

## Champions 891

### Chapter 891: Old Partner

Stuart Pearce was on holiday at home when he received the call from Tony Twain.

He knew why Twain was looking for him and even though he already had an answer, he still listened to what Twain had to say politely.

“I’m very happy that you called me, Tony, but I think the youth team needs me more.”

Twain felt very depressed. Everyone that he approached rejected him, was it such a horrifying thing to be his assistant manager?

“But I need you too, Stuart.”

Stuart Pearce’s concern was that if he joined the England team, he would have to give up his job in the youth team. He had been working in the youth team for almost 10 years and he knew everything about it and everything had to go through him. If Twain’s contract was up, what would happen to him then? Manage the England national team? He was not very interested in that. The media pressure for that kind of job was too heavy. The youth team suits him best.

“If you can convince the Football Association to agree for me to still be the manager of the England youth team, I’ll agree to be your assistant manager.”

Pearce listed his condition.

Twain considered for a while and nodded, “Okay, I’ll try.”

He really talked to Harvey about it, but no matter what he said, Harvey would not agree to allow Pearce to take on two roles at the same time. He could be either Twain’s assistant manager or stay as the youth team’s manager. This was a single-choice question, not a multiple-choice.

“Tony, we’ve recommended so many coaches for you, are there none that can be your assistant manager? There are lots of talented coaches within the choices and they’re all the cream of the crop for their age...”

Twain was furious and he did not give Harvey any leeway and he said very firmly, “They are all not good enough to me!”

Harvey was more cultured than Twain and he merely shrugged, meaning Twain could go look for his own assistant manager if he did not like them.

Twain left the English Football Association’s office with a long face. It looked like he had to do it himself after all.

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Des Walker was demonstrating how to defend in an one-on-one situation for his players on the training ground. All of a sudden, his phone vibrated in his pocket, causing him to lose his footing when dribbling. If not for the quick reflex from the player defending him, he would have made a fool of himself publicly.

Walker patted the player who held him on the shoulders, "You should intercept the ball and not think about giving me a hand."

Next, he gave a look to his assistant manager. His assistant manager walked up and shouted, "Shuttle run 20 times, everyone!"

There was a commotion within the team, but it was silenced by the coaches very quickly. One for all, all for one. This was Walker's training requirement. Even though that player attempted to help his manager out of goodwill, his action did not put him in the boss' good books.

Only after every player accepted his punishment did Walker walk to the shelter next to the training ground and fished out the vibrating phone.

It was from Tony Twain.

"You don't call me often, Tony."

"Ha, we're both busy most of the time, plus we're not in the same city anymore..." Twain laughed awkwardly.

But Walker was not trying to be critical over this issue, in fact, he did not care about the reason at all, "But if you call me, there must be something. Do you need something from me? No!" Just when Twain was still figuring how to tell him, he broke the suspense himself, "Let me guess... You're looking for an assistant manager, right?"

"You know me so well, Des," Twain laughed from the heart this time.

"But what's the use of you looking for me? I'm just the manager of a League Two team," Walker said while looking at the team in training. He had parted ways with Ian Bowyer long ago. After Bowyer was fired by Hereford, he lazed at home for a period of time while Des Walker continued to actively look for a job. He had three different teams, from the manager of the youth team to the assistant manager to manager now. He went up the ranks step by step very practically.

However, the Oxford United that he was managing then was in the fourth tier of the English leagues. They were not very famous, was only a mid-table team in the league and their top target every year was to avoid relegation. That was why he thought it was weird that Twain called him.

"I don't pick people based on their fame. You know that, Des."

"Are you really asking me to be England's assistant manager? Tony, are you mad?" What Twain said basically confirmed the reason for his call and Walker was shocked, "There are tens of thousand better coaches than me in England, why don't you look for them?"

"For me, the best coach would not compare to a coach that suits me. Des, you were the first assistant manager I had after I became Forest's manager. We work well together, you're the one who's most suitable for me, you're the one I need," Twain made it sound very passionate. If someone who did not know what they meant heard about it, they would have mistaken them to be a weird couple.

“Those coaches might be impressive, but they don’t know what I want, they don’t understand my thinking. Before I make the players understand my thinking, I have to make the whole coaching team understand me, that’s too difficult and inefficient. That’s why I need someone who knows what I want to do even before I say much as my assistant. Des, I can’t think of anyone more suitable than you.”

Walker was moved by Twain’s “passionate confession”, he did not reject Twain straight like the others, but he was stunned for awhile before stammering, “We, we’ve not worked together for, for 10 years, do...do we still work well together?”

“But we still keep in contact, right? You pay attention to what’s happening to me, don’t you, Des?”

Even though this question made Twain sound like a narcissist, Walker still grunted a reply.

“We just need a little bit of grinding and lubrication and we’ll be able to work well together naturally. You know what kind of person I’m and I know what kind of person you are. You know what I need and I know what you can do. And in the past 10 years, you must have become better than before. Look at yourself, you’re already a manager... There’s nothing to worry about, it’ll be easier for you to be my assistant manager than to be an assistant to anyone else. And for me, with you as my assistant, things will be much easier. It’s a win-win situation. Besides, if we think of your future, it’ll be much easier for you to do anything next time if there’s this experience of “previous assistant manager of the England national team”, don’t you think so?”

Twain was trying to make Des understand with reasoning while moving him with emotions. If he could not get Walker to agree, then he would be forced to accept one of the candidates that the Football Association recommended. Amongst them, there were even people who did not have a good impression of him... What kind of results would a combination like that bring the England team? Only God knows.

Walker went silent for a while, then asked hesitantly, “But I’m not very famous...” He was expressing his concern in a roundabout way that he might not be famous enough to influence those star players in the national team.

“You’re the assistant manager, Des. As an assistant manager, what’s important is your abilities, not your fame. When Venables was assistant to McClaren, the England team still listened to McClaren, at least on the surface.” Twain used the same roundabout way to express his opinion: The one managing the changing room is me, you don’t have to worry about it.

Walker looked up at the training ground, the team had already completed the 20 rounds of shuttle run and were resting at the side, waiting for the next training.

He knew that he did not have much time on that day, and he would not be able to be clear about everything. Furthermore, this was after all, a once-in-a-lifetime decision and he did not want to make a rash decision.

“My players are waiting for me, Tony. Let me consider it and give you an answer.”

Twain agreed very quickly, “Okay, no problem. For you, Des, I’ll keep my phone on all day, you can call me anytime you want.”

At the same time, Tony was screaming inside, “What are you waiting for, Des? Isn’t this much better than you being the manager of the League two team? You’ve already maximized their full potential by

bringing Oxford United to the League two. They have no more potential to grow, you're wasting your time by staying there!"

Even though this was the truth, if Twain had said that out loud, Des Walker probably would reject him directly without even taking a few days to consider. After all, nobody would allow anyone to criticize their own career.

When Walker placed the phone back into the big and loose pocket of his sweatpants and returned to the training ground. His assistant manager started to hurry those players that were still resting to continue to focus on training.

He was able to work very well together with his own assistant manager.

Was he going to give up his work here now for a work relation 10 years ago?

Which work was more important?

Des Walker could not make up his mind.

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Twain called Walker, but he was not sure. Because Walker was spot on with what he said—"We've not worked together for 10 years, do we still work well together?"

What was the concept of 10 years?

For people who have never experienced it, they would probably find it hard to imagine the passing of time.

The youngsters who just entered high school 10 years ago, youthful and vibrant, full of hopes for the future yet being unwilling to grow up would step into the sanctuary of a marriage, and some might even become parents.

The young man who just stepped into society 10 years ago full of ambitions and determinations in pursuit of his dreams would become a middle-aged uncle who was waiting for death by bumming around in the blink of an eye, all his edges were smoothed by the flow of the society.

Not even the strongest man can defeat time. Even an arrogant man like Twain could not help but to surrender in front of time.

He was no longer that rookie whom did not know anything and required Walker to take care of everything 10 years ago. And Walker was no longer the inexperienced ex-player turned assistant manager 10 years ago who did everything using passion as motivation.

Both had experienced a 10 years period where they experienced the greatest change in their lives, would they still work well together?

Would they still know what each other meant without much words, using just an action or a gaze?

There is a saying in China, "the things are still there, but the people are different", would this be applicable to them?

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Des Walker was in a daze on the sofa. His wife called him three times from the dining room, but he did not respond. In the end, she walked out and stood in front of him with her hands on her hips, staring at him.

“Ah? What’s wrong?” Walker finally realized there was someone in front of him after a while.

His wife ignored the reason why she was there staring at him and asked, puzzled, “What’s wrong with you?”

“It’s nothing...” Walker tried to dodge the question.

“Trouble at work?” His wife decided to sit down next to him and held his hand.

Walker felt the warmth coming from his wife and he gently stroked his wife’s small hands which was no longer smooth, “Tony gave me a call today.”

“Tony? Tony Twain?” As Walker’s wife, it was not easy for her to actually remember that man.

“Other than that Tony, which other Tony could it be?” Walker laughed.

“He was definitely not calling you to catch up, right?”

“He wants to introduce a new job to me, I’m hesitating about it,” Walker looked at the ceiling, unable to focus his eyes, “I don’t know if I should agree. I feel that this is a gamble, and a big gamble at that...”

“England’s manager?” As the wife of an ex-player and current manager, a woman still knew something about football.

“It’s an assistant manager, dear,” Walker smiled at his wife.

His wife looked at him unbelievably. As his wife, she knew her husband’s capabilities very well.

“I told him that I don’t think I’m good enough to be England’s assistant manager, but he said it was okay, I can do it,” he knew what his wife was thinking about.

“You’re tempted?”

Walker stayed silent, then nodded and said, “To be honest...a little bit.”

“If you go to England, you’ll have to give up your job here in Oxford.”

Walker continued to nodding.

“Des, I don’t have any opinions about this. Go if you want, if not, reject him,” His wife did not care much about her husband’s work matters. Over the years, her husband had changed a few jobs and they had moved from one place to another, she just followed him everywhere. As long as there were teams which wanted her husband to be their manager, there was nothing for her to worry about. As a husband, he just needed to inform his wife about it and he did not expect his wife to give him any ideas. Especially now that their child was all grown up, there was even less need to ask his wife for her opinions.

“Let’s go for dinner, I was here to ask you to come over for dinner, Des.”

His wife stood up and pulled Walker up.

Walker stood up too. After telling his wife what he thought, he had already made his decision.

It would just be another adventure, just like when he decided to leave Nottingham Forest for Hereford. He was used to a life like this, moving from one place to another, changing jobs again and again. Maybe when he is fifty, he’d have accumulated enough experience and settle down in a Championship team, or even an English Premier League club, and he started to draw a blueprint for himself.

Before that, he would have to follow different people to learn and accumulate the experience.

Tony was not a bad target to learn from... How to manage the players.

He was really looking forward to see how Twain manages the star players of England whom had been spoiled by the media.

### **Chapter 892: Momentous Changes**

After a night marked by restless apprehension and thoughts about Shania, Dunn awoke to some great news:

Des Walker called to inform him that Walker had just been approved to join the English National Team as their Assistant Coach.

Dunn was so happy that, as he held the phone in one hand, he punched the other into the air in a triumphant fist.

With the Assistant Coach piece sorted, the puzzle surrounding England’s team would become much easier to solve. The team generally sought Dunn’s recommendations, as he was a man with remarkable stamina, and had a great working knowledge of England’s coaches. Now he would just need to find a new Goalkeeping Coach, and things would be settled. Dunn had a degree of mistrust for the current coach, because under his supervision, England’s goalies had not exactly been performing well. In his eyes, this had to be the root issue.

For finding a Goalkeeping Coach, Dunn had focused his attention on two places: Germany and Italy. His thinking was that he could perhaps enlist the help of England’s former coach, Capello.

However, this matter was evidently not as important as finding an assistant coach.

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Right as Dunn was facing his quandry around picking new coaches, Nottingham F.C. was going through some great changes of its own.

In Mark O’Neil’s opinion, if England were to keep their treble, they would need to filter out some of their more lackluster members and replace them with some fresh, outstanding players. If they could do this, he thought, they would regain a fighting chance at winning.

Evan had told him that when it came to buying players, money would not be a problem. With their stadium debts paid off, Nottingham F.C. had plenty of money to spend.

Tony Dunn had never been a big fan of O'Neil's way of doing things.

After deliberating on it for a couple days, O'Neil finished up his list of names and handed it off to Evan. As he took it and began looking it over, he said to his friend Alan, "Martin thinks he has this whole team in the palm of his hand. He overestimates his own power, and greatly underestimates Tony's."

"How so?"

"The players he wants to sell are all subs or old-timers. With these changes, the core team would essentially remain unchanged." He said. Alan snatched the list and looked it over.

As he read, Alan began to smile. "He's trying to do this from the perspective of a coach. Every player has a record of some sort, and he's trying to make sure that the team uses as many well-proven players as it can.

"But, if the team is in turmoil behind the scenes, then their treble status might as well be useless..." Evan said, letting out a slow sigh.

Once Dunn had left, even though the media was bombarding the team relentlessly, Evan was finally able to let out a sigh of relief. However, the team knew on some level that Dunn had not left because he wasn't making enough money. Dunn's recruits within the team were many, and they all felt a certain unease about losing him, as he was the one who had brokered their success in the first place. Evan knew what this meant. With their main backbone gone, there would be a question as to whether or not these players could remain on the team. Why else would he have given the task to O'Neil? It would be better to take the initiative and have him determine who should stay and who should go, rather than letting everyone remain safe because of their connections to Dunn. He figured that this was the best way to do things, as it would minimise the damage from the current mess.

"Tiago?" Evan said aloud, looking off and trying to picture the player's face. "If he doesn't survive a change of coaches, shouldn't he be retiring soon? He's getting a little old."

"That's what I'm saying. O'Neil must still be considering just sticking with Dunn's dream team."

The two men looked at each other, and they each smiled.

Alan began to look over the list again. Tiago aside, there was one person he was most concerned about — but he didn't really think this person would be cast aside anyways. He and Dunn were likeminded in their regard of this player.

"So... what's the deal with George?"

Evan knew who Alan was referring to — there was only one George on Nottingham F.C.

"I have no idea" Evan said, shaking his head, "Mr. Wokes still hasn't gotten back to me."

A sudden silence fell in the office. They both knew the deal with Mr. Wokes, with whom Dunn had once famously butted heads. This had offended Mr. Wokes, who was interconnected in England's high

society. His sexual orientation was unusual, but even this was not seen as scandalous in the world of the very rich.

“He’s not short on money.” Alan said aloud. He was stating this as a fact, but also appeared to be trying to console himself.

“He’s not short on money, but George is.”

“I don’t see how he should have any reason to doubt George’s loyalty.”

“There might be a problem yet, Alan” Said Evan, who stood up and began to pace. “After all, where does George’s loyalty really lie? With Nottingham, or with Dunn?”

Alan gazed at his old friend, looking lost for a moment. Then he said, “He’s only gone off to play for the English national team! That doesn’t mean anything! It’s not like next thing he’s going to run off to Manchester United, just to turn around and drive us into the ground.”

Evan stayed silent, still unsure if his fears had merit or not.

“The way I see it, the best thing we could do is write up a new contract with George, and give him a healthy raise to his weekly pay. Even if his contract is up in only three years, we need to do everything we can to ensure that Nottingham is the last team he ever plays in.

After Alan said this, Evan looked at him and replied, “we’ve only just given him a new contract last year — he’s already the highest-paid player on the team.” He knew that Alan was sensitive when it came to talk about money.

“Well, let’s make him the highest-paid player in the UK!” Evan said, with certainty.

Alan opened his mouth, but said nothing.

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Wood looked at the man sitting before him, a man who rarely made visits in-person. It was Billy Wokes.

“So, George, what do you think?”

Wood shook his head. “I’m not going.”

“Come on. The salary they’ve offered you is huge, as are the perks and benefits.”

“My money right now is enough.”

“But George... there are so many better clubs you could be with! In fact, when you put it in perspective, Nottingham starts to look more and more like a quaint little group of countryfolk!” As Wokes said this, he beamed at his own joke, completely ignoring Wood’s stony expression.

“And have these other teams won more UEFA titles than us?” he responded.

This jab caused Wokes’s smile to flicker, almost imperceptibly. Then, however, it came back, and the man burst out in laughter, “Oh, George! Quite a wit you’ve got on you, asking a thing like that! As La Puerta would say, you’ve the tenacity of a Catalanian.... Hah! I must be honest, I hadn’t pegged you as the sarcastic type.”



Wood did not smile. He simply doubled his resolve, saying "I'll go nowhere but Nottingham."

"Real Madrid, AC Milan, Inter Milan, Man U, Arsenal... none of those catches your fancy?"

Wood nodded. "I have a three year contract with Nottingham. While that's in effect, I'm not going anywhere."

Wokes smiled, and said slyly, "In three years' time... you'll be thirty-one. You'll have a hard time going anywhere at all."

"All the better, then. After Nottingham, I'll retire."

"Come now, George. Your man, Tony? He's gone now. There's nothing forcing you to pledge your allegiance to the team anymore. I don't know if you realise this, but it's only a matter of time before your mates, who you won so many championships with, start going their separate ways. With your old coach gone, and your old teammates as well... why should anyone feel obliged to stay?"

Wood was silent for a moment, apparently digesting what Wokes had just said. Then, he spoke.

"Professional footballers will come and go. That is their choice, and their authority to do so. But me? I'm choosing to stay put."

Wokes sank back, then, into the sofa on which he sat. He stared across at Wood, amazed. "Why are you going this? Is it because of your mother?"

"It's nothing to do with my mother. Only me."

"But why?"

Wood was silent for a time, apparently thinking. Wokes did not press him, and instead added some sugar to the cup of coffee in front of him, stirring it slowly with a small spoon.

As he got lost, then, focusing on the coffee, he heard Wood's voice, "I don't want to be anything like the man you want me to be."

Wokes stopped stirring and stared at his coffee, as though there were something floating in it.

He had zoned out for a time, lost in his thoughts. When he came back, he fished his mobile out of his pocket, and began punching in a number.

"Hi, Santi. I've got some news to give you — an insider thing, very hush-hush. You want to hear, do you? Good, good." Wokes nodded his head as he said this. "Ah, well, I cannot tell you right this moment. I'm with George Wood, we've just sat down for a spot of coffee... not terribly good, though. I don't think I'll be coming back here anytime soon... Yes, yes, okay, you're busy, I understand. I'll talk to you later. Bye bye."

Wokes pocketed his phone and saw that Wood was looking at him, a questioning expression on his face.

"I was just calling an acquaintance of mine who works with the media. I'm going to tell him how you're interested in quite a few clubs: Madrid, Barcelona, Milan, Juventus, the English top four — practically every great European team."

Wood leaned forward, suddenly perturbed. He was looking at Wokes in an entirely different way. “Don’t you have any respect for me, and my wishes?”

“Settle down, darling,” said Wokes, signaling for Wood to sit back down on the couch, “when have I ever disrespected your wishes? Only, since you won’t give me the good grace of a transfer fee, or a sign-on fee, I need to find some way of getting myself paid! You understand.” And with that, Wokes took his gold-rimmed glasses from the table before him and set them in their case — his sign that he was ready to leave.

“You are not to do anything. If the media comes to speak with you, I want you to be vague. Tell them nothing, except that you are loyal to Nottingham. Make your intentions unclear, and let the mosquitos drift over to me.” He reached out and lightly tapped Wood’s cheek. “Then, all you have to do is sit tight and wait for me. I’ll bring you a proper high-paying contract.”

“I’ve already signed one... last year.”

“Yet, if they come along and offer you more, who would you be to refuse? We came here today to celebrate your success, on the eve of becoming the highest-paid footballer in the UK. Next time we meet up to have a chat, why don’t we do it at your place? I’ll bet your mum makes a great cup of tea.” He stuck the glasses case firmly in his pocket and stood up. “Farewell, George. I do hope you don’t regret this day in the future.”

With the confidence of a jungle cat, the old man strode across the cafe and coolly walked out of the cafe door.

Wood, on the other hand, stayed seated where he was. He watched as Wokes climbed into an ash-gray Bentley, which then pulled out and disappeared in the daytime traffic.

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When Wood was sitting down to his coffee with Wokes, Alan had already flown to Portugal and struck a deal with S.L. Benfica to write a transfer contract for Tiago Mendes. For six million pounds, Tiago would return to Benfica, and in all likelihood, he would remain there for the rest of his career.

In another decidedly ironic development, Real Madrid had unexpectedly come to fancy the Nottingham F.C. center rear guard — the Brazilian powerhouse, Pepe. Only a month prior, he had lectured a couple Madrid players out on the pitch, which had garnered intense animosity in the Spanish media. Yet, in a turn of events nobody could have expected, he had come back to Madrid a hero, with the press suddenly singing his praises.

In the previous season, Nottingham had scored on eleven free kicks. Because of this, their back defender, Gareth Bell, had become highly coveted by some big names in England, chiefly Manchester United and Chelsea. Manchester had gone so far as to offer Nottingham twenty million pounds to transfer Bell to their team.

Aaron Mitchell, who would be known as one of England’s best forwards for the decade to come, was also caught up in numerous affairs with clubs who lusted for his membership. Most notable amongst said clubs were A.C. Milan.

Nuri Sahin, the great midfielder of the Turkish national team, seemed on the verge of transferring to Bayern Munich, although Madrid also seemed quite keen to acquire him.

Wes Morgan, the third captain to be instated during the reign of Coach Dunn, also left Nottingham in favor of a new team — this time, Leeds United.

Bentley was being tempted along by Manchester City.

Rumours abounded that Fernandez was losing interest in Nottingham, and might return to play for a Spanish team once again.

Gago was on the verge of joining Inter Milan or Juventus.

Mourinho, dissatisfied with Manchester United's goalkeeper, was rallying to acquire the Russian national team's goalie, and current Nottingham player, Akinfeev.

When July first arrived, and the window for transfers in Europe officially opened, the media was flooded with stories and rumours that many of Nottingham's players were soon to be changing teams. The masses were dazzled by the spectacular tales that began to spread, yet nobody knew what was true and what was fabricated.

Nottingham's fans, collectively, were filled with worry about their team. It seemed that, with the departure of the Iron Fist, Tony Dunn, the lineup was being picked apart by more powerful teams. When they met in pubs and chatted on this topic, many fans pitted the blame on the incompetence of the team (despite its resounding successes in the past.) Others, though, psaid that the blame rested solely on Dunn.

He had brought joy and pride to Nottingham's fans during his time as coach, but now that he had suddenly left, the fans had come to wholly resent him. Dunn had never explained why he had to leave, and this only made things worse. Misunderstandings about the man only got worse.

The man who was once the "King of Nottingham" had unexpectedly become widely resented. The club directors tarnished his memory, his hand-picked team was being pried apart by other clubs, and his once adoring fans had come to hate him. Could there be a worse fate?

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While Dunn was still finding the right set of coaches for the English team, he was approached by the FA, who told him they wanted his team to come play a match.

"I haven't sorted out my coaches yet," he told them, slightly resentful of their decision, "let alone my players."

Don't worry, Mr. Dunn, it's only a friendly match — nothing more. You can use the same roster from the last World Cup. The outcome of the match will not at all effect our evaluation on you." Their decision was firm. They were the governing body, after all.

"This wasn't in the contract." Dunn said, discomfort evident in his voice.

"Mr. Dunn, this match was actually confirmed long before you were made head coach," the official told him.

Dunn was at a loss for what to say. After all, who was to say that he could take it upon himself to be the slowest team builder in English history?

“Right. Who are we playing then, and where? Wembley? Or are we to go abroad?” He had a pen and paper in front of him, ready to jot down the details, lest he be messy and forget this new obligation.

“No need to go abroad, Dunn. You’ll be going to Nottingham, the City Ground. Your opponent is to be Nottingham Forest.” As the official said this, he tried to keep a straight face. He tried not to smirk. He failed to do so.

“Huh?” replied Dunn. He paid no attention to the smirking official, instead simply staring at the words he had just reflexively jotted on the paper before him: “Nottingham, the City Ground.”

### **Chapter 893: An Exhibition Game**

Actually, a promise was made between Nottingham Forest and the Football Association about half a year ago. To celebrate the completion of Nottingham Forest’s new stadium, the club invited the England national team to play in a friendly match against Forest.

Twain was aware that such a friendly match had been planned by the club, but he had forgotten all about it now that he has a change of identity.

The friendly match against the England national team is nothing more than one of the many celebrations that had been planned. The club also intends to hold a parade to showcase the various jerseys that had been worn by Forest players over the past century. They were also going to have an exhibition to display all their past accolades, a reunion of their ex-players and staff members, and many more. It was going to be a grand celebration.

Twain was supposed to be one of the focal points during the celebrations, but now that he has left Forest, he no longer had any role to play in the celebrations, even though half of the accolades that Nottingham Forest earned over the years had come under his guidance.

Twain was not in the least excited about returning to Nottingham. He did not know how the Nottingham Forest fans would view his departure.

The reason why he did not go public with the truth behind his departure was because he did not want to burn his bridges and make his relationship with Evan turn sour. It was not like he left Forest due to a personal feud with Evan. He left Forest simply because of a mismatch of ideals.

Another reason was because it was just a resignation. There was no need to blow things out of proportion.

Unfortunately, the fans would not be able to see things from his perspective. In their minds, Tony Twain is the ambassador of Nottingham Forest. Now that this ambassador has left, their entire world has come crashing down on them. Twain is well aware that there would be people who would not forgive him for his actions.

All he could do was to manage a wry smile.

Why was such a match planned? Destiny must be playing with him.

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“A match against the England team?” John looked at Bill.

The new season was approaching and Burns’ Forest bar was starting to get lively once again. There was an increasing number of people who visited the bar to have a drink and chat. Business appeared to be booming.

“Have you forgotten about it?” Bill looked excitedly at his friend of many years. “To celebrate the completion of the new stadium, our team would be playing in a match against the England national team.”

“That’s interesting.” John was being evasive with his response.

“It’s not just interesting. It’s very interesting!” Bill waved his fists in the air. “I have to get back at Twain for what he did!”

“You are still complaining about that?” John thought Bill was being a fool. That was something that had happened over a month ago, and here he was still harping over it.

“Tony must have had his reasons.”

“Who cares about his reasons?” Bill shouted in a shrill voice that sounded a little like that of a hysterical woman’s. “F\*ck! He betrayed us all!”

Bill’s comments were met with assent from some people around them.

John opened his mouth and wanted to speak, but he eventually decided to leave them alone. He lifted his wine glass and walked towards the bar counter. He then placed his glass before Kenny Burns.

“One more glass, Kenny.”

Burns wordlessly refilled his glass to the brim.

“They have forgotten about all the glory that Tony brought to this city, even though it has barely been a month since then.” John muttered under his breath.

“There are people who like him, and they would also be people who hate him. These are words that would always hold true now and into the future.” Burns’ smiled in a way that a philosopher would.

“I don’t really feel like watching that match now. I can’t bear to watch those people who used to stand up for him in the past chastise him now. I think Tony would definitely be heartbroken to see that too.” John was in low spirits.

“And that’s all the more reason for you to go watch the match in person.” Burns spurred him on. “You have to let him know that there are people who understand him.”

Fat John coughed once. “Actually, I was even more furious than Bill when I first came to learn that he was leaving. Bill was the one who gave me advice. How did things become like this?”

“Maybe they are so mad because of the ‘indifference’ that Tony has displayed towards Nottingham Forest?” Burns said as he continued to wipe the wine glasses that he would not stop wiping for another 100 years.

John froze for a moment, and then he remembered. Tony had not brought up the name ‘Nottingham Forest’ ever since he resigned. It was as though he had never coached the team in his 11 years as a manager. Perhaps it was this ‘indifference’ that angered Bill and the other fans.

However, John knew very well that Tony wasn’t being indifferent. He was just feeling complicated. Nottingham Forest is a team that he managed for 11 years, how could he possibly forget about it? But, he couldn’t possibly keep mentioning the team after he left, because it would bring immense pressure onto the new manager, and that would not help the team as they embark on their new journey. He was trying to weaken the influence that he had over the team. He was the one who groomed most of the players in the Forest team. The moment he says something to the press, the players would definitely put his words first, even if he is no longer in Wilford. How could Martin O’Neill possibly manage the team properly if the players would rather listen to Tony than him?

Sadly, not everyone understood that.

He turned around to look at the people who were discussing about the words that they would put on the banners to mock Twain. Another doubt began forming in his mind as he did. It was a doubt that he has always had in him for many days, and it was a doubt to which he had no answer for.

Why did Tony choose to leave if he knew this was going to happen? What exactly is it that you can’t solve and had to choose to leave instead? Many things have happened during the past 11 years. You also made it through your heart disease. Why can’t you make it past your 12th year in charge of Forest?

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“Some say that the reason behind Tony’s resignation was due to his conflict with Allan Adams. But, I must say this, haven’t the two of them always been at loggerheads with each other? Didn’t they manage to get by just fine for so many years? Why did he choose to resign now? Don’t tell me those men in suits have never thought about how the fans would feel?”

“What would happen to Nottingham Forest now that he has washed his hands clean of us? Is he going to be happy watching as our performance dip?”

“I know he must have had his reasons, but I don’t think it’s a big enough reason to justify his resignation. He has a lot more influence and power in this club than what other managers would get at other clubs.”

“If he really wanted to leave, he could have chosen to leave after this season is over. Why must he leave when we have just achieved the Treble? I really can’t describe my feelings then. It was just like being tickled by a person, then getting slapped twice by that same person a while later...”

Up till now, there are still fans who continue to leave comments expressing their views towards Twain’s departure on the article that had been published on Nottingham Forest’s official website, which wrote about Tony Twain’s decision to not further his managerial contract with the club.

Most of the comments written on the article were comments that would make Twain upset.

This is perhaps a scene that Nottingham Forest Football Club wishes to see the most. They quickly held a press conference to announce that they had failed to sign a new contract with Twain, and their actions highlighted how forthcoming they were with the whole situation. Naturally, the public would then think that the blame for the whole incident is on Twain, since he has been evasive about the situation the whole time, whereas Nottingham Forest was just like an innocent girl who was lamenting about what she had gone through.

Twain has never had a good image before the masses, and not many people liked him either. In the past, people defended him because they were all on the same side, but now that they were on different sides, it was only natural that he would get a lot more criticisms and animosity from others.

Neither Evan nor Allan wanted to be blamed for the departure of their most successful manager. Obviously, the only way they could avoid being blamed was to point the finger at the man who has never had a good reputation and image in his life thus far.

He was the one who wanted to leave. We gave him the best contract a manager can get in the whole of England, but he did not want it and was hell-bent on leaving.

To the ordinary people, Twain's decision to leave Forest is hard to comprehend. However, when has Tony Twain been 'ordinary'? The way he saw things was bound to be different from the ordinary people. If one were to judge him based on how an ordinary person would see and do things, then the only conclusion that one would get is that he is a 'lunatic'. This is also why Twain is known as a 'madman' and a 'manager with a personality' before the masses. He was destined to be someone who most people would never come to understand.

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Nottingham Forest has five pre-season friendly matches planned for the summer. The match against the England national team was to be held in the middle of these five matches, and it would be the very first match played at Forest's new stadium.

The match was supposed to be just a 'show'. The England national team would certainly not practise several days for such a match, and many of the players on the national team were also players who had been brought together at the last minute as well. The national team could not even get most of the players who played at the World Cup previously to turn up for the friendly.

Such a match bore no value to Forest in their preparations for the new season.

But, the match garnered massive attention when Nottingham Forest changed its manager, and when their ex-manager Tony Twain became the new manager of the England national team.

Numerous media outlets would be coming down to Clifton, southwest of Nottingham, to report on the match.

Evan Doughty must be brimming with smiles right now, because Nottingham Forest's new stadium has just been given free publicity thanks to Tony Twain, and it looks like the publicity would be much better in terms of effect and influence as compared to those promotional events that he had planned earlier.

Martin O'Neill, the new manager of Nottingham Forest, has his own thoughts regarding the friendly match against the England national team. His team had not performed well in the two friendly matches

that they played in so far, with one loss and one draw. They have yet to win, and the media was already starting to question O'Neill's abilities as a manager. He desperately longed to attain a victory and reduce the pressure that is on his shoulders.

The England national team would not be playing their best players. This is the chance to boost his team's confidence.

There was one other reason that prompted O'Neill to feel like he definitely had to win the friendly match against the England national team.

The current manager of the England national team is Tony Twain, and this match would be the very first, and possibly the last face-off between Forest's current and ex managers.

O'Neill needed to attain a victory so as to make the people forget about the name Tony Twain.

It has been close to a month since O'Neill took over as the new manager of Forest, and he has come to understand how big of an influence Tony Twain has over the entire team. Defeating Twain would be a good way to tell the media and the players that he is their new boss.

"It's just some useless match, but the head is being so serious with his preparations..." Some of the players were distracted as O'Neill conveyed his tactics to the team.

"It's always good to treat everything seriously."

"But you'd get nervous when you get serious."

The players began whispering among themselves.

"If our boss was here, I think most of the players who would be playing in the match would be from the youth team. He'd tell them to play however they liked because it didn't matter anyway."

Someone instantly raised his finger to his lips to signal the speaker to shut up.

The word 'boss' was one that nobody wanted to bring up. They refer to Martin O'Neill as their 'head' and not their 'boss'. In Nottingham Forest, only special managers can be referred to as the 'boss', and Tony Twain was a special manager.

Tony Twain was a forbidden name that could not be brought up in Nottingham Forest right now. Nobody forced the players to not bring up his name, but it was an unspoken rule that all the players abided by.

O'Neill heard whispers coming from the players. He lifted his head to look at them.

The whispers vanished instantly.

O'Neill did not try to figure out where the whispers were coming from. Instead, he continued explaining his tactics to the team.

The players kept quiet for a moment before they leaned towards each other and began whispering among themselves once again.



“Hey, how do you think the fans would treat the boss when he returns? I’ve been hearing that a lot of people resent him...”

“Don’t you resent him?”

“Me? Hmm... At the start, I did resent him a little, but I’ve thought it through now... The players can transfer to another club, so why can’t the manager?”

“That does not sound convincing.”

“Shut up.”

“To me... Honestly, I don’t know what the boss is thinking. I think I’d feel a mixture of emotions when I see him. I still can’t get used to the head yet. I don’t feel at ease when there’s no one in the locker room to yell at us.”

“I don’t care what you guys think. I actually miss the boss quite a bit, so I’m very happy to be able to see him again. Maybe I’d hug him too.” The player who said these words was Pepe.

“Do you all think the boss has a chance of coming back to manage us?” Bale asked a question, and all the whispers disappeared in an instant.

Some of the players pretended not to hear him, while others looked at Bale curiously.

Bale shrugged. “All right. Pretend I never asked.”

Wood was the only player who did not join in the discussion when his teammates were whispering among themselves. He stared at O’Neill the whole time. It was as though he was focused on listening to the tactics that O’Neill was explaining to them.

But, in truth, Wood’s mind was in a complete disarray. He tried his best not to listen to the words being exchanged by his team mates, but they still managed to find their way into his ears, and the memories within him of that man were brought up forcefully.

That man sent him home and also encouraged him to attend school. That man was even more childish than he was. When that man met his mother for the very first time, he suddenly felt like there would come a day where he would lose his mother, and that ignited a sense of danger within him. When he had lost all hope in himself, the man opened up a new door for him by leaving him a note and asking him to go find him. When he encountered the very first failure of his life and was intent on giving up, that man grabbed him by the collar and told him not to give up and not to admit defeat, if not he was destined to be a delinquent for the rest of his life...

If someone were to write an autobiography for George Wood, then two-third of the book would mention that man’s name. That man was just his manager, but in his heart, that man was just like a father to him. Wood has never been able to experience fatherly love his entire life, but he managed to experience bits of it through his time with Tony Twain.

He did not know why that man chose to leave the club, because that man was someone who did not allow others to get close to his innermost thoughts.

Wood wanted to stay at the club. He wanted to prove to that man that his decision to leave was wrong. Or, perhaps, he was protecting something at the club.

Wood's thoughts were all over the place. He did not even hear what the manager was saying earlier, but it did not matter, since his role would always be the same. All he had to do was to stop the opposition from attacking and to build a barrier in the midfield so as to protect his team mates. When the situation calls for it, he would join in the offense as well.

The role that O'Neill assigned to Wood was not any different from how Twain would play Wood. This cannot be seen as a lack of thought from O'Neill. Rather, it was that Twain had shown the world how best to make use of Wood's abilities, and there was no need to change anything about Wood's game.

If a manager really wanted to change Wood's game, he could get Wood to focus solely on offense and get him to give up on defense entirely. However, the truth was that there would not be a single manager in the world who would ever do that, because it is a massive waste to not make use of Wood's defensive capabilities, and wastage is utterly shameful.

O'Neill felt a little relieved after seeing Wood listen to his words earnestly. At the very least, the team's captain was behaving positively. As long as the captain stands with him, the locker room would not be in a complete disarray.

In truth, George Wood was the player whom O'Neill was most concerned about when he first joined as Forest's new manager. Everyone knows the relationship between Wood and Twain. There were even some media outlets who described their relationship as that of a father and son's. O'Neill was worried that Wood would transfer to another club after Twain's departure. If that were to happen, the future for the team would be bleak.

Fortunately, Wood did not leave the club. He even signed a new contract with them.

O'Neill did not care about whether the other players wanted to stay or leave as long as Wood had stayed.

O'Neill decided to talk about something else after he finished explaining his tactics to the team.

"I hope we can attain victory in this match."

Silence ensued when he finished his words. The players finally locked their eyes on him.

Their gazes conveyed a multitude of meanings behind them, and O'Neill returned their gazes. "I know this is an insignificant exhibition game. But, I hope you guys can understand one thing. It doesn't matter what kind of game you play in. You have to prepare for it with the intention to win. You guys are a champion team. You guys are a team who pursue victory. That's all you need to remember."

The players averted their gazes away from O'Neill.

In their minds, there was one thought:

Why does he speak like the boss...

**Chapter 894: England Team C**

In the end, Twain did not get anyone from Germany or Italy to be his goalkeeping coach. He chose Clemence, who had been the goalkeeping coach for the England team for many years. He was an experienced goalkeeping coach and he represented England alongside Nottingham Forest's goalkeeper, Peter Shilton, previously. Shilton was the one who called to recommend him to Twain. As someone from Nottingham Forest too, they should take care of each other.

Twain chose Jon Webb, whom the English Football Association recommended, to be his fitness coach. He used to work for Manchester City but was unemployed then.

When it came to coaching team, the experienced Steve Wigley joined the team. From 1980, he used to play for Nottingham Forest for six seasons. After he hung up his boots, he returned to Forest and served as their youth team's coach, coach and he also served as coach, assistant manager and manager of various clubs. He understood the English players very much and was very capable.

The 64-year-old Tony Carr was the oldest coach in the coaching team. He had been the youth team's coach for West Ham United since 1973 and he was also once the manager of the team. West Ham United's youth development was famous in English football and there were many talents who came from the club. Tony Carr was the greatest contributor to that. He was a loyal warrior whom had only served West Ham United. Now that he was getting older, the English Football Association persuaded him to support Tony Twain, that was why he left West Ham United and joined Tony Twain's coaching team.

The 55-year-old Steve Gatting used to be Arsenal's youth coach but was also sent to Tony Twain to be part of his coaching team by the Football Association.

With assistant manager Des Walker, the coaching team was basically complete. This was the first time that the England team was using a psychologist. Twain successfully convinced 46-year-old Miss Emma to leave Nottingham Forest for the England team. This licensed psychologist would take up the role as the psychologist for the England team and her job was to solve any psychological problems that the players have.

This was a fully local coaching team and Shaun Harvey was very satisfied with it. He thought that Twain would most likely not pick anyone from the candidates that he recommended because of the way he likes to make things as awkward as possible. However, only the assistant manager was someone from the outside, even though Clemence was recommended to Twain by Shilton, he had been working with the Football Association for many years.

In general, other than Des Walker, who was slightly less famous, this coaching team were rather well-known in English Football. However, he was also once part of the England national team, he would still be able to hold his own.

After the coaching team was set up, Twain needed to think about the players.

Realistically speaking, even though the English Football Association told Twain that the line-up for this match could follow the one from the World Cup, it was impossible to do so. At that time, all the clubs were preparing for the new season, especially those teams who had the ability to fight for the title. They

would definitely not let their core players play in a friendly for the national team. Even without thinking about the disruption to the preseason preparation, there was also the risk that they might be injured.

That was why it would be difficult for Twain to call up players like Gerrard, Rooney and Walcott.

Therefore, Twain decided to take this chance to observe. Calling up the borderline players who were usually seldom picked for the national team and observing their performances to decide if they would have a place in Twain's national team in future. Even though there were lesser stars in the team, which would disappoint the crowd in the City Grounds, Twain had never been one to change himself because of the audience's preferences.

This was a good opportunity. The results were not important for this type of matches and there were no pressure, hence Twain could call up the players who would usually not be able to be picked without worry. This was even the first time for some of them to be called up to represent their country.

As for those established players who were usually part of the national squad, Twain did not even ask. He did not want to ask them when he knew that he would be rejected.

It only took one day for Twain to announce the name list for this match:

The three goalkeepers were Chris Kirkland, Stuart Taylor and Andy Atkinson. This was the first time that Taylor and Atkinson were called up to the national team, but Kirkland was not much better, this was only his second time. They were the real borderline players.

In defence, Dan Gosling was a versatile defender who played for Everton. Even though he had made a name for himself at Everton, and was once hailed as a genius, his international career was less successful. Before Twain called him up this time, he had only been selected for the national team four times.

The son of the ex-Wimbledon player, Alan Cork, 25-year-old Jack Cork was once the future star of Chelsea. But he failed to make the breakthrough at Chelsea and eventually went to Southampton. Southampton did not have any impressive performance in the English Premier League which affected his international career. However, he had always been thought of as one for the future. The reason why Twain called him up this time was to see if the rumours were true. This was his first time being called up.

Gary Cahill was already 28 years old, but this was his first time being called up. He had played for many different English teams such as Aston Villa, but he eventually transferred to Lyon and had been one of the key players for Lyon. However, he did not attract the attention of England manager Capello previously because he was playing overseas, and in the French Ligue One to boot. For him to be called up by Twain, it might send out a signal to everyone—It did not matter if a player was playing in England or outside England, as long as you're capable, the national team would welcome you.

The younger brother of Rio Ferdinand, 28-year-old Anton Ferdinand, made his debut with West Ham but was plying his trades at Sunderland then. He had never represented the national team before.

The Middlesbrough's key central defender, David Wheeler, selected for the national team six times. However, he was always overshadowed by the likes of Terry and the rest and was not favoured. His name appeared in the substitute's list six times but he only managed to get on the pitch once—As a substitute in the 87th minute. Standing at 1.96 meters tall, he was a central defender with impressive

aerial abilities and Liverpool used to be interested in him. He was only 27 years old then and Twain wanted to see his abilities and if he did well, he would definitely have a spot in the England team in future.

Paul Pepper was the latest academy product from Middlesbrough. He was still a young player, only 20, he had represented England in the U19 and U21 level, and he was the captain of the U21 team. He was a talented youngster with immense potential. When Twain was still with Nottingham Forest, he was interested to bring him to the City Grounds from Middlesbrough, but the asking price of 15 million meant that a deal was not to be. He was the key left-back of Middlesbrough and his specialty was a strong attacking prowess, kind of like Gareth Bale. This was also his first time selected for the national team.

30-year-old Glen Johnson was a familiar face in the national team setup. However, he did not participate in the World Cup held in Brazil this summer. That was because he sustained a serious injury two months before the competition and had to be out of action for three months, only coming back from injury now. The reason why Aston Villa agreed to allow him to play for the national team was because they wanted him to get some match fitness.

Ashley Cole might be the most famous player in the national team backline. However, he was already 33 and had gradually lost his place as the key player in the Chelsea team. That was why Chelsea agreed to let him play for the national team and he himself wanted to win back his position in the club through his performance in this match.

In midfield, Twain called seven players up.

24-year-old Fabian Delph was the most successful academy product from Leeds United in recent years, but he was part of the Tottenham Hotspurs team now. He was called up to the national squad thrice, and this was his fourth time putting on the national team jersey. His position in the team was on the right of the midfield.

West Ham United's 27-year-old midfielder, Mark Noble, became a core member of the team's midfield after Gareth Barry transfer to Liverpool. This was his 10th time representing the country.

Michael Johnson used to play for Manchester City, but he was now a midfield player for Tottenham Hotspurs. If not for the existence of George Wood, he might have been a key player for the national team. He was a very capable player and had already been called up 11 times. He also took part in the World Cup in Brazil this summer and came on as a substitute once.

James Milner made his debut for Leeds United 13 years ago. When Leeds was facing financial meltdown, he was sold by the team to Newcastle for 3.6 million to help with the financial situation at the club. Later on, he went to Aston Villa and he also used to be the record holder for the youngest goal scorer for England. Eventually, he moved to Chelsea and had been with them since. He had represented the country 15 times before this.

Matt Derbyshire was a 28-year-old attacking midfielder from Blackburn who could also play as a striker. This was his first time representing England.

Jose Baxter was the next future star that Everton developed after Rooney and Vaughan. He was only 22 and had already been in the national team once. He could play on either wing and also as a striker.

Joe Cole was the most famous star in the midfield line up. After many years at Chelsea, he just moved to Manchester City this summer. His abilities were without doubt, but his form was affected by his frequent injuries. The reason Twain called him up was because he wished that his technical abilities would be able to bring about more changes in England's midfield.

Twain picked five strikers into the team for observation. Stars such as Rooney were all not part of the list of players called up.

The senior of Jose Baxter that was mentioned earlier, James Vaughan was part of the players called up this time. He was Everton's main striker now and the personal relationship between Twain and Moyes played no small part in helping Everton release him for international duties. Also, Twain had to promise Moyes that he would only play Vaughan for only the first half before Moyes agreed.

26-year-old Fraizer Campbell was a talented product of the Manchester United's academy, but he could only warm the bench at Manchester United now. It was not known if Mourinho's arrival at Old Trafford was a good thing for him yet, but he might be able to take advantage of this call up to showcase his abilities to Mourinho.

Danny Welbeck, 23, also a product of the Manchester United Academy. However, he chose a different path from Campbell. Campbell was still struggling in Manchester United for a starting position while Welbeck left Manchester United for Sunderland long ago. He was playing regularly for Sunderland now and performed well, hence he was also called up to the national team.

The high-profile striker from Charlton previously, Darren Bent, did not perform up to his standard after transferring to Tottenham, but this did not affect Twain's decision to call him up. No matter what, he was still an experienced player when compared to the previous three strikers.

The last guy was Aston Villa's 23-year-old striker, Nathan Delfouneso. Even though his height was not that impressive at only 1.81 meters, he was good in the air and had good physical abilities. This was his first time being called up for the national team.

The 23 players above are the ones that Twain wanted to observe, and the club was willing to release. None of the major stars were here and Twain did not even give them a call. Similarly, there were no Nottingham Forest players in this name list as well as they were the opponents.

This name list was placed under heavy scrutiny by the English media as it was Tony Twain's first national squad members after all. There were countless people trying to figure something out from there.

Some people thought that Twain was favouring youth, otherwise, why would he pick so many young players? There were many older players that were also on the brinks of the national team.

Some people thought that Twain was taking this opportunity how his iron fist. By calling up so many players on the brinks, he was issuing a "warning" to the stars, "In my team, fame counts for nothing. I'm only interested in your attitude."

The other group of people thought that Twain had no choice—Most of the big clubs were not willing to release the players and the key players of England were preparing for the new season with their teams. It was not easy for him to find 23 players, who cares about the quality of the players?

No matter how the media analysed this name list, all the players on the name list received a call from the English Football Association asking them to be part of the England squad.

Some were surprised, some of them were calm, but all of them had their own thoughts about it. To the players who were still preparing for the new season with their teams, working with the new manager first would give them an opportunity to understand the personality of the new manager. This would be helpful in helping them gain a spot in the new national team.

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“Don’t expect to see anything from this match, Tony,” assistant manager, Des Walker told Twain, an opinion that was shared by some other coaches. This was the day before the team was supposed to assemble, the coaches were having a meeting to discuss the team’s tactics, the opponent’s tactics... etcetera.

“We don’t even have time for a training session, the team will assemble tomorrow, and we’ll be playing the three days later. This feels like a friendly match and everyone would be afraid of injuries. They will be scared, and we’ll be scared as well,” coach Steve Wigley said.

Twain took one look at everyone and laughed, “They may be afraid, but we don’t necessary have to be scared.”

Walker, who knew him very well, muttered in his mind, looks like somebody’s going to get hurt...

## **Chapter 895: Nottingham Forest and England**

Twain’s heart was not calm when he learned that his first game was against Nottingham Forest. Similarly, the Nottingham Forest players were stuck in in turmoil knowing they had to go against someone who was once their master.

Freddy Eastwood still remembered how he reacted when he found out his head coach had retired. He was still pouring coffee into his own cup and reading the newspaper on the table. When he saw that Tony Twain’s 11-year relationship with Nottingham Forest had officially ended, he forgot what he had been doing and could not wait to continue reading the main text. He was in a trance until the hot coffee spilled over the brim of the cup and dripped down to his pants. He threw aside the empty coffee maker and looked down at his wet pants, then at the mess on his table. His mood then was much like the current situation: extremely messy.

He could not believe or accept this reality. The man who once smiled and said to him, “You’re going to be a legendary shooter and I’m going to be a legendary coach.” just upped and left his home ground which he defended for eleven years.

Fortunately, he was not the same person which needed the head coach whenever he needed to overcome difficulties. He could draw on his own strength and he wanted to live for himself and not for someone else.

He accepted the fact a little faster than the rest, within a day, but his former teammates were not as accepting as he was.

Gareth Bale had been on vacation when he heard the news. As a result, the well-planned vacation in Hawaii was filled with constant complaints from his girlfriend, saying that he did not actually love her and he was not even focused when he was out playing with her. The girlfriend even interrogated him, asking if it was her or Tony Twain that he loved. In the end, the girlfriend suggested a breakup with Bale and flew back to the United Kingdoms by herself. Bale stayed in Hawaii in a daze for another day, then he went home afterwards.

Bale's form was also worrying after the team started training. After not seeing the cool-headed head coach in sunglasses at the edge of the training ground, he did not know what to do. Twain was like a father figure to him, and now his father is gone, his core was gone as well. He had no idea what he was going to do next. His father, too, was his agent asking about his intentions, and he just shook his head. Last season, Twain initiated the renewing of new contracts for most of the team's key players, improving their treatment and updating their contract terms. Bale now had three years left on his contract with the club before he could leave the club but before that, he needed to continue staying here.

It was already July when he decided to stay. He had feelings for his head coach, but he also had feelings for Nottingham Forest as well. As a professional footballer he had to be clear about one thing — he was playing for himself and not for a coach. It sounded a little ruthless, but that was the truth.

Pepe's reaction was the strongest among the players. The day after the news of Twain's departure broke, he informed his agent, Mendes, that he would follow Twain if he went to coach at another club. All of a sudden, he forgot his hatred for Ribery. Maybe he hated Ribery not because he betrayed the team, but because he betrayed the head coach.

Now that the head coach had gone to coach the England national team, Pepe could not follow. He was so disappointed that he would choose to leave whenever he had that chance. Now that he was the player most speculated would leave, a lot of clubs had intentions to invite the world-class center over, but Martin O'Neill did not want to let this Portuguese leave.

Fortunately, Twain did not quietly leave without any greetings. All the Nottingham Forest players received a postcard from Twain when he was in Brazil. The postcard did not mention the reason why he did not renew the contract nor any expectations of the players, it only contained greetings and apologies – apologizing for not informing them first-hand and keeping them out of the loop.

Twain did not say what he was doing was inexplicable. Nor did he ask everyone to forgive him and understand him. It was not something he could do, and if anyone in the players still resented him after reading the postcard there was nothing he could do about that. He was still what he was in the past, not willing to let other people in easily, not willing to show others anything other than his glamorous side]. Even if he was leaving, he still wanted to do it in style.

He never mentioned Nottingham Forest on any occasion after returning back to the public eye, and when asked by a reporter about Nottingham Forest, he would choose to be silent or to look at him. Some people thought it was cold and heartless, so people like Bill would be angry and have a lot of resentment towards Twain. But in fact it was just a botched ploy for people who did not know how to hide their emotions better. He did not want the players to miss him because it would not be good for the new manager and Nottingham Forest should not be "Tony Twain's Nottingham Forest", whether was wishful thinking or not, he thought about this when he had his heart disease. A mature team should



be able to maintain a high standard even if it changes its manager. Then, and only then, can it be called an “elite” team. Like Barcelona. Nottingham Forest will never be able to shake off the stigma of an “upstart” if it was relying on him.

He distanced himself from Nottingham Forest silently even though he often dreamed of returning to the City Stadium, returning to the moment when tens of thousands of people chanted his name. But when he was sober, his indifference was repulsive.

He was not a man who could be understood by just anyone.

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Des Walker suddenly thought of something he was not entirely sure would be interesting. “Tony, when you return to Nottingham Forest, have you thought of the kind of treatment to get? ”

Twain pouted. “I don’t have time and effort to think about that.”

He was not lying. Today, he needed to think of how he was going to face the 23 people he was about to meet.

This time, Arsenal’s Kearney training base was requisitioned as England’s training base for a day. Twain would meet his players here for the first time. The New England players were changing their uniforms in the locker room and talking about how their new head coach would look like.

Tony Twain’s roster did not even include a single former Nottingham Forest player — it was a completely fresh roster. These people did not know as much about Twain as compared to those smaller reporters, hence for this head coach with this type of personality, he had several rumours.

“Hey, I heard Ashley Young said Tony Twain is the type to bear grudges. If you’ve offended him he would definitely find an opportunity to find revenge, whether or not you did it intentionally.” The man who said this was Michael Johnson, who had played for Manchester City, thus he knew Ashley Young opinion of Twain.

“You still need to spread rumours about this? The whole England knows the type of coach he is.”

“To be honest, I used to hate him... I never thought I’d be playing under him now...”

“Ha, Joe. It’s just temporary anyway, it’s better this way than to let him be Chelsea manager, right?”

“Do you think he’s annoying? But I think he’s great, a team like Nottingham Forest could win so many titles under him... It would not only by swearing, wouldn’t it? ” Just as there were people who hated him, there were also people who liked him.

Tony Twain’s controversial side, even in the national team, was also displayed clearly.

“I heard he would yell at people in the dressing room. I don’t like to be scolded anyway.”

“Ferguson would, too, and I don’t think anyone at Manchester United is disgusted.” The speaker glanced at Fraser Campbell.

Campbell heard Manchester United being mentioned, so he had to come out and say a few words.

“Although he is a little grumpy, everyone would still feel as it was normal. He had so many honors, how

would his little temper matter? Anyway, I think there is nothing wrong, as long as you do not make mistakes, he will not scold you. I don't know if Coach Twain would be like this as well... It's a pity that we do not have anyone that was from Nottingham Forest."

"He, we have a match against them on the day after next, how can there be anyone here like them here?"

"Don't blindly guess, guys." The oldest here, Ashley Cole coughed, "If we don't go out again, I'm sure all of us will be scolded badly." He reminded people of the time, and if there is no accidents, he would be wearing the captain band in this practice match. He played his role beforehand.

None of the people were skeptical upon hearing, some of them shrunk their necks and start changing their clothes faster.

Ashley Cole was the first player to run out of the locker room and into the training ground. Unsurprisingly, he saw the entire coaching staff on the sidelines, including, of course, the legendary Tony Twain.

Twain stood in the green field in his sunglasses, basking in the sunlight. He stood out even in that crowd and you could pick him out in just a glance.

Upon seeing Ashley Cole running out and looking over here, and he started to smile. Ashley Cole did not dare to confirm if the man was laughing because he was not able to see the man's eyes.

"They must be in the dressing room, changing their training clothes while talking about what their new head coach is like. Otherwise the first person would not just appear now. "Des Walker was trying to joke about Twain.

Twain raised his wrist to look at his watch.

This move made Ashley Cole. It was a good thing he came out first; he was sure this devilish coach would not easily let them off if they were late. In fact, he did not know how early he had to come out to avoid being late because the former national team training time was not fixed.

Twain kept looking at the watch, as more and more players ran out of the dressing room and set foot on the training ground. They all moved quicker when they saw Twain's particular action.

When the last player ran to the training ground, Twain finally put his arm down. Then he grinned at the players standing in front of him, revealing a mouth of white teeth.

"It's good that you all just arrived before the time was up." He said it with a smile, but some people felt a chill running down their spine. What would have happened if they had not arrived on time?

"Let me introduce myself. I'm Tony Twain, your head coach for the next two years if there aren't any accidents."

Some players bowed their heads and laughed. They all know what Twain meant. Poor performance by the team or a foul mouth would have a chance to lead to him being fired.

"I know you all were just talking about me in the locker room, and I don't mind you talking privately about who I am. Actually, I get along very well, really. "At this point, Twain took off his sunglasses and gave everyone a smile that was even brighter than the sun.

This time no one laughed along with him. It seemed like there were excessive number of rumours outside, everyone were precautious against this head coach.

But Twain did not force these people to accept himself, anyway, they were all marginal figures who could become the backbone of the future England team, but they still needed to be under observation.

"No matter what you're now thinking in your hearts, in short, I've become your head coach. The day after the next, the game, to your opponents, might be just a show for your opponents to celebrate the opening of their new stadium, but I hope you know one thing. For you guys, it's not just an irrelevant show match. You should know why I didn't call for a main national team player this time? " Twain stood in front of the players and began to show these foreign soccer players his style of talking.

"Let me tell you, you all are the so-called marginal figures of the national team, some of you are capable, but you don't have a chance to go one tier higher. How do you guys feel after watching England losing to Brazil at home? Ever thought that if you were there, you'd let the tragedy be avoided? Now the opportunity has come. I'm the new coach and I don't know anything about the former England team and I don't want to know anything about it. My eyes are for looking forward, which is why they are on the front of my head. The day after tomorrow's game would be a chance for you: if you perform well, there would be a position for you in my future England team. I don't mind building an England team without any superstars at all, as long as you guys really have potential within you. You need not bother about what the media says, your jobs are simple, it's just to properly play the match the day after tomorrow. "

Twain then waved as he said, "Go and warm up, don't get injured."

After the players listened to the head coach's promise, some felt a sense of hope and were super motivated, but many more were sceptical. In particular, Twain saying, "I don't mind building an England team which don't have any big-shots nor superstars at all" was just too hypocritical. That was going against the whole of England, not just the media, but even the Football Association and the fans would never allow such an obnoxious act. So what if he was Tony Twain? Going against the whole world would have a very tragic outcome in the end.

During the warm-up run, a group of people gathered together and muttered, "Do you want to bet? I doubt Coach Twain would be here for a long time."

"Just listen to the way he talks, it would be a miracle if he stayed for a long time. I don't want to bet with you. "

"He sounded so arrogant. The rumours are really true."

"I've always thought it was a miracle that Mr Twain was able to survive in England for so long. He really does not act like an Englishman."

"What is there to be surprised, what era is it now already. "

"Cough, cough, he's looking at us..."

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Twain was observing the players, he knew it would not be easy to conquer this team and become England's master. Maybe he needed to use a victory to start setting his foundation.

"Are you really going to go down?" said Walker.

"What?"

"Nottingham Forest."

Twain turned his head and took a look at Walker.

"After all, you've been there for eleven years right?" Walker continued.

Twain shrugged, "It's simple. I used to stand with them, and now I'm standing opposite them. "

"I'm kind of curious about something all of a sudden..." said Walker, looking at the players who were warming up. "You're not going to yell at them in the pre-match dressing room and tell them to tear up the Nottingham Forest bastards completely. You used to always call your opponent that. "

Twain's eyebrows jumped by a little.

After a long while, he then muttered, "It's just a friendly match..."

A month and twenty-seven days after leaving Nottingham Forest, he was finally going back. It is just that this time he was going back as an opponent. How would the people there welcome him? There was no way they would roll out the red carpet and announce "Long Live the Majesty". He knew the fans and the team he brought up too well.

Treat comrades as warm as the spring breeze, treat the enemy as ruthless as the autumn wind sweeps leaves.

### **Chapter 896: The Days Since Twain Left**

Kenny Burns' Forest Bar had not been busy like today since the World Cup ended.

Once it opened for business since eleven o'clock in the late morning, people constantly pushed the door open to come in, ordered a beer, and then gathered together muttering in discussion.

By the time Skinny Bill appeared in the bar, the muttering sounds finally developed into a loud argument. The originally united fans had split into two factions at this time. No one was willing to give in to each other. Stop short of beer glasses being thrown and swearing, the atmosphere was unfriendly.

Burns continued to wipe the glass in his hands that could not be cleaned for a very long time. He had no intention of coming forward to stop it.

When John pushed the door in, the argument in the bar temporarily dissipated after seeing him.

John stood at the entrance and looked around the room. The fans in the bar stood clearly divided on both sides, with fewer people on the left side and more people on the right. Everyone was a little worked up as made fully evident by the flush in their faces under the influence of alcohol.

“Bill, what are you doing again?” John caught the main contradiction at once. He stared at Bill, who sat on the right side.

“Nothing. Just discussing how to ‘welcome’ Tony for tomorrow’s game.” Bill casually mentioned as he swirled the whiskey in the glass.

“Can’t you let it go? Tony has his own freedom...”

The fat man had just spoken when he was rudely interrupted by Bill. He suddenly stood up and stared at John with reddened eyes as he said, “Screw freedom! That’s right! We don’t care how many ordinary managers leave because they are worthless to us! But Tony Twain is different! It took him eleven years to prove that he belonged only to Nottingham Forest! A Nottingham Forest team without him is not our favorite Nottingham Forest team. He is also not the Tony we like...when he’s without Nottingham Forest!”

John waited for him to finish roaring and then he still calmly said, “You said you like Tony, but do you understand him? He was not happy working there. He should at least have the right to choose to leave, shouldn’t he?”

“Ah ha, he was not happy at work, so he had the right to choose to leave. So, we also have the right to choose to hate him!” Bill changed his tone and spoke sarcastically, “He made himself scarce and walked away. What about us after he abandoned us? What about the players who followed him wholeheartedly and the fans who trusted and supported him so much that they called him king? Did he ever think about how they felt when he left? Did he empathize with them? We saw him as the man who could get Nottingham Forest to the top, and this was how he treated our expectations?”

John felt that Bill had fallen into a frenzy. There was no way to communicate with Bill like this. He shook his head and ignored the hysterical Bill. He went straight to the left side and sat down. Then he raised his hand to ask Burns for a beer.

Burns personally served the beer. But John stared blankly at the drink and asked, “A disposable paper cup?”

Burns smiled at him and replied, “So that I don’t worry about any fatalities when you guys start fighting in a while.”

John heard this and suddenly was in a bad mood. Before he and the people across were good buddies who watched the games together. They would run around and follow Nottingham Forest’s glorious footprint. They would come back here to celebrate when they won a game. They would also be back here to drink to drown their sorrows and curse when they lost a game. No matter what happened, they never had an infighting like they had today, not even when Michael left.

But Tony Twain was gone unexpectedly, and they split up. That man is the devil himself. He’s gone and yet the influence he has left can still make people who were once friends turn against each other. Ah Tony, Tony, what am I supposed to say to you? What was on your mind when you decided to leave

Nottingham Forest? Also, in tomorrow's game, can you imagine what kind of treatment you will encounter?

John was not in the mood to sit here and drink. He got up, looked at Bill and shook his head. Then he walked out alone.

Those sitting on the left side departed one by one after John left. Soon, Bill and his gang were the only ones left in the bar. They came together and discussed how to "welcome" their old friend tomorrow.

Burns continued to wipe the glasses, as if he had turned a blind eye to all of this. His gaze had crossed the entrance and drifted into the distance. He also had no idea why Tony Twain had chosen to leave. But he knew that Twain was not the kind of man described by Bill. An ungrateful man would not visit Gavin at least twice a year.

Some people were used to encasing themselves in thick shells. Unwilling for other people to easily understand his inner world, Tony Twain should be this kind of person.

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The day before the game, the scene at the Forest Bar continued to unfold repeatedly elsewhere in Nottingham. The city, which was first split between the two teams, Notts County and Nottingham Forest, had now been divided into three divisions – the Nottingham Forest fans were in a state of infighting.

Tony Twain would be back in Nottingham with the England team for tomorrow's game. How should we treat him at that time? Should we thank and welcome him from our hearts, or greet him with boos, verbal abuse and middle fingers?

They could not forget the many trophies and joys that "His Majesty" had brought them. But similarly, they could not forget the shock Twain brought to their hearts when he and the Forest team broke up. The hard to describe complicated emotions surged within their hearts. Mixed with shock, disappointment, sadness and anger, it messed up their lives. One should not assume that the power of football was not so strong. Football had such power in this country and city.

The Nottingham Evening Post used this headline in the newspaper published that day:

King or Judas?

It was a good illustration of the Forest fans' conflicting moods.

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"I'm going to hug the boss before the game." Pepe announced his decision in the locker room, drawing everyone's attention.

There were people in the locker room who had good feelings toward Twain, like Pepe, who still could not forget the boss' kindness till this day. There were also people who had disdain for Tony Twain, such as the new players who had just joined the team. They had not experienced the era of Twain at all and could not understand why someone like Pepe would go mad for an outgoing manager.

The Brazilian center back, Thiago Silva, who had just joined the club, was such a representative. He joined the Forest team to replace Kompany and was obviously excited to join a team that had just won the Treble. He was eager to make a big splash here and he did not care what happened to the Forest team before. He also somewhat could not understand why there was always talk in the locker room about a manager who had left.

“Pepe, aren’t you afraid that the top brass will be unhappy with you?” Bale pointed to the ceiling.

“They don’t need to care so much.” Pepe uttered with a despising look on his face. He was the first player in the team to make clear his dislike of the top brass. Anyway, if he really offended the club chairman, worst came to worst, he could leave. The boss was not here anymore. What was the point of staying?

Some of the players envied Pepe’s courage to love and hate, as well as the courage to accept the consequences of his actions. Some people disdained it as beneath contempt and brushed it off, thinking that Pepe was just shooting off his mouth. Anyone could move one’s lips.

Cracks began to quietly appear in what was originally a united and tight knit locker room in this way.

Bale looked at Pepe and turned toward Wood to say, “George...”

Wood looked at him and did not answer.

“You, uh... Are you going to hug the boss too?” In the team, everyone knew how good the relationship between Wood and Twain was. Perhaps no one would even disagree if it were to be said that Twain was Wood’s father.

But today Wood did not give an answer that fitted with this relationship. He shook his head and said, “I’m not that sappy.”

Bale felt Wood’s indifference, and he stopped talking. Since the boss was gone, the atmosphere in the locker room had changed and the change made him uncomfortable. It used to be a form of enjoyment playing for Nottingham Forest. Now, it was gradually becoming a form of torment. The feeling was particularly pronounced for some of the players who had the closest relationships with Twain.

He silently busied himself with his own things to do while the other players gathered and whispered in groups of three or four. It was most likely something to do with tomorrow’s game.

Bale was no longer interested in their discussions. There was nothing to discuss. Everything would be revealed tomorrow.

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Evan and Allan were in the club chairman’s spacious office, looking at each other but no one spoke.

The silence lasted for a while before Evan changed his posture and leaned back on the back of the chair. The back of the leather chair squeaked, breaking the silence of the room.

“It’s truly a coincidence.” Allan laughed and said, “When I booked the game, I did not expect him to be the England team’s manager.”

“Isn’t that good? As far as I know, there are a lot of people in Nottingham who are unhappy with his sudden departure. This game may be a way for them to vent their frustrations.”

“Do you enjoy seeing this?” Allan asked.

Evan spread his hands and said, “Isn’t better than having those people protest and hold demonstrations at our doorstep all the time, is it?” When he suddenly took the initiative to hold a press conference, he had intended to put the main responsibility inexplicitly on Twain. Now he saw that his purpose had basically been achieved. There were still dissenting voices against the club, but they were too insignificant as compared to those who hated Twain.

It could be said that Tony Twain’s character and consistent image in the media helped Evan Doughty. Had it not been for his bad temper and rotten image, the public would not have targeted the attack at Twain so easily.

If Twain usually appeared with an image of a Mr. Nice Guy in front of people, that his character was gentle and low-key, and he did not offend so many enemies, how could he have fallen into such a plight? A person’s character determined his fate. These words were so true.

Allan stood up to take his leave as he said, “Tomorrow’s game... is full of anticipation. It’s to our advantage. What’s supposed to just a normal friendly match, is now different because of Tony. Outside the stadium is chock full of reporters. You’ll see later when you leave here. Just be careful of them.”

Evan smiled, “Excellent free advertising. We should all thank Tony.”

Allan did not answer. He turned around and went out.

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Since Twain became the England team’s manager, the happiest people had not been Twain’s hardcore fans but Mr. Carl Spicer.

It was like he had rediscovered the center of gravity in his life. He laughed and greeted everyone in the television station. People who were familiar with him shook their heads behind his back at how he lived for Tony Twain. It was not known how Spicer would feel if he knew this.

After the end of the World Cup, the football programming was in a slump. Initially, the match between the England national team and Nottingham Forest was not an important one. Nottingham Forest wanted to use it to test their new squad, while the England team certainly would not send its main squad. Such a game was of little value. But it was different now, because Tony Twain became the England manager.

The main subject was a news making machine. Wherever he went, that was where the news happened. Carl Spicer did not have to worry about what he could say on the show anymore. Now looking at the previous episodes of the program he did, it was enough to let him stuff his head into his pants – they were dry and bland. The clever words which he was most proud of were nonexistent. His eyes wandered about when talking, as if he did not know why his mouth was wriggling and what was being said. He did not know what to say without Twain.



Now he did not have to worry about these things. Whether it was to attack or ridicule, there was now a target in front of him.

He marched into his own standalone office at a brisk pace. With a light flick of his foot, he closed the door, and then twirled around as if he was dancing. He turned around and walked to his desk. He picked up a dart on the table and threw it at the office door.

With a “pop” sound, the dart was stuck in the dart board. That dart board was special because it was a picture of Tony Twain laughing with his mouth wide open.

The dart happened to strike on Twain’s teeth which looked a little comical.

Spicer laughed like Twain did in the photograph. He said, “It’s been a long time, Mr. Twain. The England team is more difficult to lead than Nottingham Forest.”

The photograph of Twain was still grinning even with a dart stuck to it. It did not answer him.

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“Tomorrow’s game is in the spotlight for the simple reason – Tony Twain is back again. This time he returned to Nottingham as a visitor.” The BBC reporter, holding a microphone, said to the camera. Behind him was the red behemoth, the Crimson Stadium.

Although the game was still a day away, the parking lot outside the new Nottingham Forest home ground, the Crimson Stadium, was already full of broadcast vans. The many media outlets gathered here to report the news of Twain’s “homecoming” for the first time.

The reaction of the fans, the reaction of the Nottingham Forest players... These were what the reporters were desperate to know.

The sale of the tickets to the game began a week ago with fifty thousand tickets out of sixty thousand tickets sold three days ago. It was estimated that sixty thousand tickets could have been sold out in big cities such as Manchester, Liverpool or London.

“The fans are very enthusiastic.” The reporter walked up to the fans who had lined up to buy tickets and was going to do a street interview.

A thin man appeared in front of the television camera and shouted excitedly at the reporter’s extended microphone, “We’re going to welcome Tony very, very, very warmly! This game will be extremely unforgettable for him! Ah ha!”

The reporter resurfaced on the television camera. He and smiled and said, “It looks like Tony Twain is still a big influence, and the fans still miss him. Tomorrow’s game must be very exciting!”

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The players who finished their training went out of the training ground in succession and prepared to change to go home. The reporters, waiting for a long time, flocked to surround them. They wanted to make sure that they talked about tomorrow’s game.

"It's just a normal friendly match." The team captain, George Wood pushed away the reporters blocking in front of him coldly and squeezed his way out.

The reporters shrugged it off and took aim at the other players. They basically could not get what they needed from Wood's mouth.

"I'm looking forward to a reunion with the boss!" Pepe said what the reporters wanted to hear, especially that name. This matter had too much to write about. If Martin O'Neill had heard this, how would he react?

"It's a little strange... I'd never thought I will be competing against him before." The man who said that was Gareth Bale, who was a little bit more even. He said, "But it must have been an interesting experience." What he said was nonsense, which was equivalent to saying nothing.

Most of the other players were mentally conflicted and did not want to talk more about tomorrow's game. They just managed with a few words and left in a hurry. Even while they were signing autographs for the fans, they looked distracted.

When Martin O'Neill came out from the training ground, all the players were almost gone. Some of the reporters were still gathered there waiting for him.

"I have nothing to say." O'Neill knew what they were going to ask, so he raised his hands in advance to signal that as he said, "I know what you media are so interested in. But for me, it's a normal friendly game. I don't care how you hype it. I just want to remind you that you don't affect my players."

But the reporters did not want to let him go. "Hey, Martin. Does your predecessor have a big influence on you while you work here?"

O'Neill pursed his lips without answering. In fact, he had to thank Twain for not mentioning Nottingham Forest. Otherwise, the pressure would be even greater. Even so, the former manager's influence was still everywhere which bothered him greatly. He must have been crazy when he agreed to take over the team at the time. He actually neglected Tony Twain's influence.

"One more question, Mr. O'Neill. Care to give your opinion on Tony Twain?"

O'Neill pretended not to hear.

The reporter was unyielding and continued to ask, "Are there any contradictions between you two?"

O'Neill could not pretend that he did not hear the question in case the reporters were unkind enough to interpret his silence and really turn it into "Martin O'Neill's dissatisfaction with Tony Twain." That would throw himself at the heart of the struggle. He was not Twain. He did not like to be a news personality that received too much media attention.

"No." He stopped in his tracks and answered with a smile, "I've always had a good relationship with Tony. He's a very good manager as you can tell from the many championship titles he has won. As the new manager of Nottingham Forest, I hope I can continue this glorious tradition."

In the end, he was still forced to answer the first question and even put himself in a lower standing.

Having said that, he quickly walked out of the encirclement of reporters. He no longer cared about the reporters shouting in the back and just strode away.

Pierce Brosnan was also among the reporters entangling O'Neill. As he watched O'Neill making his quick escape, he thought of Tony Twain in his mind.

From the start to finish, Twain did not show up to say a word regarding the game, but it sent so many people into a frenzy. At the same time, was the man hiding in the dark and watching the show while secretly laughing? He must be feeling smug, right? He had already left and yet his terrifying influence made countless of people willing to go crazy for him.

That man was truly a fiend that stirred up public sentiments with false statements.

### **Chapter 897: Back Home**

Some media used "Tony going home" as a caption for this match.

Twain's home was indeed still at Nottingham. He had really not been home much recently because he was staying in a hotel in London, busy with the national team.

Shania was not there so there was no need to return to that empty home.

Going home...

Twain muttered under his breath. He knew very clearly that the Nottingham now might not be willing to be his home now.

When Twain arrived in Nottingham in the bus with his team, he was bombarded by the media from all sides. For the past few days, he would either hide in his hotel to fiddle with the name list or hide in the Colney training base where the media could not reach him. However, now that he was in Nottingham, he had nowhere to hide. The media was determined to get some exclusive news out of him.

The team was to stay in a hotel in Nottingham to prepare for the match the next day. The bus had just stopped when the reporters who had been waiting outside the doors rushed over and totally cluttered the pathway from the bus door to the hotel door.

When Twain jumped out of the bus, the microphones at the end of the poles all extended to above Twain over the heads of everyone and the video cameras and cameras all pointed towards him while the security guards and police on the grounds all looked like they were facing one of their fiercest enemies.

The other players almost could not help themselves but to whistle when they saw this scene.

A group of people gathered to whisper among themselves again.

"I thought these people were here to interview us... This set up is even more impressive than the main force of an army."

"Stop dreaming, they are all here for the boss."

"He is the focus of the media now indeed."

“Did the boss say anything stupid this time?”

“He didn’t say anything.”

“He attracted so many reporters even by saying nothing?!”

“Idiot, this is Nottingham. He’s back to his home ground.”

The scene was bumbling and loud, and Twain did not hear the whispers of the players. He was busy handling the reporters.

“Mr Twain, Mr Twain! How does it feel to be back in Nottingham?”

“It feels good,” Twain replied with no expression on his face, and everyone could tell that he was not taking the question seriously at all.

“Can you explain the reason why you decided not to extend your contract with Nottingham Forest Football Club last time?” This would forever be the question that the reporters were most interested in. Even though there were many rumours but they were all not proven. The reporters still wanted to hear the real answer from the man himself.

“There is nothing to discuss about this,” Twain refused to answer. The reason why he did not want to talk about the conflicts between him and the club was because he did not want to sour the relationship between them totally, after all, he had been there for 11 years. Some things should be left a secret forever.

“There are some people who say there were some conflicts between you and the management of the club...”

“There is nothing of that sort,” Twain lied without so much as a stumble.

“Then, could it be because...”

“I’m sorry, I refuse to answer any question regarding Nottingham Forest,” Twain had a very strong look on his face. It was time to let these reporters know when to back off.

“But Mr Twain, your team will be playing Nottingham Forest. This question is related to Nottingham Forest too. If you don’t answer it...” A reporter picked on the flaw in the logic behind what Twain just said smilingly.

“What I meant was I won’t be answering any question,” Twain gave that man a look and entered the hotel lobby under the protection of both the security and the police.

The reporter who was still teasing Twain earlier was left stunned on the spot with a stiff expression on his face.

“Wow——” A player whistled, “That’s so cool!”

Carl Spicer could not stop laughing at this scene in the crowd. He turned to look at the camera and said laughingly, “Tony Twain is really back.” He felt utterly relieved in his heart. That arrogant Twain was back. He did not have to worry that Twain would become a toothless tiger under the restrictions of the Football Association after two months of dormancy. That would be no fun at all.

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Twain's return to Nottingham became the news headlines that day and the photo of him squeezing past the surrounding reporters into the hotel appeared on the papers and on the internet. Dressed in a black suit and a pair of sunglasses, he really looked like a godfather from the mafia.

Burns held the newspaper and lost himself in the picture of Twain on it.

How does it feel to be back home?

He really wanted to ask Twain that, but he did not think that Twain would be back at his bar. After becoming England's manager, he was closely watched by the media every single moment of the day and he would have no time to chat with his friends anymore. Besides, he might not be able to find anyone to talk to even if he came.

"He still looks so cool," Fat John came over to take a look at the photograph.

Bill and the gang was nowhere to be seen, probably discussing about the production of another slogan.

"But he offended the media. When he left Forest, there were not many of them who would speak for him," Burns replied.

"Heh heh," John laughed, "If Tony cared about what the others thought, he would not be Tony anymore."

"Not necessarily," Burns shook his head, "He will definitely be affected by the crimson stadium tomorrow."

What Burns said was what John was thinking about. The smile disappeared on his face and he stayed silent. He merely lifted his beer mug and chugged his beer.

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Tang announced that the day after training would be a rare day off for the players to rest up properly. He did not give a reason and the players did not think much about it other than feeling that it was strange. A day off was a good thing and they welcomed it.

Tang kept the tickets for the match properly and did not explain anything.

Such a match would normally be not worth watching, but he was interested in Twain and he wanted to see for himself what troubles would Twain come up with there.

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Even though this was a friendly match, Twain called for a tactics meeting at night.

As the team had only a day to train together, it was basically impossible that they could have rehearsed for any tactics so Twain did not arrange for any complicated tactics. They would be using the basic 442 and attack from the flanks. These tactics were the most basic and simplest ones and no matter any player would be able to cooperate and work together because they had been training like this since young.

Twain reiterated what this match meant to the players in the meeting, hinting to them that there would be a good result for them if they worked hard.

It looked like he was seriously preparing for this match. Watching him like this made the players who were still sceptical about Twain's thoughts previously think about it seriously—The match tomorrow was really a great opportunity...

"They will never guess that we will be treating this game seriously," Twain thought for awhile and confirmed what he just said, "This is just a normal game. Even though the media is all over it, their focus are not on the game. I hope you'll grab this opportunity."

He looked at the players. How many of these players would really trust him and follow him, he would know after this match.

Of course, he did not expect everyone to do their best against Nottingham Forest. He was not that popular amongst the national team players yet, and the players were not puppets on string. However, the ones he needed were only those who would listen to him and had the will to work hard. As for those who were unwilling to do so... So sorry, but the doors of the national team are forever closed to you guys.

This warmup match was a good chance for him to give the players a warning, asserting dominance did not necessarily have to be through a victory.

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At the same time, over on the other side, Martin O'Neill was discussing the tactics to be used against the England team with David Kerlake.

"What do you think England will do for tomorrow's game, David?" O'Neill asked.

Kerlake knew Twain well. To guess what Twain would do, one just had to ask him.

Kerlake was silent for a while before saying, "The public believes that the focus of this game was not the game itself, but outside it. We're going to use this game to test out some formations for the team and the form of the new players after they joined us while England's side was filled with players on the border, therefore they would be weak. However, my thinking was totally opposite to theirs."

O'Neill was interested, and he indicated for him to continue.

"Tony Twain is not one to do things logically. This is his first match since taking charge of the team and it is very important. If he wants his job to be easier for him in future, he cannot take this match lightly. I think he'll ask his team to do his best," he paused for a while, as if to think if what he was going to say was right.

"And...their target will be to defeat us," he decided to tell him the conclusion in the end.

"O'Neill did not refute this conclusion that seemed so unlikely it might as well be a fairy tale, instead, he nodded in approval, "That's just what I thought too. Tony needs this victory more than us, even if it's just an unimportant friendly match. The media is still focused on him and he'll be under a lot of pressure. He needs to prove his capabilities with a victory even if it's a match like this."

O'Neill was glad that Twain was under this kind of pressure too as he did not feel like the only fool in the world now.

"Even though they will do their best, we don't have the need to do so too. Twain doesn't need to worry that his players would be injured but we do. That's why we should still go with our original plan—— inspect our team."

Kerslake agreed with O'Neill's arrangement. Twain needed a victory and he needed it badly. He would use whatever means necessary for it and Nottingham Forest did not need to join him in the madness. Examining his players' form was one thing, avoiding injuries was just as important.

Deep inside, he did not think that it was a bad thing for Forest to lose to England. Forest was not hoping to change anything with this friendly match so this result would ensure their safety and give Twain what he wanted, a win-win situation.

However, what O'Neill said later destroyed his fantasy.

"Even so, I don't think that his England C team can defeat my Nottingham Forest."

Kerslake turned to look at his manager. After so many days, this was his first time hearing O'Neill say "my Nottingham Forest".

If he was facing some other opponent, O'Neill would never have said something like that. It looked like facing the previous manager of his team invoked a sense of crisis within this man. It was as if he was a lion trying to protect his territory and he was unwilling to retreat even for a little bit against the provocation of the previous leader of the pack. Was it instinct or responsibility? Kerslake did not know.

Twain did not want to lose this match so that he could establish his position in the England team whereas Martin O'Neill did not want to lose to Twain's England team because he was not happy about living in Tony Twain's shadows. The former for survival, the latter for glory.

These two had a good relationship privately but they would not hold back because of that.

He was suddenly looking forward to the match tomorrow.

What would the City Ground look like tomorrow?

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This match was scheduled to be played in the afternoon. The temperature of Nottingham at the end of July was very hot and even though the kick-off timing of the match was at four-thirty in the afternoon where the temperature was a little lower, it was still very hot.

Despite the heat and the glaring sun, the passionate fans were not dissuaded from watching the match. The special meaning behind this game attracted almost all the Nottingham Forest fans to watch it and at the same time, the broadcasting vans of the media surrounded the whole City Ground, obstructing traffic.

Pepe saw this inside the bus and muttered, "Looks like we're in time for the UEFA Champion's League final... This is crazy."

“They are all here for boss, aren’t they?” Bale got close to the window and looked at the fans below.

“Would they welcome him or boo him?” Gago chimed in, but everyone fell silent after he said that.

“Er...” Gago felt a little awkward, “Okay, take it as though I said nothing.”

He vocalized the concerns of everyone.

“Don’t think too much about it, prepare for the match,” Wood said from the side. He might be trying to ask Gago not to think too much but everyone felt that the atmosphere had become colder...

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When the England bus arrived at the stadium, most of the fans had already entered. However, Twain still attracted everyone’s attention when he alighted. The media rushed over and he heard some scattered jeers.

He was not a fool, he knew who those boos were directed to. He could only act as though he did not hear it and walked quickly into the tunnel.

There were still reporters following behind him, asking, “Mr Twain, Mr Twain! How does it feel to be back home?”

This time, Twain did not even bother to give a fake reply. He acted like he did not hear it and entered the tunnel, leaving the reporter behind.

Back home?

This trip back home was not an easy one...

### **Chapter 898: Welcome Home, Tony**

In fact, the England national team’s tactics were very similar to Nottingham Forest’s. Other than they did not insist on just playing defensive counterattack, the features of the sudden attacks on the sidelines, the two wingers in full strength, simple and fast breakthroughs in the midfield were still very consistent. The England team’s ability for positional play was not very good, which neither Eriksson, McClaren nor Capello had completely resolved.

After Capello came on, he had tried ways and means to enrich the England team’s playing approach in the positional play, but with limited success. Compared to the Latin and European players from Italy, Portugal, Spain and France, the England team’s players had rough footwork skills. This fact had not been changed even though the English Premier League had flourished for so many years.

Now that Twain had taken over the England team, he was in no hurry to show England’s ability for positional play in this game. The easiest and most effective way was to get the team back the familiar path – to aim high for header shots, the two wingers in full strength, and the coordination between the sides and middle supplemented by long shots. Playing like this was definitely not good to watch, but the England fans did not care about it. After all, not all England fans were Arsenal fans at the same time.



The advantage of playing in this way was that the team was more familiar with it and Twain was also spared the worry. Given the ability of these current England players, they might be able to play any overly complex tactics. On the other hand, the Nottingham Forest players were coordinated. Even with a change of manager, the team's strength had not suffered much.

Twain coped with the changes by staying constant. The tactics which had been developed before the game made all the England players feel very familiar – these were the best features of the training they received since young till they were older...

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There was a big difference between the Crimson Stadium and the City Ground stadium. The players' locker rooms and tunnel were shabby in the City Ground stadium even though they were renovated once in the 1990s to host the UEFA European Championship. They looked worn out after nearly two decades as compared with the modern Crimson Stadium.

Twain pushed open the locker room door and went out. He had to show up on the pitch earlier than the players.

Walking in the wide and bright tunnel, he turned into the hall.

The hall was more than twice as big as the one in the City Ground stadium. The smooth marble floor was like a mirror, reflecting everything on its surface. Twain looked down at his feet and scrutinize with his head tilted for a moment. Then he turned right and walked into the tunnel used specially to go out to the pitch.

The tunnel was wider than the one coming from the locker room. From what Twain could see, two Hummer Jeeps could even ride side by side. Just based on this detail, it was no wonder the Nottingham Forest club had been plagued by a financial crisis before – the budget was not a small one to build such a good stadium.

The left wall of the tunnel was painted with the team emblem of Nottingham Forest – a large white oak tree was on the red background. On the right wall, there was a sentence written on it: In addition to victory, it is still victory!

It was Twain's suggestion at the time. He wanted to use this phrase to inspire the Forest players. They just had to turn their heads and they could see it from here before every home game, so that they could firmly remember what Nottingham Forest tradition was.

Unfortunately, he had already left the team and did not know if it would continue to be carried out.

Twain stopped in his tracks in the tunnel as he looked sideways at that phrase in a daze.

Above the players' tunnel at Anfield, there was a saying: "This is Anfield." The phrase was the brainchild of the famous godfather of The Reds, Shankly. He wanted every team which came here to compete, to know the opponent they were playing against. It was their hell here. And now a lot of Liverpool players would put their hands up to the sign before they entered the field for good luck. It almost became a tradition.

When Twain was still the Forest manager, he also wanted to use this method to remind his players that the pursuit of victory would always be a tradition for Nottingham Forest, whether it was during Clough's era or in Tony Twain's era.

The sound of footsteps came from behind. Des Walker walked up to Twain and also saw the same words on the wall.

"There's definitely a touch of 'Tony Twain's style'." He said with a laugh.

Twain ignored his teasing. He just turned around and walked toward the field outside as he said, "Let's go."

Before Twain had gone out, he could already see the media who had gathered there and been waiting outside through the exit of the tunnel. The number of media today seemed to have exceeded the number for a regular friendly match. It was too many even if it was a deliberate publicity campaign by the Forest Club.

Twain certainly knew who these people came for. He suddenly slowed down and let Des Walker, who was close behind him, overtake him.

From his spot, all he could see was a lot of frenetic media. What else was there in the area where he could not see, waiting for him?

His heartbeat suddenly increased, and he was more nervous than playing in the Champions League final.

He did not care about his enemies' mocking and ridicule or abuses and attacks. But he could not ignore how his supporters would treat him now.

However, he could not hide in here and not go out. With so many media watching him, he did not want them to see that he had a weak side.

He readjusted the collar of his suit. This action seemed redundant because he was dressed neatly so far.

Then he stepped out.

The moment his figure appeared in the reporters' field of view; the flashes of the cameras started working. And when he completely walked out of the tunnel and appeared in front of tens of thousands of people, those flashes merged into a big bright light and the clicking sound of the shutters fell incessantly on the ear.

Twain was still able to keep his composure in the face of the reporters. He walked to the home team's technical area nonchalantly.

Des Walker could not close his agape mouth when he saw the scene next door. He really wanted to remind Tony that he went the wrong way...

The fans who noticed this in the stands also burst into laughter.

"Ah ha, what do we have here? Tony Twain has walked to the wrong place! Ha ha! This is a rare occurrence. Don't tell me he still thinks he's the manager of Nottingham Forest?" The commentator in charge of the commentary for the game had a gleeful emphasis and tone.

David Kerslake, who was sitting in the home team's technical area, looked a little embarrassed when he saw Twain directly walk over here. Eastwood, on the other hand, continued to watch with interest. He wanted to see how the chief would resolve this predicament.

In fact, in the moment Twain turned toward that direction, he knew he was going in the wrong direction – he was used to walking to the home team's technical area Nottingham Forest's home ground. But he forgot his current status. But he did not immediately turn around and go back. That would be too obvious. So, he continued walking and even thought of the countermeasure to deal with the situation.

When he saw Martin O'Neill from far away, Twain had already offered to shake his hand first. He looked like he wanted to shake the hand of the other man.

O'Neill also got up and walked towards Twain when he saw him doing that. The two men shook hands in front of the throngs of media.

"It turns out to be just a handshake." The commentator was very disappointed.

The laughter in the stands subsided when they saw Twain and O'Neill shaking hands. Perhaps the crowd waiting to watch the show felt that the result was too boring.

But the reporters had other ideas – was this considered a formal handover between the old and new Forest managers? They even helped the both of them scripted their lines:

Twain: I'm handing my team to you. Don't let me down.

O'Neill: Rest assured, our goal is still to be the champion!

But the two men did not exchange any words. They just shook hands. Then O'Neill gave way to the technical area behind him, knowing that Twain did not just want to say hello to him alone.

Sure enough, Twain walked toward the assistant manager, Kerslake after he let go of O'Neill's hand.

Kerslake also wanted to shake Twain's hand like O'Neill did, but he did not expect Twain to hug him.

While he held Kerslake, Twain still did not speak and patted him hard. Then he let go of Kerslake, who was still in a daze, and headed toward Eastwood.

Eastwood did not behave as woodenly as Kerslake. While laughing, he hugged Twain, and even whispered in Twain's ear, "Good luck, chief."

Just like that, Twain shook hands and hugged everyone in the Nottingham Forest coaching staff in turn, as the media followed the entire proceeding and filmed everything.

"He looks more like the master here than Martin O'Neill. Look at his calm demeanor..." John muttered in the stands.

"He won't be calm anymore in a moment!" Bill shrieked beside him.

John ignored him and stood in the new stands to applaud Twain.

There were not many people like John in the stadium. More people booed like Bill did.

They obviously could not forget what Twain did two months ago.

After hugging and shaking hands with all the Forest coaches, Twain walked toward the visiting team's technical area surrounded by the reporters. At this time, the fans' boos became more intense and obvious.

In this way, Twain came to his seat subjected to a hailstorm of loud boos.

Kerslake looked at Twain with some concern and looked the surroundings again. He'd imagined the scenario of Twain's return, but he did not expect the Forest team to really be so divided to this point.

The commentator was also a little perplexed as he muttered, "Just listen to the boos. They're all directed at one person..."

The telecast gave Twain a long close-up shot, in which Twain tightly pursed his lips in the frame and did not look up to take a glance at the fans in the stands. His eyes looked unfocused like he was gazing afar.

"What a shame. This is the welcome given to the former king of the Forest team. Ha!" Carl Spicer quipped in the stands. He had another topic of discussion in his program in the evening.

Some extreme fans not only booed Twain, but also raised their middle fingers at him and shouted abuses.

Twain's face was expressionless, and next to him, Walker looked at him with a worried look. He was afraid that his heart could not bear such provocation. But Twain did not suddenly collapse. He stood in place and let the boos ring out overhead. He allowed the reporters around him to take pictures non-stop.

"I bet he must regret not wearing his sunglasses when he came out in his mind." Spicer glanced at the television set next to him, which was screening a close-up shot of Twain's face.

Dunn, who saw the scene in the stands, sighed softly.

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The boos kept on, and the players who were waiting to appear in the tunnel all heard it clearly. They gathered in twos and threes to discuss.

"What's going on out there?"

"Who knows?"

"Cough ... Well, it's all because of the boss."

"The hisses are for him? No way!" The Forest players were very surprised. To hear hissing against Tony Twain at Nottingham Forest's home ground was almost comparable to the orbital revolution cycle of Comet Hale-Bopp, which paid a visit to Earth only once in three thousand years.

The Forest players were so surprised that their talking grew louder. The England players next to them also heard clearly and they became interested. The two teams, which were originally in two rows, mingled together. They could not be blamed for doing so as the booing outside was spectacular.

When the Forest team played in the City Ground stadium, once the grandstand, which could only hold up to thirty thousand people, hissed in unison, the momentum could make every visiting team feel a

huge psychological pressure. Now in the Crimson Stadium, the capacity of sixty thousand people did more than just doubled the volume of the booing.

When a visiting team played here, the boos of sixty thousand people were shared among the eleven players. And now that all the booing was borne by one person as one could well imagine the pressure. These players could not imagine how long they could bear the power of the hissing if it were to be them.

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Twain still stood motionless in front of the technical area.

John looked at the stubborn figure and surveyed the surroundings. The people who booed as if their lives depended on it made up the majority. He knew what he was going to do was not going to be welcomed, but he still had to do it. Otherwise he would be letting down his own conscience.

He beckoned several of his companions who held the same view as himself. He took out a red cloth from his backpack and handed one end of the cloth to one of his companions. He pulled the other end himself.

The two people stood apart and pulled the cloth to a certain distance. With a shake of their hands, a banner appeared in the grandstand.

Welcome home, Tony!

“Hey, John!” Bill looked at his friend in anger. By doing this, he was sabotaging him.

“Leave me alone, Bill. You boo all you want; I’ll do what I want. Neither of us should stand in each other’s way.” John ignored Bill’s threatening glare and continued to hold the banner as he stood in his seat.

The television broadcast director also noticed the new banner in the stands. Unlike the surrounding slogans that were insulting and mocking Twain, it was a greeting full of warmth and attention grabbing.

It was not known if Twain saw it, but the camera footage first cut over.

“It looks like he does not find himself utterly isolated.” The commentator said after seeing the banner.

“Tony.” Walker, who noticed the banner, said as he nudged Twain to ask him to look.

Twain turned his head and saw John’s banner as well. The corner of his mouth curled up. There was a noticeable change of expression on his face for the first time and this time he smiled.

Then he no longer cared about the reporters who were taking photographs of him. He turned around and sat back in the technical area.

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When the players came out of the tunnel, the booing of Twain finally stopped.

As it was a game to celebrate the opening of the Forest team’s new stadium for use, the arrangement in terms of the appearances was not the same as a regular game. The England team came out first,

followed by the Nottingham Forest players. The broadcast would loudly announce every player's name as he made his appearance, prompting a warm response from the fans.

The Forest fans dedicated their cheers to the glorious Treble winning team, and every Forest player who made an appearance received thunderous cries.

As the captain of the team, George Wood received the loudest cheers, but he maintained his special trait of indifference and did not respond to the cheers from the fans.

The last to run out was the center back, Pepe, who was going to partner with the Brazilian center back, Thiago Silva in the starting lineup. The fans also gave him the same applause and cheers, but he did not wave in response like several of his teammates who came out before him. After which, he ran out with his head held high.

Before he ran onto the field and gathered with his teammates, he turned a corner midway through and ran straight to the visitors' technical area.

Then, under thousands of staring eyes, he did an action that no one thought of – he opened his arms and gave the unsuspecting Tony Twain a bear hug.

The cheers came to a spontaneous end. The gigantic Crimson Stadium suddenly fell into an awkward silence.

“... Pepe gave Tony Twain an unexpected hug. He seemed to be saying something in Twain's ear. . .” The commentator could not understand what was going on with Pepe. Nowadays, anyone who was not a fool, could see the Forest fans' dislike of Twain. In that case, why would he risk offending all the fans as a Forest player to greet Twain so warmly. Why on earth did he do that for? Could it be that he did not want to continue to be in this team?

Twain looked equally surprised on the television camera shot. He was not surprised because of Pepe's action, but because of what Pepe said in his ear.

“I'm sorry, boss.” Pepe whispered in his ear. At this moment, the stadium was quiet, and his voice could be heard clearly in Twain's ears. He said, “I've decided to leave here. After playing this game, I'm going to Milan, Italy. AC Milan, that's my next stop...”

Hearing Pepe's words, Twain suddenly felt that the Champions League life or death final two months ago was like a dream...

“I know why you left the team, so I also don't want to stay here any longer. Thank you, boss, thank you. The years I had played for you were my most valuable asset.”

Pepe finished speaking, and hugged Twain hard before letting him go to run back to the field. No one cheered this time. If he listened carefully, he could hear some sporadic boos.

Twain was still sitting in a real leather seat as he stared blankly at Pepe, who returned to the team.

“Pepe! You really did it!” Gareth Bale stared with widened eyes at the center back who ran back.

“Heh heh. Did you think I was kidding?” The returned Pepe smiled proudly and said, “I did what I said I would do!”

While Pepe was bragging about his “feat” to his teammate, Evan Doughty in the chairman’s podium stared at his back with a somber expression. This was the first time someone in the team had openly challenged his authority. It was a dangerous sign. Initially, he was not going to consider the offers for Pepe from the big teams. After all, he was the core of the Forest team’s defense. But now he had to change his mind. Having just won the Treble, the thirty-one-year-old Pepe could still fetch a good price. If he waited a year later, he might not be able to sell him even if he wanted to.....

Twain did not have to raise his head to look around behind to know what expression Evan Doughty, the chairman, had on his face at this moment. When the fans in the stadium booed him, Evan must have been pleased because that meant the fans did not direct the hate at the club, but at him. In this way, his pressure was gone. But Pepe’s action signaled that there were people in the team who were unhappy with the club’s senior management. It was a dangerous development. The locker room had begun to break up.

The photojournalists who were gathered in front of Twain, dispersed. Their target was currently the players. Thanks to them, Twain could see the Forest players as he sat in his chair.

Those guys were standing in formation for a group photo. It was not the official group photo that every club would take before the season. But it could very well be the last more complete group photo of Tony Twain’s era.

What could be more heartbreaking than to watch the gradual collapse of the dynasty he had built by hand on the sidelines?

Twain thought for a long while and could not find it.

The exquisite statues carved out of marble, the bejeweled palace built with jade bricks and columns, the silver-inlaid and gold decorations seemed to have lost the vitality of life. Piece by piece collapsed, fell to the ground and cracked into pieces. The colors gradually dimmed and lost the luster. Very soon, everything would be weathered into sand. With another gust of wind, even the sand on the ground could not be seen.

## **Chapter 899: The Determination to Win**

More than fifty thousand home fans used boos to “welcome” Tony Twain had now become a thing of the past. The referee blew the whistle to start the game and the fans turned their attention to cheering for the Forest team, leaving Tony Twain aside.

Judging from the game, the home team, Nottingham Forest clearly had the upper hand. After all, they had played together for years. Even if the manager was changed, there was no loss to the rapport. Furthermore... even if they were facing a team led by their original boss, there was no need for them to throw the game. Twain did not teach them to throw a game when they played against old friends.

Nottingham Forest’s locker room was clearly divided into three factions. One of the factions comprised of staunch supporters of Tony Twain, such as Pepe. The other was made of players who were full of grievances against Twain. If a representative figure were to be named... Wood could be considered as one of them. There was also a middle-of-the-road faction. They did not clearly express their views and

had no obvious feelings like Pepe's or Wood's toward Tony Twain's departure. These people occupied the majority.

These divisions was also reflected during the game. George Wood was particularly driven. He tirelessly shuttled back and forth in the midfield to intercept and actively plugged to participate in the attacks.

O'Neill gave up the 4-2-3-1 formation that Twain had originally used to play and switched to the 4-4-2 formation. With Wood in the midfield as the only defensive midfielder, Şahin played as the attacking midfielder. The two midfielders were Fernández and Bentley. The forwards were Aaron Mitchell and Agbonlahor. The full backs were Gareth Bale, Pepe, Thiago Silva and Rafinha from left to right. The goalkeeper remained as Akinfeev.

The lineup was no different from that during Twain's time. It looked like O'Neill still intended to follow the main framework left by Twain. But if Pepe's words were true, O'Neill would soon have to worry about finding another center back.

On the side of the England team, a group of players, temporary pieced together to form a C team, had to play the away game with little motivation, tacit understanding and technical tactics. They were really lucky that they did not concede a goal to Nottingham Forest in the opening ten minutes.

The defender, Jack Cork passed the football to the midfielder, Delph. It was supposed to be an ordinary fifteen-meter diagonal pass, which was a technical move that any professional footballer would have. But Cork lost the ball. Cork could not be blamed, because Delph was partly at fault as well.

The moment Cork passed the ball, Delph thought Cork was going to dribble the ball himself, so he stood still. But Cork's pass needed Delph to start running to receive it, so Delph missed the ball and it rolled straight to Şahin's feet.

The fans in the stands gave Cork a burst of laughter for his passing error.

Dunn shook his head when he saw the scene in the stands and said, "It's really a motley crew."

He was right. The England team was a motley crew. Some of the players had rarely or never been selected for the national team before. And now they were put together at the last minute. How could they be expected to play well? hard work in the hope that they will do well? It was simply delusional.

Twain listened to the laughter of the Forest fans off the field. He was not annoyed nor anxious. Indeed, these players were not good enough and inexperienced, but they had an advantage that no one else had noticed – the team in front of him was had more fighting spirit than that England team with big name players, because they had more reason to work hard.

If you want to me to pick you, you have to show me your drive and fight hard.

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But the motley crew remained a motley crew. After the England team held on for twenty-five minutes, the goal defended by Chris Kirkland was finally breached with a header from Aaron Mitchell.

The cheers which erupted from the Crimson Stadium this time were louder than the cheers welcoming the Forest players. The deafening sound was like the Niagara Falls pouring down in torrents next to the ears. It roared continuously like rolling thunder, surging in everyone's heart.



It was the first time Twain experienced the power of the new stadium. He was a little unsettled from the shock – it must be gratifying to play in such a stadium as compared to the City Ground stadium.

“The goalscorer is Aaron—” The announcer on the stadium broadcast led the fans to loudly chant.

“Mitchell!!!” The fans in the stands shouted in response.

“In the 26th minute, Aaron Mitchell scored the opening goal for Nottingham Forest! A beautiful coordination on the sideline and cut in for the shot in the middle! David Wheeler and Anton Ferdinand were helpless against Mitchell’s height and bounce advantage! Before the game, people were afraid that Nottingham Forest, without Tony Twain, would play uncharacteristically as if they had lost their soul. But from this goal, the fear was superfluous. The Forest players are quick to adapt to their new manager. They are also unfazed and do not relent when they face Tony Twain... It looks like Tony Twain’s first national team game is going to meet with failure!” The commentator’s tone sounded like he took delight in the misfortune. In fact, to see the always strong Twain suffer defeat was the wish of many people. The commentator was no exception.

The reaction from the fans after the goal was enthusiastic, but the goalscorer was not in the mood to celebrate. On the one hand, it was just a friendly match and could not even be considered a quality warm-up game. There was nothing to be proud of to score a goal. On the other hand, it was because he was up against Tony Twain, the boss. The man whom Mitchell should be most grateful for his career in his life was Tony Twain. If it were not for him, it was likely that he would still be playing as the unpromising center back all his life and then be abandoned by the Forest team before ended up playing in a lower level league team and eventually retiring in obscurity. He was on the side of Pepe.

After the goal, Mitchell was not even in the mood to wave in response to the fans’ cheers for him. He just turned around and ran back. Occasionally he would shake his head and felt that the players the boss had picked were too weak...

Those who were really happy with the goal were Martin O’Neill and Evan Doughty. The former was happy because it was possible to beat Tony Twain. While a friendly match could not clarify too many issues, it certainly allow him to temporarily get rid of Tony Twain’s shadow. People would not always use the tedious and complicated label “Tony Twain’s successor” when they mentioned him.

The latter’s delight was that he heard the cheers erupted from the stands. The people’s hearts were still on his side...

Twain expressed a slight dissatisfaction with the goal concede. He shook his head in the technical area as he said to Walker, “The defense is not tight enough...We shouldn’t have given Bentley a chance to pass the ball.”

Walker nodded and said, “It can’t be helped, Tony. They’ve only been practicing together for half a day. I don’t think we should care about the result of this game...”

“No.” Twain categorically rejected Walker’s suggestion, “We must win this game.”

Walker did not go on. He could vaguely guess why Twain must win the game. The reason was complicated. In addition to establishing his power and prestige, perhaps he was provoked by the boos during his entrance. When did Tony Twain ever admit defeat? Give in? If people booed him, he had to

prove his power. Simply put, he just liked to meet other people head-on. As a man with such a strong personality, no wonder he offended so many people.

Walker felt he might really be the most suitable candidate to be England's assistant manager. If someone else were to be Twain's assistant, he was afraid that the person might be at odds with him soon. Only those like him who knew Twain so well could act as a lubricant to oil the wheels.

On closer inspection, the person who could be an assistant manager to Twain must be a Mr. Nice Guy, someone who tried never to offend anybody. Like David Kerslake, or the Chinese man, Dunn. No wonder Roy Keane was said to have turned down two offers from Twain to be an assistant manager. If the Irishman had agreed, the two of them might not have been friends...

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The Nottingham Forest fans were optimistic about the result of the game, especially after Mitchell's goal. They thought it was not a problem for them to win. The issue laid in how many goals the team could win against the England C team. If they won big in the end, they would have the most satisfying afternoon.

Twain observed off the field for a while and decided to make an adjustment. Taking advantage of a dead ball, he called the captain, Ashley Cole, who was near his side, over to him and repeatedly exhorted for a while.

Back on the pitch, Ashley Cole relayed Twain's latest instructions to his teammates. Following which, the England team tightened their formation and began to move into a defensive phase.

Twain saw that Nottingham Forest's morale had soared amid wave after wave of support from the fans. Looking at O'Neill's excited state on the sidelines, he could conceive that the Forest team would definitely take advantage of the momentum to wage an offensive later in the game. Therefore, based on the England team's current state, if they wanted to press ahead and go head to head with the Forest team, it would end up in a disaster. If they were to concede another goal, Twain would not have the confidence to win the game.

So, he chose to retreat, which was really ugly to watch.

The commentator laughed, "We are now seeing Tony Twain's signature move again. Nottingham Forest's new manager, Martin O'Neill, is clearly more active. He's directing his team to press on to attack and try to score another goal."

Having paid the price of playing ugly football and being ridiculed, Twain's team managed to hold the 0:1 score line until the halftime interval. No matter how Nottingham Forest bombarded, the England team's goal did not fall. It was boring for the fans in the stands –the opponent was obviously England's C team, put together at the last minute but the team was unable to overcome them even when the entire main force were deployed.

Defending to the last was very simple. All everyone had to do was to huddle together and be clear about what they wanted to do.

With only half a day of practice time, Twain made the team practice defense. At the time, everyone thought it was odd. Now they finally understood the pains the manager had put into this ...

By the time the whistle sounded at the halftime interval, Twain was the first to get up from his seat and take the lead to walk toward the tunnel. When the camera wanted to give Twain another close-up shot, it could only capture a shot of his back in the tunnel.

“It was an extremely boring first half. As long as Tony Twain is around, the game can’t look good. Martin O’Neill has brought a breath of fresh air to Nottingham Forest while Tony Twain brings what he did best at the Forest team to the England team. We don’t know if it is a good thing or a bad thing. But like what Twain himself has said, a victory is the only measure of a manager’s success. As long as he can lead the team to victory, those voices which doubt him will disappear.”

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Twain watched the players filed into the locker room. He closed the door when everyone was there. The soundproofing of the new stadium was much better than the City Ground stadium. The noise outside was almost impossible to hear as soon as the door was closed.

“I have to praise you all for the good performance in the second part of the first half. You have defended against the Treble winning team’s attacks. I have nothing to complain about, considering you have only been a team for only one day and only concede one goal.” Twain first gave the group of people something sweet before...

“But.” He changed tack and said, “Do you still remember what our goal is for this game? It’s not to win marginally with one goal here and not even to tie the game with the home team. I want you to understand this point—” He raised his right index finger and continued, “The difference between the national team and a club’s team. When you play for your respective clubs, you have to face a long season, at least thirty-eight games a year. During the process, draws and defeats are allowed. It doesn’t matter if this game is lost. We can win the next game. But the national team is not the same. The room you are allowed to have here for mistakes and defeats is very small. I do not know how many of you can eventually make it to my national team squad list. But I hope you can develop a habit here – to try your best to seek victory in any game.”

He smiled for a bit and said, “From now on I am the manager of the England team and you must remember that. I’m a man who likes to win and hates defeat. My team also has to like to win and hate to lose.”

The players looked at him quietly.

“Don’t tell me there’s someone who likes to lose?” He asked.

Someone shook his head.

“Well it looks like we now have a common language and a common goal.” Twain spread his hands and said, “We will play defensive counterattack in the second half. They will use the sidelines to threaten our goal. We will, in turn, take advantage of the empty space behind their two sidelines.”

Twain was very familiar with Nottingham Forest, even with the change of manager. Twain had discovered that the Forest team had not changed much through his observation in the first half. At least they had maintained the offense on the sidelines which they were best at, very well. Did the Forest team’s only goal now come from the attack in the sidelines?

“Do not pass the ball too much in the midfield, play more high balls, and try your best to do long passes.” Twain was referring to the English style of long balls that were once sneered at by countless people before. But it was rather good to use it to deal with the increasingly elegant Nottingham Forest.

Martin O’Neill had instilled a certain beauty in Nottingham Forest’s style. Their playing was a joy to watch. It had been worth it after working on them for more than a month. What he did not notice, however, was that the current Nottingham Forest team was slowly losing the most important thing.

“You guys have to play with a slightly tougher attitude. Don’t be afraid of getting hurt! How could you get hurt? You’re the ones driving it, not them. Only the passive side will get hurt. So, the more afraid you are of injuries, the more likely you will be injured. Give yourselves the free rein to go big. It’s going to be okay!”

“Şahin passes the ball well, but he has been seriously injured before. So, he’s apprehensive about physical contact. You can grab hold of that point and stick closer to him to tackle. There must be some petty maneuvers too to make him unable to pass the ball easily. Mitchell’s techniques and headers are good. But don’t let his height fool you, his physical ability is very weak, and physical fitness is his weakness. Force him to run continuously and go head to head with him so as to exhaust him sooner. Then he will not be as threatening later in the game. Agbonlahor is fast, but his goal-kicking method is rough. There is nothing to worry about. Just don’t let him shoot from the sidelines. Blocking Mitchell will be the same as blocking Agbonlahor...” Twain analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of all the Nottingham Forest players one by one to his players. He told them how to deal with each of them. Except for those players who only joined the team this summer, he covered almost everyone once. He was very familiar with Nottingham Forest. He was so familiar that he did not need to do his homework in advance. He had the information at his fingertips, and he could talk about it as much as he wanted.

Then he had to touch on George Wood.

He was stuck.

He did not know what to say. He knew Wood well, but he could not talk about how to deal with this kid. He waved his hands and said nothing, leaving the players, who were full of anticipation about it, a little disappointed and confused.

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Martin O’Neill was not satisfied with his team’s performance in the first half as he had deployed the main squad only to score 1:0, knowing that their opponent was England’s C team.

If Tony Twain were here, he would have abuse roundly right away. He would have rebuked them for ending the first half with only a one-goal lead when they were playing against such a terrible team. But O’Neill could not do that. If he were to really do that, his approval rating in the locker room would plummet.

It was just so unfair. The more Twain scolded, the more charming he was, while the other people had to carefully wait upon the team.

After O’Neill tactfully expressed his displeasure, he rearranged the tactics. He thought that Twain would stick to the defensive counterattack tactic in the second half, which was not a difficult thing to do for a

man who had studied him thoroughly. Generally speaking, the defensive counterattack tactic would only be used when a team was in the lead. But Twain always used it when his team was trailing by one goal. On the one hand, he could ensure that they did not continue to concede the goal. On the other hand, he could rely on a sneak attack to equalize the score, and then disrupt the opponent's formation. The hateful part was he had repeatedly succeeded, and the method was time-tested.

The order O'Neill gave to the Forest team was to fight to score first once the game started. If the situation was not ideal, then they would pull back the defensive line and contend with Twain in the midfield. Anyway, if they were to compete in the midfield, Nottingham Forest would definitely win.

After he finished talking about the tactics, O'Neill repeated his demands. "We must win this game!"

The players looked at each other and suddenly felt that this was not just a simple friendly match to celebrate the opening of the Crimson Stadium...

### **Chapter 900: Principles**

Twain substituted players out in the second half of the game. Because this was only a friendly match, the limit to substitution was decided by both parties, unlike in a real match where they were limited to three substitutions. According to the agreement between both parties, the maximum number of substitutions in this match was 11.

Even in England's third-tier team, only a few of the players who had been released by the club agreed to play full-time, and Twain did not promise the opposing club that any player would only play half a match at most. As a newly elected National team, the international results of this team was like a blank white piece of paper to Twain, so his current attitude was extremely humble. Even on media, he did not have any attention-seeking rumours spreading.

After the half-time break, Twain substituted four men at once: James Milner for Joe Cole, Michael Johnson for Mark Noble, Paul Pepper for Ashley Cole who had just recovered from his injury, and James Vaughn for Darren Bent.

Unlike the huge substitutions from Twain's side Martin O'Neill's side did not make any moves in the starting five minutes of the second half. He did not make any substitutions.

"It looks like O'Neill wants to win this game," Twain mumbled from the coach's chair.

O'Neill's thinking was very simple: Nottingham Forest's strongest squad was sure to stay on the pitch for a while, as his plan was to aggressively attack England's penalty area at the start of the second half to score. If he made substitutions at the start of the second half, how could they even attack?

So when the score was still 1-0 five minutes after the start of the second half, he was a little nervous. He got up from his seat and paced back and forth on the sidelines. At the same time, the mind was quickly calculating the possibilities and countermeasures for those possibilities.

If England's goal could not be blasted in another ten minutes, then they would have to replace most of the main players and give them sufficient rest. At the same time they would also have to shrink the formation, switch into defence, and face England. O'Neill had the confidence that it would be almost

impossible to break through the goalmouth of his team given the strength of the England team. Even if winning this match on a 1:0 score was below their expectations, at least they would have won.

What if England tied with them? Then replace a small number of key players, maintain relevant amount of potential, and continue to attack. Try to fight for the lead again.

Being different from the overly distracted Martin O'Neill, Tony Twain had been sitting at the platform with a peaceful mindset. He cocked his legs on the leather chair. England pulled back its defensive line like he commanded to compress Nottingham Forest's space and time in front of their penalty area, which made Nottingham Forest a little uncomfortable. O'Neill wanted the team to look better in their game, so there were a lot of short passes, especially on the midfield. This was not necessary for Twain, but perhaps O'Neill chose to do so in order to deliberately differentiate himself from Twain.

It was the same situation for another ten minutes; Nottingham Forest still failed to find a good chance to get into the England penalty area, relying more on long-range shots to try to score, but this also caused England a bit of trouble. At half-time, Twain asked the team to take advantage of Nottingham Forest's void which had opened up due to their assisting side flanks, but after 15 minutes into the second half, Nottingham Forest's two wing-backs did not actively assist the offense, which seemed to be O'Neill's intention. Bale and Rafinha only crossed the centre line after the whole England team retreated to their 30m zone.

So Twain's side flank counterattack tactic could not be utilized.

Fifteen minutes later, O'Neill saw that his team could not score, while Twain's offense was not effective as well, so he decided to make substitutions.

He substituted Cohen for Fernandez, Mok for Bentley, Gago for Shahin and Ibišević for Agbonlahor. He also substituted four players at a time, but he did not touch any person who was on the defensive line. He was very careful, not wanting to give Twain any chance at all.

Twain saw O'Neill's replacement and knew this was his chance.

So he got up from his seat for the first time in the second half and walked to the sidelines.

Jeers erupted from the stands when the audience saw him get up and walk, but it fell on deaf ears. Twain simply shouted the names of the players on the pitch and signalled for them to increase their press on the other team.

O'Neill had George Wood to rely upon, so he wanted to turn the present Nottingham Forest into a team that could play beautiful football, a far cry from the fast passing midfield that Twain has stressed before. His efforts had been slightly effective: today, the midfield performance of Nottingham Forest is a lot better as compared to the team before, there were layers of layers of offence as the whole team was coordinated in taking their respective positions in the offense, allowing Nottingham Forest's offense to be as smooth as a flowing river.

But this method of his did not have its desired effect in front of England who was heavily emphasizing on defense.

O'Neill also decided to make some adjustments.

Forest's only goal in the first half was through a pass from the sideline, and now it looked like he needed to restore the coordinated attacks from both wings. He gestured on the sidelines to get Bale and Rafinha to get back into offense.

This was the signal Bale and Rafinha wanted to see to most. Due to their offensive mindsets, only attacking would allow them to get the sense of satisfaction.

After Bale passed the ball to Cohen, he did not wait to see the situation at the back to decide whether to attack. This time, he was very determined to step up, and overtook Cohen.

As a teammate who worked together with him for several seasons, Chris Cohen also knew what Bale meant. Now that the coach had let go the limits on the wing assistance and with his faith in Bale's attacking ability, Cohen passed the ball forward.

It must be said that the national team that Twain temporarily cobbled together had a big gap in strength with Nottingham Forest. Jack Cook was unable to stop Bale's strike alone, and Ferdinand did not come up first because of their lack of chemistry. The two men let Bale rush past them just like that.

There was a huge cheer in the stands, cheering on Bale's breakthrough. They were eager to see Nottingham Forest score another goal because a 1:0 score was really not impressive. Besides, they knew the opponents of Nottingham Forest was a rubbish team —= they were a third tier team!

Seeing Bale break through made Twain a little nervous. He knew Bale was usually like a little monkey that looked harmless to humans and animals, but he was a complete maniac during games and his performance was steady and atypical of players in his age group. This was the reason why Twain valued him initially, but it had also become the reason he was very worried in the moment.

Mitchell could be still waiting in the penalty area, once he passes the ball in...

Twain raised a fist intuitively.

Bale did pass a high ball and this time it was Wheeler who saved England and Tony Twain. David, who was 1.9 metres tall, secured the positive, preventing Mitchell from fighting for the header as he actively jumped to head the ball out.

The cheers in the stands immediately devolved into sighs.

Twain fist didn't let go, because he saw another scene which he had been waiting for for ten minutes.

Wheeler's header did not fall at the feet of Nottingham Forest players but at Delphi's feet, and it was just nice that Delphi was on the same side as Bale. Because Bale had just went forward to assist the attack, he was not able to get back into defense.

"Counter attack!" Twain screamed from the side lines. For a moment, he forgot that he was at the Crimson Stadium playing against Nottingham Forest, the team he had coached for 11 years. His mind only wanted the jeers in the stands to disappear for a while, as the words in the deep red stadium tunnel would resurface.

Other than victory, it would still be victories. That was what my way of life was, no matter if I changed my team.

Delphi also noticed this gap, but he did not dribble the ball forward by himself, as no matter how fast a person ran, they could not run faster than a ball flying in the air.

He passed the ball to James Vaughan, who only came on in the second half, and Everton's leading scorer also ran towards the side flank. Although they had previously trained together for a very long time, tactical literacy from his many years as a professional soccer player had at least given him the knowledge of taking advantage of the opposing gap during the attack.

Delphi and he thought of this together. He was just about to read the side flank when Delphi passed the ball over.

The wing-back spot was empty as the full-center back and the defensive midfielder had to run over the cover up that gap.

George Wood was as fierce as ever as he rushed up to break Vaughn's ball. As a veteran opponent in the Premier League, Vaughan certainly knew what Wood was good at, he did have the arrogance to think he could get away under Wood's drive, the smartest thing to do was to get the ball out before he pounces...

Wood knocked Vaughan over, but instead of whistling to signal Nottingham Forest's foul, the head referee raised both hands towards the attacking direction, indicating an advantage given to the current attacking team — continue the match!

Before Wood reached, Vaughan passed the football to his Everton's team-mate, Joseph Baxter, who just pressed forward from the midfielder.

Nottingham Forest's centre-back was still keeping an eye on another striker, Fraser Campbell. Including the assistance on the most recent attack, the defensive strength was not sufficient; other than the two center-backs, there was only George Wood.

Baxter was almost completely unguarded.

Pepe and Tiago Silva made another mistake in the coordination at this moment — by reason, one of them should have gone up to defend Baxter while the other stayed behind to watch Campbell, but both of them ran forward instinctively when they saw Baxter received the ball.

In that moment, Baxter passed the ball. He passed the ball to Campbell, who was in front but still not offside.

When Campbell received the ball, he was behind Nottingham Forest's entire back line, with no one around.

Silva raised his hand to signal Campbell's offside, but the head and line referees were unresponsive.

Only Pepe turned and lunged at Campbell.

He was too late. Campbell had already broken into the penalty area, as Pepe could only trip Campbell in the penalty area when he reached.

This time, the head referee and the line referee finally had a reaction, the side judge raised the flag and kept shaking, while the main referee whistled as he ran to the penalty spot in the penalty area!



“A penalty!” The announcer shouted.

O’Neill glared at this scene on the sidelines as he could hardly believe what he had seen.

The narrator continued narrating about Pepe who fouled, “In the Champions League final he also given such a penalty to Real Madrid, in this match he gave another big gift yet again. Was Pepe trying to give Tony Twain a hand? Thinking back to the hug he had with Tony Twain before the match, what were they talking about during the hug?”

The surprised fans at the stands were expressing their dissatisfaction towards this decision by the referee by boo-ing. Perhaps some were even thinking this was Pepe’s hidden agenda.

In any case, England got a “lucky” penalty just like this. Vaughan’s penalty was clean as it turned the score into a 1:1 draw.

Looking at his team’s goal, Twain did not make the exaggerated celebratory moves on the sidelines like he used to in the past to provoke his opponents. He did not even applaud and simply stood at the side lines like a huge marble statue.

Taking everything into consideration, there was no reason why there was no happy expression on his face or any excited actions, allowing the England players to accept him as the new head coach. But Twain gave up this opportunity to deepen his relationship with his players because, deep down, he could not bring himself to celebrate that was while he was competing against Nottingham Forest.

Even until this moment, Nottingham Forest was still not the enemy to him, and would not ever be even in the future because the England national team would hardly have a chance to play against them. They were supposed to be parallel lines which does not disturb each other at all, but the wronged fate brought them together today.

He was not mentally prepared to revisit Nottingham Forest so early...

The fans could jeer at him because they had a reason to hate him. He could also lead the team to victory over Nottingham Forest here because he could not go against his work ethic. But at least he could choose not to celebrate after the team’s goal, which might make him and the fans feel a lot better emotionally.

But he could not make the reason why he chose not to celebrate obvious for the outsiders, so he could only act cool with a straight face, as if he was disappointed in the team taking so long to even out the score. At the very least, he successfully deceived the narrator.

“Tony Twain doesn’t seem to be satisfied with the even score, he was still keeping a straight face after the team scored. He was really a strict head coach, I can almost see the days of those pitiful England stars being under him, haha!”

Skinny Bill was still next to him as the die-hard fans were jeering to express their displeasure at the loss of goal, and Fat John did not care about the outcome of the game. He came here to see Twain but all he saw was the main standing stock-still in the same spot, not even lifting his hands or changing his posture, and John thought back to the past when Nottingham Forest scored. Tony Twain had been a lot more more attention-seeking compared to the players who scored. He would do a backflip, slide on his knees or even buried under the players’ embraces.

Such a scene was probably impossible to witness again, huh?

John sighed softly, then turned and left his seat while he headed for the exit.

“John? Not watching anymore?” Someone questioned him as he saw his unusual behaviour.

John shook his head, “Don’t want to watch anymore. ” He slowly moved his fat body and disappeared at the exit.

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Fatty John left the stadium early so he did not watch the scene during the 80th minute, 20 minutes after Vaughan seized an error from the passing in the backlines of Nottingham Forest.

The stadium was dead silent, as if they had just lost the European championship. Those waiting to see Twain make a fool of himself and those wanting to overpower Twain were all frightened still, as their minds were blank and they did not know what to say. Even Bill did not know that such a powerful team like Nottingham Forest could be behind on their own home field against a third-tier England team.

England’s players on the pitch were excited as they embraced, celebrating their goal that put them ahead. But Twain was sitting at the coach seat this time with no expressions on his face at all. He was stubbornly respecting his internal principles of not making any celebratory moves for his team in a contest against Nottingham Forest.

But of the 50,000 people in the stands, how many of them could understand his ridiculous “principles”?

This Tony Twain! This abominable traitor! This incorruptible, shameless Judas! You betrayed us! You betrayed Nottingham Forest! To think you can still look so proud of yourself and act like nothing happened when you are ahead of us, that is simply unforgivable! How do you feel about beating your past favoured Nottingham Forest? Do you feel happy?

But we do not!

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PS, Today ended a little later – regular updating will be restored tomorrow. There is not choice, not saving drafts is very painful... it will be painful for you guys and me as well.