

Godfather Of Champions

Chapter 29: Crazy Gang Wimbledon Part 1

The bright morning sun woke Tang En up. The sunlight was shining into his bedroom from the open windows, and he suddenly felt it brilliant and intense on his face. He opened his eyes and the clock on the wall showed it was 9:40 a.m.

Tang En wiped away the saliva from his pillow and on his lip and sat up. His head ached. As he rubbed his temple, he tried to recall how he got home last night and how he had undressed for bed. He could only remember that he and the other drunken fans were drinking crazily together, but he had no memory of the exact amount he drank. He pulled out his wallet and saw that all his cash was gone. Tang En forced a smile; he now had an idea of how much he drank yesterday.

Jumping out of bed, he stood in front of the window in only his underwear. He looked up at the sky, the clouds, and the bright sun and smiled. The days were finally getting better after so much rain. He had convinced the people at the bar of his tactical theory last night. What he needed now was to insert this mind-set deeply into his players, the fans, the managers, and Chairman Doughty's heart and make them accept it as well.

It would not be an easy task.

Tang En put his hands up, wanting to touch the sky.

“For victory... Good morning!”

Nottingham Forest lost one of their players just as the winter transfer window was about to close. This was Tang En's first transaction since he had become the main manager. Jack Lester had made the decision to leave the team. His contract was up, and he did not initiate an extension with the club. In fact, he had already told the club he was leaving, and the marketing team of Forest had been searching for buyers for Lester. At first, it had not been easy attracting buyers for him. But because of the English FA Cup Match, during which he handled the ball spectacularly, he attracted a lot of attention. Four clubs made offers and eventually Sheff UTD got Lester's contract for two years at £300,000.

Tang En wasn't surprised by Lester's decision, as he knew that he would leave in the end. At least Lester was upfront and informed the club that he did not wish to extend his contract, allowing the club time to find buyers. If he had not notified the club and just left when his contract ended, Forest wouldn't have gotten anything. Although £300,000 didn't sound like much, as a team that has experienced financial crisis, every cent counted.

Tang En did not expect that Lester would actually thank him before he left.

At that time, Tang En was wearing a pair of sunglasses and watching the team train from the sideline. Everyone was quite silent. The players had gotten used to Tang En's style and no longer found it strange.

Lester had gone back to take his things from the fitting room, but did not leave right away.

He walked back and approached Tang En.

Tang En took off his sunglasses and looked at Lester. "Jack, anything important?"

"I am here to thank you."

"Huh?"

Lester was about to call Tang En "boss", then remembered that he was no longer on the Forest team. "Yes. I appreciate what you said to me at halftime during the West Ham match. See, I listened to what you said, and now I am playing football for myself. I was able to get a decent contract." He threw up his hands. "If you hadn't reminded me that day, I still might be living a meaningless life."

Tang En smiled. "Good. Do you still want to listen to me?"

Lester nodded his head.

"No matter where you are playing football, just remember that you are a professional player, and you must be worthy of every penny that you earn."

"Thanks, Manager. I got it."

"You should go. All the best to you, Jack." Tang En lowered his head and put the sunglasses back on.

"Wish you all the best, too, Manager." Lester turned and walked out.

Lester's leaving did not cause any issues in Forest's locker room, as all were professional players and were used to this kind of thing. And furthermore, this had happened several times in the last two years.

In fact, Lester's leaving actually helped Tang En. At first, Lester, Harewood, and Johnson all had equal chance of playing, and none of them would have been happy with less playing time, which always troubled Paul Hart. Now that Tang En had David Johnson and Marlon Harewood as his strikers, one had speed and power, and the other had stamina and was good at dribbling. For Tang En it was a close to perfect match for

strikers. Although Johnson's skills might not be better than Lester's, Tang En liked his attitude and teamwork. This kind of striker would stick to the tactic ideology and always follow it without making his own decisions.

For the allocation of players, Tang En got rid of the French right back Matthieu Louis-Jean, as he could not stand his clumsiness in right defense. If it wasn't for him, Tang En could have gotten his first victory at Coventry City. Tang En made the 20-year-old Irishman, John Thompson, the side back. Except for his somewhat weak throw-ins, he was still a capable player. Tang En could just assign others for throw-ins. Thompson's skillfulness in heading would enable him to assist the center back for defending and even help the midfield, which was just what Tang En needed.

Tang En did not modify any other allocation besides the right back. The formation would be the traditional 4-4-2 parallel. Tang En wanted to use the midfield diamond 4-4-2, as he always used this formation whenever he played the Football Manager Game, which focused on attacking the side from the front. However, this kind of formation was not really helpful during training because the players were not all used to it, given the fact that they had been playing the 4-4-2 parallel for a long time. They were not sure of their routes in the diamond formation. Also, there was no one for the front that could fulfill what Tang En expected, though initially he had thought Ian was the one. However, he would lose his thought every time he was about to enter the opponent's goal area during training. The problem with Andy Reid was that he preferred to be the wing.

Tang En sighed and gave up on the diamond formation, which gave the whole team a sign of relief. The English players had played parallel 4-4-2 for many years, and that formation had already been deeply rooted into their blood and it was definitely difficult for them to adapt to the new formation.

Although the formation would not be changed, Tang En wanted to change their understanding about the tactic, just like how he convinced Walker and Burns.

Tang En separated the midfield players into two teams, led by Walker and Bowyer respectively. The two teams trained themselves with high-speed passes that required them to start from the kickoff circle and could not exceed five passes before they entered the goal area. This training was specially designed and Tang En was observing the players and jotting down all the gaps and problems he saw so that he could modify the training to better cater to the players. He did not expect the team to fully understand his tactic and be very good at it yet. What he wanted to see were some changes.

At beginning of February, Nottingham Forest would have to go against Crazy Gang Wimbledon at their home stadium for their 30th league match. Tang En wanted to see some changes in this upcoming match, and most importantly, he needed a victory to prove and strengthen his new tactic.

Losing would destroy everything, while winning would help to save everything.

To win or not to win? That is the question...

Tang En used to play a game called CM (Champion Manager) before he ended up as Twain. Wimbledon was considered League One in the game, though the team had a few strong players. If it purely depended on the skills of the players, theoretically they would be able to get back to the Premier League after one season.

However the truth was... out of the current 29 league matches in the 02-03 season, they had accumulated 35 points and were ranked 17th.

The reality was that Tang En did not know there was a difference between the actual data and the excellent data of Wimbledon in the game. In real life, Wimbledon was no longer officially the Crazy Gang, at least their London fans would not credit them as such. The team had just moved out of Wimbledon, where they had been for 97 years, and transferred to a satellite city, Milton Keynes, that was located in Northern London. They even changed their name to the Milton Keynes Dons after two seasons.

However, the new Crazy Gang that had been widely recognized was the AFC Wimbledon, which has only been established for half a year. This was an amateur club that was initiated by Wimbledon Fans, and they have used the same badge and jersey color of the glorious Wimbledon of the past. The team participated in many non-professional league matches. The SI Company that designed the CM game sponsored this club and had their company logo printed. Many old CM players would remember the cover page of CM4, which depicted a goalkeeper that was jumping up and had the SI symbol on his jersey. That guy was the goalkeeper of AFC Wimbledon. Due to the sponsorship from SI company, there were many strong players in the CM game. For instance, the "dribbling genius" which was the 15-year-old boy, Serge Makofu, in CM4, was just an ordinary player in real life who did not possess exceptional speed, dribbling, and power. Another example was the left wing talent in the game, Lionel Morgan. In reality, he retired at 21 and became a manager.

Tang En did not know this before, and the truth was, the information would not have helped him at all. The only thing that he needed to know was that the current Wimbledon's performance was poor and perhaps that was related to their move.

Their last four league matches were not bad. They did not lose, nor did they win. Their 23rd, 24th, 28th, and 29th were all draws. The 26th and 27th league matches were delayed, which somehow affected their ranking.