Hello, my name is Grant Koziol, and I am going into my 4th year at UC Davis.

Today, on this sample podcast of #include<cs>, I will be talking about the prevalence of technology in sports and some of the benefits of this emerging partnership, as well as some of its drawbacks.

Technology has slowly surrounded the world of sports from things like the way players stay healthy all the way to how fans consume sports media. We now have sensors that can detect all of a players vitals, clothes that optimize sweat, and shoes that perfect running comfort and speed. All of these advancements enhance athletic performance and push athletes to continue to be better and break records, which is exciting to us as fans.

Fans have also had the benefit of technology in terms of how we view sporting events. Camera quality is constantly improving, and new equipment such as drones give us the best angles possible to make you feel as if you are almost at the stadium. Who knows even virtual reality may take the fan viewing experience to an even greater level.

Yet, through all of the benefits of advancing technology in sport, there is also a lot of pushback. One key example comes from my favorite sport - soccer, or futbol. In 2018, VAR, or Video Assistant Referee, was written into the laws of the game by the International Football Association Board, and since major competitions such as the Premier League have implemented it. What VAR does is position a 4th official that checks the replays of each major play and determines if the referee made an error and then allow the referee to check this error himself. This sounds like a good idea, however its usage has drummed up controversy. One of the more controversial uses has been the offside rule, in which a player is farther beyond the 2nd to last defender when a ball is played to them. The controversy arises from the fact that VAR must be objective in that it draws the exact line in which each player is positioned and thus even if the attacking player is just centimeters offside and the difference is indistinguishable from a full speed replay, the goal would be disallowed. Another controversy arises from the inconsistent use of VAR. By definition, VAR can signal the referee over any clear and obvious error but when it ends up being another human referee, clear and obvious doesn’t always carry the same threshold. This is shown by the fact that just 6 games into the season this year, there have already been 3 decisions admitted to be incorrect by the Professional Game Match Officials Board, a notable one being Chelsea player Marc Cucarella being pulled down via his hair en route to a Tottenham goal resulting in the match drawing at 2-2. There are also complaints that VAR ruins the spirit and flow of the game, sometimes pausing the game for up to several minutes. There is no easy answer to wether or not VAR should be included thus the reason for its controversy, which further emphasizes the idea that while the implementation of constantly advancing tech has clear benefits for athletes and fans alike, it is not always a steady road.

Thank You.