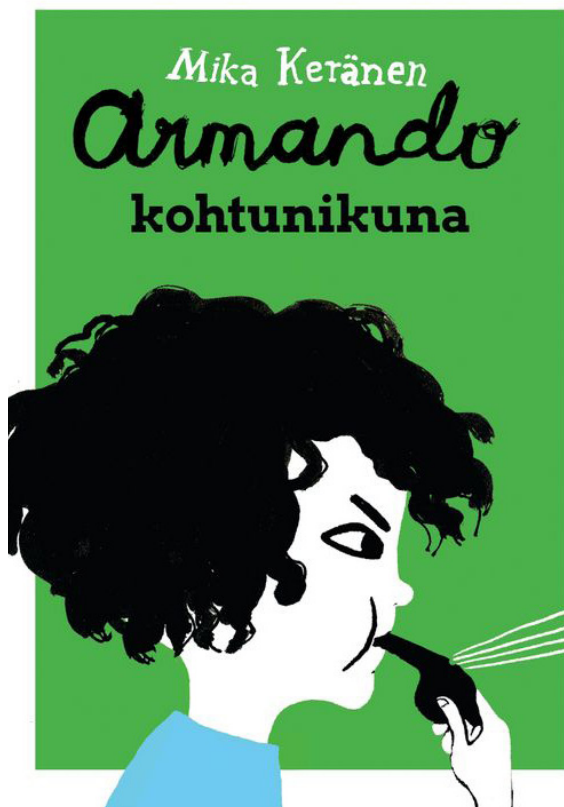


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Armando Referees

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Age: 7+

Armando knows that football is an intense game and it's sometimes hard to contain your feelings. But when he and his team can't wrap their heads around the referee's ruling in the middle of a match, bad words find it all too easy to cross their lips. Their coach Timo tries to get the boys and their parents alike to cool their nerves, but Armando and his teammate Chick are soon forced to leave the field with a red card. They're still angry at the referee after the match ends, so Timo decides to have Armando try out refereeing himself. Quickly, Armando realizes that taming opposing teams and their fans isn't as simple as he thought it was.

Armando

Reading sample

Sometimes a game can get out of hand. When a game starts, the joy can be just incredible, but at some point, it can get lost along the way.

This specific game, FC Nõmme Pines versus FC Kernu Junipers, was just like that for Armando. In the beginning of first half, he scored a missile but after that everything started to go downhill. The boy felt that the offensives were jabbing him with no reason and, suddenly, he himself was pulling them by their shirts. The young referee gave both sides a verbal caution but kept the cards in his pocket for the time being.

Armando felt that the offensives should have already received a few cards. A few minutes later, a Juniper tackled him with such force that Armando flew over the ball and landed face flat on the field. Armando banged his fists on the ground and yelled out of frustration. How on earth did the referee not see that?!

At the break, all Coach Timo saw around him were disappointed faces. Goalie Chick felt just as dissatisfied as Armando. He threw his gloves on the ground in a fit of anger and shook his head as if he had water in his ear.

“The referee is siding with them!” he huffed.

Armando agreed.

“He is constantly whistling for their benefit.”

Such excuses did not sit well with Timo. He looked both boys in the eyes and said: “You two concentrate on playing. You’ll see. Everything will be ok.”

But it wasn’t. Nõmme Pines just didn’t manage to land their attacks. The Kernu team, on the other hand, managed to create quite a few good-quality counterattacks but, despite that, didn’t manage to score either.

When the ball crossed over the end line and Chick ran to fetch it to give it a goal kick, the referee whistled for a corner kick instead.

That was the second time during the game that Armando started to argue with the referee. He didn’t choose his words carefully and ended up getting a yellow card.

The goalie Chick rushed up to have his say and ended up getting a yellow himself, too, as he was assisting Armando in his insults.

Among the spectators were Armando’s Argentinian dad, Pedro, and Chick’s grandfather Toivo. Neither of them shied away from showing their resentment.

“Oi, referee, was that really a corner!?” Toivo bawled.

Pedro seconded that by yelling “Get yourself a pair of pecks!” He meant specks but although his Estonian was pretty good by now, he sometimes still made silly mistakes like these.

Toivo whispered into Pedro’s ear that in Estonian, one says “specks,” so Pedro yelled again, “Referee, buy yourself some specks!” Toivo held up his hand for Pedro and they high-fived.

It was no use though. FC Pines tried all they could but the offensive team pushed even stronger. Soon Armando’s team couldn’t even make it to the offensive half. The equaliser was close but, luckily, time was running out. The score was still 1:0 for FC Pines.

Chick managed to catch a very dangerous cross and yelled for the whole team to run up. He himself was strolling very slowly in the penalty area and held the ball above his head with one hand like a waiter holding a tray in a fancy restaurant. Being a cunning player, he was stalling deliberately because the longer he managed to keep the ball out of the game, the better. Every second ticks closer to the win.

Pedro demanded for the referee to finish the game. He shouted: “Time is out! The game is over!”

But every player knows that the game is only over when the referee has whistled three times. And it is for the referee to decide when those three whistles are blown, no one else.