



By: *Elise Quevedo*

# Mother Nature does not negotiate with software



Last year, I ended my [article](#) "Behind Every Innovation, There's a Human Being" with a sentence that is as relevant today as it was back then.

"Behind any technology and innovation, there's a human being. Let's never forget the people who make sport worth watching."

I couldn't have imagined how quickly Wimbledon would remind us why those words cannot be forgotten. Just days before the start of The Championships, [Wimbledon](#) qualifying was disrupted extraordinarily.

Hawk-Eye Live, the electronic line-calling system that replaced human line judges, stopped functioning during matches after extreme heat affected it.

With no line judges available as a contingency, play came to a standstill while officials worked to resolve the issue.

To me, the incident exposed one of the biggest questions facing every industry embracing artificial intelligence and automation: what happens when technology becomes the only option?

In order to increase fairness, speed, accuracy, and audience interaction, sports today embrace innovation. Much of this change is driven by tennis.

The game has been elevated in ways that were unthinkable only ten years ago, thanks to digital fan experiences, artificial intelligence, enhanced analytics, immersive broadcasting, and electronic line calling.

Technology undoubtedly improves professional tennis. But the Wimbledon qualifiers have reminded us that innovation should not eliminate human resilience. The oh-so-powerful and mighty Mother Nature delivered the reminder.

## The Hawk-Eye failure was a lesson in resilience

[Extreme weather](#) has dominated headlines across Europe over the past several weeks. Record-breaking temperatures have disrupted transportation systems, strained power infrastructure, challenged public health services, and now, even affected one of the world's most technologically advanced sporting events.

The suspension of qualifying matches because Hawk-Eye Live temporarily failed surprised many fans. The greater surprise came from discovering that there were no human line judges available to continue play immediately.

Last year, I questioned whether removing line judges entirely represented the right long-term decision. This year's events have reinforced that concern.

I understand why tournaments continue adopting electronic officiating. Hawk-Eye delivers exceptional accuracy, eliminates many controversial calls, and creates greater consistency across matches.

Technology solves genuine problems, but let's not forget that every technology carries operational risk.

### [Environmental conditions continue to challenge even the most advanced engineering systems](#)

Engineers understand this principle better than anyone. The most resilient systems always include redundancy. Think about airlines, hospitals, data centres, and cybersecurity teams; they all build redundancy. Sport should do the same.

Removing every human backup from critical match operations assumes that technology will perform perfectly under every condition. Real life rarely works that way.

Mother Nature does not negotiate with software. Extreme temperatures affect sensors, cameras, processors, and electronic equipment. Even my iPhone shut down while I

was filming outdoors this week due to the heat.

Environmental conditions continue to challenge even the most advanced engineering systems. Every system has limits. The responsibility lies in preparing for those limits before they appear.

Ironically, the incident also reminded millions of tennis fans why human officials remained such an important part of Wimbledon for generations.

Their value extended beyond making line calls. They represented resilience when technology could not.

## Wimbledon continues leading sports innovation through AI and digital transformation

The Hawk-Eye interruption should not overshadow the remarkable technological progress Wimbledon continues to make.

If anything, it highlights why ongoing innovation is still needed. The **All England Club** recently announced an extension of its long-standing collaboration with Hawk-Eye Innovations, guaranteeing the long-term advancement of broadcast capabilities and officiating technologies.

At the same time, **IBM** introduced another generation of AI-powered digital experiences for Wimbledon 2026.

This year's enhancements go far beyond match statistics. IBM's latest AI capabilities deliver personalised match previews, automated player insights, expanded multilingual experiences, interactive storytelling, and improved fan engagement across Wimbledon's digital platforms.

## Formula 1, football, cricket, golf, cycling, and tennis all increasingly rely on AI, computer vision, predictive analytics, and cloud infrastructure

In ways that traditional broadcasting was never able to, artificial intelligence now helps millions of fans appreciate player form, past matchups, tactical strengths, tournament narratives, and real-time developments.

The fan experience is enhanced by these advancements. Sports should be more accessible thanks to technology. While providing devoted supporters with more in-depth analytical insights, it should assist casual fans in appreciating strategy.

Processing enormous volumes of current and historical data is what artificial intelligence feeds on. It can identify trends in a matter of seconds, instantly simplify complex material, and customise experiences for particular audiences.

Every year, Wimbledon becomes a larger technology ecosystem. That evolution reflects a broader transformation occurring across professional sport.

Formula 1, football, cricket, golf, cycling, and tennis all increasingly rely on artificial intelligence, computer vision, predictive analytics, and cloud infrastructure. Can we implement it responsibly?

## Innovation works best when humans remain part of the system

The Hawk-Eye interruption offered an unexpected reminder that technology and humanity should never compete against one another.

They should complement one another, and this principle extends far beyond tennis.

Every industry currently embraces automation at an extraordinary speed.

Artificial intelligence now supports many industries, and each industry celebrates improved efficiency.

But each industry also faces an important responsibility. And that is that efficiency should never eliminate resilience.

We often describe technology as replacing people. We shouldn't. The stronger approach involves redefining human roles.

Instead of asking people to compete with machines, we should ask people to supervise machines, improve systems, solve unexpected problems, and make complex judgements that technology cannot.

Wimbledon is a clear example of why we need to ask these questions.



*As climate conditions become increasingly unpredictable, sporting events will likely face new operational challenges*

When Hawk-Eye operated normally, the tournament benefited from speed and precision. When environmental conditions disrupted the system, human adaptability suddenly became the missing ingredient.

Machines follow programming. Humans solve problems. That distinction remains incredibly important.

As climate conditions become increasingly unpredictable, sporting events will likely face

new operational challenges. Extreme heat, severe storms, heavy rainfall, and environmental disruptions will test infrastructure more frequently than before.

Technology should help tournaments adapt. Human expertise should determine how effectively they respond.

As another Wimbledon begins, I hope every player stays safe during what promises to be another physically demanding Grand Slam.

Extreme temperatures add another layer of difficulty that organisers, medical teams, coaches, and tournament officials must continue managing carefully.

The Championships remain one of the greatest sporting events in the world because they successfully combine tradition with innovation. That balance deserves recognition. Artificial intelligence has improved the fan experience; electronic officiating has increased consistency; and digital platforms have expanded the sport globally.

None of those achievements diminish the importance of people.

Last year, I wrote that behind every innovation stands a human being.

Wimbledon 2026 reminded us why that statement feels even more relevant today.

We should build a partnership between people and technology, where each strengthens the other. As innovation continues shaping every corner of professional sport, perhaps the most important question is whether we will remain wise enough to remember why people make sport worth watching.

To everyone, stay safe during the heatwaves!