

Law 5 - The Referee

REFEREE OBSERVATION REPORT

Competition, match, final score: U20WC – M22 – Saudi Arabia (3) v Mali (4)

Refereeing team:

Referee: Slavko Vinčič (SVN)

Assistant Referee 1: Tomaž Klančnik (SVN)

Assistant Referee 2: Andraž Kovačič (SVN)

Fourth Official: Davide Massa (ITA)

Video Assistant Referee: Alejandro José Hernández Hernández (ESP)

Assistant Video Assistant Referee: Paweł Raczkowski (POL)

Blog Observer: Alex F

Presentation of the match:

The second match of the tournament for both teams, each having coming off of a disappointing first game result: Saudi Arabia (white today) with a loss, Mali (yellow) giving up a late draw. Two continental champions in need of a win were going to come out strong and Vinčič and his crew needed to put in a matching performance.

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

This game was an interesting one in that both teams played with a sense of urgency, looking to put points on the board. Mali started significantly stronger, but Saudi Arabia tallied the first two goals, with Mali pulling one back shortly before halftime. At the end of the first half, Mali had committed 10 fouls (13', 14', 15', 15', 22', 23', 26', 41', 43', 45+1') to Saudi Arabia's 1 (41'), despite having had the general run of play. The frustration levels of the Mali players at this apparent injustice. While Vinčič was correct on the majority of these offences, even finding a soft foul by Saudi Arabia before the 41st minute would have likely lessened Mali frustrations. One option could have been in the 11th minute when KSA#3 committed a hard (but deemed fair) challenge on MLI#18 that frustrated several Mali players.

Vinčič had a good advantage at the 15th minute and came back and cautioned MLI#15 for either a reckless challenge or SPA (either could have held true here). Another caution followed to MLI#4 in the 26th minute. Another caution could have been given in the 43rd when MLI#11 lunged at KSA#19, but Vinčič was satisfied with just the free kick.

The second half was much more even with Saudi Arabia committing 8 fouls (YC at 75' to KSA#17) and Mali 10 fouls (no cards).

The two talking points from this match both were related to VAR. The second incident, in the 54th minute after Mali had scored a 2-2 goal led to the game not restarting due to the VAR check until a full two minutes had passed. Players and the crowd were getting clearly edgy, and this was likely due to the first incident, which started in the 15th minute.

After playing an excellent advantage (noted above), Vinčič signalled for simulation (YC/IFK) against KSA#9 for a fall just inside the penalty area. The call was made at 14:38 on the game clock. VAR intervened and after an OFR, Vinčič signalled for a penalty kick instead at 16:24. This was a generally acceptable timeframe. And due to the location of the offence, MLI#13 was issued a caution for DOGSO. The penalty kick was taken over a minute later (17:40) and stopped by MLI#16, the goalkeeper, eventually going out for a corner kick. This corner was delayed and VAR indicated to Vinčič that the goalkeeper had encroached. Vinčič showed a caution and had the penalty kick retaken, and that was done at 19:34, the entire process taking almost exactly five minutes beginning to end. Video suggested that MLI#16 (GK) was perhaps six inches off of the goal line, so it is likely that the interpretation being used is to clamp down on all GK encroachment during this tournament.

In any case, with a 5+ minute process for a penalty kick to be awarded and ultimately taken, the VAR process too far too long with far too much delay, and this is not what the game wants. In addition to this, only three minutes were added to the end of the first half, despite this delay plus several other cards and injuries to tend to.

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

AR1, Klančnik, had four offside calls during the match (2', 21', 36', 67'), but was otherwise not too busy and was consistently in the appropriate position to make calls, using differing types of movement to ensure this.

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

AR2, Kovačič, was not nearly as busy as his counterpart with only two offside calls made (73', 90+2'), both against Mali. The first pulled a goal back, supported by VAR. He was consistently in the appropriate position to make calls, using differing types of movement to ensure this.

Fourth Official performance:

Executed his role on an expected level.