

Rise of a Football God

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2 minutes of football later after Black Hearts FC went 2 goals down, the ball went out for a throw in and that was when the referee stopped the game.

Black Hearts FC was about to make a change.

Unlike what most people thought though, Coach James was not taking his star attacking midfielder off the game.

Rather, he took off one of the center midfielders in the game.

Coach James was making a radical change to his game formation in this stage of the game, switching from his preferred 4-3-3 attacking formation to an even more aggressively vertical 4-3-2-1 formation.

Coach James decided to experiment with the diamond formation in this important game all because of the player that he stumbled upon yesterday.

Losing 0-2 in the 53rd minute of the game and with his team playing like this against such an elite opposition, he already lost hopes of a comeback the normal way, this was why he decided to gamble.

This was why he decided to gamble on the wildcard he stumbled upon yesterday. Maybe, just maybe, the boy could conjure up a miracle.

Coach James made a double substitution, introducing 2 new players into the game, both midfielders as he gave instructions to Sam.

"Relay my orders to the others, we're switching to a 4-3-2-1 attacking formation". Coach James looked at the tall boy and took a deep breath, "you'll be occupying the attacking midfield position alongside Joshua".

"I'm giving the both of you freedom, play as you will, cause chaos, disrupt this game and create something". He clapped aggressively. "I want something!"

"Yes, coach". Sam nodded seriously.

The second player that Coach James introduced was another center midfielder, this guy was renowned for his work-rate on the pitch.

The game was about to go hay-wire.

As soon as Sam entered the pitch, standing adjacent to Joshua, this star attacking midfielder threw a glance at him. "Play like you did yesterday, and don't hold on to the ball for too long, always pass".

Sam nodded. "I know".

FWEEEE!

Once the ref's whistle went off again to restart the game in the 55th minute, it was clear immediately that team Black Hearts changed.

The only question was, was it a good change or a bad one?

For the first few minutes after, it seemed like a bad change as unused to the sudden new formation, the players in black jersey struggled to connect passes, misplacing a few passes here and there and losing possession.

10 minutes passed and team Black Hearts still seemed disjointed, D'Tigres FC still being the team creating more danger till a sudden unexpected moment of magic tore the game open.

The tall striker of D'Tigres FC received the ball and was progressing it forward when Sam stole the ball with a slightly aggressive tackle.

For the past 10 minutes, running around the middle of this pitch, absolutely focused on the game, he had a few thoughts in his head.

'I must make my mark!'

'I must make my mark!'

'I have to orchestrate the comeback!'

Despite the tight and disjointed nature of this game at this point, these thoughts dominated his head, helping him focus and right after he stole the ball in the halfway line, he drove forward with it.

Almost instantaneously, one of the opposition midfielders closed him down but instead of dribbling, without slowing down, Sam kicked the ball to his left before accelerating forward.

Joshua received this ball and in one touch, passed it back to the right.

With simple and effective one-touch football, Sam evaded the opposition midfielder as his engine heart started pumping blood fast through his body.

Thud!

Digging in, his boots hit the field as his tall frame ran towards the opposition box like a freight train.

At this moment, Sam already entered a state of absolute focus as everything else left his mind, replaced by clarity.

As he closed in on the opposition 18-yard box, a player slid in for a tackle.

Pushing the ball slightly with the outside of his boot, Sam jumped above his opponent's outstretched legs as the legs also missed the ball.

As soon as he landed, another player rushed in for a tackle but he reacted swiftly, cutting the ball to the right.

By now, Sam with the ball was on the right side of this pitch. D'Tigres FC's right back was already closing in on him but Sam held this player off with his tall frame before glancing around to view his options.

He had a few options.

Tega, his striker was right in the 6-yard box, holding off a defender as he called for the ball. Further to the left, his left back was charging into the box with his hand outstretched, wildly calling for the pass.

These 2 seemed like the best options but Sam didn't go for them, this was because he knew that his opponents expected him to go for the obvious options.

Rather than going for them, he looked for another option.

An option that his opponents would not expect.

Afterall, his team had been playing according to the book for over 65 minutes to no avail. From the sidelines, he already watched D-Tigres FC's game and was perfectly aware of how disciplined they were defensively.

A normal pass would not be able to break this defense open.

In the world of football, there is a saying that physicality, speed, and shot power may leave a player as he ages, but one thing that endures the passage of time is technique.

Despite the fact that Sam had left football for 4 years, one of his better attributes during his playing time that endured through this time was his passing and vision.

His body deteriorated with time, not his technique, not his football I.Q.

And this was what helped him to spot the unexpected pass.

After giving him the one-two pass and letting him run, inauspiciously, Joshua had been following him from behind all the way from the midfield.

Right now, this attacking midfielder was just arriving in the 18-yard box, totally unmarked by any of the D'Tigres players in sky blue.

Bam!

With his stronger right foot, Sam played an inch-perfect pass into the box.

As the ball rolled through the green grass and as time seemed to freeze, only 2 players reacted, Joshua and one of D'Tigres two imposing center backs.

This center back showed incredible reaction time as he moved his body at an incredible angle to block a possible shot from this attacking midfielder.

Joshua raised his leg to shoot, everyone held their breaths, then...

Bam!

He didn't shoot, he passed.

It was another one-touch football between the 2 attacking midfielders as he passed the ball back to Sam who was already rushing into the box after playing the initial pass from the right side.

This time, more players reacted to the pass, rushing to close Sam's shooting path off and then Sam hit the ball.

Again, he didn't shoot, rather, he laid it off back to Joshua.

This time, Joshua didn't dally, hitting the ball first time with a curling effort into the top right corner of the post.

The opposition goalkeeper was rooted to the spot.

This was perfect tiki-taka football executed by 2 impressive attacking midfielders, and immediately, the field erupted.

"GOALLLLL...!"

Joshua spread his arms with a wide smile on his face as he ran to the corner flag to celebrate. Then turning round, he pointed his finger at Sam, indicating that the boy was the one who did it.

On the sidelines, it was pure chaos.

"That's f*cking right!" Coach James celebrated with pure passion.

Finally able to take his head off the action a bit to celebrate, as he celebrated, this was when Sam heard a voice close to where he celebrated.

"That's my son right there, that's my son!"

He looked over, and there he saw his dad in familiar black shades standing alongside his best friend. Seeing him look over, Ian grinned and gave a thumbs up.

Sam grinned back, feeling even more motivated to play his heart out today.

Adrenaline surged through his body like electricity. "Let's mount a comeback!" He growled.

The game restarted.