

Champions 811

Chapter 811: The Loudhailers

When Guardiola received the Nottingham Forest starting lineup list before the game, he looked at the name in the forward line. He thought for a moment, and then asked his assistant beside him, "Is Ibišević injured too?"

Vilanova shook his head in reply, "I haven't heard of such news. All we know is that Eastwood is definitely absent from the game with an injury."

Guardiola fell into deep contemplation when he heard his most trusted assistant say so.

He really did not know why Tony Twain served up this completely unfamiliar striker when Ibišević was not injured. He did not even have any information at all on the player presented before his eyes, only that his name was "Aaron Mitchell." It was only because it was written on the starting list. He did not even know how tall Mitchell was until he saw the real person. Not to mention this player's technical characteristics and real level...

He frowned. Barcelona's training in defense was targeted at Ibišević but now Ibišević was sitting on the substitutes' bench. Barcelona's defenders knew nothing about the player in front of them. How were they supposed to defend? Should they observe first for a while and then decide? Then he'd better hoped that Nottingham Forest would not take advantage of this situation to score a goal first...

It looked like they could only do it this way. No one in the coaching unit was familiar with this "Aaron Mitchell", so the Barcelona players were less likely to be familiar with the player they had never heard of.

It was a scene that took place before the game began. Now Guardiola was sitting in the visiting team's technical area and watching the game on the pitch. In the area next to him, the manager's seat was empty in the home team's technical area. The Chinese assistant manager looked like a manager in appearance, but he was a little too nervous.

Guardiola still unwittingly looked to the stands and seemed to be able to find Tony Twain among so many people. In fact, he did not find anything.

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At this point, Twain was enjoying the football game surrounded by a group of his closest fans.

"You rarely watch the game from this spot, don't you, Tony?" Fat John said with a smile, sitting on the left. The game had just begun, and his attention was still on the people around him.

"I had been penalized and sent to the stands many times. But this is my first time sitting in the stands where the hardcore fans gather. Well... the view is a lot better here than the technical area."

“Why don’t we change seats? You can sit here in the future and I’ll sit there.” John pointed to the Forest team’s technical area below.

Twain grinned and did not speak.

On the other side, Bill poured cold water on his friend and said, “I bet you can’t sit down for forty-five minutes.”

“Don’t put your own level as the standard on someone else, Skinny!”

Taking advantage of the two men’s bickering, Twain turned back and looked up. Nottingham Forest treated the two UEFA two inspectors very well and gave them seats in the VIP box. But it was actually arranged by Twain, including sitting in the stands which was Twain’s idea as well. Since we are the home team with the home advantage, then we must make good use of it. Otherwise it will be a waste of our resources.

When he arranged to be seated in the stands, it was not really about being able to enjoy the game with his old friends here. Twain had another purpose.

He glanced back at the box and never saw the two black-clad game inspectors. However, he was sure the two men must be up there, drinking and watching the game.

So, he interrupted John’s and Bill’s argument over who would be more capable to sit in the Nottingham Forest manager’s seat.

“Hey, guys. I want to discuss something with you...”

John and Bill turned to him at the same time and stopped arguing. “Anything you need help with, just name it, Tony!” This time they came to an agreement.

“Well, it’s like this...the UEFA people use every possible means they can to stop me from contacting the coaching unit and the players below, so I don’t have any communication devices on me...”

“I’ll lend it to you!” Bill pulled out his cell phone, but it was swatted down by Twain.

“Don’t take it out. I can’t even borrow someone else’s cell phone. Do you think they don’t know what I’m doing here while they are sitting up there?” Twain pointed upward without turning back. “They’re equipped with a powerful binocular.”

“Wow, is that so!” Bill was amazed. It was only an inspection. Why did they need to act like voyeurs ...?

“I prepared it for them.” Twain laughed.

“Huh?” Both of them were taken aback.

“I want to show that I’m very cooperative with them and definitely will not play any tricks. Preparing the binoculars for them proves that I do not have any schemes in mind. But actually...” Twain gave a shy smile, a look which made John really want to give him a punch.

“I can’t really get in touch with below through any means of communication, but the UEFA can’t ban the fans from shouting, can they?” He smiled again, with his eyes squinting together.

“Hey, Tony! Don’t beat around the bush, just say it! What do you want us to do?” Bill was a little impatient. He was not a man of good patience.

“Sometimes I may need to give the latest instructions based on the situation on the pitch, but I can’t tell my coaches and let the players know my ideas. But I think maybe I can borrow your mouths to tell them. If I have information I want to tell the people below, I want you to help me shout them out, but don’t be too deliberate. It will be just like cheering the team in the stands... That way, when the UEFA ask me about it, I have an excuse. They can seal my lips, but they can’t shut your mouths. Ha!”

John laughed with Twain. He now thought that Tony Twain’s mind must be different from everyone else. Otherwise how could he come up with so many clever schemes?

Bill’s reaction was a little slower, but it dawned on him soon after.

“No problem, Tony!” He shouted excitedly, “We’d be delighted to meet the UEFA head-on! I always find the group of men in suits objectionable!” He also brandished his fists.

John also patted Twain on the shoulder and said, “Just take it that you’re directing the game from the stands. We’ll be your assistant coaches.”

Twain nodded to the two men and said, “Thank you guys!”

John laughed and continued, “As long as you can win Barcelona and make things difficult for the UEFA, not to mention we will help you voice out the instructions, it’s not a problem even if you want us to pave the way!”

When he finished speaking, he got up and left his seat to inform the nearby fans. It would be impossible to act collectively by relying on two or three people. So, this grandstand must be informed of what they were going to do in a while.

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Five minutes into the game, Barcelona was aggressive in its offense because they kicked off the game and were able to use the technical advantage to keep the ball on their side. Another reason for Barcelona’s fierce attack was that a problem seemed to arise in Nottingham Forest’s midfield defense today... George Wood repeatedly turned to the north stands during the game to find that man. He thought it was strange as he had always thought since he was the team captain, he should be able to take charge. But when he habitually glanced toward the technical area before the game and could not find the familiar figure, he felt a little unsettled...

Since when did he considered him as a person to rely on?

This is ridiculous! I’m George Wood. I had tried to make a living in the slums since young and took care of my mother. I don’t need to rely on anyone!

Despite thinking this way, he still incorrigibly threw glances at the North Grandstand...

There were so many people there that he could not possibly find him.

Just as he turned his head, Iniesta passed the ball past his defensive zone and he did not even react.

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“George is a little distracted...” Twain muttered and frowned in the stands.

Bill, the “number one loudhailer” beside him, pricked up his ears and asked, “Do you need us to shout this?”

“Ah? Well, there’s no need to.” Twain hurriedly waved his hands. The side effect of getting the fans to be loudhailers to help was that they could mistook what he said casually as something that needed to be shouted out... If anyone was too enthusiastic, awkward scenes such as thousands of fans shouting “māle ge bī” (your mother’s f**king c**t) in unison would appear. Because he was used to muttering dirty words repeatedly while he watched the games, and the words would all be in Mandarin...

He did not know what was wrong with Wood but judging by his performance of the last few minutes, he was always glancing around on the pitch and not focused on the game. It was a very rare situation. George Wood was always known to focus his attention, threw his full concentration on the games and had a dedicated attitude. A situation like today should not happen to him.

In that case, what was wrong?

If he were below, he could stand on the sidelines and shout, “George!! What the hell are you doing?! Play attention to the game!”

Now, although he had the fans to act as the loudhailers, they could not just shout out any remark.

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Dunn also noticed Wood’s anomaly. But his reaction was not the same as that of Twain. He looked down and pondered for a moment. Then he got it and looked up with a smile. He turned around to look for Kerslake and his loud voice. He said, “David, can you help me tell George that Tony’s in the middle of the North Stand?”

Kerslake thought it was a little strange. He asked, “Didn’t you say that in the locker room?”

Dunn smiled, “Maybe someone did not hear it at the time.”

Kerslake shrugged and rose from his seat. He really felt that as an assistant manager, he was sometimes like a nanny. He had to deal with any matter, regardless of its importance...

After taking a deep breath, he bellowed, “Geor—ge!!”

Wood heard Kerslake’s voice and turned his head to look over. He found Kerslake pointing to the north stand and yelled, “He’s there! In the middle! Stop looking! I think he must be dissatisfied with your performance!”

The remark was effective. Wood glanced at the north stand and refocused his energy on the game.

When Messi was about to break through him, the ball bounced off the turf from his interference and knocked against the leg to go out of bounds. It was even considered Nottingham Forest’s throw-in.

“George Wood was not in form in the opening five minutes of the game and his position allowed the Barcelona players to break through several times. But it all seems okay now! Messi had wanted to play

the same old trick, but he took a tumble instead. Not only did he fail to break through, he gave the Forest team a throw in after Wood's close interference."

Messi also felt the course of events had changed. He was like a zebra in the African savannah. As soon as the wind turned, he smelled a lion in the low bushes. He shrewdly looked up and looked around with his ears pricked up and on guard.

Whether George would admit the feeling or not, he was at peace at the very moment. Before, he was like a lion snoozing in the afternoon, lazily lounging under the bushes, letting the bunnies and zebras hopped around in front of his nose, even too lazy to lift the eyelids.

But when the last light of the sunset disappears below the horizon and the night descends, our lion will rise from the shadows, with its cold eyes staring at its prey.

It is hungry.

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When Wood re-focused on the game, Barcelona's five-minute advantage was immediately wiped out. In addition, there was the bad news—their men were completely unable to adapt to the crumbling pitch at the City Ground stadium.

When Silva ran to an empty gap on the left side and raised his hand to ask for the ball, Xavi sharply noticed that there were no Forest players marking him nearby. So, he did a feint and passed the football over.

Such a pass was cakewalk for the Spanish national team's playmaker—provided that it was done on normal turf. At the City Ground stadium, his pass eventually rolled out of bounds. Silva lifted his leg and did not get it. Because the football in front of him suddenly jumped to the left and flew straight out of the sidelines!

The Catalan commentator thought at first that there had been a mistake in the two men's coordination and regretted missing out on such a good opportunity. But then Barcelona's pass-and-go balls went wrong one after another, he felt something was wrong—when he first saw the pitch, he only thought the turf was of poor quality and that some areas had exposed dirt. But now he found that there was a problem with the foundation of the soil under the turf!

"I don't know how the Nottingham Forest football club maintains its turf, but I do know there's not one professional football club in the world that will maintain its grounds in such a way. This must be Tony Twain's idea again! This is... really a lack of sportsmanship!" He did not have to think about impartiality. He was a Catalan commentator and the people who listened to him must be the Barcelona fans. He did not need to consider the mood of the English fans, so he could try everything he could to denigrate Barcelona's opponents on the show. The response was very good at the same time.

After Silva's miss, Bojan had another very good chance. He broke through Woodgate and almost faced off Akinfeev alone. But just as he lifted his leg to get ready to shoot, the football popped up on the uneven turf! He kicked out in the empty air, and nearly twisted his knee on the supported leg... Fortunately, he reacted quickly and threw his entire center of gravity out. Although he cut a sorry sight and was covered in dirt, he was not hurt.

The football was easily saved by Akinfeev who struck.

Akinfeev, who got the football, still remembered to smile at Bojan, who was lying on the ground.

“Ten minutes since the start of the game, Barcelona had relied on the advantage of its ball possession after the kickoff to launch several threatening attacks. George Wood’s wandering mind led to many loopholes in Nottingham Forest’s defense. But Barcelona did not manage to score a single goal. Their players suddenly behaved like they could not play football. Their performances on the pitch were...comical. I think it must have something to do with the venue. To tell you the truth, the turf on the City Ground stadium is terrible! The Barcelona players are wearing the yellow away jerseys for the game. But I reckon they’ll be brown by the time we get to the halftime interval...”

Seeing his players play like this, Guardiola, sitting in the technical area, shook his head. He really had no ideas. He was not superman and could not move Camp Nou’s turf to England in an instant.

He could only hope that Nottingham Forest would be restricted by the pitch at the same time. Even if the score was 0:0 in the end, Barcelona would still advance.

Such a rotten venue was a double-edged sword. No one knew how the football would move. Sometimes the naughty football could cause trouble for Barcelona. But who could say that at other times it would not become Nottingham Forest’s nightmare?

Chapter 812: Aaron Is a Fool

Nottingham Forest’s tactics for the match were actually very simple. They would create a tense atmosphere for Barcelona to play in by passing the ball about quickly and snatching the ball from their players ferociously. Those actions would stir up feelings of agitation within the Barcelona players and cause them to perform poorly. The venue in which they are playing at would also assist them greatly in creating an atmosphere that is difficult for the Barcelona players to play in as well.

Barcelona is well-known for being a team that is not good with headers during both its defense and offense. This prompted Tony Twain to research about aerial tactics so as to capitalize on this particular weakness of Barcelona’s.

Nottingham Forest gradually seized the initiative on the pitch after Barcelona tossed aside the advantage that they had at the start of the match.

Barcelona has always placed a strong emphasis on getting its forwards to snatch the ball at the front of the pitch. Many of their goals have all been scored as a result of their players snatching the ball back from the opposition in the opposing half.

It was a tactic that worked well in La Liga, but it was ineffective against Nottingham Forest in this match.

The Catalan press once mocked British football for being crude. They said, “The defenders playing in the Premier League only know to raise their legs and kick the football into the other half. They possess such poor technique!”

Now they all can see how that supposed ‘poor technique’ is tormenting Barcelona...

A forward is only able to snatch the ball away at the front of the pitch on the premise that the opposing defenders do not kick the ball away easily, and prefer to control the ball at their feet before sending the ball to the other half through a series of passes.

That is something that the defenders in La Liga do often. La Liga is a league that regards individual techniques so highly that even the players playing in teams that are at the bottom of the league possess the skills and techniques needed to break through Real Madrid and Barcelona's defense.

Getting your forwards to snatch the ball from defenders who prefer to control the ball at their feet can compel those defenders to commit an error, which would then help the team in snatching the ball and going on the counterattack straight away.

This tactic has been very useful in allowing Barcelona to gain the upper hand over their opponents in La Liga. However, it was a tactic that was very physically demanding. The season has gone on for quite a while now, and this was the period of time where the players' stamina start to plummet. Many of the Barcelona players who were on the pitch right now were pushing themselves to run.

If Barcelona is able to score a goal quickly using this tactic of theirs, then the match would most likely be decided right there and then. Barcelona would be able to control the flow of the game from that point onwards, and Nottingham Forest would just be led by the nose.

Given how Barcelona was much stronger than Nottingham Forest as a whole, it was certainly not difficult for them to score another goal.

However, Bojan Krkić and Messi realized after going forward that the Nottingham Forest's defenders gave them no chance to get close and snatch the ball away. The moment they saw the Barcelona players approach them, they would kick the ball into the other half of the pitch.

Their actions frustrated the Barcelona players. They are only able to snatch the ball from the defenders when they have run up towards Forest's penalty box, but since the Nottingham Forest players kick the ball away before they can even snatch the ball from them, it would mean that their efforts were in vain and they ran for nothing.

Given how running back and forth depletes the players' stamina, it was hard to guarantee that the Barcelona players would be able to last through the entire match.

If their physical conditions were to deteriorate as the match goes on, they would most likely start to lose focus and their movements might become erratic. It would then be as easy as walking for them to pick an injury on the pitch...

Nottingham Forest was good with long balls. Their defenders were usually able to find their target, Aaron Mitchell, who was positioned in the other half of the pitch, when they kick the ball to the front. It was then up to Mitchell to do the rest.

Mitchell struggled against Gerard Piqué at the start. He might be 2.02m tall, but he had a bamboo-like figure and was not physically strong, just like Peter Crouch was in his early days.

He was on the losing end during the few times he battled with Piqué, and he was not able to perform any headers even though he was good at them and also had the advantage in height.

The commentators kept praising Piqué and Barcelona during this period of time, despite the fact that Barcelona's attacks were not as good as before. "... Barcelona definitely triumphs over Nottingham Forest based on their overall abilities as a team. This is an indisputable fact... It is only a matter of time before they score. It all depends on whether they are able to readjust their mentality when facing Nottingham Forest..."

How should Barcelona readjust their mentality when facing Nottingham Forest?

Do they have to get rid of how they 'look down' on their opponents?

Twain shook his head as he watched Mitchell's performance from the stands. "Mitchell, you fool!"

Bill, who sat next to him, immediately asked, "Do we need to shout this sentence?"

"No need, Bill..." Twain replied, feeling exasperated. He realized that he might have a mouthpiece now, but it was still much easier for him to say what he wanted to by the side of the pitch.

It was also much more natural for him to do that...

But, no, wait a moment, maybe it will work!

Twain turned to Bill. Bill watched him with excitement written all over his face.

"Bill, John, I want you to shout like you always do when you are cheering for a particular player. First, you shout his name a few times, then you shout, 'Technique. Awareness. Positioning.' Can you do that?"

Fat John did not agree to Twain's request at once. He leaned towards Bill and they rehearsed what they were going to shout.

"Mitchell! Mit-chell! Technique! Awareness! Positioning... No, that doesn't feel right!"

"It sounds very awkward when we shout those words..." Bill furrowed his brows as well.

Fat John contemplated for a moment before he suddenly snapped his fingers. "Why should we shout them? We should sing them out!"

Bill clapped his hands together in response. "That's right! We are good at singing!"

"Singing?" Twain was a little surprised. "You'd need to come up with the lyrics and the melody on the spot. Can you two do it?"

John smiled. "You don't need to worry about the lyrics. As for the melody we'd just use the melody of a popular song. I've never heard of anyone who is able to come up with a melody on the spot..."

The two had a hushed discussion amongst themselves before they passed on the lyrics and the melody of the song to the other fans seated around them. Thereafter, the fans worked themselves up and a clear voice rang out from the North Stand,

"We have a giant on our team, his name is Aaron Mitchell! He's 2 meters tall, good at headers, jumping and good on the ball! Yet, he doesn't make use of any of them! He prefers to confront his opponent head on! Lalalala! Aaron, Aaron is a fool! Tony, Tony has lost his cool! Lost his cool!"

The fans made use of a melody from a popular song that Twain was familiar with. Many people were able to sing along because the song was catchy and had a very simple melody.

Even Tony Twain could not resist waving his arms in the air and singing 'Tony, Tony has lost his cool' alongside the other fans.

He burst out laughing when he finished singing. This is so interesting! This is an emotion that I won't get to enjoy when I'm sitting on the bench with a long face.

Their voices were a little jarring. The lyrics were very weird as well...

Still, it caught the attention of everyone in the stadium. People who stood by the side of the pitch also raised their heads to try and locate the source of the voice.

Eventually, everyone focused their gazes on the crowd of people at the North Stand who had their hands in the air.

"... He prefers to confront his opponent head on! Lalalala! Aaron, Aaron is a fool! Tony, Tony has lost his cool!"

Dunn, who initially had his brows furrowed as he sat at the tactical area, suddenly smiled. He was the first to make sense of what was happening. He knew Tony Twain must be 'up to no good' and the song was his 'wicked idea'.

This was his way of communicating with the players after UEFA banned him from coming into contact with the other managers at the tactical area as well as the players on the pitch.

UEFA must be thinking that all is well after sealing Twain's mouth. They surely did not expect him to make use of the 27,000 mouths at the stadium to help him relay his messages.

The voices grew louder and louder as more and more fans joined in the chorus.

It suddenly dawned on Mitchell that the fans were singing about him. He froze and listened carefully to the lyrics.

His face turned red soon after.

He knew that the boss was seated at the North Stand, and he understood what the song was really about.

The boss was upset with his performance.

In the past, if the boss was upset about something, he would yell and flail his arms about by the side of the pitch. However, he was seated at the stands now, and all he could do to convey his emotions was through such a method.

Mitchell was not stupid. He knew what he has to do from here on out...

Most of the Barcelona fans, players and staff did not pay any heed to the voices that had emerged out of nowhere, because they knew that it was very common for British football fans to sing songs at their stadiums, and that they include all kinds of messages into their lyrics.

Piqué was the only one amongst them to realize that something was amiss with the song since he had played in England for numerous years and was also able to understand and converse in English.

He began to keep a closer watch on Mitchell. He knew that he would most likely fail the next time he tried to snatch the ball from Mitchell by relying on his physical advantage.

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Nottingham Forest played a long ball to the front once again. This time, Mitchell did not jump up to fight for a header with Piqué, and neither did he try to engage in a physical battle with Piqué over the ball.

Instead, he ran backwards towards the ball and waited till it had fallen close to the ground before using his chest to bump it downwards. He then stopped the ball with his right foot.

Piqué went up to him and pushed him from the back. Mitchell made use of the momentum from the push and continued to run backwards. It looked as though he was running further away from Barcelona's penalty box, but the ball was still at his feet and he had not lost it.

Mitchell had no intentions of protecting the ball at his feet after he got it under control. Piqué continued to chase after him to try and snatch the ball away, and he continued to retreat backwards towards his own half.

When he had retreated all the way back to the center circle, he suddenly passed the ball away. He then turned around and made a run forward!

At this moment, Piqué had been led out of Barcelona's penalty box by Mitchell!

The spot that was originally guarded by Piqué was vacant. Carles Puyol had no choice but to move towards it to fill up the void.

Mitchell did not hesitate to make use of his advantage in height against Puyol this time. He jumped up into the air and headed the ball over to Puyol's original position.

The player who received his ball was Lennon, who had suddenly cut into the penalty box from the flank.

Yaya Touré was hot on his heels.

Lennon did not dribble the ball forward. He made a turn the very moment he received the ball and passed it over to Forest's left back, Joe Mattock!

"Nottingham Forest is very fast on its counterattack! Their left back has joined in the offense in the flash of an eye. However, if we look at this from another perspective, if Barcelona manages to intercept the ball, they would be able to make use of Nottingham Forest's left flank because it is currently empty!"

Intercept the ball?

Joe Mattock did not give Philipp Lahm the chance to do that. He passed the ball into the middle of the pitch.

Bentley, who was originally playing at the right back position, had appeared in the center forward's position right before goal.

He jumped up high but failed to get to the ball. However, his actions had attracted the attention of Víctor Valdés.

The player who followed up on the ball was Aaron Mitchell!

Mitchell had been on the losing end throughout his numerous battles with Piqué so far, and this led the other Barcelona players who had not faced off with him before to assume that he was a player who was tall but was bad with headers. Thus, Puyol did not go forward to mark him.

Piqué was the only one who kept close to Mitchell throughout. He was not familiar with Mitchell, but he knew that the boss must have his reasons for choosing to use him in such an important match.

Mitchell dashed towards the ball when he was just a short distance away from where it would land. He then jumped up and threw his body towards the ball.

Piqué did not dare to be negligent. He followed suit and jumped into the air and stretched out his hands to try and interfere with Mitchell.

Most people are of the opinion that the taller a person gets, the higher they can jump. However, Mitchell has surpassed their expectations. He had jumped higher than any other player in front of the goal. Piqué, who stood at 1.91m tall, could not even jump as high as him.

At this very moment, Mitchell was the Mount Everest within the City Ground Stadium!

Piqué could only knock his body against Mitchell and hope that he is able to throw him off balance.

He succeeded. Mitchell was hit by Piqué when he tried to get to the ball, and he lost his balance as a result. The ball that he tried to head into the net slammed against the sidebar and deflected onto the top of the net...

Mitchell subsequently fell onto the ground due to him losing his balance.

Twain burst out, "That's a f*cking penalty!"

Bill did not need to ask if he had to relay Twain's words this time round, because all the Nottingham Forest fans had bellowed in unison, "Penalty! Foul!"

The referee and the assistant referee shared the same opinion. It was a goal kick.

Bentley flung out his hands to protest against the referee's decision. The referee shook his finger at him, then pointed at his eyes to indicate that he had a good view of the entire incident. He determined that Piqué had not committed a foul.

Mitchell climbed to his feet. He was very upset with the fact that he had not scored a goal and that the referee had not given him a penalty kick. He kicked the goalpost in anger before shaking his head and running away.

He might not have reacted fiercely to the referee's decision, but there was one person at the stands who did.

"That's my son! That's my son!" Mitchell's father, who was a workman, shouted at the top of his voice as he pointed at his son. "You son of a b*tch! Piqué had obviously knocked into my son just now! Why

has there not been a penalty awarded against him! I hope your child ends up without an anus [1], you evil referee!”

When Mitchell’s father first found out that Mitchell was going to start in the match, his mouth was so large it could fit a light bulb. He finally understood why his son had acted so abnormally for the past few days.

However, his happiness was short-lived. He began to worry that his son would not perform well in the match and would end up affecting the entire team as a result. If that were to happen, he would become the laughingstock of the neighborhood after the match ended.

At the beginning, his son’s performance showed signs that it could progress in the direction that his father feared he would.

When the fans began to sing the song directed at Mitchell, he sang it with much more gusto and force than any other fan, especially at the part of the song that went, ‘Aaron, Aaron is a fool’. It was just like he was scolding his own son for failing to live up to his expectations.

Mitchell’s poor performance even prompted him to make a promise in his heart.

If his son were to perform well in this match, then he would buy a car for him the next day.

Aaron Mitchell has always complained about how his team mates would drive their own cars to the training grounds and how he was the only one who boarded the bus over. He has always wanted a car of his own.

It was natural for Mitchell’s father to shout the loudest after seeing his son perform better on the pitch and being unfairly treated.

Look at how he had rolled up his sleeves. He looked like someone who desperately wanted to rush towards the referee and ‘settle the score’ with him like men.

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Twain took the lead and started to boo the referee’s decision after seeing how he had not awarded a penalty kick to Mitchell. Soon after, deafening boos rang out from the stands as well.

The fans did not care if the referee was right or not. All they cared about was that things did not go their way, and that is why they booed.

Booing is nothing more than a way for the fans to vent their frustrations. It does not change the situation on the pitch in the slightest. The match went on as per normal.

Nottingham Forest did not score a goal, and they were not awarded a penalty kick either, but the players saw something positive from the incident.

Barcelona’s defense was still weak, and they could only rely on Piqué to help them deal with aerial balls. However, everyone saw how Piqué had lost out to Mitchell when battling for the ball in the air.

The knowledge that Barcelona was not some indomitable giant gave the Nottingham Forest players a huge confidence boost. It meant that they could keep attacking Barcelona's goalpost fearlessly and pile the pressure on their defense from here on out.

Nottingham Forest would definitely be able to score a goal!

Barcelona tried their best to control the game, but things did not go their way due to Nottingham Forest's tactic of snatching the ball away from them and the terrible venue that they were playing in.

The Catalan press looked down on the long passes being used by Nottingham Forest in this match, but it was those long passes that had bared their fangs before Barcelona.

Frightening booms would ring out every single time the ball pounded against Barcelona's defense. It would not be long before the rampart starts to crumble.

Guardiola had a grim look on his face, and his lips had also gone white from him biting onto them.

Chapter 813: A Blunder

The Barcelona players were trapped in a vicious cycle.

It all started with them being unable to control the ball at their feet. They started to feel indignant at the venue that they were playing in, and as a result, feelings of agitation began to rise within them. These erratic emotions led to erratic movements, and they became unable to perform at their best. They continued to struggle to control the ball, they continued to blame the terrible venue for their mistakes, and they continued to feel agitated and enraged...

And the cycle repeats.

Not a single Barcelona player had the right psychological state for the match. The players responsible for the team's offense were agitated, and the players responsible for the team's defense were on edge.

Even players like Messi who looked cool and composed on the outside would make two consecutive mistakes when bringing the ball forward. Once, he exerted too little force when kicking the ball forward, so the ball did not move by much. Another time, he exerted too much force and sent the ball far away from him.

Messi stomped on the turf beneath him in anger after he committed the two consecutive mistakes. He knew that the reason for his errors lies beneath his soles, but there was nothing he could do about it. He was lucky to not have picked up a sprain during the runs that he has made so far....

Before Guardiola could give any instructions to the players with regards to the situation that they were in however, the Barcelona players began to readjust their playing style by themselves.

They reduced the number of dribbles and passes that they made, and they also stopped making their way into Forest's penalty box as frequently. They chose to do long shots at goal instead.

Once the ball made its way towards the front of the pitch, the Barcelona players tried to threaten the goalpost that Akinfeev was protecting by shooting from a distance. However, their long shots at goal were ineffective against Nottingham Forest. They lacked power and were nothing more than a shadow of their former selves...

In contrast, Nottingham Forest's offense was much more exciting and threatening.

The defenders would intercept the ball and do a long pass.

The defensive midfielders would also intercept the ball and do a long pass...

Every single player in the team would do a long pass to the front.

The ball continued to fly about in the air. The necks of the Barcelona players ached just from having to raise their heads to track the ball.

Technical players like Xavi and Iniesta found themselves unable to make use of their techniques and keen awareness following the shift in strategy. They were soon rendered useless in the match even though Twain had not assigned players to mark them.

Yaya Touré was the only player who could contend against Forest in the midfield. However, there was very little that he could accomplish alone. He was not able to stop all of Nottingham Forest's attacks all by himself.

The fact that George Wood was able to get increased chances to go forward and join in the offense highlighted the mess that Barcelona's midfield was in.

Guardiola insisted with playing a 4-3-3 formation for the match, and this has resulted in the current situation whereby Barcelona only has three midfielders against Forest's four. It made it very hard for Barcelona to put up a fight against Forest in the midfield.

Nottingham Forest's long balls would always make their way past the midfield easily.

Yaya Touré would have his hands tied behind his back whenever Aaron Mitchell retreated backwards to retrieve the ball. He paled in comparison to Mitchell in numerous aspects, be it height, ability to head the ball or the ability to jump.

Mitchell, who stood at 2.02m tall, was superb at jumping. Yaya Touré could only wait on the ground and try to snatch the ball after Mitchell jumped up to head the long ball from his team mates.

Every time Mitchell retreated backwards to retrieve the long ball, there would always be a Forest player positioned near him to provide support, and this allowed Mitchell to have a good grasp of who he could pass the ball over to.

It did not matter how good a player Yaya Touré was. He might be able to try and snatch the ball from one possible spot in which the ball lands, but he was not able to go after the ball at all the possible spots in which it will land.

There were many players that Mitchell could choose to pass to after he had jumped into the air. He could pass the ball to Lennon, to Bentley, to his partner Agbonlahor, and he could also pass to George Wood or Tiago. He could also stop the ball with his chest and then control the ball under his feet.

As a result, it was very difficult for Yaya Touré to try and snatch the ball away given how there were many different ways for Mitchell to deal with the ball after he has headed it...

He was unable to stop Nottingham Forest's aerial attacks by himself. It was just not something that he was good at.

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"Nottingham Forest's offense goes unimpeded! There are no obstructions along the way... Yes, that's because Barcelona do not have the players who can deal with their aerial attacks! They do not have the 'Royal Air Force' on their side! Akinfeev kicked the ball to the front of the pitch, and Mitchell headed the ball over to George Wood who has moved up to join in the attack! Wood passed the ball over to the flank, and Bentley passed it into the middle. Agbonlahor jumped up to head the ball! He misses! Valdés gets a hand to it! Forest's entire attack has been completed in the air. Piqué has become the most important player in Barcelona's defense. Unfortunately, there's only one Piqué in the entire Barcelona team."

The match had only gone on for 20 minutes, but Gerard Piqué was already gasping for breath.

He was under immense pressure. Every single one of Nottingham Forest's attacks was done in the air, and he was the only player in Barcelona's defense who was able to deal with aerial balls. This meant that he had to run all over the pitch.

He was not a 'freak' like George Wood. There was a limit to his stamina, and running all over the pitch was taking a toll on his body.

Carles Puyol was very experienced as a defender, but sadly, he lacked height. Additionally, his physicality has also deteriorated with age. He was not good with dealing with physical players like Agbonlahor and Mitchell.

As for Dani Alves? He was busy trying to join in the offense. Piqué has to thank his lucky stars that their opponents did not exploit the space left behind by Alves whenever he moved forward to attack.

As for Philipp Lahm, he was also a fullback who liked to move forward and join in the attack like Alves. However, unlike Alves, Lahm was still a 'newbie' in the team, having just joined a year ago. Therefore, he was not as reckless and would not go all out during an attack. He would still track back and help in the team's defense vigorously.

At the back, they had the unreliable goalkeeper Víctor Valdés.

Piqué suddenly felt alone after surveying his surroundings.

He would not be so exhausted when dealing with aerial balls if he had Pepe as his partner. Bale and Rafinha might be attack-oriented fullbacks, but they would stay at the back of the pitch for an entire match if the boss asked them to.

In comparison, Guardiola prefers to get the fullbacks to join in the offense. The main job of the fullbacks is to move forward and attack rather than to defend.

The playing style adopted by Barcelona makes it very exhausting for a center back like Piqué to play in.

It did not take long for Nottingham Forest to initiate another attack. This time, Bentley passed the ball into the middle, and Mitchell jumped up to try and head the ball into the net.

Piqué had to give his all to compete with Mitchell in the air. In the end, he managed to triumph over Mitchell marginally, and he headed the ball out of bounds and gave Forest a corner kick.

“Forest’s ex-player Gerard Piqué has been rather lively throughout this match. He has stopped Nottingham Forest’s attacks numerous times so far. His performance reassures Guardiola.”

The commentator might have praised Piqué’s performance, but there was nothing ‘reassuring’ about the current situation to Piqué and Guardiola. In fact, if Guardiola were to be given a choice, he would rather take Piqué off the pitch, because that would signify that Nottingham Forest’s offense was not a threat to Barcelona.

Twain shook his head vigorously as he sat at the stands. If possible, he wished that Piqué would get injured and miss out on playing in this match, because the game would have been dominated by Forest if not for his presence on the pitch.

There were no other player in the Barcelona team who could stop Forest’s advancements besides him. Piqué was like the last soldier standing for his army, and he continued to put up a resistance against Forest.

The ball flew into the penalty box from the corner. Piqué headed the ball away before Mitchell could get to it. Right after he did, he turned around and yelled at his team mates, “Focus on the defense! Victor, you need to step out a bit more! The area that you can take control of should be bigger! They keep using aerial balls, but we don’t need to fight for the ball in the air! We can interfere with them on the ground!”

The Piqué right now did not seem to remember that he once played for Nottingham Forest. All that was on his mind was to help Barcelona defend its goalpost.

Twain scratched his head.

It looks like I have gotten Piqué all fired up... This is not good.

Mitchell was not a player with a strong body. His performance would definitely be affected if he were to be marked by Piqué. Twain hoped that Mitchell would be able to get tougher, but it was hard for him to achieve that in this match. He needs more training to build on his muscles and strength, but those were things that he could only do after the match.

It would be disadvantageous for Forest if Mitchell were to be tightly marked by Piqué, because Forest’s tactics for the match were formed with Mitchell as the core.

Perhaps some changes need to be made?

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Forest launched yet another attack. The ball was sent to Mitchell through the air once again.

This time, Mitchell decided to stand his ground and engage in a physical battle with Piqué for the ball instead of avoiding him.

Mitchell tried to block Piqué from getting to the ball in the air. His tall stature certainly made things difficult for Piqué. He then jumped up into the air to receive the ball. Piqué also followed suit. Right at the moment where there was physical contact between the two players however, Mitchell led out a cry and fell to the ground.

The referee's whistle rang out.

Piqué had committed a foul!

Piqué felt wronged. He did not see anything wrong with his actions. They were normal actions that would be taken in any other physical battle.

He checked with the referee over what had been deemed to be a foul, and the referee raised his arm upwards to indicate that Piqué had wrapped his arm around Mitchell during the physical battle earlier.

Piqué knew that Mitchell had deliberately fallen to the ground at the slightest of contact, but there was nothing he could do about it.

Nottingham Forest had finally gotten their first free kick of the match after practicing for an entire week.

Guardiola should feel lucky that Bale was out injured for the match. Bale was Forest's sole free kick specialist.

The free kick that Twain had trained his team to do for the past week was the 'indirect free kick'.

There are two types of free kicks in football. One is called the 'direct free kick', while the other is called the 'indirect free kick'. There are no restrictions for direct free kicks. The ball may be directly kicked into the goal without any other player touching it. On the other hand, an indirect free kick requires at least two players to touch the ball for it to count as a goal in the event that it does make its way into the net.

Mitchell had earned a direct free kick for Forest. However, Nottingham Forest was going to play the ball as though it was an indirect free kick that had been awarded to them.

Bentley walked over to the ball. Mitchell kept trying to squeeze his way past the Barcelona's defenders, and that led to a minor scuffle between the players from both teams.

The scuffle prompted the referee to step forward to maintain order. In the end, Mitchell was able to get what he wanted from the start, which was to squeeze his way into Barcelona's penalty box.

The Barcelona players all believed that the ball would be sent to Mitchell. Thus, they sent a player to stand right behind Mitchell. The player would be able to mark Mitchell and also prevent a gap from being formed that Forest would be able to exploit if Mitchell were to run away after the free kick has been taken.

But, everything was nothing more than a pretense for Nottingham Forest.

Their true tactic was this...

After the referee blew his whistle, Bentley ran up to the ball. However, he did not kick the ball straight for goal. Instead, he passed the ball over into the middle of the pitch!

George Wood ran up from behind and shot for goal at once!

He did not manage to shoot the ball at the height that he was most comfortable with. The ball was low and it lost a bit of speed due to the friction with the pitch below.

Nonetheless, the shot still caused huge problems for Valdés...

The ball bounced about erratically on the pitch, and it was hard to tell where the ball was going towards.

Valdés' initial judgement was that the ball would continue to follow its current trajectory and land in his arms, but he did not expect the ball to suddenly change direction after bouncing over a small bump on the pitch.

The ball then rolled towards the goalpost!

Valdés pounced towards the ball and managed to tip the ball away!

All the Barcelona players broke into cold sweat at the sight.

"George Wood does a long shot at goal! He nearly scored! The terrible pitch has helped him out. Fortunately, Valdés was completely focused and he did not commit a rudimentary mistake..."

Wood was disappointed that the ball had not gone in. It was not like he could replicate such quality long shots at goal every single time.

Valdés' heart was palpitating furiously after he got the ball away.

It was a close call.

His heart was in his mouth when he saw the ball make a turn at the last moment, and there were still lingering feelings of fear in him even now.

Thankfully, the ball had not deviated too much from its original trajectory, and it was still within an area that he could get to. However, given the condition of this pitch...

Who knows if Barcelona would still have such good luck the next time Nottingham Forest launched an attack?

The ball was sent into the penalty box from the corner.

Mitchell headed the ball, but sent it wide due to Piqué's interference.

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Guardiola looked at his watch as he stood by the side of the pitch.

27 minutes had passed since the start of the first half, and Nottingham Forest's attacks were still as ferocious as ever.

The only thing Guardiola could be glad about was that the team had not let in a goal during the period of time where Forest's offense was at its most intense. Piqué's outstanding performance had definitely saved the team.

He definitely has to make changes in the second half...

Nottingham Forest decided to slow down their tempo to allow their players to conserve some stamina after attacking feverishly for 20 minutes. They did not want any of their players to be exhausted before the first half ended.

Barcelona decided to try and shift the game back into their favor now that Nottingham Forest had stopped being as offensive.

They maintained possession of the ball and tried to find a way through Forest's defense. They did not believe that Nottingham Forest had no weaknesses that they could exploit. They just haven't found one since they were too busy dealing with Forest's attacks earlier...

However, they soon realized that Nottingham Forest's was invulnerable to their attacks. They did not give them any chance to break through and shoot for goal.

What should they do against a team that is defending to the death?

Barcelona decided to pass the ball around the back and maintain possession for the time being. Doing so would attract Nottingham Forest to move forward, because they were the ones who needed to score a goal.

Nottingham Forest were the ones who should be getting anxious. Not Barcelona.

Once Barcelona realized of that fact, they started becoming less frantic. They would pass the ball around at the back, and if Nottingham Forest did not move forward, they would continue to kick the ball backwards and let their goalkeeper Valdés initiate another attack.

On the 30th minute of the match, Barcelona continued to pass the ball about at the back, but Agbonlahor suddenly charged towards Puyol from the middle of the pitch.

Puyol was not in a hurry to pass the ball away. He wanted to attract Agbonlahor and the other Forest players to move upwards. He gestured for his team mates around him to move back and support him.

Piqué turned around and ran back towards him. However, Puyol did not pass the ball over to him, because Mitchell was right behind Piqué.

The Forest players were all like a pack of wolves chasing behind its prey, waiting for the opportunity to strike.

Puyol turned and passed the ball over to Alves at the flank.

Lennon rushed up to Alves after seeing that the ball had been passed to him.

Alves could have passed a long ball to the front of the pitch, but he hesitated. He raised his leg and put it down.

In the time in which he hesitated, Lennon had already run up to him!

Alves turned around and tried to protect the ball at his feet. He realized that it was risky to pass to any player before him, so he chose to pass the ball back to the goalkeeper.

He held Lennon back and passed the ball back to the goalkeeper. Valdés moved forward to stop the ball that was rolling towards him.

Agbonlahor noticed that Barcelona had passed the ball back to their goalkeeper. He did not stop in his tracks. Instead, he shrugged off Puyol and charged towards Valdés.

Valdés had initially wanted to stop the ball at his feet before passing it to a defender, but he realized that he had underestimated Agbonlahor's pace. In the blink of an eye, the two were already in very close proximity to each other. He would only be digging his own grave if he were to stop the ball at his feet now.

Valdés changed his mind at the last minute and decided to kick the ball towards the other half of the pitch.

Barcelona's first choice goalkeeper lifted his leg. All he had to do was to connect his feet with the ball...

Agbonlahor was only about 10 meters away from him. He definitely could not afford to make a mistake.

In the next second however, every single player, fan and staff of the Barcelona team could not believe their eyes...

The ball that had rolled over towards Valdés was not fast. It would be as easy as breathing for a goalkeeper like Valdés, who had played in countless games before, to kick the ball away.

Valdés got into position and was ready to kick the ball away...

But, the ball suddenly bounced upwards just when it was a short distance away from Valdés!

It was at this very moment that Valdés swung his right leg out!

His right leg did not hit its intended target and he kicked at nothing but air...

Valdés exerted too much force in his attempt to kick the ball. It tipped him off balance and he fell backwards onto the ground.

It dawned on him at once that he had just missed!

He looked on in horror as Agbonlahor passed him by...

"A mistake! Valdés has made a mistake! This is a chance for Agbonlahor! This is a chance for Nottingham Forest... He shoots! GOOOOOOOOOOAL!"

Agbonlahor would have to smash his head against a wall if he could not score a goal before an empty goalpost. There were no defenders around Agbonlahor when Valdés failed to kick the ball earlier. He could have stopped the ball and readjusted himself before shooting. He would still have scored a goal.

The Nottingham Forest fans were already cheering by the time Agbonlahor scored the goal. They had erupted into cheers the very moment Valdés fell to the ground.

Twain, John and Bill all jumped up from their seats. They stretched out their two arms and roared at the top of their voices.

"Forest, Forest! Nottingham Forest!"

Barcelona has committed a blunder...

Chapter 814: Panic and Lost

Víctor Valdés was perhaps the worst goalkeeper of any European club. It wasn't because of his lack of potential, but because of his instability of play. He often exhibited some inexplicable low-level mistakes, such as kicking the ball directly to the other side's feet, creating an assisted offense for the opponent, or fumbling the ball after diving on it...

But this time it was not his fault.

Nottingham Forest's turf and field combined to make the goal. Valdés knelt on the ground and gave a hard slap to the culprit: a bulging piece of turf in front of his foot. This was where the football rolled when it suddenly jumped and playfully dodged Valdés's right leg, scoring Forest's goal.

"Nottingham Forest's lousy field has made a contribution!" the narrator roared with excitement. "Alves's return pass has caused Valdés' mistake, and Agbonlahor scored with ease!" This scene was so dramatic that Barcelona's players could not believe their eyes until now, and Valdés could only vent his anger on the turf. Nottingham Forest now gained the lead, tied with Barcelona on aggregate score, and took the advantage with an away goal!

"Passing the ball back to the goalkeeper in this situation, Alves must also take responsibility for this lost goal!"

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When Barcelona's players saw the football slip away from Valdés's feet, everyone was in a state of desperate panic. Some people even hugged their heads prematurely because they didn't want to watch.

Guardiola, looking expressionless, sat in the coach's chair with his hands around his chest. It was impossible to tell how he was feeling from his face. He was not the kind of head coach who immediately went into a frenzy after losing the ball—this was the great difference between him and Tony Twain.

Looking at what was next door, Kerslake raised his arms, charged out of the coaching room, and hugged whoever he saw, displaying Tony Twain's style. Don, another assistant coach, was calm. He just clenched his face and waved.

What about Tony Twain?

As the ball slipped through Valdés's feet, Twain rose from his seat like everyone else around him, raising his arms and cheering.

Eventually, when he imitated tens of thousands of fans and shouted, "Forest! Forest! Nottingham Forest!" he felt an excitement that he never felt when he was on the coaching seat.

"Well done!" After the cheers, John gave a thumbs-up to the celebrating Forest players. "We're even now!"

Twain corrected him. "No, we're ahead. "

If Twain did not say anything, once he spoke, the fatty John squeezed over like a meaty hill, “Tony! Wow, your idea was really brilliant! They definitely lost out on this field! Did you see their expressions? It was too exciting! Haha!”

“Hey, John... I’m going to be out of breath...”

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The goal-scorer, Agbonlahor, was so excited that he ran to the north stands with his mouth open and roared, waving his arms at the most hardcore fans, and immediately drew even greater cheers.

Twain did not cheer like the rest of the fans this time. He just gave a thumbs-up to Agbonlahor below. He did not know if Agbonlahor could see him, but he still had to act like a head coach.

In fact, Agbonlahor was looking for his head. He soon found him in the crowds, because his head was different from the masses—he was actually smiling at him!

“Hey, guys! I see the head!” The excited Agbonlahor pointed to the stands as he shouted at his celebrating teammates, and for a moment everyone looked at the stands, in the direction that Agbonlahor was pointing, as they saw Tony Twain’s silhouette.

“Hey, let’s have another celebration!”

Agbonlahor first did a salute towards the stands, similar to that of the U.S. Marine Corps. The other players also followed to salute to Twain.

Twain made a serious face and saluted back, just like a general’s head.

After they saluted to their head, they ran back to get ready to reenter the game.

But Tony Twain was still excited amongst the fans. They sang the Nottingham Forest anthems loudly, again and again. Even Twain sang with them afterwards.

“We are invincible, we are invincible! We are the strongest team in the world, we are Nottingham Forest! ”

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Nottingham Forest’s goal impacted Barcelona quite a bit, as Barcelona’s players looked a little flustered on the pitch after the game resumed. If Forest’s front-court players were pressing a little more, Barcelona’s players would immediately kick the ball a lot further – they definitely did not dare to pass the ball backwards, as they were scared that the ball would playfully jump up again, it would all be over for them.

So, in order not to let the football be intercepted in front of them, everyone chose to kick it forward, hard.

This naturally helped Nottingham Forest a great deal. Barcelona’s attack was threatening when the football was on the ground, and when they kicked the ball into the air for fear of making a mistake, they were not even a first-class team in front of Nottingham Forest.

Nottingham Forest were easily in control of the situation on the pitch, again and again besieging Barcelona's goal.

Fortunately, Valdés was not affected by the loss of the ball. His performance was still normal: blocking the ball consistently, ensuring the goalmouth was not lost. Another busy man was Piqué, who was in good form. Nottingham Forest were dominating in the air, and he was the only man who could be trusted in Barcelona's backline, with his height and header advantage.

He was not completely downwind in his tussle with Mitchell, which was one of the reasons why Barcelona had not let in another goal. But Piqué did not think the situation was optimal. He had given all his strength, and the tall man, who was still looking for his play, did not give full strength. If this goes all, he did not know if he could hold on for the full 90 minutes.

Towards the end of the first half, Nottingham Forest, who had been expected to take a possible counterattack at home, instead surrounded Barcelona's penalty area and launched a frenzied siege. Barcelona could not even get over to the other half of the field.

Guardiola was restless and anxious on the sidelines. He just wanted the first half to end quickly so he could make adjustments. He did not care about pride; he just waved to the team to defend the whole line and survive the last five minutes.

The last five minutes were a pain for Barcelona's players. Nottingham Forest's wild attack was never seen at the Nou Camp, and they even thought Nottingham Forest would not attack at all, or would maybe try once or twice.

But Nottingham Forest's current attack had left the Catalan narrator speechless.

England's narrator, on the other hand, was very excited. He kept shouting the names of Nottingham Forest players.

"Aaron Lennon's breakthrough was very beautiful, he passes! Mitchell's header! The header was too good, but it's a pity it was blocked by Valdés!"

"Thiago's long shot – it flew just past the goalpost and out!"

"Nottingham Forest seemed to be trying to force a break in the middle of the road to open a breakthrough, with Mitchell leaning on Piqué and relying on his leg-length advantage to pass the ball to Agbonlahor. Agbonlahor feigned and passed straight! Bentley appeared in the penalty area and he received the ball, as if it was a straight cleaver! He shoots! Valdés pounced and hit the football out..."

"Barcelona fouled on the right side of the penalty area, with Nottingham Forest's free-kick...Will they do it again? Bentley passes! Straight to the post! Mitchell attracted three of the Barcelona defenders by himself, Kompany heads the ball from behind! The ball went in ... Oh no, it hit the side of net! It's a shame, it was like it got in from this point of view..."

"Nottingham Forest intercepts the ball on the midfield...Barcelona were intending to pass it out, but they were beaten by George Wood's relentless resistance. He passed the ball to Thiago and ran forward ... one-two, it was beautiful! Nottingham Forest made a two-on-one play in front of Barcelona, Yaya Touré was played around with by the chemistry of Wood and Thiago! Piqué keeps a close eye on

Mitchell...Long shot! George Wood came straight up with a long shot, and it flew slightly above the crossbar! Listen to the voices in the stands—they thought the ball was going in!

“Joe Mattock passes! Aaron Mitchell – goalpost!! Alas, it seems that today the Goddess of Luck has not blessed the young Mitchell. This is the second time in the game he’s headed the ball at the crossbar! His height and header were a big threat to Barcelona’s goal, but his luck was off—or was Barcelona’s luck too great?”

In Nottingham Forest’s tide-like attack, the referee became Barcelona’s saviour. As he blew his whistle at the end of the first half, even the most hardcore of Barcelona’s fans wanted Nottingham Forest to come again, Barcelona’s defensive line would collapse.

“Guardiola should be thankful for the first half, because at least they haven’t had a player who was injured by that poor pitch but had only lost a goal.” At the end of the first half, this was how the narrator was casually talking.

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Twain got up from his seat and said to Bill and John next to him, “Hey guys, do you want to have a drink? I’ll treat you.”

“I thought you weren’t supposed to be drinking,” said Bill.

“Of course I can’t drink. But I can drink juice, and you guys can choose to drink what you like.”

“You’re in a good mood, Tony.”

“Because we’re ahead, ha!” As he said this, a group of people walked towards the exit.

“Aren’t you worried Guardiola will make adjustments during the mid-game break? Barcelona is a world-class team for a reason...”

Twain laughed. “Unless he can figure out a way to level the ground in 15 minutes, Barcelona won’t be able to turn the tables. Their technique simply can’t be used on such a pitch, and if they play high-altitude football, they might as well continue to endure a bad ground attack.”

Yes, he had calculated everything: this game must consume Barcelona. So he was not worried about the bad effects when the UEFA would not allow him to enter the dressing room. He believed that the outcome of the match had been decided by his idea of the “vegetable patch.”

I am like Buddha, Guardiola. No matter how sly you are, you will still be unable to escape my palm, haha!

“Come on, guys, I’ll invite you to drink. Moisturize your throats—I might still need to use you guys in the second half!”

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While Twain was drinking and talking at the stadium’s concessions stand with his “voice-over”, Barcelona’s dressing room was a bit of a feniiall.

The team's physiotherapist was giving Barcelona's players ankle and knee massages to prevent them from spraining in the second half. The atmosphere was a bit dull, and no one knew what to say. It was too bad to play on a pitch like this, because they were unable to display their most prized techniques. They could only be played around by Nottingham Forest.

If the game went on like this again...the consequences were unimaginable. Perhaps they could also count on Nottingham Forest to make the mistake they had made in the first half?

Guardiola took away their hopes. "Don't expect your opponent to make a mistake. We have to play well in our own game."

But Guardiola had no idea how to get his team to play well, too. The atmosphere in the changing room turned cold again.

Barcelona's players might have felt this way for the first time after experiencing thousands of glorious games. This game was unplayable, and it was not because their potential was not up there, but because their opponent was too cunning. Who would have thought that Nottingham Forest would have been at the expense of transforming their pitch for a win ...

After a moment of silence, Guardiola re-opened his mouth. "We will pass the possession to them in the second half."

Everyone looked up with an expression of surprise on their faces. Barcelona's football was always under their own feet—passing the possession right to their opponents did not fit their style.

Guardiola had to explain why he wanted to do this. "Yes. The quality of the turf on the City pitch is so bad that long-term ball control on the foot increases the risk of losing the ball. So, I think it's better for us to give up the football to the other side. Once the football is at the foot of a Nottingham Forest player, wherever that player is, the people around him have to go up and snatch possession. Launch a quick counterattack immediately after the turnover!"

This was a good idea, as Barcelona's players had accepted the manager's arrangement.

"Piqué, how do you feel about defending Mitchell?" Guardiola turned to ask the defender.

Piqué gasped, "I feel that it's a little tough, coach...I'm afraid I can't defend him alone."

Guardiola looked around at the players on the bench, and found that there seemed to be no players with decent heading skills other than Márquez, a veteran on the bench. But Márquez was too old and was in a bad state, rarely getting a chance to play. In such an important game, he really didn't want to pin his hopes on such a player.

So his eyes passed Márquez and fell onto Puyol. "Carles, in the second half you helped Piqu. I don't ask you to win their no. 9 in terms of heading, but don't let him jump and head so easily."

Puyol nodded, stating that he knew what he was supposed to do.

Next, it was time for psychological hints.

"Don't give up the race in the last second! We have 45 minutes left, and with just one goal, Nottingham Forest will be in disarray. But until then, we can't panic ourselves! I saw that in the last half you were

panicking. That's not going to work! That's absolutely not going to work! Your panic will only make your opponent happier. I know this kind of venue has cost us a lot, but if your minds are just complaints on the bad pitches, I'm sure you'll have no hope of winning. This is Tony Twain's trick! You have to put all your energy into the game, and not think about anything else! The more you think about it, the worse it may turn out!"

Guardiola made a strict face, but deep inside, he knew the situation was bad...

Chapter 815: Piqué

The mood in Barcelona's locker room was gloomy and miserable. Guardiola desperately tried to boost everyone's morale. It was a different story in Nottingham Forest's locker room.

"Well done, guys!" Kerslake took on Tony Twain's job in the locker room. He had to continue motivate the players with words while Dunn was responsible for explaining the tactical arrangements.

The players were as happy as the coaches. They were pleased with the performance in the first half. Barcelona's offensive was almost completely blocked. They had the upped hand in the game and even scored a goal in the final five minutes.

Everyone sat down and started discussing Barcelona's predicament in the first half. They had a happy discussion.

When he saw that their discussion was becoming more animated, Kerslake had to use the imposing manner as the assistant manager to keep them quiet, because Dunn had something to say, "We played well in the first half. But we cannot relax in the second half. I am now worried that you will be arrogant and underestimate your opponent in the second half. You still have to keep in mind what kind of opponent Barcelona is. If you give them too much space, the situation will not be good once they adapt to the pitch..."

The expressions on the players' faces became serious. They knew what Dunn said was right.

As the saying went, a lean camel was still bigger than a horse. A team like Barcelona was still strong under any circumstances. They could get into trouble if they lowered their guard.

"So, in the second half we will continue to fully press them, forcing them to make mistakes and not being able to organize an effective attack. Force their offensive to only rely on long shots and crossing from the sides. Once they play high-altitude football with us, their threat will be much reduced."

"As for our offense ... we just have to pay more attention to the rate of success. We had a lot of chances in the latter part of the first half but didn't score a single goal. We cannot be like this in the second half. Tony always said there will be payback if we waste our opportunities and a one-goal lead is the least secured score in the world. I don't think he wants to see that you are satisfied with a score of 1:0 in the second half in the stands?"

Dunn still had to evoke Tony Twain in the end to make his speech more convincing. He could not control the players, which was already proven when Twain was absent from work with a heart attack. When

things were good, everyone listened to him, and no one cared about him when the situation was bad. Evoking Tony Twain at such times was like having an imperial sword which gave the sword bearer arbitrary powers. Sometimes Dunn would also think that he might just be an assistant manager all his life at Nottingham Forest because Tony's influence on the team was so profound...

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Twain held a disposable cup filled with fruit juice and returned to the stands with his mates. The second half was about to begin and both teams' players had left after they did their warm-up on the pitch. The fourth official and three referees appeared on the sidelines. They were having a chat. Perhaps they were talking about the stadium?

Twain's appearance in the stands caused a small commotion. The other fans who recognized him came up in succession and shouted, "We're going to win, right, Tony?"

Twain also replied loudly, "Of course!"

Then a group of people raised the beers in their hands and shouted, "Forest, Forest! Nottingham Forest!"

They kept shouting until the players from both sides entered.

The Nottingham Forest players were cheered by the fans as they entered the stadium. It was much quieter followed closely by the Barcelona players.

The situations of both teams might be gleaned from the players' expressions when they entered the field. The Nottingham Forest players talked and laughed, while the Barcelona players frowned and looked grave without exception from the players to the coaching staff.

Messi, who was previously dubbed as the "new king of the world" by the media, also pursed his lips and looked grim. He almost ceased to exist in the first half, with no contribution at all. The unparalleled Argentine football leader and Barcelona's ace of all aces, who was dominant on the pitch, played looked as if he was sleepwalking.

He was thinking about how he could salvage the situation and get his form back in the second half.

But it was a bit difficult. The venue was a reason, while the close marking from Wood and the others was also a reason. Twain did not let the full backs defend against Messi in the game as they did in the previous round. George Wood would often take the initiative to "pop by to talk about the ideals of life" with Messi whenever he was free.

The uneven field made it inherently difficult to control the ball. In addition to Wood's close-marking interference, he could barely manage the ball.

Maybe he should be more aggressive with his positional play in the second half and widen his scope of activity to make it better...

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After the start of the second half, Puyol and Piqué used their full strength to defend against Mitchell and the situation slightly changed. Mitchell's height and header, as well as his jump, were indeed excellent.

But he was completely at a disadvantage in terms of experience. He did not know what to do when Piqué and Puyol joined forces against him.

During that time, with Mitchell being closely marked, Barcelona gradually regained the situation on the pitch. They began to attempt organizing the offense.

Unlike the first half, Barcelona's attack began to rely more on the individual skills of the star players than coordination. Because the first half's failure proved that their cooperation could not be played on such a pitch.

Almost any team with many star players would consider relying on their individual skills to determine the game under such circumstances. Barcelona's lineup had Messi, Silva, Bojan, Iniesta, Xavi, Alves... and many other star players. Any one of these players had the ability to decide the outcome of the game alone. It would be too wasteful if they were not used.

Silva chose to act alone in the wing after he received the ball. He managed to break through the tall Nkoulou with his high center of gravity, but his pass was easily headed out by Kompany.

Then Xavi came to try. He fired a long shot straight away and deliberately hit a ground ball, trying to use the uneven field to cause trouble for Akinfeev.

But the Russian, who had been training on this kind of field for a week, had adapted to this kind of shot. Twain had specially trained him in similar capacity. He pressed the ball firmly under his body when he fell to the ground and did not create a chance for Bojan to shoot.

It was followed by Messi.

He pulled the ball to the sideline and faced Joe Mattock's defense. He did a feint to cross the ball but suddenly hook the ball to cut inside and shook off Mattock.

Messi would be more confident if he were at Camp Nou. Now he could only choose to cut inside early. Unsurprisingly, George Wood rushed up.

The football bounced on the uneven turf and Messi struggled to control the ball. His technique was really good to not lose the ball and still be able to control the ball under his feet in such a situation.

Wood saw that he was very steady in the possession of the ball, so he was not in a hurry to make a move. He just leaned his body closer to him.

Messi also knew that once he was leaned on by Wood, he would have no chance to break through. So, he suddenly stopped, flashed past Wood, and then changed direction toward the side.

He was going to forge a way out from being hemmed in by Wood and Mattock, and straight into the penalty area!

He pushed with his left foot and his right foot hooked the ball!

He succeeded in shaking off Joe Mattock's interception and intended to charge out from this crack. But the power of Wood's breakout was amazing! By the time he pushed the ball with his left foot, he had already seen through his intentions. He took a big stride first and cut across Messi's path. Just when

Messi hooked the ball to the front with his right foot, Wood separated him from the ball and successfully locked in his position!

Messi could not stop in time and directly knocked into George Wood. He felt as if he had hit a wall. Fortunately, he had just started. If he had been running at a high speed, perhaps he would be immediately dizzy ...

Messi fell to the ground, with the Barcelona fans and Nottingham Forest fans in the stands booing at the same time. The Barcelona fans thought that George Wood had fouled by blocking and they should have given a free kick, or a penalty kick—the exact spot where Messi had fallen was vague. It appeared to be outside the penalty area and also in the penalty area...

The Nottingham Forest fans booed because they thought Messi dived. It was exaggerated of him to fall to the ground at such a close distance collision.

The referee did not whistle to indicate that Wood had fouled, nor did he signal that Messi had dived. He did not do anything, and the game continued.

Even though Wood had stopped Messi's attack, Nottingham Forest was not out of danger yet as Bojan had come up.

At the same time when Messi had failed, Bojan plugged in diagonally from behind and tried to intercept the ball. He thought Wood had focused all his attention on Messi and certainly would not have time to focus on him. But he was wrong.

After Wood had stopped Messi, he twisted his body around and shuttered Bojan behind him.

When Bojan and Messi hit him like they did, he did not fall to the ground, but lost the chance to grab the ball.

George Wood's ability was fully reflected when he defended against Barcelona's two top attackers on his own. Instead of blindly sending a shot out after protecting the football, he passed it to Joe Mattock, who had already pulled to the side and let him get the football out to organize the attack.

The few successive attacks did not yield any results. It looked like Barcelona's plan to rely on the individual skills of the star players to score goals did not work as well ...

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The game was interrupted in the 60th minute.

Someone was hurt!

But it was not a Barcelona player who was injured this time, nor was it a Nottingham Forest player. The injured party was a bit of a surprise.

At that time, Barcelona's ball was intercepted in the front field and Nottingham Forest launched a quick counterattack, with both sides moving at a high speed. The referee naturally had to run quickly from Nottingham Forest's half of the field to Barcelona's half. Just as he had started running, he fell to the ground on his buttocks!

It was not until Nottingham Forest had finished the attack that people noticed the referee was still sitting in the center circle, with one hand holding his ankle...

“Ha! What are we looking at? The referee’s hurt!” The commentator laughed, which sounded like he took delight in someone else’s misfortune.

A burst of laughter could also be heard over the City Ground stadium. This scene was really comical.

“We’ve been speculating about who’s going to get hurt from the terrible pitch. Maybe Messi, maybe Iniesta, maybe Bojan, maybe even the Nottingham Forest players themselves ... But we never thought the first person to be injured would be the referee... Does it look like he sprained his ankle? Let us take a look at what happened at the time...”

The replay appeared on the television screen. When he started running, the foot which the referee used to launch stepped on a bulge, so ...

“Well, I don’t think it’s possible for this referee to enforce the game any longer...”

While he spoke, the camera gave a close-up to the fourth official who was warming up on the sidelines.

“We wish the fourth official good luck and hope he doesn’t sprain his ankle the moment he gets on that pitch. Ha!”

Twain also saw the scene in the stands. He laughed happily like the other fans. Due to the things that happened in the first round between the two teams, the Nottingham Forest fans did not have any good feelings toward the UEFA referees.

Even the two teams’ players who were fiercely fighting for the ball just now on the pitch, also put aside the competition at this moment and surrounded the referee to watch the lively scene with amused smiles on their faces.

Kompany even took the opportunity to catch up with Piqué.

“Hey, man, how’s it going?”

“Hey, it’s okay. How else can I be?”

The referee’s injury added some comedic elements to the hostile game and eased the atmosphere a little.

Next, supported by the staff, the injured referee left the field and the fourth official got ready to go into battle. As the two men did the handover of the job, the referee specifically warned him repeatedly, “Be careful of the turf around the center circle...”

A fan in the stands shouted at the fourth official, “Hey mate! Are you sure you have done enough warmup? Be careful not to twist your leg—!”

“Ahhahahaha—” His shout triggered a burst of gleeful laughter.

After the original referee came off the field, he described how terrible the turf was on the City Ground stadium pitch when asked by the people around him. He spread his hands and shook his head as he gave a helpless shrug.

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When the game resumed, the ease shown by the players on both sides just now disappeared immediately. Kompany and Piqué did not have the warmth of chatting together with a smile. Everyone returned to the state of mutual hostility.

After all, it was the final game that would determine which team would advance to the quarterfinal and which team would be eliminated. They could not let their guard down.

Messi suffered a hard time with Wood, but he did not give up. He did not even get around Wood to seek another breakthrough point. It looked like he wanted to have a showdown with Wood today.

This time he managed to bypass Wood but still could not break into the penalty area easily. He could only shoot from outside.

Akinfeev threw the ball out of the end line which gave Barcelona a corner kick. Could this be considered a victory for Messi?

Piqué rushed up to get ready to fight for a header and Kompany was ordered to keep an eye on him. As the two men leaned forward, Kompany smiled next to him, "Don't even think about scoring, mate!"

"You're so full of crap..." Piqué gave Kompany a sideways glance and said, "Don't pull my jersey!"

"I did not pull!" Kompany raised both hands.

Crowded in front of the goal, Piqué kept changing positions. He was dodging Kompany.

Xavi ran to serve the corner kick. He was waiting for the situation in the penalty area to be a little more chaotic...

Piqué was still competing with Kompany. Although his center back partner was frequently Pepe at Nottingham Forest, he also often partnered with Kompany because Tony Twain always did the rotation. Having trained and competed together for so many years, he knew Kompany well and how he was used to defending corner kicks. Likewise, Kompany knew him well too. He was familiar with his habits of competing for headers and standing positions. Piqué was aware that it was not good for him to continue to be entangled. He gave a signal with his eyes to Puyol next to him. Puyol understood tacitly and suddenly inserted himself into the fight to separate the two men. Piqué, on the other hand, took the opportunity to get out and moved outside the line.

Meanwhile, Xavi kicked the football toward the front of the goal!

Kompany knew it was Barcelona's tactic, but he could do nothing about it. He tried his best to get rid of Puyol's defense but was a step too late in the end.

The football drew an arc and slightly turned outwards. Piqué who freed himself of Kompany's close marking, dashed inward and gave a powerful header!

With the distance too close, Akinfeev could not react in time. He just raised his hands and the football flew into the goal past his side!

“GOOOAL—” The Catalan commentator yelled for a minute before stopping. Whenever people thought he had exhausted himself and stopped, he would immediately raise his voice and keep yelling.

“A powerful header from Piqué! He blew his former team’s goal wide open!”

Piqué did not celebrate after the goal. His teammates came up to hug him in a rush, but he did not show any expression. He was like a block of wood and let them hug and clap him on the back.

He scored the goal because he was now a Barcelona player and naturally wanted to play for his owner. But he rose to fame at Nottingham Forest and he loved everything there, even the fans who booed him in the stands. There was only sporadic booing in the stands. Most of the Forest players were still unable to harbor any ill feelings toward Piqué. The way he was treated in his return to the City Ground stadium was completely different to how Bendtner was treated.

But if Nottingham Forest was knocked out by Barcelona due to his goal, how would the two parties feel at that time?

“Barcelona is currently in the lead with the overall score! And more importantly, they also have an away goal! How will Nottingham Forest fight back? Tony Twain is not in the technical area. He’s always best at meeting contingencies as the circumstances dictate ..”

Chapter 816: Who the Hell Is This Kid?

“Now Barcelona is leading by the overall score! And more importantly, they also have an away goal! How will Nottingham Forest fight back? Tony Twain is not in the technical area. He’s always best at adapting to the changing circumstances...”

The commentator’s concern was also the Nottingham Forest fans’ worry. John, Bill and the others next to Twain turned to look at him as if they wanted him to make a decision.

They did not expect Twain to look at each pair of expectant eyes and laughed, “Why are you looking at me for? I’m not on the sidelines.”

“You can use our mouths, Tony.” John said, pointing to his mouth.

Twain shook his head and said, “Before the game we took into account all the things that could have happened, including, of course, the concede of the goal, even though I thought the probability of it was small ... It seems that Piqué has a high fighting spirit...”

“So, did you come up with any countermeasure?” The impatient Bill asked.

“No.” Twain continued to shake his head.

“Tony.....”

“Haha!” Twain laughed, “In fact, Barcelona had a bit of luck with this goal. They didn’t obtain control of the game. Apart from this corner kick, they didn’t really have chances to threaten our goal. So, with

regards to any adjustments we have to make, we just have to keep our offensive pace. Barcelona's defensive weakness will not improve much as a result of this goal. So, I'm not worried..."

"But we need to score two more goals now if we want to advance directly, Tony..."

"Is scoring two goals difficult?" Twain asked in return.

He stumped everyone with the question. Two goals were really hard, but why was Tony Twain so confident?

Twain no longer explained. He wanted to watch the game now.

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In fact, Barcelona was in high spirits after the goal and besieged Nottingham Forest's goal for a while. However, they did not get a decent chance in the face of the constrained conditions in the pitch and Nottingham Forest's defense. The goal was purely down to luck, just like what Twain said.

Soon Nottingham Forest drove Barcelona back. Currently for them, with twenty-five minutes to go, they needed to score a goal to make sure they were not eliminated within ninety minutes. To directly advance to the next round, they needed to score at least two goals.

It might be an impossible task for an average team up against Barcelona. But for Nottingham Forest, nothing was impossible.

They had all the right conditions. They had no excuse to lose the game!

After watching for a while, Twain said to the people next to him in the stands, "Let them boldly press forward, Barcelona's force is spent."

Accordingly, the north grandstand erupted in a burst of chanting voices, "Forest, Forest charge forward! Barcelona is finished! Forest, Forest, press forward! Barcelona is done for!"

They chanted over and over again. The Nottingham Forest players knew the chanting came from the north grandstand and were aware of whom it came from...

When the two full backs, Joe Mattock and Nkoulou boldly pressed ahead, the chanting finally disappeared.

Twain high-fived the people around him and thanked them for their help. "Well done, guys!"

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Nottingham Forest's oppressive attack kept Barcelona so busy that they had no time to attack. Perhaps they thought it was better to cling fast to defense until the end of the game under such circumstances. That way, they could eliminate Nottingham Forest by a total score of 3:2 to advance to the semifinals.

Soon Nottingham Forest was awarded a free kick in the danger zone. The Barcelona players were nervous as they knew that a set piece was key in the game. Consequently, the human wall lined up to be deliberately close to the football. When the referee did not pay attention to them, they slowly took small steps to inch forward.

Twain frowned in the stands and said, “They should simply place the human wall in front of the football!”

This time without waiting for his instructions, the fans in the north grandstand began to chant in unison, “The human wall is too close! The human wall is too close!”

Whether the referee could understand or not, it was to make some different sounds. The shouts were accompanied by a huge number of boos.

The Nottingham Forest players also noticed Barcelona’s petty maneuver. They got hold of the referee and signaled to him to take notice of Barcelona’s human wall position—they had moved forward about a meter from where they were originally...

The referee turned back to motion for Barcelona’s human wall to move backwards. The Barcelona players dragged their feet and were unwilling to move. They even indicated that they were in the right position.

The referee knew that it was not persuasive enough to use words. He must prove that Barcelona’s human wall was not far enough, so he started to walk from the penalty spot to the human wall. One step equaled to one yard. The standard free kick distance should be ten yards (9.15 meters) from the human wall, which was about ten steps.

As he began to walk, Twain and the rest of the fans in the north grandstand joined in to count the numbers for the Barcelona players who did not know numbers:

“One! Two! Three! Four!”

As the counting progressed, more and more fans joined in the camp. For a moment, loud counting voices rang out over the City Ground stadium.

“... Five! Six! Seven!”

The Barcelona players looked a little worried. Even if they did not comprehend English, they should still know what the most basic “One Two Three” meant.

Before the referee could walk up to them, one by one began to retreat.

The referee was delightful too. Even when Barcelona’s human wall moved back, he did not stop there, but continued walking. So, the Nottingham Forest fans in the stands also followed suit and were determined to embarrass Barcelona.

“Eight! Nine! Ten ——!!”

After counting to “Ten”, a huge cheer erupted in the stands. The Forest fans celebrated the victory against Barcelona for this round. Even the commentator could not help but laugh at the scene.

In the end, the referee stood in a position that coincided with Barcelona’s human wall position. Then he walked back to signal to the Forest team to get ready for the free kick.

Bentley’s free kick bypassed the human wall and went straight into the top corner of the goal, which was quite threatening! Unfortunately, Valdés pounced and turned it into a corner ball.

Off the field, Kerslake waved to signal both Woodgate and Kompany to go up. As a full back with a height of 1.88 meters, Nkoulou also squeezed to the front of the goal to prepare to fight for a header. Joe Mattock was the shortest in the rear defensive line, so he retreated to near the center circle to defend.

After Nottingham Forest's corner kick was sent out, Nkoulou received the ball. But his header deviated slightly under interference. The football brushed against the goalpost and flew out, making all the Barcelona people gasped.

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"Barcelona has fully retreated to defend, leaving Nottingham Forest to pass the ball back and forth in front of our penalty area. It is a dangerous thing ... I don't think I can understand why Guardiola did this!" The Catalan commentator was dissatisfied with the situation. Barcelona played so pathetically which greatly embarrassed the Catalans.

But he was a typical armchair expert. If he were to play, he would realize Guardiola's frustration in doing so.

The Barcelona players could not execute an effective offensive on such a pitch. If they were to rely on the star players' personal skills, it would be easy to get caught up in the quagmire of the Forest team's collective defense. If they could hold on to the one goal advantage, why not?

As the game entered the seventieth minute, Guardiola looked at his wristwatch. It was only twenty minutes away from the victory.

Nottingham Forest attacked again, with the Forest fans in the stands chanting, "We need to score a goal! We need to score! We are dissatisfied, quickly score a goal to satisfy us!!"

When Bentley took the ball on the sidelines, he was about a dozen meters from the penalty area and looked unthreatening. So, Lahm did not immediately rushed up, because he wanted guard against Agbonlahor from inserting diagonally behind him. Yaya Touré and the others were also paying attention to Tiago and George Wood. In short, no one thought Bentley, who was far away from the penalty area, was a threat. If he were to cross from the byline, he would face Lahm's defense. If he passed the ball, Yaya Touré was standing guard in the middle.

Bentley, on the other hand, chose a way that no one thought of to create a threat—he swung his leg on the spot and directly crossed the ball near the midfield into the penalty area!

Knowing that the player furthest in the front at this time was Aaron Mitchell, who was still outside the penalty area, what was the point of his pass?

The football was not passed to the front of the goal. Actually, the ball's distance from the goal was as wide as a penalty area...

Aaron Mitchell sprinted forward during Bentley's pass and Piqué closely followed him. This time, due to Bentley's sudden pass, Puyol did not keep up in time. With only Piqué around him, Mitchell was confident of winning the header against his rival.

But what would happen if he won the header? He did not have a teammate around him who could receive it... Piqué began to focus on defending the second point of fall. He observed for a while. Agbonlahor, nearest to Mitchell, was on the right. Was he going to ferry the ball over?

After competing for most of the match, Piqué believed the tall man did have that ability as his header was really strong.

Unfortunately, he was wrong.

When Mitchell turned his head back to confirm the direction of the football, he took a glance at the situation around and found that there was no Barcelona defender in front of him, apart from the goalkeeper, Valdés. Perhaps it was a good time to shoot?

Is it too far? I don't know where I am now! I only saw a wide-open goal, and a goalkeeper standing slightly forward...

Mitchell, who had made up his mind to shoot, leaped high after his sprint. He opened his arms wide like he was a glider and blocked Piqué behind him so that no one could interfere with him...

"Mitchell's header... Is this a shot to the goal?"

The commentator could not believe it. Mitchell's current position was still outside the penalty area. It was precisely at the top of the penalty arc.

Mitchell jumped really high, and even had time to adjust his body posture in the air to position himself to directly face the incoming football. Then he gave the football a powerful flick of his head. The football drew an arc in the air that could only be achieved with a kick to bypass Valdés standing slightly in front and lobbed to the far corner of the goal

Piqué, who was behind Mitchell, could not believe his eyes—Mitchell actually chose a direct header to the goal outside the penalty area!

What made it even more unbelievable for him was that... the ball actually went in!

Valdés stood a little outside during Bentley's pass. He had wanted to intercept the pass but did not expect Bentley's pass to have a wide arc. He returned after he moved into the penalty area. He knew the ball was directed at Mitchell, but he did not expect Mitchell to dare attempt a header shot to score the goal from so far away...

Unable to respond in time, he hastily jumped. But how could he stop the ball?

"What a beautiful goal! Incredible! A long-range header shot from outside the penalty area! From Aaron Mitchell—This is his first goal of the season! It is also the first official goal he scored for Nottingham Forest!"

This time it was the English live commentator's turn to be crazy. He was upset just now when the Catalan commentator extended his voice next to him and shouted "GOOOOAL!" This time, he had a chance to take revenge. His mouth was like a Gatling machine gun, popping out with all sorts of flattering words.

“Valdés was completely stunned by a goal like this! Piqué, Barcelona’s best-performing player, was also at a loss in the face of such a beautiful goal! I bet he did not even think Mitchell would choose to shoot directly! What a genius idea! Mitchell had this extraordinary confidence in his header, and he did it! Congratulations! The twenty-year-old player will pull Nottingham Forest back from the edge of a cliff! It was definitely not a momentary lapse for Tony Twain to let him make his debut!”

Mitchell still stared blankly when he saw the football flew into the goal. He was uncertain as to whether he had really scored...

When he heard the deafening cheers ringing in his ears, he then realized he was not dreaming—this time he was not fantasizing in his bedroom. Even if he shouted as loud as he wanted, his father would not break the bedroom door and rush in to admonish him.

“GOOOAL! GOOOOAL!! GOOOOOOAL—!!” He had rehearsed this action many times. He roared with his arms wide open and rushed toward the camera near the corner flag.

“Two point two meters tall, excellent headers, marvelous bounce! Where did Tony Twain find this giant? It was said that his breakout force is also very powerful... Formidable! We’re seeing another master header of the ball! Look at his goal, who would have thought he had played as a goalkeeper and center back eight years ago?”

Aaron Mitchell had been so obscure that most Forest fans could not call his name at once. They could only chant during the cheering, “Number 9! Number 9! Our Number 9 master header of the ball!”

Mitchell’s father was so dizzyingly happy in the stands that he kept shouting, “That’s my son! That’s my son! I’m his father! I’m his father! Hey! Son, I’m here!”

“You have a good son!” The fans next to him came up to him to hug and congratulate him. “Also, what’s his name?”

“Aaron! Aaron Mitchell! Hey, guys, remember this name. I promise you’ll often shout it in the future.”

“I hope so, old chap!”

Soon, the shouts in the stands turned from “Number 9! Number 9! Our Number 9 master header of the ball!” into “Aaron! Aaron! Our master header of the ball, Aaron!”

Then the fans present made up a song for the goalscorer, and of course they started singing from the north grandstand.

“Aaron! Aaron Mitchell! If you don’t know the name yet, you’re outdated! Outdated!”

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When he saw Mitchell used his header to “shove” the football into the goal that Valdés guarded, Tony Twain who put him on the starting lineup, also rose from his seat and cheered with the fans around him with his arms high up. To see the success of a player whom he had personally dug up, that sense of accomplishment was indescribable.

Kerslake, who celebrated in the technical area, got hold of Dunn and shook his head as he admitted his failure, "Tony does have a keen eye for players. Luckily I did not bet with him at that time... Aaron did a wonderful job!"

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Unlike the jubilant Nottingham Forest technical area, on the Barcelona side, Guardiola, who had just picked up a water bottle for a sip of water, threw the bottle out before he could put it to his parted lips.

"Who the hell is this kid?!" He could not help but burst out with a curse word.

He never thought Nottingham Forest could score when Bentley passed the ball...

They could actually head the ball in from so far away. They were too lucky!

The manager issued the angry question, and the people around him could not help because they similarly did not know who the kid was. . .

There was no information about the player in the information about Nottingham Forest. It was like he had descended from the sky, bringing with him a gust of wind to blow away Barcelona's fire of hope.

Chapter 817: A Giant's Waltz

"Aaron Mitchell! A beautiful header outside the penalty area! Nottingham Forest equalized the score between the two sides!"

Huge cheers broke out at the City Ground stadium.

The Barcelona manager, Guardiola was furious on the sidelines and threw out the water bottle in his hand when the football was "shoved in" by Mitchell's header.

"Who is this kid?!"

Both assistant managers, Vilanova and Eusebio, cleverly chose to be silent at this moment.

Guardiola's anger was not directed at his own team. The fact that they could score a goal in such conditions, was already good. What angered him was that he knew nothing about the Nottingham Forest striker. He obviously could not make targeted arrangements without any information, such as he did not know before the number 9 player was outstanding at headers. Otherwise he would not let the team give Bentley the opportunity to play from the side ...

After a while, Vilanova said, "Maybe... it isn't as bad as we think it will be? At least the total scores of both sides are currently tied and the away goals are also at a tie. We still have a chance to play during overtime..."

Guardiola frowned and shook his head. He spoke in a bad mood, "It's useless to play overtime with the current state of the team... The players will physically exhaust themselves very fast on such grounds."

He was right. Even if Nottingham Forest accidentally allowed Barcelona to drag the game into overtime, they were not worried at all. Tony Twain had taken that possibility into account before the game. The Forest players were fit enough to ensure that they could complete in a 120-minute intense game, while Barcelona was not. Playing on such a terrible pitch required more stamina than usual. Playing an additional thirty minutes was more likely to increase the chances of their players getting injured.

No wonder Twain was not anxious after the goal conceded.

Everyone was lamenting in the Barcelona technical area and the players on the pitch were no better. After Barcelona's goal, they were in high spirits and wanted to build on the momentum. If they were to score a second goal, it would be almost impossible for Nottingham Forest to reverse the situation. Not only did they not score the second goal, they had unexpectedly let Nottingham Forest score another goal ...

When they saw the football flew into the goal, their hearts instantly felt cold almost at the same time.

What scared them was not the score, but the game had gone on for seventy minutes, and they were still unable to adapt to the feeling of playing on this ground, while Nottingham Forest took to it with ease. What would be the outcome of the game if it were to continue like this? They did not dare think about it.

After the game resumed, Barcelona stepped up their defense against Mitchell. But this time Mitchell played even better. The Barcelona players could block him from shooting, but not necessarily prevent him from passing the ball. As a beacon for the front field, he could not only score goals himself, but also create all kinds of opportunities for his teammates. His height was his biggest weapon. At the same time, the skills he displayed in stopping and protecting the ball had caused the Barcelona defenders to be at a loss as to how to deal with him—once they were squeezed behind him, they could not tackle the ball without fouling.

Agbonlahor also got opportunities for two threatening shots due to Mitchell's excellent performance.

To make matters worse, four minutes after the Forest team scored, Messi withdrew from the game after he sprained his knee in a scuffle. The departure of the team's soul due to an injury hit Barcelona really hard. Many Barcelona players on the pitch had a lost look in their eyes... They really did not know how to play such a game.

The Catalan commentator began to scold Tony Twain and his Nottingham Forest team incessantly when Messi was injured. He accused them of no sportsmanship and destroying the players' bodies in order to win.

The English commentator, on the other hand, gave a long breath and said, "A player was finally injured.... It would be incredible if no one was hurt playing on such a bumpy field."

When Messi was injured, Guardiola finally could not stand it any longer. He rushed to the sidelines to look for the fourth official—the previous referee who was brought off the field due to the injury—and pointed to the field as he said to the fourth official, "Is this a venue where the Champions League can be played? It's bumpy and causes my player to get hurt! Is this also allowed?"

Unfortunately, Twain was not on the sidelines. Otherwise, he would step forward to rebut without hesitation, “The UEFA agreed. Why are you kicking up a fuss?”

The fourth official shrugged helplessly, “There’s nothing we can do about it, Mr. Guardiola.”

“I’m going file a complaint to the UEFA after the game! How can something like this that violates the sports ethics be allowed to happen?”

“Hey, look!” John suddenly pointed to the technical area below, where Guardiola spoke to agitatedly to the fourth official. In fact, everyone could tell what he was saying by looking at his gesticulations—he was pointing at the pitch.

“Ha! Is he sore about losing?” Twain laughed in his seat. “Want to go crying to the UEFA mommy?”

“I guess he must be protesting to cancel the game or lodging a complaint with the UEFA!”

“What a coward!”

An immediate deafening hissing of Guardiola erupted in the north grandstand. Even Twain booed in the crowd. He could not go down to argue with Guardiola. He obviously could only boo here.

The fourth official reassured Guardiola, “We will record all these details in the game report. But for now, please go back first, Mr. Guardiola.”

Guardiola walked back with a black face. The boos grew increasingly louder, which he pretended not to hear.

Messi was eventually carried off on a stretcher with a painful expression. The team doctor’s expression also did not look good. Guardiola could not help but swear as he looked upon the scene. He did not find Twain when he looked up toward the stands with the loudest boos. The guy was hiding among a crowd of fans, dressed up as they were and could not be told apart.

The UEFA sent him to the stands as punishment. From the looks of it, it might even have been a favor to him...

Guardiola gritted his teeth and thought so.

Messi could not continue to play so Guardiola brought on the young midfielder, Busquets to strengthen and increase control of the midfield. Busquets, who stood at 1.89 meters tall, had outstanding physical qualities. His presence could change Barcelona’s weakness in competing for the headers. At the same time, his playing style was to the point which was very suitable for handling the ball on such a ground.

Before he went on, Guardiola patted Busquets on the shoulder and said, “Be careful, don’t get hurt...”

It was indeed a helpless act.

As the game went on, the Barcelona players played with fury. It was quite normal... Who would not be angry at watching his teammates get hurt due to this terrible field? Moreover, they might follow in Messi’s footsteps and could not calm down at the thought of it.

Even Piqué also set aside his relationship with Nottingham Forest and did not hesitate to make Mitchell fall during defense. His approach “won” the boos of Nottingham Forest. He did not find it awkward.

Nottingham Forest did not care what the Barcelona players thought. As always, they attacked Valdés' goal and were bent on settling the fight within the ninety minutes.

But Busquets did prove to be effective on the field. His height and physical condition helped Barcelona to complete the midfield defense well. He and Piqué teamed up to defend against Mitchell in the grab for the headers, thus freeing Puyol while Agbonlahor had little chance.

So, Nottingham Forest began to try to make more use of the long shots to seek scoring opportunities. Such an attack tended to end hastily after it hit the front field.

Twain was very unhappy about it and waited a little longer to see if the team show no signs of change. The north grandstand rang out with shouts from the fans, "Be patient! We have the upper hand! Don't shoot blindly!"

"Okay. Guys. I'm sure they heard it." After shouting a few times, Twain told them to stop. He did not want to do it too explicitly.

As the game progressed, the Barcelona players began to gradually recall their defensive lines till everyone retreated to their half of the field. They did not have much energy left to attack now, so they naturally concentrated on the defense. They wanted to be able to hold on to the current score so that they could have at least thirty minutes more to fight again.

Dunn stepped out from the technical area when he felt it was time for the team to attack. So, he signaled to indicate for the team to fully press.

"The Nottingham Forest offensive is pretty fierce! Barcelona has fully retreated to defend against it...Let's look at how many Barcelona players are in the penalty area when Nottingham Forest attacks. Eleven! They're all back!" The English commentator was quite proud of it. "Who says that Nottingham Forest only plays conservative and utilitarian football? Such scenes are not common in offensive football, are they?"

Such a situation might be humiliating to the Barcelona fans, because they had always been the ones to compress their opponents like this in previous games. They would never display such pathetic side to them.

Mitchell felt greater pressure than before since 1.89-meter-tall kid came on. Sometimes he might win while they competed for the header, but the header that was sent out might not go accordingly to plan. It seemed that Barcelona had made special arrangements to target his height and headers...

If it continued, Mitchell did not know he could still contribute to the team with his headers. He had played almost the entire game. During the long time, he had been playing directly up against two of Barcelona's best defenders and had expended more energy than he did in the last league game. His bounce and sprints were not as powerful as before. Sometimes he could not guarantee that he could lock in his position.

When Bentley passed the ball over, he was pushed behind by Piqué at the last minute even though he had locked in his position earlier. When he struggled to squeeze back, he felt as if he was pushing against the head of a train and could not jump. He watched helplessly as Piqué headed the ball in front of him.

Barcelona fought back. His teammates were quick to defend. His spirit was willing, but his body was weak. He put his hands on his knees while he took big gulps of air. In the past, he always appeared as a substitute. Even though he was in the starting lineup in the last league game, he was also replaced midway and did not even complete the game. Now that he had persisted in such a fierce match for more than seventy minutes, he did not know if his body could sustain until then.

George Wood intercepted Silva's pass to Bojan in the backfield. He did not hesitate to send out a direct long pass.

Mitchell, who had been gasping for air in front of him just now, wanted to jump and catch the ball, but was ruled in an offside position—he was focused on taking a break but forgot to look around at the situation.

"Is his size a weak spot for his stamina?" Twain muttered to himself in the stands.

Then Mitchell got another chance, but this time he lost it quickly under the joint defense of Piqué and Busquets after he controlled the ball under his feet. He was even crushed to the ground by the two players who were not as tall as himself, looking really vulnerable.

The Barcelona fans in the stands began to laugh at the stupid great hulk of a man.

"Aaron Mitchell has fully exposed his physical weakness. Being overly thin, he could not achieve anything under Barcelona's tight defense. His performance is worrying. Perhaps the Forest team should consider replacing him?" Even the commentator began to question Mitchell. "He scored a goal and he did well enough for a young player who made his debut in such an important game. The Forest team's coaching staff can't ask him to do more because that's impossible."

Kerslake also noted that Mitchell's performance during this period was not as active as it had been before. Apparently it had to do with Barcelona's targeted defensive arrangements. Guardiola found that the situation had turned better after he replaced Messi with Busquets. So, he simply brought on Keita to replace Xavi and changed for the team to play the 4-4-2 formation with three defensive midfielders and one attacking midfielder. The Forest team's ball was now difficult to deliver to Mitchell's feet as Barcelona's midfield defense had hardened. Another reason was that Mitchell's fitness had declined by a lot...

He looked for Dunn to discuss, "Aaron looks like he can't play anymore. The opponent's defense against him is too tight. He has overly exerted himself physically... plus it is his first time playing in such an important game. I think he did a great job, going head to head with Puyol and Piqué for eighty minutes... Should we think about replacing him? The most important thing..." He hesitated for a bit before he said what he was worried about, "Tony insisted on putting him in the starting lineup. He performed wonderfully. But I'm afraid that the confidence he's just built up with much difficulty, will be destroyed if he continues playing. You must know that Piqué and Puyol are not your average defenders. We may have been too hard on him to let him fight these two strong opponents..."

Dunn frowned. He was also considering whether to have Mitchell come off and bring on Ibišević who had better stamina and more superb shooting, to attack. But his mind would inevitably diverge in the other direction— what kind of choice would he make if he were Tony?

He realized that if he were Tony, he would probably insist on keeping Mitchell on the field.

In that case, would he also agree to do the same?

“David... I don’t think Tony would agree to bring him off...” Dunn was hesitant.

“But we’re the ones in charge of the team now, Dunn!” Kerslake was unhappy that Dunn used Tony Twain as an excuse.

Dunn also seemed to feel that he was too feeble. He could not always take Tony as his only guide. He thought about it and then made his choice, “Let us wait a little more. Give him five minutes...”

Kerslake nodded and stopped saying anything.

The game entered the 79th minute. Soon, there was only ten minutes left.

Once again, Nottingham Forest organized an attack.

Keita, Yaya Touré and Busquets formed a wall in front of Barcelona’s penalty area, blocking the Forest team’s attack.

The Forest team’s midfielders very much wanted to send the ball to Mitchell’s side, but under the opponent’s tight defense, even if the ball was passed over, Mitchell could not hold it. What was the use of passing the ball over when he would soon lose it?

Tiago took the ball and was a little confused. He wanted to send the ball out. but did not know who to pass it on to. Just as he was looking in all directions and hesitating, his ball was jabbed away by Keita.

The Barcelona fans in the stands suddenly burst into huge cheers, but their cheers had just come on before coming into an abrupt end because Keita’s ball was also intercepted by George Wood.

When Keita had ball successfully intercepted, Barcelona was just about to fight back, and their formation pressed slightly outwards.

Mitchell found himself in an offside position again, so he also followed suit and retreated. This time he could no longer let a teammate’s pass turn into an offside position. But he retreated a little more this once. Instead of acting as the beacon in front, he simply retreated to Agbonlahor’s position in one go—somewhat like a shadow striker. Did he over-compensate?

After George Wood intercepted the ball, he saw that Barcelona’s rear defensive line hurriedly pull back and widen the distance just enough from Mitchell who ran back. No one was marking him up until now!

Wood did not hesitate to pass the football over.

Piqué saw that the football was passed to Mitchell, and he suddenly pounced over. He had already seen through the tall guy. He knew the other man was close to collapse. As long as he put in a little more force in the back, his ball would be dropped.

Mitchell’s stamina was really exhausted. He only had two things in mind right now—to receive the ball and not lose it. As for where and who the opponent was plus what they were going to do to him, he did not think about it at all. His oxygen-deprived brain simplified his thinking and anything superfluous was stripped away.

Piqué rushed up and decided to speed up to bypass Mitchell from the side. He wanted to suddenly circle to the front to defend, intercept Mitchell's ball and then seize the opportunity to counterattack Nottingham Forest!

It was a good idea, but...

After picking up the ball with his back to the goal, Mitchell used his heel to arrange the ball while he jumped up, stepped on the ball, turned around and pulled the ball at the same time. With Piqué as the axis, he turned one hundred and eighty degrees and evaded Piqué's defense together with the ball! Piqué went around to the front had instead brought about Mitchell's beautiful bypass!

"Wow! What a fantastic bypass!" The commentator could not help but call out, "A Marseille Turn!"

It was indeed visually stunning for a player with a height of 2.02 meters to produce a move as elegant as the waltz...

At this moment, Mitchell tossed the boss's warning that he was "not allowed to play with fancy footwork" to the clouds. When the football came, more than two years of hard training allowed his body to automatically make the most suitable choice—he did not use a header nor his body. He just used his own footwork to deal with it.

After being bypassed by Mitchell, Piqué was a little dazed, and even forgot to return to defend as he stood in a daze at the same spot—he did not expect that when he pounced on him, the other man took advantage of it to bypass him. And he still did not know how the other side did it.

Thanks to the help of Busquets, Puyol had put his focus on Agbonlahor and the other. He did not expect Piqué who played so well in the whole game would be bypassed so easily off and be caught off guard.

Fortunately, Busquets was so focused that he rushed up to defend when Mitchell bypassed Piqué.

On the outside of the penalty area, Mitchell suddenly made a quick stop. After he pulled away from Busquets, he swung his leg to shoot!

Busquets reached his leg out to stop but did not think this was Mitchell's feint!

He simply dodged and got away from Busquets to enter the penalty area!

"He bypassed two people in one breath! My God. What are we seeing? The 2.02-meter-tall player is willfully showing off his footwork in front of Barcelona's defensive line! Is he possessed by Ibrahimović's spirit? The world is going crazy!"

Busquets, who had been flashed past by Mitchell, could hardly believe his eyes. He slipped to the ground and turned to look back at Mitchell in amazement. But by this time, he could only see his back.

At the very moment, Mitchell and the Mitchell that Guardiola understood were completely different players. He did not make use of his height and header advantage but displayed his stunning footwork! Guardiola, who saw the scene off the pitch, suddenly felt like a failure as he sat in his chair—there was so much more about the kid that he did not know! Who exactly was this kid?!

Mitchell himself seemed to have entered a mysterious realm where he forgot himself. Perhaps he was too tired, and his physical instincts in turn dominated his consciousness. Whenever an opponent was

directly in front of him, his legs would automatically make the movements, leading him all the way forward. He did not know the faces of the opponents that appeared in front of him. He only knew he must go around them!

“Son! Bypass him! Bypass him!” Mitchell’s father roared with excitement as he watched the scene in the stands.

Busquets’ blocking did not succeed in tackling the ball, but he at least bought some time for Puyol and the other defenders.

Seeing how Mitchell bypassed two players alone and enter the penalty area, Puyol and the rest of Barcelona’s defenders came up to encircle. They dropped their original defensive target and came charging aggressively at Mitchell as the target.

Mitchell did not even lift his head. After he entered the penalty area, he lifted his leg to shoot again!

Puyol took a big step forward to block in front of him, intending to stop the other player’s shot with his body.

It was actually a feint, with Mitchell hooking the football back with his left foot. The experienced Puyol had already anticipated his move, so he did not make a move. He just locked down on his position.

However, he did not realize that Mitchell was not done hooking the ball. He used his right foot to hook the football back to its original position again. With two consecutive hooks of the ball, he finally shook open a crack. Mitchell continued to drill inside! Puyol, on the other hand, was stuck in place because changes in the center of gravity happened too quickly.

“Three players!” The commentator roared excitedly.

Breaking through Puyol’s defense, Mitchell only had Valdés in front of him. He once again lifted his leg to seize the opportunity to shoot.

Whether he was doing it for real or still faking it this time, Valdés had to make a defensive move. He fell to the ground as he pounced toward the direction that Mitchell might have shot. With Alves making a slide tackle at the back against Mitchell, even if he fouled, he could not allow the kid to score so easily after tricking three Barcelona defenders!

Don’t even think to score such a beautiful goal in front of Barcelona!

It was almost as if Mitchell had eyes in the back of his head. Without looking back, he pulled the ball to the right and jumped with the ball. He tricked Valdés and dodged Alves’ slide tackle.

Although he evaded Alves, he also missed the first opportunity to shoot.

Alves tried to get up and grab the ball. But Mitchell tilted his body and his 2.02-meter-tall body pressed against him. This time he lifted his leg once again to shoot for the fourth time!

But it was not a feint...

“Mitchell! Mitchell! Mitchell!” From the moment he burst into the penalty area, the commentator kept shouting Mitchell’s name, each time louder than the last. Because if he did not shout louder, he could

not hear the words he was shouting, even with a soundproofed headpiece on—the entire City Ground stadium was like an erupting volcano with the continuous thunderous cheers coming in one wave higher than the previous wave.

“Mitchell! Mitchell—goooooooooal!! A beautiful goal from the ground! A brilliant goal! A magnificent goal! A tall player who was more than two meters tall used his long legs to play with the Barcelona defenders as much as he liked! He single-handedly overturned Barcelona’s entire rear defensive line! It’s a miracle! Who would have thought that this tall player could have such a delicate footwork skill! Hey, Mr. Tony Twain, had he really been playing as a center back for the last seven years?” The English commentator was almost mad. On the other side, the Catalan commentator was completely silent.

“Even Messi couldn’t guarantee the control of the ball on such a bumpy pitch, but the 2.02-meter-tall kid did it! He levelled Barcelona’s penalty area like a giant! The football was meek like a sheep under his feet. It was like he was playing on a flat field! The City Ground stadium, which made Barcelona’s skillful players suffered greatly, was like the lawn in the back garden of his own home, where he drew a wonderful painting on it with his pair of long legs!”

“Listen to the cheers in the City Ground stadium——!”

“Aaron! Aaron! Aaron Mitchell!! If you don’t know the name of Nottingham Forest’s number 9 yet, you’re already outdated!”

It was the cries of the Nottingham Forest fans, which became the only voice in the City Ground stadium during this time period.

Tony Twain held his head in his hands among the crowd. He could hardly believe his eyes. He knew that Mitchell’s footwork skills were much better than his ability to shoot and dealing with physical confrontations. But he did not expect his footwork skills to be this good—to be able to keep the ball firmly under his feet on such a rough and bumpy terrain which made it difficult to control the ball and bypass four players as well as break away from the goalkeeper to finally send the ball into the empty goal.

Was this something which an average striker could do?

Was it just plain dumb luck? But good fortune only favored the people who were prepared.

Amid the unified cheers of the fans in the entire stadium, he seemed to see the ascendant of a new star player of tomorrow.

While his opponent, Guardiola sat paralyzed in his chair. He did not even have the strength to scold “who is this kid?”

If he really lost the game, he must admit he had no idea that Tony Twain would boldly deploy a new player in the game, and he knew nothing about the new player. It was the main reason for the failure of the game.

He thought the new player was of a great height and would not usually be good at his bounce and header. But Mitchell’s header from outside the penalty area gave him a slap in the face. Next he thought the player was outstanding in his height, jump and headers. That meant his footwork skills must be terrible. According to the general law, such analysis was immaculate and unassailable.

He was wrong again...

When the football went in, it was as if Mitchell woke up from a dream. He looked at the football quietly parked inside the goal and turned around to look at the Barcelona players lying on the ground in disorder. He still could not believe his eyes.

I scored the goal?

How did it get in?

It looks like... I've bypassed all of them?

Ah! I'm done for! The boss will definitely must scold me! He said I wasn't allowed to show off my footwork skills... How can I forget!

The somewhat panicky Mitchell was startled by the huge cheers coming from behind him. He looked back at the grandstand with countless arms waving, and everyone roaring his name.

"Aaron! Aaron! Aaron Mitchell! Aaron Mitchell!! If you don't know his name, you're outdated!"

He could not find the boss among the crowd because all he could see was arms and excited faces. He did not know if the boss was in the cheering crowd.

He turned his eyes from the stands and when he turned his gaze to the field again, he saw his teammates rushing toward him excitedly with arms wide open.

Then he was pounced onto the ground. His ears were filled with hoarse shouts.

They were shouting, "Aaron, you bastard! You stole all of our limelight!!"

Chapter 818: A Last-Ditch Struggle

"Aaron Mitchell! He has scored the most brilliant goal of the match! No, the most brilliant goal of the Champions League! He went past 4 players on his way to score the goal! At 2.02m tall, his techniques remind us of Ibrahimović, who is also over 1.9m tall. But Mitchell is even taller than him..."

Mitchell's team mates flung their bodies onto him after he scored the goal.

Mitchell's father looked at the player who had been weighed down by the other Forest players absent-mindedly. He was not like the other fans around him who were screaming and dancing in joy.

A fan next to him patted his shoulder and yelled excitedly, "You have a great son! You have a great son!"

Mitchell's father forced a laugh in response, but quickly averted his sight back towards Barcelona's goalpost.

Is that man on the pitch really that foolish son of his?

That son of his who would always go 'heh heh' when he laughs?

That son of his who has a weird voice?

That son of his who, as a child, was suspected to be suffering from 'gigantism' due to how he could not stop growing in height?

The only reason why he had sent his son to Nottingham Forest's football academy was because Mitchell enjoyed playing football. Never in his wildest dreams did he expect his son to score not just one but two goals in a top-level European match...

He was overjoyed for his son when he scored the first goal.

The second goal was also a brilliant goal, but he felt like his brain was unable to comprehend everything that had happened after that goal.

Number 9. Mitchell.

That's right, that's his last name.

He then took a look at the face that carried an exuberant smile. It was indeed his son.

This all feels like... A dream...

My son has just become Nottingham Forest's hero in the blink of an eye!

I am now the father of a hero!

Guardiola turned his head to look at his assistants seated next to him. He realized that they all had blank looks upon their faces.

It seemed like none of them have recovered from the shock induced by Mitchell's goal.

There was nothing that any of them could say against such a brilliant goal.

But, it was not like the match has ended, right?

He stood up from his seat and readjusted his emotions. He then called Carles Puyol over to him.

"There's still 10 more minutes!" He told Puyol as he pointed at his watch. "Nottingham Forest would be finished as long as we can score one more goal! One more goal! I don't need anything more than that! One goal is enough!"

Puyol nodded his head. He knew what he had to do.

"Tell the others to concentrate fully on offense. Don't think about defense right now. We have to score another goal against them!"

Puyol did as he was told. He called all his team mates over to him and relayed Guardiola's words to them.

"The match is not over yet! Now's not the time for our heads to drop! As long as we can score another goal, it would be game over for Nottingham Forest! The initiative is still on our hands!"

Barcelona had not given up on the match, but neither did Nottingham Forest lose themselves in their euphoria either.

When the players were celebrating the goal, Dunn and Kerslake reminded them from the side of the pitch, "Don't let your guard down. The match is not over yet! I need all of you to put aside your feelings of happiness right now and pay attention to the defense! We are going to change our tactic from here on out to defense and counterattack!"

After the match restarted, Barcelona launched a flurry of attacks towards Nottingham Forest's half of the pitch. They knew that if they do not bestir themselves right now, there would be no chance of them winning the match.

Nottingham Forest responded to Barcelona's attacks by making their defense compact and trying to find the opportunity to hit them on the break.

Both teams played as though they had tossed their midfield aside. Barcelona kept passing long balls towards the front of the pitch, and similarly, Nottingham Forest's defenders also kept passing the ball to their forward at the front. The ball kept flying about in the air.

Barcelona was making use of a playing style that they were not good at. However, long passes were right down Nottingham Forest's alley.

Mitchell was utterly exhausted after scoring his last goal. He could not even get off the pitch after the celebration of his goal due to a sprain on his leg. Hence, Dunn took him off for Ibišević.

As he hobbled to the side of the pitch under the assistance of the team's medical staff, the fans in the stadium all stood to their feet and applauded his performance.

"Aaron Mitchell. He has scored a brace in this match. If Nottingham Forest were to end up winning Barcelona, then he is surely the biggest contributor to their victory. His performance in this match can be regarded as perfect. The media might not have given him a score for his performance yet, but the fans at the stadium have all given him a 10 for his performance today! Look at all the fans who have rose to their feet! Well done to the 20 year-old Aaron Mitchell!"

Mitchell could not believe that the scenes he fantasized about that very night had actually turned into reality.

He lifted his head to look at the stands before raising his two hands slowly to thank the fans for their applause.

Tears welled up in his eyes. He felt like he was the happiest man alive in the whole wide world right now...

"Well done, Aaron." Dunn stood before him and looked at him with a smile on his face.

Mitchell took a step forward and gave Dunn a hug.

"Rest up. Everyone's waiting to give you a hug." Dunn patted him twice on the back lightly.

Mitchell noticed his team mates on the bench who were winking at him. A smile emerged on his weary face.

The scenes at Forest's bench might make one feel warm inside, but the scenes on the pitch would fire one up instead. Nottingham Forest and Barcelona were still having a heated battle with each other.

Barcelona's offense might look ferocious, but it did not rattle Nottingham Forest's defense in the slightest. They kept attacking Forest from all directions, but their attacks did not lead to any results. Instead, it was Forest who nearly scored another goal due to the void left behind in Barcelona's defense after their players moved forward to attack. If not for the fact that Forest was unlucky during their attacks, the score would definitely not remain 3:1.

Guardiola stood by the side of the pitch and watched the match nervously. He would become very enraged every time Forest went on the counterattack. There was nothing else that he could do besides feeling enraged.

Barcelona has to press forward and attack, and it is only natural that Forest would try to go on the counterattack. Forest were no fools. With all the Barcelona players moving forward to join in the offense, it was the perfect opportunity for them to go on the counterattack. How could they not make full use of it?

All he could pray for was that his team would score a goal quickly.

His team just needs one goal to pronounce Forest dead...

Unfortunately, Barcelona were not able to get their wish. Nottingham Forest did not give them the slightest chance to score a goal.

Five minutes had passed since the match restarted.

Barcelona was a team that took pride in its offensive prowess, but right now they were being kept outside of Nottingham Forest's penalty box, and were only able to attempt long shots at goal.

The Barcelona players started becoming more and more agitated as the end of the match drew near. The players from both teams started to have physical contact with one another more often as well. However, there was something different about the physical contact that the players shared. There seemed to be a note of anger in the players' actions every time they had physical contact with an opposing player.

Bojan Krkić was pushed to the ground by Wood when he tried to maintain possession of the ball before Forest's penalty box.

The Barcelona fans started booing to show their displeasure towards Wood's actions, and the Barcelona players all gave up playing in the match as well. They raised their arms into the air to indicate that Wood had committed the foul. Every single one of them waited for the referee to blow on his whistle, but the referee did not react at all!

Nottingham Forest did not care about what the Barcelona players were doing at the moment. Wood passed the ball over to Lennon, and Lennon initiated a counterattack by bringing the ball forward.

Their actions snapped the Barcelona's players back into the game. Yaya Touré charged towards Lennon and tackled him from behind as revenge!

Lennon fell to the ground and rolled about as he clasped onto his ankle. It looked like a serious injury.

This time, the referee blew his whistle. He deemed that Barcelona had committed a foul!

The Barcelona players had initially intended to rush over to the referee to question his decision over not penalizing Wood's actions as a foul earlier. However, they changed their target en route to the referee and dashed towards the spot where Yaya Touré had fouled Lennon instead.

That was because Yaya Touré and George Wood both had their hands on each other's necks over there.

"Ah! Look at what's happening on the pitch! George Wood and Yaya Touré have gotten into a confrontation!"

Sergio Busquets, who was 1.89m tall, ran up and shoved Wood on the chest. It was unclear if he did what he did to stop the fight or to vent his frustrations.

"Take off your hands, bastard!"

The Forest players were not willing to take things lying down after seeing their captain get humiliated. Kompany bumped his head against Busquet's, and the two looked like two angry bulls in a fight. Their eyes were bloodshot and there was hot air being emitted from their nostrils.

"Do you f*cking want to die? You bastard!" Kompany chastised Busquets.

"Shameless son of a b*tch!" Busquets did not reply in English but in Catalan instead.

In truth, the Barcelona players have been fuming over the terrible state of the pitch for a while now. Their actions have started becoming rough when Messi was taken off the pitch due to an injury earlier. The fact that their team was now a goal down only added to their frustrations.

They were looking for a way to vent their vexation all this time, and now they finally found one. Nottingham Forest has given them the chance to vent when Wood committed a 'suspected foul' on their player earlier. None of the Barcelona players were willing to let this chance slip away.

"Hey! Stop fighting!"

The Barcelona players might be shouting that, but they were secretly punching Wood behind his back.

"Are you guys going to get rough after seeing that you can't win? I'm not afraid of you!"

"Pull them apart at once!"

"What do you want to do?"

The players from both teams were at each other's throats. The scene was utterly chaotic.

The Forest fans at the stands started booing the Barcelona players. There were even coins, lighters and other objects being thrown towards the pitch.

The security officers at the stands were on high alert. They were afraid that the more 'extreme' fans would rush down from the stands to join in the fray on the pitch.

That would be terrible...

Dunn did not expect the situation to go out of hand. He was dumbstruck and did not know what to do.

Kerslake was the one who was shouting by the side of the pitch, "George! You are the captain! Calm down right now!"

No one on the pitch could hear what he was shouting about. All the players were lost in their anger, and the only thoughts in their heads were how to teach the opposing players a lesson.

Gerard Piqué from Barcelona and Jonathan Woodgate from Forest were the few players with a clear head. They threw themselves into the fight that was going on between their team mates and tried to pull as many players away from the brawl as possible.

Wood appeared to be livid. He did not utter a single word and just glowered at Yaya Touré. He looked to be trying to find an opportunity to grab hold of Touré.

If Yaya Touré were to be caught by Wood, he would definitely get punched in the face.

Piqué was well aware of the kind of temper that Wood has. He had seen him throw his temper numerous times during his time as a player at Forest. Wood would always be the first person to get in their opponent's face whenever his team mates got fouled.

Perhaps that is his way of protecting his team mates...

Between the two troublemakers, Piqué chose to run up to Wood first. He wrapped his hands around Wood's waist and forcefully dragged him away from Yaya Touré.

"George! George!" He shouted. "You need to calm down! You are the captain! You can't be the one getting into fights! Calm... down!" With concerted effort, he dragged Wood away from the fray.

Wood continued to struggle in his arms. He wanted to rush back towards Touré to teach him a lesson.

Meanwhile, Puyol was the player to drag Touré away. He had also wrapped his arms around Touré just like Piqué had done to Wood.

Both Puyol and Piqué believed that Wood and Touré would likely fight to the death if they were to loosen their grip.

Twain swore after he saw what was happening on the pitch. However, none of the angry fans seated around him understood what he said, because he had sworn in his Sichuan dialect.

"F*ck your mother!"

He was not reprimanding the Barcelona players. He was reprimanding his own players instead.

John and Bill's faces had gone red in fury. They kept yelling and scolding the Barcelona players at the top of their voices.

Twain wished he was at the technical area rather than the stands. If he were at the technical area, he would have rushed onto the pitch and stopped the fight between the players.

Nottingham Forest was most likely going to progress to the next round of the competition. A wise thing to do at a time like this was to rile the Barcelona players up and let their players get penalized with yellow cards for committing fouls.

Forest should not be the ones getting riled up as well!

What are Dunn and David doing?

Pepe is not able to play in the next match! How are we supposed to play in the semi-finals if any other player on our team picks up more yellow cards and gets suspended?

F*ck, are all of you bastards on drugs or something? Why are you all so damn agitated?

The referee kept blowing on his whistle to signal for everyone to calm down. The conflict abruptly started again just when things looked under control, but eventually the players were able to calm down and stop fighting. However, both Wood and Touré still had to be held back by another player, because the looks on their faces still suggested that they were not ready to walk away from the fight just yet...

Forest's medical staff had already run onto the pitch to treat Lennon during the confrontation between the players.

Once the situation was completely under control, the referee called Touré and Wood over to him. Both players carried looks of hostility on their faces when they stood next to each other, but they did not get into a fight before the referee.

The referee fished out a deck of cards from his pocket. Then, he flashed the red one at Yaya Touré to penalize him for his malicious tackle from behind.

Touré protested against the referee's decision, "Why have you not penalized their player for committing a foul on us?"

The referee paid no heed to him. He turned around and flashed the red card at Wood!

Wood knew he was going to get shown a red card. He had already walked to the side of the pitch before the referee flashed the red card at him.

The fans at the stands applauded him when he walked off the pitch. They saw him as a hero who stood up for his team mates.

He helped us take our anger out on those Barcelona players!

Kerslake chased after Wood when he saw him leave the pitch. He personally walked him back to the locker room because he was afraid that Wood would get into another fight with Touré on the way back.

On the way over to the locker room, Kerslake kept patting Wood on the head to chide him for being too rash earlier. The managers clearly saw things from a different perspective than the fans.

Dunn hung his head by the side of the pitch. He did not know what kind of expression he should make after all that has happened.

Guardiola, on the other hand, was very upset with the referee's decision. He felt that the decision was biased against his team, and that they were 'unfairly treated'.

He pulled on the fourth official and questioned him, "Why have there not been any penalties given to their team for the fouls they made on our players? Why are we the only ones who got penalized? And

we even got a red card for it! Why was only one player penalized for their team? What about Kompany?"

He soon found out why Yaya Touré had to be given a red card and why George Wood was so indignant.

Aaron Lennon was carried off the pitch on a stretcher. He was badly injured and would not be able to continue playing in the match. Gary Fleming, Forest's medical doctor, gestured to the managers to make a substitution as he walked off the pitch alongside Lennon.

"That was one nasty foul. The referee has made the right decision to show Touré a red card!" The British commentator was furious.

"This match has really been... Horrible." There was a twinge of helplessness in the Catalan commentator's voice. He knew the match was over for Barcelona. They were not going to qualify for the next round...

Wood and Touré were both penalized with red cards for their actions. Kompany and Busquets were also shown yellow cards for their involvement. Numerous other players were all given verbal warning as well.

The entire confrontation had lasted for 5 minutes. When the situation was finally brought under control, the match was already at the 90th minute and was about to enter stoppage time.

The fourth official was able to shake off Guardiola after a moment of struggle. He raised the board to indicate the number of stoppage time that would be added in the game:

Nine minutes!

Deafening boos erupted in the City Ground Stadium once again.

"Why don't you f*cking add 45 minutes to the game? Rotten referee!" The Forest fans chastised the referee's decision at the stands.

"The confrontation from earlier lasted 5 minutes. That's why the stoppage time is exceptionally long... Is there still a chance for Barcelona to win the match?"

Not a chance.

Dunn put Rafinha on the pitch to replace the injured Lennon, and he also reassigned Nicolas Nkoulou to play as the center back.

With the addition of Nkoulou, Forest's defense was now made up of five defenders. It was just like a bulky iron chain that had completely sealed up Akinfeev's goalpost.

The Barcelona players were all affected by the confrontation from earlier. Their emotions and movements were erratic, and they were not able to perform at their best. They chose to do long passes to the front of the pitch instead of building up their attacks slowly from the back during their offense.

The boos from the stands turned into cheers the moment the referee blew on the whistle to signal the end of the match.

All the Forest fans celebrated their victory. They had triumphed over Barcelona 3:1 at home. They not only exacted revenge on Barcelona with this victory, they also proved that Nottingham Forest, who was the two-time defending champion of the Champions League, was still a strong team.

“The match is over! Nottingham Forest has just eliminated the 2009-10 Champions Barcelona after eliminating the 2008-09 Champions Inter Milan! Those two teams were the champions in the two seasons where Nottingham Forest failed to become champions in the Champions League! They have now eliminated both of those champions... Nottingham Forest is truly the ‘Champions Killer’! Tony Twain said at the start of the season that we would know how good a champion team is by letting them play a game against Nottingham Forest! His team has certainly shown what they are capable of!”

Chapter 819: Well Done

Everyone at the stadium was cheering when the referee blew on the whistle to signal the end of the match.

Twain stealthily left the stands behind once the whistle went off.

UEFA might have barred him access to the locker room and the pitch prior to the start of the match, but they did not ban him from getting into contact with his players after the match has ended.

He was finally able to bask in the joy of their victory over Barcelona after being banished to the stands for more than 90 minutes.

If possible, Twain hoped that he would be able to do a handshake with Guardiola. He wanted to enjoy the treatment that a victor deserves.

Mitchell, who had been sitting at the bench after being taken off the pitch, tossed the towel that was draped around his neck onto the floor. He then bolted onto the pitch to give his team mates a hug.

As he made his way about the pitch to hug his team mates, he realized that a crowd of reporters was constantly on his trail, and they would surround him no matter where he went.

“Heh. Aaron, you are famous now.” Akinfeev patted Mitchell on the head before leaving him behind.

Mitchell was left to deal with the horde of reporters coming in for him alone. He did not know what he should do.

“Mitchell, can you answer a few questions for me?”

“Can you share what was on your mind when you scored that last goal?”

“Is it a challenge for you to play as a forward now when you have been playing as a center back previously?”

“This is the very first time that you are representing Forest in the Champions League, and you were able to score two goals in the match. Is there anything you’d like to say?”

“Ah... Uh...” Mitchell was at a loss of words. It took him a while to gather his thoughts and answer the reporters’ question one by one.

As a 'newcomer' who just made his debut as a professional footballer for Forest, Mitchell was still inexperienced when it comes to dealing with reporters. He did not know how to reject others and answered all the questions that were thrown at him.

If this goes on, he would be stuck here answering questions all day long...

Right then, a voice rang out by the side of the crowd, "How long do you plan on asking him questions? My player can't even return to the locker room to bathe and change his clothes. If he were to catch a cold because of this, then don't even think about interviewing any of my players again in the future."

Mitchell and the reporters turned their heads towards the source of the voice. They saw Tony Twain standing by the side with a dark face.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the interview time is over."

The moment the reporters saw the fiendish Twain appear before them, they knew that their interview time was over. They would not be able to get any 'ground-breaking' scoop from Mitchell now that Twain was here...

The crowd of reporters dispersed at once.

Soon, only Twain and Mitchell were left at the scene.

At the sight of Twain's dark face, Mitchell instantly remembered the warning that the Boss gave him at the start of the match.

"If you dare flaunt your techniques during the game, I'd take you off the pitch right away, even if it's only the start of the match."

He might not have flaunted his techniques at the start of the match, but he still flaunted them towards the end. He knew that he had went against the boss's wishes.

He did not know what kind of chastisement would be thrown against him. The happiness that he felt from scoring the two goals had already been tossed somewhere far away...

"B-Boss..."

"You forgot everything that I told you, right?" Instead of praising Mitchell for scoring a brilliant goal in the match, Twain seemed to be intent on reproaching him instead.

"I... I did it instinctively..."

Twain watched as Mitchell said nothing for a while. He then patted Mitchell on the shoulder before walking away.

Dunn noticed Twain's figure on the pitch from the corner of his eye as he was giving an interview to the reporters. He saw him discuss something with Mitchell.

Dunn immediately recalled the words that Twain had told Mitchell prior to the start of the match. He was worried that Twain would go over and reprimand Mitchell for his actions. Thus, he shoved the reporters out of the way and approached the duo with the intention of saying a word for Mitchell. He

was going to pin all the blame on himself by saying something like, 'I was the one who asked him to do that'.

Before he could reach them however, Twain had already turned around and was walking towards him.

"Tony."

"Hey, Dunn. Congratulations. You did very well in the match." Twain's originally dark face brightened up. He smiled exuberantly at Dunn and looked like a completely different person than the one who stood before Mitchell earlier.

"Ah... Thanks. Well, Tony... I saw you and Mitchell..." Dunn's focus was still on Mitchell. He found Mitchell to be a very gifted player, and he was worried that Twain would destroy his confidence by giving him a dressing-down.

"That lad... Did well. He has what it takes to become a football star in the future." Twain turned his head around to look at Mitchell, who continued to stand rooted at the spot where they just had their conversation.

"Huh?" Dunn was surprised to hear Twain say the words that he did.

"What's with that response?"

"I thought you would admonish him for going against your wishes..."

Twain laughed. "A player who is able to break free of the restrictions imposed on him at the start of the match and perform to the best of his abilities in a way that no other player can, is a player who will turn out to be a superstar in the future. If not for that 'eureka moment' of his towards the end of the match, I think I would still be sitting at the stands now and the match would have gone into extra time. So, why would I scold him?"

"But I saw you with a dark face earlier..."

"I just don't want him to get ahead of himself." Twain smiled slyly. "You can be the one to heap compliments on him. I'd be in charge of playing the devil."

"Oh, you...!" Dunn did not know what to say to Twain.

Twain left with a grin on his face. He still needed to find Guardiola for a handshake after all.

Dunn clearly saw through Twain's 'scheme', because he told him, "Don't bother. He left the moment the match ended. I was the one who shook his hand."

"Huh?" Dunn's words burst Twain's bubble.

"But... If you really want to get your handshake... You can go to the press conference."

Twain thought about it for a moment. UEFA probably wouldn't care about what he does now that the match has ended.

He nodded his head. "All right. I'd go to the press conference. I reckon there'd be many questions for me from the press."

“Are you ready to handle all those questions?”

Twain waved his hands dismissively. “One has to act based on the situation! Plus, I’m not scared of those reporters. In fact, you should pray for them instead.”

Dunn smiled as he shook his head. He then left Twain behind and walked straight to Mitchell before patting him on the back.

“Ah, Assistant Manager Dunn!” Mitchell instantly felt better once he saw Dunn.

“Well done, Aaron. But these are not words from me.” Dunn secretly pointed at the person behind him.

Mitchell looked in the direction that Dunn pointed at and saw Twain.

“Boss?”

“He doesn’t want you to get ahead of yourself. You still have a long way to go.”

Twain and Dunn have certainly allocated their roles very well. Twain is responsible for being imposing before the players, whereas Dunn is responsible for helping him come off as being much more friendly and approachable than what he might appear to be in front of the players. Doing so allows Tony Twain to maintain a ‘perfect’ image before the players. He is imposing like a father should be, and also kind like a mother would be...

Mitchell finally understood that his boss had his best intentions at heart. In truth, he had actually felt a little upset with the way Twain looked at him earlier. He is, after all, the person who helped the team win the match! He did not deserve to be treated that way by Twain.

He nodded his head forcefully. “I understand now, Assistant Manager Dunn. Thank you.”

“If you really want to thank someone, thank him.” Dunn smiled at him, before turning around and walking away.

When Twain made his way past the mixed zone, numerous reporters chanted his name. However, he did not stop in his tracks. He only pointed at the front and said, “I’d see all of you at the press conference later. Ask your questions then.”

After hearing his words, there were a few reporters who decided to give up on their interviews with the players. They left the mixed zone and headed over to the venue for the post-match conference.

Twain had only sat inside the conference room for a short while before the reporters began to stream in and take their seats one after another.

Everyone was waiting for the arrival of Guardiola, but he did not show up for quite some time.

Twain was not angry that Guardiola was late. There was not a twinge of anger on his face. Rather, he carried a smile the whole time as he waited at his seat. He would even make eye-contact and gestures whenever he spotted a reporter whom he knew.

The reporters soon got annoyed with how long they had to wait for Guardiola. Just as they began to whisper amongst themselves, Guardiola finally showed up in the conference room. He clearly looked displeased, especially after seeing Tony Twain at the stage instead of Dunn or Kerslake.

What made him even more enraged was the fact that the man before him was smiling!

Does he not know what he did to my team? He actually has the audacity to smile?

Guardiola felt like turning around and walking straight out the door after seeing the smile on Twain's face. However, he decided against it when he thought about how he had to display poise before the reporters. Additionally, he could not become a person like Tony Twain, who has no manners.

He swallowed the animosity that he held towards Tony Twain and took a seat.

"Since both managers are here, we shall commence the press conference right now..." The press officer said with a forced smile on his face. He could tell that there was tension between the two managers.

Guardiola, who was the manager of the away team for the match, spoke first. "There's nothing I want to say. We lost. However, everyone saw the reason why we lost. I'm proud of the performance that my team put in."

It was Twain's turn next.

All the reporters were keen to hear what sort of 'brilliant' comments he would say this time round. They were certain he would not have anything good to say.

"I'm happy that we won." Twain said with a grin. "It proves that we are stronger than Barcelona, and that we are more qualified to progress into the semi-finals. I am very pleased with my team's performance today. They were able to dominate every aspect of the game without my guidance. It was the kind of match that I hoped to see."

The reporters were upset with the comments that the two managers made so far. There was no element of hostility in their words.

Nobody's here to watch the two of you get along with each other!

When it was time for the reporters to ask questions, one reporter instantly threw a sharp question at Twain, "Mr. Tony Twain. The Barcelona players mentioned numerous times about how the terrible pitch has affected their performance for the match during our interviews with them. What are your thoughts on this issue? Do you think that it is inappropriate for you to suddenly announce that you are going to change the turf just a few days before the match?"

The reporter who asked the question was from Catalonia. He looked hell-bent on getting a comment from Twain regarding the state of the pitch.

Twain replied slowly, "There's nothing inappropriate about what we did. We provided a report to UEFA prior to the match, and they permitted our actions. Thus, there are no problems whatsoever. Are you questioning UEFA's decision?"

"No. I just find it odd as to why you would only change the turf a few days before this match is due to kick off."

"That's because this is the time when we usually change our turf. We played in an away game before this match, and that delayed our plans to change the turf. If not, we would have finished changing the turf by now."

Twain pushed all the blame to the Premier League's match schedule. He had no intentions of shouldering any blame for the poor state of the turf.

"You said you changed the turf. But your stadium looks as though you did not even lay out a turf over it." The reporter was still relentless in questioning Twain about the turf.

"We are a small club and we have been having tight finances recently. We cannot afford to buy a better turf, so we can only settle for something that isn't as good." Twain threw out his hands before him and looked helpless, as though he was the victim in this situation. "We can't possibly let Barcelona play on mud. So, we still put the turf over it even if it's low in quality. But, we do know that others would make fun of us for our poor pitch, which is why the club is considering to purchase two sets of high quality turfs. I promise that such a situation would not happen again in the future!"

Twain was serious about his words. After all, such a situation could never happen a second time. It was a scheme that he could only use once...

He would not have thought about altering the pitch if their team was not in such a dire situation after the first leg of competition.

His words rendered any other reporter who still wanted to question him about the turf speechless.

Guardiola was upset with how things had turned out, but he knew that there wasn't much that he could say or do. "I believe that UEFA should look into establishing a standard that all pitches have to follow in the future to ensure the quality of the pitches that we play on..."

Twain concurred with Guardiola's proposition shamelessly. "I completely agree with Mr. Guardiola's opinion. UEFA should indeed come up with measures to standardize the quality of the pitches that we play on. We should never have to let players play on rotten pitches in the Champions League ever again."

The Catalan reporters all wished they could run up to the stage and slap Twain on the face. They have seen many shameless people in their lives, but they have never seen anyone as shameless as Twain!

Guardiola was so enraged by Twain's words that he shuddered all over his body.

He was not good with verbal confrontations. He did not know what to say to Twain, and he also found him to be someone he could never reason with.

There were a few reporters who felt that they were not going to be able to get any interesting scoop from the managers if they continued to probe them about the turf. Therefore, they decided to shift the focus onto the players who got injured in the match.

"Messi has sprained his knee. I do not know the extent of his injury right now. As for how he picked up the injury? Isn't that very obvious? It's impossible to not pick up an injury while playing on such a terrible pitch!" Guardiola became agitated as he said those words.

Messi was a player that he really liked and relied on. How could he not be indignant now that he was injured, and badly, from the looks of it?

"He had sprained his ankle without any physical contact from any other player on the pitch!"

When it was Twain's turn to respond, the very first thing that he said was, "My players have not gotten injured while playing on the pitch. Lennon was only injured because of Yaya Touré's foul on him. I think that foul by Touré was truly very malicious. I don't know why he actually wanted to protest against the referee's decision. If I were him, I'd most likely have run off the pitch before the referee showed the red card. Every experienced footballer knows how dangerous a tackle from behind is!"

Twain was equally enraged when speaking about Lennon's injury.

"As for my opinion on Wood's red card incident, I have to say that I fully support the actions that he took then!" Twain might have been upset with Wood's impetuosity when he was at the stands earlier, but he has to show support for his player before the press right now. "He had only acted out of concern for his team mate. I understand him completely."

Guardiola could not hold his emotions in any longer. He scoffed, "So it's reasonable to hit another player to you?"

"And you are saying that it's reasonable to tackle another player's ankle from behind?" Twain did not even turn his head to look at Guardiola when he spoke. "Would Wood have been that rash if not for Touré's tackle?"

"If the referee had not failed to penalize Wood's foul on Krkić, would my players have acted the way that they did?"

Twain laughed coldly. "That's the job of the referee. I'm not able to make a comment on that. If your players felt so upset about that, why don't they tackle the referee from behind? Do they think they are so great after venting their anger on Lennon? Who doesn't know how to do a tackle? Touré's action is completely devoid of sportsmanship!"

Twain was just like a thief, and he was calling another thief 'thief'.

Guardiola realized that he could not triumph over Twain when it came to arguing. Nottingham Forest was the team that did not display sportsmanship first, but Tony Twain made it sound as though Forest was the victim, and that Barcelona was the team without sportsmanship...

There were many reporters who were also upset with Twain's comments. The Catalan reporters started booing to show their displeasure and to protest against Twain.

Twain definitely did not give up on the chance to make things difficult for the Catalan reporters now that he was the victor of the match. The Catalan press has constantly criticized Twain for these two matches. It was payback.

He pointed at the Catalan reporters who were booing him. "I wonder who was it who said that their style of football is a kind of art, and that the football that Nottingham Forest played was 'ugly', because it was 'defensive' and 'conservative' football? Look at the score and look at how the match progressed. We dominated the game and drubbed Barcelona throughout. Our possession was at 68% at one point in the match. Be it shots or passes made, Nottingham Forest was the team with the better stats for the match. Let's not forget Aaron Mitchell's last goal. He went past four players! He went past every single player on Barcelona's defense! Do any of you dare to call his goal 'ugly'?"

Twain's words were powerful and they resonated in the conference room. Forest's performance for the match could certainly be regarded as 'perfect'. It not only added weight to his words, it also gave him the confidence to confront the Catalan reporters.

As Twain had expected, none of the Catalan reporters stood up to rebuke his words. The team that they supported had lost completely in the match earlier. The Barcelona player who got the highest score in the post-match ratings was Piqué. He received a score of 7 for his performance in the match. However, his performance was definitely not one that could be seen as a form of art.

Additionally, what humiliated the Catalan media even more was the fact that Piqué, who was the man of the match for the Barcelona team, was groomed in Nottingham Forest. The style of football that he plays bears the mark of 'Nottingham Forest', and he was also a player who still maintained a good relationship with many of the current Forest players. It was not wrong to call him a Nottingham Forest player, even.

Twain threw the criticisms and mockeries that he had received from the Catalan media back at them. When he was done throwing a temper, he stood up and left the room with a dark face.

Twain's departure made things awkward for Guardiola. He should have been the one to walk away from the press conference and make things difficult for Tony Twain, but now Twain was the one who had made things difficult for him...

Guardiola sat unmoving at his seat for a moment. Eventually, he stood to his feet with a displeased look on his face and left the room without saying a word.

A grudge between two managers was born.

Chapter 820: A Scoundrel Realized His Ambition

The game between Nottingham Forest and Barcelona ended but the story was far from over.

A day later, the Barcelona Football Club filed a complaint with the UEFA about the quality of the turf at the City Ground stadium. At the same time, Nottingham Forest submitted a complaint document which they had worked on for a week about the issue with the referee in the first leg.

In any case, the battle between the two sides would continue on to a higher level.

Barcelona protested against Nottingham Forest's use of a method which lacked sportsmanship to help them win the game. They had brazenly changed the turf at the last minute. Mourinho used to sprinkle sand on the turf at Stamford Bridge when he was at Chelsea to deal with Barcelona. But generally, people simply could not see the sand spilled on the pitch. Only the people who personally played on the field would know how uncomfortable it was and could not find the reason why for a moment. Tony Twain's ploy was too blatant. Was he afraid that he did not leave enough evidence?

The English media taunted Barcelona for being a sore loser. "They had already lost the game and yet they still talked about the terrible pitch condition and Nottingham Forest resorting to tricks. Did they still want the UEFA to award them the victory?"

The Catalan media hit back, "We just want to preserve the spirit of sportsmanship in professional football! A sacred football match must not be tarnished by the conduct of such a vile character!"

When the Barcelona players and coaches were interviewed after the game, they all blamed their loss on the City Ground stadium's poor pitch. It appeared as long as the pitch was fine, it was as they would have definitely won. In fact, they just wanted to draw attention to the quality of the turf on the City Ground stadium.

The Nottingham Forest Football Club remained unmoved. They alleged that the UEFA had agreed for them to change the turf. The quality of the turf was really a little worse for wear, but there was no other choice due to the club's financial constraints ... But they had learned their lesson this time and promised that this would never happen again. If they did not believe it, the UEFA officials and the Catalan media were welcomed to inspect and provide pointers for the first leg of the semifinal match...

The UEFA was also forced to suffer in silence this time. In fact, anyone with a normal IQ could see what Tony Twain was up to. He stated that the financial constraints had caused the quality of the turf to be so poor. Did it mean that it had to be really bad? Nottingham Forest was also an English Premier League club. How could they not have two sets of standard turf? It was pure nonsense! He deliberately did not take it out, just so that they could pit against Barcelona. This point was already everyone's common understanding. Even if the Nottingham Forest fans were interviewed, nine out of ten would think so, and the one person who did not think so was lying.

But the UEFA really could not punish Nottingham Forest, because the Nottingham Forest Football Club's change of turf was agreed upon and approved by them. They would have to take on the responsibility first in order to punish the Forest team. That way everyone would find themselves in an awkward situation and it would not look good on them. And more importantly, Tony Twain did this in full compliance with the procedure. No fault could be found.

Barcelona's complaint made them looked like a sore loser.

Platini privately supported the Catalan side. His and the other top brass' relationship with Barcelona was really good. But he must handle the matter impartially, or he would lose his prestige and undermine the UEFA's reputation. The result of the impartial handling of the matter was that Nottingham Forest was innocent of any wrongdoing.

Finally, the UEFA issued a public statement saying that it would inspect the quality of all fields that would host the Champions League games in the future, and that any clubs which did not pass the review would be penalized. The "home ground would be banned."

"... We believe that as the highest level of tournament between the European clubs, the venues that host the matches should also be of the appropriate standard. This should never be in doubt. For example, we have asked that the venue for the Champions League final must be able to accommodate at least sixty thousand people, which is a mandatory requirement. Any stadium that does not meet the requirement will not be considered. Of course, we can't use the number of seats as a criterion for venues that are not for the finals, but the quality of the turf is still necessary... Yes. We don't want to see the scene from the City Ground stadium last week to happen again. I admit that the official launch of the rule has something to do with the game between Barcelona and Nottingham Forest. It was an unusual

game... No, we will not impose any punishment on the Nottingham Forest Football Club. They were within the limits of the regulation..."

Following this remark, the press spokesman said it rather helplessly. This was tantamount to a euphemistic expression of the UEFA's attitude that Nottingham Forest had found a loophole with the UEFA. Since we can't punish them now, it does not mean that we can't punish them in the future. Anyway, we have taken note of this, and one day we will settle the score.

After the new rule was established, the Catalan media was still unwilling to forgive and complained that Barcelona would have made it to the top four if it had been introduced a week earlier.

The English media taunted them and said, "If Barcelona had learned of Tony Twain's move earlier, they wouldn't have to complain like that."

Guardiola was expressionless during an interview. It was clear that losing the game in such a wretched way still left him brooding a week later. "The UEFA did the right thing, albeit a little late. I just hope that Barcelona's defeat can be a source of power to drive progress in the Champions League—what the viewers and fans in front of the television as well as the spectators who go the stadiums to watch the highest level of European competition definitely do not want to watch that kind of game."

That kind of game he referred was certainly the second leg match between Nottingham Forest and Barcelona. The football flew back and forth in the air from start to finish. There was no beauty to speak of. The big-name star players did not play normally, which disappointed those people who wanted to enjoy their wonderful performances. It had zero technical highlights and the tactics used were subpar. A typical game whereby "the results are important than everything else" was really boring.

But there were four goals in a game like this. And there were two goals that had made it to the top ten best goals in the Champions League this season. In this respect, the game was better than a lot of those thrilling to watch games but with dull results...

On the other side of the sea, Tony Twain was surrounded by a crowd of reporters at the training ground, wanting him to talk about the new UEFA rules.

Twain smiled and agreed with the UEFA's new rule, "It's a good thing, of course it's a good thing. In particular, I agree with the spokesman's statement that 'as the highest level of tournament between the European clubs, the venues that host the games should be of the appropriate standard.' Well-said!" Twain's smile could easily be interpreted that he was fawning on the UEFA. "I don't think the fans themselves want to see a game on a vegetable field. That would be damaging to football!" Looking at his righteously indignant face, it was as if the turf on the City Ground's stadium had nothing to do with him.

"So, I give two thumbs-up to the UEFA rule." At this point, he even raised his hands. "The rule guarantees the quality of the Champions League tournament and it's a good thing for our players too—because no one will worry about getting injured playing on a bad pitch. This is a very humane rigid rule. Nottingham Forest will certainly give its full support and cooperation!"

Guardiola was said to have torn the newspaper in half after he read Twain's comments. Well, reportedly anyway...

The other matter was more complicated.

A week after that game, the UEFA finally dealt with the issue of the turf with a new rule. Following which, they were going to deal with Tony Twain. They had no grounds in the “vegetable field” incident. But now they believed there must be enough reasons to deal with the unruly Tony Twain.

You dare to accuse our appointed referee of accepting a bribe from Barcelona! What evidence do you have? There’s no evidence. You’re making a false accusation!

Originally with UEFA’s bureaucratic style of handling things, a hearing would have to wait until six months later.

But this time, contrary to the norm, the UEFA acted swiftly and decisively. Tony Twain was notified to attend the hearing in Nyon, Switzerland as soon as the “vegetable field” incident was dealt with.

Before going to Switzerland, Twain called Pierce Brosnan and Lineker. He was willing to accept their interview, to be recorded by BBC 5. The interview would be aired on BBC 5 and published in the <Nottingham Evening Post>.

Obviously, Twain also realized that this was a huge pitfall in his coaching career. Someone wanted to mess with him, but he would not be dragged down.

So, he needed to give his all and package himself as a Robin Hood figure up against the official authorities. He needed to win more support from the people and make use of the media. This kind of thing could be done easily.

The interview naturally revolved around a series of recent focal points about Tony Twain and unfolded from there.

Lineker was the one who did the interview while Brosnan made notes at the side.

Lineker asked a lot of questions, which Twain explained them one by one. In the television footage, he tossed aside his usual arrogant and ego centric manner and looked placid with a smile on his face as he cordially accepted the interview. Sometimes he even displayed his characteristic sense of humor, but his antagonistic way against the reporters could not be seen. It was rare to see this in previous interviews—he seemed to have a natural enmity against reporters.

He did not shy away from those sensitive issues. Instead, he opened up to Lineker.

He said the word “counting the money-gate” incident was a term invented by the Catalan media. He never said that the referee had accepted a bribe from Barcelona. He did not hint at it in other ways. His gesture was obviously... a snapping of his fingers.

Lineker asked why he would snap his fingers in that situation. One must know if his action were to be interpreted as a snapping of the fingers”, then its appearance was indeed abrupt and inexplicable.

“It may be abrupt to the outside world, but I don’t find it strange. It’s like when a player was sent off inexplicably by the referee, he used clapping to express his anger. I did not choose to clap. I chose to snap my fingers and that meant—well done, referee! Can you understand? It was actually a kind of irony. But the Barcelona fans in the stadium preferred to interpret it as ‘counting money.’ I don’t know why. Maybe they’re naturally cynical?” He laughed.

The Nottingham Forest fans would think that this was Twain's humor. But the Barcelona fans were lucky enough to watch the interview, they would definitely not going to think so...

"I repeat, I had never said in any way on any occasion that I thought the referee on duty at that game had been bribed by Barcelona. I know the Catalan media vilification of me is not a short-term thing. Of course, they would love to see me make a fool of myself. Whereas the twisting of right and wrong or fabrications in the world are a common occurrence for the media. So now, do you know where the nonsense come from? If the Catalan media is unhappy with my comments, I am willing to take responsibility. I will cite all the media comments after that game. I have collected them." Twain laughed again at this point.

"But those are considered evidence, and I'll only show them to the UEFA. They'll know who started this whole thing and it's not me anyway." Twain shrugged.

The interview eventually received a good response after it was broadcast on the television. Brosnan's article was reprinted by several newspapers. Twain's purpose was achieved. At least now a lot of the media and public were on his side.

After he had done his preparations, Twain left for Nyon alone. Before he left, his wife, Shania, specially called him from the United States to support and comfort him.

All these gave Twain the confidence to tackle the pitfall.

At the same time, the club also did something. They presented the UEFA with a video of the last ten minutes of the first leg match between Nottingham Forest and Barcelona as evidence to support Twain and show that this was not a shot in the dark. His team had indeed been treated unfairly in the away game. If the UEFA was unwilling to admit that the penalty shot had issues, they did not mind appealing to the Court of Arbitration for Sport. Anyway, since you're going to mess with our manager, we'll fight you to the end!

Twain's leading the team into the top four spots also appeared to have improved his relationship with the club's top brass. Evan decided to step forward to show support for Twain while Allan was also being ordered to lobby the UEFA's top echelon.

The Forest team's final place in the Champions League had a direct impact on their televised bonuses at the end of the season. Twain was a manager who could lead the team to victory and naturally it would bring a lot of money to the club. Only a fool would not protect such a cash cow...

Meanwhile, a lot of people in the circle had come out to express their support for Twain's view. Mourinho, who always did not get along with Twain, also seemed to have seen glimpses of himself in Twain, also came forward and said that the Catalan media's hype about "counting money" was pointless. As a former Barcelona translator and assistant coach, his words held sway.

Ferguson also said he had not heard Twain complain that Barcelona had bribed the referee. Because "he's not that kind of person."

Wenger said that although Tony had a sharp tongue, he would never talk about uncertain things.

Benítez's relationship with Twain was not good either, but this time he chose to stand on the opposite side of his country. He thought that since he and Twain had many encounters before, he was familiar with Twain's temper. If he said that he did not say it, then he must not have said it.

This time the Premier League managers were on Twain's side. Perhaps the UEFA's attitude towards the Premier League had angered them. The English Premier League had long been an organization that fell outside the grey area on the edge of the UEFA's jurisdiction. The Premier League gave the biggest headaches the UEFA in terms of people and incidents.

They naturally took it that the UEFA's beef with Twain was actually them making an example of Twain to warn them. It was obviously necessary to unite. After all, the interests of the Premier League were their own interests. These problems were in fact about "interests" at the heart of the matter.

Led by John and Bill, the Nottingham Forest fans also gathered at the City Ground stadium to show solidarity with Twain at the time of the hearing. They contacted a number of media outlets to come for interviews and do coverage to continue to expand the impact.

"We're fighting a battle to defend our own kingdom!" John said resolutely in front of a lot of media and cameras.

All of these were totally down to put pressure on the UEFA.

No one knew the details of the hearing, but one thing was clear to everyone.

The moment Twain got out of the car and greeted the reporters outside the UEFA headquarters with a smile, an observant person could see that his smile was somewhat stiff. The Ray-Ban sunglasses that he wore—he was now the brand's British spokesperson—still could not hide his worries.

Despite all the preparations he did, he was still a little nervous.

But after two hours, when he came out of the headquarters building, he took off his sunglasses and gave a breezy smile. There was no hidden meaning behind his smile. He smiled naturally from the bottom of his heart.

Every reporter present was familiar with Twain and certainly knew what Twain's behavior meant.

The Catalan reporters groaned in pain on the spot, "This bastard got away with it!"

The reporters from Nottingham and England cheered Twain who happily waved to them. Twain willfully enjoyed the cheers usually reserved to welcome a hero's return.

Following which, a UEFA press spokesman reappeared in front of the press to announce the final verdict of the case, "While we think that Tony Twain's remarks toward the referee was a little extreme after the game, there was no evidence that he had suspected the referee's and Barcelona's professional ethics. He gave a reasonable explanation of his actions at the hearing, of which we had accepted. Finally, we want to remind Tony Twain to pay attention to his words and deeds..."

Brosnan asked about the referee and his handling of the penalty.

The UEFA spokesman stalled for a long while before he replied, "That offside ball was a miscalculation ...for which we're sorry."

Up until now, Tony Twain and Nottingham Forest had won big.

The next day the Catalan media largely adopted the same headline, which roughly translated into Mandarin words as—

A scoundrel realized his ambition.

Indeed, in their eyes, Twain, a despicable scoundrel had managed to escape twice. Just look at his brilliant smile in front of the UEFA's Nyon headquarters. He's a typical scoundrel that got away!

A hardcore Barcelona fan tweeted a similar message at a popular Barcelona fan forum in China:

"It's truly the case of the good die young (Barcelona was knocked out) and the evil lives a thousand years..."