

Champions 121

Chapter 121: Provocation Part 2

“Des, I don’t wish for this kind of thing to interrupt my match.”

“Hmm?”

“I want to mount a comeback in the rest of the match! I want to let those fans that mocked and humiliated us, as well as that idiotic manager, realize their consequences for doing this!” Tang En lowered his head and looked at his watch, before walking toward the fourth official whose forehead was full of perspiration.

“I suggest we proceed for the halftime break early.” Tang En pointed at the field, and said to the fourth official, “We are currently one minute away from the end of the first half. I won’t allow my players to continue to wait on the field like that. Who knows what those crazy fans will do? If they break past the police barrier and assault my players, will you be able to take responsibility for it? Enter half-time, and we’ll return to the changing room. Leave everything here to the police to handle!” The questions posed caused the perspiration on the fourth official’s forehead to become even more concentrated...

McLeary, the manager of Millwall, also happened to approach the fourth official at the same time to express the same opinion.

Tang En did not have any intentions of being on the same side as McLeary and turned around to leave as soon as he saw McLeary approaching. Because of the incident just now, Tang En did not view this person in a positive light.

Since the managers of both teams requested for an early halftime break, the fourth official called the referee over and briefly discussed it with him. After that, the referee blew the whistle on the side of the field, signaling the end of the first half. Players from both teams began running toward the changing room, and it was apparent that they also felt that staying on the field was a very dangerous thing. The fans’ rioting should be left to the police to deal with. Even if they had remained on the field, there was nothing that they could do.

Tang En saw the scene that he had hoped for and returned to the changing room as well.

Just like that, the first half of the EFL Cup quarter finals ended in a kind of chaos and riot.

※※※

All of the players entered the changing room. Even the substitute players, who should have been warming up on the field during halftime, were called over by Walker. It would be crazy if they were to proceed with their warm-ups under such circumstances.

Tang En stood at the door of the changing room and watched as the players ran into the room with their heads lowered.

Compared to the depressed Nottingham Forest players, the Millwall players who were leading were very excited. Even though there was a riot going on, their mood was hardly affected. There were even people

who intentionally laughed loudly while discussing about Cahill's goal as they walked past Nottingham Forest's changing room, such as their Australian center-back, Kevin Muscat.

Hearing that unpleasant laughter which sounded like a male duck, Tang En shot him a glare. The other party, upon seeing that he had successfully gotten Twain's attention, even shrugged his shoulders smugly before leaving with his laughing teammates.

Tang En turned his head around and closed the door after entering the changing room. As a result, the laughter and noise from the outside immediately ceased to be heard.

Looking at the room full of dejected players, Tang En felt as if he had gone back in time. This was exactly the scene which he had seen when he first arrived here in January.

Of course there were some aspects which were different, such as Tang En being at a loss and not knowing what his own future was. At that time, it was as though he was a drowning person struggling in water. He wanted to grasp at anything that could save his life, even if it was a straw.

And now? He had a goal to strive hard toward, and he knew what he was currently doing, as well as what he should be doing. He was no longer at a loss, no longer hesitating, and no longer in doubt... His heart was firm, and his feet were on solid ground. Every step he took on it left behind his footprints, and these footprints accumulated from here and extended into the far distance.

This was his road to glory, his road to being a champion.

Everyone's head was lowered, and nobody uttered a single word. The atmosphere in the changing room was exceptionally suffocating. It was several hundred times more suffocating than that on the train.

Walker very much wanted to say something, but upon seeing the long faces of Tang En and the players, he seemed to have no idea of what he should say. Say something like "We will definitely win"? But who would believe these words, which were not convincing at all? Say something like "Everyone get your spirits up"? But what was the use of such a superficial encouragement?

How he wished that Twain would say something at that moment. Regardless of what he said, even if he would just casually make some noise, it would be much better than letting the silence in the room continue! The morale of the team... The morale of the team was about to suffocate and die under this unbearable silence!

Tony!

Walker turned his head and looked at Twain, but discovered that he had his eyes fixated on the walls of the changing room, as though there was something that was very attractive.

Finally, someone could no longer bear the awkward atmosphere and broke the silence with a cough. After that, even more players raised their heads, and looked weirdly at their manager.

This kind of movements finally pulled back Tang En's attention. He looked at the curious faces of the players and laughed. "So sorry, I just recalled some things." Currently on the team, there were a few players who had not been under him in the previous season. They were Rebrov, Gareth Taylor, Gunnarsson, and Danny Sonner. Tang En wanted to let them know of the similar situation in the previous season.

“Hmm, I recalled some things in the previous season when I first took over this team.” Tang En was not in a hurry to arrange the tactics and, instead, began narrating a story. “At that time, the team’s situation was even worse than it is now. Yes, how bad was it... Financial crisis, no funds for transfer fees, and even all of the money gotten from player transactions had to be used to repay debts. The team was ranked in the middle, and everyone on the team wanted to escape City Ground Stadium. We lost quite a few matches consecutively, and we lost 0:3 on our home ground in the first match that I led. I was even knocked onto the ground by David, making a fool out of myself.” Tang En stopped here and pointed at Johnson, causing that black lad to lower his head in embarrassment.

“The situation was terrible, and those who were on the team in the previous season must remember it very clearly as well. What was worse was that we were about to face off Premier League team Westham United in the match after. Even though they were already a League One team like us, but they were still very formidable at that time. That match...” Tang En raised his head. That match was really unforgettable for him. “By the end of the first half, we had been dunked three goals by them. Terrible right? It was simply awful!”

Although that was what he said, Tony Twain began giggling.

Those veteran players in the changing room also followed suit and started laughing, leaving the few new players bewildered and confused. They looked at the people around them, baffled. Was trailing by three goals something to laugh at?

“At that time, we were left with no means of retreat, completely no means! If we did not come up with something in the second half, then we would continue to concede even more goals! But the end result was? We turned the tables and scored four goals back at them!” Tang En shouted as he felt the fervor and excitement from that day at City Ground Stadium returning to him. “Four goals! Before the match, nobody had any hopes for us. We made the Premier League team Westham United completely lose face! In the end, they could only rely on the referee to escape! That darned referee blew off two of our goals. Although we lost in terms of the rules, but I have never once viewed that match as a failure,” Tang En stood at the door of the changing room as he said to the players listening attentively to him.

“And now? The team is ranked fourth from the bottom in the league, and has an extremely low morale after switching managers. Before this match, we were met with a lot of troubles as well. In addition, we are trailing by one ball in the match, provoked by those b*stards on the viewing platforms with their singing, and the fans’ rioting... etc., etc. Is our defeat for certain? Quit joking!” Tang En waved his hands. “We are only trailing by one ball! We were able to mount a comeback even when we were three balls down, much less one ball!”

“Michael! Andy! Everyone else too, have you all heard those singing from the viewing platform?” Tang En asked loudly.

“I heard them, boss.” Andy replied softly.

“What do you guys think?”

“I.. I can’t wait to kill those b*stards!” Dawson said as he clenched his fists and gritted his teeth. The other Nottingham Forest players were equally furious. These people had all experienced the pain of failing to promote in the previous season.

“Me too,” Tang En nodded his head and said. “But we cannot do that. We can use another way to teach them a lesson.”

The players all raised their heads and looked at Twain. Actually, they knew very well what he was referring to, but they looked forward to hearing those words directly from the boss’s mouth.

“They dare sprinkle salt on our wounds in hopes of angering us, so that we will lose our calm, be at a loss, lose our fighting spirits, and surrender on our own accord! They think that they’ve succeeded in doing so! We are currently down by one goal and left the field dejected...Those Millwall idiots, from the fans to the team, are all waiting to laugh at us! I dare to bet that their changing room is now filled with laughter, just like all of you imagined!”

Tang En punched the door forcefully, causing a loud bang to be heard.

“We were insulted by them!” Tang En poked at his chest and said, “Our fans were insulted by them!” He pointed toward the ceiling and continued, “Even a dead person had to be insulted by those sons of a gun!”

Bam! Yet another fist hit the door.

“Yes! They’ve succeeded! They’ve angered us!”

Bam!

“But they will soon regret doing so! We will make it clear to them, what lies in wait for them when they anger us!”

Bam!

Apart from the banging noises from Tang En’s fists hitting the door, no other noise could be heard in the small changing room. Everyone looked at the manager which was almost crazy, and every banging sound that was heard, was as though their hearts had been punched. They were being told again and again: This is what humiliation means!

“In the second half... In the second half, use your goals to defeat them! We’ll score a goal each time these b*stards sing! Every time they sing, we’ll score one goal. Every time they sing, we’ll score one goal! Until those b*stards won’t even dare to open their mouths! Until they are not even allowed to speak—at—all!”

Bam—Bam—Bam—!

Tony Twain’s roaring resounded throughout the room. His left fist appeared as though it was an iron ingot that had been burnt red, while the metal door of the changing room trembled and made lamenting noises after being continuously pounded by Twain’s fists.

Everyone present was shocked by his murderous intent...

Chapter 122: The Consequence Of Provocation Part 1

Tang En stopped talking and the locker room was quiet again. But there was an undercurrent brewing beneath the calm. After a while, the sound of heavy breathing in the room grew louder, and Tang En knew the time was right.

“Well, lads, we can’t win the match with hot-bloodedness alone. We still need to use our brains.” He knocked on the tactical board, “I think we all have seen what kind of football Millwall plays. Who else is going to reveal his footwork in front of them? No one? Very good.”

“In the first half they used all their efforts to press hard across the entire field. The results were very good, and we were unable to react well. But I must say that the other manager is an idiot. There are already some problems with their physical fitness. The second half is destined to be our world. Learn to make use of the width of the field. We move around more and more direct passes. Play a more straightforward game. They want to keep and fight us in the midfield, don’t give them the chance, just swiftly break through the midfield. They like to kick long balls. We’ll do the long-ball play with them! Taylor!” Tang En looked at Gareth Taylor, who had just returned from the reserve team.

“You’re on for the second half. You’re going to substitute for Johnson. Pay attention, everybody!” He raised his voice. “When you have the chance, kick long balls! Their center back can’t compete with you on headers! The one who’s most capable on headers, Darren Ward, is not even on the main list for this match. The 21-year-old Mark Phillips is still too inexperienced. He’s not a threat to you.” Tang En looked at Taylor as he said these words, everyone could see that the key to the team winning in the second half laid with this guy.

“As for the other player... that b*stard, Muscat, is only 1.78-meter tall, shorter than you by 10 centimeters. And that guy’s header skills... are far worse than his ability to slide tackle and break someone’s legs off! But the task that I’m giving to you is not to defeat him with a header. I want you to... bring him down! You know what I mean?”

Taylor thought for a moment and then nodded. “He has a yellow card on him.”

Tang En grinned and chuckled, “You’re smart, big guy. Find a way to bring him down, but don’t hurt yourself. Remember, you must be realistic! If you get a yellow card for a fake dive, I won’t feel sorry for you.” He wagged his finger.

Taylor nodded again. “I know what to do.”

It was Tang En’s method of bribing the team’s heart by entrusting Taylor with a heavy responsibility in front of the entire team. The so-called carrot-and-stick approach.

After the task had been assigned to Taylor, everyone knew what the team’s tactics were going to be in the second half: to use the 1.88-meter-tall Taylor, who was excellent at headers, as the bridgehead for the offense and breakthrough to the opposing side. Whether he was going to shoot a goal or make an assist, all had to pass with his head first.

“Rebrov, your mission in this match is not to organize the offense, but to score a goal. Taylor will soon be marked by the opponents, he will attract all of Millwall’s defensive attention. You have to follow him by his side. When he seizes the control of the ball, you have to grab the second pass before the Millwall players and then, I don’t care what method you use, you must strike the ball into their goal!”

Rebrov nodded vigorously.

“Next... Eugen Bopp, you should reflect on that stupid yellow card in the first half. If I had a defensive midfielder substitute, I would have brought you off immediately,” Said Tang En while he stared at the young German player. Bopp lowered his head and dared not look at him. “But lucky for you, except for you and Gunnarsson, we do not have another defensive midfielder. So, you still have to stay on the field. Mind your actions, don’t take the initiative to apply for a red card!”

“I... I got it, boss.” Bopp replied with a low voice.

“Gunnarsson, Bopp has a card. You will need to help him more in the second half. You two will work together to closely mark Cahill! Don’t give him a chance for a long pass like the first half!” Tang En waved his fist. Cahill was able to easily shoot in the first half because Bopp and Gunnarsson did not close in around him in time.

“Yes, sir.” The Icelandic man replied with an expressionless face.

“As for their captain...” Tang En closed his eyes and paused a little. He would have to say goodbye to the past from now on. Dennis... Let me send you off one last time!

“There’s no need to be afraid of a 37-year-old man!”

※※※

While Tang En was assigning tasks to the players and laying out their strategies, Des Walker went out alone to see the situation in the stadium. The disturbance in the stands had subsided and returned to calm. But at a glance, there were still a lot of empty seats. Those people must have been taken away by the police, or sent directly to the hospital...

There were three rows of fully armed riot police stationed on both sides of the visitors stands. Occasionally, fans from both sides still engaged in a war of words across the three-layer human wall, but the situation had largely been restored to calm. It seemed like the second half could proceed normally.

It just so happened that the referees came out of the referee’s lounge and Walker looked at them questioningly. The fourth official nodded to him. “The second half of the game can continue, Mr. Manager.”

“That’s good news,” Walker smiled. “If the referees decided to cancel the second half and postpone the game, Nottingham Forest and Tony Twain would suffer the biggest blow.”

Seeing Walker’s response, the fourth official stopped and said to him, “I too think it’s good news, Mr. Manager. I also hope that in the second half we will all see a match, and nothing else. So, please tell your manager to calm down on the sidelines.”

Walker shrugged his shoulders, “Do you plan to say the same thing to the Millwall manager and their fans, Mr. Referee?”

This question stumped the fourth official and he did not know how to answer. He froze for a moment, and then shook his head, “I will report all the facts of this game to the Football Association. Good-bye, Mr. Manager.” Then he turned and left.

Looking at the back of this man, Walker laughed and said loudly, “You should wish Mr. McLeary good luck!”

He turned and walked toward the locker room, opened the door, and found that Twain was almost done talking.

“Tony, the second half will start on time.” He brought the best news to Tang En.

Tang En smiled. “That’s fantastic! Guys, you don’t have to worry about not being able to give vent to your rage! Do you still remember everything I said?”

“We remember, boss!” The players answered loudly.

“Close your eyes and think about how they’ve treated us in the first half! What do you recall? How do you feel?” Tang En was like a virtuoso guiding the players to reach the desired state that he wanted.

Michael Dawson raised his clenched fist and trembled slightly. “I... I want to get out there and play! Chief! I want to shut those b*stards up!”

“Then let’s do it! Wipe them out!” Tang En and Walker stepped aside in the doorway and the players all rushed out. “Let them know... the consequence of provoking us!”

※※※

After the second half of the game kicked off, the hissing sounds from the Millwall fans in the stands did not seem to diminish and some singing voices could even be heard insulting Gavin. But Tang En was no longer in competition with the fans in the stands behind the technical area. He stood on the sidelines, with his hands in the pockets and watched the ongoing game with a grim face.

Looking at him, he seemed to be very worried about the outcome of the game because his team was behind by a goal. McLeary sat in the technical area with his legs crossed, getting ready to enjoy a good show.

But... whose good show was it going to be?

Cahill attempted to dribble the ball to break through from the middle zone. But he was blocked out by Gunnarsson and Bopp in unison at the goal area. Gunnarsson who seized the ball, passed it to Andy Reid on the left wing. Reid’s strength was in long passes, and he followed Twain’s instruction and directly shot it to Gareth Taylor in front.

The man defending against Taylor now was not Muscat, but young Mark Phillips, who could not compare with Taylor both in terms of experience and physical size. The two players had not even jumped, and he had already lost first—Taylor squeezed in front of him and he completely missed his position!

Now Taylor had not entered the penalty area yet, so it was impossible to do a header straight away. During his struggle with Phillips for the position, he saw Rebrov running up from behind, and Wise followed him closely behind. Should he pass the ball to him?

When he saw Reid pass the ball to Taylor, Rebrov ran forward, and Wise, with ample experience, guessed the Forest team's tactic almost instantaneously and had followed up, too. This created a huge problem for the Ukrainian player in his next move.

Stopped the ball? It would likely to be cut off by Wise. That little man's feet were too fast! And now there were not many people on the Millwall defensive line. He had hoped to directly wade into it, seize the opportunity to break through those defenders who were too close to each other, and then face the goalkeeper. It looked like this was out of the question now.

In order not to let Wise cut off the football, he could only stop the football on the wing. Although he could still retain the possession of the ball, he would also lose the best opportunity for an offense.

What was he going to do?

When Collymore left, Rebrov originally thought that his days on the Forest team were numbered. However, he did not expect that in the previous match, the new manager's words and a change of position had let him regain a new lease on life. Yes, though he was originally a striker, he did not obtain the kind of results that corresponded with the title of a striker when he played for Tottenham Hotspur. It was the same in the Forest team. Just when he began to doubt his ability, Twain told him to move his position backward by 20 meters and he would see a completely different world.

Chapter 123: The Consequence Of Provocation Part 2

You will see a completely different world...

Rebrov looked up at Millwall's goal. The opposing goalkeeper stood in the front and there were very few defenders. He could envision countless routes that the ball could be launched from his current position to the goal across the huge expanses of empty space,

Yes! I see it!

Taylor trapped Phillips behind him, and he looked up at the ball and spied Rebrov from the corner of his eyes. His teammate in the yellow visitor jersey was waving at him, and his gesture indicated to him to pass the ball back with a header.

I'll pass it to you!

Taylor suddenly leapt and pressed Philips down. Then he headed the long pass that came from Reid to assist Rebrov who was charging forward!

Wise had tried to keep up with the opponents' preparation, but he did not expect the Forest team number 10 to suddenly accelerate and shake him off in two strides! He tried to catch up, but he found his body ignored his command. He was getting old... He could only stumble and watch Rebrov receive the ball flying toward him, leap sideways, swing open his leg, and whip his leg toward the football...

"Taylor, a header..."

I see it, this is the path to the goal, this is... a whole new world!

“Rebrov... Rebroooooooooooooooooooooooooooov!”

Tony Warner, Millwall’s goalkeeper, did not think that Rebrov would directly kick the ball while it was still so high in the air outside the penalty area, which was still 30 meters away from the goal! He was positioned too far ahead. Even if he leapt high with all his might and stretched out his arms, he still could not stop the powerful force of the shot from that leg! The football swept past the top of his hands, then rapidly fell and hit the net as the commentator was yelling!

“Incredible! It’s unbelievable! A super long shot! From Serhiy Rebrov—!”

A tremendous cheer erupted in the visitors’ stands, heavily surrounded by the police. At that moment, they quelled the Millwall fans’ singing and jeering. At that moment Nottingham Forest shut the Millwall fans’ mouths!

“This is Rebrov! What a magnificent goal! Tony Twain’s team showed us their remarkable nerve! They have leveled the score in this away match! There’s absolute silence in the home team grandstand. Everyone’s stunned by this amazing long shot! Beautiful shot! Beautiful! The Millwall goalkeeper Tony Warner is speechless with this loss!”

After finishing the shot, Rebrov got up from the ground and looked up at the goal. The football had just hit the net. He knew he had succeeded! He was so excited that he did not hug Taylor for his assist. Instead, he turned and ran toward Tony Twain, his team manager who was on the sidelines, celebrating the goal with Walker. He wanted to thank this man for giving him a new lease of life!

He was not good with words and unable to say anything too sappy. At this moment the only way for him to express his gratitude... was to hold the man firmly in his arms. His arms tightly clasped and almost crushed the breath out of Tony Twain. Behind him, his teammates flocked around them and knocked him and the manager down, and then they all piled on...

“Ah! Damn it! My ribs!” Tang En, who was the one crushed at the bottom, howled in pain.

※※※

“...This is the quarter finals of the EFL Cup! Millwall versus Nottingham Forest in a home ground match! After the fan riots at the end of the first half, the second half of the game continues! We’re just less than five minutes in, and we have already seen this beautiful goal! This is a value for the price of the ticket goal!”

Motson’s animated voice boomed from the television set in the bar, and it was a sea of cheers under the television. A few excited fans jumped onto the tables and poured down the large mugs of beer in their hands. And more people imitated them and splashed their beer into the air. Beer was raining down in the bar and the beer showered on everyone. But they did not care. They drank the beer that fell from the air with their mouths wide open, fists pumping and hollered, “Well done! Ukrainian! Good job! Tony! This is the best way to retaliate against those b*stards!”

“No one can get away safe and sound after provoking us! No one!”

“Those Millwall idiots will regret it! You should not have mentioned Gavin’s name!”

※※※

The cheers and celebrations of the Forest fans in the stands still continued. The game had started again, and the Millwall fans' resentful hissing started again.

After the score was equalized, McLeary went to the sidelines in a panic and tried to redeem the situation. Tang En gave him a disdainful glance. This man did not pose a threat to him at all.

After leading the First Team to play more than a dozen games, the only manager that deeply impressed him was the Sheffield United manager, Neil Warnock. Because that old chap defeated him in the most crucial match, which left him with a failure that he would never forget.

Having equalized the score with a breathtaking kick, Nottingham Forest was completely playing in peak condition. Even Wise was helpless when faced with the rush of the Forest players. For the first time in his 19-year career, he felt a sense of powerlessness surge from the bottom of his heart... He was getting old, the field belonged to the young.

Seven minutes after the Forest team's equalizer, they successfully reversed the score. This time it was Andy Reid who scored the goal. As a result of a beautiful coordination by the Forest team in the penalty area, he was able to dribble the ball into the penalty area, and then he kicked a low shot into the net from the left wing!

After taking the lead at 2:1, the Forest team played even more aggressively. The Millwall players could also see that their opponents were hooked on the offense and would not give up at this point.

Because Mark Phillips was unable to defend against Gareth Taylor, Kevin Muscat was instructed by Manager McLeary to mark Nottingham Forest number 18, who was 10 centimeters taller than him! The disparity was not only reflected in height, but also reflected in physical strength.

Muscat spent all his energy in his entanglement with Taylor, and his temper was rising as fast as a thermometer that was put into boiling water. He really wanted to boot this big guy's leg. At the most he would be sent off with a red card, but the opponent might end up in the hospital for up to half a year.

When he slide-tackled Gareth Taylor from the back again, Taylor screamed and fell to the ground. Then he held his ankle in agony and rolled around. It looked as if his leg was really broken.

The referee's whistle rang, and the Australian defender, Muscat, accepted his ending with a smile—second yellow card and a red card. This was what he had anticipated, and he did not even make any excuses. When his teammates surrounded the referee and still pleaded on his behalf, he tugged his jersey out of his shorts and smiled at Taylor, who was lying on the ground.

Boy, I'm walking off the field and you're being carried off, these are our respective endings. Which one do you think is better?

He had just finished his thoughts when he saw the big guy, who had just been tossing and turning and desperately calling out for a stretcher, stand up before the team doctor. And he even walked off the field on his own!

Of course, he did not forget to turn his head around and give Muscat a smile.

My friend, we're all walking off the field. But I can come back up after this and you... will go back to the locker room, get dressed, and then go straight home!

The smile on Kevin Muscat's face froze.

※※※

Short of a player and behind in the score at the same time, Millwall did not give up the game and were prepared to go on a frenzied counterattack with their fans cheering them on.

However, their fighting spirit had not even been ignited before it was extinguished in their hearts.

Muscat had just slowly shuffled to the sidelines when another immense cheer came from the visitors' stands.

"Gareth Taylor! What a stunning header! Poor Mark Phillips could not defend against Taylor who is of the same height. Nottingham Forest's number-one scorer this season, just added the eleventh goal to his personal goals! 3:1! The away team, Nottingham Forest is leading by 3:1 at The Den!"

Upon seeing Taylor hugging his teammates to celebrate the goal together, Muscat angrily struck the railing beside him. He was duped by this big guy, no, fundamentally speaking, he was duped by that other person!

He turned his gaze toward the Nottingham Forest technical area. Tony Twain jumped up and pumped both fists in excitement.

All of a sudden, he felt that not only was he tricked, but Mr. McLeary, manager of his team, was also caught in Twain's trap.

This... son of a b*tch!

At the urging of the fourth official, Muscat, who was sent off by the red card, finally reluctantly left the field and entered the player's corridor.

Next, the Millwall fans in the stands gradually quieted down. They could only powerlessly watch their team being slaughtered by the sudden eruption of the Forest team. Why had they used the name "Gavin" to provoke Tony Twain's team?

Look what happened!

4:1!

5:1!

6:1!

7:1!

The Forest team went on a frenzy as if they could just score a goal with any random shot. No matter what kind of substitution adjustment McLeary had made, he was unable to save the team from the fate of their disastrous defeat on their home ground.

He stood dumbstruck on the sidelines and could hardly believe everything he was looking at. How... How did it come to this? He was feeling smug and complacent before the match. He had bright prospects at the halftime interval and now... everything that was happening now was a disgrace to him!

The referee finally blew the whistle at the end of the match, and the nightmare of the 38-year-old Millwall manager, Alan McLeary, and his team, as well as the Millwall fans in the stands, had come to an end.

Chapter 124: Press Conference Part 1

In the hearts of the reporters, the match was an interesting one with many ups and downs. However, the press conference held after the match was their real focus. The reporters were eager to hear from the managers of both teams regarding their opinions on the fans rioting which had occurred during the match.

Soon after the match ended, the reporters quickly ended their interviews at the mixed zone and assembled at the venue where the press conference would be held while waiting for the managers to come out.

Tang En was the first to come out, and the dejected person following behind him closely was Millwall's manager, Alan McLeary. According to the norms, the two managers should shake hands as a form of courtesy. However, Twain sat in his seat with both his hands in his pocket, and seemed to have no intentions of shaking hands with McLeary at all. McLeary stood on the stage dumbfounded for a split second, before proceeding to sit down on his own seat in a somewhat awkward fashion.

As soon as the host announced the commencement of the press conference, all of the reporters immediately raised their hands.

It was evident that the topic which the reporters cared about the most was not the shocking 7:1 score. Any score was possible on the football field, and a score of 7:1 was still within the boundaries of the Earth, and not that far-fetched as though it was on Mars. This match was full of publicity value and stunts. The story which would attract the public's attention happened on the viewing platform. The Millwall fans insulting songs as well as the rioting caused by both parties' fans were the topics of interest which the reporters asked questions about.

Faced with these questions, Tang En snatched the microphone first to answer. The earlier he finished whatever he had to say, the earlier he could leave this place and return to Nottingham. He did not have any intention of sitting with the guy beside him for too long.

"I understand that all of you are very eager to know about those things which happened on the viewing platforms, but I don't wish to mention it again. I suggest you ask the Millwall club chairman as well as Mr. Manager seated beside me instead. They should know best what kind of people their supporters are." This sentence directly caused Twain to make an enemy of all the Millwall people, but he did not care at all as he did not rely on getting in the good books of enemy fans to obtain victory. "I only want to say one point, that I am extremely pleased with my players' performance in the second half, and that they are every bit worthy of this match's victory."

A reporter seemed to have seen through Tang En's intention to leave soon, and hurriedly asked, "Excuse me Mr. Twain! Your team's performances in the first half and the second half are worlds apart. What did you say to them during the halftime break? Were there any special arrangements?"

Tang En stared at this reported and said, "I told my players that if they were furious at the Millwall fans' singing, then they should score goals to shut their mouths up. Every time they sang, we would score a goal. Every time they sang, we would score a goal. Until they don't dare to make a single noise. I am very happy that my players managed to accomplish this."

After that, Tang En paid no heed to the uproar caused by this statement and placed the microphone on the table, before taking his leave.

The host reminded him, "Sir, the press conference has not ended yet..."

"His press conference has not ended, not mine." Tang En pointed toward McLeary and said. "I have nothing more to say, Mr. Host. Everyone!" Tang En raised his voice at the reporters and said, "If you have any questions, you may ask Mr. Alan McLeary to your hearts' content!"

After which, he turned around and left.

The dejected McLeary mumbled behind Tang En's back, "I've never seen someone with such bad manners."

Tang En, who was in the midst of leaving, stopped because of this sentence. He turned around and looked at McLeary, giving off a look so fierce as though he wanted to gobble McLeary up. "Manners? Mr. Alan McLeary..." Tang En spoke slowly, articulating each and every word clearly. "There's something that I can be sure of, and it's the fact that my manners are definitely a few hundred million times much better than you and your supporters on the viewing platform!"

After finishing his sentence, Tony Twain completely ignored the reporters who shouted his name and left the small press conference room without even turning his head around.

※※※

Nottingham Forest triumphed over Millwall with a score of 7:1 in their away match, successfully advancing into the semi-finals. However, there were few reports regarding this score. Instead, the rioting fans made the headlines of most English newspapers after the match.

The media was able to make the connection to the previous season's match between Nottingham Forest and Millwall, where the football hooligans' fight caused an innocent child's unfortunate death. Hence, they titled their newspaper articles as such: The return of football hooligans! The return of football violence!

A kind of suppressed excitement could be vividly seen in the papers.

Actually, this kind of attitude by the media could be explained by a catastrophe from 14 years before.

Ever since the Hillsborough incident, Lady Margaret Thatcher who had always been opposed to football as a sport, finally found an excuse to remediate this form of "violent sport." She tasked Lord Justice Taylor to carry out a detailed independent investigation targeted at the football environment in England at that time. As a result, two versions of "Taylor Report" were published over the span of six months.

In this famous report, Lord Justice Taylor proposed various suggestions for football as a sport, as well as suggestions pertaining the English society's attitudes toward the assumption of responsibility. However,

the English government only adopted a few of the suggestions, such as the reconstruction of stadiums, changing all of the standing accommodations into all-seater models, and tearing down the fences.

The Sports Ground Safety Authorities was already established in 1973 by the English Government, and those sports stadiums which did not meet the safety requirements would not be issued safety certifications. However, the safety certification of Hillsborough Stadium, where the tragedy took place, had already expired for more than 10 years! According to the expired safety certification at Hillsborough Stadium, the third and fourth zones of the West viewing platforms could only hold up to 2,200 people. But in actual fact, its maximum holding capacity was less than 1,700 people. When the tragedy took place, there were more than 3,000 fans trying to squeeze into these two small zones, directly causing the tragedy with an overcrowded stampede.

Although speaking from a subjective point of view, Lady Margaret Thatcher's actions were all carried out in order to oppress football, a sport which she thoroughly detested. Objectively speaking, those action did revolutionize English football. Now, the spectators were able to sit on plastic seats and there were also specialized evacuation routes in the stadiums. The ability to watch football matches in refurbished football stadiums had to be credited to the Taylor Report and the Thatcher government.

The Taylor Report also built a solid foundation for the establishment of the English Premier League in terms of safety and hardware facilities. In 1992, the long-awaited English Premier League finally made its debut, momentarily drawing the attention of worldwide football fans with its captivating matches. Under the highly marketed and commercialized management, the English Premier League became increasingly captivating as the years went by. It looked like English football once again regained its former glory and even the blights like football hooliganism seemed to have disappeared from the top tier English leagues.

In reality, with regard to the issue of football hooliganism, the ones who should take responsibility and atone for those tragedies should not only be limited to the fans. The English government and the media should also shoulder some of the responsibilities.

In fact, perhaps 99 percent of the English football fan population was innocent. However, as long as the remaining one percent of football hooligans existed, the rest of the fans would be blamed as well. There was a 'blacklist' inside the English Police Headquarters Scotland Yard used specially for the recording of football hooligans' identities, and this list had been established since the times of the Thatcher Government. More than 10 years had passed since then, and they continued to abide strictly by Lady Thatcher's principles which she had once tactfully proposed—she'd rather get 3,000 people killed wrongfully, than to let one culprit off.

As a result, countless innocent fans were implicated as well. There were some fans with a proper occupation and no past records listed on the blacklist, banned from watching live football matches. The reason was simply because "they once entered the same stadium as the football hooligans", or that "they had drunk in the same bar as the football hooligans."

Of course, for the government to have treated the issue of football hooliganism so harshly, the media also played an integral role in adding fuel to the flames.

A representative example from English history was enough to explain the kind of role which the media played in aggravating the issue of football hooliganism.

The Liverpool fans staying in Merseyside would not forget their hatred toward The Sun for the rest of their lives, because this newspaper company, which had a considerable amount of influence in the country, had, in an attempt to attract attention and vie with The Daily Mirror for news resources, decided to make a selective compilation of reports to sensationalize the incident. As a result of their success in doing so, until now there were still many people who, as a result of the news reports at that time, believed that the Hillsborough incident was caused by the “notorious” Liverpool fans, and that they “deserved to die.”

That headline of The Sun on that day was named “the most shameless headline of news history”—THE TRUTH!

The Sun’s supposed truth was that the Liverpool fans died a deserving death, because it was precisely the drunk Liverpool fans’ fighting which caused this tragedy. They vividly described to the readers everything that happened in the Hillsborough Stadium: those “scumbag” Liverpool fans took advantage of the chaos and snatched the purses of the deceased, clothes, watches... peed at the police who were trying to maintain order, hit the staff who were administering resuscitation to the injured, and even attempted to gang rape a deceased female fan!

They had originally designed the headlines for this news report to be “All of you are scumbags”, before editing it to “THE TRUTH” right before publishing it. What an irony that was. What was the real truth?

As the Thatcher government determined football fans to be “internal enemies”, it was not possible for the government to care about their enemies’ safety or innocence. In fact, they even hoped that the media would collectively report the Hillsborough tragedy as a football hooligans’ riot incident. That way was the only way that could beautifully show how far-sighted they were, and provide justification for their disgusted attitudes toward football as a sport. The fact that till now, Lady Thatcher’s private consultant still felt that The Sun’s perspective at that time was correct is the best proof for it.

The real truth only slowly surfaced years after the incident, but this sort of truth only existed among the people. After countless court trials, the English court ruled the Hillsborough as a “fortuitous incident”, with the police not having to shoulder any responsibilities for this incident. The ironic thing was that all of the evidence which the court based its ruling off was provided by the police. After that, the English courts refused to reopen another court hearing in this matter, because according to the English laws, a private prosecutor had no rights to make an appeal.

Chapter 125: Press Conference Part 2

In English, “justice” can refer to the quality of being fair and reasonable, or the judge of a country’s Supreme Court. The judge who represents justice had ironically personally closed the door to justice for the family members of the deceased.

And the souls of the 96 Liverpool fans shall never get the chance for their grievances to be redressed. Until now, they had been labelled as “football hooligans”, hovering in between Heaven and Hell. They are unable to enter the gates of Heaven, but they are also unwilling to enter Hell and be tortured.

Later, the furious Scousers launched boycott activities against The Sun, and those activities were still going on. It was not unusual to see Liverpool fans raising posters high up in the air, with the following words written beneath a bloodied The Sun logo:

The truth is that 96 people died in the 1989 Hillsborough tragedy! For the deceased, don't buy The Sun's newspapers!

Until now, The Sun newspapers' circulation in Liverpool remained at a meagre 10,000 copies, which was 200,000 copies less compared to before the Hillsborough tragedy took place.

To the powerless Liverpool fans, this was their only means of fighting back given that they were not even able to obtain support from the law. However, this means of fighting back remained powerless and insignificant in the face of the watchful eyes of the police, judges, lawyers, and English government.

After understanding that background, one would be able to understand why the media paid so much more attention to the viewing platforms instead of the field.

Ever since Thatcher's indiscriminate, ironfisted policies, football hooliganism appeared to have left the masses' fields of vision. The media reported mostly about the tabloids of football stars and managers, but the match from yesterday caused the paparazzi all over England to become excited once again.

Yes, football hooligans were back! Football violence was back! The thing that allowed us to draw the attention of the masses was back!

※※※

With a whooshing sound, Tang En threw the newspapers in his hands out. He had originally thought that things would end just like that, and let the past remain as the past. He did not expect that...

After experiencing the Hillsborough tragedy, the English media displayed much more restraint. This time, most of them felt that the Millwall fans were the ones at fault. At first, a group of extremist Millwall fans began singing mocking songs about the deceased young football fan, Gavin Bernard, who had died as a result of a fight that broke out between football fans. Then, the song began to spread and raise discontentment amongst the Nottingham Forest fans, which caused the clash during the match.

Fundamentally, Tang En felt that this was still considered a just report from an objective point of view, as it did not label the Forest fans that were forced to retaliate as "football hooligans."

However, Millwall FC Chairman's words made Tang En extremely furious.

"...I am enraged by those who say that the Nottingham fans only clashed with the police after being provoked by our fans. I witnessed with my eyes that the Nottingham fans were the ones who incited the fight this time. They tried to rush on the field and threw the plastic seats, which they tore off, onto the field..." This was what Millwall FC Chairman Theo Paphitis said when he was interviewed by the reporters.

"I was directing the match at the time, and could not possibly notice what happened on the viewing platforms. No coach would focus his attention on something unrelated to the match. However, I heard about the incident afterwards, and I feel that this incident was not caused by the Millwall fans, but instead by a group of ruffians from Nottingham! Therefore, the ones who should shoulder the

responsibility should be them and not us!” This was what Millwall FC Manager Alan McLeary said in an interview with a reporter from The Sun.

The riot which took place this time at New Den Stadium resulted in 13 people injured. Five Millwall and two Nottingham fans were arrested by the police. In addition, a total of 88 seats sustained damages of varying degrees, and there were several policemen who suffered light injuries as well. It was considered one of the largest-scale fan riots to take place in an English stadium in recent years. The largest-scale fan riot that took place outside of the stadium would have to be the riot which took place on the 7th of June in the previous year, when the Millwall fans rioted after Millwall FC was defeated in the playoffs.

For the Millwall chairman and manager to say something like this with various media paying close attention to the incident, it was no different from trying to shift the blame to Nottingham Forest.

Tang En personally already disliked Millwall as a club, and his hatred for it only grew after this incident.

He decided to break the silence and give those shameless people a sound slap on their cheeks.

Therefore, he took a piece of paper and decided to write an open letter before tasking it to Pierce Brosnan to help him publish it in the newspapers. The feeling of having to suppress one’s words inside the heart was too unbearable. Luckily, he had a reporter friend who he was on relatively good terms with.

Just as Tang En finished writing the first word, he received a call from Doughty.

“Tony, can you come to City Ground Stadium?”

“What’s the matter? I’m currently...” Tang En looked at the open letter, which he had only begun to write, and was about to ask if it was something urgent. If it wasn’t, then he would decline.

“Regarding the fans rioting incident which took place yesterday, I intend to hold a press conference under the name of the club. Come... I know you must want to scold that bunch of b*stards. Now, I’m giving you a chance to scold them in front of the whole of England!” Doughty said fiercely.

Tang En was overjoyed. “You really know me well, Edward! I’ll head there right now!”

※※※

Fifteen minutes later, Tang En appeared in Doughty’s office located inside City Ground Stadium. When he was invited into the room by Ms. Barbara Lucy, Doughty was standing in front of the windows with his back facing the door as he looked at countless reporters rushing toward the gate.

Mr. Doughty, Mr. Twain is here.”

Doughty turned around and smiled at Lucy. “Thank you, Ms. Lucy.”

Ms. Lucy poured a drink for Tang En before leaving the room promptly.

Tang En’s eyes followed Ms. Lucy’s shaking butt until it exited the room, before turning around. He saw Doughty staring at him and laughing, and therefore scratched his head embarrassingly. Tang En explained awkwardly, “Erm... your new secretary is not, not too bad...”

“That is not a new secretary. Ms. Lucy followed me here from America and has always been my personal secretary. She and Allan are both people who I can completely trust.”

“Mhmm, I know. Then what about me?” Tang En was very intrigued by Doughty’s last sentence, and decided to ask.

“You too, Tony. Although we’ve only known each other for a short time, but I like your straightforward personality a lot.” Doughty sat casually on one corner of the table. This kind of situation was something that would never been seen during his father Nigel Doughty’s time as the club chairman.

“Hey, when you told me I wasn’t in your plan, I really thought that I had been abandoned.” Tang En shook his head lightly. “Did you know? At that time, I had at least three club’s telephone numbers in my pocket, and I could have left whenever I wanted.”

Doughty nodded his head, signaling that he knew. “That’s why I always had a question. Tony, what made you ultimately decide to stay in this club where you were unable to see your future, even if it meant going back to the youth team to coach?”

This question made Tang En silent for a while. After which, he replied softly, “Doughty, when I was deciding between whether I should leave or stay, I hesitated for a very long time. Many people helped me directly and indirectly, for instance... Boss Clough took me to the managers’ cocktail party to gain exposure. There, I met countless successful and unsuccessful managers, and it was as though I had entered a completely different world from before. He even told me that failure is only temporary. After that I went to the youth training grounds and amidst the empty compounds, I saw George Wood—the genius who I found in the slums that day—he was practicing some basic techniques alone in the training field, striving hard toward his dream of becoming a football star. After that, I paid a visit to Gavin’s grave.”

Hearing Tang En say this, Doughty no longer sat on the table casually with his body slanted. He got off and listened to Tang En while standing in front of the table.

“I met Michael there, and he told me that he wanted to return to America. His wife was unable to bear the pain of staying here, haunted by her longing for their son. Hence, they wanted to migrate to a country where there was no football. I did not try to persuade him, because his family and life are more important than football. He knew that I might leave, so he said...”

Tang En continued speaking slowly and softly, as though he had once again returned to that fateful afternoon. In front of Gavin’s tombstone, Michael patted Tang En’s shoulders and said, “... Brian Clough came to this team on the 3rd of January, while you, Tony Twain came here on the 1st of January with a difference of two days. What a pity, perhaps we have all missed a legendary tale.”

“He left after that, while I remained in the empty cemetery alone. Even though Michael compared me to Clough, I still did not make up my mind to stay. Until I saw a line of words carved on Gavin’s tombstone. The words were extremely small and had been neglected by me all the while. Do you want to know what was written on it?”

Doughty nodded his head.

“Written on it was: The person resting here is Michael Bernard and Fiona Bernard’s deeply loved son, Nottingham Forest’s most loyal fan, George Wood’s number one supporter forever—Gavin Bernard.”

Tang En did not continue, and Doughty also fell into silence.

He knew of the incident between Tang En and Michael. Michael Bernard was a famous person amongst the football fans of that district, and everyone knew that he had a smart and lovable son. Doughty also felt sorry for Gavin’s death. Otherwise, why would he have thought of holding a press conference today, in order to refute Millwall’s groundless claims?

But he had not expected that young child would hold such an important position in Tony Twain’s heart. Looks like he did the right thing by calling him over.

Doughty coughed and said, “Alright, I think it’s almost time. Let’s go down...”

The silence in the office room was finally shattered, waking Tang En from his deep thought. He raised his head and looked at Doughty, before frowning and standing up.

“Erm, Tony,” Doughty reminded him. “Do you need to prepare the script for your speech? I had Ms. Lucy draft up a copy for you beforehand...”

Tang En shook his head and declined his goodwill respectfully. “Thank you, Edward, but there’s no need for it. I’ve never heard of someone using a script when scolding people.” After that, Tang En pushed open the office door and walked out.

Chapter 126: Big Mouth Twain Part 1

Pierce Brosnan spent an entire night and stayed up late to finish the news report, “The Dangerous Encounter of Tony Twain and Nottingham Forest in the London Underground.” He wrote it in the style of a novel and wrote it with relish. He hoped that the readers would read it with relish, too. That was truly a rare experience.

But when he presented the manuscript to the editor-in-charge, the editor told him that the manuscript could not be released.

“Why?” Brosnan was a little annoyed. Why was the manuscript which was an all-night effort, not allowed to be released? He did not include any content that was not allowed to be published, and Britain was a democratic country with freedom of the press. Furthermore, Millwall had unjustly accused the Nottingham Forest fans of causing the riot. He needed to inform the readers through an accurate account of this news report who the dangerous people were and who the thugs were!

“Ah, don’t get me wrong, Pierce,” the editor-in-charge smiled and said to him. “I mean I can’t release it now. We have just received a press conference notice. Mr. President wants you to attend, and then come back and write a report.”

Brosnan, still unwilling to back down, asked, “What does this have to do with this report?”

“Well, I think... this story, put together with the report from the press conference, will be more appealing.” The editor-in-charge was not miffed, he just smiled and said, “Do you know what that press conference is about?”

Brosnan shook his head.

“It was called by The Nottingham Forest football club in response to Millwall’s nonsense about which side had caused the fans to riot.”

Brosnan’s eyes widened.

“So, you will go, Pierce. Your friend, Tony Twain will be at the press conference, and I think wherever he’s at, there will be no shortage of news elements and dramatic scenes.”

The editor-in-charge had just finished speaking when Brosnan turned and rushed out of the office.

※※※

When Brosnan breathlessly ran into the press conference, he found that inside was already a full house and all the seats were definitely gone. He could only stand at the door and squeeze among the TV station cameras in the back row.

The number of media which attended this press conference exceeded Brosnan’s anticipation. Just counting the television networks, there were already five of them, two Nottingham local television stations, and the other three were Sky TV, BBC, and an independent station.

As far as the print and online media were concerned, there were so many more that it was impossible to recognize them one by one.

It looked like everyone was very concerned about this fan riot in the stands. Violence in the world of football seemed to have kept far away from the leagues, but in fact it had never disappeared. It lurked insidiously outside of everyone’s awareness and revived at the first opportunity. Brosnan thought of Gavin, who had died in innocence... A few days ago, he had gone to Gavin’s grave and found two bouquets of flowers in front of his tombstone. Neither of the cards had been inscribed with the names of the senders. But Brosnan guessed that one of the bouquet must have been sent by Twain. With him being more frequently in contact with Twain during this more than half a year’s time, he found that underneath the man’s irascible appearance that always seemed to be wearing a hanging sign that said, “Strangers keep out”, he was in fact a rather sentimental person. It was just that he was not too good at expressing the feelings from the depths of his heart.

How else could the Forest team defeat Millwall by 7:1 in an away match in the midst of adversity? Brosnan thought about this question during and after the game. If the Millwall fans did not use Gavin’s name to provoke and mock the Forest team, perhaps Nottingham Forest would have lost this tough match. But they did deliberately do this. It was tantamount to stabbing a knife into Twain’s heart, and it was not just stabbing. It was adding salt to the wound after the stabbing.

Tony Twain was a football coach, not a killer. He could not have abandoned the match, jumped to the stands and gotten into a fight with the fans. But the fury inside him had to have a place for him to vent, and so the poor Millwall team became a victim of their fans’ momentary gratification. Brosnan could even imagine how Twain had behaved during the halftime interval. He must have been brandishing his

clenched fists and roaring in the small room to let all the players understand that all those who infuriated him, annoyed him, provoked him, mocked him, and repeatedly challenged his bottom line, would not have a good ending.

Just like what he had said at the post-match press conference, “When (those fans) sing once, we’ll score a goal! Sing once, score a goal! Until they dare not open their mouths again!”

To be honest, Brosnan had no doubt that the Forest team could really do this. Because he knew that was Tony Twain’s Forest team. At that time, he was very excited in the stands every time the Forest team scored a goal, as if he were a fervent Forest fan sitting in the press box. After the tumultuous first half, any Forest fan would be as excited as he was, right? Looking at those Millwall fans who gradually became silent, all the despondence inside them was completely swept away! It was more exhilarating than an orgasm!

What Twain said was right. What was the best kind of manager who would win the hearts of the fans? Victory! A manager who could bring victory! Judging from these two matches and after experiencing the failure of the team’s promotion, Tony Twain had become more mature after his experience in the youth team—of course, he was more mature as compared to before. He must have seriously considered his current situation and future. After he was clear about his forward direction, he no longer hesitated and just steadily moved forward step by step with both feet firmly on the ground.

While Brosnan was in deep contemplation, the din at the press conference gradually waned, and finally disappeared completely. Tony Twain and Edward Doughty, the two leading figures at the Nottingham Forest Football Club, went up to the stage. The chairman sat down, and the manager stood in front of his seat, looking at the microphones, recorder pens, tape recorders and even the cell phones on the table. He did not count them because they were too many to count.

However, he still saw a few familiar logos.

“Sky TV, BBC, ITV, The Sun...” Tang En casually listed the logos he knew, as if talking to himself. “That’s good, all the influential media are here.”

Then he looked at the reporters sitting in front of him, “I want to ask, are there any Millwall media, such as from their official website, or a reporter who has a close working relationship with that club?”

The reporters looked left and right, front and back. No one raised their hands or stood up, and no one uttered a reply.

Tang En shook his head, “That’s a shame. Never mind, it will be the same talking to you. I believe that blind Chairman Paphitis’ ears are still functioning. If he can’t read the newspapers, he can still always listen to the television and radio, can’t he?”

His first remark caused a commotion among the reporters below. This was plainly a personal attack...

So, someone raised his hand.

“You, sir, do you have a questions?” said Tang En as he pointed to him.

“Um, Mr. Twain, I hope you know the impact of what you’ve just said and how will affect you ...” a balding reporter of a small stature wearing a beige suit stood up.

“Oh, why didn’t you raise your hand when I asked just now if there was any media related to the Millwall club?” Twain frowned.

“I have no relationship with the Millwall club, I’m just reminding you, Mr. Twain. I am...”

Tang En waved his hand and interrupted the reporter, “I don’t care which media company you’re from. I know what you’re going to say... only that blind Mr. Paphitis will be very angry, and the consequences will be very serious. Right?” He glared at the reporter aggressively. “Then I would like to respectfully ask you, Mr. Reporter... How do you think I felt when his club’s fans in the stands made lyrics about a young dead Forest fan, insulting my team and provoking my fans? How do you think I should feel?!”

Twain suddenly raised his voice, and that poor little reporter’s body even gave an uncontrollable shudder under his sudden outburst.

“He said he did not see his team challenging the Forest fans in the stands, and he said he didn’t hear the song that the fans were singing? Ah, I’m sorry, I just said he was blind, actually, he is not only blind, but deaf as well! If he intends to say that he doesn’t understand the meaning of those lyrics that the fans sang, then I’d be honored to announce that Mr. Paphitis has a problem with his head! ‘Brain-disabled’! Have you heard of this term? No? Very well, the Encyclopedia Britannica should include this word. I invented it, and then wrote in the entry note: The brain has a disability, for example: Please refer to the distinguished chairman of the Millwall club, Mr. Theo Paphitis!” Tang En took on the reprimanding tone which he used on his players to scold the Millwall club chairman. The poor reporter must have been seen as Theo Paphitis by Tang En.

“His fans used songs to insult my fans, it was so loud that it could be heard clearly in the broadcast. There was half a minute of TV footage focused on that section of the stands that hadn’t changed, and he said he didn’t see it and didn’t hear it! I mean, is there any logical reason why I can’t state that he’s blind and deaf? Did I slander him? Am I talking nonsense? What is he angry about? What gives him the right to be angry? If he still intends to pretend that he’s muddled, then I’ll tell him now, his fans use the most despicable and shameless means to mock my team, I’m motherf**king angrier than he is! The consequences are even more f**king serious!”

Twain slammed his fist on the table and angrily growled. The press conference was silent. Maybe everyone was frightened by the emotion he showed.

For some of them, before their arrival, they thought it was just the Nottingham Forest Club issuing a claim to the Millwall Club, an official procedural statement. No one had expected to see such a good show. How could this be the official statement? This was just someone scolding at the top of his lungs. He wouldn’t be the first manager to swear at a press conference, right?

Chapter 127: Big Mouth Twain Part 2

Only Brosnan did not find it strange. Because this was the Tony Twain that he knew. He was emotional and somewhat impetuous... and sometimes he did not appear to be a very mature professional manager. He was already 35 years old, but he looked like a 26- or 27-year-old young man, about the same age as himself.

“As to what the serious consequence is, I think everyone saw it yesterday. If the Millwall chairman has to look for an excuse to explain his team’s crushing defeat, I suggest he go after the Millwall fans who sang in the stands yesterday. They asked for it! They lost the match and said the riot was caused by my fans? I’m here to tell him to look into his conscience and see if he dares to repeat those words again?! As a man, he failed to assume the responsibility for the defeat. In order to give vent to his anger, he actually inverted right and wrong, fact and fiction, and misplaced his anger and blame on the innocent party. I can’t believe there’s such a chairman and such a manager... tsk tsk!” Tang En shook his head. “It’s perfectly normal that we could defeat them by six goals! Why did they link the subway station to the stands at Millwall’s new home, The Den? I think that this Mr. Chairman must be well aware of it in his mind. Just like he must also know very well what kind of people their fans are.”

Not only the chairman was aware of this but also the reporters present knew too. Millwall’s The Den was a newly built stadium in the 1990’s. The prevalent problem of the Millwall football hooligans was considered during the design and planning stage. Therefore, the visiting fans’ stands were designed in the most southeast section whereby the visiting fans could directly go from the stands to the train station next to the stadium through a passageway and then buy their tickets home. It was convenient for the visiting fans to evacuate the stadium in the fastest time.

Millwall’s football hooligans were notorious all over the United Kingdom, hence they had such a design feature in their stadium.

“If Mr. Paphitis thinks he’s being insulted for no apparent reason and wants to sue me, then I will also seriously consider suing him and Manager Alan McLeary for the slander of Nottingham Forest fans and the club!”

As soon as Twain had finished, Doughty, who sat next to him, continued, “We will sue them using our club’s name. Please rest assured that we are not making light of this or saying this in the heat of anger. Our Forest club will be happy to oblige them if Mr. Theo Paphitis and Alan McLeary intend to bring this deluded quarrel to the court of law, to trifle with the law and public trust.”

If this was half a year ago, Doughty would have no right to say such things. This official decision, in the name of the club, required to be passed through a board of directors’ resolution. Now he owned 75 percent of the club shares, and he was the only owner of the Forest club, so he could do whatever he wanted.

Upon hearing these two men’s words, there was a buzzing chatter among the crowd below. Was this an official declaration of war between Nottingham Forest Club and Millwall Club? Their innermost paparazzi blood was ignited and set ablaze! Our trip today had been totally worth our while! Manager Tony Twain, you did not disappoint us! Ah, with a gush of words from your big mouth, our newspaper sales are steadily rising!

“That’s all I have to say. Good day, everyone!” After speaking, Tang En turned around and left the scene of the press conference. He did not care about the trouble that his words would bring him. He just had something to say and would feel aggrieved if he was not allowed to say it. He felt very good and refreshed now. As to how Mr. Paphitis and Mr. McLeary would feel about this, he did not care.

Brosnan looked at Twain’s back and shook his head. Tony, you’re being exploited by the media!

※※※

“Tony, did you see the reporters’ excited faces?” Doughty was at the window of his office with Twain, watching the reporters walk out the door.

“Of course, I saw it. That little man pretended to be pathetic to lure me to say what he wanted to hear. He succeeded.”

Doughty scratched his head. “I thought you didn’t know. What do you think?”

“The news media are happy... But I think public opinion is good for us. I did not think too much about the other stuff. If Millwall really want to sue me, I will not run from it.”

When he heard Twain say that, Edward smiled. “You don’t have to act like a hero, Tony. With regard to this matter, the club will completely support you. It concerns the club’s reputation. I will not stand by and watch and not do something about it. Tony, you know what? After listening to you talk about the relationship between the team’s performance and economics at Wilford Lane the other day, I re-drafted a terrific plan. Do you want to hear it?”

Twain turned his gaze away from the window and looked at the smiling Doughty. “Let’s hear it, Edward.”

“This can’t be discussed in two or three sentences... We can have lunch together. It just so happens that Alan has come back from America. We’ll have a lot to discuss.” Doughty patted Twain on the shoulder.

“That financial advisor of yours?”

“That’s right, but soon he’ll become the club’s marketing manager. He will be responsible for bringing in the money...” Doughty did not go on, he just smiled and looked at Twain.

Twain understood, and he smiled too. “And I’m in charge of winning.”

“Yes, the three of us will get along quite well, Tony!”

※※※

When Pierce Brosnan listened to the recordings of the press conference and organized his manuscript all over again, he felt more and more that the editor-in-charge was prescient. This highly charged declaration, when put together with the thriller-like news article documentary, was indeed more eye-catching than the other uniform media reports.

Of course, every word that Twain had said at the press conference was enough to attract more eyeballs... Looking at the obscenities in the manuscript, Brosnan sighed and then deleted them.

As a result, the draft that he had handed in was returned. Brosnan found it odd as he opened the Word document. He found that those swear words that he had originally deleted were added back in again and furthermore, they were also highlighted in bold.

He grinned. This must be Mr. Editor-In-Charge’s handiwork. Though it might be unfavorable to Tony Twain, he had to admit that Mr. Editor-In-Charge doing this had made it more appealing to readers’ interest.

The media's top priority would always be to attract the readers' attention... What about the journalistic ethics? The news media's social responsibility? Stop kidding... This was serious business. Ever since Rupert Murdoch's acquisition of The Sun, he started the trend of vulgarization in the newspapers, and in addition he successfully acquired The Times, revered at that time in the British newspaper media. He practically aligned the national newspaper which enjoyed a high prestige throughout Europe with the third-rate tabloid newspaper The Sun. As of today, 40% of all British newspapers were controlled by Murdoch. Morality and responsibility had long since been removed from the news lexicon.

And now, whatever that would attract the readers would be reported. If the news was not appealing enough, the news editors and reporters would write it until it could make the newspaper, or they would meticulously orchestrate and coordinate from all angles to seduce the leading news characters to act out a good story. This sounded like a Hollywood movie, but in the current news environment in the United Kingdom, this was a fact.

Brosnan knew this well, so he sighed and agreed to the editor-in-charge's amendments. Then he put his byline on it and sent it up again. This time it was not returned. He knew that starting from this afternoon, a news war between the media had begun.

Mr. Twain, you are truly a "news figure"!

Chapter 128: The Media's Pet Part 1

While the English media were busy with the fans' rioting incident and the two clubs' war of words, Tang En was eating poor-tasting Indian dishes at an Indian restaurant with Doughty and Allan Adams, who were using forks and spoons to illustrate their blueprints for their future.

Actually, before Tang En met Allan Adams in person, his only impression of this person was that impressive stock acquisition plan which had kept everyone in the dark, including himself and Edward's father. As such, before they met, Tang En had always imagined Allan to be a potbellied fatty with a flushed red face and to have a pair of eyes which glimmered with a cunning light.

After seeing him, Tang En discovered that Allan actually had a baby face! He had a head full of curly golden hair, and the area below his eyes was full of freckles. From his looks, he only appeared to be in his twenties. However, when Doughty introduced him, he mentioned that Allan Adams was already 45 years old!

It was really unbelievable. One only had to imagine what a 45-year-old doll looked like, and he could more or less experience the shock experienced by Tang En. Luckily, Allan had already gotten used to being looked at this way whenever he met someone for the first time, so he was not bothered by Tang En's impoliteness. He was very friendly and took the initiative to shake hands with Tony. "Mr. Tony Twain, nice to meet you. You may call me Allan."

"Ah, nice to meet you. Allan, you may call me Tony." Tang En abruptly snapped out of it and extended his hands in reciprocation.

Edward was very pleased with the first meeting between these two and signaled for everyone to take a seat first before they continued chatting. "This is a very authentic Indian restaurant. What would you both like to order?"

What replied to him were two extremely loud sneezes. Tang En turned around and sneezed twice consecutively. As a result, he drew much attention from the other customers in the restaurant. "Ah... I hate curry. I am sensitive to it. Why do you guys like to eat Indian cuisine?" Tang En rubbed his nose and said in a slightly awkward manner.

Doughty, who was seated opposite Tang En, chuckled as he saw that Tang En embarrass himself, while Allan passed him a tissue.

"Thank you, Allan. Next time, I'll treat you guys to some Chinese cuisine. It's much better than this! China has a few thousand years' worth of food culture, and definitely nothing like Indian cuisine, which looks like... Erm, that kind of weird-tasting curry which could rival..." He had originally wanted to say "looks like a turd", but quickly recalled that they were in a high-class restaurant. It was not a place like the school lunchroom, where he could crack any kind of joke with his friends in the past.

"Alright, Tony, I know what you're trying to say... We also know that you are obsessed with Chinese culture." Doughty waved his hand in a bid to interrupt Tang En's sentence. Then, he touched his chin and said jokingly, "But if you really intend to treat, I would have to consider getting more people..."

"As long as you don't call the entire team over..." Tang En scratched his head.

"Oh! That's a really great idea!" He turned his head and looked at Allan who was seated beside him, and the two of them burst out laughing.

"Please spare me, the Chinese cuisine here is extremely expensive..." Tang En raised both of his hands high up in the air to make a surrendering gesture.

"But really, Tony. If you are able to get the team to return to the Premier League by the end of this season, I'll personally treat the entire team to a Chinese meal. How about that?" Doughty smiled as he looked at Twain.

"From being ranked fourth from the bottom, to being promoted to the Premier League within half a season's time.. This is really very challenging." Tony frowned.

"If it wasn't challenging, I wouldn't have gotten you, Tony." Edward's words made Tang En feel good inside. That's right, he liked the feeling of being trusted by others.

As such, his frown gradually grew lax. "You're right, Edward. I love challenges. Moreover... my plan does not stop at this goal." Tang En emptied his right hand and raised his thumb and began counting.

"Qualifying for the Premier League, qualifying for the UEFA Europa League next season, first or second place in the EFL Cup... I want all of them."

Looking at the three fingers raised by Tang En, then looking at his confident expression, both Edward and Allan were dumbfounded. They looked at each other before Edward shook his head at Tang En.

"Tony, you are crazier than I expected."

Tang En liked the expressions on those two faces, and he began laughing loudly. This once again drew looks of displeasure from the customers who were seated around them.

Seeing Twain's smug smile, Allan also nodded his head and said, "Indeed, much crazier than our plan."

Hearing Allan say this, Tang En stifled his laughter and asked, "Speaking of which, what exactly are your plans?"

Doughty looked at Allan, and Allan coughed once before unravelling the puzzle for him. "Tony, you know about the G14 right?"

With a "Cling clang" sound, the spoon in Tang En's hand slipped out of his hands and fell onto the ground. This caused him to be able to attract the attention of the surrounding customers for the third time, as well as the restaurant waiter's "special treatment." An Indian waiter with black skin and dressed in red walked up to Tang En. He had originally planned to remind the customer to take note of his own actions, so as to not affect the other customers' meal.

However, before he could open his mouth, Tang En bent over and picked up the spoon before stuffing it into the waiter's hands. "That's great, I was just about to call for you. Can you get me another? This one dropped on the floor. Thanks!"

The young waiter took the spoon back somewhat perplexedly, while Doughty and Allan were trying their best to suppress their desire to burst into laughter. They bit their lips tightly and tried to hold it in until their faces turned red. They let out a "ho ho" laughter, as though it came from the depths of their throats.

Tang En knew that he had been set up by the two of them. "I feel that your plan is the truly 'crazy' one."

Allan lightly shook his spoon and said, "No no, Tony. When G14 was first established, that organization seemed extremely hard to enter. But it's different now. The clubs only needed the following three conditions in order to apply for it: To have had a long glorious history, a strong financial foundation, and to possess a rather high position in the home country's league. Then, as long as you have some good connections, there won't be much problem. Nottingham Forest has a long and glorious history, as we are one of the five oldest football clubs in the world. In addition, we have won two consecutive UEFA Champions League Championships. Even Chelsea cannot compare to these kinds of results."

Tang En nodded his head to express his agreement. Although Chelsea was wealthy, why was it that many people still referred to them as "upstarts"? That was because, compared to their current wealth, their historical results were extremely poor in comparison. Till now, there are only a few teams in the entire Europe that could successfully defend the UEFA Champions League championship title—Real Madrid, Benfica, Inter Milan, Ajax, Bayern Munich, Liverpool, as well as Nottingham Forest.

"I really didn't expect you to know this much about football, Allan." When Tang En was agreeing with Allan's opinion, he also felt shocked that Allan was somewhat knowledgeable on the topic of football.

Allan shook his head and said, "Tony, you know I'm an American, but I am currently working for the Nottingham Forest Club. Therefore, I naturally have to understand the situation of my work environment. This is my own work ethic. Edward wouldn't hire some idiot who knows nothing about football to help him, right? If that was the case, then he would be an idiot."

Tang En could hear Allan's displeasure from this and apologized to him. "So sorry Allan, I was just slightly... Erm, slightly shocked." The waiter who came to deliver the new spoon arrived at the right time, helping him out with his predicament.

Allan shrugged his shoulders and said, "It's alright. As an American, it is not uncommon to be asked this kind of questions in this country: 'God! An American knows about football?' I'm used to it. Let us continue, where were we?"

"G14, long glorious history," Doughty reminded him, before taking the opportunity to call the waiter over and order some Indian dishes while Allan was explaining the plan to Tang En.

"That's right. Nottingham Forest already has a glorious history, so we definitely fulfil that criteria," Allan continued. "And from the current looks of it, a strong economic foundation appears to be as far from us, as we are currently from New Delhi. But this is precisely my job."

Tang En interjected, "You are in charge of making money."

"As well as PR. A good connection requires outstanding PR work. And this kind of PR is not only targeted at the important figures of the European football scene. Our PR is well-rounded. But it is very troublesome to go into the specific details of this. In any case, this is also within my job scope, and you can just leave it to me. As for you, Tony," Allan looked at Twain and said, "You are the key to this plan. Obtaining a strong financial power, a healthy club finances, a good worldwide reputation, and the qualifications to negotiate on equal ground with the important figures... All of these require us to fulfill criteria beforehand—use the outstanding performance of the team as a foundation. You are very right, Tony. A team who is not playing in England's top league cannot possibly get the support of top-tier sponsors, and can't possibly receive even greater market share. A team that cannot obtain glory can never have the chance to talk to those powerhouses on equal ground. Wanting to enter G14, wanting to earn more money... they are just wishful thinking." Allan threw down his spoon and leaned against the seat after shrugging his shoulders. He had finished what he had wanted to say.

The three of them fell into a period of momentary silence.

Tang En was deeply attracted to this grand plan. Wasn't this the goal which he had been yearning for? An even broader stage, an even high glory, matches after matches of consecutive victory, and cheers! Even louder cheers! Trophies! Even more trophies! Make Nottingham Forest once again return to the top of the world!

Tang En cleared his throat, because his throat had become parched from the stimulation brought about by the fascinating future.

"This...is really... a plan so crazy... it can't get any crazier..." He said intermittently.

Chapter 129: The Media's Pet Part 2

Hearing him mouth it like this, Edward and Allan looked at each other, and did not understand Twain's attitude toward their plan. Was he going to join or refuse? If he wanted to join, then everything was fine. But if he refused, then although it would be a pity, they would have no choice but to look for someone else.

“It sounds as though... we are building castles in the air. If you randomly find a person on the streets right now, and tell him that Nottingham Forest will become a member of the G14, he will definitely think that you are crazy.”

“Tony...” Doughty just opened his mouth when he was interrupted.

“To achieve this kind of goals... If we really managed to accomplish such a goal, then it would be similar to a legend, right?” Twain continued mumbling to himself. “But...”

He raised his head and looked at the two of them. “The feeling of creating a legend must be incredible.” The two people opposite him laughed, because they saw that familiar, confident smile on Tony Twain’s face. “To be striving toward such a goal has filled my blood with fervor once again!” He clenched his fists and pressed tightly against the table, as he leaned over and growled, “I love it, I love this crazy plan so much!”

Doughty smiled and said, “As long as you like it, Tony. We can give you time, eight years or even 15 years for it. We know that managers of English football clubs always tend to have a long office term.”

“Moreover,” Allan added, “Tony, if your team can really advance into the UEFA Europa League in the next season, I think that we would be one large step closer to our goal.”

Tang En closed his eyes and thought for a while, before reopening his them again. “After the winter break, I will let you both see an entirely different Nottingham Forest.”

“We believe in you.” Both of them laughed.

“Hehe, speaking of the future, I’ve recalled something. I’ve once made a wager with Kenny Burns that the champions of the previous seasons Premier League would be Manchester United, and not Arsenal. In the end, I won and got a voucher for a lifetime’s worth of free alcohol at his bar.”

“I’ve heard of this incident.” Doughty nodded his head. “They all say that you have the ability to look into the future, just like a Gypsy shaman.”

“They are right. So Edward, in the future, you will definitely become the greatest chairman in Nottingham Forest’s history. And Allan, you will become a manager that will put Moggi and Kenyon to shame.” Tang En said while pointing at the two of them. After that, he pointed to himself and said, “As for me...”

This time, Doughty and Allan did not wait for him to continue, as they said together at the same time, “Will become the most noble manager in Nottingham Forest’s history!”

The three of them started laughing loudly, completely not caring about what kind of looks the surrounding customers gave them.

It may sound very cliché, but... when Nottingham Forest is mentioned in future football-related historical data or news reports, perhaps aside from Brian Clough, it is also reported that the three masterminds which created Nottingham Forest’s second glory had decided its future in an Indian restaurant.

※※※

It was just as Pierce Brosnan had expected. From that afternoon onward, the press conference held by Nottingham Forest had been reported and presented to readers and audiences from all over England via newspaper and television. The media excitedly reminded the readers and audiences that: Although Nottingham Forest was still struggling in League One, their manager was still full of entertainment spirit.

The English media which liked to rake up the past even found out Twain and Shania's "past", so as to prove that Tony Twain was definitely not a manager that behaved himself. He was definitely not someone to be taken lightly.

The most enthusiastic The Sun even listed out all of the "news" which Tang En had appeared in, starting from 1st January 2003 until 18th December 2003:

During his first match directing the team, Twain had been knocked over by his own player, falling into a temporary comatose; When he held a press conference in front of the hospital, he accused the English Football Association of having a mastermind, because his team lost to the Premier League Team Westham United; When he went to London for his hearing, it was unsure what methods he used, but this amateur manager who had just begun his career as a manager and received a "heavy sentence" from the media before his court hearing, had ultimately gotten a sentence that was akin to tickling him—something that will only make him feel more comfortable; After a young fan passed away during a football hooligans' riot, it was said that he had once barged into the hideout of the football hooligans alone, but no one knew what he said there; In the summer, he had charges pressed against him for allegedly abducting an underage girl—of course in the end, it was unsure what methods he used, and there was no further news regarding this matter; When they were on their way to Millwall to participate in the quarterfinals of the EFL Cup, they decided to switch to the subway instead due to a traffic jam. When he unexpectedly faced off against a group of Millwall fans on the train, he did not appear to be in an inferior position at all; During the match against Millwall, he broke the plastic baffle because he was displeased with the fans singing and insulting his team, but this action only resulted in louder jeers and insults directed at his team; During the press conference after the match, he spouted ravings and angered the Millwall manager and chairman; The day after the match, he scolded the Millwall Chairman saying that he was deaf and blind, and even scolded the Millwall Manager for not being a man in front of the countless reporters. On top of that, he even conveniently invented the term "Brain-disabled"—by the way, the media even agreed to put this entirely new English term inside the Oxford Dictionary and Encyclopedia Britannica. For this purpose, they even specially derived the special term "Brain-disabled person" based on this term, and even enriched the definition of "Brain-disabled" so as to differentiate it from "neuropathy", "mental illness", as well as "autism." Of course, even though the editorial team for the Oxford dictionary and the Encyclopedia Britannica did not adopt the opinions of the media, it did not prevent the use of this entirely new and trendy word from becoming used widely all over England... but all of these happened afterwards.

After analyzing these "glorious incidents" of Tony Twain, the media excitedly discovered that they had finally found the successor to the maverick old manager, Brian Clough. Although his results were incomparable to the old manager whose team obtained the championship title of the UEFA Champions League, he did not lose out in terms of his personality.

Upon discovering this point, the media was soon able to dig out that picture which was taken in the summer: Clough was in front of Twain's house, seated in the car smiling and shaking hands with Tony Twain while greeting the reporters. This seemed to further confirm their judgment.

Of course, there were also some who felt that it was a pity for Nottingham Forest to lose to Sheffield United during the playoffs last season. Because after getting tired Sir Alex Ferguson and French Manager Wenger's mutual "insulting" of each other, the public urgently looked forward to a manager with more personality and entertainment value to enter this circle. But it just happened that Twain was unable to lead his team and advance into the Premier League, and his experience at League One and the Youth team caused him to be noticed by few media, and in turn lose the opportunity to be noticed by the public.

However, now that Nottingham Forest had already gotten two consecutive wins in the league and EFL Cup under Tony Twain, perhaps it was not impossible for them to advance to the Premier League through the playoff matches after the season.

Disregarding how the Millwall side would respond to this matter, at the very least Tony Twain is now absolutely famous. The whole of England knew overnight that there was actually a charismatic manager with such an outstanding character hidden within English League One.

Does anyone know the reason why the moment Mourinho entered England he was so popular with the media? And as a result his fame and image went up to become one of the most famous managers in the world? Just because he had a big mouth that the media liked, and a unique character completely unlike the others. The thirsty English media liked to hype up every single sentence, every action, and every scandal of his...

Now, before Mourinho arrived in England, Tony Twain had accidentally replaced his position in the media's eyes... Tang En no longer had any confidence that the things which would happen in the future, would continue to be within the domain of his understanding.

Chapter 130: Merry Christmas, Tony Part 1

To the great disappointment of the eager media, Millwall did not respond the way they wanted. The Millwall chairman and manager had remained quiet about this matter. Perhaps they knew they were in the wrong... But the media were upset. They had spent so much effort, and what did they get in the end? They only managed to hype up an obscure and unknown manager and nothing more!

Sometimes when the media calmed down and thought about it, they felt that they had been used by Tony Twain.

Because who was the only person who had benefited from this matter? It was that big mouth, Twain. Not only he had led the team to a sweeping victory of 7:1 over Millwall at The Den Stadium and advanced to the semi-finals of the EFL Cup, he also successfully raised his profile. Pierce Brosnan's story on the subway incident also helped Twain gain a lot of popularity among the football fans. Now almost all of Britain knew that Nottingham Forest had a manager who dared to confront the football hooligans to protect his team. And those dangerous football hooligans were surprisingly well-behaved in front of Twain.

His only punishment was to receive a bill asking him to pay for the plastic barrier board next to the visitors' seats at The Den.

After the investigation, the Football Association concluded that Manager Twain did not have any excessive behavior. As for the war of words between the Forest Team and Millwall, it was a personal feud between the two clubs which the Football Association would not intervene or meddle in. Otherwise... Tottenham Hotspur and Arsenal, Manchester United and Bolton, Manchester City and Manchester United, Liverpool and Everton, West Ham and Millwall, Nottingham Forest and Notts County, Manchester United and Arsenal... If the Football Association were to manage all the grudges between these clubs, then they would not be able to take care of anything else during the year.

The investigation report was quite unfavorable for Millwall's home fans. They believed that the Millwall club had not stopped the fans' extreme conduct in time, which led to the fan riots in the stands. At the same time, after the incident had occurred, the Millwall club chairman's method of shirking his responsibility had disappointed the Football Association. Given that the history of the Millwall fans repeatedly causing trouble in their stadium, the Football Association levied the Millwall Club a fine of £15,000, ordered the Millwall club to improve the atmosphere of the stadium, and to strengthen the supervision of the fans to strictly prohibit such similar fan riots again.

Fortunately, there were no fatalities in this riot. If people were killed, the punishment would definitely not be something that could just be settled by a fine. London was preparing to bid for the right to host the 2012 Olympic Games. Any small amount of negative impact could have incalculable consequences. From the looks of it, the Football Association was still considered lenient.

Due to the EFL Cup schedule and Christmas, the 24th round of the English Football League Championship was postponed to February 27th, 2004. Therefore, the Forest team had nine days to prepare for the next round of the League Championship after the EFL Cup which gave Tang En precious time. Just like the first time he took over the Forest First Team, he had 14 days of training time after they had finished playing for the FA Cup.

Maybe it was a coincidence or maybe it was the arrangement of fate. These two longer periods of preparation gave Tang En the time to familiarize with the team and also gave the team time to breathe.

The media hype did not affect the team's training because Tang En had organized a sealed training to disallow any media from approaching the training ground.

Rebrov was basically fixed in a midfield position by Tang En and it looked like Tang En was using the 4-5-1 formation with a single striker. But it was not really that simple in reality. When Tang En was watching the games, he already held the view that the formations had long ceased to be the most important part of football. The era of discussing formations first when it was time to talk about tactics had passed. The age of depending on unchanging formations, which had swept the football world, had long passed. It did not make any sense for the team to submit the formation layout to the television broadcasters before the game and then play according to the formation layout on the screen. A real manager should be able to make appropriate adjustments at any time based on the situation of the match, and formations were just for references only.

It looked like Nottingham Forest had abandoned the 4-4-2 formation they had played last season and changed to 4-5-1 formation. However, during the actual game, the formation was sometimes still 4-4-2, but with some changes in certain portions. For example, Rebrov was still a striker, but his position was moved backwards. He was a converted second striker. In this way, not only could Rebrov avoid being

besieged by the opponents, he could also effectively unleash his skills. His special characteristic was he was good at dribble-and-pass, and then inserting himself from the back to create a bigger threat.

A seemingly simple positional adjustment had let Rebrov score in two consecutive games. This was sometimes the case with excellent managers. An ordinary change could produce a great result. It was best not to think of football tactics as complex. If it were too complex, the manager himself would be dizzy with confusion first. So, the wise man's approach was often to simplify what looked to be very complicated.

Brian Clough, for example, was proficient at doing this. He once said to Roy Keane, who was at his debut on the Forest team, "Don't think so much about it, lad. You just go up and pass the ball to someone in the red jersey, and then you run forward. It's that simple."

Roy Keane had kept that in mind throughout his career, and faithfully executed the old man's tactical instructions given to him. Just like that, he played his way from a new star player in Nottingham Forest to the Republic of Ireland National Football Team, kicked his way into the Red Devils Manchester United, became the captain of Ireland National Team, and also became Manchester United's captain.

Keane's football was so simple, and he succeeded.

Tang En also wanted his players' understanding of the tactics to be simpler, because it was counterproductive to think too much on the field. For example, his instruction to Taylor was to seize possession of the ball first, and then to either shoot or pass, and not think too much about it.

And his instruction to Rebrov was to follow Taylor and pay attention to the second point. Once he received the ball, he could use his own judgment whether to pass, shoot, or break through.

The manager could not take the place of the players on the field, so it was impossible to lay out every step of the players, and therefore, it was even more necessary for the players to comprehend for themselves.

That was why it was said: a first-rate player used his brains to play, a second-rate player used his body to play, and a third-rate player... could not play football.

Ole Gunnar Solskjær was known as a "super-sub" because he always played the most important role for the team within a limited playing time. Ferguson had praised him as a player who was "able to read the game on the field and have a very high level of comprehension." One must know that the substitutes often had more difficult jobs to do than the starting players because they were usually not given much time. It was impossible for them to spend dozens of minutes to get into the rhythm of the game. When they were required to play on the field and must quickly be effective, they were expected to enter the condition of the game at the fastest speed and immediately understand the situation on the field... All these requirements were basically impossible tasks to complete if the player did not use his brain to play. That was the reason why there were so many substitutes, but few and far between were known as "super-subs."

In addition to the team's tactical drills and adaptation of the players' new positions, Tang En had another task.

When the League Championship was set to reopen, it would be after Christmas. From then on, he had to start thinking about candidates to replace Dawson and Reid. No one on the Forest team could play left midfield except for Reid. Tang En realized he was really fortunate that Reid did not suffer any injuries during the year, and he took part in every game. In that case, he had to search around for a left midfielder. His value could not be too high and, in addition, his ability must absolutely not be so poor that Tang En could not consider him. He was not going to purchase a player at a high price for their promotion to the Premier League. He had more ambitious goals waiting for him before that.

There was a piece of good news for Tang En. Leeds United's performance continued to decline, the share price had fallen again, and the team was now in a panic. Around the Elland Road stadium (Leeds United's home ground), a rumor was spreading that "once the team is eventually relegated to League One, the club will declare bankruptcy and all the players will be listed for sale."

Tang En knew clearly that this was no rumor. His chance had arrived. Therefore, he once again, "in his personal capacity," asked the old scout Mr. Ian Storey-Moore to make a trip to Leeds. The focus of this lobbying was for Aaron Lennon on the youth team, who had not yet signed a career contract with Leeds United. He hoped he would transfer to Nottingham Forest. The suggestion that Tang En gave to Moore was he must convince Lennon. If he couldn't be won over, then sway his parents and family. If necessary, bribe with money. In short, don't let him sign with Leeds United. Tell him about Leeds United's current situation and let him seriously consider his career prospects and promise him that the Forest team will advance to the Premier League this season. If the final promise is not fulfilled, the Forest team will voluntarily relinquish the ownership of him, and he can go to any team he wishes to go. This condition can be written into the contract. If the Forest team does not comply, Lennon can bring the club and Twain to court.

Of course, if Lennon's entire family were staunch Leeds fans who were loyal to the club, and the team also greatly valued Lennon and had prepared a generous contract for him, resulting in an unsuccessful purchase, Tang En also had a back-up plan. He just needed to spend a little more money. He believed that in the midst of a financial crisis, there was no player he could not afford to buy from the near-bankrupt Leeds United. The sale of Dawson and Reid earned the club £8,000,000, so Tang En was qualified to seek out players that he had yearned for in the past, those who he previously could only look at and not touch.

In fact, in terms of attacking players, there was a long list of names on Tang En's shortlist. There were far more attacking talents in football now than defensive talents. Even with Reid gone, the impact on the team was not that big. The greatest impact was actually the departure of the team captain, Michael Dawson.

Tang En had always believed the fact that Tottenham Hotspur was willing to pay £8,000,000, it was mainly to buy Dawson, and Reid was just a "gift with purchase", or it was half sale half giveaway. Because there were so few good defenders now.

With the departure of Dawson, the current Forest team's center back combination, it might not be a problem for their promotion to the Premier League, but what would happen after the promotion?