

The case for fixing sporting replays



What a Test match. What a Test match for the Aussies!

Obviously the game belonged to Steve Smith, making one of the greatest comebacks in all sport (leaving aside the circumstances that meant he had to “come back” at all).

He was the game’s super-dooper star, but he had a great green-and-gold supporting cast.

Nathan Lyon was damn near unplayable on the last day – it’s a fair argument whether even Warnie could have been more destructive – and the quicks, especially Pat Cummings, more than did their bit.

Matthew Wade’s re-emergence as a specialist batsman after a long absence from the Test team was remarkable, and Travis Head, who is averaging just a tick under the magical 50 in his nine Tests, continues to look very solid.

It was a brilliant effort, but it mightn’t be what the game is most remembered for.

If you grew up in the 1960s or 70s, you would be well aware that football and cricket umpires are fallible.

They make mistakes of a human kind.

As kids we knew when a goal umpire had made a blue by signalling a behind when everybody knew it was a goal; or, in cricket, when the ump fired his finger skywards giving a batsman out LBW, when we all knew when he had smashed the cover off the thing.

Fast-forward to the year 2000 and beyond and, as if by magic, we’re neck-deep in the technological revolution.

I was born in the day when toilets didn’t flush, and we did without microwaves, refrigeration, not to mention laptops and the internet.

Those were the days when *Homo sapiens* controlled everything, particularly on the sporting fields where umpires



Umpire Aleem Dar calls Aussie opener David Warner LBW at Edgbaston.

called the shots.

But today the decisions of our game’s adjudicators are being brought into question.

Technology hasn’t quite taken over, but it’s only a matter of time before it does.

The opening day of the Edgbaston Test was one umpires Aleem Dar and Joel Wilson would rather forget, after each of them made one incorrect decision after another, painfully exposed by the decision review system (DRS).

David Warner was given not out by umpire Dar after getting a thin edge down the leg side from Stuart Broad.

Four balls later, Dar judged Warner LBW to Broad for two. The opener barely consulted his partner Cameron Bancroft before walking off, but replays showed he should have reviewed the decision, with Broad’s delivery projected to slide down the leg side.

Umpire Wilson turned down

a vociferous appeal after England thought they had Usman Khawaja caught behind off Chris Woakes. Their review was successful as UltraEdge picked up the faintest of edges from Australia’s No.3.

England were joyous as Steve Smith padded up to a Stuart Broad delivery and Dar raised the finger. An aghast Smith reviewed almost immediately and Hawkeye showed the ball missing off stump.

Just seven balls later, Wilson turned down an LBW appeal from Chris Woakes against Matthew Wade. The Poms reviewed and another on-field decision was overturned.

Dar later decided James

Pattinson was LBW to Broad. The batsman opted to review, perhaps due to the presence of key man Smith at the other end, and the replay showed the ball would have missed leg stump.

Peter Siddle was LBW to Woakes, according to Wilson. A review process proved the umpire wrong, as a massive inside edge was revealed.

Can it get any worse than this? Well, yes, it can.

In Australia’s second innings, Matthew Wade was given out LBW to Broad. Thankfully, DRS overturned that mistake too.

And by the time you’d reached for Ripley’s Believe It Or Not, Pat Cummins under-edged one to Jonny Bairstow, which only a television camera managed

‘The opening day of the Edgbaston Test was one umpires Aleem Dar and Joel Wilson would rather forget’

to pick up.

In England’s fateful second innings, skipper Joe Root was twice given out LBW when the review showed he’d hit the ball on to his pads.

Replays and reviews are so ingrained in today’s cricket it’s easy to forget the controversy that once attended their inclusion.

Remember when India wouldn’t have a bar of DRS?

They finally capitulated, because even they could see that the game had to be played on an even playing field.

DRS was brought in initially to get rid of the howlers, mistakes made by umpires that were clearly incorrect. As we know, humans err.

But it’s doing much more.

Not all of the incorrect decisions made during the first Test were “howlers”.

Most were marginal. And it’s to be remembered that these decisions must be made in an eye-blink. It stands to reason that the umpires will pull the wrong rein at times.

So replays are here, and here to stay.

While it undoubtedly works, it can work much better than was evidenced in the first Test.

The system of challenges is good for the game, but how they are administered is not.

Replay should be able to correct umpiring errors without limitation, as is currently the case with run-outs.

If the technology is there to get it right, why not? So, when in doubt, refer through DRS.

What’s happening in our football is far more spurious.

We get the DRS on whether or not a goal or point has been scored.

The ridiculous system plagues our football every weekend, and should never have been introduced in a half-arsed manner.

The AFL should scrub it before obvious gremlins in the system end up deciding the result of a grand final.

Poor, confusing and disruptive decisions are bad enough, but the AFL’s new system is doing damage on a grander scale.

At a base level you’d have to say the system sees fewer incorrect decisions made, it just looks bad – and really stupid – when somebody gets it wrong, despite having many different angles and plenty of time to look at any scores in doubt.

We’re told that every goal is reviewed.

Well, that’s small beer if the ball has already been bounced before a final decision has been reached.

Incorrect decisions are still being made and this is unacceptable.

Like their cricket umpiring brethren, the football umps don’t want to be shamed or ridiculed on the big stage.

But at the moment the AFL is making dodgy decisions based on poorly-placed cameras that seem to roll on slowly like forgotten clips from a Friday-night movie at an old cinema.

While the system is supposed to be making the game better, it is making the game worse.

The solution is to throw out the current DRS system lock, stock and barrel, until they can put in a system that works.

In life, we live with human error. It’s a part of our DNA.

There can’t be any arguments for not using DRS – sport must keep abreast of the times.

But it must also be accurate and administered correctly.

Until then it’s not a matter of the system being broken; it’s the system that’s breaking the game.

Hundreds of hopefuls prepping for schools titles

SURFING
By CAMERON BEDFORD-BROWN

More than 500 young surfers from about 50 metropolitan and regional schools will take part in the Western Australian School Surfing Titles over the next few weeks.

Surfing WA events manager Justin Majeks said excitement was building in classrooms and playgrounds around the state as competitors prepared to share the stoke of surfing.

“Surfing WA is excited to join forces again with long-term partner SunSmart, who have been integral to the development of surfing throughout WA over many years through their support of events,” Justin said.

“The School Surfing Titles is one of WA’s largest participation-based events of the year, with five regional and five metropolitan qualifying events.

“Beginning next week in Geraldton, it offers a unique opportunity for students to surf and bodyboard with their schoolmates and peers in a safe, relaxed and fun environment.

“This is a great chance for us to engage with students and schools that actively



Margaret River Senior High School surfer Ben Gradisen will be going all out to make sure his school secures its 14th straight win during the Schoolies this month. Photo: Surfing WA/ Majeks

incorporate surfing into their curriculum.

“Many schools now offer surfing as part of their physical or outdoor education programs and kids love the opportunity to

head to the beach and hit the waves on a school day.

“The titles also provide a unique stepping-stone for students to reach higher levels of competition.”

Students will compete in teams of two, lining up in junior (under-16) and senior divisions (under-19), catering for boys and girls in both surfing and bodyboarding.

The winning teams from the state final at Trigg will qualify to represent WA and their schools at the Australian Junior Surfing Titles on home turf at Margaret River in December.

Margaret River Senior High School will once again be the team to beat, competing for a record 14th consecutive school title.

Margaret River’s surf-academy boasts many highly accomplished surfers including brothers Ben and Jed Gradisen, Zali Hewson, Danny Benedetti, Arabelle Gibson and Dylan Vernon.

Despite Margaret River’s dominance over the years, there are many other schools tipped to challenge them in 2019.

Carine Senior High School, Mandurah Catholic College, Nagle Catholic College and Albany Senior High School all have experienced and talented students set to represent their schools.

Locally, Christ Church Grammar School and St Hilda’s Anglican School for Girls have performed admirably in the past.

