



FIFA WORLD CUP
RUSSIA 2018

Referees of the 2018 FIFA World Cup™

Statistical Kit



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Photo on cover by Alex Livesey - FIFA/FIFA via Getty Images

Referee Nicola Rizzoli (C) with Philipp Lahm (L) of Germany and Lionel Messi (R) of Argentina prior to the 2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil Final match between Germany and Argentina at the Maracana in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

List of Referees (35)

Confederation	Name	Nationality
AFC	FAGHANI Alireza	IR Iran
AFC	IRMATOV Ravshan	Uzbekistan
AFC	MOHAMMED Mohammed Abdulla	United Arab Emirates
AFC	SATO Ryuji	Japan
AFC	SHUKRALLA Nawaf	Bahrain
CAF	ABID CHAREF Mehdi	Algeria
CAF	DIEDHIOU Malang	Senegal
CAF	GASSAMA Bakary	Gambia
CAF	GRISHA Ghead	Egypt
CAF	SIKAZWE Janny	Zambia
CAF	WEYESA Bamlaku	Ethiopia
CONCACAF	AGUILAR Joel	El Salvador
CONCACAF	GEIGER Mark	USA
CONCACAF	MARRUFO Jair	USA
CONCACAF	MONTERO Ricardo	Costa Rica
CONCACAF	PITTI John	Panama
CONCACAF	RAMOS Cesar	Mexico
CONMEBOL	BASCUNAN Julio	Chile
CONMEBOL	CACERES Enrique	Paraguay
CONMEBOL	CUNHA Andres	Uruguay
CONMEBOL	PITANA Nestor	Argentina
CONMEBOL	RICCI Sandro	Brazil
CONMEBOL	ROLDAN Wilmar	Colombia
OFC	CONGER Matt	New Zealand
OFC	HAUATA Norbert	Tahiti
UEFA	BRYCH Felix	Germany
UEFA	CAKIR Cuneyt	Turkey
UEFA	KARASEV Sergei	Russia
UEFA	KUIPERS Bjorn	Netherlands
UEFA	MARCINIAK Szymon	Poland
UEFA	MATEU Antonio	Spain
UEFA	MAZIC Milorad	Serbia
UEFA	ROCCHI Gianluca	Italy
UEFA	SKOMINA Damir	Slovenia
UEFA	TURPIN Clement	France

List of Assistant Referees (62)

Confederation	Name	Nationality
AFC	AL MARRI Taleb	Qatar
AFC	ALHAMMADI Mohamed	United Arab Emirates
AFC	ALMAHRI Hasan	United Arab Emirates
AFC	MANSOURI Mohammadreza	IR Iran
AFC	RASULOV Abdukhamidullo	Uzbekistan
AFC	SAGARA Toru	Japan
AFC	SAIDOV Jakhongir	Uzbekistan
AFC	SOKHANDAN Reza	IR Iran
AFC	TULEFAT Yaser	Bahrain
AFC	YAMAUCHI Hiroshi	Japan
CAF	ACHIK Redouane	Morocco
CAF	AHMED Waleed	Sudan
CAF	BIRUMUSHAHU Jean Claude	Burundi
CAF	CAMARA Djibril	Senegal
CAF	DOS SANTOS Jerson	Angola
CAF	ETCHIALI Abdelhak	Algeria
CAF	HMILA Anouar	Tunisia
CAF	SAMBA El Hadji	Senegal
CAF	SIWELA Zakhele	South Africa
CONCACAF	ANDERSON Frank	USA
CONCACAF	FLETCHER Joe	Canada
CONCACAF	HERNANDEZ Miguel	Mexico
CONCACAF	MORA Juan Carlos	Costa Rica
CONCACAF	ROCKWELL Corey	USA
CONCACAF	TORRENTERA Marvin	Mexico
CONCACAF	VICTORIA Gabriel	Panama
CONCACAF	ZUMBA Juan	El Salvador
CONMEBOL	ASTROZA Carlos	Chile
CONMEBOL	BELATTI Juan Pablo	Argentina
CONMEBOL	CARDOZO Eduardo	Paraguay
CONMEBOL	DE CARVALHO Emerson	Brazil
CONMEBOL	DE LA CRUZ Cristian	Colombia
CONMEBOL	ESPINOSA Mauricio	Uruguay
CONMEBOL	GUZMAN Alexander	Colombia
CONMEBOL	MAIDANA Hernan	Argentina
CONMEBOL	SCHIEMANN Christian	Chile
CONMEBOL	TARAN Nicolas	Uruguay
CONMEBOL	VAN GASSE Marcelo	Brazil
CONMEBOL	ZORRILLA Juan	Paraguay
OFC	BRIAL Bertrand	New Caledonia
OFC	LOUNT Simon	New Zealand
OFC	MAKASINI Tevita	Tonga
UEFA	AVERIANOV Anton	Russia

Confederation	Name	Nationality
UEFA	BORSCH Mark	Germany
UEFA	CEBRIAN Pau	Spain
UEFA	DANOS Nicolas	France
UEFA	DI LIBERATORE Elenito	Italy
UEFA	DIAZ Roberto	Spain
UEFA	DJURDJEVIC Dalibor	Serbia
UEFA	DURAN Bahattin	Turkey
UEFA	GRINGORE Cyril	France
UEFA	KALUGIN Tikhon	Russia
UEFA	LISTKIEWICZ Tomasz	Poland
UEFA	LUPP Stefan	Germany
UEFA	ONGUN Tarik	Turkey
UEFA	PRAPROTNIK Jure	Slovenia
UEFA	RISTIC Milovan	Serbia
UEFA	SOKOLNICKI Pawel	Poland
UEFA	TONOLINI Mauro	Italy
UEFA	VAN ROEKEL Sander	Netherlands
UEFA	VUKAN Robert	Slovenia
UEFA	ZEINSTRA Erwin	Netherlands

List of Video Assistant Referees - VAR (13)

Confederation	Name	Nationality
AFC	AL JASSIM Abdulrahman	Qatar
CONMEBOL	SAMPAIO Wilton	Brazil
CONMEBOL	VARGAS Gery	Bolivia
CONMEBOL	VIGLIANO Mauro	Argentina
UEFA	DANKERT Bastian	Germany
UEFA	DIAS Artur	Portugal
UEFA	GIL Paweł	Poland
UEFA	IRRATI Massimiliano	Italy
UEFA	MAKKELIE Danny	Netherlands
UEFA	MARTINS Tiago	Portugal
UEFA	ORSATO Daniele	Italy
UEFA	VALERI Paolo	Italy
UEFA	ZWAYER Felix	Germany

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Referee Profiles

Asian Zone

Alireza FAGHANI (IRN)



Country	IR IRAN
Place & date of birth	Kashmar, 21.03.1978
Occupation	Municipal employee
Languages	Persian, English
International since	2008
Hobbies	Playing football, cinema, reading
Fondest memory	The finals of the Asian Cup, the 2014 World Cup and the Olympic Football Tournament 2016, in addition to the semi-final of the Confederations Cup 2017

Career

Alireza Faghani started out as a player, reaching the third tier of the Iranian league before deciding to follow in the footsteps of his father Mohammed by becoming a referee. Other relatives in the same profession include his younger brother, father-in-law and brother-in-law. He handled his first Iranian top-flight game in 2007 and earned his FIFA badge the following year. During his career he has presided over three finals in Asian club competitions: the first was the AFC President's Cup in 2009, followed by the AFC Challenge Cup 2010 and the first leg of the 2014 AFC Champions League final. In 2010, he was the man in the middle for the AFC U-16 Championship final between Korea DPR and Uzbekistan. In 2013, he was called up by FIFA for the U-20 World Cup and the Club World Cup, directing two games in each event. Faghani participated in the 2014 FIFA World Cup™ as a fourth official, after having taken charge of five Asian qualifiers. In 2015, he covered the Asian Cup final between Korea Republic and Australia, followed by Barcelona-River Plate in the decider of the Club World Cup. In 2016, he was named by the AFC as the best Asian referee of the year. The same year, along with assistants Reza Sokhandan and Mohammadreza Mansouri, Faghani headed the first all-Asian refereeing team in the Olympic final in Rio between Brazil and Germany. In 2017, he took part in the FIFA Confederations Cup, controlling two matches including the semi-final between Chile and Portugal. At the end of the season, he was named the best Iranian referee for the second time (the first time was in 2013/14). In the Asian preliminary tournament for Russia 2018, he oversaw six games, including the first leg of the continental play-off between Syria and Australia.

Ravshan IRMATOV (UZB)


Country	Uzbekistan
Place & date of birth	Tashkent, 09.08.1977
Occupation	Football instructor
Languages	Uzbekistanek, Russian, English
International since	2003
Hobbies	Playing tennis and football
Fondest memory	The opening match of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa

Career

Ravshan Irmatov started playing football at the age of seven and took up refereeing after an injury forced him out of the game. He began officiating in the Uzbekistanek league in 1998 and made his international bow in 2003 with a call-up for the first of three FIFA U-17 World Cups (the other two being the 2007 and 2009 editions). Since 2007, he has been ever-present in the AFC Champions League, where he has supervised four finals (2007, 2011, 2013 and 2017). Also in 2007, he took part in the U-20 World Cup and subsequently in 2008 presided over the first of two finals in the Club World Cup, between LDU Quito and Manchester United, which was followed by the 2011 decider between Barcelona and Santos. In 2008, Irmatov was named Asian referee of the year by the AFC, an honour that he has since won four more times (in 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2014). He was appointed to his first World Cup in 2010, where he was entrusted with five games, including the opening match between South Africa and Mexico, and Netherlands- Uruguay in the semi-finals. He has been involved in three editions of the Asian Cup, covering Australia-Japan in his only continental final in 2011. In 2012, he was on the referees list for the Olympic Football Tournament in London and officiated Korea Republic-Japan in the play-off for third place. The following year, he was selected for the Confederations Cup in Brazil. In 2014, Irmatov was invited back to the World Cup and oversaw four fixtures, taking his overall tally to nine and moving him above Mexico's Benito Archundia, Uruguayan Jorge Larrionda and Frenchman Joel Quiniou in the competition's all-time appearance table. Also in 2014, he was put in charge of the Indian Super League final. Irmatov refereed games in the Asian qualifying for Russia 2018, including Australia-Syria in the return leg of the continental play-offs, which was his 22nd World Cup qualifier (the first was in 2004). He also became the first Asian referee to officiate a CONCACAF Champions League semi-final in 2018. He has been awarded three high state honours by Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov, namely the Uzbekistanekstan Iftikhori in 2010, the El-Yurt Khurmati Order in 2014 and the Buyuk Hizmatlari Uchun Order in 2015.

Mohammed Abdulla MOHAMMED (UAE)


Country	United Arab Emirates
Place & date of birth	Dubai, 02.12.1978
Occupation	Financial auditor
Languages	Arabic, English
International since	2010
Hobbies	Bowling, swimming, reading books, classic car collector
Fondest memory	Nigeria-Mexico in the semi-finals of the U-17 World Cup, and England-Mexico in the quarter-finals of the U-20 World Cup

Career

Mohammed Abdulla Mohammed started out as a footballer but switched to refereeing after seeing a compatriot officiating in the World Cup. That person was Ali Bujsaim, who directed seven games spanning three editions of the global showpiece (in 1994, 1998 and 2002). A year before obtaining his international credentials in 2010, Mohamed gained his first overseas experience at the Toulon Tournament in 2009. After officiating numerous games in youth tournaments, regional events and continental club cups, he supervised his first AFC Champions League matches in 2013. The following year, he presided over the final of the AFC U-22 Championship. In 2015, he received his first call-up to the Asian Cup, where he directed two fixtures, and the U-17 World Cup (three games including the semi-final between Nigeria and Mexico). In 2017, Mohamed took charge of the AFC Cup final and was among the referees selected for the U-20 World Cup. On the road to Russia 2018, he covered three Asian qualifiers.

Ryuji SATO (JPN)


Country	Japan
Place & date of birth	Nagoya, 16.04.1977
Occupation	Currently a full-time referee, formerly a secondary school teacher
Languages	Japanese, English
International since	2009
Hobbies	Spending time with family
Fondest memory	Still to come – the upcoming experiences in the 2018 World Cup

Career

Ryuji Sato played football as a youngster but was inspired to take up refereeing after seeing a conference held in 2002 by compatriot Toru Kamikawa, who refereed at the 2002 and 2006 World Cups. He turned international in 2009 and made his debut in a friendly between Korea Republic and Iraq. Sato supervised his first final in the AFC Challenge Cup 2012. That same year he became an established referee in the AFC Champions League, where he officiated the return leg of the 2016 final between Al Ain and Jeonbuk Hyundai. He was the man in the middle for the Japanese Super Cup final in 2014. In 2015, he refereed in the Asian Cup, conducting the semi-final between Korea Republic and Iraq. FIFA selected Sato for the U-20 World Cup 2015 (two games), the Olympic Football Tournament 2016 (one game) and the U-17 World Cup 2017, where he was put in charge of Spain-Mali in the semi-finals. The preliminary tournament for Russia 2018 was his second World Cup qualifying campaign, following his debut in 2011 in the continental tournament ahead of Brazil 2014.



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Nawaf SHUKRALLA (BHR)



Country	Bahrain
Place & date of birth	Muharraq, 13.10.1976
Occupation	Referee and lawyer
Languages	Arabic, English
International since	2008
Hobbies	Fishing, swimming and beach sports
Fondest memory	Participating in the 2014 World Cup

Career

Since turning international in 2008, Nawaf Abdulla Shukralla has been used in various AFC competitions (the AFC Cup, President's Cup and Challenge Cup), becoming an established name on the referees list for the AFC Champions League from 2010 onwards. In Asia's premier club competition he has overseen one final (the return leg between Guangzhou Evergrande and FC Seoul in 2013) and no fewer than five semi-finals. He was on the referees list for the Asian Cup in 2011 and again in 2015, when he officiated the play-off for third place between Iraq and United Arab Emirates. His first call-up for a FIFA competition was the U-17 World Cup in 2011, followed by the Club World Cup 2012 and the U-20 World Cup 2013 (including France-Ghana in the semi-finals). At the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, he was tasked with two group matches. Shukralla was again nominated for the Club World Cup in 2016 where he directed the match for third place and the U-17 World Cup in 2017. In the Asian qualifying for Russia 2018, he handled five games.

African Zone

Mehdi ABID CHAREF (ALG)



Country	Algeria
Place & date of birth	Constantine, 14.12.1980
Occupation	Air-conditioning engineer
Languages	Arabic, French, English
International since	2011
Hobbies	Travelling
Fondest memory	The final of the African Youth Championship 2013, participating in the Africa Cup of Nations, being the fourth official in the final of the U-17 World Cup 2017, and refereeing the deciding match of the CAF Confederation Cup 2017

Career

Mehdi Abid Charef followed his father into refereeing, while his brother was a player. He was selected for the FIFA panel in 2011 and received his first call-up for the CAF Champions League the following season. In 2013, he handled the final of the African Youth Championship between Ghana and Egypt. In 2015, he was assigned his first game in the CAF Africa Cup of Nations and was posted to the U-17 World Cup, where he supervised two group fixtures. In 2017, Abid Charef directed the play-off for third place in the Africa Cup of Nations, three U-17 World Cup matches, including a quarter-final, and the first leg of the CAF Confederations Cup final between TP Mazembe and Supersport United. In 2018, he directed his second Algerian Cup final, after his first one in 2011.

Malang DIEDHIOU (SEN)


Country	Senegal
Place & date of birth	Badiana, 30.04.1973
Occupation	Colonel, chief inspector of customs
Languages	French, English
International since	2008
Hobbies	Reading, travelling
Fondest memory	Being called up for his first Africa Cup of Nations in 2015, the U-17 World Cup 2015 and participating in the Olympic Football Tournament 2016, where he was the fourth official for the final

Career

After standing in to officiate a training game that his team was involved in, Malang Diedhiou decided to enrol on a course that set him on the way to a refereeing career. His presence in Russia marks the return of a Senegalese referee to the World Cup, 16 years after Falla Ndoye participated in the 2002 edition. He has officiated internationally in Africa since 2008, when he directed a preliminary match in the CAF Champions League, and in 2015 was appointed to his first Africa Cup of Nations and also the U-17 World Cup. The following year he handled the return leg of the CAF Confederations Cup final between TP Mazembe and MO Bejaia, as well as conducting two games at the Olympic Football Tournament in Rio de Janeiro. Diedhiou was just as active in 2017, overseeing a semi-final in the Africa Cup of Nations, another return-leg final in the CAF Confederations Cup and two Club World Cup fixtures, including the play-off for third place.

Bakary GASSAMA (GAM)



Country	Gambia
Place & date of birth	Mameh, 10.02.1979
Occupation	Teacher
Languages	English, French
International since	2008
Hobbies	Travelling, listening to music, wrestling
Fondest memory	Taking charge of Netherlands-Chile in the 2014 FIFA World Cup

Career

Bakary Papa Gassama started out playing football but switched to refereeing after realising he would not make it as a player, in contrast to his brother who plays at semi-professional level in Gambia. He began officiating in 2003 and earned his international credentials in 2008. Gassama is one of Africa's most experienced referees and already has a World Cup under his belt, having overseen Netherlands-Chile in the 2014 edition. Since 2012, he has been a regular in the CAF Champions League, where he officiated five consecutive finals from 2013 to 2017. His first call-up for a FIFA competition was for the Olympic Football Tournament in London 2012 (two opening-round fixtures). That was followed in 2013 by the U-20 World Cup and the Club World Cup, where he presided over two games including a semi-final. In 2017, he was in Russia for the Confederations Cup. He has also taken part in four Africa Cup of Nations tournaments, including the 2015 final and a semi-final in 2017. The following year he officiated the African Nations Championship final between Morocco and Nigeria. Gassama, who also has experience in the Qatari league, was named CAF Referee of the Year four times in a row from 2014 to 2017.



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Ghead GRISHA (EGY)



Country	Egypt
Place & date of birth	Mansoura, 29.02.1976
Occupation	Public relations for an Egyptian oil company
Languages	Arabic, English
International since	2008
Hobbies	Playing football, reading, playing chess
Fondest memory	The 2014 Egypt Cup final, the final of the CAF Champions League 2015, and the opening game of the Africa Cup of Nations 2017

Career

Ghead Grisha's footballing career took him as high as the Egyptian second division before his passion for refereeing took over, although he still plays as an amateur. Grisha made his international debut in the Toulon Tournament in 2009 and supervised a semi-final in the CAF Champions League two years later, before refereeing the first leg of the 2015 final. In his last four participations in the Africa Cup of Nations he has officiated two play-offs for third place (in 2012 and 2015). In 2015, he received his first call-up to the U-20 World Cup, covering the play-off for third place, before taking charge of two fixtures in the 2017 edition. Grisha featured in the Olympic Football Tournament 2016 in Rio de Janeiro, where he was entrusted with two games including a quarter-final. In February 2017, he was the man in the middle for the CAF Super Cup final between Mamelodi Sundowns and TP Mazembe.

Janny SIKAZWE (ZAM)


Country	Zambia
Place & date of birth	Kabwe, 26.05.1979
Occupation	Teacher (mathematics and P.E.)
Languages	English
International since	2007
Hobbies	Singing
Fondest memory	The final of the Club World Cup 2016, where VAR was used for the first time

Career

Inspired by his father, himself a match official, Janny Sikazwe is the first Zambian referee to be involved in the finals of a World Cup. Internationally qualified since 2007, he has been one of the most in-demand referees in African competitions since 2012. His experience includes one final (in 2014) and two semi-finals in the CAF Champions League, four participations and a final (Egypt-Cameroon in 2017) in the Africa Cup of Nations, as well as the first leg of the CAF Confederations Cup final in 2015. Also in 2015, he directed three games in the U-17 World Cup, including a quarter-final. Sikazwe was allocated to handle Real Madrid-Kashima Antlers in the 2016 Club World Cup final and the following year was included in the referee pool for the U-20 World Cup.

Bamlaku WEYESA (ETH)



Country	Ethiopia
Place & date of birth	Addis Ababa, 30.12.1980
Occupation	Sociologist
Languages	English
International since	2009
Hobbies	Playing football, swimming, reading
Fondest memory	Receiving his first international FIFA badge at his wedding ceremony in 2009

Career

Tessema Weyesa Bamlaku is the first Ethiopian referee involved in a World Cup for 48 years, after Seyoum Tarekegn officiated at Mexico 1970. He began refereeing in 2003 and earned international status in 2009. In 2011, he presided over a preliminary-round fixture in the CAF Champions League, before going on to direct the first leg of the 2017 final. In 2013, he officiated two games in the African Youth Championship, followed by one on his Africa Cup of Nations debut in 2015, before returning to handle two matches in the 2017 edition. He supervised his first two games in a FIFA competition at the U-17 World Cup in 2017.

North, Central American and Caribbean Zone

Joel AGUILAR (SLV)



Country	El Salvador
Place & date of birth	Sensuntepeque, 02.07.1975
Occupation	Consultant for a project that involves student athletes in 12 different disciplines participating in national and international events
Languages	Spanish, English
International since	2002
Hobbies	Running, reading, biking
Fondest memory	Participating in the 2014 World Cup

Career

As a youth football coach, Joel Aguilar started out by officiating training games, before being called upon to handle a competitive match, which ignited his passion for refereeing. He is the first and still the only Salvadoran referee to have featured in a World Cup. Internationally qualified since 2002, Aguilar has covered numerous finals in Salvadoran football and is also one of CONCACAF's most experienced and in-demand referees in continental and international competitions. He started with the CONCACAF Champions Cup in 2003 and progressed to supervising the 2011 first-leg final between Monterrey and Real Salt Lake. In international team events, Aguilar participated in six editions of the Gold Cup between 2007 and 2017, directing three consecutive finals between 2011 and 2015. He was also shortlisted for two editions of the Copa América in 2015 and 2016, overseeing a semi-final in the latter edition. He has an equally extensive background in FIFA competitions, having participated in one U-17 World Cup in 2007, three U-20 World Cups (2007, 2009 and 2017) and two Club World Cups, where he handled a semi-final in both 2011 and 2015, as well as overseeing two matches in the Confederations Cup 2013 and another two in the 2014 World Cup. En route to Russia 2018, he refereed a total of six qualifiers, of which no fewer than four were in the final round. In 2015, he was named CONCACAF Referee of the Year.

Mark GEIGER (USA)



Country	USA
Place & date of birth	Toms River, 25.08.1974
Occupation	A mathematics teacher for 17 years before becoming a full-time referee in 2013
Languages	English, Spanish
International since	2008
Hobbies	Reading, watching movies and football
Fondest memory	His first MLS match (Columbus-San José), his first FIFA tournament (the FIFA U-20 World Cup 2011 in Colombia), the Olympic Football Tournament 2012, and the 2014 FIFA World Cup

Career

For many years, Mark Geiger combined his job as a mathematics teacher with his passion for refereeing, which started when he was 13 years old. Shortly before devoting himself full-time to refereeing, he received the Presidential Award for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching directly from President Obama. Having covered three games at Brazil 2014, he holds the World Cup appearance record for a US referee, and is the only American to have officiated a knockout match (France-Nigeria in the round of 16). In Russia, he will equal the record for World Cup participations by a US referee, which belongs to David Socha, who featured in the 1982 and 1986 editions. Geiger has taken charge of over 150 Major League Soccer fixtures, including the decisive final of the 2014 MLS season between LA Galaxy and New England Revolution. During his tenth year on the FIFA list in 2017, he presided over his maiden CONCACAF Champions League final (the first leg between Tigres and Pachuca), nine years after making his first tournament bow in the 2008 edition. In 2011, he officiated the final of the CONCACAF U-20 Championship between Costa Rica and Mexico, before participating in three Gold Cups, in 2013, in 2015 when he refereed a semi-final, and again in 2017. His experience in FIFA competitions stretches back to 2011, when he was tasked with handling the U-20 World Cup final between Brazil and Portugal. The following year, he oversaw two games at the Olympic Football Tournament 2012 in London, followed by the Club World Cup in 2013. After taking charge of three World Cup games in Brazil in 2014, the year in which he was named CONCACAF Referee of the Year, Geiger was assigned one match in the Copa América 2016 and two in the Confederations Cup 2017. In 2016 and 2017, he was appointed as a VAR for the FIFA Club World Cups in Japan and UAE, respectively, where he was the VAR of the final in 2017. Ahead of Russia 2018, he refereed the first leg of the intercontinental play-off between New Zealand and Peru.

Jair MARRUFO (USA)



Country	USA
Place & date of birth	El Paso, 17.06.1977
Occupation	Professional referee
Languages	English, Spanish
International since	2007
Hobbies	Live concerts, theatre
Fondest memory	All of trips during his refereeing career that have enabled him to learn about different cultures

Career

Following in his father's footsteps, who participated in a CONCACAF Gold Cup (1993), a FIFA U-17 World Cup (1995) and a Copa América (1997), Jair Marrufo started out in the MLS in 2002 (eventually going on to direct the 2015 final between Columbus Crew and Portland Timbers) and obtained his FIFA badge at the age of 30. As early as 2008, he was shortlisted for the Olympic Football Tournament in Beijing, where he wielded the whistle in three games, and in 2009 began refereeing in the CONCACAF Champions League. Besides featuring in four editions of the Gold Cup, Marrufo has been called on to oversee tournament games in other confederations, such as at the OFC Nations Cup 2008 and the Copa América 2016. He also has participated in three FIFA U-17 World Cups (2009, 2013 and 2017), where he supervised two quarter-finals.

Ricardo MONTERO (CRC)



Country	Costa Rica
Place & date of birth	San José, 06.03.1986
Occupation	Business manager
Languages	Spanish, English
International since	2012
Hobbies	Watching movies
Fondest memory	Participating in the final of the FIFA U-17 World Cup 2015 in Chile as the fourth official

Career

Ricardo Montero's father was a referee at national level (and an assistant referee at international level) and his brother still is. The last Costa Rican to referee a World Cup match was William Mattus, who oversaw two games in 2002. Montero joined the FIFA panel in 2012 and made his international debut in the CONCACAF Champions League in 2013. In the two-year period 2014-2015 he was extensively used in youth tournaments, supervising two matches (including a semi-final) in the Youth Olympic Tournament in Nanjing 2014, the final of the CONCACAF U-17 Championship 2015 and two U-17 World Cup fixtures later the same year. Also in 2015, he received his first call-up for the Gold Cup and was allocated a semi-final. In 2016, he handled a Copa América game and the following year was picked for his second U-17 World Cup, where he officiated the play-off for third place. In 2018, he refereed the first leg of the CONCACAF Champions League between Toronto FC and Guadalajara.

John PITTI (PAN)


Country	Panama
Place & date of birth	Chiriquí, 02.08.1978
Occupation	P.E. teacher
Languages	Spanish, English
International since	2012
Hobbies	Walking in the countryside, playing baseball, DJing
Fondest memory	His debut in Panama's <i>Primera División</i> as a fourth official

Career

If he is assigned a game in Russia, lifelong football fan John Pitti will be the first Panamanian to referee in the World Cup finals (Roberto Moreno served as a fourth official in 2014). The physical education teacher took up the whistle in 2001 and turned international in 2012. The following year he officiated in the CONCACAF U-17 Championship and also made his debut in the CONCACAF Champions League. In 2015, he was handed a semi-final in the continent's premier club tournament and also took part in the CONCACAF U-20 Championship, as well as notably receiving his first FIFA call-up (for the U-20 World Cup) and debuting in the Gold Cup, where he directed one group match. In 2016, he officiated a Copa América match and another semi-final in the CONCACAF Champions League. 2017 brought a second call-up for a FIFA tournament, with two fixtures in the U-17 World Cup. During the Russia 2018 qualifying tournament, Pitti also covered two games in the final group round of CONCACAF qualifying. In 2018, he was appointed for a CONCACAF Champions League semi-final.

Cesar RAMOS (MEX)



Country	Mexico
Place & date of birth	Culiacán, 15.12.1983
Occupation	Communications manager
Languages	Spanish, English
International since	2014
Hobbies	Watching movies, reading, playing baseball
Fondest memory	The opening ceremony of the 2016 Olympic Games

Career

Raised in northern Mexico, César Arturo Ramos played baseball as a boy and started refereeing football matches at the age of 16. He made his debut in the *Tercera División* (the fourth level of the Mexican league) before the age of 20 and oversaw his first Mexican top-flight game in 2011. A student of Arturo Brizio Carter, who officiated six games in the World Cup (three in 1994 and three in 1998), Ramos became a FIFA-listed referee in 2014 and immediately made his debut in the CONCACAF Champions League. His international experience grew the following year thanks to call-ups for the U-20 World Cup and the Gold Cup, where he supervised a quarter-final in both events. In 2016, he covered a semi-final in the CONCACAF Champions League, a *Copa Libertadores* match and two fixtures at the Olympic Football Tournament in Rio de Janeiro. Ramos oversaw three finals in 2017: the return leg of the CONCACAF Champions League decider between Pachuca and Tigres, the play-off for third place (Uruguay-Italy) in the U-20 World Cup and, most notably, Real Madrid-Gremio in the final of the Club World Cup. The Mexican also handled three games in the final group round of CONCACAF qualifying for Russia 2018 and also officiated the final of the 2018 *Copa Mexico Clausura*. CONCACAF named him the confederation's best referee for two years running in 2016 and 2017.

South American Zone

Julio BASCUNÁN (CHI)



Country	Chile
Place & date of birth	Santiago de Chile, 11.06.1978
Occupation	Insurance agent
Languages	Spanish, English
International since	2011
Hobbies	Watching movies, travelling
Fondest memory	Supervising Brazil-Argentina in the World Cup qualification tournament

Career

Julio Bascúnán began refereeing aged 17 after being convinced to take the plunge by one of his teachers (also a referee). He has a son who instead practices roller skating. He turned international in 2011 and immediately made his debut in the *Copa Sudamericana*. In 2013, he took part in the South American U-17 and U-20 championships (also returning to the U-20 event two years later) and made his debut in the *Copa Libertadores*, eventually being promoted to cover the first leg of the 2017 final between Gremio and Lanus. The Chilean has participated in two *Copa Américas* (in 2015 and 2016), plus one U-20 World Cup in 2017. In South American qualifying for Russia 2018, he presided over six fixtures. Bascúnán was voted by Chilean colleagues as his country's best referee in 2017.

Enrique CACERES (PAR)


Country	Paraguay
Place & date of birth	Buenos Aires (ARG), 20.03.1974
Occupation	Accountant in a government company
Languages	Spanish, English
International since	2010
Hobbies	Running, watching movies
Fondest memory	The emotions of refereeing his first matches

Career

Enrique Caceres took up refereeing after watching his friend officiate a number of games. He turned international in 2010 and the following year made his debut in the *Copa Libertadores*, where he has since overseen two finals: the first leg of the 2016 decider between Independiente del Valle and Atletico Nacional, followed by Lanus-Gremio in the return leg of the 2017 edition. Since 2011, he has been used in the South American U-15 Championship every two years and has appeared in two U-20 Championships. In 2015, he received his first call-up for a FIFA competition (the U-17 World Cup) and for the *Copa América*, before participating in the latter tournament's centenary edition the following year. In 2016, the Paraguayan presided over the semi-final of the Club World Cup between America and Real Madrid. The following year, he was again nominated for the U-17 World Cup, where this time he was entrusted with the final between England and Spain. He took charge of six South American qualifiers en route to Russia 2018. This year, Caceres officiated Gremio-Independiente in the return leg of the *Recopa Sudamericana* final.

Andres CUNHA (URU)



Country	Uruguay
Place & date of birth	Montevideo, 08.09.1976
Occupation	Businessman
Languages	Spanish, English
International since	2013
Hobbies	Cooking, listening to music, travelling
Fondest memory	Being called up for FIFA tournaments

Career

In his first year as an international referee in 2013, Andrés Cunha was immediately called up for the South American U-15 Championship, before being selected for his first continental club competition the following year, the *Copa Sudamericana*. Cunha had a busy 2015, taking part in the South American U-20 Championship, as well as supervising six games in the *Copa Libertadores*, three *Copa América* fixtures (including a quarter-final) and a semi-final in the *Copa Sudamericana*. The following year, he returned to the *Copa América* and was also assigned a quarter-final in the *Copa Libertadores*, as well as one in the *Copa Sudamericana*. The Uruguayan was again one of the most heavily used officials in the *Copa Libertadores* in 2017, officiating six games, and received a call-up for the U-20 World Cup, where he handled three fixtures. Cunha took charge of four group games in South American qualifying for the 2018 World Cup.

Nestor PITANA (ARG)



Country	Argentina
Place & date of birth	Corpus Misiones, 17.06.1975
Occupation	P.E. teacher
Languages	Spanish, English
International since	2010
Hobbies	Joining family and friends for an <i>asado</i> barbecue
Fondest memory	His first international match, a friendly between Uruguay and the Netherlands, as well as making his World Cup debut on his birthday

Career

Néstor Pitana will become the second Argentinian referee to participate in two World Cups after Norberto Coerezza, who oversaw two games in 1970 and one in 1978.

A physical education teacher with a footballing background in youth teams, Pitana is one of South America's most experienced referees. He made his bow in the Argentinian league in 2007 and went international in 2010, debuting in the *Copa Libertadores* where he has since been tasked with covering two finals: the first leg in 2013 between Olimpia Asunción and Atlético Mineiro and the return leg in 2016 between Atlético Nacional and Independiente del Valle. In 2011 he was rostered for the South American U-17 Championship and the following year oversaw the first of two *Recopa Sudamericana* finals, specifically the first leg between Universidad de Chile and Santos, which was followed by San Lorenzo-River Plate in the return leg of the 2015 decider. Three games in the U-17 World Cup 2013 preceded a call-up the following year for the World Cup in Brazil, where Pitana supervised four fixtures, including France-Germany in the quarter-finals. In 2015 he was called up for his first, and so far only, *Copa América*, in addition to handling River Plate-Huracan in the final of the *Supercopa Argentina*. Pitana returned to Brazil in 2016 for the Olympic Football Tournament, where he was man in the middle for the semi-final between Germany and Nigeria. In 2017 he covered another semi-final, but in the Confederations Cup between Germany and Mexico. On the trail to Russia 2018, besides handling six qualifiers in the South American round-robin tournament, the Argentinian also directed the return leg of the intercontinental play-off between Australia and Honduras.

Sandro RICCI (BRA)


Country	Brazil
Place & date of birth	Pocos de Caldas, 19.11.1974
Occupation	Foreign trade analyst for the Brazilian Ministry of Industry, Foreign Trade and Services
Languages	Portuguese, English, Italian, Spanish
International since	2011
Hobbies	Biking, running
Fondest memory	Refereeing in the World Cup on home soil

Career

Sandro Ricci's passion for football, refereeing and big-game atmospheres was inspired by his grandfather, who used to be a professional player, and by watching the 1998 World Cup, despite the disappointment of seeing Brazil lose to France in the final. He has refereed in the Brazilian top flight since 2008 and gained international status three years later. Since 2012 he has been an ever-present name on the referees list for the *Copa Libertadores*, where he supervised the return leg of the 2014 final between San Lorenzo and Club Nacional. In 2013 he attended both the South American U-20 Championship and the U-20 World Cup, where he presided over Ghana-Iraq in the play-off for third place. At the end of the year he was entrusted with the Club World Cup final between Bayern Munich and Raja Casablanca. That experience served as the prelude to the 2014 World Cup, where Ricci became the first referee to confirm a goal using goal line technology in the France-Honduras match. His first *Copa América* outing was at the 2015 edition, including Argentina-Paraguay in the semi-finals, and the following year he covered the bronze medal match between Honduras and Nigeria in the Olympic Football Tournament. In 2017 he returned to the Club World Cup and officiated Al Jazira Club-Real Madrid in the semi-finals. He became the first VAR referee for CONMEBOL in the *Copa Libertadores* 2017 semi-final between River Plate and Lanus. The six games that Ricci refereed on the road to Russia 2018 took his total in South American qualifying to ten (adding to the four he covered ahead of Brazil 2014).

Wilmar ROLDÁN (COL)


Country	Colombia
Place & date of birth	Remedios, 24.01.1980
Occupation	P.E. teacher, sports project manager for Medellín municipality
Languages	Spanish, English, Portuguese
International since	2008
Hobbies	Reading books
Fondest memory	Participating in the 2014 World Cup and handling the 2015 <i>Copa América</i> final

Career

A footballer in his youth, Wilmar Roldán got the refereeing bug aged 12 after attending a refereeing course in Antioquia. At 16 he gave up playing to devote himself exclusively to a career in refereeing, like his brother who is an assistant referee in the Colombian league. Roldán was 23 when he made his debut in the Colombian league. He turned international in 2008 and participated in the *Copa Libertadores* just a few months later, where he has since controlled two finals, specifically the return legs of Corinthians-Boca Juniors in 2012 and Atlético Mineiro-Olimpia Asuncion in 2013. Inspired by the style of Javier Castrilli (Argentinian referee who officiated at France 1998), he also admires Pierluigi Collina (two World Cups including the 2002 final) and Oscar Ruiz (Colombian official with three World Cup participations in 2002, 2006 and 2010). At youth level he has taken part in two South American U-20 Championships (2009 and 2011), one Youth Olympic Tournament in Singapore in 2010 and the U-20 World Cup in 2013. In 2011 he presided over the first leg of the *Recopa Sudamericana* final between Independiente and Nacional and participated in the first of three *Copa América* tournaments, handling the play-off for third place between Peru and Venezuela. At the two later editions he oversaw Chile-Argentina in the 2015 final, plus a quarter-final in 2016. In 2014, Roldán was put in charge of two World Cup matches in Brazil. The Colombian's CV also includes the Olympic Football Tournament 2012 and the Club World Cup 2015. In 2017 he directed two games in the Confederations Cup and the return leg of the *Copa Sudamericana* final between Flamengo and Independiente. Roldán officiated six qualifiers on the road to Russia 2018, increasing his appearance tally in World Cup qualifying to ten matches spanning three campaigns (including one game in the 2010 edition and three in 2014). He's the founder and president of an arbitrator corporation where young people of Medellin are given the opportunity to find dignified work helping them to leave the vulnerable zones of the city.

Oceanian Zone

Matt CONGER (NZL)



Country	New Zealand
Place & date of birth	Athens (USA), 11.10.1978
Occupation	Primary school P.E. teacher
Languages	English, Spanish
International since	2013
Hobbies	Playing guitar, reading, hiking, biking
Fondest memory	Acting as fourth official in a regional match, he was handed the whistle after 20 minutes when the referee sustained an injury. His performance on that occasion saw him selected for his first match at national level

Career

Born and raised in the United States, Matt Conger dreamed as a child of participating in the World Cup. He began refereeing aged 15 before moving to New Zealand, where he worked full-time as a teacher until opting to go part-time, so that he could devote himself to a career as a referee. Conger, who also has experience in the Australian and Indian top flights, turned international in 2013 but made his OFC Champions League debut as early as 2010. In 2011 he presided over the play-off for third place in the continental U-20 championship. In 2015 he took part in the U-20 World Cup (two games) and the Club World Cup, supervising the play-off for third place between Sanfrecce Hiroshima and Guangzhou Evergrande. The following year he officiated Papua New Guinea-Solomon Islands in the semi-finals of the OFC Nations Cup, plus two opening-round fixtures at the Olympic Football Tournament in Rio de Janeiro. Last year he was on the referees list for the U-20 World Cup (two games) and took charge of one Club World Cup match.

Norbert HAUATA (TAH)



Country	Tahiti
Date of birth	06.06.1979
Occupation	House builder (carpenter)
Languages	Tahitian, French, English
International since	2008
Hobbies	Karate, fishing
Fondest memory	Being assigned to the 2014 World Cup

Career

Norbert Hauata took up the whistle after receiving instruction from his maternal uncle, also a referee. Having already seen action in Brazil four years ago, but exclusively as a fourth official, Hauata could be the first Tahitian to referee a World Cup match. Internationally qualified since 2008, he quickly made his debut in both the OFC Nations Cup and the OFC Champions League. He has taken part in three continental nations championships, directing the 2016 final between New Zealand and Papua New Guinea. In the OFC Champions League he has officiated no fewer than six finals, the last one being the return leg of the 2017 decider between Team Wellington and Auckland City. His career highlights also include refereeing the deciding matches of continental youth tournaments at U-17 level (in 2017) and U-20 level (2011). In 2010 he was shortlisted for the Youth Olympic Football Tournament and was subsequently called up for the U-17 World Cup 2011, the Club World Cup 2014 and the U-20 World Cup 2017.

European Zone

Felix BRYCH (GER)



Country	Germany
Place & date of birth	Munich, 03.08.1975
Occupation	Lawyer for the Bavarian Football Association
Languages	German, English, Spanish
International since	2007
Hobbies	Playing tennis, beach volleyball and mountain biking in Bavaria
Fondest memory	Travelling to matches during the pressure-free early days of his career, but also full stadiums that get the adrenaline pumping

Career

Law graduate Felix Brych started refereeing in Germany's lower leagues in 1999 before being promoted to the *Bundesliga* in 2004. He turned international in 2007 and later that year made his debut in European cup competitions (Champions League and UEFA Cup qualifying stages). The following year he debuted in the group stage of the Champions League, where he would go on to referee the 2017 final between Juventus and Real Madrid: this was his second final in a European club competition, after Sevilla-Benfica in the Europa League 2014. He has experience in foreign countries such as Saudi Arabia, Cyprus and Korea Republic, where he was appointed to oversee the return leg of the 2008 K-League final. On home soil, Brych oversaw a national cup final in 2015. He has been used in many international events, starting with the Olympic Football Tournament 2012 (two games), the Confederations Cup 2013, UEFA EURO 2016 (three games including a quarter-final) and the Club World Cup 2017, where he took charge of Gremio-Pachuca in the semi-finals. Russia 2018 is Brych's second World Cup after Brazil 2014, where he covered two games. In World Cup qualifying he has handled three play-offs, namely Republic of Ireland-France in 2010, New Zealand-Mexico in 2014 and Switzerland-Northern Ireland in 2018.

Cüneyt ÇAKIR (TUR)


Country	Turkey
Place & date of birth	Istanbul, 23.11.1976
Occupation	Full-time referee, previously an insurance agent
Languages	Turkish, English
International since	2006
Hobbies	Rock music, reading, table tennis, travelling
Fondest memory	The Champions League final 2015 and the semi-final of the 2014 World Cup

Career

The son of referee Serdar Çakır, Cüneyt Çakır played football in youth teams but decided to follow in his father's footsteps at the age of 17. He joined the FIFA panel in 2006 and his first international posting was the UEFA European U-19 Championship in 2007. Two years later, Çakır was called up for another continental youth tournament, the UEFA European U-21 Championship, where he covered England-Sweden in the semi-finals. In 2010 he took charge of Fulham-Hamburg in the first of two Europa League semi-finals, the second one being Benfica-Juventus four years later. In 2010 he made his UEFA Champions League debut and has since overseen a total of five semi-finals and one final, Juventus-Barcelona in 2015. Besides having covered a number of games in the Saudi Arabian and Qatari leagues, Çakır has also participated in three U-20 World Cups (including a semi-final in 2011). He also appeared in the last two European Championships (2012, 2016), where his matches included Spain-Portugal in the semi-finals of the Poland/Ukraine edition. He also refereed Corinthians-Chelsea in the final of the Club World Cup 2012. Back home in Turkey, he has supervised a national cup final (2010) and two Turkish Super Cup games (2012 and 2015). In 2014 he was allocated three World Cup fixtures in Brazil and wielded the whistle in the semi-final between the Netherlands and Argentina. He returned to Brazil two years later for the Olympic Football Tournament. In European qualifying for the World Cup, Çakır presided over Sweden-Italy in the first leg of the play-offs, four years after refereeing another play-off, Ukraine-France.

Sergei KARASEV (RUS)


Country	Russia
Place & date of birth	Moscow, 12.06.1979
Occupation	Before becoming a professional referee he was a lawyer
Languages	Russian, English
International since	2010
Hobbies	Hard rock and heavy metal music, playing electric guitar
Fondest memory	Being called up for EURO 2016

Career

Sergei Karasev's desire to retain an active role in football after playing in his youth prompted him to pursue a refereeing career. The last Russian referee in the World Cup finals was Valentin Ivanov 12 years ago, who oversaw three fixtures at Germany 2006. Karasev became FIFA-listed in 2010 and the following year made his debut in the UEFA EURO 2012 qualifying competition and the UEFA Europa League, where in 2017 he was assigned the semi-final match Celta de Vigo-Manchester United. In 2012 Karasev made his UEFA Champions League bow. On home soil he has supervised one national cup final (2014) and two Super Cup games (2012 and 2016). He officiated a semi-final in the European U-21 Championship 2015 and the following year conducted two EURO 2016 fixtures and one match in the Olympic Football Tournament. In 2017 he was included in the list of referees for the U-20 World Cup. In 2018 he directed the UEFA Europa League semi-final and the Russian Cup final.

Björn KUIPERS (NED)



Country	Netherlands
Place & date of birth	Oldenzaal, 28.03.1973
Occupation	Businessman (supermarkets)
Languages	Dutch, English, German
International since	2006
Hobbies	Mountain biking, playing tennis
Fondest memory	The Champions League 2014 final and the Confederations Cup 2013 final

Career

Björn Kuipers is the third Dutch referee to take part in two World Cups after Charles Corver (1978, 1982) and Mario van der Ende (1994, 1998). The son of referee Jan Kuipers, he started out playing football but later opted for a refereeing career whilst pursuing his studies and subsequently undertaking various business activities. His children are very sporty too: his son plays football, while his daughter prefers hockey. He made his Dutch top-flight bow in 2005 before turning international the following year and immediately oversaw a final, between the Czech Republic and Russia in the UEFA European U-17 Championship. In 2008 he debuted in the UEFA Cup and in 2009 he appeared in the Champions League group stage, as well as officiating his second youth continental final, the U-21 decider between Germany and England. In 2010 he refereed Mazembe-Internacional in the semi-final of the Club World Cup and the following year he supervised a semi-final in the Europa League, followed by the UEFA Super Cup between Barcelona and Porto. EURO 2012 was his first competition for senior national teams, where he covered two games. Kuipers' numerous high-profile assignments in 2013 include Benfica-Chelsea in the Europa League final, a Champions League semi-final and Brazil-Spain in the Confederations Cup final, as well as Croatia-Iceland in the World Cup qualification play-offs. Real Madrid-Atletico Madrid in the final of the UEFA Champions League 2014 paved the way to the World Cup, where he headed three games, followed by the same number at EURO 2016, his second European championship. In 2017 he was selected to cover the U-20 World Cup final between Venezuela and England, as well as another World Cup qualifying play-off on the road to Russia 2018, namely Greece-Croatia. Besides taking charge of several Belgian league matches, Kuipers has accumulated 14 seasons of experience in the Dutch Eredivisie. He has also wielded the whistle in three national cup finals (2013, 2016, 2018) and two Super Cups (2009, 2012). In 2018 he also officiated the UEFA Europa League final.

Szymon MARCINIĄK (POL)



Country	Poland
Place & date of birth	Plock, 07.01.1981
Occupation	Professional referee, businessman
Languages	Polish, English, German
International since	2011
Hobbies	Martial arts, cinematography
Fondest memory	The final of the European U-21 Championship 2015 and participating in EURO 2016 and the FIFA U-20 World Cup 2017

Career

Szymon Marciniak is the third Polish referee to participate in a World Cup after Alojzy Jarguz (1978, 1982) and Ryszard Wojcik (1998). Another compatriot, Michał Listkiewicz, was a linesman in the final of the 1990 FIFA World Cup between Germany FR and Argentina. He used to play for Wisla Plock but switched to officiating after being sent off and remonstrating with the referee, who challenged him to do the job himself. His brother is also a referee and has supervised first- and second-division matches in Poland. Marciniak made his Polish top-flight debut in 2009 and has also directed two national cup finals (2013, 2016) and one Super Cup (2017). He became FIFA-listed in 2011 and initially handled qualifiers for the European Youth Championships and for the UEFA Champions League and Europa League, before making his group-stage debut in the latter event the following year. In 2014 he debuted in the Champions League proper, before presiding over a Europa League quarter-final in 2015 and being selected to handle Sweden-Portugal in the final of the European U-21 Championship. In 2016 he officiated a Champions League quarter-final and was called up for EURO 2016, where he conducted three games. Another Champions League quarter-final followed in 2017, as well as a Europa League semi-final (Lyon-Ajax) and a call-up for the U-20 World Cup, where he covered three games, including Uruguay-Venezuela in the semi-finals. En route to Russia 2018, Marciniak refereed a total of five qualifiers including Republic of Ireland-Denmark in the play-offs. The Pole also has experience in the Saudi Arabian, Qatari, Japanese and Swiss leagues.



FIFA WORLD CUP
RUSSIA 2018

Antonio MATEU (ESP)



Country	Spain
Place & date of birth	Algimia de Alfara, 12.03.1977
Occupation	P.E. teacher
Languages	Spanish, English
International since	2011
Hobbies	Sports, reading
Fondest memory	Covering Real Madrid-Barcelona in the <i>Copa del Rey</i> final on 16 April 2014 in his hometown of Valencia, with all his family watching in the stadium

Career

A footballer in his youth, Antonio Mateu Lahoz decided to become a match official after one of his brothers, who was a referee, advised him to make the switch during a period of rehabilitation following a knee injury. He began refereeing at the age of 15 and in 2008 made his debut in *La Liga* before turning international in 2011 and immediately seeing action in EURO 2012 qualifiers, the Europa League and the Champions League preliminary stage. In 2012 he was the man in the middle for the Spanish Super Cup final and made his Champions League group-stage debut, eventually officiating a semi-final in 2017 (Monaco-Juventus). In 2014 he was the match official of the *Copa del Rey* final and the following year he was shortlisted for the U-20 World Cup, where he would subsequently return in 2017 to cover Italy-England in the semi-finals. Mateu oversaw two matches at the 2016 Olympic Football Tournament in Rio de Janeiro and was tasked with Italy-Sweden in the play-offs for the 2018 World Cup.

Milorad MAZIC (SRB)


Country	Serbia
Place & date of birth	Titov Vrbas, 23.03.1973
Occupation	Director of a meat company
Languages	Serbian, English, Russian
International since	2009
Hobbies	Sports, reading
Fondest memory	Participating in the 2014 World Cup, EURO 2016 and the UEFA Super Cup 2016, but especially the Confederations Cup 2017 final

Career

Initially, refereeing was a means for Mažić to stay in touch with football, at the suggestion of friends after he had suffered an injury as a player. He has two cousins who have been professional footballers. Mažić has been on the FIFA referees list since 2009 and has also officiated in the Egyptian, Qatari, Romanian and Saudi Arabian leagues. At home he has been allocated no fewer than five national cup finals. His first international event was the European U-17 Championship in 2009, where he was tasked with a semi-final. In 2010 he made his debut in the Europa League and the following year he officiated the play-off for third place in the European U-21 Championship. In 2012 he made his debut in the group stage of the UEFA Champions League. In 2013 Mažić handled the first of three consecutive Europa League semi-finals. He was also picked for the U-20 World Cup (two games) and for Romania-Greece in the World Cup play-offs. In 2014 he refereed two group matches (Germany-Portugal and Argentina-IR Iran) at the global showpiece, after handling the first of three successive Champions League quarter-finals. In 2016 he was the man in the middle for the UEFA Super Cup meeting between Real Madrid and Sevilla. The following year, he took charge of another cup final, between Chile and Germany in the Confederations Cup. On the trail to Russia 2018 he was called on to supervise Denmark-Republic of Ireland in the play-offs. In 2018 he officiated the UEFA Champions League final.

Gianluca ROCCHI (ITA)



Country	Italy
Place & date of birth	Florence, 25.08.1973
Occupation	Owner of a lighting company with his family
Languages	Italian, English
International since	2008
Hobbies	Travelling
Fondest memory	The first game he refereed as a 16-year-old, which convinced him that refereeing was his calling; his first Champions League match in 2010 (Schalke 04-Benfica); and the fantastic experience of the UEFA Super Cup 2017

Career

Before choosing to become a referee, Gianluca Rocchi played football as a midfielder. He took charge of his first Serie A match in 2004 and joined the FIFA panel in 2008, making his debut the same year in the UEFA Cup. His first postings in the UEFA Champions League came in 2009 (qualifiers) and 2010 (group stage). The following year, he headed a semi-final in the Europa League. In 2012, in addition to directing a Champions League quarter-final, Rocchi was included in the referee pool for the Olympic Football Tournament in London and officiated Mexico-Japan in the semi-finals. The following year he handled another semi-final, Argentina-Mexico in the U-20 World Cup. Rocchi has also been called on to referee matches in the Qatari league, as well as the 2013 Italian Super Cup match and the final of the 2016 *Coppa Italia*. Between 2016 and 2018 he presided over another two Champions League quarter-finals and two Europa League semi-finals, as well as two games in the Confederations Cup 2017, the UEFA Super Cup between Real Madrid and Manchester United and finally Croatia-Greece in the qualification play-offs for Russia 2018.

Damir SKOMINA (SVN)



Country	Slovenia
Place & date of birth	Koper, 05.08.1976
Occupation	Real estate manager
Languages	Slovenian, Croatian, English, Italian, Serbian
International since	2002
Hobbies	Biking, beach time
Fondest memory	The final of the Europa League 2016 and participating in EURO 2012 and 2016

Career

A former youth footballer who quit the game in his mid-teens, Damir Skomina is the first Slovenian referee to take part in the finals of World Cup. He made his debut in the Slovenian top flight in 2000 and was added to the FIFA referees list two years later.

In 2003 he debuted on the European scene, both in the UEFA Cup and in the continental U-17 championship, handling a semi-final in the latter tournament. In 2005 he took part in another European youth championship, this time at U-19 level, and oversaw the first of 13 World Cup qualifiers spanning four European preliminary campaigns (including the France-Ukraine play-off ahead of Brazil 2014), a tally that makes him the sixth-busiest European referee in the competition. In 2007 he was the man in the middle for the European U-21 Championship final between Serbia and the Netherlands, before being called up for the Olympic Football Tournament in Beijing the following year, where he presided over a quarter-final. During his career, which has also included assignments in Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Ukraine, Skomina has handled a total of three UEFA Champions League semi-finals, four Europa League semi-finals, four Slovenian cup finals and two Slovenian Super Cups. Between 2012 and 2013 he participated in the finals of the European Championship in Poland/Ukraine (three games including a quarter-final), oversaw Chelsea-Atlético Madrid in the final of the UEFA Super Cup and took charge of two games in the U-20 World Cup. In 2016 he participated in the EURO finals in France (handling four games including a quarter-final). In 2017 he was assigned to handle Ajax-Manchester United in the Europa League final and to the Confederations Cup, where Skomina oversaw one game, was the prelude to a call-up for his first World Cup.

Clement TURPIN (FRA)


Country	France
Place & date of birth	Oullins, 16.05.1982
Occupation	Regional referee supervisor for Bourgogne regional association
Languages	French, English, Spanish
International since	2010
Hobbies	Sports
Fondest memory	The matches he oversaw at EURO 2016 with his family in the stands, and participating in the Olympic Football Tournament 2016

Career

Clément Turpin's inclusion marks the return of a French referee to the World Cup finals, after none were picked for the Brazil edition four years ago. The son of Jacques Turpin – the former president of FC Montceau Bourgogne – he made his *Ligue 1* debut in 2008 and turned international two years later, when he also debuted in the Europa League qualifying stages. In 2011 he was selected for the first of two French Cup finals (the second was in 2016) and covered a semi-final in the continental U-19 championship. In 2012, Turpin officiated in the Champions League qualifying stages and in 2014 took charge of the French Super Cup encounter between Paris Saint-Germain and Guingamp. He presided over two games in the European U-21 Championship in 2015, followed by the same number in the senior European Championship and the Olympic Football Tournament in Rio de Janeiro the following year. Last year he was selected for the U-17 World Cup, where he covered a quarter-final, and was assigned to handle Peru–New Zealand in the return leg of the World Cup intercontinental play-off. In 2018 he officiated a UEFA Europa League semi-final.