

The Centre Bounce Machine: A New Centre Restart for AFL

The centre restart is one of AFL's signature moments. It should do more than restart play - it should create anticipation, spectacle and a genuine contest.

The shift from the traditional centre bounce to the current centre ball-up has improved consistency, but it has also reduced the **height, theatre and anticipation** that made the best centre bounces so compelling.

The result is a restart that is **lower, more predictable and less dramatic** for spectators, broadcasters and players. This proposal introduces the **Centre Bounce Machine** - a machine-based centre restart system designed to restore that lost spectacle.

The system would launch the ball with **the height and hang time of the best traditional centre bounces** - effectively recreating the spectacle of the iconic 1993 Grand Final centre bounce, every time - while delivering far greater consistency and control than the old bounce.

While the current throw-up is easier than the old bounce, it still places the umpire in the contest and forces players to work around that movement.

A remotely activated system removes that interference and creates a cleaner, truer and more consistent centre contest, with far greater drama and spectacle.

A short visible **pre-release sequence** could signal that the launch is imminent, while the exact release moment varies within controlled limits.

Like Formula 1's red-light start, that creates tension because everyone knows the moment is close, but not the precise instant. At the **start of the game** or the **start of each quarter**, it would sharpen crowd anticipation, strengthen the broadcast moment and turn the opening contest into a genuine event.

The system could also allow **controlled variation** in launch height, release timing and a slight, tightly limited skew to either side.

This would restore some of the natural unpredictability of the old centre bounce, without the wild and often unfair deviations that could heavily favour one side.

Strategic Benefits

- **Restores spectacle** with a higher, more dramatic restart
- **Strengthens broadcast appeal** with a bigger visual moment after every goal
- **Delivers a cleaner contest** by removing the need for the umpire to enter and then clear the contest area
- **Combines consistency with theatre** instead of sacrificing one for the other
- **Reintroduces controlled unpredictability** without unfair randomness
- **Reduces umpire involvement in the restart moment** while retaining officiating control
- **Creates a distinctive AFL signature moment** that can be trialled, refined and potentially become iconic

This is not about reversing the AFL's move to modernise the centre restart.

It is about improving the replacement so the game does not lose one of its most recognisable and exciting moments.

The centre restart should remain one of the biggest moments in the game.

This proposal offers a way to restore its theatre, elevate its spectacle and make it a more powerful moment than ever.

