

Law 5 - The Referee

REFEREE OBSERVATION REPORT

Competition, match, final score: U20 World Cup 2019 QF Italy – Mali 4:2

Refereeing team: Referee: Ismail Elfath (USA)

Assistant Referee 1: Kyle Atkins (USA)

Assistant Referee 2: Corey Parker (USA)

Fourth Official: Ahmed Al-Kaf (OMA)

Fifth Official: Abu Bakar Al-Amri (OMA)

Video Assistant Referee: Alan Kelly (IRL)

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

Blog Observer: Gus Stark

Presentation of the match:

A quarterfinal which will leave Mali players thinking of what could have been. Africans started the game on top and were the more dangerous team. However, aggressive approach led to two rash challenges one of which resulted in a red card. Even playing with a player down, Mali often looked the more dangerous side impressing with slick passing and movement. Early dismissal exhausted the African team and the Italians managed to break the game in the 81st minute. The refereeing team had a generally good outing with some areas for improvement.

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

Ismail Elfath exhibited calm throughout most of the match. Two potential flashpoints were two heavy tackles made by Mali players resulting in correct YC at 18' and a straight RC at 21'. Having said that, this observer would have

liked to see more of the referee's personality. There was an altercation between groups of players at 19' when the tension was rising following the YC. However, the referee completely ignored the players involved and only gave a verbal warning to Italy player who committed a foul. Also, there were a few VAR checks during the game and it seemed the referee allowed the players too much freedom in questioning his decisions during the checks. This was particularly evident during a strange protest from Mali players at 62' following a goal scored by Italy. VAR check confirmed the goal, but Mali players were crowding the referee and demanding he do an OFR. LOTG demand a caution for such behavior.

Foul detection was acceptable, but lacked consistency. Soft calls (4', PK at 81') were mixed with potentially missed fouls (37', 45', 90'). Concentration maintained during added time when Italy player was asked to leave the pitch after receiving treatment (90+1') and correctly awarded PK (90+5'). Management of additional time was questionable. 4' of added time were indicated. The penalty was awarded at 94'35" and completed at 95'35", but the final whistle came at 96'42". The kicker missed the penalty and there seemed to be a touch from the GK. The referee did not seem to indicate a corner (or a goal kick either). However, at 90+6' the referee indicates there was a touch and gives a corner. If this change of mind came with the help of VAR, it is a violation of the VAR protocol.

Ismail Elfath's running shape visually seems laborious, but he was always at a good distance thanks to good awareness and positioning.

On-field refereeing team had no problems cooperating, but VAR may have been misused as discussed above.

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

No situations to mention, expected level performance.

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

Three offside calls, all correct and according to procedure (wait for VAR input if borderline). Expected performance.

Fourth Official performance:

Expected level, no situations to mention.