

Working with Electronic Line Calling

Electronic Line Calling (ELC) is widely used across the world at various levels of tennis events. There are a variety of companies which are now involved in ELC and these systems have their own ways in which they track balls. There are two types of ELC, they are referred to as: Review ELC and Live ELC.

In the UK the system which is most widely used is the Hawkeye review system. This means that there are line umpires on the court and the players challenge calls during the match. The operators are overseen by a qualified Review Official who confirms which ball is being challenged and ensures the integrity of the system. In recent years Hawkeye have also been the sole provider of "Live ELC" which means that the system calls every ball with no line umpires on the court. This is exactly the same system as the "Review ELC", except that during play the ball will be automatically called by the system. With the Live ELC system, the review official is also in charge of calling foot faults, which they can see on a screen from cameras placed on the baseline and on the centre service line. A button is pressed when there is a foot fault which triggers an audible call on the court.

Tracking during play with these two systems is the same, the review system is tracking every ball in a rally and knows if there is an incorrect call, regardless of whether it is challenged or not. With the live system, every time the ball is a fault/out this will trigger a vocal call from the system, so there are no incorrect calls during the match. There may be instances of 'operator error' as the system relies on an operator selecting the correct box for a serve, or ensuring they start tracking before every serve, which means they can be caught out by quick underarm serves.

Another company which many may have seen at tournaments is "Foxtenn" which is another Review ELC system, used on all surfaces, including clay. They use real life tracking imagery to show the challenges on the screen.

For many, officiating with ELC for the first time can be nerve wracking. However, it is important to remember that the system is there to help us all. A player who may have complained about a call for the next 5 games can now immediately see the result of the call and gives an opportunity for them to move on.

As a Line Umpire whether the match has ELC or not we should call the ball in the same way. Use the techniques which have been taught and call the ball as you see it and try to forget about the system. If you are challenged then keep a poker face, whether the call is shown to be correct or incorrect, there are cameras everywhere which will pick up little smiles or snarls and we must remain professional at all times. Enjoy the time on court, doing the best job that you can with some of the best players in the world, and treat ELC as a friend, there to solve issues and ensure that the match flows as effectively as possible.