



AFC
U23
CHAMPIONSHIP
CHINA 2018

REFEREEING TECHNICAL REPORT





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INTRODUCTION



The 2018 edition of the AFC U23 Championship reached new milestones in China featuring two teams from the Central and ASEAN zones in the final for the first time in the competition's history. The AFC Vision and Mission of seeing Asian teams succeeding on the biggest stages was reinforced with the remarkable progress of the Member Associations.

Fans' passion for football resounded astonishingly in digital media, with social media numbers peaking at an all-time high and outshining the figures recorded at the tournament's entire 2016 edition by the end of the Group Stage.

Aiming at delivering top refereeing performances, the AFC U23 Championship inaugurated the application of the Additional Assistant Referee (AAR) system at a centralised competition, building on its success at the knockout stages of last season's AFC Champions League. Tailor-made programmes, training and resources were designed to enhance the match officials' preparation and to ensure their uniform interpretation and consistent performance on the field of play.

With the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 in the pipeline, the event provided a suitable scenario for the execution, assessment and planning at all levels: technical, physical and administrative. This report offers an overview of the said areas, including feedback to further elevate the standards of refereeing at AFC competitions.

1.1 TEAMS OVERVIEW

Sixteen teams from four regions qualified for the AFC U23 Championship final stage. The draw ceremony, held on 24 October 2017, revealed the groups' composition and determined the opening game between hosts China PR and Oman.

Group A			Group B		
A1	China PR	(CHN)	B1	Japan	(JPN)
A2	Qatar	(QAT)	B2	DPR Korea	(PRK)
A3	Uzbekistan	(UZB)	B3	Thailand	(THA)
A4	Oman	(OMA)	B4	Palestine	(PLE)
Group C			Group D		
C1	Iraq	(IRQ)	D1	Korea Republic	(KOR)
C2	Jordan	(JOR)	D2	Australia	(AUS)
C3	Saudi Arabia	(KSA)	D3	Syria	(SYR)
C4	Malaysia	(MAS)	D4	Vietnam	(VIE)

MATCH SCHEDULE

AFC U23 CHAMPIONSHIP CHINA 2018

9 - 27 January 2018, Jiangsu, China PR

	Group Stage								Quarter Finals		Semi Finals	3rd/4th Place		Final					
	Tuesday, 9 January 2018	Wednesday, 10 January 2018	Thursday, 11 January 2018	Friday, 12 January 2018	Saturday, 13 January 2018	Sunday, 14 January 2018	Monday, 15 January 2018	Tuesday, 16 January 2018	Wednesday, 17 January 2018	Thursday, 18 January 2018	Friday, 19 January 2018	Saturday, 20 January 2018	Sunday, 21 January 2018	Monday, 22 January 2018	Tuesday, 23 January 2018	Wednesday, 24 January 2018	Thursday, 25 January 2018	Friday, 26 January 2018	Saturday, 27 January 2018
Changzhou Changzhou Olympic Sports Center	1 16:00 CHN vs OMA			9 16:00 UZB vs CHN				17 16:00 CHN vs QAT	20 16:00 THA vs PLE						29 16:00 W25 vs W27				32 16:00 W29 vs W30
Jiangyin Jiangyin Sports Center		3 16:00 PRK vs THA			11 16:00 PLE vs PRK			18 16:00 UZB vs OMA	19 16:00 JPN vs PRK		Rest Day				25 19:30 1A vs 2B	26 16:00 1B vs 2A			
Changshu Changshu Sports Center		4 19:30 JPN vs PLE			12 19:30 THA vs JPN														
Kunshan Kunshan Sports Center		5 16:00 IRQ vs MAS			13 16:00 MAS vs JOR										27 19:30 1C vs 2D	28 16:00 1D vs 2C			31 16:00 L29 vs L30
		6 19:30 JOR vs KSA			14 19:30 KSA vs IRQ			21 19:30 IRQ vs JOR	24 19:30 SYR vs VIE										
		7 16:00 AUS vs SYR			15 16:00 VIE vs AUS														
		8 19:30 KOR vs VIE			16 19:30 SYR vs KOR			22 19:30 KSA vs MAS	23 19:30 KOR vs AUS						30 19:30 W26 vs W28				

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
A1 China PR (CHN)	B1 Japan (JPN)	C1 Iraq (IRQ)	D1 Korea Republic (KOR)
A2 Qatar (QAT)	B2 DPR Korea (PRK)	C2 Jordan (JOR)	D2 Australia (AUS)
A3 Uzbekistan (UZB)	B3 Thailand (THA)	C3 Saudi Arabia (KSA)	D3 Syria (SYR)
A4 Oman (OMA)	B4 Palestine (PLE)	C4 Malaysia (MAS)	D4 Vietnam (VIE)

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1.2 STADIUMS OVERVIEW

The thirty-two matches were distributed among four different venues.

Changzhou Olympic Sports Center:

Capacity: 38,000 spectators
Matches: Group A, QAT-PLE quarter-final, QAT-VIE semi-final, and VIE-UZB final

Jiangyin Sports Center:

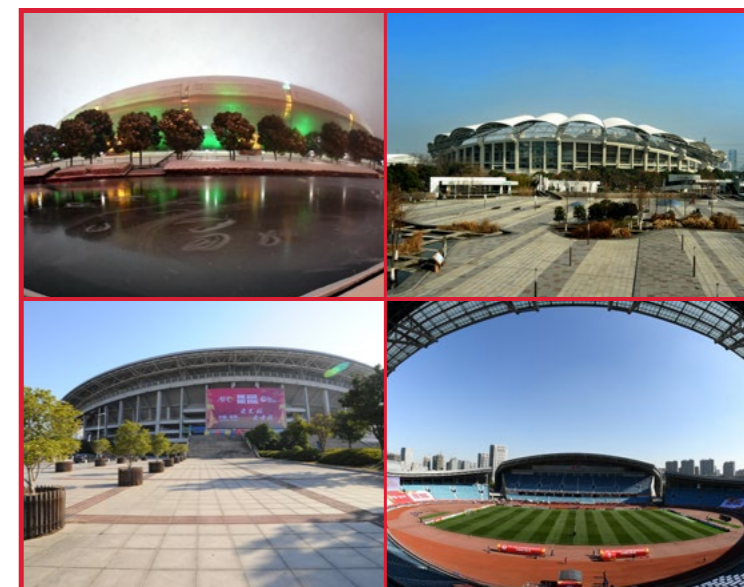
Capacity: 32,000 spectators
Matches: Group B and JPN-UZB quarter-final

Changshu Sports Center:

Capacity: 35,000 spectators
Matches: Group C and IRQ-VIE quarter-final

Kunshan Sports Center:

Capacity: 25,000 spectators
Matches: Group D, KOR-MAS quarter-final, UZB-KOR semi-final and QAT-KOR 3/4 place



LOGISTICS OVERVIEW



2.1 HEADQUARTERS & FACILITIES

AFC delegation's headquarters (HQ) was located in the Traders Fudu Hotel By Shangri-La in Changzhou, acting as the nerve centre for all refereeing activities and operations. The facilities described below were used throughout the duration of the competition.

- o Referees' Meeting Room
- o Referees' Lounge
- o Match Analysis Room
- o Gymnasium
- o Swimming Pool
- o Massage Room



2.2 TRAINING VENUE

The Changzhou Institute of Technology, located within the proximity of the headquarters, hosted the practical training sessions.



AFC REFEREEING DELEGATION

MATCH OFFICIALS

REFEREES	COUNTRY	ASSISTANT REFEREES	COUNTRY
CHRISTOPHER JAMES BEATH	AUS	MATTHEW JAMES CREAM	AUS
PETER DANIEL GREEN	AUS	YASER KHALIL EBRAHIM ABDULLA TULEFAT	BHR
NAWAF ABDULLA GHAYYATH SHUKRALLA	BHR	EBRAHIM MUBARAK SABT MOOSA SALEH	BHR
MA NING	CHN	HUO WEIMING	CHN
FU MING	CHN	CAO YI	CHN
LIU KWOK MAN	HKG	REZA EBRAHIM SOKHANDAN	IRN
ALIREZA MOHAMMAD FAGHANI	IRN	MOHAMMAD REZA DAVOUD MANSOURI	IRN
ALI SABAH ADDAY AL-QAYSI	IRQ	TORU SAGARA	JPN
MOHANAD QASIM EESSEE SARRAY	IRQ	AKANE YAGI	JPN
RYUJI SATO	JPN	AHMAD MOANNES NADI ALROALLE	JOR
JUMPEI IIDA	JPN	KWANGYEOL YOON	KOR
ADHAM MOHAMMAD TUMAH MAKHADMEH	JOR	SERGEI GRISHCHENKO	KGZ
DONGJIN KIM	KOR	MOHD YUSRI BIN MUHAMAD	MAS
HYUNGJIN KO	KOR	ABU BAKAR SALIM MAHAD AL AMRI	OMA
AHMED ABU BAKAR SAID AL KAF	OMA	TALEB SALEM H A AL-MARRI	QAT
ABDULRAHMAN IBRAHIM Y J AL-JASSIM	QAT	SAOUD AHMED S A ALMAQALEH	QAT
KHAMIS MOHAMMED S A AL-MARRI	QAT	ABDULAH MUTLAQ A ALSHALWAI	KSA
FAHAD ADWAN M ALMIRDASI	KSA	MOHAMMED MAKI A ALABAKRY	KSA
TURKI MOHAMMED A ALKHUDHAYR	KSA	RONNIE KOH MIN KIAT	SIN
MUHAMMAD TAQI ALJAAFARI BIN JAHARI	SIN	PALITHA PARAKKRAMA HEMATHUNGA DENIYE GEDARA	SRI
CRISHANTHA DILAN PERERA HETTICKANKANAMGE	SRI	MOHAMED AHMED YOUSEF ABDULLA ALHAMMADI	UAE
MOHAMMED ABDULLA HASSAN MOHAMMED	UAE	HASAN MOHAMED HASAN ABDULLA ALMAHRI	UAE
RAVSHAN IRMATOV	UZB	ABDUKHAMIDULLO RASULOV	UZB
VALENTIN KOVALENKO	UZB	JAKHONGIR SAIDOV	UZB
STAND-BY REFEREES	COUNTRY	STAND-BY ASSISTANT REFEREES	COUNTRY
MINORU TOJO	JPN	NGUYEN TRUNG HAU	VIE
ILGIZ TANTASHEV	UZB	ALI MOHAMAD AHMAD	SYR

REFEREE INSTRUCTORS

TECHNICAL INSTRUCTORS	COUNTRY	FITNESS INSTRUCTORS	COUNTRY
HANY TALEB B S AL RAEESI	QAT	GANESAN S/O MANIAM	SIN
SUBKHIDDIN BIN MOHD SALLEH	MAS	RAVICHANDRAN CHAPPANIMUTU	MAS
FARKHAD ABDULLAEV	UZB		
CHARLES CHEUNG	HKG		
NOBORU ISHIYAMA	JPN		
ISMAIL ADNAN ISMAIL ALHAFI	JOR		



LOCAL ORGANISING COMMITTEE (LOC) DELEGATION



REFEREES' LIAISON OFFICERS (HQ)

Three liaison officers (LOs) were assigned to support the coordination of all logistic requirements at the headquarters. The LOs also managed transportation and training equipment.

REFEREES' LIAISON OFFICERS (MATCH VENUES)

One liaison officer was assigned at each match venue. The LO assisted in the airport and hotel reception of the match officials, as well as ensured transportation and the readiness of the referees' room at the stadiums.

PLAYERS TEAM

22 local players plus a coach were involved in the referees' practical session to create simulated match incidents as per the technical instructors' plan.

MASSEURS

Three masseurs were based in the headquarters to perform therapeutic massages as part of the recovery and injury prevention strategies.



PRE-COMPETITION



4.1 ADDITIONAL ASSISTANT REFEREES' PREPARATION

The AFC Referees Committee agreed to the introduction of the Additional Assistant Referee (AAR) system in AFC competitions in Goa, in September 2016.

In operational terms, the referee, two assistant referees and the fourth official are now joined by two AARs positioned along the goal-line in each half.

Other than enhancing the decision making process, the AAR system benefits towards reinforcing match control through teamwork by having two different angles of vision when looking at the same incident. This creates an improved assessment in and around the penalty area, especially when the referee clearly missed the incident.

Prior to the implementation of AAR system, Asia's top referees and assistant referees took part in two preparatory courses conducted in Doha, Qatar (7-11 July 2017) and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (11-14 July 2017), respectively.

The match officials underwent theoretical as well as a series of practical on-the-field simulations aiming at reaching consistency and uniformity in their understanding and application of the system.

Specific teaching material was also designed to enhance the referees' preparation, with video and graphic demonstrations of the system's concept, protocol and technique.

4.2 FITNESS TEST

The appointed match officials performed the fitness test at the earlier AFC Elite Referees & Assistant Referees seminars, held simultaneously in Dubai, United Arab Emirates and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 20 to 30 November 2017.

Exceptionally, attendees to the AFC Additional Assistant Referees Courses were exempted to participate in the above-mentioned event and, therefore, submitted the results from the fitness test taken at their Member Associations.

4.3 TEAM ARRIVAL MEETINGS

Team Arrival Meetings (TAMs) were delivered to all teams involved in the AFC U23 Championship three days prior to their debut in the tournament.

Referee technical instructors furnished the players and other team officials with information on key topics and latest amendments of the Laws of the Game, setting the bar for the refereeing standards to be expected on the field of play. The meeting also incorporated a round of questions and answers making the experience interactive and insightful for the teams.

4.4 MATCH COORDINATION MEETINGS

Match Coordination Meetings (MCMs) were held one day prior to each group games. Based on the competition's schedule, group A and D's MCMs were conducted independently, while Groups B and C participated in a combined session.

During the meeting, attended by assigned team officials, various refereeing matters were dealt with such as injury management on the field of play, technical area management, and players' jersey colours for the specific matches.

Additionally, one MCM took place prior to the quarter-finals, semi-finals and final matches respectively.



PREPARATORY COURSE



The referees and assistant referees participated in a four-day preparatory stage from 5 to 8 January comprising theoretical sessions, a fitness check, and acclimatisation and practical sessions.

5.1 FITNESS CHECK

The fitness check consisted of a Yo-Yo Intermittent Test for referees –with the target level set at 18-2– and an Assistant Referee Intermittent Endurance Test (ARIET) for assistant referees –with the target level set at 15-53–.

Upon the monitoring of the two fitness instructors, all match officials were declared physically qualified to officiate at the competition and cope with the match demands as required.

5.2 PRACTICAL SESSIONS

Preparatory practical sessions took place at an indoor futsal court on 5 and 6 January due to the unfavourable weather conditions (heavy snow). Consequently, all activities for the first two days focused on fitness training. Once the field of play was operable, technical practical sessions including players were successfully resumed on matchday minus 2 and minus 1.

Twenty-two players plus their coach took part in the practical sessions that focused on the following topics, among others:

- o Positioning and movement
- o Additional Assistant Referee system protocol and teamwork
- o Foul recognition
- o Offside recognition
- o Free-kick management
- o Standard signalling

The technical instructors stressed the importance of referees always being in the best position to assess incidents, especially in the vicinity of the penalty area, considering the new involvement and cooperation with the AARs. Likewise, the exercises helped to adjust fine details and reinforce the importance of remaining in the same position and looking for the same angle-view as they would naturally do if no AARs were present.

An instant feedback replay station supported the training, allowing the match officials to review the incidents in situ and, therefore, enabling the incorporation of the instructors' advice in the subsequent set of exercises.



5.3 THEORETICAL SESSIONS

Preparatory theoretical sessions targeted at further enhancing the technical knowledge of the match officials and raising their performances to a much higher level up to the demand of Asia's second most prestigious tournament after AFC Asian Cup.

Uniform interpretation of the Laws of the Game, including the latest amendments, as well as expert advice on fitness related matters, and administration topics were raised during the sessions. Special attention was also given to the AAR system briefing as part of the classroom programme.

A wide number of match incidents video clips were reviewed and discussed in order to facilitate the match officials' participation, analysis and consensus.



MAIN TOPICS COVERED DURING THE THEORETICAL SESSIONS:

Technical Area

- o Positioning, movement and reading the game
- o Penalty area incidents
- o Tactical fouls
- o Challenges / tackles
- o Handling the ball
- o Match management
- o Additional Assistant Referee (AAR) system

Fitness Area

- o Fitness check
- o Weight control
- o Nutrition
- o Recovery strategies
- o Injury prevention
- o Heart monitoring system

Administration Matters

- o Championship overview
- o Stadium regulations and accreditation system
- o Pre-match procedures
- o Start list and players' equipment check
- o Referee's match report
- o Media contact and procedures
- o Transport
- o Match officials' apparel
- o Communication system sets and beep flags
- o Accommodation and logistics

DURING COMPETITION



6.1 PRACTICAL SESSIONS

While planning for the competition, the particular conditions of the AFC U23 Championship, primarily related to the number of matches, venues' location and match officials' movement schedule, were meticulously studied. Based on the findings, the instructors' team designed a customised training approach focused on maintaining and building up the fitness of the referees and ensuring they were up to the games' demands.

The fitness instructors led the daily match preparation for matchday minus one (MD -1) referees and matchday minus two (MD -2), as well as the post-match recovery sessions –gym and aqua exercises–. The referees and assistant referees were also provided with feedback on fatigue and heart rate levels, and conditioning plans to be implemented after their games.

No technical training took place after the preparatory course, except for a session after the completion of the group stage that aimed to prepare the match officials for the knockout stages.

6.2 MATCH VIDEO ASSESSMENT

All match footage was analysed live by a video referee assessor. The games were previewed at the headquarters via live streaming on the AFC official's Youtube channel.

The video referee assessor tracked the match situations, compiling all relevant details: time and nature of the incident, decision and sanction, officials involved and other inputs for discussion. As per the shortlisted clips, a first draft of the debriefing was produced and subject to the collective review of the technical and fitness instructors' team.

6.3 VENUE ASSESSMENT

Referee assessors were assigned to observe the match officials' performance at the stadiums. The referee assessors closely monitored the referees team's officiating skills and decisions made throughout the game, and furnished them with firsthand feedback.

As part of the role of the referee assessor, the match assessment reports were submitted accordingly and timely.

6.4 GENERAL MATCH DEBRIEFING SESSIONS

The general match debriefings gathered all the referees and assistant referees daily at headquarters, with the exception of those away at the matches.

Significant incidents from the previous day games were analysed with the main purpose of preparing the officials for the upcoming matches. By opening the discussion on the selected clips, the instructors highlighted areas for improvement and advised the referees and assistant referees where necessary in order to reach consistency and uniformity in foul recognition and Laws of the Game application.

6.5 INDIVIDUAL MATCH DEBRIEFING SESSIONS

Besides the general match debriefings, the referee assessors conducted individual sessions with the six officials involved in the specific game to go through it in a more comprehensive manner. The referee assessors utilised a higher number of clips, as well as their own on-field experience when meeting the referees individually.

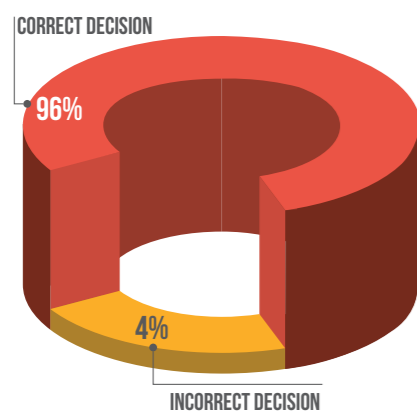
6.6 TECHNICAL STUDY GROUP SESSION

By the end of the group stage, AFC Deputy Technical Director Wim Koevermans, representing the competition's technical study group, shared with the referees an overview of the teams' technical and tactical approach. This valuable insight into players' style and behaviour, teams' tactics and crucial areas to focus from a refereeing perspective, enhanced the preparation for the knockout stages.

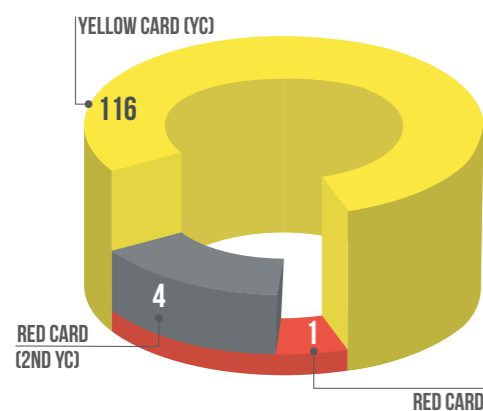


PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

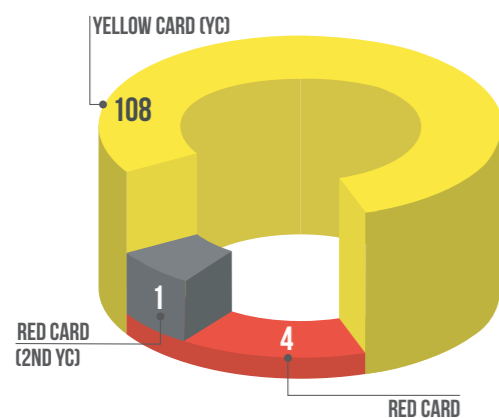
ADDITIONAL ASSISTANT REFEREES' INTERVENTIONS



AFC U23 CHAMPIONSHIP CHINA 2018



AFC U23 CHAMPIONSHIP QATAR 2016



7.1 GENERAL PERFORMANCE

The AFC U23 Championship acted as a showcase of AFC's flagship event, the Asian Cup to be held in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in 2019.

Therefore, Asia's top-ranked match officials were appointed for the tournament, endorsed by their vast experience in handling high-level football games. The same group underwent the preparatory stage prior to the implementation of the additional assistant referees and kept accumulating experience on the system over the 32 matches officiated in China. The support provided to the main referees proved successful as highlighted in this report.

As reported by the referee assessors and instructors' team, the general performance of the match officials was very good. Practical sessions and post-match debriefings contributed to the early detection and improvement when a situation was incorrectly judged; on the contrary, these activities mostly reinforced the strengths and positive trends shown by the referees.

From the physical point of view, the referees and assistant referees displayed high levels of fitness at the AFC U23 Championship, benefiting from the training and maintenance programme designed by the fitness instructors. As well, no serious injuries occurred during the period.

7.2 ADDITIONAL ASSISTANT REFEREES' PERFORMANCE

A game-changing decision was made by the additional assistant referee at the semi-final match Qatar versus Vietnam. The AAR correctly identified that the ball had completely crossed the goal-line, adding Qatar's equalising goal to the final score that allowed the team to proceed to kicks from penalty mark.

Throughout the competition, the additional assistant referees successfully cooperated with the referee in decision-making in and around the penalty area in twenty-seven incidents out of the thirty two matches. The AARs' support was accurate in a 96% of the situations with only a minimal percentage of incorrect calls made (4%).

7.3 GENERAL MANAGEMENT

A total of 121 disciplinary sanctions were issued. Out of the total, 116 cautions were yellow cards, four dismissals took place after a second caution and one direct red card was shown. There was a match average of 3.6 yellow cards and 0.16 red cards. However, in contrast with the last edition of the AFC U23 Championship Qatar 2016, the total and average of direct red cards decreased from 0.13 to 0.03.



CONCLUSION

The holistic approach to the match officials' educational programmes, monitoring their physical fitness and technical performances, and the continuous effort by the AFC in planning tailor-made development activities contributed to the top-level of refereeing witnessed at the AFC U23 Championship China.

The host country, China, represented by the Local Organising Committee, ensured a suitable and professional environment in which the referees and the assistant referees could realise their full potential.

The AFC refereeing fraternity looks forward to continuing raising the bar of the match officials' performances, sparing no resources in their development, and aspiring to excellence at continental and worldwide level.

From the technical area, the main highlight was the positive outcome of the introduction of the two additional assistant referees in the match officials' team. Laying the foundations ahead of the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019, the U23 tournament was the launchpad of the system at national team competitions.





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to convey our sincere gratitude and acknowledge the following parties for their contribution to the success of the AFC refereeing activities:

- o The AFC President
- o The AFC Referees Committee
- o The AFC Management
- o The Chinese Football Association (CFA) and the Local Organising Committee
- o The AFC technical and fitness instructors
- o The AFC match officials



Continental  德国



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