

## Champions 841

### Chapter 841: Behind a Successful Man

The first round of the three round of matches between Nottingham Forest and Arsenal had ended. Forest won by one solitary goal. Wenger was not unhappy at all, the whole Arsenal team's mood wasn't affected by this defeat, that was why Fàbregas had the mood to exchange jerseys with Wood after the end of the match.

Twain was in a good mood too. He did not care what kind of tactics Wenger had in mind; all he knew was getting the victory was safest. He never believed in words like, "What are we going to do in future", "what are we going to do in the next round".

He had to temporarily toss the UEFA Champions League out from his thoughts, the league was just as important.

From early April to 22nd May, these two months were the most crucial period of the season for Tony Twain. Whether they were able to get any returns for the season's hard work depends on these two months' results.

They could be the glorious "treble winners", or they could crumble at the last step and get nothing.

These are the busiest days for managers in the whole season. They would be so busy that they would not be able to care about anything. Because of this, every time Twain returned to his big, pitch black house, he would feel exceptionally fatigued. A manager who was living separately with his wife for the long term, one could probably count the numbers of them in one hand.

Good news finally arrived.

After completing her work in America, Shania rejected an interview and a banquet and returned to England ahead of schedule.

At this moment, Twain was holding on to his coffee as he leant on the door frame, quietly looking at Shania getting busy in front of the washing machine.

Fans who loved Shania would probably find it hard to imagine such a scene. The supermodel who shone on the runway, the superstar who was a maverick in the eyes of the media, would be tidying up a messy room like a normal woman at home, bringing out piles and piles of dirty clothes before tossing them into the washing machine. She then put on an apron to do the dishes and cooked.

Twain had no intention of helping, instead, he was enjoying the view. Watching his wife getting busy at home gave him the feeling that this was family.

"Uncle Tony."

"Hmm?"

"What are you looking at?"

"At you."

“Am I that nice to look at?”, Shania said with a smile, “after so many years of marriage, haven’t you seen enough of me?”

“It’s been quite a while, I want to watch to my fill.”

” Shania went silent for a moment before asking, “Uncle Tony, how about I quit my modelling job?”

Apparently, she was mistaken about Twain’s meaning.

“Ay, what are you talking about? That was not what I meant. I don’t want to do anything else now, I just want to look at you, that’ll do for me. Don’t think too much about anything else.”, Twain said.

Twain put down his coffee mug and walked in to help.

“But it’s good now, I have nothing until the Summer, I can stay by your side all the time.”, Shania said very happily. She looked forward to days like this too. On normal days, she was an high-profile star, yet she was not interested in the happenings of the entertainment circle and she did not yearn media exposure. She also seldom visit luxury shops, her favorite way to spend her personal time was to stay with her husband, even staying on the sofa watching dvds was better than going out to get photographed by reporters.

That was why the media said she was a maverick in the modeling world and Hollywood.

Twain smiled after hearing her say that.

To him, the biggest advantage was that he could focus all his attention on football without any worries. But to Shania, she would receive a little less love. What to do, this was the sprint of the season. They would be like this every season — Shania would go back to take care of Twain and enjoy their time together while Twain had to split his attention. Half of it to his wife and half to football. Shania thought this was a little unfair...

Luckily for Twain, he had an understanding wife. Other than the occasional complaints and jealousy towards football, Shania were not dissatisfied at all.

Every time he thought about this, Twain felt like he should thank Shania. The reason why he could enjoy the success he had now, he could claim half the credit while his wife had half. It was not easy to have a star for a wife, let alone one with a personality. But when Shania was with him, she would sacrifice her personality to fulfill his needs. Feminists might feel that Twain was too chauvinistic, but this was what married life should be like. Someone had to sacrifice a part of his or her benefits, compromises had to be made.

What was in Twain’s mind then was that he did not want to stay in this business until he was 70 years old before retiring, like Ferguson. Because that would leave him with not much time to spend with his wife. When he retires, he would give everything he had to compensate his wife for all the love that he owed her.

A model’s career is short and Shania had no intentions of having any great achievements in the reel business. So when Twain retires, Shania should most likely not be a model anymore. When that time came, the two of them should have a lot of time to arrange for their own life. First, Twain wanted to travel the world with Shania. Go places where they had never went before, to all corners of the world.

To an utopia where there was no media or any conflicts, as if they were the only two left in this world, enjoying each other's company...

Twain was lost in thought as he kept scrubbing the plate in his hands, water flowing.

"What are you thinking about, Uncle Tony?", Shania asked, aware of Twain's abnormality.

"Ah...", Twain muttered as he looked at the plate that was long cleaned. He put it at the side and turned off the tap, smiled at Shania and said, "I'm thinking about our lives after we retire."

Shania was also interested as she put down what she was working on and asked, "What did you think of, is it interesting?"

"I thought about travelling the world with you. Where do you want to go?", asked Twain.

"Hmm...", Shania looked up as she thought, "There are too many places that I want to go..."

"That's okay, we have lots of time.", Twain replied.

"Have you already decided when to retire?", Shania asked.

"Not yet, but I won't wait till I'm 60 or 70 years old. I'll be old then and I'll only be able to sit in our backyard, get a suntan, that'll be pointless then.", Twain replied as he wiped his hands dry before going behind Shania and gently hugging her. "When the time comes, we'll go to places we've never been to. You love ice-cream, don't you? We'll eat while we explore and I'll let you taste all the ice-cream in the world."

Shania could feel Twain's breath on the nape of her neck and it ticklish, causing her to laugh as she replied, "Aren't you afraid I'll eat so much that I'll become fat?"

"An old man and his fat wife, that'll be even more compatible.", Twain said as he nuzzled Shania's ears and hair from behind. "We're very compatible, Shania."

Shania did not argue with Twain's "old man" and "fat wife" as she laid in Twain's wide chest, enjoying this warm moment. Twain might find it difficult to endure when he was alone in England, but was it not the same for Shania in America?

She yearned to smell the breath of her man, feel the warmth of his body. After a day out at work, entertaining and doing catwalks, all she wanted when she returned home was to lie in her husband's embrace like this, throwing all her troubles away and enjoying their quiet time together.

She closed her eyes slightly and rested her head on her husband's shoulder lazily, not wanting to move.

Twain greedily smelled the scent of her hair as he hugged Shania.

Then, both of them smelled something burning at the same time...

"Ah! The egg!", Shania exclaimed as she jumped up, knocking into Twain's nose as she did so. "Uncle Tony?", she said as she turned back in a panic to see Twain holding on to his nose in pain while he held onto the table at the side for support, tears coming out from his eyes. Looks like it was quite a strong impact. "Uh... I'm really sorry Uncle Tony..."

Twain held on to his nose with his left hand and pointed behind Shania with his right, indicating for her to switch off the electricity first.

She panicked as she switched it off, then tossed the fried egg in the frying pan into the dustbin. After she was done with that, she turned back to check on her husband. Twain had already recovered. He rubbed his nose and muttered, "I hate big noses..."

Looking at his moment of weakness, Shania could not help herself but to laugh.

"You're the culprit and you're still laughing!", Twain said as he gave her a stare, wiping a tear off the corner of his eye as he gave her a fierce look. "Isn't your head in pain?"

Shania continued laughing as she shook her head.

"The eggs are burnt, right?", Twain asked.

"Mm, burnt.", Shania replied as she glanced at the dustbin by her feet. The pitch-black fried egg was quietly lying there and she started to laugh even more.

"Let me do it.", Twain said as he prepared to do it himself. Shania stopped him.

"Let me do it Uncle Tony. But this time, you must behave yourself.", she said.

Twain shrugged innocently and said, "I was only hugging you."

Shania gave a stern look and pointed at the dining table saying, "Now, sit and prepare to eat!"

Twain sat in front of the table like a good boy with a knife in one hand, a fork in another as he waited for his meal.

Only then did Shania smile and turn back to continue making her fried egg.

Both of them enjoyed a night like this.

With Shania back in England taking care of Twain, when he went to the training grounds the next day, Twain had a smile on his face and greeted every reporter that he met. Everyone felt that something was strange. The team was going to visit the Emirates Stadium soon. Was he putting on a show to show Arsenal that he was full of confidence?

Or maybe he really had a way to ensure victory?

The reporters would probably puke blood if they knew the truth.

Pierce Brosnan understood Twain the most after all. He specially researched the love story between Twain and Shania when he was writing Twain's biography, that was why he knew the reason. He asked Twain when he greeted him, "Your wife's back?"

Twain nodded and took his leave with a smile.

Pierce Brosnan stroked his chin and thought for a while. The people around him asked him what was he thinking of, and he replied, "I'm thinking that the element of uncertainty for Forest has been solved, Arsenal might need to take care at their home ground..."

The people around him could not understand what he was saying. Brosnan did not explain either, they would know during the weekends anyway.

The next day, an entertainment magazine from London, England, took a picture of Shania shopping outside. Shania was dressed rather normally in the picture, without the model's disposition on the runway at all, and her clothes were not very fashionable either.

The editor of the magazine even mocked her saying, "...Shania was dressed like an old lady from the countryside. This would have displeased the various fashion sponsors she has as it was as if she was dressed in cheap clothes bought from the market in public. Those fans who loves her would be very disappointed to see these pictures. The superstar in their eyes did not have any branded clothes in her hands, instead, she had bread, cheese and egg. She's just like a housewife..."

In the pictures, other than a pair of sunglasses, Shania did not try to hide her identity at all. And it seemed like she did not know she was targeted by paparazzi. She drove to the supermarket and came out with bags full of food and necessities. Later, she called someone and the magazine editor gave her the lines, "Tony, what do you want for dinner?"

They were actually quite accurate. Shania was indeed giving Twain a call and she did ask this question indeed... Twain was thinking about the Arsenal match then and was a little absent-hearted in his reply, "Don't burn the eggs again." This made him apologize to Shania for a very long time before he could eat dinner.

As everyone can see, just like how Tony Twain had not many friends in the media, as his wife, it was natural that she would be mocked by the others.

Later, when Twain brought the team to north London and prepared for the match with Arsenal, he found a few reporters for entertainment papers in the crowd.

The questions posed to him were naturally related to Shania. Twain felt weird that the media would suddenly ask about Shania.

"This has nothing to do with this match, right?", Twain said. He was unwilling to answer personal questions during work.

"Will she come watch the match?" A reporter asked a question which he thought was relevant to the match.

"Is it any business of yours whether she comes?", Twain said with an unfriendly expression, unwilling to cooperate.

In fact, Shania would come watch the match. Ever since Twain had a heart ailment, Shania would come watch the match whenever she had the chance. That way, she could be closer to Tony and had a better sense of security.

Wenger had to come cool the situation down, "Please do not ask any questions that are not related to the match, we have limited time."

Without asking these gossip questions, they could only ask some very boring questions. For example, "How confident are you of beating Nottingham Forest at home?", "Would Van Persie's injury be a great

blow to the team?”, “Would two away games in a row make you feel that the match is difficult?”, “Is there really no issues with the team’s physicality?”

There was no conflict during this press conference. Twain behaved properly.

The media left unhappily.

After the end of the press conference, Twain specially thanked Wenger for helping him out earlier.

The cordial atmosphere between the two made it difficult to tell that they were going to be engaged in a battle to the death here soon.

Wenger smiled and said, “I don’t want them to anger you. Who knows what you’ll do when you’re angry.” He put out his hand, “I hope you’ll be in the mood for a drink after the match.”

Twain took his hand and said, “I don’t drink, Arsene.”

“Juice would do too, as long as you are in the mood.”

“Why not?”

After saying goodbye to Wenger, Twain received a call from Brosnan. The mysterious tone that the reporter used on the phone made Twain think that he was very annoying.

“Hey, Tony. Um... Is Jordana’s return beneficial to your final sprint?”, he asked.

“Is this an interview?”

“Oh no, this is definitely not an interview, nor would it be publicly posted. I’m just a little bit curious...”

“Since when did you become so interested in gossips, just like those entertainment reporters, Mister 007?”

“He he...”, Brosnan could only give a wry laughter.

Twain sighed, it was not a big secret anyway, “Yes, are you happy now Mister 007?”

“Ah...Thank you! I understand now!” Brosnan hung up excitedly.

Twain shrugged as he looked at his phone.

Even though Shania was not technically a “good wife”, he still needed his wife to give him a push at the back during the sprint...

At home, Shania always liked to lie down in his arms, but during the sprint to become champions, he felt a gentle but firm person behind him. As long as that person was there, he felt like the road filled with thorns was flat and smooth and there was good weather ahead.

## **Chapter 842: Collapse?**

Nottingham Forest now looked like they were walking along a narrow path that only one person could go through sideways, with a deep abyss on the left and right sides. Following the movements of the

footsteps, small stones would roll down and the echo of the crashing sounds could be heard in the abyss, growing gradually fainter.

In such an environment, slight inattention might cause one to lose his footing and fall. Then even one's bones could not be found.

In short, Nottingham Forest now had no room for even a millimeter margin of error. They could not lose the Champions League and the league tournament. What could they do when their goal for this season was the continental treble this season?

Twain did not care about rotation for the away game against Arsenal. He deployed the strongest lineup possible.

Nottingham Forest faced a series of attacks from Arsenal at the Emirates Stadium. Similar to the last Champions League game, Arsenal's offensive was fast paced, leaving the Forest team struggling on the pitch.

With a need to win, Twain did not choose conservative tactics, unlike in the last Champions League game. Nottingham Forest chose to play defensive counterattack in the last Champions League game because they already had a one-goal lead in hand. Now the score was still 0:0, and it was of little value to play conservatively—he did not need a draw and could not accept any other result other than a win.

So, in this game, Twain asked the team to attack aggressively. Even if the Arsenal's swift attack made them confused and disoriented, they could not retreat. Instead, they had to actively carry out interceptions in the middle and front field against Arsenal.

It was what Wenger wanted to see most. Nottingham Forest would consume a lot of physical energy in such a scramble.

Twain was aware of it too. Arsenal wanted to drag down the Forest team. But now he had no other choice but to try to wipe out Arsenal before they themselves were dragged down.

"George! George!" Twain kept shouting Wood's name off the field, signaling for him to tackle a little fiercer and to not be afraid to foul.

Gago also gave his very best on the pitch. He had trained his playing style to be like "a brave man, willing to risk his life" at Real Madrid. Now that the Forest team transformed to learn from Redondo, Twain still intended to let Gago keep up with his spirit.

With the opponent using the same tactics, the Forest team played harder than they did in the last game. Apart from not choosing to play conservatively, Arsenal's home advantage could not be ignored.

Wenger's team in this game fully played to their characteristics of fine skills, good rapport and smooth offensive, and their continuous campaign caused the entire Forest team to be exhausted. In the face of Arsenal's attack, the will was there, but not the strength.

Twenty-nine minutes into the first half, the Forest team's defense finally revealed a crack, which was keenly seized by Arsenal. Fàbregas did a straight pass. Carlos Vela suddenly plugged in from the side and unexpectedly appeared behind the Forest team's entire line of defense. He was not in an offside position!

“He’s not offside! Vela has the ball!”

Pepe was still raising his hand to signal that Vela was in an offside position while Akinfeev had already left the goal to strike. A huge cheer erupted over the Emirates Stadium.

Amid the cheers, Vela shot low!

The football past through Akinfeev’s underarm and struck the farthest goalpost to bounce into the goal...

“The ball’s in! A gorgeous onside shot! And a brilliant assist from Fàbregas!!” Amid the thunderous cries, the live commentator had to raise his voice to shout along with the fans, “Arsenal leads at home! This dealt a heavy blow to Tony Twain’s Nottingham Forest!”

Akinfeev was a little angry after the goal concede. He walked over to Pepe and shouted, “Asshole! Why didn’t you come back to defend just now?”

Pepe was clearly angry too. He brusquely pushed his teammate aside, “It was f\*\*king offside!”

“Whether it was offside or not, you should have f\*\*king come back! You bastard!” Akinfeev was a little angry that he and his question were pushed aside. Just as the two men were about to come to a head, their teammates around fortunately rushed up to separate the two men.

Twain nearly flew into a rage as he watched the scene from the sidelines. He kept swearing, “Those bastards! They actually display their shameful behavior on live broadcast!”

Next door, Wenger sat in his seat with a slightly hidden gleeful smile on his face. Internal strife within the Forest team? It was highly unusual. It looked like the Forest team was about to collapse under immense pressure.

Even the commentator was excited, “Oh, oh! The Nottingham Forest players have a clash. What more, it is a conflict between their own players! This is getting interesting! I’ve done commentary for nearly ten seasons of Premier League games and nearly fifty games with the Forest team playing, and I’ve never seen such a heated conflict between their own men! Tony Twain always boasts that his team is the most united team in the world, and there is really little negative news in the media about their locker room. But today ... all this is happening openly before all of us. It’s a once-in-a-century sight! I’m already starting to look forward how Tony Twain is going to face the influx of reporters after the game...”

“What are you guys doing?!” Meanwhile, on the pitch, the Forest players were trying their best to calm down the two “angry bulls.”

“Calm down!”

“Don’t make a fuss. What’s wrong with you two?!”

Wood stood between the two men with one hand on each side to push them apart. But the two men tried to struggle free of Wood, unwilling to back down.

The Arsenal fans in the stands booed and jeered after a brief moment of shock— any fans of a team loved to see their opponents made a fool of themselves in front of them.



The laughter and booing sounded harsh in Twain's ears. It was even more shrill than when he was on the ground scolding, "You son of bitches!"

He finally stopped muttering alone and rushed to the sidelines to yell toward the field, "It's live broadcast. You damn idiots! Live broadcast!!"

His voice was drowned out by the loud boos at the stadium and he was not heard. However, it invited special attention from the cameras. The broadcast gave him a long close-up. In the camera, he clenched his fists and he was red in the face. Eyes wide with fury, he looked really angry.

Shania, who saw what happened from the box, also stood up nervously from her seat. Whenever Twain was excited, Shania would be so worried.

Twain roared in vain on the sidelines until he was out of breath and had to return to the technical area to get some water. He did not succeed. Kerslake handed him the water and muttered, "Is there too much pressure?"

Twain took the water bottle but did not drink from it. Instead, he stared blankly at Kerslake, which scared the latter a little. He suddenly did not drink the water, nor did he go to the sidelines to continue swearing. Instead, he sat down and stared at the field without saying a word, as if he was in a daze.

In the end, it was George Wood who unleashed his "power" as the team captain and grabbed the collars of Pepe and Akinfeev to make them calm down.

"We are playing a game now. If you want to fight, wait till the game is over!"

Even the referee stepped forward to intervene. He called the two men over to his side and gave them verbal warnings. He told them that even if they were teammates, he must give out a yellow card warning in the event of a violent physical confrontation.

The anger of the two men subsided a little. But they still did not look at each other.

They walked back to their own positions, without saying a word.

While the Forest team had the internal strife just now, Wenger got up and walked to the sidelines to beckon Fàbregas over and brief him personally.

"They have a problem themselves. This is our chance. Next up, continue to assist Pepe with that."

Fàbregas nodded as he sipped water.

Back on the pitch, Arsenal did adjust their tactics and use Pepe's position as the main offensive direction. Pepe was clearly affected by the goal concede and the brawl, because realistically speaking, the ball did slip past him, and he did not actively defend. Perhaps in that moment he opened up a small gap, or for some other reason, his mistake gave Vela a chance to shoot the ball in easily. For a time, the Forest team's goal was surrounded by perils.

Twain saw this and got up from the technical area, shouting Wood's name from the sidelines and using hand gestures to signal for him to cover Pepe's position. Wood obeyed and went before the Forest team's defensive line was able to regain its footing amid Arsenal's stormy attack.

Fortunately, there was not much time left in the first half for Arsenal. Even if there was infighting within the Forest team, the stoppage time was only three minutes. The referee quickly blew the whistle to end the first half, which also upset the Arsenal fans, who thought the Nottingham Forest goal would be conceded again if Arsenal were to be given another minute.

Regardless, the Arsenal players were in a good mood when they were back in the locker room because they saw their opponent collapse—nothing was more demoralizing than a clash between the teammates in the game, because such an incident was humiliating....

They knew when they saw the way the Forest players walked off the field with their heads down. They could not wait for the game to be over so that they could fled the Emirates Stadium early.

Twain stayed behind. He stood alone on the sidelines for a moment and then slowly walked toward the tunnel.

His back view appeared to be very tired.

Shania saw this scene in the box and her face sank.

When Tony Twain who acted brashly on the sidelines and experienced such an intense game, he would suddenly age ten years when he went home. He had a heart problem and the pressure was so great ... She was really worried.

The Forest players in the locker room were silent. Akinfeev and Pepe sat far part and did not look at each other.

Hearing the sound of the door opening and closing, people looked up and saw the boss.

They did not see an angry expression on his face. It did not even look like the calm before the storm.

Twain swept his gaze across everyone. His eyes slowly turned to look at them one by one which seemed to take several minutes. The locker room was dead silent. Kerslake was not one who could withstand such an atmosphere. He tried several times to open his mouth and say something, but he gave up in the end.

He did not think the atmosphere felt right.

Twain finally spoke up, "I think I've made a mistake—I happily made an exciting bet with someone, but I forget your ability to bear it. It wasn't my intention to put you under the same pressure as I am. You all know ... Well, I want to be able to put all the pressure on myself so that you can play without worry. Now it looks like I'm wrong, ridiculously wrong." He kept shaking his head to negate himself. He looked pained and tired.

"So, I won't put any pressure on you for this game. You just play at will ... As for the matter on eating the table, you don't have to worry about that. I have my own way."

With that, Twain sat down in his chair and let out a long breath.

"Igor and Pepe don't let this get to you both. I don't blame you. I know you're all thinking about the team, so ... let bygones be bygones." He put his hands together as if he did not really take it to heart.

"I now realize that the treble is not an easy thing to do, especially given our situation. It's a pipe dream for us to want to win the treble. The outside world was justified to ridicule. I, Tony Twain, am used to talking big. But I want to thank you all, you always make my big talk become a reality every time... But this time, it's not the same. The treble is indeed ... very hard. All right!" He got up from his seat again and raised his voice, "I admit defeat! We're not qualified to win the treble! Everyone will go home and sleep after this game. Don't think about anything else. Let's win either the Champions League or the FA Cup."

"Let's put the pressure down! It's no big deal to lose this game to Arsenal! As long as we knock them out of the Champions League, revenge will still be ours to take!"

Twain finished speaking only to find that the locker room was still dead silent, even quieter than before. He asked strangely, "What's the matter? Why are you not talking? Did I say something wrong? Hey, I'm doing this for the good of you guys! I'm trying my best to relieve the stress for you! Is this your attitude in response? What are you looking at me for? Why are you not talking?" He suddenly shouted, breathed heavily and stared at the crowd in the room.

"Say something! Like, 'Okay, we gave up the league tournament!' or something like that."

"No." Wood stood up and said, "I don't want to give up the league tournament." With that, he looked at Twain.

Pepe hesitated for a moment before he got up to say, "Boss ... I apologize for what happened in the first half ... I lost my cool when I saw the goal concede..."

"That's why I'm here to relieve your stress, isn't it?" Twain spread his hands and shrugged.

"But what I want is not for the pressure to be reduced in such a way..." Pepe shook his head and said, "Like George, I don't want to lose the championship title."

"Boss... None of us said we were going to give up the league tournament. Why would you say that?" This time it was Akinfeev who came forward and said, "I apologize to Pepe. I acted impulsively in the first half, but it's all right now. We're only one goal behind. Why give up now?"

More and more people stood up to express their wishes. No one wanted to give up. They all wanted to win the championship. At last everyone stood up and surrounded Twain in the middle.

Twain looked left and right.

"Strange. So, in other words, you suddenly don't want to lose the game again?"

"We did not say we wanted to lose the game, boss!" Someone corrected the mistake in Twain's words.

"Do you really want to win?" Twain asked incredulously.

"Does anyone want to lose?" Wood asked in return.

When Twain heard Wood, he put his hands up in front of his chest and lowered his head to signal for everyone not to speak first. He was silent for a moment, and then spoke up, "Very well, you'll forget what I just said from now on. Forget those damn words like 'give up the league tournament', 'go home and sleep.' Let's set up the tactics against Arsenal for the second half..."

## Chapter 843: This Season

It was silent in the locker room, and Twain stood among the group of players. He looked at each of them. Everyone stared at him wordlessly. He was the backbone of this team.

“Do you really not want to lose?” Twain asked, but he did not expect the men to answer. He raised his hands in front of his chest and bowed his head to signal for everyone not to speak.

“Very well. Then from now on you forget all of what I just said just now! Forget those damn words like ‘give up the league tournament’, ‘go home and sleep.’ Let’s set up the tactics against Arsenal for the second half...”

“We’re definitely going to win this game. A draw is unacceptable. We’ve put in our efforts and we need to be rewarded. So, we don’t have to consider defensive counterattacks...” Twain wrote and drew on the tactical board. He looked back to see everyone still standing and hurriedly wave for them to sit down.

“In terms of defense, we can refer to the last game. George, you have an important task. Freeze Fàbregas completely, leaving him too occupied to organize the attack. Arsenal rely on him to manage in the midfield. If he’s ineffective, Arsenal’s offensive threat will be at least weakened by half. Don’t wait, pounce on the first point. Fernando, you protect in the back.”

Gago and Wood both nodded at the same time.

“Your task is not to intercept their ball, but to delay the time and slow Arsenal’s pace down to buy some time for Wood’s defense. Remember, when they want to pass the ball, let them pass. You don’t have to run over. Guard the middle and leave the other positions to your teammates.”

Then Twain drew two lines along the sidelines on the tactical board.

“It’s going to be very demanding on the sidelines in the second half because not only do you have to attack, you also have to let go. The full backs have to assist with the offense and the wingers also have to defend. If the side midfielders are not active, then our defense will be in jeopardy. If the full backs do not assist in the offensive, then we can’t win the game. You’re the key to this game, guys.”

This time it was Bale, Rafinha, Fernández and Bentley who nodded.

Twain looked at Pepe and said, “Pepe?”

Pepe knew what he wanted to ask. He shook his head and said, “I don’t have a problem, boss. You don’t have to worry about me.”

Twain pointed to him and smiled, “Toward the end of the first half it was clear that Arsenal had used your position as the place to focus on breaking through. Now let’s make a bet. Do you feel...” He winked, “... that Arsenal will still think so in the second half?”

Pepe guessed what the boss wanted to do. He asked, “Boss, you’re saying they think Igor and I are going to fight in the locker room and continue to play abnormally in the second half?”

Twain wagged his finger and said, "I just think it's possible, and Arsenal can think it's possible. If I were Wenger, I would take everything into account. You had a big blowout with Igor in the first half. It looked like you have a vicious feud between you two...Heh." Seeing the look on the two men's faces, Twain laughed.

The two parties in the conflict bowed their heads a little embarrassedly. Now that they had completely calmed down, they were really ashamed of themselves for their outburst in the first half in front of tens of thousands of people and live television cameras. Who knew what went in their minds at that moment, and what rang in their ears?

"I think Arsenal will try to break through from your position in the second half. If they find that nothing has changed from the first half, they will concentrate all the attacking firepower on you. If it were me, I would do the same. It's my favorite thing to twist another knife into the open wound and add salt to the injury." As he said so, he did the action of stabbing with a knife and twisting it. The muscles on the players' faces twitched as well. . .

Twain suddenly stopped talking and stuck his head out to look around. The people who were focused on listening to his instructions, were puzzled—what was the boss up to again?

"Tony, what are you doing?" Kerslake could not take it anymore and asked aloud.

"It's a shame." Twain shook his head and sighed, "The locker room in the Emirates Stadium is really clean. There is no dirt or dust at all...I wanted to slightly change your appearances." Twain said to Pepe and Akinfeev, "Your faces are too clean now. It doesn't look like you're two enemies that had just fought a fierce fight."

Some of the players who were first to catch the boss' drift, laughed.

Amid the laughter, Akinfeev looked embarrassed again, but Pepe was brave enough to throw caution to the wind and lifted his head to say, "This is nothing, boss. Igor and I will continue to stare at each other. That'll do." Having said that, he specially demonstrated the action.

He stood next to Akinfeev but turned his head to the side and glared at the other man from the corner of his eyes with the muscles flaring slightly around his nostrils. The corners of his mouth tilted upwards, but it was not a smile. It showed contempt, disdain, and disgust. It was as if he really looked down on his teammate next him from the bottom of his heart.

Twain clapped right away as he watched from the side. He said, "You acted it out very well. I recommend you go to Hollywood after you retire, Pepe!" Then he looked at Akinfeev.

"I can't act that well, boss. I can only avoid looking at him." Akinfeev turned his body around and turned his back toward Pepe.

The two men's performance made the locker room laugh endlessly.

Twain snapped his fingers and the laughter subsided.

"While we're defending, the biggest headache is not how sharp the other side's attack is, but not knowing where they're going to come from." As he said it, the defenders nodded and felt the same way. "Now the problem is solved." Twain pointed to Pepe, and there was another burst of laughter in

the crowd. "At the start of the second half, you act a little clumsy. Don't worry, I won't shout at you from the sidelines, Pepe."

"Okay, boss." Pepe agreed right away. It was also a challenge for him to be able to deliberately perform abnormally without making any fatal mistakes.

"Pepe can be a little bit clumsy, but you can't, Igor."

Akinfeev nodded hurriedly and said, "I know, boss. I'm the last line of defense."

Twain knew the Russian goalkeeper was smart and did not continue the topic. He turned to the team now and said, "Now that Arsenal's main direction is clear, don't think that we can win just like that. Our opponents are living people, not bronze statues outside the stadium or computer data. They will adjust to our changes. Once they find out that Pepe is just a trap, they'll make a change right away, or they'll beat us at our own game...So, in fact, we are given very few opportunities. I ask you not to hurry to counter press after successfully defending and to make sure of the success rate. I repeat I don't want to see you send long shots ahead after you intercept the ball. Try to keep the ball on our side and not give the ball possession back to Arsenal easily. If you lose the ball, then counter press. Don't rush back to defend. You must remember, we don't have many chances to deceive Arsenal. You have to treat it as our only chance to attack each time you take the ball! One goal!" He put up his right index finger and said, "As long as we have a goal, we can break the deadlock on the field and mess up Arsenal's tactics. So, we have to take advantage of our one shot at the ball! This is an away game for us, everyone outside is our enemy, we don't have a right to waste our chances! We will suffer if we waste any opportunities!"

"In terms of offense, you have to keep running, and every opportunity will emerge during running. Don't be lazy and expect the football to be sent to your feet in front. Pull apart Arsenal's defense. Their full backs also like to assist. Take advantage of that to strike their flanks! Ibi, you've got to be a little bit tougher! Keep them occupied. In that way, it also reduces the pressure on our defense."

After everyone knew what they had to do, Twain was silent for a moment. Kerslake looked at his watch. There was little time left for the halftime interval. The halftime interval seemed extraordinarily short.

Twain was silent for a while before he continued to say, "I know that everyone is very tired recently. Honestly, I am also very tired. Everyone here is tired." He pointed to the coaches around him. "You're not the only ones fighting in the final stages. So are we. You are physically tired, and we are mentally tired. Anyway, we are so tired till we are going nuts." Twain used the word "tired" a lot in one shot. He seemed to want to emphasize the feeling in particular.

"But it's the 34th round of the league tournament now." Twain pointed his finger and said to his players, "Four more games to go before the end of the season ... No, it's three and a half. We are six points behind Arsenal, a gap of two games. That means there are one and a half games left. If they win against us in this game, then there is a three-game gap. Even if we win all three of the last league games and Arsenal loses all of them, we still share the same points with them, but because we have fewer goals scored than them, we still can't win the title."

"I say these things to you not because I want to lessen the burden on you and not to make you feel like 'things are still in control.' I want you to know 'Damn it, things are at a rotten stage! We are done for if we don't work hard!' Three and a half games! We don't even have the slightest chance to make a

mistake, just like life. Once you lose, you lose and there's not another chance for you to re-do. So now I'm grateful for the competition schedule!" Twain gnashed his teeth and looked fierce when he said "grateful." "It gives us a chance to take our destiny into our own hands, even if this is our last chance."

Twain raised his index finger, slightly trembling. It was a sign of him using too much force.

"One last chance. If we can't grasp it, we can really declare that we give up. Even there are still three rounds until the end of the league tournament. We are not qualified to win the championship in that case! We have no right to laugh at the losers, because we will be the biggest losers! So, for me, for you, for all of us, this season actually has... only forty-five minutes left. If we can't defeat Arsenal, we can't win the league title! If we lose to Arsenal here, then we still can't win against them in the Champions League game three days later! It's how things are. If you have been tripped by the same stone, you will be tripped by that stone for the rest of your life. You can't climb up. To you, that stone lying on the ground will simply be a mountain insurmountable to you! So, don't believe the kind of nonsense that if we lose the league tournament, we still have the Champions League!"

Twain's face was flushed again. This time it was not from anger, but from excitement.

"How many times in your career will you have the same opportunities as this season? The league title, the Champions League trophy, the FA Cup, we have three titles to fight for. We can win the 'treble' that tens of thousands of people admire! Twenty-two years since the establishment of the English Premier League, only Manchester United had ever done it! We would have a chance to be the second in twenty-two years, but it will be gone if we let it go here today! Who knows what's going happen in the future? Who can guarantee that we can still win the treble next season? I can't guarantee it in any case." Twain spread his hands and added, "If such an opportunity is still not worth our whole team to grit their teeth to fight!" He brandished his arms and roared, "Then what else is there in this world that is worth us fighting hard for? What else?!"

The eyes of the players who had been watching him in silence, underwent a transformation. Balls of raging flame burnt in their eyes. Some of them were so excited that their lips trembled, fists brandished, and bodies shook. They could not wait to rush out now and fight Arsenal.

But Twain was not done talking. The fire was not fanned strongly enough!

"You're tired, I know! You're under a lot of pressure, I know that! But why are we tiring ourselves for and putting ourselves under pressure? It's all for the first treble to be achieved since 1999 in fifteen years! If you're tired, grit your teeth and bear it! If you're feeling the pressure, grit your teeth and bear it!" Twain gritted his teeth and said as his knuckles turned white. "Hold up till May 23rd. At that time, we will have three championship trophies to prove that it is worth gritting our teeth and bear it! We will not do useless work. There must be a return for every bit of hard work and perseverance we put in. We, Nottingham Forest ... are champions!"

"Champions!!" The players, unable to contain their excitement, finally roared out.

"On that day, everyone will Bow! Down! To! Us!!" Twain brandished his fists vigorously, as if he was going to smash a hole in the air.

A crowd of people followed suit and howled. The air in the entire locker room sizzled due to him, leaving everyone excited and eager to find an outlet for the fire inside their hearts.

They had already overshot the time. The staff came knocking on the door of the visiting team's locker room to remind the Forest team it was time to play. Arsenal had been waiting for them on the pitch for almost two minutes. Unhappy boos had broken out in the stands. Those security guards were really worried that if the Forest team still did not come out, the fans in the Emirates Stadium would start to tear down the seats and smash the visitors' technical area.

But when he knocked on the door, a group of people rushed out and nearly knocked him to the ground.

He staggered to one side to avoid and watched in amazement as the Nottingham Forest players, with their glares and necks flushed with anger, rushed to the pitch.

Then he saw Tony Twain coming out last. Twain also saw him, and the two men exchanged looks. Twain smiled and walked to the field.

### **Chapter 844: The Crucial Goal**

Once the second half started, it was as Twain had analyzed at halftime interval, Arsenal first tried out from Pepe's position. They wanted to see if Pepe still had not adjusted back.

It was not just Arsenal's concern. It was also an issue that the live television commentator was concerned about.

"Tony Twain did not replace his player. Pepe, who clashed with Akinfeev in the first half, still remained on the field. It looks like his anger has not dissipated. I really don't understand ... Tony Twain, who has always been known for his strict discipline, why did he not show any response to such a serious conflict? If they managed to settle the dispute during the halftime interval... Why do I feel that Pepe is still playing with anger? As a center back, he never communicates with the goalkeeper during the game and doesn't even want to look at him. As for Akinfeev... When he directs the game, he calls the names of Bale, Rafinha and Woodgate, but he doesn't look at Pepe . . . That's weird..."

The commentator remained perplexed despite much thought. The Arsenal players could not care less. All they knew was that there were gaps within the Nottingham Forest defense for them to go through.

Everyone still remembered how, just before the end of the first half, Arsenal surrounded the Forest team's goal with perils. Pepe was simply too distracted to play during the last few minutes. If it was not for Wood filling the position in time, or if Akinfeev was still doing his job conscientiously, they believed Arsenal should have brought a score of 2:0 to the locker room at the end of the first half.

Now, after a fifteen-minute break, it looked like the conflict between Pepe and Akinfeev remained unresolved, which was good news for the Arsenal players.

Wenger also thought the same. He stood on the sidelines and signaled the players to continue attacking. A score of 1:0 was not very secured. He needed to score another goal.

Fàbregas controlled the ball in the midfield and Wood did a fierce tackle. He had to get the football out as soon as possible. Against an opponent like Wood, it would be dangerous to let the football stay at his feet for one more second.



Wood pressed hard, but for Fàbregas, the situation was not the same as before. When Wood pressed him hard at the time, he needed to deal with Wood while also looking for the target and route to pass the ball. Having to multitask, it was easy for him to lose the ball at his feet.

Now he did not have to think about where to pass the ball. He knew Pepe's position and so did his teammates. He just had to pass the football there ...

Therefore, without any worries, Fàbregas kicked the ball into Pepe's defense zone.

Now the test for Pepe was here.

How could he guarantee that he could perform poorly to convince Arsenal and yet not cause real trouble for Akinfeev behind him?

He slightly stumbled and was a little late by a step. Vela rushed ahead of him and grabbed the ball. It looked like Pepe's form still had not recovered.

But just as Vela was about to go around inward, his body was entangled by a stronger and more powerful body. Pepe strode fast to catch up, and he pushed Vela out. He could not use too much force. He had to make Vela think his defensive rhythm was chaotic, so his strides alternated between hard and soft. Vela was so bothered by him that he could only pass the football out when he saw his own position was veering off. He passed behind him and Walcott appeared where Pepe should have been. He shot directly!

Akinfeev had already jumped to make the save, but someone's leg flew across and the football hit the leg to bounce out of the end line.

It was Woodgate who saved the day. After he saw Pepe followed Vela, he took care to cover the gap left by Pepe because he knew that Arsenal would attack from here, so it was not difficult.

Twain heaved a sigh of relief when he saw what happened off the field. He was obviously very nervous.

"Your method is really risky..." Kerslake smacked his lips next to him. He was on tenterhooks just now.

"Heh heh." Twain chuckled, "Taking risks come with great rewards."

Seeing that the team's goal was temporarily out of danger, Kerslake had a casual chat with Twain. He was impressed by Twain's performance in the locker room and full of praises, "Hey, Tony, how did you come up with that idea to motivate the team?"

Twain was focused on the game and did not quite understand, "What?"

"First you deliberately look down on them, and then you stirred up their fighting spirit ...That was an incredible move!"

Twain turned to look at Kerslake with an excited look on his face. He looked amused and said, "I meant what I said."

"What?" This time it was Kerslake who did not understand.

"You think I said that to deliberately motivate them?" Seeing Kerslake nodding his head incomprehensibly, Twain smiled, "I'm telling the truth. I really wanted my team to give up. The pressure

was so great to have cause my own men to clash in person during the game. I couldn't take it that it hadn't happened and forget about it. If that pressure was bad for the team, I did not have to keep going. It was only that the players' own behavior went beyond my expectations, so I changed my mind at the last minute."

"But something about your manner told me that it was not the case. You seem to have a card up your sleeve. It was as if you planned for everything..."

"Of course, I can't let you see through me at a glance. I couldn't let them think that I really wanted to give up as a manager. It would be blow to their morale. So, I had to let you think that I deliberately pretended. Look, you were deceived, weren't you? If the players thought the same way, then a bad thing had turned into a good thing." Twain smiled and explained to Kerslake, who wanted to give Twain a punch—he deceived everyone.

"Then why are you telling me this now?"

"They can't hear us anyway." Twain said and shrugged at the players on the field.

The Forest players on the pitch really could not hear the conversation between the boss and the assistant manager. They were all focused on the game. They were thinking about how to score one goal and score another goal to win the game.

Arsenal's corner kick did not pose any threat to the Forest team's goal. Fàbregas' corner kick did not even get past the first point and was headed out by Wood in front of the goal.

After a chat with Kerslake in the technical area, Twain felt it did not look good if he was sitting comfortably in the technical area—if he was not happy with Pepe's performance, if his team was in perilous situation, he should get up from his seat as the manager, pace anxiously back and forth and occasionally shout from the sidelines?

At this point, he left the technical area and walked to the sidelines to shout toward the field, "Fight back, fight back!"

He was really worried that the players would forget to fight back.

Nottingham Forest must cherish every attacking opportunity because they knew there were not many opportunities like this.

After Wood headed the ball out, it was Sagna who got the ball on the sideline when he came up to assist in the offense. He was going to pass the ball, but he was entangled with Fernández and could not disengage himself for a while. Then Wood rushed up and converged with Fernández front and back to intercept the ball!

It was a long-awaited chance for Nottingham Forest!

After Wood intercepted the ball, he looked up and did not follow up with a long pass to send the ball forward. Instead, after a feint, he dribbled the ball along the sideline.

Sagna rushed back to defend and intended to cut Wood off midway. Just as he was about to catch up to Wood, Wood braked and turned around to pass the ball to Gago, who had already plugged in.

At the same time, Fernández, who had just been entangled with Sagna near the end line, as well as Bentley on the other side, plus Şahin and Ibišević who defended against the corner kick in front of the goal, all of them rushed up at this time. When Arsenal finally responded, they had already crossed the center line first.

“Return to defend!” Fàbregas shouted to his teammates to run back.

“This is Nottingham Forest’s chance to counterattack! It’s rare to see such a scene in this game!”

Fàbregas was the first to rush up after Gago got the ball in the middle. The best defense was to end their offense now!

Gago did not go directly head to head against Fàbregas. He sent the ball back to Wood. Wood did not stop the ball and directly divert the ball to the side, which was received by Bale who plugged ahead and dribbled the ball along the side as he dashed!

Nottingham Forest’s attack was as fast as what Arsenal had done before. But they are more concise and direct than Arsenal. If Arsenal’s attack was like a classical symphony, then Nottingham Forest was more like rock ‘n’ roll.

The former made the neutral fans give a standing ovation, while the latter made their supporters to jump out of their seats and get carried away as they waved their arms high and shout.

Bale dribbled the ball along the sideline and Arsenal’s defensive center of gravity tilted toward his side. He did not force to break through and pass the ball to Wood.

Wood then moved sideways to pass to Gago.

Meanwhile, Fernández and Bentley suddenly retreated to the flanks from the sideline, leading Arsenal’s defenders to follow suit and adjust.

It was a tiny window of opportunity. Gago saw a gap between the two sides which he could pass the ball which could be received. He did not hesitate to send the ball to the right.

The Arsenal full back retreated to the flank as he followed Bentley. The side was temporarily empty and Rafinha took advantage of the move to receive the ball.

“Rafinha is completely unguarded! Arsenal has made a mistake!” The commentator exclaimed.

Clichy threw aside Bentley to run to the sideline to defend against Rafinha. The flank was handed to Walcott who returned to defend.

The Forest team’s attack was quick, and Arsenal’s defense was fast as well. If Rafinha were to force a cross pass, Ibišević was not absolutely sure he could have gotten the ball. Then the Forest team’s one opportunity to attack would have been wasted. That was not what Twain wanted to see.

So, Rafinha hooked the ball and passed it back.

Gago ran over to help him, and Wood moved to the middle. Şahin cruised in the flank to look for opportunities. Ibišević was at the forefront and tried his best to get the attention of the opponents.

Gago seemed to feel that a forward pass would not be effective. He intended to send it back. That was when he heard Twain growl on the sidelines, "Don't pass it back, Gago! Forward! Forward! Attack!"

Gago could only pass the ball to Wood in front of him. Fàbregas immediately pounced on the ball, trying to tackle Wood's ball under his feet.

But Wood protected the ball as well that he could not find a chance to make a move.

Wood continued to shift the ball.

The ball went to the left side again and Fernández took the ball in the flank. Bale plugged in from his back at a high speed which attracted Sagna's attention. He pulled back a little and Fernández suddenly cut inward to enter the penalty area!

Nottingham Forest only passed the ball back and forth outside just now. It looked like their pace had slowed down and there was no threat. Now, in a flash, they were showing off their ability and giving fierce smiles to Arsenal.

Sagna raced back to defend in a panic, but Fernández gave the ball to Bale on the sideline in time.

Bale did not pass the ball but slipped into the penalty area along the end line!

"A breakthrough! What a beautiful coordination!"

Seeing that Bale had broken through and entered, it was suddenly pandemonium in front Arsenal's goal.

Despite Sendero pulling him at the back, Ibišević struggled to squeeze forward and prepared to grab the ball.

And Arsenal's defenders, too, rushed toward Bale, trying to stop him before he passed the ball or fired a shot, using their bodies to block the ball out of the end line.

Bale saw through their intentions. He would not be stupid enough to give them that chance. Before the encirclement had fully closed in, he swept the football with his left foot to the middle!

Ibišević crossed in front of Senderos but did not grab the ball. While the goalkeeper, Almunia who was disturbed by him, fell to the ground and did not touch the ball. None of the other Arsenal defenders touched the ball.

The football slipped past them like this, and then Gago rushed up to meet the ball and fired a shot!

The football flew into Arsenal's empty goal unsurprisingly... Almunia was still lying on the ground at this moment and had not gotten up.

"Gooooo! Nottingham Forest has equalized the score! It's not even ten minutes into the second half! Gago scored his fifth goal of the season! This is the crucial goal!"

Gago was so excited after the goal that he turned to run toward Bale, who had passed the ball to him. The two men hugged each other tightly.

Off the field, Twain also raised and vigorously waved his fists.

He finally got the goal!

“The goal pulled Nottingham Forest back from the edge of the cliff! They have temporarily avoided the fate of failure! With three and a half games left in the race for the league title, this is their strongest opponent. This is also the Forest team’s best chance to close the gap in the points! Tony Twain certainly won’t allow his team to lose to Arsenal. Even if they face a strong opponent in an away game, he will tell the team that winning is the only goal! Now from the looks of it, Gago has done it!”

The Forest players looked so excited after the goal. They flocked to Gago, pressed him under their bodies and cheered to their hearts’ content.

The commentator did not exaggerate. The goal was too important for them. The risk of the duplicitous tactics set up by the boss during the halftime interval was too great and gave them only a scarce few opportunities. If the ball did not go in, nobody knew how the game would develop next. Everyone felt a great weight had lifted once the goal was scored.

The Arsenal players stood in place and felt a little helpless. They did not have any special feeling about this goal concede, which was like any goal concede in a normal game.

But if any of them listened carefully to what the Forest players were roaring about, perhaps their hearts would not settle down.

The Nottingham Forest players in the yellow away jerseys chanted endlessly:

“Treble! Treble! Treble!”

#### **Chapter 845: Qualifying for Championship**

“Fernando Gago! He scored a crucial goal! That goal pulled Nottingham Forest back from the edge of the cliff!”

There was a loud cheer in the stands at the Emirates Stadium where the fans all jumped from their seats and cheered with their arms raised. Arsenal’s players were a little helpless, with Arsène Wenger sitting in the manager’s box but only bent his head backwards, expressing his displeasure.

Twain’s celebration lasted only a short time as he pulled over Mitchell when the crowd was still clapping and cheering. “The warm-up is over, boy.” Twain glanced at No. 9 in Nottingham Forest who was taller than him.

Mitchell nodded, and the expression on his face was calm. It had already been three years since then, he was not the rookie who had just made his debut in the Champions League.

“Our replacement is a little early, the opponent must not have predicted this. I want you to go up there and play a bigger role, and not just scoring goals. Do you know what to do?”

“I know, coach. It’s not the first time I’ve played.”

Twain laughed when he heard that, “Right, you’re not a rookie anymore. Also, go up and tell them, Sagna and Criscito are very active in assisting and let them take advantage of that.” He pointed to both sides of the field and said to Mitchell. “Try to score another goal in a short time.”

Mitchell went forward after receiving the orders, Twain whistled as he walked to the side of the field, he used gestures to direct the team to continue the attack.

Wenger really did not expect the early substitution made by Twain. Not to mention that after they have just scored, it was reasonable to say that the team was doing well, and they should try to ensure the integrity of the line-up, not interrupting the rhythm of the team. This adjustment should have been made after they lose the ball.

Mitchell came on and replaced Şahin. Şahin was a little unhappy when he came down because it was too early. It was only fifty-five minutes. He had a dark look on his face as he clapped with Mitchell. Twain did not say anything as Şahin walked by, only raising his hand to touch his forehead.

From that goal, Gago seemed to be in good form in the game, hence Twain got Gago to get more involved in the attack with Wood defending at the back.

Seemingly aware of Twain's intentions, Wenger got up and issued the newest instructions. The two wing backs of Arsenal then stop assisting the offense and stayed at the backcourt.

Twain saw this scene and called them "p\*ssies" on the manager's seat. The enemy was too cunning! He initially wanted to take advantage of Arsenal's instability and score another goal to take the initiative in his own hands, but now it would become a stalemate.

Fortunately, Mitchell was able to control the ball on the pitch, so Nottingham Forest were able to play the possession game against Arsenal. But Twain still seemed a little worried...

From time to time, he got up from the coach's chair to walk to the sidelines, or raised his hand to look at his watch and the score on the big screen. Time went by minute by minute, and Nottingham Forest's attack still did not gain much. And Arsenal's offense was not as active, it looked like Wenger was satisfied with taking a draw on their homecourt.

After all, they were six points ahead. Even if it was a draw, they would still be six points ahead. For Arsenal, maintaining the six-point gap would almost certainly ensure that they would win the league in the end.

Wenger did not want to exert too much energy for this game as there would be another Champions League game in three days. That was the most important thing, where losing was absolutely unaffordable.

For that, after 65 minutes, Wenger began to make substitutions. First, he replaced Fàbregas. As the core of the team, the captain, the absolute main force, his task had been completed this game, Wenger did not want to see him getting injured or exhausted in the last 25 minutes. Fàbregas did not express any displeasure, but he was by no means thrilled, because he wanted to keep playing against Wood on the court....

So after seeing the fourth official raise the sign, he hesitated, shrugged and pointed at himself, questioning the side court. Wenger nodded. He then turned his head and glanced at George Wood who was a distance away, and then slowly walked down.

Nottingham Forest fans were very unhappy with his move. He thought he was deliberately delaying the game and hence jeering at Arsenal's captain on the stands.

Francesc Fàbregas remembered that he was still wearing the captain's armband after walking halfway, and then folded back and handed the sleeve to Senderos as the jeers became louder. But soon the boos were drowned out by the applause of the Arsenal fans, who stood up to greet their captain.

On the sidelines, Fàbregas turned and turned to the pitch, raising his arms in response to the applause of the fans, but his eyes kept staring at George Wood who was standing near the center circle. He seemed to be looking at himself as well.

The two men met eyes as Fàbregas turned and walked back to the bench. He shook Wenger's hand. Wenger patted him on the shoulder, signaling that he did a good job.

Twain was happy to see Fàbregas go off the field. He knew that there was hope for this game. Wenger has clearly chosen to be conservative as he switched to a defensive midfield—Denilson, the Brazilian who played the defensive midfielder.

Wenger's idea was that even if Fàbregas were to go off-field, Arsenal's offense would still have Wilshere, thus he was not worried about anything.

But in Twain's view, Wilshere was not yet able to compete with Fàbregas. It was not a matter of talent, but instead a gap in experience.

Wood alone was more than enough to deal with him, and after Wilshere got frozen, the likes of Walcott and Berra would not be able to play their full potential and Nottingham Forest would have more energy to put into offense, as they sought more chances to score goals.

In the remaining time, Nottingham Forest gradually took the initiative in midfield and began to put pressure on Arsenal's penalty area. Arsenal were on the defensive.

Nottingham Forest were aggressive but they seemed to have forgotten the requests of Twain at half-time. Rafinha fired a straight-out shot after receiving the ball outside the penalty area twice in a row, with one kick deflected and one shot flying. That upset Twain, who was watching the game, as he rushed to the sidelines and yelled Rafinha's name.

Rafinha became more patient after that and he no longer shot away blindly.

Twain then muttered as he walked back to the manager's seat, "It's a waste of opportunity....Do they still think they're leading by at least three goals?"

Francesc Fàbregas was substituted in the 75th minute five minutes later and Nasri was also replaced by Ramsey. Twain sneered at Wenger's replacement, then he made his own adjustments. Bentley was replaced by Moke. Moke's task on the pitch was simple, to use his technical skills advantage to create enough trouble for Arsenal's left-field defence. Since Lennon left, Nottingham Forest's right side was dominated by Bentley. Moke was still a little immature, but on some special occasions he had more use than Bentley.

Breakthrough! Breakthrough! Breakthrough!

Before the game, Twain pulled Moke and told him to forget everything else, leaving only one thing in his head, breaking through Arsenal's defensive line after he went up. He did it very well. He was not fast, but his dribbling was really good as Arsenal's defenders could not intercept the ball easily.

For a time Clichy's side became the focus of Nottingham Forest's attack, with Arsenal's defensive core following the left, Nasri did not play long as he quickly became a defensive forward....

They managed to hold on against Nottingham Forest's offense until the 80th minute.

Twain looked at the table. They were already at the eighty-minute mark and he had one last substitution left. Several people had some fitness issues and they seemed to need to be replaced for a rest. Bale, for example, was not efficient in his offensive assistance. After running forward, he no longer ran back actively to defend. Fortunately there was still Wood to make up for him at the back as he did not let Arsenal seize the opportunity to score.

Twain only brought Leighton Barnes as a left-back to come to play in the away ground. If he went up, the offense will definitely be reduced, because he needed Barnes' defense.

Should he let Bale rest for the Champions League match three days later? Or substitute into an offensive player and continue to strengthen the offense?

Twain considered for a while as he called Agbonlahor from the bench. He was going for an all-in.

A minute later, the fourth official signalled for Nottingham Forest's substitution as Agbonlahor replaced Gareth Bale. Removing a wing-back and replacing him with a striker, this was Twain's gamble. As he told his players at half-time: if we lose here, we would not be able to continue to qualify for the title.

He wanted to use the replacement to remind the players that he had not forgotten his words, so he hoped the players on the pitch do not forget it. Victory would be their only goal.

Agbonlahor ran up onto the field, as the ball went out, he called everyone over as he raised his fist and shouted at his teammates, "The coach allowed us continue to attack, we must win!"

After hearing this, Nottingham Forest players all turned to look to the side of the field to look at Twain, with his stern face.

"What about defense? Bale's down, Rafinha's not made for a centre-back" Gago had some concerns.

"Don't think so much. Think about it after a goal!" Agbonlahor cheered.

Wood said, "I would be in charge of the defense. You guys don't worry about it."

He ended the argument as soon as he spoke and no one disagreed.

"That settles it. Be sure to score goals. Be sure to win!" Agbonlahor raised his fist to cheer up the tired players. "Guys, think about the triple champions"

Gago gasped as he nodded, "Ten minutes to go, find a way to get them a goal."

The group of people set a goal and then dispersed.

After a minute later, Nottingham Forest attacked into the penalty area, but Ibišević collided with Almunia during the scuffle, and the latter fell to the ground with the referee summoning the team doctor to the pitch.



Nottingham Forest fans in the stands were still complaining that Almunia had deliberately delayed the game, as Twain did not have the effort to find the fourth official to reason. He took the time to call Wood to the sidelines and strategized.

“Cross! Pass the football through the air to the front of Arsenal’s door and to Mitchell! But it is not to let him score, he’s not the main striker, but instead let him grab the back spot and then swing the ball over. Do you understand? He’s not the main offense, but we want to make the opponent think that he’s the one who solves the problem.” Twain hurriedly used gestures to make up for the information.

Wood nodded, “I understand.”

“Tell them about the change, tell Gago if we succeed in a pass, then run into the penalty area and ignore the defense of the midfield. ”

“Do I defend?”

Twain nods, “Yes!”

“Okay, no problem.”

Wood ran back to the field and told the team about Twain’s adjustment.

Wenger called Senderos to the sidelines while Almunia was being treated to keep his eye on defending Mitchell. Senderos was the only one on the pitch which was able to compete with Mitchell for headers with his height in Arsenal. At such times, Twain would certainly use the simplest approach — a cross into the penalty area, allowing Mitchell to fight for the header — to try to score, so he had to mark Mitchell.

After the game resumed, Wenger began to take comfort in his previous arrangements. Mitchell did become Nottingham Forest’s main offense, as Senderos fought hard to get the top spot at the start and was not in the downswing.

But then things started to look different. Looking at his stamina, Senderos had been running for almost 90 minutes and could not keep up with Mitchell at all, who only joined in the second half. Tactically, Mitchell was not really the endpoint of Nottingham Forest’s offense.

When George Wood intercepted the ball successfully in the backfield, his position was on the right side. He did as he said he would, to guard the right-back as well.

At that time, Walcott was aiming to force a break with his pace against Wood. Unfortunately, Wood’s accurate position made it impossible for him to increase his speed, and the ball at his feet was easily tackled by Wood. He just tried to snatch Wood’s ball in front and ran back. But Wood did not pass the football to Gago in the midfield, as what the narrator thought, as he made a move that surprised everyone: he dribbled the ball straight through the sidelines!

Walcott did not expect Wood, being a temporal wing back, to bring the ball up like an authentic wing-back. He watched Wood run past himself as he was completely unresponsive.

When Wood crossed the middle line, the Arsenal defenders was still thinking he would pass the ball to Gago in the middle, or Fernandez in front. So everyone’s defensive attention was on the two at the back, so they watched Wood continue to dribble the ball along the sideline.

“Ah, ah! George Wood’s still dribbling the ball! There’s not a single Arsenal player going up to defend, they’re defending Gago. Some were focusing on Fernandez, some even on Mitchell. But no one were going up to defend George Wood. He was still dribbling!”

The narrator got excited, because whenever Wood did something unusual, things would get interesting.

“Don’t leave him alone!” Wenger roared as he got up from his seat, abandoning his calm facade. As an experienced veteran coach, he sensed danger from Wood’s unusual move.

Like him, Fàbregas got up from his seat as he got nervous. He has changed his clothes as he sat on the bench with a towel, chatting with his teammates. At this moment, he could not help but leave the bench, as he walked to the sidelines, staring intently at George Wood dribbling crazily on the sidelines.

He really has a lot of stamina.

That was Fàbregas’s first thought in mind. The second was: This is bad!

The manager’s loud reminder made Arsenal’s players change their minds, just before Sagna was preparing to leave Fernandez to go to defend Wood, Wood passed the ball. He passed the football to Fernandez.

When he saw this pass, Sagna suddenly had this wonderful feeling. He finally passed the ball!

Then he threw his head coach’s words away to Java as he turned around to pounce on Fernandez. In the inertial thinking of a lot of players, George Wood would never run to the sidelines.

But they were wrong.

Fernandez discovered that Wood, after passing to himself, did not stop running. Instead he continued to speed forward. He did not make any gestures to ask for a pass, but Fernandez felt that he should pass the ball instead of dribbling it himself.

So when the football came over, Sagna was still following from behind. He did not hesitate to pass the ball out again, the goal was to the space on the sidelines, Wood was running through at high speed.

“One-two?” The narrator’s tone was visibly surprised. Apparently he did not expect Nottingham Forest to play the game from there. Since Bale stepped down, the narrator repeatedly said that Tony Twain wasted one sideline. But the situation he was looking at now embarrassed him.

Wood’s style of play was very simple, the focus now was on handling the ball. He was not like other wingers who received the ball and passed it again, even though he had lost his best passing opportunity at that time. No one knew exactly what habit it was, perhaps it was simply to get the football to stay at his feet for a little longer. He was also not like other wingers who like to break through from outside.

He watched the football roll towards himself, as he did not stop the ball but instead immediately kicked the ball towards the goal.

Until this moment, many people at Arsenal were still counting themselves lucky. None of them went up to defend Wood, because they thought Wood’s passing technique would definitely be bad, because no one had seen him have any decent pass....

This time Wood's pass still seemed quite bad....

It was very high.

Twain raised his head outside the field, as he squinted his eyes to stare at the silver-white football that was high in the dazzling light.

The people below even had enough time to compete for positioning.

Senderos looked up at the ball while he was grabbing Mitchell's uniform to prevent him from slipping away.

Wood, who had passed the ball, lost his centre of gravity and fell down, sitting on the ground as he watched the ball fly past Arsenal's goalmouth.

"Watch out for his header!" Almunia nervously reminded his teammates in front of the goal. "Watch Out for Ibišević!"

There were two center-backs, one of which was to defend Mitchell, and the other to defend Ibišević. Senderos and Mitchell jumped at the same time. The Swiss centre-back felt like he was stuck in position, but it was only half of it. Mitchell still found a little space, twisting his body in the air and pushing Senderos aside.

The football fell. Almunia gave up the idea of jumping straight into the air and competing for the ball. With a center-back, he did not want to risk a foul.

While in the air, Mitchell felt like he was flying, he always felt it whenever he jumped, and he enjoyed it. He saw the football in the air and he also saw Senderos's forehead, then he discovered himself jumping a little higher than his opponent...

He was looking for someone. Ibišević was blocked, so he could not pass there.

Gago. Where was Gago?

A yellow figure appeared at the corner of his eye.

Whoever it was

Mitchell swung his head with much effort. Senderos hit nothing with his header at the front. Instead of flying towards the goal, the football flew in the opposite direction.

In the crowd, the yellow figure ran out. Even under the pull of Denilson, he still struggled forward, stretching his legs back and kick!

Gago felt he had kicked football, but what happened next, he was not sure.

Almunia realised he had made a mistake. He should not have put Senderos and Mitchell, two big men, to be in front of him, as he could not see what was happening in front!

When he saw the football flying over, his brain was still blank. He did not make any actions to dive for the ball, he just stared as the ball flew past him, and scored.

Was the ball in?

Arsenal's players and fans were surprisingly calm in their heads at this moment, as they were just asking themselves. Did the ball really go in? When the match still had a minute before injury time and the ball scored?

The ball's in! How could that be!

The Emirates Stadium, which had been dormant for a moment, suddenly became a crater of eruptions.

"Unbelievable! Unbelievable!" The narrator presses both his hands on the soundproof headphones and roared, for he was about to be unable to hear his own voice.

Twain rushed out of the coach's chair with the screams of Arsenal fans behind him, his arms open, his teeth clenched and waved. He looked like deranged; it was hysterical.

Immediately behind him, more Nottingham Forest players and coaches rushed out of the coaching staff, hugging and kneeling on the ground to thank God.

Eastwood was crying with excitement, his eyes red, as he grabbed onto his clothes and roared. No one could hear clearly what the Romani was shouting about.

Gago, who was pulled down by Denilson, took a peek at the goalmouth by habit, when he really saw that the football was lying in the goalmouth, he went crazy.

His eyes were wide, with his pupils shrinking, as blood surged from his neck and into his head, dyeing his face red.

He clenched his fist as he felt himself grabbing onto fate by its throat.

"If we give up here, we won't be eligible to win the championship! If we don't win Arsenal, we can't win the league! If we lose here to Arsenal, we won't win the Champions League match three days later! If such an opportunity is not worth our whole team to grit their teeth to fight, what else is there in this world that we're fighting for? What else!"

The passionate voice of their coach rang in every Nottingham Forest player's eardrums. Now they could proudly claim to be the team that qualified for the title.

He got up from the ground, shook off the entanglement of his teammates behind him, and ran to the corner flag, taking off his jersey and throwing it to the sky. He did not care if the referee would give him a yellow card, as this time he was like venting everything he had. Gago was usually elegant, but this was the first time he stripped as a celebration after a goal, it really seemed that the Argentinian was really very excited.

Even George Wood, who had rarely let his emotions out, stood up from the ground, as he raised his fist and waved. Then he was hugged by Mitchell, who rushed forward.

At the Emirates Stadium, in front of 60,000 Arsenal fans in front of the enemy Arsenal, Nottingham Forest's players were celebrating their last-minute goal, completely ignoring the home team's mood and feelings, and venting as if they were the owners of the stadium.

The Emirates Stadium was silent. On the coaching seat, Arsène Wenger had his head in his hands, he held his head low as he did not want to see this scene in front of him.

He had nothing to say about the result. But there was still a thought in his heart: Champions League.

After three days, let us have a battle to decide it all, Tony, This time, it will be a true death battle!

### **Chapter 846: One More Match Remaining**

“Fernando Gago! Fernando Gago!” The commentator roared. “A goal in the dying minutes of the match! Nottingham Forest has miraculously gone into the lead! They have made a comeback against Arsenal! My god! Look at them... They have all gone crazy!”

The Nottingham Forest players have truly gone crazy on the pitch.

Even Twain had lost himself in his ecstasy. He began acting rather inappropriately as a manager by the side of the pitch, and his behaviour caused numerous cameras in the stadium to be ‘attracted’ to him.

He was not acting inappropriately so as to anger the Arsenal fans. He was truly fired up by the goal. He had told his players during half-time that they needed to win this match if they wanted to continue their fight to become champions, and they had done just that.

How could he not be worked up?

When his excitement and euphoria died down, Twain noticed that Eastwood was murmuring to himself by the side. He looked like he had just cried as his eyes were red.

He walked over and patted him on the shoulder. “Why did you cry?”

“I didn’t cry... Boss.” Eastwood stopped murmuring once he noticed that Twain was standing next to him.

“What are you mumbling about?”

The Romani’s face turned red, but he said nothing.

His reaction piqued Twain’s curiosity. He shook Eastwood’s shoulder and asked, “Go on, tell me. What are you being embarrassed about?”

Eastwood hesitated for a while before he went on to say, “I, uh, I’m trying to memorize the words that you said at half-time, boss...”

Twain was taken aback by his words. A short moment later, he burst out laughing. “What is there to memorize? It won’t do you any good...”

Eastwood chuckled. His cheeks were still faintly red. “Your words are just like the bible, boss. I feel full of energy every time I recite them, boss.”

It was Twain’s turn to be embarrassed. He scratched his messy head of hair and did not know what he should say.

“... How can there be anything else in this world that is worth fighting for if we don’t even want to fight for a chance like this?”

Eastwood grinned at Twain after reciting the words one more time.

“Well said, boss. We fought hard and we have attained victory. Do we have what it takes to become champions now?”

Twain looked at the smiling Eastwood. The latter’s eyes were still red.

He definitely cried earlier.

It suddenly dawned on Twain that if Freddy had not retired, then he could have become a player who achieved the treble in his career.

Those achievements mean nothing to him now...

Twain did not answer Eastwood’s question. Instead, he said, “Didn’t I say this before? I equate Nottingham Forest with the champions. Looks like you didn’t memorize properly, Freddy.”

There were three minutes left to play in the match. The Arsenal players could only pick themselves up and continue playing in the match.

Twain had left his happiness from earlier aside and was shouting at the top of his voice by the side of the pitch. He wanted his players to stay focused and not give Arsenal the chance to level the score in the final few minutes of the match.

After all, if Nottingham Forest is capable of scoring a goal in the dying minutes of the game, then who is to say that Arsenal is not capable of doing the same?

“Stay calm! You all have to stay calm!” Those were the words that Twain shouted the most in the final three minutes of the match. He was worried that his players would get too excited and that their emotions would end up affecting their performances.

Twain was right to be worried, as the players’ emotions did nearly get in the way. Luckily for them however, they had a captain who was capable of staying composed in all circumstances.

George Wood kept reminding his teammates verbally and through his actions on how they should be acting in the final few minutes of the match.

The Emirates Stadium was filled with deafening cheers. The home team fans were all supporting and cheering their team on.

Wenger might be thinking that it was all right to lose the match since they still led Forest by three points, but there was not a single fan who would want to see the team that they support lose a match.

Wenger got his Arsenal team to go all out with its offense. It did not matter if they were to lose by another goal since it would still be a loss. But, if they were lucky, they could score a goal against Forest and level the score.

Arsenal earned a corner after shooting at Forest’s goalpost repeatedly. It was Arsenal’s last chance to score in the match. Even their goalkeeper Almunia had run up to Forest’s penalty box.

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

Almunia actually managed to head the ball!

Unfortunately for him, his shot went wide. It flew right out of bounds.

There was no one guarding Arsenal's goalpost right now. Akinfeev was not going to let this opportunity to carry out a counterattack slip. He ran over to the ball boy positioned behind the goalpost and asked for the ball. He planned on scoring a goal and making the score 3:1 by kicking the ball towards the empty goalpost before Almunia made his way back.

He did not get his wish, however. He heard three blows to the referee's whistle right at the moment he received the ball from the ball boy.

"The match is over!"

The Forest fans at the stands all stood up with both hands raised to the skies, and they began cheering at the top of voices.

Their team had achieved victory in a challenging game. This win was worth six points in their hearts!

"Nottingham Forest has defeated Arsenal in an away game and they have obtained three valuable points. The gap between them and Arsenal is only three points now, and they have also risen to second place. In the match that kicked off before this, Liverpool drew with Manchester United and has dropped to third place. Tony Twain has taken another step towards a future where Carl Spicer has to eat a table."

"It was a match that would get any football fan fired up. Gago scored a brace, and his second goal was crucial in rescuing Tony Twain's heart. He is Forest's biggest hero today. If Nottingham Forest were to end up becoming the champions of the Premier League, then Gago deserves a lot of credit for their success. His goal was extremely significant!"

When the whistle signalling the end of the match sounded, Twain stood to his feet and walked over to Wenger with his hand outstretched.

"I'm in the mood for a drink now."

Wenger forced a smile as he stretched out a hand.

"I'm not in the mood for that sadly, Tony."

Twain patted Wenger on the shoulder. It was his way of comforting him.

"There's still one more match left to play between us. If you win, I'd wish that you can become the champions of the Champions League wholeheartedly." Twain sounded sincere with his words. It was hard to discern even a twinge of sarcasm in them, and it was also hard to imagine that these words would come from a man whose goal was to become champions of the Champions League.

"Thank you."

Wenger was the most influential manager in the Premier League after Ferguson retired. He has achieved many accolades during his managerial career, but the only thing that eluded him was the Champions League trophy.

"I too, would wish that you would become the champions should you win the next match between us."

The two bade each other farewell. Wenger turned and walked down the tunnel, whereas Twain turned and walked towards the pitch.

Twain quickly made his way onto the pitch. He hugged each and every Forest player and thanked them for putting in a good performance earlier.

When he reached Gago, he gave the latter a tight hug with all his strength. The reporters surrounding them started pressing down on their shutters as they hugged, but neither Gago nor Twain cared about the attention that was on them.

“Well done, Fernando!” Twain patted Gago on the back forcefully.

Five minutes might have passed since he scored the match-winning goal, but Gago was still feeling pumped up. His lips continued to tremble, and he returned Twain’s hug with a lot of strength as well.

He was the main character in the stadium today. He was Nottingham Forest’s hero for the match, and he could very well end up being Nottingham Forest’s hero for the season as well.

He had definitely not expected things to turn out this way when he transferred to Nottingham Forest from Real Madrid.

He now saw himself as a member of Nottingham Forest completely. He did not have any lingering thoughts about his time in Real Madrid. It was all in the past now.

“The treble, boss! That’s what you said! We all tried our best...” Gago, who rarely got worked up, had trouble forming his words.

“That’s right. Like I’ve said, we would definitely achieve the treble.” Twain spoke softly by Gago’s ear.

Gago suddenly calmed down and stopped trembling after hearing Twain’s words.

Twain ruffled Gago’s hair affectionately before releasing him from his embrace.

“Enjoy this special night, Fernando.” He winked at him.

Gago was surrounded by countless reporters the moment Twain left.

“Can you talk about that very last goal of yours, Gago?”

“How do you feel to have scored two goals in the match, and one of them being the goal to clinch the victory for your team?”

“Can you tell us what you were talking about with Manager Twain earlier?”

“Let’s talk about the possibility of Forest becoming champions of the Premier League. You have just reduced the gap to just three points...”

“Hey, Gago...”

Twain, who had been making his way over to the tunnel, suddenly stopped in his tracks by the side of the pitch. He then lifted his head to look at the row of VIP rooms situated at the top of the Emirates Stadium.



He knew that Shania was in one of the rooms, though he did not know exactly which room she was in since there were people in each and every room.

He had gotten really worked up earlier, and he was certain that Shania must be worried sick.

Watching football matches is a great enjoyment to most of the fans who turn up at the stadium every week. It is a way for them to vent their pent-up emotions and to experience the highs and lows that watching football brings.

However, Shania was an exception. Watching football matches was a form of torture to her. She did not care about the exciting performances that the players put in, nor did she care about how the two managers are battling with each other through their use of tactics. She certainly did not care about whether a particular player is handsome or not either.

All she cared about was Tony's performance in the match. She did not want him to overexert himself or get too overly excited, because she was afraid that those behaviours would affect his heart.

She did not care about how appealing football is as a sport, or how it is reckoned as the number one sport in the world. Some people even call it the 'war' within a peaceful era, or a 'game between men', but none of those things mattered to her...

She just wanted her husband and lover to be healthy at the end of each and every match.

Twain did not manage to see which room Shania was in but he waved his hands at where the rooms were situated, before pressing a hand on his heart.

He was sure that Shania would see this action of his, and that she would also know what it meant.

Shania did indeed see that action of his. She smiled and waved back at her husband from the VIP room as a response.

As for whether Twain saw her gestures...

There is no need to ask, is there?

Twain did not solely commend Gago's performance during the post-match conference. He commended the team's performance collectively.

The players shared the same opinion as him as well. All of them spoke about how the victory was only possible because the team had worked together as one during their interviews at the mixed zone. They also brought up how the words that Tony Twain said to them at half-time became their source of strength to pull off the feat.

Their comments piqued the reporters' curiosity. However, neither Twain nor the players were willing to divulge what was said in the locker room. Therefore, 'what Tony Twain said at half-time during the Arsenal game' would most likely become yet another secret that no one knows the answer to for a long while...

Twain and the Nottingham Forest players were in a good mood during the press conference. Likewise, Wenger was also composed and did not throw a temper either.

In contrast, the Arsenal players did not appear to have been able to accept the outcome of the match.

Fàbregas kept shaking his head during his interview. He was clearly dissatisfied with the result.

“A loss is a loss. There’s nothing else that I can say about it... I have no idea what to say either. We’d focus on the Champions League next. We still have a chance. The initiative is still on our hands. We still lead them by three points...” His voice grew softer as he spoke before he turned and left. It was as though he did not believe what he had just said.

Wilshere did not approach Wood to request for an exchange of jerseys at the end of the match. He was not in the mood to do it. He finally understood what Wood must have felt when he refused to exchange jerseys when his team lost.

If another player were to go up to him and ask to exchange jerseys right now, he might not refuse the other person, but he would definitely not feel good during the exchange.

Fortunately for him, the Nottingham Forest players were too busy celebrating their victory, so no one went up to him to ask for his jersey. He left the pitch briskly, but was still stopped at the mixed zone. The reporters wanted him to say a few words about the match from before since he looked crestfallen.

“I don’t know if we are still able to become champions of the Premier League. They (Nottingham Forest) are right on our trail...” He realized that it was not appropriate to say such words after losing the match, thus he quickly added, “However, we don’t know what will happen in a match until the very last moment. Thus, it’s not the end of the world just because we lost a match...”

He left in a hurry after he said those words.

The way in which Wilshere and Fàbregas left after providing an interview to the reporters was subsequently adopted by all the Arsenal players.

None of the Arsenal players were in the mood to talk about the match after losing the match at their own home grounds. All they wanted to do was to get away from the stadium, take a nap, forget all about the match and start preparing for the second leg of their Champions League semi-finals match.

The Arsenal players were well aware that the best way to forget the pain of losing a match is not with the passage of time, but with a victory instead.

Their manager was of the same opinion as well.

At the end of the press conference, Wenger said, “To me, today’s match is already a thing of the past. I’d not think about it anymore. What’s really important is the Champions League match three days later. We’d be playing at the same stadium then, and we would not lose to Nottingham Forest again.”

His expression was solemn. It was a stark contrast to Twain’s smiling face.

The next day, the various media outlets all reported about how there was immense pressure riding on Wenger’s back, whereas things were easy for Twain going into their Champions League match.

Sadly, they were all wrong.....

**Chapter 847: Other Than Attack, it’s Still Attack**

As it was an away game in the UEFA Champions League three days later in the same stadium, the Forest team did not return to Nottingham. Instead, they stayed at the Nine O'clock and prepared for the mid-week UEFA Champions League quarterfinals.

To help the players loosen up and relieve their stress, Twain sacrificed precious training time and gave the team a day off.

The players had the freedom to choose whether they wanted to sleep in the hotel rooms or go shopping outside. However, Twain still had to analyze the videos of the matches with his coaching staff to prepare for the final match.

The players might be able to relax, but as coaches, especially the manager, they would not be able to relax at all.

There was no time for Shania to even have a meal with Twain. He was that busy. Even when they had a chat on the phone, they could only have a quick chat. Shania could tell from Twain's voice and replies that he was obviously very distracted. During this time, Uncle Tony's body and heart were both not Shania's, his whole mind was filled with "football".

Shania was very jealous, but she could not do anything about it.

She would never really ask Twain to retire and accompany her for the remainder of their lives. That was because she could not be by her husband's side half the time in a year due to her own career. So, when she could be with Twain, she did not mind sharing half of her husband to football. She even felt guilty and thought she let Twain down, so she had to accept a little unhappiness.

And so, she reminded Twain to take care of himself again and hung up.

Twain only managed to come out of his distracted state after Shania hung up and he started to think about whether he was acting too poorly earlier.

"Phone call from your wife?" Kerslake turned and ask after hearing the door opening in the midst of analyzing the videos.

Twain acknowledged.

"Actually, you should still have time for just a meal, isn't it?" Kerslake turned and said to Twain, "Call her back and ask her out."

"I do, but I'm afraid I'll be distracted," Twain shook his head as he rejected the suggestion of his assistant manager.

Kerslake smiled and said, "How I envy you, Tony. Look, my wife will never call me to show any concern."

"You've been married for so long," Twain smiled as he sat down beside him and continued to watch the videos.

"That's precisely why I envy you... It feels like you're enjoying the life of a newly wedded couple every day," Kerslake said.

“That’s only because we don’t get to spend many days of the year together,” Twain said with a dry smile, “Okay, let’s not talk about women anymore, let’s talk about the match with Arsenal. Our physical fitness might not be a match for them now...”

“Do you want to rotate the players, Tony?” Asked Kerslake.

Twain went silent for a while as he considered whether he really wanted to rotate the players. For a competition like the UEFA Champions League, he still preferred to use the strongest lineup available. However, he had already been using the strongest lineup for two matches in a row. This third match...

“Let’s make a few changes,” Twain said after much consideration, “Şahin’s fitness is poor, let’s switch him out. We’ll play with two forwards.”

“442?” asked Kerslake.

“Hmm...” Twain thought for a while again. Turning to his assistant, he asked, “Say, what formation do you think Wenger will expect us to use in this match?”

Kerslake frowned and thought for a moment. He took a rather long time to consider and so, Twain extended a palm without waiting for his answer and said, “Here, let’s analyze our advantages and disadvantages. Firstly, their fitness level is better than ours. They have two home games in a row while we have two away games in a row. Secondly, they have the home ground advantage. The referee’s judgement will definitely be affected by this and we’ll be under stricter scrutiny by them, whereas it will be the opposite for them. ”

At this point, Kerslake interrupted him, “Who asked you to always emphasize that our style is very rough and physical in front of the media. That even Rijkaard’s Chelsea will have to go back crying against us.”

Twain scratched his head, a little embarrassed.

He cleared his throat and continued saying, “Thirdly, hmm...thirdly, they’re only one goal behind after the first leg. This difference is too small, it’s so small that we can ignore it. Arsenal is an attacking team, a goal difference doesn’t mean a thing to them. I believe that it was Wenger’s intention to lose 0:1 in their away game.”

“What’s the fourth point?” Asked Kerslake.

“There’s no fourth point,” Twain clapped his hands and said, “These three points are enough to put us at a complete disadvantage. The media do not think we have much of a chance as well. Ever since the first leg ended, they have been reporting that Arsenal will definitely progress, and we can only be eliminated. Now that we beat Arsenal in the league, they’re looking for more reasons. Saying that we’re placing a higher emphasis in the league and giving up on the Champions League...” At this point, Twain burst into a short laughter and said a line in mandarin, “How can a sparrow know the will of a swan?”

Next, he continued in a language that Kerslake can understand, “I think that Wenger will be expecting that too. Since we’re lacking fitness and we’re playing away, I’ll definitely choose to be more conservative in my tactics and try to hang on against Arsenal. Even if they score once, we still have extra time and penalties. Anyway, if we want to progress, there’s no wrong in being conservative.”

When he said this, Twain suddenly smiled, “But I want to give him a surprise this time.”

In the team meeting at night, the players who have been relaxing the whole day gathered in the meeting room provided by the hotel and listened to the words of their manager.

Nobody was distracted by the freedom in the day and failed to return, and there was no problem with the team's discipline.

"For the match on the day after tomorrow, we'll not be playing counter-attack at all," Twain said loudly in front of a bunch of players. The meeting room was rather large, and the team was not able to fill it up completely. He had to raise his voice or else it will be dispersed in this rather empty room and some people might not be able to hear him clearly.

"We'll attack!" He said while waving his arm.

There was a minor commotion in the meeting room which died down very quickly. The players knew that Boss had his reasons for this arrangement, all they needed to do was to listen.

"Everyone else thinks that we're exhausted, but we are going to tell them through this match that—we're still going strong! They definitely won't be expecting us to go for an offensive approach in the away game, that's why we'll give them a surprise! We'll bamboozle them right from the start! So, our tactics for this match has to be simple and effective. For that purpose, I've decided to cut one of our midfielders," Twain said.

Şahin knew that he'll be the one replaced. Boss loves to use two defensive midfielders, and he places a lot of importance in the flanks too, so if he's going to sacrifice a midfielder, it'll definitely be him, the attacking midfielder.

"Aaron, you'll start in Nuri's place," said Twain.

Mitchell and Şahin both nodded. They both accepted this arrangement.

"We'll be using the 442 formation. With Aaron's height in front of goal, we need to make use of the flanks more. Also, George and Fernando, you two have to actively push forward instead of staying back in defense. Pressure the Arsenal's defense and make them lose focus. Take note, I'm talking about a very offensive approach. We'll be attacking Arsenal from start to finish and not give them a chance to control the game, prevent them from implementing their rhythm on the game. Disrupt their game right from the first second," Twain continued.

"If we can get into the match faster than them at the start, then we don't have to worry about their attack at all!" Twain told his players confidently, "They will not have any chance to threaten our goal at all. So, both our full backs need to actively assist the attack too. Scoring first will be the key!"

"Leave Fàbregas to George. Fernando, you'll have to pay more attention to the others."

"Just remember, just attack for the match in two days' time! Attack, attack, attack. Other than attack, it's still attack!"

He rarely says this. He usually says, "Defense, defense, defense. Other than defense, it's still defense."

After the meeting, the players went back to their rooms. Along the way, they were discussing about this arrangement and they were also very interested in the Boss' thinking. Fighting head-on with Arsenal in terms of attack? Few have tried that before. Against Arsenal in the past, Twain would usually pit

themselves as the weaker side and choose to play on the counter. Make use of physical fouls and defense as well as tireless fitness to compete against Arsenal's exquisite attack.

Because of this, the media had always demonized Nottingham Forest. Indeed, if you compare the footballing styles of the two teams, there would be a stark contrast—Arsenal's football was pleasing to the eyes, like a classical musical, refreshing to the audience. On the other hand, Nottingham Forest's football was much more utilitarian in nature, not as attractive or pleasing. Other than their own supporters, there were only very little neutral fans who liked Nottingham Forest.

Now, this situation might be changed in two days' time. Tony Twain was finally giving up on the conservative ways and was going to compete against Arsenal fair and square in the Emirates stadium. The Nottingham Forest players have the chance to prove to the world that they were not inferior to Arsenal, and that they were not naturally conservative. Defeating Arsenal by attacking in their home ground no less, this was indeed a tactical arrangement that can inspire them.

For the next day and a half, Twain focused on some attacking training, flank attacks and midfield attacks. The media did not know about the contents of the training as Twain rejected all forms of interviews again.

This gave the media even more evidence to belittle him.

"...Tony Twain rejected our interviews and recording requests once again. He seems to be very nervous. Even though Arsenal is the team trailing, everyone favors Arsenal to go through to the next round. There are many situations that are advantageous to them and the nervousness of the manager, Twain, is compelling evidence.

"Twain is not confident himself, otherwise he would not have trained behind closed doors."

"In the last league game, their own players clashed in the match and almost came to blows. Tony Twain must have been very troubled by this. A team will crumble when they are under too much pressure, I believe Nottingham Forest is not far away from crumbling."

"I asked Pepe after the match, why did he clash with Akinfeev in the match? He said it was nothing, they were only gunning for victory and the conflict has been solved... Look, what a stereotypical answer. I've interviewed countless players, and I've seen many internal conflicts situations. Their answers are almost always the same as this, so much so that I'm beginning to suspect that they have the same template."

"There are no problems internally for the Forest team? Only a fool will believe that! The pressure on Tony Twain is so heavy it feels like he'll suffer from a heart attack anytime. His players even almost came into blows in a match. If not for their luck in coming from behind to beat Arsenal at the death, I really don't know if Twain would be admitted to the hospital again."

"Are there really no bad blood between Pepe and Akinfeev? Will their performance during the match really not affect the team's morale? Is Twain really not going to "rest" Pepe by reducing him to the bench? There are too many talking points to watch out for in this match."

"... No matter what, I think Arsenal would progress. They have too many advantages. Nottingham Forest? All I see is a group of wounded soldiers that have collapsed due to the pressure and fitness.

Twain has used all his energy to think about how to make his team recover, how can he have the energy to think about any tactics?"

The media was so vocal in their voices and their abilities to mislead the people was so powerful that even the Nottingham Forest fans were unsure—is there really a big problem internally in our team? Are we going to be eliminated from the UEFA Champions League? Can it be that even a strong manager like Tony Twain can no longer control the Forest dressing room?

And so, Nottingham Forest welcomed the final match of the three matches against Arsenal in a row under such a circumstance, the concerns of their fans and the belittling of the media.

The final match that would decide their fate.

Nottingham Forest was standing with their backs to a cliff, they had no way to go other than forward. If they were eliminated then, all the hard work they put in earlier in the season, all the victories that they fought tooth and nail for would be for naught.

There is still the Premier League champion? So sorry, our target is the treble. The English FA cup, English Premier League and UEFA Champions League. All three of them. We will not accept any less.

On the night of the match, the Emirates Stadium and its surroundings were brightly lit. The fans from both teams entered the stadium full of expectations.

The official anthem of the UEFA Champions League was being broadcasted live. People who heard the anthem felt even more hot-blooded and they could not wait for this blockbuster match to begin immediately.

At the same time, in the respective dressing rooms, both managers were doing the final preparations for their teams.

Wenger looked at his players calmly and said, "We've lost twice, we can't lose again. If we lose again, we'd have lost everything this season..."

Some people might find it strange, even if they lost the Champions League, did they not still have the Premier League? They are still leading Nottingham Forest by three points, how could they lose so easily?

But how could they have understood Wenger's thoughts? He won many different trophies during his almost 18 years in Arsenal, yet he had never won the UEFA Champions League, that was his only regret. He was already 60 years old and he did not know how long more could he stay in this business. He was not willing to give up on any opportunity to lift the Champions League trophy. For this, he was even willing to sacrifice the Premier League...

"Arsenal has never won the Champions League before. I hope you can change this embarrassing history into real history this season," he said.

On the other side, Twain was shouting with his team as he pumped his fists in the air, "We've just beaten them in the league, surely we can beat them again in the Champions League! Beat them three times in a week, make them shudder at just the sight of us in future! Remember your task—Attack, attack, attack! Other than attack, it's still attack!!".

**Chapter 848: Unexpected Advantage**

“Arsenal is in trouble,” the commentator said, “It doesn’t seem like they ever expected Nottingham Forest to suddenly attack in full force in their home ground...”

The Arsenal fans in the stands kept booing to disrupt the Forest team.

From the situation on the field, Arsenal was indeed in trouble...

Just like what Twain said, Wenger did not expect that Forest would dare go against their normal behavior and attack in Arsenal’s home ground at all.

In the first five minutes of the match, Nottingham Forest had already threatened Almunia’s goal twice.

This caused Arsenal to be a little flustered, and their defense was full of mistakes.

Nottingham Forest firmly held on to the initiative of the match.

When the ball was under their control, Arsenal could only keep running, tiring themselves out. As they were not prepared for Nottingham Forest’s attack, they did not even know what to do. Some of them wanted to follow Wenger’s pre-match tactics and continue to attack, others felt that the situation was critical and they should defend before counter attacking.

With differing opinions, they were not able to work well together. When they could not work well together, there would be loopholes for the opponents to take advantage of.

Twain could see the gap between Arsenal’s front and back lines very clearly on the side. This was a massive opportunity for Forest to score...

He turned to look at Wenger on the manager’s seat. The Frenchman had no expression on his face, and he did not seem to have any intention to make any adjustment. Maybe he believed in his team? Maybe he was unable to understand Nottingham Forest’s intentions yet and did not dare to make any rash decisions?

No matter what, he would not be able to change anything no matter how much he thought about it. The matter of fact was Nottingham Forest had the advantage then.

Making use of the advantage that they got hold of in the opening five minutes, Nottingham Forest successfully turned an away game into a home game.

Next, they continued to launch their attacks deep into Arsenal’s territory. This was not a simple siege — In fact, a siege of the Arsenal’s goal was not what Twain hoped to see. Arsenal also launched attacks of their own and a good amount of them too. Forest controlled the game to create a situation where there were attacks from both sides, allowing them to have more chances of attacking. If their opponent did not come out of their own third, how could they attack?

Arsenal had no choice but to work hard to try and grab the control of the game back. That was why they had to attack instead of just defending. After about ten minutes of panic, there was a unified thought within Arsenal internally — attack!

That was what the Forest team wanted to see the most, Arsenal attacking along with them.



An intense attacking game started...

“Fàbregas! Beautiful pass, Vela receives the ball, shoot! Ah, what a pity!”

Akinfeev caught the ball tightly. He did not wait for the Arsenal players to go back into their defensive positions as he threw the ball back into play to launch their own attack. Gago got the ball and dribbled with it. After Wilshere came out to stop him, he did not stop to turn and try to dribble past him, instead, he passed the ball directly to Cohen at the flank.

Cohen, who was playing in this game in place of Fernández, was a better crosser of the ball than the Chilean. Twain let him start because of this. This was because the starting forwards for Forest in this game are Ibišević and Mitchell, both good headers of the ball.

However, Cohen was not great at dribbling and the Arsenal’s full-back, Sagna, was quick to retreat. Therefore, Cohen changed the play directly from one flank to the other with a long pass to Bentley. Bentley received the ball and passed it to the middle where Gago was already approaching.

After receiving the ball, Gago passed the ball forward and it rolled into the penalty area!

Mitchell appeared from behind the everybody and just when he was about to receive the ball and form an one-on-one with the keeper, the ball was intercepted by the onrushing Almunia. Michell was a little unhappy to see the ball fly over his head, if only he was a little faster...

Almunia waited for Mitchell to get out of the penalty area before kicking the ball forward. Wood’s advantage in the air was obvious. There was no one in the Arsenal’s midfield who could compete with him for aerial balls.

Wood headed the ball in the air easily as he passed it to Pepe behind.

After witnessing this situation, Fàbregas made a sign with his hand to Almunia at the back, informing him to try throwing the ball out instead of pumping the ball forward so that they can build their attacks from the back.

Starting the play like this was akin to giving possession back to Forest.

Even though the ball was intercepted by Forest, Arsenal did not give up on attacking this time. They actively tackled and fought for the ball and successfully got it back from under Gago’s feet, starting their attack right then.

Wilshere dribbled past Woodgate using his technique before feinting to shoot and passing the ball to Fàbregas coming from behind instead.

Under pressure from Nottingham Forest’s captain, the Arsenal captain took a shot but the ball flew just over the crossbar, giving the Nottingham Forest fans a scare.

Fàbregas was a little upset with this miss. He stood up and gave a clap out of annoyance.

Twain looked down at his watch, the match had started for 15 minutes. Forest had not scored yet, but on overall, they had the advantage. The Arsenal attack felt a bit messy under the strength of Forest, depending more on the individual brilliances of their stars. The main reason why Arsenal was at a disadvantage was because Wenger did not even play with any defensive midfielders in his attempt to

attack Forest on their home ground, he picked an all attacking midfield. As a result, their midfield was being overrun by Forest's midfield.

They still had to score as early as possible, otherwise this tactic of theirs would not be able to work if Wenger came around...

Furthermore, the fitness of the team was indeed a problem, they could not afford to drag the game.

Twain stood up from his seat and walked to the sideline. He did not say anything, but he believed his players understood what he meant by standing on the sideline.

We need to score, guys. What are you doing?

Arsenal was still working hard to regain control of the game. They were neglecting their defense a little, or more like they placed too much focus on attack. Wenger told them before the game that they had to score in this match. Scoring was the key. That was why the thought of scoring was ringing in their minds...

As for defense?

Even though they knew that their defense was in danger in the face of the Forest attack, all of them had a feeling of luck in their minds, thinking that they would be able to break through the Forest defense first before they concede.

This was simply a game to see who would score first. If Arsenal scored first, the game would be following Arsenal's game plan. If Nottingham Forest scored first, Arsenal would not have the initiative.

That was why they kept thinking about scoring, so much so that they placed their defense as second priority instead...

Arsenal's attack got intercepted yet again. George Wood and Pepe intercepted Fàbregas' pass to Vela. After Pepe poked the ball away, Wood got to the ball ahead of Wilshere and stormed forward with the ball. His dribbling was very standard, and his form was good. Fàbregas gave up on trying to win the ball, choosing to disrupt him from the side instead.

Wood was only dribbling for a few steps when he realized that the Arsenal's defense was not in position yet. It was very messy, some people assisting in front, some people rushing back, some people hesitating whether to go back to defend or go forward to fight for the ball...

There were spaces everywhere.

He decided not to dribble anymore, passing the ball to the flank instead. There were no defending Arsenal players there, wide open!

Cohen ran as hard as he could. He was not fast, but Wood's pass was too good... He did not have to compete with anyone for speed. As long as he ran forward in a straight line, the ball would go towards him as it rolled. The opponent's defenders might seem to be closer to the ball, but they would find out after a few steps that if they ran in a straight line, the ball would be just out of their reach, and if they ran in a slanted line, the ball would be further and further away from them...

As Sagna was still in a forward position and did not come back in time, a center back had to cover him for this ball. One of the two center backs, Kolo Touré ran towards the flank. He gave up trying to get the ball halfway in his run and chose to run along the path of the ball instead, blocking the path into the box, preventing Cohen from going in. This was the best choice he could have made under this situation.

It was a pity that Cohen did not even think about cutting into the penalty area at all. He allowed the ball to roll about two meters ahead of him, feinted a dribble, forced Touré to move back a little. When there was space, he went outside and crossed directly!

Cohen's cross was good. It was unlike Wood's cross in the dying moments of the previous game, high and floating. His cross was level, the speed of the ball was fast and there was an obvious curve to the ball. The ball was almost at the byline when the curve was at its strongest. The ball was going towards the goal but curved towards the penalty area when it was going to reach the goal. This curve caused Almunia to be at a loss about what to do. He wanted to come out to claim the ball initially, but just when he started to come out, the ball curved away.

So, he started to retreat and prepared to protect his goal. He just put up his hands when there was a shadow in the air.

"Aaron Mitch—ell!" Screamed the commentator.

The ball seemed to have been attracted by Mitchell as he headed it. The ball changed direction and flew past Almunia who could not react at all. The force of the cross, along with the momentum of Mitchell combined to give an effect of "one plus one is greater than two". Right in front of goal, there was no goalkeeper who could have reacted to it.

The ball was headed into the goal powerfully by Mitchell.

Twain pumped his fist at the sideline towards the sky.

He looked at his watch, the match had started for 29 minutes. He finally got what he was looking for!

Wenger, who was seated on the manager's seat, slapped his thigh forcefully, with an upset look on his face. He did not expect Forest to really score with this attack. Looks like the attacking form showed by Nottingham Forest until then was not just putting up a show, they were serious...

He miscalculated.

He did not expect the gambler, Twain, to dare gamble like this in this game.

The Nottingham Forest fans at a corner of the stands exploded into a loud cheer, drowning off the boos from the other side temporarily.

Mitchell ran over and gave Chris Cohen who assisted him a hug. The other players surrounded them as they celebrated the goal.

This goal by Mitchell not only gave Forest an away goal, it also gave them an aggregate lead of 2:0. If Arsenal wanted to progress to the next stage, they could not just win this match by a score of 2:1, they needed to score three goals!

No wonder Wenger was so agitated after conceding the goal. Fàbregas' face turned solemn immediately.

Anyone with a clear mind knows that Arsenal would have a tough time for this game...

Replays of the goal was shown repeatedly on the screen as the commentator praised Mitchell's movement and header, "...He appeared behind Arsenal's Senderos just like that, unmarked as Touré was drawn out to the flank to defend Cohen. Ibišević's movement was so good! His movement in front drew Senderos away and Mitchell, who was still outside the penalty area when Cohen was preparing to cross, suddenly sprinted into the box and leapt high into the air! He leapt higher than anyone else! He scored! All in one movement, beautiful! The planned movements that Forest demonstrated were key for this goal, but the individual capabilities of Mitchell was praiseworthy too..."

Ever since Mitchell became a member of the first-team and scored often in matches, his father became the happiest man in the stands. Every time his son scored, all the Forest fans around him would congratulate him and shouted his son's name loudly. He loved this feeling of being a star.

The spot where Mitchell celebrated his goal was coincidentally just below the away end of the stands. A group of people shouting, "Aaron! Aaron!" made him, the father, passionate too.

As the players ran past the front of the technical area and back to their own positions after celebrating, Twain shouted at them from there, "Keep attacking! Continue! Don't slack off, score as many as you can!"

Next, he pulled George Wood next to him and gave him some quick instructions, "Watch out for Arsenal's fight back. If they're going for long balls, we don't have to worry. If they attack through the middle, pass the ball to the flanks immediately after intercepting their ball. We'll counter their attacks and try for another goal in the first half! Tell Cohen and Bentley to take note of any opportunity to counter attack."

Wood nodded and turned to run back to the pitch.

After everything, Twain turned and returned to his manager's seat, took a seat and had a drink of water.

After drinking, he turned and gave Kerslake a silly smile.

Kerslake asked, "The pressure's not that high anymore, right?"

"No, it's even heavier now."

"Huh?"

"Unless the game is over, otherwise my pressure would not be reduced. Before scoring, I'll be worried that we won't score, and the opponent takes the lead by scoring first. Now that we've scored, I'm worried that the opponent will score and level the match. I asked them to try for another goal before the end of the first half. That way, we'll have greater leeway," Twain explained.

As expected, Arsenal attacked Forest wildly after conceding, almost giving up on defense entirely. They did not want to lose at home, did not want to let Nottingham Forest complete a double over them in the same season. Attacking with all their might was the only way.

Forest performed steadily, getting into their defensive formation and dealing with the balls calmly, making full use of their advantage of having two defensive midfielders, controlling the all-attacking midfield set-up that Arsenal had.

Next up was the counterattack.

That was the Forest team's forte.

40 minutes into the first half, there was an astronomical figure. A 2:0 lead with five minutes to go in the first half, 3:0 on aggregate.

This game was basically over...

### **Chapter 849: To Win the Championship**

Arsenal made an adjustment during halftime interval. Wenger brought off Wilshere and brought on Denílson. It looked like it was to strengthen the defense, but in fact it was to prepare for the counterattack. Unfortunately, the gap of three goals was too wide. If Arsenal wanted to advance to the next level, they had to score four goals in forty-five minutes and ensured that they did not concede another goal.

It was simply an impossible task.

At the start of the second half Arsenal did threaten the Forest team's goal, but good times were always short-lived. They still could not shake Nottingham Forest's advantage built in the first half. George Wood is certainly one of England's most powerful midfielders today. Fàbregas' errors in his passing began to rise under his close marking and his physical strength was on the decline.

Although he could also send out those incisive passes, the whole team was suppressed by the Forest team. What could he pass the ball to?

The game was a tactical failure for Arsenal and no matter how good Fàbregas was, it was to no avail.

When Arsenal still failed to score halfway through the second half, Wenger had already foreseen his defeat and begun to save his team's strength for the league tournament.

Fàbregas was still running hard on the pitch, passing the ball or making shots himself. He was not willing to admit defeat at this time.

The Spaniard was a little impetuous on the pitch, while Wood was calmer. The boss instructed him to keep a close watch on Fàbregas, and he meticulously carried it out. As for who Fàbregas would pass the ball to, he did not care. Just as his teammates believed in him as the team captain, he believed in his teammates too.

It was this sort of tacit understanding that allowed the Forest team to play actively in the away game and gain the initiative in the game.

In the second half, Arsenal had very few chances and the Forest team kept threatening Almunia's goal. The Nottingham Forest fans had not seen such an easy game at Arsenal's home ground for a long time.

In the 80th minute, some Arsenal fans began to leave the stadium early. They already held no hope for the game and could only comfort themselves with “we still have the league tournament” as they left the stadium unhappily.

Seeing that the overall situation had been determined, Twain also replaced a few players who had been more tired recently. Bale was replaced by Joe Mattock; Bentley was replaced by Moke and Ibišević was replaced by Agbonlahor.

Every player who was brought off hugged Twain and celebrated their victory in jubilation.

Twain did not think there would be a chance of failure with a 2:0 lead and ten minutes left.

He could go back to Nottingham with a relaxed mood. He believed that Shania in the box could breathe a sigh of relief as well.

During the last ten minutes, Arsenal launched a frenzied counterattack on the Forest team’s goal. They had almost given up on the pursuit of victory, but the pride of the strong team made it impossible for them to be so cleanly defeated at home. They wanted to take advantage of the remaining time to score a goal.

Unfortunately, the Forest team did not let them get their way. The entire team retreated to defend and fully block the goal.

Fàbregas finally played a full game and was not replaced early. Unfortunately, his efforts did not help the team win and not even bring a face-saving goal for the team.

When the referee blew the final whistle to end the game, many of the Arsenal players sat immobilized on the pitch, with only their team captain still standing.

On the other side, the Forest players on the bench, led by the assistant manager, cheered as they rushed onto the pitch, hugging their teammates on the field to celebrate.

While Tony Twain tidied his clothes and strode towards Wenger with a smile on his face.

“I’m sorry.” He comforted.

“I wish you good luck now, Tony. I hope you can make it to the final. But I won’t let you have the league title.” Wenger wanted to appear gracious. But he had just lost the Champions League and could not really smile.

Twain smiled and did not speak.

Wenger shook his hand and turned to walk away. Twain looked at his back, and he did not say the words on his mind, “Of course I’m not going to ask you to let me have the championship title, Professor. I’ll take it myself.”

After shaking hands with Wenger, Twain was surrounded by the reporters.

“How does it feel to be in the top four again, Mr. Twain?”

“It feels great!”

“Is the Champions League title your goal this season too?”

“Who doesn’t want to win the championship?”

“Is it a bit of a surprise to beat Arsenal so easily in the away game?”

“No, it’s Arsenal which should be surprised, not me.”

There were reporters wanted to ask questions, but Twain raised his hand to refuse, “You can ask whatever questions you have at the press conference. I have to go be with my team!”

He pushed aside the crowd and walked to the pitch to celebrate the win with the Forest players.

“Acting all self-important...” One of the reporters muttered in a low voice.

“But he’s qualified to act like a big shot.” Someone next to him shrugged, “After all, he’s the victor, isn’t he?”

The defeat of Arsenal and advancement to the semi-finals had given the Nottingham media a few days of enthusiastic publicity. The Wilford training base was full of buzz every day, with hardcore fans coming to support the team and the news media came sniffing.

The Forest team, who reached the semi-finals, met with some good luck. Their semi-final opponent was not strong. It was the France Ligue 1 team, Lyon. In the other match, it was an El Clásico between Real Madrid and Barcelona.

The Spanish media were excited about the top four teams because they had two teams in the top four and a team which dominated the top four of the Premier League long-term. All the teams had been utterly defeated this season except the Nottingham Forest team representing the Premier League in the top four.

The foreign media took delight in the misfortune, claiming that the Premier League was finally going to hand over the claim to the top league. The Spanish media proclaimed that they were going to take the top spot and that La Liga was the top league in Europe.

Whereas the Italian and German media, as always, chose silence.

The English media were unanimous in their optimism about Arsenal before the game, cheering Wenger’s team. Now they were turning to Nottingham Forest like opportunists, blowing Twain’s team up as “English football’s only hope”, “a warrior fighting for the dignity of English football” and “the inheritor of English football’s glory.”

Twain did not care about these labels being put on him. He had to return his focus on preparing for the league tournament. He would only think about the Champions League when the time came.

Before the Champions League game, the Forest team had already experienced playing against two strong teams. In the end, neither Chelsea nor Arsenal were able to complete their task of stopping them. Twain’s team successfully advanced and were currently ranked second, one point ahead of the third-placed Liverpool and three points behind the first-placed Arsenal with fewer points and goals than Arsenal. Arsenal was still quite far ahead in winning. The latest odds issued by William Hill for the Premier League title win this season remained bullish on Arsenal.

In an effort to prove that he had the victory in hand in his bet with Twain, Carl Spicer analyzed the Forest team's disadvantages on his show. In terms of the competition schedule, he stated that the Forest team would face two strong teams and two weaker teams. The Forest team had already played the strong teams. The weak teams were the real test.

Neither of the two teams was out of the relegation zone yet. Worse still, they had not been promoted early. This was a situation that any of their opponents feared—a team in or at the edge of the relegation zone could either be relegated to the English Football League Championship before the three rounds of the league tournament or successfully secure a last-minute stay in the Premier League. Heaven and hell were right in between.

No one wanted to go to hell. Everyone wanted to go to heaven. Twain was the same. If he helped the others succeed, he would go to hell. He was a saint or Buddha who had altruistic love for the world and was willing to sacrifice himself. Therefore, the two games could be expected to be very intense and exciting.

These two games were in the 35th and 38th rounds of the league tournaments respectively.

In the 35th round, the Forest team would play against Portsmouth in an away challenge. While in the 38th round, the last game of the league tournament, they would play Sunderland at home.

If Nottingham Forest could beat Portsmouth while Sunderland won, then the final round might not be so bad for either team—Sunderland had already successfully avoided relegation and Nottingham Forest would naturally no longer have to face an opponent who would fight desperately to survive.

It was the ideal situation for the future, but Twain did not think their luck would be so good.

Because in the 35th round, Sunderland was up against Manchester United. How could Manchester United let Sunderland win at home in the fight to qualify for the Champions League? Sunderland only had one home game in the final four rounds and with two of the other three away games, they had to face a formidable opponent. It was harder for them to avoid relegation than Portsmouth.

As a result, the media had already declared Sunderland's death sentence ahead of time. In comparison, Portsmouth's last four rounds only had the Forest team as its strong opponent. They appeared more likely to successfully avoid relegation.

Perhaps only the Sunderland people themselves had not given up. The local media constantly cheered the team on. They thought that they would be able to create a miracle if they were united. It had even been suggested that Sunderland should bring back the former manager, Keane who had performed a similar miracle—taking over the previous team at the bottom rank and leading the team to be successfully promoted to the Premier League after half a season. It was also Keane's only brilliant performance as manager. His coaching career was not very smooth later on, so such a proposal was entirely a desperate attempt at anything in a crisis. Nor could Keane have promised to step forward and be the fall guy.

There was a seemingly reasonable interpretation.

"... Tony Twain's team is currently competing in three tournaments. Their physical exertion is extremely high and there is a lot of pressure on the players. I don't think Sunderland is at the point of surrender. As long as we haven't dropped out before the final round, we may still have a chance to defeat the



exhausted Nottingham Forest team... Think about it, the fatigue from three consecutive tournaments and the immense pressure of having to win the league title, or else their boss will have to eat a table... No team can play at a normal level under such circumstances..."

But any terrible suggestion would seem reasonable before anything bad happened.

In short, Sunderland was still struggling. Twain would not go easy on them just because he had loaned many young players to them on several occasions, as well as had a good personal relationship with their former manager, Keane. Just like he would not show any mercy to Portsmouth. He did not care about any opponents other than himself. As long as they were obstacles in front of him and became a stumbling block to his progress to win the title, he would ruthlessly kick them aside.

Nottingham Forest challenged Portsmouth in an away game on April 19th, the 35th round of the league tournament.

Portsmouth had the vigor of a team looking to avoid relegation. But it seemed to come up with only eighty per cent of strength. Because the news came from Old Trafford that Sunderland trailed Manchester United just three minutes after the start of the game. Sunderland falling behind lessened a lot of the pressure that was on Portsmouth. They wanted to win the game but was not willing to stake it all. After all, there were three rounds left in the league tournament. If they used all they had got against the Forest team, then they would probably watch as their opponent overtake them in the remaining three rounds to escape the depths of despair in hell.

It was dangerous to bring such a contradictory frame of mind to compete against Nottingham Forest, which was determined to win and catch up with Arsenal.

The Forest players did not have that many complicated ideas in their heads—They had to win the game. What about the next game? They played using their best in the game. What about the second half?

It was easy to them—once they won this game, they would continue to win the next game. They played using their best efforts in the game and they would continue to play their best in the second half.

In the 25th minute, Nottingham Forest broke the deadlock with a long shot from Rafinha. They took a 1:0 lead in the away game.

Portsmouth only stepped up their attack once they trailed behind, with their manager roaring from the sidelines to ask the team not to give up. Ten minutes later, Portsmouth used a corner kick to breach Akinfeev's goal and the score was 1:1.

This time it was Twain's turn to get angry on the sidelines.

During the halftime interval, Twain replaced the under-performing Tiago with Gago and continued to strengthen the offense.

The Forest team finally scored in the 71st minute. Wood's long shot deflected off the Portsmouth defender's body and bounced right to Mitchell's feet. He swung his leg and shot the football right into the net.

Trailing once again, Portsmouth tried to fight back. But only three minutes later, Matías Fernández blasted the Portsmouth goal with a long shot that completely extinguished Portsmouth's fighting spirit. The ensuing game was dominated by Nottingham Forest and Twain made substitutions to let more players rest.

The only disgruntled people were the Portsmouth fans watching the game from the stands. They protested by exiting the stadium early.

When the referee blew the final whistle to end the game, the latest news from Old Trafford was that Sunderland had lost to Manchester United. In this way, the situation of the two teams remained unchanged. There was still a risk of relegation and a possibility of a promotion.

As Twain got up to shake hands with the Portsmouth manager, Kerslake, who was next to him, said, "Arsenal won, too."

Twain nodded and said nothing. With a smile still on his face, he extended his hand to the other manager.

The two teams were still three points apart. Nothing had changed.

Now, Nottingham Forest could only make sure that the team kept winning and then expect Arsenal to make mistakes.

But could Wenger and Arsenal, which had been knocked out of the Champions League and only had the league tournament to contend with for the season, make mistakes and give Twain a big present?

### **Chapter 850: Sprint**

After they defeated Portsmouth in the away game, the Forest team overcame another obstacle. Portsmouth, fighting to avoid relegation, did not cause them much trouble.

Following which, Twain temporarily shifted his focus from the league tournament to the Champions League.

In the semi-finals, Nottingham Forest's opponent was the France Ligue 1 dominant leader, Lyon.

Although it had always been the France Ligue 1 champion and a well-deserved overlord, this team was the weakest in the Champions League quarterfinals. Their strength was not in the same league as Nottingham Forest. There was some element of luck for them to reach the Champions League quarterfinals this time.

The immediate consequence of Lyon, the dominant team in the France Ligue 1 was the lack of competitiveness from the France Ligue 1 team in the European arena—how good could a team be if the league was not competitive?

There was a consensus in the media that the Forest team would make it to the final, and the English media even guarantee Nottingham Forest a ticket before the game. They were already introducing the finals venue to their readers.

English football world was also bullish on the Forest team. Some people felt that there was no need to use full strength to play against Lyon. Twain should save up the energy to play against their league rivals.

Even so, Twain did not dare take it lightly. Instead, he was even more worried due to the media hype—he was afraid that his team would be influenced by the public opinion and be conceited enough to underestimate the opponent.

To this end, he put on a grim face every day, as if he was worried that his team would be eliminated. During interviews, he also changed his past arrogant and condescending style to appear cautious and never brought up remarks such as “they are definitely in the final”, “book your tickets for Bernabéu in advance.”

His behavior was so strange that people wondered if Twain was kidnapped by aliens and had a brain transplant...

“... Against a team like Arsenal, he dared to say before the game that he wanted to win. Against the weakest team in the top four, he was afraid to mention the finals instead... Maybe it’s a ploy to deliberately confuse his opponents?”

Twain did not care how the outside media viewed his actions and words. He just did not want his team to lower their guard and not to be overly conceited to underestimate the opponent.

Due to his and Wood’s influence, the entire team did not appear to take the opponent lightly. Twain instructed the team to play against Lyon with the attitude that should be taken against a semifinal opponent. Wood trained and prepared for the game seriously to set a good example. Twain’s prestige in the locker room was highly regarded and the power of George Wood’s example could not be ignored. Twain had nothing to worry about before the game against Lyon.

The first leg would be played in the away game.

It was the first time in the history of the Lyon football club that they had reached the quarterfinals of the Champions League. They even hoped to reach the final and lift the trophy. Therefore, Lyon’s spirits was flying high and also had the home field advantage. They launched wave after wave of attacks against the Forest team’s core like raging waves beating against the shore, which made the Nottingham Forest fans watched with their hearts in their throats.

Twain instructed the team to use defensive counterattack tactic in the away game because he predicted that Lyon’s momentum at home would be strong. According to the military tactic of “avoiding the sharp edge”, Twain would not be foolish enough to go head to head against Lyon. It would be victory for this game if he could obtain one point. It would be better if they could score goals.

Lyon’s idea was simple: to use its home advantage to aggressively attack the Forest team, score goals and to win the game in the end to lay the groundwork for the next round. After all, it was hard to play in the Forest team’s home ground. If there was a win in hand, there might be more leeway. No matter what, Lyon was tired of being the reigning champion at home. They wanted to make a historic breakthrough—to be a European champion.

But Nottingham Forest clearly had more experience playing in the Champions League semifinals than Lyon. Twain's handling of it was experienced. On the contrary, Lyon appeared to be overly anxious. They attacked ferociously from the start. What if they did not score? What if they overstrained themselves?

Twain asked the team to stay firm, slowly wear Lyon out. They would grind Lyon's fighting spirit and physical fitness. The Lyon players were overexcited and galloping around the field. They looked good playing like this. Those fans who did not understand also blindly cheered, thinking that Lyon had the absolute upper hand and scoring goals was only a matter of time.

That was not the case at all in the eyes of the professionals.

The match was played in France. As a Frenchman, Wenger, the manager of the already eliminated Arsenal, accepted an invitation from a French television station to comment on the match. When he saw Nottingham Forest being beaten back into the penalty area by Lyon, he asserted that Lyon would be the unlucky one if they continued to attack like this.

The French commentator was still doubtful and thought it was only a matter of time that Lyon breached the Forest team's goal based on the situation in the field—"this is a passive defense. No matter how tight the defense is, there will be loopholes once the other side besieges. I don't believe Nottingham Forest's defense is impregnable. The Forest team, not Lyon, will be under a lot of pressure if the game continues in this way..."

Wenger just laughed and did not speak. He could not argue with the commentator on the live broadcast, but he did not agree with the commentator's words. He could only wait quietly until it was time to tell who was right and who was wrong.

Thirty minutes into the first half, it was mostly Lyon which besieged Nottingham Forest. The Forest team had only two shots, while Lyon had six shots and broken into the thirty-meters zone several times. Lyon was well ahead. The Lyon fans sang and danced in the stands in a happy and relaxed mood. They seemed to think that they had nothing to fear from Nottingham Forest.

Lyon's rear defensive line also pressed closer and closer, with the center backs almost eager to dribble the ball into the opposition's penalty area and shoot.

Just when everyone thought that Lyon's next attack would be able to break the Nottingham Forest goal, the Forest team fought back.

Like a spring compressed to the extreme, once the pressure loosened up slightly from the top of the spring, then it would suddenly bounce up and its tip would pierce through the light in the night with chilling brilliance.

Akinfeev directly threw a handball to launch the attack, and Şahin quickly diverted the ball after he dribbled the ball to break through. After Agbonlahor, the starting right back used his own speed to force a breakthrough, he did not continue to dribble the ball on the sideline as the Lyon players thought, but suddenly cut inside and headed straight for the goal. He was going to shoot straight at the goal!

Agbonlahor was too fast and the Lyon players were ill-prepared for the Forest team's counterattack. When Agbonlahor cut inside, there was only one goalkeeper in front of him.

What happened next was unsurprising.

Agbonlahor burst into the penalty area. Just as he was about to shoot, he was knocked down from the back by a full back returning to defend. Agbonlahor's fall was slightly exaggerated, but the other side did indeed foul. The referee promptly awarded the Forest team a penalty shot. Not only that, he gave the player who fouled a yellow card.

Off the field, Twain did not let it go and thought that he had gotten off easy with a yellow card. He should at least be directly sent off with a red card!

His protest "won" a lot of boos from the stands.

The Lyon players were ill-prepared for the penalty shot. After a moment's pause, they gathered around the referee to demand an explanation. They think Agbonlahor had dived.

And on the other side, Agbonlahor was hugging and high fiving his teammates in celebration. He did make the penalty shot happen on purpose. Otherwise he would never have been able to be shoved from behind by his opponent with his speed. He just needed to jab the ball out and accelerate to get away. But in doing so, he would also lose the best angle and timing to shoot. Under such circumstances, a penalty shot was obviously the most reasonable thing. So, he dragged a leg in the back, waiting for the other side to shove and then fall. In that way, the penalty shot was in hand.

The player in charge to carry out the penalty shot was Şahin. He succeeded with one shot and sent the ball into the goal. The goalkeeper misjudged the direction. He only found out that the football came from the middle to land in the position he had stood earlier after he pounced.

Seeing that the Forest team had scored, the commentator on the French television station lost his voice for a moment. Wenger kept his smile as usual, making it impossible for others to see his smugness.

Finally, the commentator gave himself a way out and said, "This penalty shot was a bit controversial, but the referee insisted on his penalty decision... the Forest team was lucky to have taken the lead in the away game..."

Wenger thought: How is this considered lucky? You haven't watched a Premier League game before, Mr. Commentator. This tactic is one of Tony's most commonly used tricks. You think he's being beaten passively. In fact, none of them are actually hit... He's just waiting for the right moment to fight back. If I were the Lyon manager and saw the Forest team play like that, I would ask the defenders to watch the defense and then pull back to lure them out again.

Unfortunately, Lyon's lack of experience with Twain and playing in the Champions League semifinals was entirely exploited by Twain.

The leading Forest team played better and more easily. As Lyon continued to attack, the Forest team stepped up its counterattack. They almost scored another goal before the halftime interval.

During the halftime interval, Wenger chatted with the commentator about the game. When they touched on the second half, Wenger said that it would be difficult for Lyon in the second half if Nottingham Forest was given the lead in such an elimination game. This time, the commentator finally agreed with Wenger. After all, this manager was more familiar with Twain than he was.

In the second half, as Wenger had stated, Twain still used a defensive counterattack tactic to lead Lyon by the nose.

Lyon was desperate to equalize the scores, which gave the Forest team more chances to counterattack.

But it was clear that the Forest team's fitness had indeed been affected by a series of high-intensity games. Their fitness in the second half also started to show problems. The power of the counterattack was modest. Despite Twain's on-field demands for the team to attack repeatedly, the Forest players were lacking in strength even though they were willing. By then, Twain was resigned to the situation. He started to make substitutions and replace the exhausted starting players. He replaced them with the substitute players and focused on the defense.

The last five or six minutes were a tough test for Twain's heart. With only one goal ahead and Lyon still pressing hard, all the efforts in the game would be wasted to him if Lyon were to score a goal— perhaps he might have accepted a 1:1 result at the opening ten minutes of the game. But at this time, he still had a one-goal lead, so he would never accept any result other than victory.

Fortunately, although the game was thrilling, Nottingham Forest finally held on. The referee blew the final whistle after four minutes of injury stoppage time. Nottingham Forest secured a precious away win and an away goal amid the home fans' hissing.

With an away win and an away goal, it looked like Nottingham Forest had one foot in the Bernabéu stadium. The Forest team would be formidable and definitely not disappoint Lyon once it was back in its home ground.

Three days later, Twain led the team to a home win over Fulham in 36th round. A day later, Arsenal also won an away game. The gap between the two teams was still three points and there were only two rounds left in the league tournament. The bookmaker, William Hill was still bullish on Arsenal winning the title. And in the odds for the Champions League, Twain's team was the second-to-last out of the four teams—with the exception of Lyon, they were the least optimistic about the Forest team.

Real Madrid was at top of the table as they tied 2:2 in the mid-week Champions League game with Barcelona. They scored two precious away goals and a good chance of reaching the final. Moreover, this year's Champions League final was being played at their home ground, the Bernabéu. Once Real Madrid reached the final, they would unreservedly have a real home advantage. By then half of the championship title would almost be Real Madrid's.

No one would doubt Real Madrid's desire for the Champions League trophy. They had already been one title short of fulfilling its magnificent record of ten Champions League titles. This time it was also at their own home ground. There was certainly no reason to let go of such an opportunity. As it could be seen from their away game against Barcelona during the semifinals, their ferocious momentum completely suppressed Barcelona. Although the score was 2:2, everyone, even the Barcelona fans, who watched the game from the start, would admit that Barcelona was lucky enough to tie with Real Madrid...

Twain faced two fearsome teams in two tournaments, with both teams having an unlimited desire for the titles. Real Madrid, once the world's number one football club, had not won the Champions League which they had once won nine times in twelve years. Wenger's Arsenal also wanted to regain their title in the league tournament. They had already lost the Champions League to Nottingham Forest. They would not want to lose the league tournament to them again.

Three days later, Nottingham Forest crushed Lyon by 2:1 at the City Ground stadium and bade farewell to the City Ground stadium with a victory in the Champions League. They advanced to the final with a total score of 3:1, and then reached the final again after five years.

Meanwhile, Real Madrid beat Barcelona 1:0 at home, edging out its archrival, Barcelona with a total score of 3:2. They successfully made the Bernabéu stadium, the main ground in the Champions League final, their true home ground.

Nottingham Forest reached the final against Tottenham Hotspur in the FA Cup. Nottingham Forest also reached the final in the Champions League and their opponent was Real Madrid. With two rounds remaining in the league tournament, they were still three points behind Arsenal.

Would Nottingham Forest, which was in the final sprint in all three tournaments, return to Nottingham with three championship trophies at the end of the season or would they collapse and ended up empty-handed in the end?

All would be revealed half a month later.