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Football

What do coaches think about Alabama HS football adding instant replay?

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By Josh Bean | jbean@al.com on April 22, 2018 8:13 AM, updated April 22, 2018 1:38 PM

The AHSAA's decision to use sideline instant replay for the first time this fall sparked plenty of questions.

How will it work? How much will it cost? Will it slow down the game?

AL.com asked another question: What do high school coaches think about having instant replay available?

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"It's going to correct the obvious and help to get the calls right," said **Vestavia Hills** coach Buddy Anderson, the state's all-time wins leader. "If we can fix the obvious ones ... I think it's going to be a great thing."

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Officials must be trained on how to use instant replay before the 2018 season begins. (AL.com file)

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The AHSAA's football committee, consisting of at least one coach from each of the state's eight districts, voted in favor of instant replay. AHSAA Director of Officials Mark Jones said the state's officials also want access to instant replay.

Some coaches, like Anderson, love it. Others don't.

Citronelle coach Rusty Funk said purchasing an instant replay system is a "waste of money."

"I do not believe it is a good idea," said Funk, entering his fourth year at Citronelle after winning a state title at Marion County. "In high schools, we don't have the money or other resources to sustain this. We also don't have millions of dollars on the line in games. I believe we should trust our game officials. As a coach, I make mistakes throughout a game. Why should officials be judged differently?"

Count **Briarwood Christian** coach Fred Yancey as another coach wary of instant replay.

"I just don't buy into the idea that we have to be like the pros or colleges in order for our boys to have a great experience playing football," said Yancey, who has been Briarwood's head coach since 1990. "The toys that go with modern football are expensive and not necessarily an improvement."

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Alabama high school football will serve as America's instant replay laboratory beginning this fall. National Federation rules do not allow instant replay, and Alabama will be the first state to use it on such a large scale.



The DVsports system will allow officials to use a tablet on the field to review a call. (AL.com file)

No Alabama high school is required to buy equipment to allow officials to access on-field instant replay, but DVsports, the company the AHSAA partnered with, has designed a system that will plug into a school's current video set-up.

That's intended to minimize the cost, while giving officials another way to get calls correct.

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"All we've added is another eye in the sky," said Jeff Hilyer, a longtime high school and college official who has served on the NFHS' football rules committee.

That's precisely why some coaches like the adoption of instant replay.

"Anything to help get the game right on the field I am for," **Madison Academy** coach Grant Reynolds said. "This is a way to help them do their job better. As a coach, I know I am always looking for ways to do my job better. I applaud them for doing this."

Added **East Lawrence** coach Jeff Pugh, "Definitely a need to have a resource to reverse calls that have an impact on the outcome of the game."

Davidson coach Fred Riley serves on the AHSAA's football committee and said he was convinced to support instant replay after learning officials want it.



The AHSAA has developed policies for officials to follow. (AHSAA)

"Everyone now has some type of replay even if it is on their phones," Riley said. "That makes it very tough on the officials."

Since 2013, NFHS rules have allowed coaches to review video on the sideline during games and at halftime. Much of the in-game video is done with tablets, sometimes with video shot from field level.

But most of those handheld devices won't be part of the officials' formal replay system. Instead, it will plug into a team's video-taping capability, which is often a sideline camera from the coaching box and an end zone view.

High school stadiums lack the state-of-the-art lighting systems available in NFL and college stadiums. Couple that with limited camera angles and some coaches worry that officials will have limited ability to find the overwhelming video evidence to overturn a call.

Schools can buy additional cameras, but that also increases the cost

"Unless we have more camera angles, the traditional wide and end zone shots will make it tough," **Oak Mountain** coach Cris Bell said. "I'm sure the obvious will, but I don't see too many officials miss the obvious calls."



The AHSAA isn't forcing any school to buy an instant replay system. (AHSAA)

Added **Montevallo** coach Brandon Wilcox, "I think the premise behind wanting to get the call correct is a good thing. It will be interesting to see if most high schools' limited camera footage and angles will allow for definitive answers on the plays that are in question."

The biggest reason instant replay proponents like it is that it could help officials get the call right.

"If you do not get it, there will most assuredly be times during the season that you wish you did," **Bayside Academy** coach Phil Lazenby said.

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Mountie84 15 hours ago

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Oak Mountain's coach has good reason to be concerned about video replay. It would never work at their home stadium because people can hardly see with their own two eyes there is so little light!



^ 0 v 0 ↩ ...

Lhs11 ⌚ 19 hours ago

Last time I checked, Jeff Pugh was at East Limestone.

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Hiker ⌚ 20 hours ago

Can't see anything good coming from this. Controversy, delays, confusion can be expected instead. 4 hour games can be expected before long.

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Notsusan ⌚ 22 hours ago

Once again, nothing is said on how these interruptions will be communicated to fans. Are you gonna wire the ref? To what? Every school has a different kind of sound system, literally hundreds of different kinds and very few have wireless capability. Another big expense to budget strapped schools, plus you have to have a place for a review person to sit. Stand on the sidelines? in a rainstorm with an Ipad? (oh yeah, another expense) many schools have very small press boxes with no extra ... » more

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Josh Bean | Jbean@Al.Com ✓ ⌚ 19 hours ago

Reply to @notsusan: The system will have a hood-style sideline thing that the ref will go to. I suspect P.A. announcers -- at least the good ones -- will communicate what's happening for fans.

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