

Football God 221

Chapter 221 A rant

Sam felt a deep yearning to return to the pitch as soon as possible.

Watching his teammates play in the last 2 games, he became filled with a deep sense of impatience. Like the others, he could also recognize that his team was in a crisis and his absence was what caused it.

He could not wait to get back on the pitch!

"Hey, are you ok?" Kayla inclined her head to look at him.

"Ah, I'm fine". Sam replied absentmindedly.

Hearing that reply from him, this girl sighed exasperatedly and suddenly, she hit the brakes, stunning Sam as he looked at her.

"What?"

"What's what?" She stared at him. "I know, your team is losing, it's affecting you but don't you think this is getting too much?"

"Sam, I love you and I love your career, I respect it. I do watch football too; do you really think being such a nerve wreck is how you'll help your teammates?"

Sam frowned, just looking at her.

"Have you forgotten what your coach told you so quickly? He told you to leave it to them, is this your way of leaving it to them?"

"For the past few days, you're not even eating well!" Tears welled in Kayla's eyes. "Is this how you repay your teammates for their trust?"

"Yes, they lost but they're giving their all out there. You think they don't also want to turn the situation around and win?"

"You were not like this before, is it always about you?"

"..." Sam was speechless.

"They trusted you to focus on recovering from your injury so you can come back and help them, while they expect you to trust them to do their best in your absence but from the look of things, you don't even trust them, do you?"

Silence.

Again, Sam was speechless.

"If you don't eat well and take care of yourself, how do you expect your body to heal properly so you'll return to the pitch at the quickest time?"

"Besides, don't you even care about me? You being like this is affecting me, sometimes I can't even think straight!"

"It's almost like you're depressed every minute".

At this point, Sam finally realized, he was being too hard on himself and not just on himself but he was being too hard on his girlfriend too.

Click!

Unstrapping his seatbelt, with a grimace, Sam leaned closer and hugged his girlfriend on the driver's seat tightly. Kayla didn't resist it.

After breaking away from the hug, Sam forced a baby expression on his face. "I've been foolish babe; will you forgive me?" He did puppy eyes.

Kayla just glared at him, unimpressed.

Sam sighed. "I'm sorry for being so self-centered. I didn't think about how my teammates felt at all, and most importantly, I didn't think about you. I recognize my mistake now, from the bottom of my heart, I'm sorry".

Silence; still no response.

Suddenly thinking of something, Sam smiled. "You remember your suggestion the other time?" He grinned.

Kayla raised an eyebrow.

"That I should follow you to Netherlands so you'll take care of me and nurse me back to health properly, and maybe even follow you to school at times to socialize and meet new people?" He smiled. "I'm in for it now, let's go!"

Now, Kayla was moved. She looked at him, trying to hide her excitement. "Really?"

"Yes, let's go to Netherlands!"

And that confirmed it.

The next day, after informing his coach, with his one leg, Sam left England with his girlfriend as he followed her to Netherlands.

He would be spending the rest of his recovery time in Netherlands.

She was right, instead of wasting time worrying about the form of his teammates, he should respect their will and desire to turn the situation of the club around while focusing on recovering from his own injury.

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(Premier league:)

(Matchday 20 of 38:)

(Tottenham – Newcastle)

(Date: 4th January, 2025)

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(Bournemouth – Everton)

(Date: 4th January, 2025)

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(Aston Villa – Leicester City)

(Date: 4th January, 2025)

...

(Crystal Palace – Chelsea)

(Date: 4th January, 2025)

...

(Southampton – Brentford)

(Date: 4th January, 2025)

...

(Man City – West Ham)

(Date: 4th January, 2025)

...

(Brighton – Arsenal)

(Date: 4th January, 2025)

...

(Fulham – Ipswich Town)

(Date: 5th January, 2025)

...

(Liverpool – Man United)

(Date: 5th January, 2025)

...

(Wolves – Nottm Forest)

(Date: 6th January, 2025)

Fulham's next engagement was in the premier league against Ipswich Town, the newly promoted premier league club.

It was already new year for some time already, but only after the EFL Cup elimination did the new year start for the Fulham players.

At first, they were totally devastated by the loss, taking a big blow to their confidence from it but then Coach Marco Silva did a good job in helping his players to forget about the trauma of that game.

The coach was not the only one who came in handy though, a player who was currently in injury also came in handy.

Sam simply dropped a message in the Fulham team's WhatsApp group chat and that was enough to perform the magic.

{You've got it!}

That simple message did wonders, making this team forget about past traumas as they looked ahead towards their next game in the premier league.

While Sam had one of the most enjoyable periods of his life in Netherlands with his girlfriend, his teammates worked their asses off in training, giving their all in preparation for their next league clash.

Engrossed in training, the passage of time became a mirage and in no time, D-day was here.

They welcomed Ipswich Town in their home stadium, Craven Cottage.

After the last 2 disappointing results, the Fulham fans were still devastated but again, they showed their nature as fans. No matter the situation of the club, these guys were ready to support it through thick and thin.

The home supporters came in droves, flooding Craven Cottage in the tens of thousands as they supported their team.

Even before the game started, the atmosphere in this stadium in West London already intimidated the visitors.

The Fulham players felt their hearts blaze like a fire.

They were motivated to create something positive from today's game.

Chapter 222 Lovers' day out in Netherlands

"Have you heard? That guy is Kayla's boyfriend".

"Really? The footballer guy? The one that's playing for a big club in England?"

"Yeah, that's him, you can search for him online. His name is Samuel Moses".

"Hmmm, ok".

{Samuel Moses- No. 11}

{Nigerian professional footballer}

{Professional Football Club: Fulham FC}

{Overview:}

{Age: 19 years}

{Current Season Stats: All competitions}

Games Played: 21

Goals: 18

Assists: 16

{Last Match: Chelsea 1-1 Fulham}

{Date: 26th December, 2024}

{S. Moses stats: 88 mins, 4 shots, 1 goal, 0 assists}

{Samuel Moses is a young Nigerian professional football player who plays as an attacking midfielder for Premier league club Fulham and the Nigeria national team. Sam started his career in Enyimba FC, making 54 appearances and scoring 41 goals. Wikipedia=}

"Wow, it's really him!"

Well, it was safe to say that today, Kayla fully experienced the privileges of being the girlfriend of a big celebrity.

The English premier league was the most broadcasted and publicized football league in the world. In Netherlands, the Eredivisie was more popular but still, as one of the shining stars of the new premier league season, Sam was known.

For some time, rumors swirled around Kayla's university that one of their girls was dating a famous football player, and now it was confirmed because today, Sam insisted on following his girlfriend to school.

At first, Kayla vehemently refused.

It was not until he showed her that his legs were already strong enough to just walk did she accept, but nonetheless, Kayla was stunned by it.

What cursed speed of recovery was this?

They arrived in Netherlands 2 days ago. During their first day, both of them stayed indoors as they enjoyed quality lover's time.

But today, when Kayla informed him that she had a lecture to attend at the university, Sam insisted on following her to school and here they were.

Well, it was not just her schoolmates that gossiped her and her boyfriend, Kayla also gossiped them to her boyfriend.

"See that one?"

"Don't point at him, he'll know we're talking about him". Sam felt like covering his face in embarrassment as he chuckled.

Kayla smirked. "Well, he's that guy that asked me out that I told you about".

Hearing that, Sam's face quickly turned sharp as he looked at the guy again. "Hmmm," he nodded slowly, his face turning serious. "I understand now, you can point at him some more".

"No way!" Kayla laughed.

Kayla had 2 lectures to attend in the university that day, one was scheduled for morning and the other was for evening.

During the morning class, he sat alongside his girlfriend in the lecture hall even as he kept on being subjected to fiery gazes from all around.

"He's so handsome!" He thought he heard a girl shriek excitedly.

Even the male lecturer had an irked expression on his face due to how distracted his students seemed, Sam felt a bit bad for him.

But then, he was stunned when at the end of the class, this lecturer was the first person to walk up to him with a calm expression on his face before slipping a jersey into his hand.

He chuckled. "Mr. Sam, an autograph please, my son is a big fan of yours".

"..." Sam was stunned and speechless.

In the end, he chuckled. "Of course, lecturer". He signed an autograph for the excited lecturer and took a picture with him.

With their lecturer showing the first example, the students became emboldened as after the class, they swarmed Sam like the celebrity he was, demanding pictures left and right.

Some girls even secretly tried to separate him from his girlfriend but sensitive enough, Sam was firm and he did not let it.

In the end, it took some security interference before he was finally able to leave the university premises with his girlfriend.

"Hmph!" Kayla snorted. "Shameless girls".

Sam chuckled.

"What's funny?" She snapped.

"Nothing, nothing". He raised his hands in surrender, smiling.

After the morning class, Kayla took him to a restaurant where they had a nice local Netherlands meal and then later in the afternoon, she took him along for a modeling business appointment that she had.

News of Sam walking around in Netherlands with a girl already got to England long ago, and in the afternoon, he received a series of phone calls.

One was from his coach, one was from Emile Smith Rowe, another from Ian, while 5 staggering missed calls were from his doctor.

When he finally called back, they all expressed the same concern, was his leg strong enough to walk already?

His doctor displayed the greatest concern, the middle-aged man only calmed down when Sam reassured him that he felt no discomfort and also promised him that he would be extra careful.

Later in the evening, they finally returned back to the university for Kayla's last class of the day and this time, Sam was not idle in her class.

While Kayla focused on attending her lectures, blocking his ears with an apple air pod, Sam tuned in to DSTV where he watched the ongoing premier league game.

(Premier league:)

(Matchday 20 of 38:)

(Fulham – Ipswich Town)

(Date: 5th January, 2025)

The game already started.

Just like expected, amid the boisterous atmosphere in Craven Cottage, both teams started with their strongest lineups.

For Fulham, Raul Jimenez started up top while behind him was the trio of Alex Iwobi, Emile Smith Rowe, and Adama Traore.

Further behind them was the midfield duo of Lukic and Andreas Pereira. The 4-man defense comprised of Tete, Bassey, Diop, and Antonee Robinson who was recently being labelled as the best left back currently in the premier league.

FWEEEE!

After the referee's whistle, Ipswich Town started kickoff but the newly promoted premier league club were not allowed to take control over this game as with Alex Iwobi, Jimenez, and Emile Smith Rowe leading it, Fulham slowly took control over the game.

During the early proceedings, Fulham dominated.

They came close to scoring a few times, only the defiant performance of the Ipswich Town goalkeeper kept them afloat for now.

While he watched on his phone, Sam was all smiles till in the 28th minute, he felt like he was suddenly drenched in cold water.

After a lengthy period of relentless Fulham attacks, Ipswich Town finally won back the ball and went on a counterattack. Their first tangible attack of the game, their first shot on target and it resulted in a freaking goal!

In the 28th minute, against the run of play, Ipswich Town went ahead.

"..." Sam felt devastated again.

Chapter 223 A fan's POV

'Come on guys, you can do it!'

Sam felt devastated but only for a moment.

Kayla's words before he decided to follow her to Netherlands impacted him a lot. Instead of lamenting the fact that his teammates were now trailing behind, Sam simply decided to have faith and believe in them.

So just like any other Fulham supporter, he went in behind them, cheering them in his mind as the game continued.

If Sam was maybe not in a lecture hall at this moment, he would be screaming at the top of his lungs already in support of his teammates.

After that stunner goal from Ipswich Town, Fulham became flustered a bit but only for a short time. That goal only made them angrier to get a result.

Their attacking raids became more urgent and aggressive as Ipswich Town was forced to pack the bus in their 18-yard box, defending with their lives.

In the end, such cowardly play paid off for the visitors in the first half as the game ended with Fulham trailing 0-1.

Sam did not think about the current scoreline much though, still fully behind his team as he cheered them on in his mind.

'Come on guys!'

When second half started, Fulham's domination continued but it was not as thorough as Ipswich Town had more opportunities on the break to go on a counterattack, threatening to make it 2 nil.

In those moments, Sam felt like his heart would leap right out of his throat but he held his nerve, watching and hoping as he clenched his fists tightly.

Noticing her boyfriend's antics, Kayla could not help but look at him weirdly, then at his phone. Seeing who was playing, she finally understood, she let him be.

Kayla's class was supposed to be a 2 hours long class, more than enough time for Sam to fully watch the game.

The second half was nervier than the first, testing Sam's patience and pushing his nerves to the limit but then, Fulham's relentless attacks finally paid off as they managed to find a way.

It was Alex Iwobi who broke the deadlock for Fulham.

After a long-lobbed pass from Lukic, Alex Iwobi ran in behind the Ipswich Town defense, calmly controlling the ball and taking it in his strides and then with his second shot, he whipped a powerful shot towards goal.

It was rifled towards the goalkeeper's new post but not expecting it, the goalkeeper was caught off-guard as the ball snuck in.

"GOALLL...!" Craven Cottage exploded.

Sam squirmed where he sat close to his girlfriend, pumping a fist excitedly.

If he was not in a lecture hall, he would have screamed for joy.

In the 70th minute, the scoreline was finally level, 1-1.

'Come on guys, 1 more goal!' He kept on cheering them on.

When the game continued, Fulham rode the momentum from their goal, attacking the Ipswich Town 18-yard box even more as the visitors decided to forget about attack, focusing only on defending.

Their anti-football style did frustrate Fulham, Sam felt the most frustrated but still, fortune favors the bold.

In the 1st minute of additional time after 90 minutes, Emile Smith Rowe got a pass from Pereira and went on a mazy dribbling run and then setting himself up, this midfielder scored a goal of the season contender.

It was a powerful driven shot from outside the box, leaving the Ipswich Town goalkeeper no chance as Fulham finally went on the lead for the first time this game.

"GOALLLL...!" Craven Cottage exploded again.

Feeling his body shivering in excitement, Sam could not hold it in anymore as he jumped in this lecture hall and pumped a fist excitedly. "Yes! Come on!"

"..."

Over a hundred eyes turned to look at him, including the lecturer's as Sam finally realized what just happened.

His girlfriend pinched him by the leg. "Sit down!" She growled.

Chuckling slightly and muttering a sorry, Sam finally sat back down but even that awkward moment was not enough to curb his joy.

That joy of his that disappeared for the past 2 days returned.

Fulham won the game and Pereira got the man of the match award after his impressive display from the base of midfield.

Fulham was back to winning ways.

Later that same day at night, the blockbuster game of this matchday was played as Liverpool welcomed Manchester United at Anfield.

Renowned as a stadium where Manchester United dreams were killed, tonight was no different as the Merseysiders humiliated their rivals from Manchester, thumping Man United 5-1 at the end of one of the most exciting games of this premier league season.

Having brought Ruben Amorim from Sporting CP to replace Erik Ten Haag as their head coach, Man United fans expected a swift turnaround in results but from recent results, the memes and trolling from rival fans would only continue.

Man United were in one of their worst periods since the club's inception.

That night, cuddling with his girlfriend in her bed, Sam slept peacefully and happily. Today could not have gone any better for him.

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The next day, after Wolves took on Nottingham Forest in another premier league encounter, all the matchday 20 clashes finally came to an end with results.

(Premier league:)

(Matchday 20 of 38:)

(Tottenham 2-1 Newcastle)

(Date: 4th January, 2025)

...

(Bournemouth 1-0 Everton)

(Date: 4th January, 2025)

...

(Aston Villa 3-0 Leicester City)

(Date: 4th January, 2025)

...

(Crystal Palace 1-4 Chelsea)

(Date: 4th January, 2025)

...

(Southampton 2-0 Brentford)

(Date: 4th January, 2025)

...

(Man City 2-1 West Ham)

(Date: 4th January, 2025)

...

(Brighton 0-3 Arsenal)

(Date: 4th January, 2025)

...

(Fulham 2-1 Ipswich Town)

(Date: 5th January, 2025)

...

(Liverpool 5-1 Man United)

(Date: 5th January, 2025)

...

(Wolves 1-1 Nottm Forest)

(Date: 6th January, 2025)

...

(Updated premier league table standings:)

(1. Fulham GP: 20/ W:15/ D:4/ L:1/ Pts: 50)

(2. Liverpool GP: 19/ W:14/ D:2/ L:2/ Pts: 48)

(3. Chelsea GP: 20/ W:12/ D:6/ L:2/ Pts: 42)

(4. Arsenal GP: 20/ W:11/ D:7/ L:2/ Pts: 40)

(5. Nottm Forest GP: 20/ W:9/ D:7/ L:4/ Pts: 34)

(6. Brighton GP: 20/ W:8/ D:6/ L:6/ Pts: 30)

(7. Man City GP: 20/ W:9/ D:6/ L:5/ Pts: 33)

(8. Newcastle GP: 20/ W:8/ D:6/ L:6/ Pts: 30)

(9. Aston Villa GP: 20/ W:9/ D:5/ L:7/ Pts: 32)

(10. Bournemouth GP: 20/ W:9/ D:5/ L:6/ Pts: 32)

(11. Tottenham GP: 20/ W:9/ D:2/ L:9/ Pts: 29)

(12. Brentford GP: 20/ W:7/ D:4/ L:9/ Pts: 25)

(13. Man United GP: 20/ W:7/ D:4/ L:9/ Pts: 25)

(14. West Ham GP: 20/ W:6/ D:4/ L:10/ Pts: 22)

(15. Crystal Palace GP: 20/ W:4/ D:7/ L:9/ Pts: 19)

(16. Leicester GP: 20/ W:3/ D:7/ L:10/ Pts: 16)

(17. Everton GP: 19/ W:3/ D:5/ L:11/ Pts: 14)

(18. Ipswich Town GP: 20/ W:2/ D:7/ L:11/ Pts: 13)

(19. Wolves GP: 20/ W:1/ D:5/ L:14/ Pts: 8)

(20. Southampton GP: 20/ W:2/ D:1/ L:17/ Pts: 7)

Chapter 224 Festive period

After 20 matchdays of the English premier league, more than halfway through the season already, incredibly, Fulham still led the line at the top of the premier league table rankings.

After the game against Ipswich Town, Fulham supporters regained their voice after their previous run of 2 games without a win.

They were having a truly terrific season.

Due to the tight schedule of football leagues, professional football players barely had time for themselves for festivities and even if they did, it was always limited. Despite this, the reality was that this was still a festive period.

It was still just early January and people were still enjoying the Christmas and New Year spirit.

Having played 4 games between 26th December and today, 6th January, the Fulham players barely had any meaningful time for themselves but coincidentally, Sam no longer suffered this with his teammates because of his injury.

His injury made him sad, but at the same time it gave Sam some-much needed time to catch up with his life outside football.

Because of the fact that he was in a rehabilitation period from his injury, he got the luxury of fully engaging in the festive period though it was already late.

To Sam though, it was not too late, it was still a rare opportunity to enjoy himself with his girlfriend and that was what he did.

The next day after Fulham's win against Ipswich Town, still in a happy mood from his team winning, Sam finally decided to participate in the festivities.

Taking Kayla's car, on the 6th of January, 2025, they had another amazing lovers' day out in Netherlands as they went shopping.

Feeling generous due to his good mood, Sam splurged money, buying a lot of things for himself and his girlfriend.

He didn't stop at that as he bought souvenirs that he would give to his best friend, Ian on getting back to England; he also bought for Emile Smith Rowe too.

And finally, he did not forget to shop for his family too. From when he was younger, there were a few things that his parents always fantasized about but left it at just fantasy simply because they didn't have the means to get them.

But now, Sam decided to meet this old dream of theirs.

For his mom especially, he bought some expensive jewelries, those she always raved about when watching Indian drama series on Zee World back then.

Also, Sam decided to shop on behalf of his girlfriend's parents.

Yes, Kayla Banks' parents lived here in Netherlands.

Sam had heard a lot about Kayla's parents and vice versa but today, after speaking with his girlfriend about it, in a good mood, he finally decided that he was ready to meet them.

After the shopping session, they drove to an African food restaurant where they enjoyed themselves, and then they finally drove to Mr. Banks' home.

Kayla's parents were just like she told him about. Both were English citizens but her father was black, it explained her love for the black culture.

Kayla looked just like her mom. Looking at the older woman, Sam was stunned at the uncanny resemblance. 'Damn! They're cut from the same tree!'

And then, the middle-aged man initiated a conversation, smiling. "Sam, I hear that you're from Africa, how's Africa these days?"

Feeling the familiar energy in that question, Sam stared at this middle-aged man with wide eyes. "Sir, you've been to Africa?"

Mr. Banks chuckled. "I grew up in South Africa".

"Wow!" Now, everything made sense, but why did Kayla not tell him this? He briefly glared at his girlfriend who chuckled on seeing his reaction.

Sam met Mr. Banks for the first time today but in no time, the both of them gelled as they discussed a lot of topics, ranging from Africa and its economy, to Nigeria, to South Africa, and then football.

Walking to the balcony where they overlooked the world below, they conversed in a familiar manner.

Mr. Banks was also a big football fan. Actually, he was a Liverpool fan meaning that this season, his club was Sam's biggest rival.

"Sam, I don't want Fulham to win the league but if you must do it, can you promise me something?"

Sam scratched the back of his head. "Umm, sir, I can't promise without knowing what you'll ask".

This middle-aged man hesitated, he coughed, and then he suddenly faced Sam. "Sam, sign for Liverpool next season!"

"..."

Sam was speechless, he coughed. "Umm, that..."

"Please". He pleaded shamelessly.

Sam was tongue-tied.

Right at that moment, the door to the balcony was flung open as someone stormed in. "Dad...!" Kayla complained. "This is why I didn't want you to meet him, I knew you'd be like this!"

"Sam, let's go".

Mr. Banks looked at her. "Women...", he scoffed. "What do you know?"

Sam chuckled. "I'm sorry Mr. Banks," he looked at him. "I would have agreed just to please you if I didn't have a dream to play in a specific club".

Hearing that, Mr. Banks snorted. "The Real Madrid dream, right? That broken club will definitely sign you at the first opportunity if you offer yourself up".

Sam grinned. "Actually, my dream is to play for their rival".

Mr. Banks' eyes widened. "You mean FC Barcelona?"

Sam nodded. "Yeah, I'm the biggest Barca fan in the world!" He boasted.

"I'll lead FC Barcelona back to the top of the footballing world, I promise!"

Mr. Banks was stunned, clearly, he did not expect that from Sam. In the end, he chuckled.
"Goodluck then Sam, I'll follow your career closer from now".

Sam and Kayla spent the most of the day at her parents' home as Sam used the rare opportunity to bond with her parents.

At the end of it all, they finally returned to Kayla's apartment were taking his iPhone out, Sam dialed a number.

(Outgoing video call to Best Mom...)

Click!

As soon as a familiar face appeared on the screen, she glared at him but once she noticed the other face beside Sam, her face lit up.

"Kayla my daughter!" Mrs. Moses' mood improved immediately. "How are you doing? Thanks for taking care of my son in my absence".

And just like that, the 2 women monopolized Sam's phone.

'I was the one who called!' Sam cried.

Chapter 225 A crunch FA cup game- against Watford

After the game against Ipswich Town on 5th January, Fulham's next engagement was an FA Cup game against Watford in 4 days.

(FA Cup 3rd round:)

(Fulham – Watford)

(Date: 9th January, 2025)

Despite the fact that Watford was an English club that competed in the Championship, the 2nd tier of English football, the FA Cup game was still a game that Sam attributed a lot of importance to due to various reasons.

The first and most important reason was the simple fact that after crashing out of the EFL Cup for the season already, he didn't want his club to crash out of another cup competition in his absence.

It was a knockout game and in knockout games, things don't always go as planned. An inspired performance from a single opposition player could spoil all the plans that Fulham approached the tournament with.

Having entered the flow state a few times himself already, Sam knew how powerful of a weapon it could be in enemy hand.

And that was the thing about cup games, a single player entering the flow state was all it needed to knock another team out of the tournament for good.

It was not like a league game where clubs could afford to stumble once and rectify their mistake in the next league game.

In knockout tournament games, it was win or lose.

Win and stay in the tournament, lose and crash out.

The buildup to this important game in their impressive season so far was grueling for the Fulham players. The fact that they already crashed out of one cup competition in Sam's absence already was still haunting them.

This was why they were determined not to crash out of another one.

This was why despite the fact that it was an FA Cup game and that it was against Watford, Coach Marco Silva started the game with a strong lineup.

He didn't just want his team to win, he wanted them to put out a statement display to show that they were still in the game even in Sam's absence.

Raul Jimenez was benched, allowing Muniz to start as the striker. Behind him was a dynamic trio of Harry Wilson, Emile Smith Rowe, and Adama Traore. Further behind them was the midfield duo of Lukic and Berge.

The 4-man defense comprised of the usual quadruple of Antonee Robinson, Diop, Bassey, and Tete. Castagne was still out injured. And of course, Bernd Leno started in between the posts this game.

Only few rotations were made by the Fulham coach.

As for Watford, starting in a 4-1-4-1 formation, Bayo started as their striker while behind him comprised the 4-man offense of Vata, Chakvatadze, Sissoko, and Bash. Behind the 4-man offensive players was Dwomoh in midfield as the anchor.

Behind the anchor was a 4-man defense comprising Larouci, Pollock, Porteous, and Ngakia, while Backmann started as the man in between the posts.

That night, Fulham fans gave the Watford players a reception to never forget as their loud noise blasted through the roof of Craven Cottage.

Even before the game started, the Watford players were already intimidated.

FWEEE!

As soon as the referee's whistle sounded, from the very first minute of this game, Fulham took the game to their opponents.

Fulham started kickoff and as soon as the first kick of the ball was played, the rapid Adama Traore charged down the field.

Before the Watford players could react...

Bam!

Emile Smith Rowe played a perfect lobbed pass over their full defense for the rapid Traore to catch up to in no time, taking it in his strides.

"Oh! What is this? An early goal?"

The Watford goalkeeper charged out but keeping his cool, Adama Traore rounded the goalkeeper before poking the ball into an empty net.

In just the 1st minute of this game, Fulham went ahead.

"GOALLLL...!" Craven Cottage erupted.

In a certain apartment in Netherlands, Sam also screamed for joy, making his girlfriend throw glances at him even as she idly ate popcorns.

That goal set the tempo for the rest of this game.

Fulham totally dominated Watford. They barely put up any resistance in the first half as the West London club ran them ragged with Smith Rowe pulling the strings from attacking midfield.

After setting up Adama Traore once already, Emile Smith Rowe orchestrated another moment of magic, playing Muniz in behind with an outrageous defense-splitting pass.

The lethal striker did not miss his mark, rifling the ball past the goalkeeper and into the net as Fulham scored its 2nd goal in the 22nd minute.

Just 3 minutes later, Adama Traore went on a powerful rampaging run with the ball, obliterating defenders with his pace before setting Muniz up again for the striker to rifle into the net on a powerful volley.

"Damn! Watford are being ripped apart!"

"What a run from Traore! What flawless shooting technique from Fulham too, they're in their groove!"

In the end, Sam's worst fears did not come true.

In the 25th minute of this game, Fulham was already 3-0 ahead and in the 40th minute, Muniz finally completed his hattrick after another bombing run and exquisite pass from Adama Traore down the right-hand side of the pitch.

40 minutes, 4-0...

It was over for Watford.

During halftime, Coach Marco Silva pulled the plug, replacing majority of the starting players and refreshing his team with fresh legs, resting his stars.

This gave Watford a chance in the 2nd half as they scored a consolation goal in the 60th minute but then in the 71st minute, Calvin Bassey powered in another goal from a corner kick routine, making it 5-1 to Fulham.

By the end of 90 minutes, all the Watford players looked defeated.

The ecstatic Fulham fans sang songs at the top of their lungs and then, inexplicably, a familiar chant took over Craven Cottage.

"Sam!" "Sam!" "Sam!"

The reason for the fans' chant was not clear but watching this game from home, Sam felt a warm feeling fill his heart.

"They're back!" He punched a fist in celebration.

Kayla looked at him. "I told you to be patient, didn't I?"

"Yes, you did my love, that's why I love you!" Grinning, he drowned her in smooches.

Chapter 226 A hectic schedule without Sam [1]

(Premier league:)

(West Ham – Fulham)

(Date: 14th January, 2025)

...

(Leicester City – Fulham)

(Date: 18th January, 2025)

...

(Fulham – Man United)

(Date: 26th January, 2025)

After the impressive win against Watford in the FA Cup, Fulham had 4 days of rest to prepare for their next game which was a premier league game.

After the FA Cup game, Fulham finally ran into their first hectic schedule since they lost their talismanic attacking midfielder.

Their next 3 games were important games that would potentially decide the outcome of their season.

Their first 2 encounters against West Ham and Leicester City were away games in tough away stadiums. No football club loved losing in front of their home fans, they would surely make things hard for Fulham.

In Sam's absence, the other Fulham stars would have to show up to win and of course, their hardest of the 3 premier league encounters was the 2nd clash against Manchester United for the premier league season.

This game was important because it was Fulham's last game for January 2025, and more importantly because it was against Manchester United.

Despite the recent dominance of Manchester City in the premier league, ask OG premier league fans and they would tell you that Manchester United are yet to be dethroned as the historical Kings of England.

Their history was still the best and most storied.

The memories created by ancient legends like George Best, more recent ones like Cristiano Ronaldo, Wayne Rooney, Robin Van Persie, Ryan Giggs, Paul Scholes, Edwin Van Der Sar, all of it would not be forgotten so easily.

Besides, this season, Manchester United was a wildcard.

They win when you expect them to lose and when you do expect them to win, they'll go on and break your heart, losing in humiliating fashion.

In simple terms, they were unpredictable this season.

Despite their current form, it was still a team of elite professional football players in Marcus Rashford, Bruno Fernandes, Andre Onana, Lisandro Martinez and the likes. It was going to be Fulham's hardest game streak of the new year so far.

Personally, for Sam who was still in Netherlands with his girlfriend, the next run of games was especially important to him.

This was because after 26th January, the day when his team would take on Manchester United at home, the next day would be the day of his full recovery from his injury and when he would shock his teammates.

Till today, not even his girlfriend knew that he would recover in one month despite the fact that she was excited by how fast he was recovering.

Sam was ready to shock everybody, not just his girlfriend, his friends, his teammates and his coach, but also Fulham rivals.

A lot of people were secretly happy that he was injured, praying for their downfall, he could not wait to see the look on their faces on his return.

'Thinking of my return,' he rubbed his chin. 'I think I should find a way to make it special and memorable'.

'Something like..., maybe a new celebration that is exclusive to me?'

Thinking of that, he remembered a certain Marvel superhero and then he grinned. "As you can see, I am not dead".

...

Time moved fast for the Fulham players.

While they were engulfed in training, preparing for their next game, time moved like it was being chased and in no time, it was already 4 days.

The Fulham squad traveled to West Ham United's London Stadium.

Like usual, both teams started with their strongest lineups.

For Fulham, Raul Jimenez led the line with the trio of Harry Wilson, Pereira, and Emile Smith Rowe behind him. Further behind them was the midfield duo of Lukic and Berge who started this game.

The 4-man defense comprised of Antonee Robinson, Diop, Basse and Tete with Bernd Leno starting in between the posts in their regular 4-2-3-1 formation.

As for West Ham, they started in a 4-1-4-1 formation with Fabianski in between the posts and a 4-man defensive quadruple comprising of Aaron Wan-Bissaka, the ex-Man United defender, Mavropanos, Kilman, and Emerson Royal who once plied his trade for FC Barcelona.

The sole man in midfield was Alvarez, while the 4-man offensive unit ahead of him comprised of Jarred Bowen, Lucas Paqueta, Soucek, and Mohamed Kudus.

Nikolas Fullkrug, the tall and imposing German striker was the sole man upfront for West Ham starting as their striker.

This was a formidable lineup and once the referee's whistle sounded, West Ham rode the momentum created by the home fans to play a wonder game.

This was Fulham in its current full power but during the first few minutes of this game, West Ham ran the Fulham defensive units ragged.

Mohamed Kudus especially was in imperious form as bolstered by his defense shutting out the Fulham attackers, this winger took the game by the scruff of the neck, consistently turning Tete inside out.

Their domination continued for over 40 minutes without a goal and during the late stages of the first half, as the pressure that they mounted on Fulham reduced, that was when their striker scored a wonder goal.

Mohamed Kudus created it.

After receiving the ball in the left-hand side, this winger wriggled past Tete again, wrong-footed Calvin Bassey before slipping a lobbed pass for the laser-focused German striker to hit on a powerful volley towards goal.

Bernd Leno reacted, his right hand touching the ball but the power behind the shot was just too much as it squirmed past him and into the net.

The London Stadium erupted as ecstatic West Ham supporters rejoiced.

The first half ended with West Ham leading 1-0.

When second half started, the Fulham players probably having taken a dose of motivation words from their coach started the game powerfully as they took the action to their opponents but it only lasted a short while before the West Ham domination continued.

Without Sam on the pitch, Fulham just seemed to lose that extra factor that would enable them compete at the very elite level.

They kept on trying but in the 60th minute of this game, the German striker pounced again, powering a header past Bernd Leno from a cross.

In 60 minutes, 2-0 to West Ham.

The away fan section deflated but, on the pitch, the Fulham players kept on trying their best and giving their all.

Late in the game, Fulham got a consolation goal for their troubles as Antonee Robinson, the Fulham left back scored a wonder goal from midfield.

The goal didn't change much though, Fulham lost the game 2-1.

Chapter 227 A hectic schedule without Sam [2]

"Max, what do you think is wrong with Fulham?"

"Nothing Charles, like I told you before, there's a Samuel Moses-sized hole in their starting XI, that is the only thing that is wrong with them".

"I mean, come on, do you really think West Ham would have been able to pass Fulham ragged the way they did today if Sam was on the pitch?"

"Let's just forget about his offensive capabilities for a moment. Just do a switch and let's analyze his work rate on the pitch".

"There's a statistic that's going around recently in a premier league twitter page. This season, no attack has gone through Sam's area of the pitch and resulted in a goal".

"Do you know what that means?"

"Sam is so good in locking his area of the pitch that the opponents are never successful in creating any meaningful attack from there".

"That reliable figure, Fulham missed it today".

"Forget about the other areas of the pitch, if that Sam area was locked today, the others would have raised their game from his performance alone".

"Sam's ability is more than just personal ability; he has this charisma on the pitch to effortlessly raise the overall level of his teammates".

"To me, the guy is captain-material already despite his young age".

"It's just unfortunate that he's injured".

"Next season, I can't wait to see the big club that he'll play for. I'm telling you; the footballing world is not ready for the heights that Sam will hit when playing for a big European club".

Just like expected, most of the talk after matchday 21 of the English premier league revolved around Fulham and Samuel Moses as after 21 matchdays, they finally let up and fell to second place, allowing Liverpool to top the league.

To a lot of people who watched, this was the normal status quo, Fulham were back to default settings.

Their prediction was that in no time, Fulham would be out of the top 4 of the English premier league table entirely.

The Fulham players were under a lot of pressure to perform, most especially after how they were totally outplayed by West Ham.

...

(Premier league:)

(Leicester City – Fulham)

(Date: 18th January, 2025)

3 days of rest after traveling to West Ham, the Fulham squad finally made another trip, this time to Leicester City.

After West Ham finally broke the voodoo, taking points off Fulham finally after their record-breaking run of form since the beginning of the season, Leicester City approached this game with high hopes of doing the same.

Just like expected, both premier league teams started with their strongest lineups as Leicester City started with its favored 4-2-3-1 formation just like Fulham.

With Jamie Vardy starting up top as the sole striker, the trio of Mavididi, El Khannouss, and Jordan Ayew started behind him. Further behind them was the duo of Skipp and Soumare.

Their 4-man defense comprised of Justin, Coady, Vestergaard, and Kristiansen while Ward started in between the posts for them.

For Fulham, compared to the lineup that they used against West Ham, the only change Coach Marco Silva made was the fact that Adama Traore started ahead of Harry Wilson today.

FWEEEE!

As soon as the referee's whistle sounded, giving the signal to kickstart the game, Leicester City kicked off the game and they started with a bang.

Riding the energy of their fans, during the first few minutes of this game, they proved extremely threatening even as the Fulham players tried their best to stabilize the game, their defense working on overtime.

Before the game could be stabilized though, a certain Leicester City legend who goes by the name of Jamie Vardy imprinted his name on this game.

"Jamie VARDYYY...!" The commentator screamed.

"What a goal, a twist and turn, then slalom goal!"

"What a moment from the premier league legend!"

In just the 4th minute of the game, Jamie Vardy broke the deadlock, giving his team the lead as charging towards the corner flag, this striker slid on his knees in celebration as the home fans sang praises of their legend.

That goal definitely dampened Fulham hearts, but they were not done yet.

"Come on guys!" Emile Smith Rowe clapped his hands.

In recent weeks, the Englishman discovered that he developed a bad habit due to being around Sam and playing with him week in week out.

He discovered that he now developed a deep hatred for losing and not giving his all till the last moment.

The loss against West Ham heavily impacted him mentally and after going home and reflecting about it, only one question lingered in his mind.

What would Sam had done?

That was why this game as soon as his team went behind again, Smith Rowe decided against staying idle as he played captain today.

And sometimes, that extra nudge was just what his teammates needed.

After that goal, Leicester City thought they would be cruising towards a memorable victory to turn their season around but they could not have been more wrong as Fulham turned the game on its head.

Just 6 minutes after Jamie Vardy's goal, Emile Smith Rowe went on a mazy run into the Fulham 18-yard box, skipping through players like they were not there.

Before he was dispossessed, he snuck the ball into the bottom right corner.

"GOALLL...!" The away fan section erupted immediately.

The Englishman jumped, pumping his fists excitedly as he celebrated. "Come on!"

He was drowned with boos but he didn't care.

That goal turned the momentum of this game around a complete 360%.

Fulham gained control of this game as they seemed to gain their mojo back. They started dominating this game, led by Smith Rowe's impressive form today.

And then it was him again in the 18th minute as dribbling into the box, he forced the Leicester defenders to trip him.

FWEEEE!

"Ohhhh! A penalty, Leicester City have lost their head!"

"What a response from Fulham after their drab loss against West Ham, Emile Smith Rowe in particular looks to be enjoying himself".

Raul Jimenez took the penalty and though the goalkeeper dived the right way, his shot was towards the corner as it snuggled inside the post still.

In less than 20 minutes after going behind, the game was turned on its head as Fulham equalized and were now leading.

Leicester City tried to regain control of this game but they could not as in the 33rd minute, Emile Smith Rowe scored a wonder goal, curling a shot from outside the box into the top right corner of the net.

1-3 to Fulham in the 33rd minute, Leicester City was cooked.

The first half ended 1-3.

Second half was much more boring than the first as Fulham defended their lead. The game eventually ended 1-3 to Fulham.

Even if it was just for a moment, they relished it.

They were back to winning ways.

Chapter 228 Clash against an aging Leviathan; London vs Manchester [1]

(Premier league results:)

(Matchday 22 of 38:)

(Newcastle 2-1 Bournemouth)

(Date: 18th January, 2025)

...

(West Ham 1-1 Crystal Palace)

(Date: 18th January, 2025)

...

(Brentford 1-3 Liverpool)

(Date: 18th January, 2025)

...

(Leicester City 1-3 Fulham)

(Date: 18th January, 2025)

...

(Arsenal 3-0 Aston Villa)

(Date: 18th January, 2025)

...

(Nottm 0-0 Southampton)

(Date: 19th January, 2025)

...

(Everton 3-4 Tottenham)

(Date: 19th January, 2025)

...

(Man United 0-2 Brighton)

(Date: 19th January, 2025)

...

(Ipswich Town 1-2 Man City)

(Date: 19th January, 2025)

...

(Chelsea 3-2 Wolves)

(Date: 20th January, 2025)

...

(Updated premier league table standings:)

(1. Liverpool GP: 21/ W:16/ D:2/ L:2/ Pts: 54)

(2. Fulham GP: 22/ W:16/ D:4/ L:2/ Pts: 53)

(3. Chelsea GP: 22/ W:14/ D:6/ L:2/ Pts: 48)

(4. Arsenal GP: 22/ W:13/ D:7/ L:2/ Pts: 46)

(5. Man City GP: 22/ W:10/ D:6/ L:6/ Pts: 36)

(6. Aston Villa GP: 22/ W:10/ D:5/ L:8/ Pts: 35)

(7. Nottm Forest GP: 22/ W:9/ D:8/ L:5/ Pts: 35)

(8. Brighton GP: 22/ W:9/ D:7/ L:6/ Pts: 34)

(9. Newcastle GP: 22/ W:9/ D:7/ L:6/ Pts: 34)

(10. Bournemouth GP: 22/ W:9/ D:5/ L:8/ Pts: 32)

(11. Tottenham GP: 22/ W:10/ D:2/ L:10/ Pts: 32)

(12. Brentford GP: 22/ W:8/ D:4/ L:10/ Pts: 28)

(13. Man United GP: 22/ W:8/ D:4/ L:10/ Pts: 28)

(14. West Ham GP: 22/ W:7/ D:5/ L:10/ Pts: 25)

(15. Crystal Palace GP: 22/ W:4/ D:9/ L:9/ Pts: 21)

(16. Leicester GP: 22/ W:3/ D:8/ L:11/ Pts: 17)

(17. Everton GP: 21/ W:3/ D:5/ L:13/ Pts: 14)

(18. Ipswich Town GP: 22/ W:2/ D:8/ L:12/ Pts: 14)

(19. Wolves GP: 22/ W:1/ D:6/ L:15/ Pts: 9)

(20. Southampton GP: 22/ W:2/ D:2/ L:18/ Pts: 8)

After 22 matchdays of the English premier league, this was how the premier league table looked like.

Despite the predictions all around, it was not a full-blown crisis yet in Fulham.

Yes, they lost their game against West Ham. Yes, it was 3 important points lost. Yes, Liverpool was now top of the table with a game in hand but at the same time, Fulham was still 2nd in the premier league table.

They were still within touching distance of the summit of the premier league table and to the Fulham fans, this meant everything.

After the game against Leicester City away from home, the Fulham players got a triumphant welcome back to Fulham as their fans celebrated their victory exuberantly like they already won a trophy.

Despite the celebrations though, the Fulham players did not let it get to their head, this was because they knew that there was a bigger challenge ahead.

Yes, it was a home game.

Yes, last time out they were able to beat the Red Devils in their home turf in Old Trafford but in that game, a certain Samuel Moses was on the pitch.

The Fulham players did not relish the knowledge that they would be clashing against the Kings of Manchester without their talismanic attacking midfielder, but they were not delusional.

They were elite professional football players; they knew not to complain in adversity but to work with what they had. With this mentality, they trained hard, approaching the game with optimism.

Like that, the days moved like the rolling pages of a book and in no time, it was already time for matchday 23 of the English premier league.

The first games of the matchday were played on 25th but Fulham's clash against Manchester United was left for last on 26th January.

(Premier league:)

(Matchday 23 of 38:)

(Brighton 2-0 Everton)

(Date: 25th January, 2025)

...

(Liverpool 2-0 Ipswich Town)

(Date: 25th January, 2025)

...

(Southampton 1-0 Newcastle)

(Date: 25th January, 2025)

...

(Wolves 0-4 Arsenal)

(Date: 25th January, 2025)

...

(Bournemouth 1-3 Nottm Forest)

(Date: 25th January, 2025)

...

(Man City 1-3 Chelsea)

(Date: 25th January, 2025)

...

(Tottenham 2-1 Leicester City)

(Date: 26th January, 2025)

...

(Crystal Palace 0-1 Brentford)

(Date: 26th January, 2025)

...

(Aston Villa 1-1 West Ham)

(Date: 26th January, 2025)

...

(Fulham – Man United)

(Date: 26th January, 2025)

With another impressive Liverpool win against Ipswich Town, all of a sudden in the build up to the Manchester game, the pressure was on Fulham as the Merseysiders now led by 4 points with a game in hand.

If they didn't want to be left behind by a rampant Liverpool, Fulham needed to get a result against Manchester United.

The Fulham players approached the game with this mindset.

But they were not the only ones who approached this game with the mindset to win, the Manchester United players did the same thing.

Unlike Fulham's impressive season so far, Manchester United was having an absolute disaster of a season. Having amassed only 28 points in 22 games, they were in mid-table 13th position in the league.

A lot of the Manchester United star players were currently under fire, including the new coach, Ruben Amorim. They were desperate to get a good result.

All of this added even more spice to this game.

In the build-up to the game, the media dubbed it the clash of the new Dogs vs the aging Leviathan, a battle of London vs Manchester.

When the Man United players entered Craven Cottage, they were welcomed by the hostile atmosphere that was created by the home supporters.

It was incredibly toxic but that was football.

The Fulham fans were ready to do anything to help their team win.

And like expected, both teams started with their strongest lineups.

Fulham started with a similar lineup that they used to demolish Leicester City, the only difference being that Castagne finally returned to the starting XI as the right back of the team after minor injury issues.

As for Manchester United, it was still a much more fearsome and star-studded lineup of players on paper.

Starting in a 3-4-2-1 formation, Andre Onana, the Cameroonian started in between the posts while the 3-man defense in front of him comprised the trio of Mazraoui, Harry Maguire, and Lisandro Martinez.

The 4-man midfield comprised of Diogo Dalot and Tyrell Malacia playing as high inverted fullbacks, then Manuel Ugarte, and Kobbie Mainoo, the young prodigy.

The attack comprised of Amad Diallo, Bruno Fernandes, and Joshua Zirkzee who started as the striker.

FWEEEE!

As soon as the referee's whistle sounded, the clash between heavyweights of London vs Manchester started.

Chapter 229 Clash against an aging Leviathan; London vs Manchester [2]

Bam!

"Ohhh! And the ball rebounds off the crossbar!"

"Zirkzee would be left rueing his luck there, the header was perfectly executed to the top corner, only the post deprived him of the goal there".

"And what a strong start from Manchester United!"

In the 18th minute of the game, after a few minutes of sustained pressure, Joshua Zirkzee got on the end of a Bruno Fernandes cross as the striker rose above all the Fulham defenders and planted a firm header at goal only to be thwarted by the goal post.

Ruffling his hair, this player cursed.

But the game was already continuing without him as Calvin Bassey pounced, clearing the game up field.

As soon as the referee's whistle sounded from the first minute, buoyed by the loud noise that was being made by the home supporters, Fulham played with venom and purpose as they aimed to get the early lead.

But for some reason, they could not sustain this pressure as it lasted for only 5 minutes before Manchester United took the game by the scruff of the neck.

For the next 15 minutes or so, Manchester United dominated as they tried their best to score, their closest being Joshua Zirkzee's header.

In the end, despite their efforts, the game was still level 0-0.

After the 20th minute though, Fulham settled down again as riding the energy from the loud noise around Craven Cottage, they slowly settled down into this game until it was no longer one-sided.

This game became even and once it did, it became pound for pound.

Bruno Fernandes vs Lukic, Emile Smith Rowe vs Manuel Ugarte; all across the pitch, exciting matchups dominated the game as the players of both teams gave their all to give their team the edge in this game.

In the 33rd minute of this game, Amad Diallo came closest to opening the deadlock as after a long pass from Kobbie Mainoo, the young forward bravely drove forward with the ball before unleashing a venomous shot at goal that stung Bernd Leno's gloves.

The Fulham goalkeeper saved a sure goal only due to his quick reflexes even as Craven Cottage exploded with cheers for their goalkeeper.

Immediately after making the save, Bernd Leno took the ball and quickly launched it forward for a quick counterattack.

Alex Iwobi took it in his strides, sprayed it to the other side of the pitch to Emile Smith Rowe who set Raul Jimenez up one-on-one with Andre Onana.

Somewhere in Netherlands, at that moment, Sam jumped up to his feet, about to scream in celebration but he only ended up cursing. "F*ck!"

"What a save from Andre Onana!" The commentator raved.

"What a game this is turning out to be! Both goalkeepers are in elite form!"

Despite the many chances that dominated this first half, the game ended 0-0 but it was during 2nd half that the level of play in this game truly shot up to a stratospheric level, showcasing the determination of both teams to win.

It was pound for pound football, extremely physical and rough, mixed with a few glimpses of individual brilliance.

And in the 54th minute of this game, Antonee Robinson showed his talent again as after an inverted driving run from left back, this left back unleashed an absolute piledriver of a shot that tore its way into the bottom right corner of the post.

Andre Onana stood no chance.

"ROBINSONNNNN...!" The commentator screamed.

"What a goal, what a moment!"

"He really is rising up for his team in recent weeks!"

"They call him the best left back in the league now and oh boy, is Robinson living up to the challenge!"

"What an absolute rocket!"

Craven Cottage exploded after that goal. Even after the celebrations, the ecstatic home supporters kept on singing at the top of their voices.

The same thing for a certain Samuel Moses in Netherlands; Antonee Robinson's goal turned Sam's mood straight from 12 to 100!

After that goal, Fulham finally regained control over this game as they kept on taking the action to Manchester United's 18-yard box.

Man United kept on trying to turn the tides to no avail.

In the 70th minute, Ruben Amorim finally said f*ck it and pulled the plug, making a couple changes to his team as Marcus Rashford was introduced into the game and his substitutions paid dividends almost immediately.

2 minutes after coming on, consequence of a failed Fulham corner kick routine, the rapid English forward got on the end of the cleared ball.

Taking the ball in his strides, Rashford kicked it long before absolutely obliterating Castagne in a race battle.

Bernd Leno charged out to clear the ball but Rashford was faster still, arriving earlier as the Englishman chipped the ball above the goalkeeper.

Due to the fact that he didn't add too much power to it, the ball rolled slowly towards goal even as Diop charged back to clear it.

In that moment, time seemed to freeze in Craven Cottage...

"...!"

Will it or will it not?

Diop barely arrived on time but when he cleared the ball, his balance was already too awkward as he ended up rifling it into his own net instead.

"F*ck!" The center back cursed angrily.

It was recorded as a goal to Marcus Rashford still.

72 minutes, 1-1..., out of the blue!

In a moment, the game turned on its head but Fulham responded immediately, pushing more players forward to snatch the lead again.

Their risk paid off as after being kept quiet for most of this game, Raul Jimenez burst to life, executing a sublime touch and control after an Alex Iwobi pass to get past his man before rifling the ball into the net.

"RAUL JIMENEZZZZ...!" The commentator screamed.

"What a game, a thriller!"

"Fulham are not about to give up 3 points at home!"

"Fulham are back on top again in the 78th minute, what a game!"

But then again, somehow, Manchester United came back and again, it was the rapid English forward.

This time, receiving the ball in the left side of the pitch, Marcus Rashford went on a short run past Castagne again, and then he cut in before curling a shot past a sprawled Bernd Leno.

"My God...! Rashford is feeling it today!"

"This is prime Rashford in display! What a shot, what a goal!"

Even the Englishman could not believe how good he was playing today.

In the 86th minute of this game, it was back level, 2-2...

In the final minutes of the game, it was pound for pound as relentlessly, both teams pursued the winner without caring much about the risk.

It was a 50-50 situation and in recent seasons, Fulham fans were used to crossing over the line in situations like this.

Surely, today would be no different right?

But they forgot something, there was no Zinedine Zidane on the pitch.

In the 2nd minute of additional time, it was the rapid Englishman again, Marcus Rashford as after receiving a pass from Bruno Fernandes, in a show of how synced and lost he was in the zone state, this forward set himself up before unleashing an absolute rocket of a shot from 30 yards out!

Whoosh!

The ball flew like a rocket, drilling through the air with venomous momentum...

Time seemed to freeze...

Craven Cottage watched in silence, and then...

"GOALLLLLLLLL...!" The commentator screamed.

"MARCUS RASHFORD!"

"MARCUS RASHFORD!!!"

"MARCUS RASHFORD...!!!"

"What a statement display!"

"A hattrick to show Man United fans that he's still got it!"

"They're clamoring for the club to sell him, and this is his reply, a vintage Marcus Rashford performance!"

And that, brethren, was how Fulham lost a game that they seemingly had in the bag already.

It was an exciting game, but torturous from the Fulham perspective.

...

In a certain apartment in the Netherlands...

"..."

Chapter 230 He's... BACK!!!

In a certain apartment in the Netherlands...

"GOALLLLLLLLL...!" The commentator screamed.

"MARCUS RASHFORD!"

"MARCUS RASHFORD!!!"

"MARCUS RASHFORD...!!!"

"What a statement display!"

"A hattrick to show Man United fans that he's still got it!"

"They're clamoring for the club to sell him, and this is his reply, a vintage Marcus Rashford performance!"

There was silence in this apartment, only the voice of the commentator could be heard but even that stopped as calmly, Sam muted the television.

With the television muted, silence reigned in this apartment.

"...!" Kayla could feel the tension rising.

For most of this game, Kayla watched this game from the side, idly eating her popcorns even as she pressed her iPhone. When her boyfriend reacted to the game, he would idly look at him before focusing back on her phone.

She could tell that the game was a rollercoaster though she didn't watch it, this was because of the highs and lows of Sam's emotions as he watched the game.

At some point, she thought. 'Don't go and get a BP from watching football!'

But now, even she was tongue-tied as soon as the game came to an end as she could tell that the atmosphere in this living room already changed.

She fidgeted with her box of popcorns, looking at the floor, then at the ceiling before finally gathering the courage to peek at her boyfriend.

The TV was muted but at this moment, Sam still had his eyes fixated on the screen, watching as emotions cascaded on the pitch.

He watched as Marcus Rashford received his match ball and the man of the match award, and he also watched his devastated teammates.

When the camera switched to show Alex Iwobi and Emile Smith Rowe's dejected faces, Sam's face twitched a bit but overall, he was still very calm.

And then, with the last result of matchday 23 of the English premier league ready, the premier league table was updated again.

(Premier league:)

(Matchday 23 of 38:)

(Fulham 2-3 Man United)

(Date: 26th January, 2025)

...

(Updated premier league table standings:)

(1. Liverpool GP: 22/ W:17/ D:2/ L:2/ Pts: 57)

(2. Fulham GP: 23/ W:16/ D:4/ L:3/ Pts: 53)

(3. Chelsea GP: 23/ W:15/ D:6/ L:2/ Pts: 51)

(4. Arsenal GP: 23/ W:14/ D:7/ L:2/ Pts: 49)

(5. Nottm Forest GP: 23/ W:10/ D:8/ L:5/ Pts: 38)

(6. Brighton GP: 23/ W:10/ D:7/ L:6/ Pts: 37)

(7. Man City GP: 23/ W:10/ D:6/ L:7/ Pts: 36)

(8. Aston Villa GP: 23/ W:10/ D:6/ L:8/ Pts: 36)

(9. Tottenham GP: 23/ W:11/ D:2/ L:10/ Pts: 35)

(10. Newcastle GP: 23/ W:9/ D:7/ L:7/ Pts: 34)

(11. Bournemouth GP: 23/ W:9/ D:5/ L:9/ Pts: 32)

(12. Brentford GP: 23/ W:9/ D:4/ L:10/ Pts: 31)

(13. Man United GP: 23/ W:9/ D:4/ L:10/ Pts: 31)

(14. West Ham GP: 23/ W:7/ D:6/ L:10/ Pts: 26)

(15. Crystal Palace GP: 23/ W:4/ D:9/ L:10/ Pts: 21)

(16. Leicester GP: 23/ W:3/ D:8/ L:12/ Pts: 17)

(17. Everton GP: 22/ W:3/ D:5/ L:14/ Pts: 14)

(18. Ipswich Town GP: 23/ W:2/ D:8/ L:13/ Pts: 14)

(19. Southampton GP: 23/ W:3/ D:2/ L:18/ Pts: 11)

(20. Wolves GP: 23/ W:1/ D:6/ L:16/ Pts: 9)

It was official, Fulham now trailed 4 points behind the English premier league table toppers, Liverpool.

And not just that, they were feeling the pressure from behind them. With just 2 points now separating them, Chelsea was now hot on their heels.

As Sam silently stared at the new English premier league table rankings, his girlfriend secretly stared at him and when he turned to look at her, startled, she almost choked on the popcorn.

"Ah, babe, hey," she chuckled. "How are you doing?"

Sam just looked at her, he forced a smile. "I'm sleeping early today".

Standing up, he started going to the room.

"Hey, you've not eaten!" Kayla called. "Won't you eat?"

"No need, I'm full".

As soon as Sam was out of his girlfriend's sight, his hands clenched into fists even as veins popped all over his body.

A fire lit up in his eyes and then, a familiar chant started in his mind.

'Win!'

Before Sam got to the bedroom, he already managed to kill all the adrenaline and fury currently flowing through him as he forced himself to sleep.

Tomorrow... was going to be a big day for him.

...

The next day, Sam woke up very early, around after 5 in the morning.

~~~~~

[Congratulations! The effects of ingesting the high-grade physical conditioning elixir have been completed!]

[You have completed your injury recovery time!]

[You have successfully recovered from an ankle injury!]

...

[Sam, welcome to a new day!]

[You have unlocked a new Daily System Quest- Get back in shape!]

[You have unlocked today's daily quest goals!]

[Task 1: 250 push-ups]

...

[Task 2: 250 squats]

...

[Task 3: 250 sit-ups]

...

[Task 4: Run 25 kilometers]

...

[WARNING: If the daily quest is not completed, penalties will be given accordingly.]

[Remark: You're furious? Good, channel that fury into training!]

~----~

Staring at the series of notifications that were displayed by his system, Sam could not help himself as a grin crept up his face.

For the past 1 month, he felt like a superhero that was deprived of his powers while his allies suffered but now, he finally recovered his powers.

It was too early; he didn't want to jog out of the apartment by this time or Kayla would panic when she eventually wakes up. But Sam was not ready to stay idle after waking up.

And so, he decided to start his work out right there at home.

'Even if I can't jog effectively here, I can still engage the push-ups, squats, and sit-ups'. His eyes gleamed. 'There's no time to waste'.

Right there in the bedroom, while his girlfriend still slept, Sam started working out.

Hours later, when Kayla woke up, seeing him all drenched in sweat, she was shocked and alarmed. "Sam! Are you ok?"

Hearing her voice, he grinned. "Oh yeah I'm ok, far ok than I've been since the past 1 month".

Hearing that, she heaved a sigh of relief but once the panic left her mind was when her logical brain came to fore. "Wait..., you're working out? Are you out of your mind?!"

"What of your injury?"

Sam kept on grinning. "My injury?" He shrugged. "That's a thing of the past, I'm healed now".

"See ya later, I'm going out to jog".

In his gym clothes, Sam jogged out of this apartment in Netherlands. Of course, he did well to wear a hoodie to cover his face and try to hide his identity.



It didn't mean much though.

As soon as he came out, unknown to Sam, a paparazzi brought out his camera as he took pictures of him including a video.

A few minutes later, while Sam jogged in Netherlands, unknown to him, a storm already started on social media due to a post from an anonymous source.

It was a post on Twitter.

{Twitter:}

{Username: @Stalker007}

(Surprise surprise mother\*ckers!)

(Image=)

(Video=)

(He's... BACK!!!)