

Busacca: Consistency is crucial for referees

A major milestone for referees that are aiming to officiate at the 2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil was reached this week with an intensive four-day seminar conducted at the Home of FIFA in Zurich between 16 and 19 April.

This week's event featured UEFA match officials – referees and assistant referees – and followed recent seminars in the CONCACAF and CONMEBOL regions. Referees from the AFC, OFC and CAF Confederations will engage in seminars in their respective regions over the coming fortnight.

FIFA's Head of Refereeing, Massimo Busacca, himself a highly regarded former FIFA World Cup referee, conducted the intense seminar which involved numerous theoretical and practical sessions.

Prospective match officials for Brazil 2014 had already attended an event in Zurich last September, while this second seminar built further upon that base. Some of the key areas focussed upon were protecting players and the image of the game; consistency and uniformity; reading the game from a technical and tactical perspective; and understanding a variety of player and team mentalities.

Busacca says that while they are currently working with 19 UEFA-based referees and 57 assistants, there is still scope for others to make the final list at Brazil 2014. "Like a national team, we have been working for almost two years now," said Busacca. "We want to give a clear message: the list is open. A referee may not have the qualities today that we are looking for, but maybe he will tomorrow.

"In this way referees outside the current list should be motivated knowing they can still potentially participate in the final competition. We are operating like a football team. Today we are involved in qualifiers, but we don't yet know who will be in our final World Cup squad." Busacca states the next step in developing the class of 2014 is building a level of equality and consistency in on-field decision-making. "We are looking for uniformity and consistency for the future, this is key for us," says the vastly experienced Swiss.

"It's important for us to watch the qualifiers, the league games and try to see who has a good tactical approach during the game. The referees who get this are the ones who are able to participate in big competitions. These are our next steps."

One of the key components of this week's seminar was fair play, and more specifically, protecting players and the image of the game. And Busacca is at pains to stress this area is a key point going into Brazil 2014.

"For me, it's one of the most important messages we have to give to the world and the players," he said. "We are going to Brazil, one of the most famous and key football countries. We need fair play, we need respect.

"Situations happen in less than one second for the referees, sometimes they don't have the right angle, so it's important to collaborate. Players have to understand that football is something you have to enjoy, not destroy. Sometimes for the referee, if there's no fair play, it's very difficult to make the right decision."

Cultural understanding □ Another important pillar of the seminar was based around understanding different football mentalities, so how can referees further develop this aspect?

"By eating football, like players and coaches do," says Busacca. "That's how the referees will understand the different football mentalities. Watching videos and understanding the differences.

"At that seminar, we had theoretical sessions where we watched videos of situations from

different confederations. We have to understand every zone be it Africa, Asia, Central America, because then the referees won't 'expect the unexpected'. We need to anticipate the different cultures as much as possible. It's very important."

Busacca says there is also a strong focus on positioning, with goal-line match officials not currently used at FIFA tournaments. "We focus particularly hard on positioning at the moment," he said. "A well-positioned referee is able to anticipate and have a better reading of what happens in the grey zone, the penalty area, and generally the parts of the pitch which are very hard to see. With all this training, I think the current four referees can then see more things."

Goal-line technology will feature at a FIFA World Cup for the first time next year and Busacca believes it is an important addition. "Goal-line technology is quite important of course," he says. "Thinking back to the last FIFA World Cup, we had a situation where the ball passed over the line by 50 centimetres or so. With this technology, referees can concentrate on other delicate areas, such as offsides, etc, so it's a huge support mechanism."

"We did some real testing at the FIFA Club World Cup in December and while we did not have any clear situations the system worked very well, and I'm sure it will be hugely beneficial in the future."

Busacca acknowledges that several areas of refereeing can be enhanced and he says FIFA are working hard to that end. "Reading the game and the tactical approach can be enhanced," he said. "Of course we cannot possibly eliminate all mistakes, but we can do everything possible to reduce them. We are human and as such, we will always make mistakes."

"What we are doing here is providing a tactical approach, concentrating on positioning, and giving a clear message to the players that, with the help of fair play, we can reduce the quantity of errors, which is our aim. This is our duty and I hope the message will be clear for all."

Taken from:

<http://www.fifa.com/aboutfifa/footballdevelopment/technicalsupport/refereeing/news/newsid=2060807/index.html>