

In a groundbreaking moment for Rwandan football, Video Assistant Referee (VAR) technology was used for the first time during a match at Stade Amahoro on Sunday, January 26, 2025.

This historic trial took place during the Urubuto Community Youth Cup, in a match between FC Bayern Munich Academy and Intare FTC under-16 teams. The game concluded with Bayern Munich Academy defeating Intare FTC.

The match featured Rwandan international referees, with additional support from Moroccan experts overseeing the implementation of VAR. Six cameras were strategically placed around the stadium, including two dedicated to goal areas, feeding live footage to a VAR-specific room near the players' dressing rooms.

A pitch-side monitor allowed the on-field referee to review footage if necessary. Communication devices ensured seamless interaction between referees on the field and those in the VAR room.

Late in the game, referee Nsabimana Célestin was called to review a penalty decision after an incident in the penalty box. Following his review, a penalty was awarded to Bayern Munich Academy, although it was ultimately missed.

FERWAFWA President, Alphonse Munyantwali, expressed pride in this technological advancement at Stade Amahoro, noting that the adoption of VAR reflects Rwanda's commitment to modernizing sports infrastructure. "This is a significant milestone for football in Rwanda. We hope to extend this technology to other stadiums as resources become available," he said.



Video Assistant Referee (VAR) technology

Murangwa Eric Eugène, the organizer of the Urubuto Community Youth Cup, echoed these sentiments, emphasizing that such innovations inspire young players and demonstrate the country's dedication to supporting their development.

The VAR team, led by renowned referee Mukansanga Salima, handled the system efficiently despite the game's relatively few contentious moments. Referees acknowledged that VAR has proven to be a valuable tool in minimizing errors and ensuring fairness in decision-making, particularly in critical moments such as penalty calls, goal confirmations, and disciplinary actions.

While VAR has revolutionized football worldwide since its initial trials in 2016, its implementation remains resource-intensive. Factors such as stadium infrastructure, financial capacity, and adherence to FIFA and IFAB regulations continue to pose challenges for its widespread use.

VAR technology was officially approved in March 2018 during a meeting in Bogotá, Colombia, and made its debut at the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia. Its primary purpose is to assist referees in making accurate decisions.