

Law 5 - The Referee

REFEREE OBSERVATION REPORT

2019 FIFA UNDER 20 WORLD CUP – GROUP STAGE – MD3

SOUTH AFRICA – PORTUGAL 1-1

31/05/2019 20:30 CET

Referee: Alexis Adrián Herrera Hernández (VEN)

Assistant Referee 1: Jorge Eliecer Urrego Martínez (VEN)

Assistant Referee 2: Tulio Enrique Moreno Cedeño (VEN)

Fourth Official: Pacifique Ndabihawenimana (BDI)

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 3 of 2019 FIFA Under 20 World Cup group stage, group F. South Africa and Portugal meeting in Bielsko-Biala. This game was important for both teams but with a clear difference. Portugal with 3 points would have very likely directly qualified for KO stage, while South Africa, despite of having lost both previous games, would have had still chances, being among the possible candidates for the best third-placed team with 3 points. There wasn't a full attendance at stadium and the atmosphere was not challenging for referee. Game showed that one side (Portugal) was more determined than the other one to reach their goal. Referee in charge was Alexis Herrera from Venezuela, at his second appointment of the tournament, after Honduras – New Zealand on 24 May. Based on the report written by our colleague Stake, in that previous game basically his performance had been OK and there were some positive notes. South American referee had to confirm expectations but in my opinion unluckily he failed, as I will explain in this report.

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

Alexis Herrera, a referee with a very good physical condition all match long, had a very easygoing approach to the game, also helped by the fact that in first half the play was very fluent with only 10 fouls whistled and nothing extraordinary. Under this aspect, we could say that referee's performance after the first 45 minutes was surely a full expected level. However, things turned differently in second half, regarding both crucial incidents and disciplinary control. Some things to be mentioned regarding the first half are the awareness by referee (very positive note) starting from the early minutes about the choice made by South African team, to be content just by avoiding a loss. Indeed, RSA keeper got a warning for time-wasting in 8' when score was 0-0. This was for sure an extra-ordinary case, but absolutely justified. Apart from that, regarding first half, one can mention only another incident occurred in 31', in which, despite of the fact that player had hit the ball by his tackle, his challenge involved also the opponent, in a situation borderline between careless and reckless. However, still nothing that important. All the relevant and significant events occurred in second half. In 49', following a corner kick, referee was invited to rewatch an incident leading to a possible penalty for deliberate handball. Having watched the replay, I agree with VAR that it was a punishable one. Before the exact moment of the handball, there was a clear movement by arm. This made the touch punishable despite of a not so open position of the arm. From referee's position it was not easy to spot this penalty, also due to players movements. Some minutes later, 57', referee was called again to rewatch an incident, this time I think that he could have spotted it live, at least more easily than the first case. He was close but he failed in detecting the arm of RSA defender that was clearly going toward the ball. Despite of a good positioning he missed it live. However referee was very clever, and that's a positive note, in managing goalkeepers before both penalties. He warned them and he invited to respect the rules. Being back to analyze disciplinary control, between the two crucial incidents, a clear YC was missed in 56', and if in first half there hadn't been problems regarding disciplinary control, this was actually a very clear mistake. Referee showed the advantage gesture, but with a weak body language, I would have liked to see him booking the player at the end of the action. In 66' there was a possible foul when player from Portugal had already kicked the ball, in this case I think referee missed it, but in my opinion a possible YC once whistled. In the last minutes of the game the "tactics" by RSA was even clearer. They were satisfied with a draw (despite of being eliminated in that case) and a player pretended an injury in 90'+2. Referee should have warned him. In 90'+1 a very clear YC for reckless challenge (also SPA, but reckless is stronger argument here), was correctly issued. Maybe this was the result of a missing gradual approach of disciplinary control in second half. The last minutes of the match were also characterised by a certain tension. There weren't blatant incidents or further crucial situations, but the feeling is that referee would have lost control in case of a more challenging context. My final impression is therefore that, to come to a conclusion, referee suffered afterwards from a too relaxed approach that he had in first half, and he was not ready to face the situations occurred when the game was resumed after the half-time. It was for sure a totally different scenario. With a more accurate disciplinary control, he could have offered definitely a better performance. Performance is therefore not satisfying and surely below the previous one he showed. In addition there were two crucial situations missed from the pitch: as reported, if in the first case I can still think it was difficult to spot for referee, the second penalty could have been detected and whistled live. And that's another point for improvement. I think

that the tournament for the South American referee could end here because he didn't still show to have the skills to officiate in KO stage. I think he can use these games to prepare and be ready in case of new calls by FIFA for the future. In any case, I wish him good luck.

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

AR1 had basically a regular performance with only one offside involvement: in minute 47' there was a player from RSA in offside, he also committed a deliberate handball while controlling the ball. AR1 raised the flag for reporting one of the two offenses (either offside or foul) but unluckily it was not shown by broadcaster which signal he made with his flag. It is however possible that he called offside while referee, also ready to whistle, detected the handball. In any case for sure I can't question on this incident because it was correctly solved by officiating crew. There weren't other offside situations and game was definitely normal-difficulty for AR1 under this point of view. He reported a foul in his vicinity in 17', 4 minutes later there was another possible foul but in this case replay was not shown and I can't be 100% sure, so I back him.

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

Even less challenged than his colleague on the other side, AR2 was never involved in significant offside / onside decisions, his cooperation with referee was at an expected level, given that there weren't particular incidents close to him. For sure expected level, in a very calm context.

Fourth Official performance:

Fourth official with an expected level performance, one could say that in occasion of the missed YC he should have informed referee (56') but the latter was close and with an excellent view, so it was referee's (wrong) choice to miss the booking of the player. As for the rest, he was quite alert especially during the last minutes of the game, but there weren't other particular incidents to be mentioned.