Real bench from Fabio Capello, who was finally sacked two weeks ago.

Rival Madrid sports daily Marca, for its part, prefers to concentrate on Real's transfer plans.

Marca claims on Saturday that Real are planning to offer winger Robinho in exchange for Arsenal's Cesc Fabregas, one of the players

promised to the fans by Calderon in his election campaign 12 months ago.

The other players promised by Calderon, Milan's Kaka and Arjen Robben of Chelsea, are also summer transfer targets.

Marca claims that if Arsenal reject the Robinho-Fabregas swap then Real will offer between 35 and 40 million euros for Fabregas and Jose Antonio Reyes, who was loaned out to Real by Arsenal last season.

According to Marca, Schuster has been in "constant contact" with Real sporting director Pedja Mijatovic for at least three weeks about the club's summer transfer policy.

It was Schuster who, three months ago, recommended that Real sign German defender Christoph Metzelder, who was finishing his contract at Borussia Dortmund.

And, according to AS, it is Schuster who is insisting that Mijatovic sign young left-back Royston Drenthe from Feyenoord.

Indonesia goes Zidane-crazy

AFP, Jakarta

About 1,000 people, including visiting French football star Zinedine Zidane, played football on 200 pitches installed in central Jakarta on Sunday.

In jeans and a polo shirt, Zinedane took part in a three-minute match of 'futsal' -- miniature soccer -- on a stretch of street in the Indonesian capital, playing with local celebrities and government officials.

Hundreds of people crowded around the venue, cheering Zidane using his nickname "Zizou."

Earlier Zidane, who is completing a three-day visit here, met Jakarta Governor Sutiyoso before boarding an open jeep to inspect the 200 futsal fields erected on the city's main thoroughfare.

Sutiyoso said: "Zidane's visit will increase confidence that Indonesia is safe to visit."

Indonesia is recovering from a series of bomb attacks and health scares such as bird flu, which have cut down on the number of tourists visiting the country.

Poor air safety and security, which has recently led to the European Union to ban Indonesian aircraft from flying to Europe, has further discouraged visitors.

Football is one of the most popular sports in Indonesia, a co-host of the Asian Cup which kicked off Saturday in Thailand.

Zidane, in Indonesia in his role as an ambassador for children's programmes for French company Danone, met President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono on Friday.

The former Real Madrid and Juventus midfielder retired from professional football after playing for France in the 2006 World Cup final.

Japan serious about Qatar

AFP, Hanoi



Japan are treating their Asian Cup opener against fast-rising Qatar on Monday in the same way they would if it was Brazil or Italy -- deadlseriously.

"Qatar is for me the same as Italy or Brazil. The next game is always the most important in football," Japan coach Ivica Osim said on the eve of the Group B match, the only tournament game being played on Monday.

"I know the Qatar side knows about our team. Both sides have huge information but it will be decided in 90 minutes, not before or not after," added the 66-year-old tactician.

Qatar coach and fellow Bosnian Dzemaludin Musovic, Osim's assistant when they guided the former Yugoslavia to the 1990 World Cup quarterfinals, admitted Japan were "excellent in the quality of players."

Japan play "collective football," led by Celtic playmaker Shunsuke Nakamura, said Musovic.

"Japan on paper are the favourites in this competition. About the

result, it will be open and nobody is sure how the game will be finished," he said.

Boosting a team of largely J-League players, Japan were slowly peaking just a week after the domestic competition shut down, according to goalkeeper Yoshikatsu Kawaguchi, who helped Japan to Asian Cup triumphsin2000and2004.

"We are training very well and we have good combinations and good teamwork so we are like challengers and have no pressure," he said.

Japan, springing back from a winless exit from the World Cup in Germany last year, are led up front by Frankfurt striker Naohiro Takahara with the back four held together by hardman defender Yuji Nakazawa.

Qatar, who have won the 2004 Gulf Cup and the Asian Games title in 2006, both at home, since Musovic took their helm, are struggling with injury problems which the coach attempted to play down Sunday.

They are defender Abdulmajid Wesam and Uruguyan-born ace striker Sebastian Soria, who is the core of Qatar's offense with former Manchester City winger Hussain Yasser.

Wesam was injured in a recent

friendly in Thailand and Soria, 18, who gained Qatari citizenship last year, hurt his left leg in practice on Saturday.

Musovic said Wesam remained a doubt but Soria "will be ready for the game."

"We can find good solutions. We have about 20 good players. We will wait until the last minute to decide who will play," the coach said.

Qatari captain Alshammari Saad added: "We are not afraid of Japan. We are going to qualify for the second round despite the injuries."

Qatar have already lost midfielder Khalfan Ibrahim, the current Asian Player of the Year, to injury.

The Gulf state side are old hands at the Asian Cup finals, having qualified six times before, but they have never managed to go the extra yard.

Aside from 2000 when they made the quarterfinals, they have failed to get beyond the group rounds.

Asked about fighting a team under his old friend Musovic, Osim said, "There are no relations between a game and a private relationship.

"We are good friends but there is no connection there."

Iraq rue dropped points

AFP, Bangkok



Coach Jorvan Vieira believes the loss of valuable points in a struggling draw with co-hosts Thailand may cost Iraq dear at the Asian Cup.

The Iraqis conceded a dubious sixth-minute penalty before equalizing through skipper Younis Mahmoud in the 31st minute but failed to deliver the knock-out blow in a 1-1 draw at rainswept Rajamangala Stadium on Saturday.

Much has conspired against the Iraq team as they attempt to repeat their quarterfinal appearances at the last three Asian Cups, but they were hoping for all three points against Thailand.

While they kept their unbeaten Asian Cup record against the Thais intact, the team paid for not capitalising on a dominant first half where

they fired 10 shots at the home goal.

Vieira knows that his team must now find points against Australia (July 13) and Oman (July 16) to once again reach the quarterfinals.

"I am a little bit disappointed because I think the game could have been decided in the first half but we didn't take advantage of that," said the Brazilian, who has been Iraq's coach for just two months.

"In the second half I think my team were finding it difficult as the pitch became heavy and we missed the chance to win.

"It was difficult and it could be very important for the rest of the competition, but football is like this."

The Iraqis, who inspired their strife-torn nation by making the final of the Asian Games football competition in December, had few chances in the second half and Thailand looked the more likely to score the winner.

Despite dropping points, Vieira stopped short of levelling criticism at

his team, who have endured a difficult build-up to the tournament with war ravaging the country.

"I am quite satisfied, you cannot imagine the problems we have had to prepare this team," he said.

Vieira defended using Mahmoud as a lone striker with a packed midfield, saying the Qatar-based goalscorer was not supported enough.

Mahmoud took a heavy collision in the 35th minute and appeared to be holding his ribs as he slowly left the field at half-time.

"He couldn't play much better because the midfield were too late to support him and he couldn't do well without the support," Vieira said.

"We had to attack and defend at the same time. Everybody has to work together. We have to play win in the next match."

Mahmoud could be seen gesturing to his midfield teammates for support during the match.

10x3

10x2

10x3