

Law 5 - The Referee

REFEREE OBSERVATION REPORT

2019 FIFA UNDER 20 WORLD CUP

Match 9 (Bydgoszcz)

25 May 2019, 18:00 CET

Panama - Mali

Referee: Davide Massa (ITA)

Assistant Referee 1: Filippo Meli (ITA)

Assistant Referee 2: Fabiano Preti (ITA)

Fourth Official: Sandro Schärer (SUI)

Video Assistant Referee: Marco Guida (ITA)

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

Law 5 Blog Observer: Mikael W.

Presentation of the match:

Opening game of this FIFA Under-20 World Cup for Panama (PAN) and Mali (MLI), who played in Bydgoszcz in pleasant conditions and although the stadium was far from full, a decent ambience was delivered by the spectators. This game was officiated by Davide Massa, thirty-seven years old referee who is the only Italian in FIFA's vision regarding the next World Cup. Very little happened in this game for the refereeing (eg. first and only YC at 90'), until the last ten minutes where it became more interesting with some scenes to evaluate. On the whole, one can reflect on a well-handled game by the referees.

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

Firstly, I would like to underline three important scenes that occurred all after 80'.

* 83'. This situation went totally *under-the-radar* with players, coaches, spectators, broadcasters – and crucially referees. [I am quite sure that MLI player planted his studs with much force on his opponents' shin; no foul was awarded and no insinuation that VAR Marco Guida had any interest in looking again.](#) We cannot assign a crucial mistake because we can't be sure, but my deep feeling is that this was **at least** a dark YC.

* 85'. [Penalty is assigned after a careless trip.](#) Excellent decision by Massa, who also computed that it took place inside the penalty area.

* 89'. [MLI No.8 is cautioned for committing a reckless tackle.](#) Tackle was rather a flying one, and a RC was actually possible here. YC is the more logical choice though, considering the context of this match.

Both nations were just focused on playing football, and the referee could just stay in the background; Massa is a referee with quite an elegant optic, his running style, gestures and talks with players all seem very natural and relaxed. He was always in the background in this match, which generally allowed it. I appreciated his little talk at 12' with a MLI player who just committed a foul that his opponent exaggerated- it fully reached its target. There were rarely other scenes to have public words with the players. A caution was possible at 54' for a studs-on-boot tackle, but I agree with the evaluation that it was rather a heavier careless foul. Hence, I want to summarise by asyndetically listing some points for consideration he can take on board for the future:

=> Improving his dynamic sprinting, twice (15', 65') he was *caught out* by not increasing his running speed. At 15' when PAN lost the ball on the halfway line, Massa should have read the chance for a quick attack, and have dynamically sprinted to the left. He got *stuck* in the diagonal channel and quite far away, and would have struggled to evaluate a penalty area scene.

=> Being ready to use advantage more sparingly. Massa should differentiate between TEAM BALL and an ATTACKING ADVANTAGE. Especially one at 28' was quite *dangerous*. He should be ready to leave the background and whistle in the midfield when necessary; in this easy game it didn't matter.

=> Too many late whistles. These were not the late whistles that were serving football, he took a bit too long to compute some relatively simple duels. Again for this match not a problem, but in other circumstances it could bare trouble.

=> He should be more determined against the surrounding players at the penalty scene- having just taken an excellent crucial decision, defend it with more determination!

We have to see Davide Massa in a harder match to really compute his potential.

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

Filippo Meli had a good performance. He always computed his offside decisions correctly, as far as we could decide with replays given. He showed to have a sophisticated understanding of the wait-and-see technique for very promising attacks in VAR games at 35'. Just sth to consider: not flagging very clear offside situations can make the match harder to officiate, (what is easy to say from the armchair) have confidence to immediately put the flag up for crystal clear offsides. Well done.

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

Fabiano Preti also had a good performance, getting every on/off-side decisions right that we could evaluate. Like Meli, I offer the consideration that flagging crystal clear offsides even in very promising attacks can help the referee keep control of the match in case of a more challenging match.

Fourth Official performance:

Sandro Schärer executed his role on an expected level.