

## **LAW 5 – The REFEREE**

### **REFEREE OBSERVATION REPORT**

2019 FIFA Under-20 World Cup (Poland) – Match 13, Group A, Matchday 2

#### **POLAND – TAHITI 5:0 (3:0)**

Referee: Ahmed Al-Kaf (OMA)

Assistant Referee 1: Abu Bakar Al-Amri (OMA)

Assistant Referee 2: Rashid Al-Ghaithi (OMA)

Fourth Official: Joel Alonso Alarcón Limo (PER)

Video Assistant Referee: Khamis Al-Marri (QAT)

Assistant Video Assistant Referee: Ammar Al-Jeneibi (UAE)

Blog Observer: Howard Maxi

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#### Presentation of the match

Second match for hosts Poland who needed to get a convincing win over minnow Tahiti to keep their progression hopes alive. In front of an enthusiastic, but mostly fair crowd of nearly 16,000; the hosts did their job against a Tahiti side that fought bravely and even had some attacks of their own in the second half. Therefore, the match was perhaps a bit more challenging than could be expected for the refereeing team spearheaded by a trio from Oman. 28 fouls show the at times scrappy nature of the match, which still can be categorized as very fair.

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

Ahmed Al-Kaf tried to stay in the background most of the time, an approach that given the nature of the game surely was a good one. His communication with players was not one of great gestures, but of small conversations. Players and referees understood each other, and we can give credit to him for managing the game well.

The foul detection was solid. The Omani had phases in which he had to call quite a number of small fouls that broke up that game, but he wasn't excessive in his calls to keep the match flowing as much as possible. The advantage rule was applied well.

However, his disciplinary control had some points of improvement. While he tried to work with smaller warnings (e.g. 5', 14', 54'), at times his calm demeanour was a bit counter-productive. This is something that might be harder to enforce this way in another game, but one can be confident Al-Kaf is well aware of that and can adapt in such situations.

The first possible card could have given to TAH #2 for a tackle the bordered on SPA (24'). He decided to keep his cards for now, a decision that can be supported still. However, he missed a rather mandatory caution for a late tackle by POL #16, that caught the ankle of his opponent (30'). Here a warning was not enough.

Al-Kaf correctly evaluated another scene five minutes later when TAH #3 pulled down his opponent who was trying to reach a pass (35'). This was correctly evaluated as SPA and not as DOGSO, as the player had some ground to cover until he could reach the ball and would have gotten it close to the goal-line.

Another noteworthy scene happened in 44'. A Polish player passed the ball to a team-mate in an offside position and is mowed down by a frontal tackle by TAH #4. Poland went on to score, but the goal was disallowed due to offside. While that itself was a good decision, both AR1 and Al-Kaf should have decided on free-kick and a yellow card for TAH #4 for the reckless nature of the challenge. No full replay was shown, but it looked like it wasn't SFP and therefore no reason for a VAR intervention. Still, it appears that both of them missed this tackle on a perception level, which should be improved in the future and can possibly inflame heated games even more.

The only other YC was given to TAH #3 – therefore being a second caution and therefore a sending off – for once again holding his opponent (88'). While it might seem harsh compared to the challenges mentioned above, the sending off is doubtlessly correct.

His fitness was appropriate for the tournament. Two small appeals for handball (51', 63') were correctly turned down, very good work!

Final assessment: Expected level performance with points for improvement. Surely, he should get a second game

#### AR1:

AR1 had two excellent decisions allowing both the second and the third Polish goal. All other decisions were correct as well, including cancelling the goal in 44'. However, like the referee he missed the card-worthy tackle nearly right in front of him in this scene. Otherwise a very good performance.

#### AR2:

He wasn't challenged as much as his colleague, but still had a solid performance. No wrong decisions, good work.

#### Fourth Official:

Expected level performance for Joel Alonson Alarcón Limo. He maybe could have helped the referee evaluate the tackle at 30', as his placement allowed him a better view of the point of impact.