

Law 5 - The Referee

REFEREE OBSERVATION REPORT

Competition, match, final score:

2019 FIFA U-20 World Cup

Japan vs. Ecuador (1-1)

Refereeing team:

Referee: Slavko Vinčič (Slovenia)

AR1: Tomaž Klančnik (Slovenia)

AR2: Andraž Kovačič (Slovenia)

4th: Sandro Schärer (Switzerland)

VAR: Artur Soares Dias (Portugal)

AVAR: Ammar Al-Jeneibi (United Arab Emirates)

Blog Observer: **Norman Wood**

Presentation of the match:

This was the first game of the tournament for both these teams. Many of these players have most likely never seen each other before. These teams were drawn out of Pot 3 and Pot 4. Japan and Ecuador do not have any sort of rivalry. The attendance at the game was a measly 3 018, and the weather was pleasant and unremarkable. Ecuador were significant favorites coming into this match as favorites, as they are the champions of the 2019 South American U-20 Championship, and Japan was not as convincing in qualification in a weaker confederation. As a result of all these factors, this was not expected to be a very difficult game for the referee from a management perspective.

Referee performance (Personality, LotG application, disciplinary control, physical condition, cooperation, VAR management):

Overall, this was a very satisfactory performance from Vinčič in what was a very mundane game compared to his other assignments, like the UEFA Champions League. Throughout the entire match, Vinčič maintained disciplinary control, was fully accepted by the players and coaches, and most of his decisions were fully correct. A lot of the game centered around

methodical and short passing by Ecuador, with only a few counterattacks by Japan, because of this, the game was not very physically demanding, and Vinčić was always in good position where he needed to be. The game itself had 26 fouls, although many of them were small. Vinčić did keep a rather tight foul line, calling many minor contacts. This choice in game management turned out to be an O.K. one, as the players seemed to accept his line, even though many spectators would find this overly officious. He also managed holding and pushing at restarts effectively, making sure it does not continue when the ball is in play. Vinčić began the game in a somewhat focused and alert manner, correctly not calling a foul near the edge of the penalty area after ECU #10 went down under minimal contact in the 3'. However, he did miss a rather obvious SPA caution in the 5' on JPN #10. This would, however, turn out to be one of his only mistakes in the entire match. In the 17' there was a penalty kick appeal for a potential trip by ECU #2. The TV angles provided were inconclusive as to whether or not the Ecuador player got the ball, so this decision can be considered acceptable. There was another potential penalty kick correctly not awarded in the 22' after ECU #1 made minimal contact on JPN #9. These two situations demonstrate the focus and awareness of Vinčić, as well as his top-class foul recognition. The first caution in the game came in the 30' for a reckless tackle by JPN #7, which was fully correct. Overall, other than the missed SPA, the first half from Vinčić was strong. One minor thing I would prefer to see is more public warnings for persistent offending. ECU #20 was fouled 4 times in the half, with 3 of these fouls coming in the first 20 minutes. The 4th foul in the 43' did end up being cautioned, but I would like to see a public warning after the 3rd foul, although this is only a minor gripe. The 2nd half started off very positively for Vinčić. (Most likely in cooperation with AR1 Klančnik), he gave a correct penalty kick for handling by JPN #6 in the 50'. It was unclear from the camera angles whether or not this stopped a shot on goal, so no caution is acceptable. The 68' goal by Japan truly demonstrated the talent of the crew. There were 3 potential situations which could have nullified the goal (2 fouls and a potential offside) all of which were correctly assessed. The first foul was correctly assessed as a collision in the air between ECU #2, and another Japanese player. AR2 Kovačič then correctly assessed JPN #13 as being onside due to the ECU #2 on the ground. Then came in my opinion the most controversial of these situations. After challenging ECU #1 for the ball, JPN #13 appears to slightly trip ECU #1 on his way out of the net, causing him to fall and not be able to make a save. It could be said however, that once again, this was a collision between players, and JPN #13 did not really initiate the contact. Regardless, this was not a clear and obvious error, and Vinčić, and VAR Soares Dias correctly sorted out the situation, even though the VAR review did take slightly too long in my opinion (over two minutes). This is understandable however, as it was a complex situation. The rest of the game played out very smoothly for Vinčić. He correctly cautioned JPN #5 for a reckless tackle, in cooperation with his 4th official Schärer in the 78'. Once again however, ECU #17 was fouled 3 times in the last 5 minutes, twice by JPN #4. Overall, I would like to see stronger action against players fouling a specific player on another team, especially when the first of those fouls is potentially cautionable in and of itself (potential SPA in 87', but not necessary). Other than those very minor complaints though, a very solid performance from Vinčić in his first game of the tournament.

Assistant Referee 1 performance (Please mention the minutes of important / crucial situations):

Tomaž Klančnik had a very quiet game overall. His only notable action was aiding Vinčić in calling the 50' penalty kick for handling, which was done correctly. He called no offside, and didn't seem to have any other notable decisions. Expected level performance.

Assistant Referee 2 performance (Please mention the minutes of important / crucial situations):

Andraž Kovačič also had a rather quiet game. He had two offside decisions. One of them was in the 10', in which he and Vinčić correctly identified a player in an offside position challenging an opponent for the ball. In the 68', he also correctly assessed a crucial no offside leading up to Japan's goal. Overall, a very good performance.

Fourth Official performance:

Sandro Schärer had an expected level performance as well. Two notable incidents in the game in which he took part were in the 21', where he promptly identified and curtailed an unfair timewasting tactic by ECU #8 during a free kick for Japan in the free zone, as well as helping out Vinčić in correctly identifying a cautionable offense by JPN #5 right in front of him. (He can be seen in the close up saying "foul foul foul" into his microphone.)