

Godfather Of Champions

Chapter 23: The Manager Seated On The Viewing Platform Part 1

Tang En and his two “MI 6 bodyguards” sat on the viewing platform. He found out that his host was really “thoughtful” and arranged him to sit at a place with the worst view. Tang En was extremely far away from Nottingham Forest’s substitutes’ benches. It seemed that Coventry was more worried about him than the Football Association, and decided to directly cut off his most basic way of communicating with his team.

Tang En sat amidst a group of fans wearing the Coventry City’s jersey, forcing him to be extremely low-profile. England’s football hooligans were extremely infamous. He didn’t want to think about what would happen, should a certain person beside him drink too much and act on impulse. Tang En was not afraid of getting into a fight with other people, but was more afraid of being reported by these two minions. If that happened, it might really be the end of his manager career.

Tang En did not want to be the first football manager to end his career by getting into a fight with fans.

The match started on time at two o’ clock in the afternoon. The moment the referee blew the whistle, Highfield Road Stadium became like a pot on fire, while the viewing platform was like the water that was boiling in it, making loud bubbling noises. Tang En could not hear nothing but the home team fans’ screaming.

Tang En opened his mouth and said something, but he discovered that even he could not hear what he was saying. The atmosphere was much crazier than when he was seated at Nottingham Forest’s coach’s seat.

Coventry City’s fans stood up to root for their players, and Tang En followed suit, raising both his hands. However, he was not rooting for his opponent, but instead was scolding and cursing at the top of his lungs.

“That wretched Old Trafford security system! How can these kinds of fans be considered safe?” He was completely not worried about causing any commotion, because the people beside him definitely could not hear what he was saying. “God dang it! Coventry City’s fans are not friendly in the slightest bit!”

After he finished grumbling, Tang En sat down and watched the match. The people around him must have thought that this was a very ardent fan of Coventry City.

Perhaps it was those two sentences he said before the match, which ignited the fighting spirit and ambitiousness of Nottingham Forest's players, or perhaps it was Coventry City fans' fanatical behavior which triggered the entire Nottingham Forest's pride. In short, when the match started, Nottingham Forest, the away team, took the lead and went on the offensive against Coventry City.

For this match, Tang En specifically made Gareth Williams part of the starting lineup, as he was the key player in helping the team win against Coventry City in the first half of the season. Williams scored the only goal in the entire match, securing the victory for his team on their home ground. Today, Tang En hoped that he could leverage on Williams' luck and bring some good luck to the team.

Seeing that his team was offensively overwhelming the home team as the away team, Tang En chuckled. As expected, the manager's position was not merely for show, as the tactics he deployed were very effective. Looking at Coventry City's assistant manager walking up and down in panic, Tang En felt that perhaps there would be no issues in winning this match.

Tang En had not spent the last few days idling around. Compared to when he first found out they would be playing Coventry City, he was way more confident in his understanding of this team.

From the statistics of the 28 rounds of the season, Coventry City's offense was not so great. In the 28 rounds, they had only scored 35 goals, but conceded 30. On the other hand, although Nottingham Forest's performance had not been satisfactory, they had played one less match and still Nottingham Forest had scored 44 goals, and conceded 31.

From the statistics, Tang En managed to find some useful information which, of course, had to be verified through observation of their matches. The only thing was his darned seating location was very unsuitable for watching the match live, or at least, it was not conducive to him watching the match with a clear thought process.

Team Coventry City finally managed to get a chance to counterattack, but their shot at the goal hit the advertisement board behind the goalpost. A loud wave of sighs resounded throughout the viewing platform, and the people which surrounded Tang En all clutched their heads in disappointment. Tang En and the two people beside him were like black reefs in a vast blue ocean, different from the rest. Luckily, the fans' attention was totally focused on the match, or else a figure from the news like him would have been identified long ago. Tang En was already thinking about asking his babysitters to request for a change of seats with the staff during halftime, at the bare minimum, shifting them to an area which was closer to where the Nottingham Forest fans were seated. He was really afraid of being identified by a bunch of unfriendly people.

Three years ago when Coventry City was still in the English Premier League, there was a talented youth on the team—Irish player Robbie Keane. He made his debut in

Wolfhampton Wanderers Football Club, and was bought over by Coventry City at a price of £6,000,000 after having exceptional performances during the three seasons. However, he only served the team for one season. He scored 12 goals in 31 matches, and that was when he had just turned 20 years old. After one season, faced with AC Milan's offer of £13,000,000, Coventry City was unable to resist and sold Little Keane to the Italian powerhouse. However, he did not have a pleasant time in the Italian black hole of star players and did not score any goals in the six matches which he was fielded. After one season, he was brought back to England by the newly formed Leeds United, by means of rent-to-own. Currently, he is playing for Tottenham and walked a different path from the football team which he had played for one season.

The Coventry City's fans must have missed the young Irish lad who was full of passion, and why? Because their strikers were unable to score goals. This team even had to largely rely on the already 38-year-old player-manager, McAllister's positioning ball, to score most of their goals. It could not be described as anything but miserable.

For this match, Coventry's striker in the starting lineup was the 27-year-old black man, Julian Joachim. He was only 1.6 meters tall, which was a very classic height. However, Joachim did not possess the same abilities as Maradona, Zola, or Carlos. According to Tang En's observation, his speed was considered decent, but his shooting skills were extremely lacking, evident from the fact that he once missed his shot right before the goalpost. That was a ball which was harder to miss than to score. Suddenly, Highfield Road Stadium exploded with a loud exclamation, that seemed to make Tang En's heart stop beating for a split second.

Joachim had been fielded nine times in the first 20 rounds of matches, and yet he had only scored two goals. These kind of results for a shooter could only be described as pathetic.

Partnering with this black man was the 18-year-old David Pipe, a young player who had just been promoted from the youth team to the main team. Up till now, he had been fielded 11 times, but had not scored a single goal yet.

Tang En looked at this pathetic striker combination, then compared it to Nottingham Forest's strikers. David Johnson was fielded 20 times and scored 10 goals. Marlon Harewood was fielded 19 times and scored 11 goals. This was a striker combination that had thrown English Premier League team West Ham into confusion 14 days ago, which Tang En felt would be equally effective against a League One team.

Behind these two people, were four midfielders which were positioned parallel to each other. From left to right, they were respectively, Andy Reid, Riccardo Scimeca, Gareth Williams, and Eoin Jess. Among the four of them, Scimeca was mainly in charge of defense, while Williams took on the heavy responsibility of organizing the offense. Reid and Jess would support him from the two flanks. The majority of Nottingham Forest's offense came from the combination of these four midfielders, and was also Nottingham Forest's most widely-used midfield position in the early phases of the match.

Aside from that time when he put the slightly older Jess on the substitutes' benches to rest, he had never once modified this formation. This was the wealth Paul Hart had left behind for Twain, and Tang En did not believe that Twain's teacher caused the team's demise with his tactics.

Tang En's trust was soon met with reciprocation. After Pipe's wasted opportunity, Nottingham Forest quickly counterattacked. Goalkeeper Darren Ward kicked the ball toward the front, to which the Moroccan defensive midfielder from Coventry City, Safri, managed to successfully head it forward. At the midfield mark, Dawson intercepted the ball, passing the ball back to his teammate.

With his exceptional physique, Harewood managed to keep the ball under control and waited for his teammates to come and receive the ball.

McAllister immediately saw through his intentions, as he called his teammates to return to defend while he rushed up to challenge for the ball, in hopes of slowing down Nottingham Forest's offense. The 38-year-old McAllister faced off against the 22-year-old Harewood, but lost in terms of his physique. Harewood managed to keep McAllister blocked behind him, after which he executed a beautiful cross pass, passing the ball over to Andy Reid, who was running over from the left wing.

When Reid was on the youth team, his far shots and long passes made him stand out among the other players. Although this was only his second League One match, he had already displayed qualities which made one excited. He had brought all of his specialties when he was still in the youth team over to the adult team's matches. Seeing that Coventry City's defensive lines quickly shifted over to the left, and realizing that there was nobody to intercept him to his right, he passed the ball to the right. The ball flew across the football field, directly landing behind Coventry City's defensive line!

Appearing there was David Johnson, whose speed was so fast that it made West Ham suffer immensely in the previous match. He kicked the ball forward, which Reid passed, slipping through the backline defense of Coventry City!

Coventry City's right flank defender turned around and only managed to see Johnson's back. His first reaction was not to chase after him, but instead raised his right arm, signaling to the assistant referee that Johnson had committed an offside foul!

"Foul your head!" Tang En stood up from his seat, as his mouth scolded countless vulgarities. He did not need to worry about himself becoming a target for the Coventry City's fans, because he was surrounded by sky blue fans who stood up due to the absurdity of the claim.

Johnson sprinted at the sides along with the ball, and was only mere steps before he reached Coventry City's penalty area. He looked up and saw that the assistant referee was still running together with him, signifying that he had not gone offside. Johnson took yet another step forward and raised his head again. This time, the players from

Coventry City dashed toward him as if they were crazy, and even the two midfielders rushed up toward him.

Tang En, who was on the viewing platform, could not help but make a cross with both his hands. This was the offensive strategy which they had been practicing for the past few days: The striker would attract the attention of the enemy defenders. The real scoring force would be the midfielders, who were running forward. Among the four midfielders, aside from Scimeca, who was more defensive, the other three were all rather proficient in scoring.

Johnson had already kicked the ball into the middle of the penalty area, and it looked like he was about to perform a lateral dribble before raising his foot to shoot. Coventry's players, from their defenders to their goalkeeper, were all focused on his every movement, and completely forgot about the rest of the Nottingham Forest players who were running forward at full speed.

Johnson had already reached the middle of the penalty area, and beside him were three Coventry City's defenders. He raised his foot... but he did not shoot. Instead, he passed the ball behind him! Where it was completely open!

All of the Coventry City's players had been fooled by him! When a red-colored figure dashed past from beside him, Coventry City's Danish goalkeeper, Morten Hyldgaard, was still standing in the middle of the goalpost.

"Gareth Williams!"

Nottingham Forest's number eight player received Johnson's beautiful pass at the corner of the goal area and shot without hesitation! The football rolled into the goalpost at a flying speed!

"Goal! 1:0! Thirty-three minutes into the first half, the away team, Nottingham Forest takes the lead against Coventry City! Looks like Nottingham Forest has more or less recovered from their poor performance in the first half of the season. They're aggressive in their away match and seem to be the host instead!"

A wave of jeers from the Coventry City's fans resounded throughout the stadium. As such, Tang En was unable to express his agitation, and all he could do was to clench both of his fists and place them over his head. He acted as if he was incredibly sad, but in reality, he was celebrating this goal. Tang En looked at the rejoicing at the Nottingham Forest managers' seats and was slightly envious of them.

It was the first time that Tang En had watched the match from the viewpoint of a fan. As he saw his players hug together to celebrate the goal, he felt a sliver of confidence for the team's future. The worry that arose from Bowyer's intention to leave was also slightly alleviated.

The Coventry City fans who had finished telling-off Nottingham Forest, quickly sat down and resumed watching the match. However, they still continued to heckle and curse even as they were watching. Tang En also followed suit and sat down, as he continued to watch the match silently. He even forgot that there were two “bodyguards” beside him. As such, when he heard the person beside him say, “Congratulations, Mr. Twain,” Tang En felt extremely shocked.

“Ah, you are...”

“...We are from the English Football Association disciplinary committee...”

“There is such an organization?”

“Mr. Twain, please don’t crack these kinds of jokes.”

Tang En burst out into laughter and paid no attention to them, while he continued watching the match.