

## New Automated Tracker Offside Technology: A Step Forward For Football?

JOHN MORAN

Every four years, the FIFA World Cup creates the biggest stage in sports, and every time upon that stage there is a call by a referee that stings outrage across the world. Consider the Argentina vs. Mexico game in the 2010 World Cup. Argentina's infamous goal stands as one of the most extraordinary examples of a blown call by a World Cup referee. The goal scored by Carlos Tevez in the 26th minute was clearly offside as the replay cameras reveal, but neither the line judge nor the head referee spotted the infraction. Years of incidents like this, as well as the uproar that they often engender, have led to FIFA implementing a new system known as VAR or Video Assistant Referee in the past couple World Cups, but these too have become the target of vitriol from fans.

VAR has been around for some time now. Since the 2018 World Cup, the system has allowed on-field referees to call for a review of a play and watch the play on a

field-side television operated by two other assistant referees in a nearby film booth. This enables the on-field referee to make a better judgment on a play if they weren't able to catch the incident in all the chaos of a soccer pitch.

Despite this advantage, VAR has been the subject of some criticism. Fans and players alike have said the technology slows the game down, making soccer more stop-start instead of the fluid and dynamic game that fans are accustomed to. Liverpool midfielder James Milner tweeted in 2020 "It's clear and obvious we need a serious discussion about VAR. Sure I'm not alone in feeling like [I am] falling out of love with the game in its current state." VAR has been an issue to players for some time, but its reliance on a human referee to make the final decision has kept it within the favor of most players.

However, a new rule has been implemented for this year's World Cup, and this time, fans are even more frustrated with virtual systems. During this World Cup, every shot on goal is reviewed by an automated VAR system that uses arti-

ficial intelligence to judge whether or not any offensive player, on ball or off, is offside. Without any explicit on-field referee interaction, a goal can be called back by this automated system.

For example, in the group stage match between Qatar and Ecuador, a goal scored by Ecuador during the fifth minute was called back by VAR. The goal in question was not initially called offside by the line judge or the head referee, but after further review by the automated VAR, it was called offside due to the shin of the attacking player jutting past the front of the defender's foot. Ecuador would end up winning the game anyhow, but the call brought automated VAR into the spotlight as a system that could potentially disagree with initial referee decisions.

Fan opinions on the new VAR rules have been overwhelmingly negative. Sports writer James Robson wrote in an article that these

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A Video Assistant Referee review room, monitored by assistant referees.

## Is Overwatch 2 Worth Playing?

JEREMY LIAO

You may have heard about the struggles that Overwatch 2 faced on release day—hours of queues, random server closures, and DDoS attacks—and perhaps that has made you think twice about downloading the game for yourself. As somebody who waited with my friends on release day myself, I understand your hesitation. However, as the game stabilizes, and servers become playable again, Overwatch 2 has emerged as a free-to-play team-based shooter that is absolutely worth the time.

Overwatch 2 is the updated version of Overwatch, a team-based fantasy PvP shooter. The standard game mode gives you an objective, which typically consists of capturing a control point or escorting a payload with your

team. Gameplay includes using abilities, which vary based on which character (called heroes) you pick. Heroes specialize in either soaking up damage, dealing damage, or healing allies.

Furthermore, after closer exploration, one can see that the gameplay in Overwatch 2 is not much different from the original version. Heroes and abilities are largely the same, with a couple of new additions, like Kiriko. If you were a fan of the first game, you might as well give Kiriko a try. She can make heroes temporarily invulnerable, and her ultimate makes heroes shoot fast. Another addition is the push objective, which is essentially characterized by a cute little robot which pushes walls for you. Playing a push map feels similar to playing a payload escort map, but there is a big wall that often gets in the way. Push games also typically go on for a pretty long time, be-

cause the only way to stop the timer is to completely push the wall into your opponent's spawn.

To many competitive gamers, Overwatch can seem to entail a lot of effort or exertion, and this is true. In order to play competitive, one has to win 50 games. But compared to other competitive games, such as Valorant, Overwatch is not that bad. And on the upside, by the end of those 50 games, you will have unlocked most of the playable characters.

One downside for competitive gamers, however, is that you have three ranks—one for tank, damage, and support, and for each one, to be placed in a rank, you must first win 7 games or lose 20 games. This can be frustrating, considering you have to

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Overwatch 2 was released on October 4th, 2022.

## The Future of U.S. Tennis is in Good Hands

BRANDON HORNE

If you were to venture a guess at the last time a male U.S. tennis player won a grand slam, how many years ago would you expect? 5 years? 10 years? The actual answer is nearly 20 years when Andy Roddick won the U.S. Open back in 2003. Ever since then, the U.S. has seen many promising runs at Grand Slams, all of which ended in defeat. In 2005, Andre Agassi appeared in his last Grand Slam final, losing to the great Roger Federer. Since 2009, America has failed to reach another Grand Slam final.

Despite a recent history of failure, the future of U.S. tennis is currently in great hands. Nine U.S. players are currently ranked in the top 50, with two ranked in the top 20. Youngsters such as Taylor Fritz and Frances Tiafoe lead the movement, both recently beating Rafael Nadal. Fritz and Tiafoe both find themselves in the next generation of top players, competing alongside the likes of players such as Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz. In addition to winning Indian Wells in 2022, Fritz also won the Japan Open in Tokyo and the Eastbourne International in England. In 2022, Tiafoe was a

U.S. Open semifinalist and a runner-up at the Portugal Open. Both players surround themselves with great fundamentals and playing tactics, skills that will aid them in future tournaments. Fritz carries a serve that tops out at nearly 150 mph, while Tiafoe can hit serves upwards of 140 mph. Both Americans have massive forehands, witty footwork, and most importantly, excellent mental strength while under pressure. Just recently, at the Laver Cup, Tiafoe showed off his grit and determination by winning from a set down against the world number 4 Stefanos Tsitsipas. Tiafoe's impressive performance handed Team World their first win in the history of the event.

There are many other U.S. players on the rise as well, such as Brandon Nakashima, Maxime Cressy, Reilly Opelka, Tommy Paul, and Sebastian Korda, all of whom are young and in the top 50. This year, Nakashima won two titles, one of which was the Next Gen ATP Finals, a tournament that would move Nakashima up 20 spots in the ATP rankings. Nakashima also has multiple major weapons, including a razor-sharp

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Taylor Fritz defeats Francis Tiafoe in all-American Tokyo Open Final.

## Why a Potential John Collins Trade Would Perfectly Solve The Issues of Luka Doncic and the Dallas Mavericks

HARRY MURPHY

After an unexpected conference finals berth in the 2021-22 season, the Dallas Mavericks and Luka Doncic have begun this season with a 14-13 record, leaving them underwhelmingly sitting as the eighth seed in the western conference. Per usual, superstar point guard Luka Doncic is meeting and surpassing all expectations put forth for him, sitting third in the NBA MVP race despite the Mavericks' lackluster record. One of Lukas' co-stars, Christian Wood, is also performing quite well. As a role player, Christian Wood provides a floor spacing scoring punch off the bench in the frontcourt position. The question of why the Mavericks are underperforming is pertinent in the heads of many fans and analysts alike.

Last season, the main gripe with the Dallas Mavericks was the individualism of the offense. Everything was run through Doncic and throughout the history of the NBA, a championship has never been won with an offense solely dominated by a single player. The front office tried fixing this issue by trading Kristaps Porzingis for Spencer Dinwiddie, who would play the role of a secondary ball handler. While Dinwiddie dampened the loss of star player Jalen Brunson to the New York Knicks, the loss of your second-best player and playoff

breakout player would always be an issue for the Mavericks. The sad reality for the Mavericks is that they are a team centered around defensive negative Luka Doncic. It will be hard to build a quality defense, so I believe they should invest heavily into building up their offense and their rebounding.

As expected, the Mavericks are top ten in offensive rating and middle of the pack in defensive rebound percentage. John Collins of the Atlanta Hawks could be a perfect addition to help bolster the offense and fix the perpetual rebounding problem the Mavericks are faced with. Collins's best season was in 2019 when he averaged 21 points and 12 rebounds per game while being able to shoot the three and play adequate defense as well. However, contract discussions and coaching changes have made his role within the Hawks team unclear and many reports have pointed to him being unsatisfied in Atlanta. Collins recently signed a long-term extension with the Hawks, which would alleviate tons of stress within the Mavericks, who are dealing with salary cap issues due to Doncic's monstrous contract. The Mavericks could potentially deal Davis Bertans and use some of that draft capital to swindle the Hawks into giving them an extremely undervalued asset in Collins, who would be the perfect rebounder and pick-and-roll partner for Luka Doncic in the future.

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Nick Bollettieri was one of the greatest tennis coaches of all time, and will never be forgotten.

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### Japan's Manga-Inspired Jerseys Start Worldwide Sensation

The Japan national soccer team wore jerseys inspired by the hit sports anime series Blue Lock, catching international interest

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### 2022 U.S. Open Swimming Championships Recap

The 2022 U.S. Open Swimming Championships produced an array of spectacular performances and surprises.

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# Halftime



# HALFTIME World Cup Edition



BY RISHI RANE AND THEO SFIKAS

## BREAKING NEWS

**-LIVE ON AIR: USWNT star Megan Rapinoe reveals why she is so good at the "scissor" kick.**

**-After recent TV remarks by Kanye West, Germany's National Team appoints YEEZY brand as uniform sponsor for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.**

**-Unexpected trade by the United States sends the "Merchant of Death" back to Russia for WNBA "star" Brittney Grinder and a 3rd round pick. The US has to take on the highly rated star's 8-year contract, as ESPN grades trade as a D- for the Americans.**

## FAVORITE TEAM QUIZ

WHAT TEAM ARE YOU WATCHING THIS WORLD CUP?



If you have any ideas for Halftime, reach out to us at [rrane25@andover.edu](mailto:rrane25@andover.edu) or at [ssfikas25@andover.edu](mailto:ssfikas25@andover.edu).



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## The Future of U.S. Tennis

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return of serve, powerful groundstrokes, and excellent footwork. His momentum comes at a time when legends of the game such as Federer, Nadal, and Djokovic begin to fall behind.

Maxime Cressy, another one of America's young stars, plays with a unique style. Once a facet of top tennis, the serve and volley have been rendered ineffective recently due in part to the newer courts which supposedly produce a truer bounce. Cressy is one of the few top players who continue to employ the style, and he is quite effective with it, as his serves and his volleys are among the best in the

game.

Standing at 6 ft 11 inches tall, Riley Opelka is the tallest active player in tennis history, possessing a powerful serve and powerful groundstrokes. He won two tournaments in 2022, and is currently poised to make a large leap in the rankings in the coming year. Tommy Paul and Sebastian Korda are two names you might want to remember. Paul earned a victory over Nadal at the Paris Masters and had much to show for himself. Korda trained at the well-renowned IMG Academy and was the runner-up at the Next Gen Finals just a year ago. With all this in mind, it is safe to say that the future of U.S. tennis is in good hands.

## Blue Lock-ed in: Japan's Manga-Inspired Jerseys Make a Worldwide Splash

CHARLES VEST

It was on the morning of August 1st, 2018 that the readers of Weekly Shonen Magazine were first introduced to the world of Muneyuki Kaneshiro's Blue Lock; and they loved it. The story follows a group of teenage boys who are invited to a training regime known as the Blue Lock Program, where a former player trains the teens in an effort to create the world's best egotist striker. The manga quickly became popular among the magazine's fanbase, soon becoming the 16th best-selling manga in 2021; it has over 10 million copies in circulation as of the fall of 2022. The manga has also received accolades from critics, winning the prestigious Kodansha Manga Award in the Shonen category, an achievement which netted its creators 1,000,000 yen.

Kaneshiro could not have achieved this success on his own, however. While he writes the story, the pages are brought to life by Kaneshiro's illustrator, Yusuke Nomura. Nomura's art has been the talk of many manga fans, who cite the exciting action and great character designs as some of their favorite parts of the manga. But Kaneshiro and Nomura haven't just caught the attention of the magazine's target audience of teenage males. During the 2022 World Cup, hosted in Qatar, the Japanese team shocked the world by coming onto the pitch wearing jerseys that heavily resembled those worn by the players in Blue Lock. As it turns out, it was not a coincidence. The team had collaborated with Nomura and his team to create the jerseys, and fans loved it. The striking blue and white colors coupled with the sleek logo placement gave the team an aesthetic feel that could be enjoyed by both fans of the manga and those who never heard of the comic. The anime was released in October of 2022, providing both the team and the designers with enough time to build the hype behind the collaboration before Japan's opening match against Germany in November.

Going into the match, the Germans were heavily favored to win. The general consensus on various betting sites was that Japan had one to seven odds of winning, making them the undisputed underdogs. As the match seemed to be in the expected direction with Germany

leading 1-0 going into the second half, Japan shocked the competition by scoring a goal in the 75th minute, then scoring again a mere eight minutes later to win the game. This upset sent shockwaves through both the soccer and animanga (anime and manga) communities. While fans marveled at the last-minute upset by Japan, readers of Blue Lock quickly began drawing comparisons between the Japanese team and the manga. They claimed that the player's victory was the result of the Blue Lock Project, even going so far as to bring up clips from the match and compare them to similar clips from the show. There was one event in particular that truly caught the eyes of Blue Lock fans: Japanese player Takumi Asano's game-winning goal. Pinned by a German player, Asano was forced further away from the goal, and it didn't look like he had any room to score. Usually, a player in his same predicament would pass to a teammate, but no, Asano kicked the ball straight into the upper right corner, finding nothing but net. Such a manner of play was familiar to readers of Blue Lock, who found the goal to be reminiscent of the highly aggressive playing style so lauded in the manga.

Despite Japan's 1-0 loss in the following match against Costa Rica, the Blue Lock Project couldn't be stopped. Just four days later, the Japanese were able to beat Spain, a team even more heavily favored than Germany. Japan were given one to eight odds of winning, making fans nervous that the Blue Lock Project was just a hoax. Though their fears looked like they would come to fruition as Spain led by one at the end of the first half, Japan's two goals scored in the 48th and 51st minute put them ahead, allowing the team to seize yet another victory. The triumph over Spain solidified the fanfare surrounding the team as the internet leaned more and more into the idea of the "real-life Blue Lock Project."

Though Japan was ultimately knocked out of the World Cup in their match against Croatia, the hype and novelty of seeing a professional team decked out in gear from a fan-favorite manga will stick around for a while. Who knows? Maybe in 2026, the players will return with an addition to their roster: a striker, claiming to be "the world's greatest egotist." As of now, however, only time can tell.

## Is Overwatch 2 Worth Playing?

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win 21 games just to get your first rank in all three. After that, the game will only update your rank after another 7 wins or 20 losses. Estimating your hidden MMR is a little harder with this system, and for gamers that like to spend hours grinding on competitive, may be a little more satisfying to see your rank skip a division, but for most players, immediate feedback is much more engaging.

Furthermore, the addition of push maps is also something that can be very infuriating to grind on. Push maps are 8 minutes, which can only be shortened by being overwhelmingly better than the enemy and pushing the robot into the enemy spawn (or, if you're like me, having the opposite happen). In a competitive match, such terrible matchmaking is so rare that push maps are often considered more tedious and annoying when you want to climb.

Another change that Blizzard, Overwatch's game developer made to competitive gaming was removing a tank. This was overall a good change; less health in the game means that individual actions are a little more meaningful at low elo and incentivizes more creative play. Sneaking around the back with your buddy? Tanks are a little stronger, so your frontline might still be intact when you surprise the enemy with your flank.

Every game is fun with friends, but Overwatch is especially so. There is lots of potential for goofy plays, and maps typically have a back entrance that you can use to sneak attack some enemies. The cartoonish graphics and bright colors makes for a lighthearted environment, as do the voice lines between the characters.

But the best part of Overwatch 2 is that it's free to play. You can get all of your friends on it, even if they can't buy anything.



## The Everlasting Legacy Nick Bollettieri Left on the Sport of Tennis

BEN SHIN

Nick Bollettieri was born in Pelham, New York on July 31, 1931. When Bollettieri was in high school, he played quarterback on the football team. Later, he went to Spring Hill College in Mobile, Alabama to study philosophy. Once there, he played collegiate tennis, not because he was good, but because they needed to fill in the lineup. Afterward, he joined the Reserve Officers' Training Corps and earned his bachelor's degree. Subsequently, entering the army for four years, he enrolled at the University of Miami for law. To support himself, however, he started teaching tennis at public courts in North Miami Beach. Soon after, Bollettieri became more invested in tennis and he dropped out of school to focus on teaching private lessons. He started by charging three dollars an hour which eventually became 900 dollars once he was inducted into the Tennis Hall of Fame.

Bollettieri traveled across North America, teaching tennis anywhere from New York to Puerto Rico. During his time traveling, he officially became a personal tennis coach by working for the Rockefellers at the Pocantio Hills Estate near New York. After more coaching, he co-founded Port Washington Tennis Academy in Long Island, New York with his student, Hy Zausner. He continued coaching at Port Wash-

ington until he established his own tennis club, Bollettieri Academy. The academy was located in Sarasota, Florida, at the Colony Beach and Tennis Resort. The players were offered living space at a former motel and had to live under strict rules during the weekdays. The Nick Bollettieri Tennis Academy was the first place where you could live on campus, focus on school, but mainly, play tennis. In 1987, the academy was sold to IMG Academy and is now a 600-acre, world-class, multi-sport facility. Bollettieri continued to teach high-performing players including Boris Becker, Andre Agassi, Jim Courier, Jelena Janković, and Martina Hingis. Many of his students reached world number one, or at least, entered the top ten.

Bollettieri was an essential part to the game of tennis and influenced it in a way no one could imagine. He coached ten world number-one players and established the present-day template for sports academies. He built the first tennis academy which brought together school and tennis for young athletes with the main goal of getting a college scholarship or going professional. What made Bollettieri such a special coach was his ability to motivate his players and connect with them on another level. "He knows how to push your buttons, to make you do what you need to do," said former number one Jim Courier. Even though Bollettieri passed away on December 4, 2022, his legacy will always be remembered in the tennis world.

## A Step Forward in Offside Technology

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offside calls are "against the spirit of the game," and fans tend to agree. In a survey conducted by the Football Supporters Association in England consisting of 33,000 soccer fans, 95 percent of those who were surveyed agreed that VAR "made watching (soccer) less enjoyable." As for why fans are so incensed at these rules, FSA vice-chair Tom Greatrex has some perspective: "There is a clear feeling among fans that VAR has ruined the spontaneity." In today's game of soccer, there is always a chance that the goal will be called back, so teams don't celebrate quite as hard anymore. There is now a tentative worry about the goal being taken from them, which can leave the fans in the stands underwhelmed when a goal is scored.

Aside from differing opinions between referees and robots, VAR has also brought into question the nature of the offside penalty. The rule as it stands in the officially published FIFA "Laws of the Game" handbook states that, "A player is in an offside position if...any part of the head, body or feet is nearer to the opponents' goal line than both the ball and the second-last opponent." This is the official ruling by FIFA on the matter.

However, is that the way the rule should be written? If all it takes is a toe over the line to be called offside, how far back must an offensive player play in order to avoid a call? Could this rule lower the offensive intensity that players

conduct themselves with because they are constantly aware of this hair-trigger rule ready to call off their plays? The offside rule might be worded in a clear manner, but the goal of the rule has always been to prevent an overpowering advantage for the offense. Is an offensive player truly in an unfairly advantageous position if their knee is barely extended past the foot of their opponent? A referee can make the nuanced judgment that this rule is meant for. A robot can't.

Even without considering potentially altered game results or rule clarity, VAR simply changes the nature of the sport. As is known by fans and players alike, soccer is like no other sport because of its fluidity. The nature of the game is to be constantly in action, without reprieve. This is what makes soccer what it is. New systems, in the format that they are being implemented in, are slowing the game down. They are slowly removing that element of the game, making it more akin to a game of basketball, where play is usually constant yet frequently stopped for review.

So are all of these virtual systems truly helping the sport of soccer? In some cases they might uphold the rules to a more exact degree, but what about the rapidity of the game? What about the flow that makes soccer what it is? VAR might be a step forward for the game of soccer in certain realms, but how many steps back could it also be taking? There's a reason that soccer is called the most beautiful game, and one can't help but wonder if these new rules are making it a little more ugly.

## 2022 U.S. Open Swimming Championships Recap

WOORI LEE

The 2022 Toyota U.S. Open Swimming Championships recently took place from November 30 to December 3. The competition took place in the famous Greensboro Aquatic Center pool, a facility that has become a staple for many swim competitions. The competition saw a wide diversity of swimmers, some joining all the way from Brazil, Ireland, or Canada, all coming together to compete in several epic tests of skill.

This meet saw an avalanche of records that were broken. Swimmers from many different colleges and countries proved that they have what it takes to swim at the elite level. While the meet saw many new faces, big names in the swimming scene continued to show why they are the best. On the men's side, the most impressive swimmer was Chase Kalisz, a long-time veteran in the medley events who further showed off his dominant prowess. On the women's side, however, a Canadian teenager by the name of Summer McIntosh stole the spotlight from her competitors in dazzling fashion.

Perhaps the most anticipated race of this meet was the meet-up of Katie Ledecky and Summer McIntosh in the 400m freestyle. Ledecky is a veteran—she has demonstrated time and time again what a near-perfect performance would look like. McIntosh, a younger enthusiastic swimmer had everyone expecting the 400m freestyle to be the race of the meet. As expected, they both delivered—finishing the race under the championship record with a mere separation of 8 one-hundredths of a second. Ledecky was victorious, but McIntosh showed no signs of stopping. Just the next day, she struck back with a sizzling World Junior Record in the 400m IM, an event that combines all four strokes, abolishing her own time by nearly a second. It seems that even with a relocation to train with a local team in Florida, McIntosh is adapting quickly and surging forward.

Much like McIntosh's coaching switch, Regan Smith, the American record holder in the 100m and 200m backstroke, moved bases from Stanford to Arizona State University to train under the famous Bob Bowman, former coach of Michael Phelps. She joined a force of star-studded swimmers including Chase Kalisz and Leon Marchand. The pair of swimmers each took down two meet records in their respective events. Chase Kalisz dominated in the medley events, nearly matching his winning time at the 2020 Olympics of 4:09.42. On the other hand, Regan Smith



Katie Ledecky after re-claiming her 400 free world title from Summer McIntosh.

prevailed in a variety of events including the 100m and 200m backstrokes, the 100m and 200m butterfly, and the 200m IM. Her efforts won her the high point award on the women's side. Her striking stat line surely suppressed some of the lousy speculations she received after switching coaching teams.

After watching such a successful meet with bountiful historical performances, fans are excited to see how many records are soon to be replaced by the number of young sensations that have been on the rise. There seems to be no upper bound for some of them and certainly, many more jaw-dropping races are to come with them.