Law 5 - The Referee

REFEREE OBSERVATION REPORT

2019 FIFA UNDER 20 WORLD CUP – GROUP STAGE – MD2

QATAR – UKRAINE 0-1

27/05/2019 18:00 CET

Referee: Héctor Said Martínez Sorto (HON)

Assistant Referee 1: Walter Enrique López Ramos (HON)

Assistant Referee 2: Helpys Raymundo Feliz Cuevas (DOM)

Fourth Official: Iván Arcides Barton Cisneros (SLV)

Video Assistant Referee: Julio Alberto González Bascuñán (CHI)

Assistant Video Assistant Referee: Gery Anthony Vargas Carreño (BOL)

Blog Observer: Chefren

Presentation of the match:

Matchday 2 of U20 WC group stage, group D. Qatar and Ukraine meeting in Tychy. The Asian team had lost its first game, so after that they were forced to win, while Ukraine had won the first match, being in advantage for a possible qualification to KO stage. Not a great attendance at Tychy Stadium, that was almost empty. Atmosphere was absolutely calm. No pressure at all for the referee appointed for this game, Martínez Sorto from Honduras. The match was not easy to manage, and the difficulty for sure more than normal, because some players from both teams had a certain attitude to strong physical play. However, I think that in this context referee could have made better by using a different approach, as I will explain on next chapter.

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

Martínez Sorto had a quite good foul detection with some small exceptions but in my opinion he was not consistent during the whole game regarding disciplinary control and there were some situations in which a better solution would have been possible. Also, in terms of personality and acceptance he has clear room for improvement. Physical condition was not a problem, he was fit and I can mention a situation in which he was absolutely close by making a correct call, whistling a foul (10') at the edge of penalty area. A total of 44 fouls were whistled in this game, this was a

quite mandatory choice, given the style of both teams. However, despite of that, there were also situations in which advantage was very well used (20', 34'). The game was intensive starting from the beginning and referee had a first clue of what was about to follow for him when he whistled the first infringment after only 50 seconds. This was a blatant holding that could have resulted already in YC. However, given that referee was aware and he warned the player, I think disciplinary measure was not strictly necessary there. After a situation in which another YC could have been issued (20', good advantage in this case), referee issued the first sanction in 22', when, immediately after a whistle for another foul, a player committeed a reckless challenge. This was a fully justified choice. Regarding first half, I need to point out that referee was not so much able in making him accepted by players, even though there weren't blatant consequences of that, he was in trouble when he had to manage a corner kick by making prevention in more than an occasion (25', 30'). After some attempts, it looked like he had renounced to warn players, allowing them to continue without being strong and firm, also whistling possible fouls. I think that in these situations referee showed that in case of a more challenging game he could have been in real trouble by applying this style. In minute 27' a potentially crucial situation occurred in Ukraine's penalty area, with a player from Qatar who wanted to demonstrate that he had been hit by opponent with arm. Referee played on, maybe he didn't have the exact perception of what happened. VAR supported. Given that replays are not clear and closer ones not available, I have decided to back referee because one can't be sure that the touch was enough to whistle a foul and the intensity. However, in any case, referee could have managed it better by showing at least alertness toward the incident. In minute 40' in my opinion a very important incident occurred, with a reckless tackle by a player from Ukraine that went unpunished. Referee whistled only the foul but in this case YC was mandatory, this challenge was even close to RC for SFP. VAR supported and I can easily understand the reason: not a clear RC, but still a very clear YC. This missed card was even more evident when in 85' referee sent off a player from Qatar for a similar challenge by a straight RC. More than reckless, maybe not a 100% clear RC, but still ok to send off the player. Indeed, VAR backed referee also in this case, but clearly there wasn't any consistency with the previous incident. So a very important point for improvement for referee is to find balance when issuing disciplinary measures. If he thought that the tackle in 40' was not even YC, he couldn't then send off a player for a similar challenge in 85'. However there were also positive notes: both YC in 48' (raised leg hitting the head of opponent while contending the ball, but without excessive force) and 68' (very reckless challenge from behind) were absolutely correct, as well as a simulation – decision in 46' (very clear). Regarding YC in 68', I can't exclude that FO helped referee, as he was very close to incident, and referee showed the card with a small delay (maybe after advice and cooperation?). In any case, very good. In 64', another situation in which a player from Qatar could have been booked and I would have liked to see the card. Having to summarize the performance I would say that the overall image was not totally positive, but at the same time not extremely poor. There were for sure some positive aspects, and I can understand why he is considered a young and potentially talented referee, but on the other hand something more is absolutely expected in: read of the game (understanding the way of playing by some teams), consistency in disciplinary control, acceptance (dealing in a firm way with players behavior). I think that referee

should get a second game in which to show a better performance. Otherwise, I can't imagine him in KO stage based on this first appearance.

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

AR1 had a game of normal difficulty without being so much challenged but he made a quite blatant mistake when he missed a very clear offside in the additional time of first half (45'+2). Flag was not raised, not even afterwards, since game was resumed by a goal kick. The offside position was clearly noticeable, so I expected more in this situation, after a not challenging first half. In second half, he signaled offside in 87': in this case I can't be sure based on video footage, it is possible that player was in extremely tight offside, however it was a borderline situation. The good thing this time was that he waited for the end of the action and a possible goal before raising flag, so VAR in case would have been fully entitled to intervene and correct the original decision, if wrong. Therefore a good appication of VAR protocol. However, merely based on the first situation reported, I can't consider the performance as expected level, despite of a normal difficulty, I think that AR1 has surely points for improvements.

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

AR2 had a regular performance in a game of normal difficulty. Unluckily, it is not possible to make a deeper and detailed assessment about his work, because in both situations in which he raised the flag for offside (50' and 84') replays were not shown and the live sequence was not enough in order to make the final evaluation. I can just back him. In addition, he cooperated when needed, for example reporting a foul in the last minute of the game (90'+3). Expected level.

Fourth Official performance:

I can't exclude that FO helped referee in 68' when a correct YC was issued for reckless challenge, this foul happened very close to him. Referee showed his card with a certain delay, I can't be sure but in case very good cooperation. As for the rest, another mention for an incident occurred in second half's injury time, minute 90'+1, he was very alert after a foul whistled by referee, he joined the pitch being ready to prevent a possible confrontation. Furthermore, in first half he was seen dealing with team officials on the benches with a very calm and composed style. So I would say that his performance was definitely more than an expected level because he showed, with such interventions, to be "in the game". Well done.