

Law 5 - The Referee

REFEREE OBSERVATION REPORT

Competition, match, final score:

2019 FIFA U-20 World Cup

HONDURAS - NEW ZEALAND

Score: 0-5 (half-time score: 0-3)

Refereeing team:

Referee: Alexis HERRERA (Venezuela)

Assistant Referees: Jorge URREGO (Venezuela), Tulio MORENO (Venezuela)

Fourth official: Joel ALARCON (Peru)

Video Assistant Referee: Julio BASCUÑAN (Chile)

Assistant Video Assistant Referee: Jesús VALENZUELA (Chile)

Blog Observer: Stake

Presentation of the match:

First match for both teams in Group C for Honduras and New Zealand at this year's edition of the FIFA U-20 World Cup in Poland. The game itself was not particularly entertaining, also given the final result, which was 5-0 in favour of the Oceanian side. They have been dominating the game on a physical basis and were always superior in contrary to their opponents. This game took place in front of a crowd of nearly 4,500 people in Lublin in what looked to be pleasant meteorological conditions and was awarded to a Venezuelan trio, led by Alexis Herrera.

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

In this match, the referee did clearly recognised that both teams were interested in playing football: both teams behaved in a fair manner during the 90 minutes of the game, which allowed the match to flow properly and which allowed the referee to stay in the background. Having very early determined the character of the game, the referee was able to read it very good, which led to two good advantages (**6'** and **70'**).

In terms of the application of the Laws of the Game, we can say that Mr Herrera had a consistent line and mainly whistled smaller careless fouls throughout the entire game. One of these smaller careless fouls led to a **correctly disallowed goal for NZL in 88'**, since the referee spotted a careless foul by NZL4 on HON16 prior to the goal. A decision which was correct for my taste and also supported by VAR.

In his disciplinary actions, he was always present when needed: so for example in 19', where HON6 was correctly awarded the first yellow card for a high leg on his NZL opponent (reckless tackle). Perfect opening card! The other yellow card in 70' for HON13 for holding his opponent was also a clear textbook example, an easy and good decision by Mr Herrera. However, there is one incident that we must analyze a bit closer, **which is the YC to NZL3 given after an on-field review in 80'**: NZL3 stamps his opponent on the ankle. NZL3 was trying to get the ball, but his opponent at the same time kicked the ball away, which led therefore to the contact, an incident which the referee seems to have missed. VAR Bascuñan recommended an OFR for a possible red card and the final decision by the referee was a YC only. In my personal opinion, if VAR decides to recommend an OFR in such a situation, one must consider the fact of endangering the safety of the opponent. Given that the intensity of the contact was quite high, I would personally have **preferred to see a straight RC in that situation, given that there was a possibility that the opponent could have been safely injured.**

Alexis Herrera is a referee who is in an EXCELLENT physical and athletic condition, which one could immediately see once the first whistle was blown: he was always close to play and did not hesitate to run far inside the penalty area when necessary. Sometimes he was even too fast when following the play, but being too fast here is another proof for his excellent physical condition.

In conclusion, one can say that - despite the controversial VAR incident - Alexis Herrera delivered an expected performance in his first fixture at this U20 World Cup. A further assignment at this tournament should follow undoubtedly for the Venezuelan, whom I'd like to see in more challenging games, where his personality will be much more needed than today (given the very fair approach by both Honduras and New Zealand). In any case, the big picture is satisfying. All the best for the future!

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

Not much challenged. Only one offside correctly evaluated. Performance on expected level.

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

Not much challenged. **Very tight and good ONSIDE decision prior to the 0-2 in 17'**. Decision to keep the flag down was fully correct, well spotted! Otherwise, a performance on expected level.

Fourth Official performance:

Nothing to report. Performance on expected level.