

## Football God 27

### Chapter 27: A mixed debut performance

FWEEEE!

As soon as the referee's whistle sounded, every distraction left Sam's head as all his focus honed in on the game before him, boosted by the incentives offered to him by the system and the drive of his personal ambition.

'I need to make my mark on this game!'

'A goal perhaps, maybe an assist, I must get one!'

Nasarawa United restarted play from the throw in and immediately, they started their attacking raids against the Enyimba FC defense, launching attack after attack with their overwhelming numbers.

This was where Sam was caught off-guard.

As an attacking midfielder since he was a kid, most of Sam's instincts on the pitch were that of an attacking player.

After all, tracking back to mark opposition players and defend was boring, definitely not as exciting as bombing forward with the ball, dribbling through multiple players, and scoring an incredible solo goal.

Yet at this moment, faced against the ultra-offensive momentum of Nasarawa United, Sam was forced against his will to track back and defend.

For literally 5 minutes after Sam entered the game, his leg didn't touch the ball once as Nasarawa United dominated possession, laying siege to his box even as he defended alongside his teammates.

He didn't like it but he had no choice.

He was even furious at his coach. 'Why did you take Victor off? Now, we're playing defensive football, how am I supposed to score or give an assist like this?'

'F\*ck! I hate this'.

Despite his thoughts though, he defended, martialed and led by Austin Oladapo who even in this moment when his team was being laid siege upon was comfortable and in his element.

Defending was second nature to this center midfielder.

"Sam, defend!" Austin kept on shouting.

"Close him down, don't give them chances to shoot from distance!" He kept yelling, displaying his capability as a vocal captain on the pitch.

Luckily for Sam, he was just being introduced into the game, so he had fresh legs and to his credit, he had a lot of stamina.

After 6 minutes of being laid siege upon, it was Sam who finally won the ball back with his relentless running as sticking his right leg out, he poked the ball away from the leg of the Nasarawa United center midfielder.

"Pass, pass!" Sam heard a player shout immediately, he didn't know who.

He didn't pass immediately though. 'This is my moment, I won the ball!' He thought. 'I need to work it and make the most out of it'.

'I won't have many chances to complete the system mission'.

Instead of passing, Sam pushed the ball forward and ran after it, intent on starting the counterattack himself and scoring if the opportunity came or at the very least laying on the assist.

He barely pushed the ball when he heard the screeching sound of boots sliding through the pitch.

Sam flinched, jumping as the boots hit the ball, also catching his legs in the process as he collapsed on the pitch.

Sam just lost possession in his half, close to his box.

This was a big mistake; at first he was stunned, but then he reacted.

To redeem his mistake, instinctively, he clutched his leg, screaming as if he was in pain when he was not but the referee paid him no attention.

One opposition player slid in to win the ball back, pushing it into space, then another one ran into the free ball and unleashed a rocket shot from distance.

Boom!

It was Josiah Oche with the rocket shot!

The Enyimba FC players reacted, putting their bodies on the line to try and block the shot but it slithered through their block. Olorunleke Ojo, the Enyimba goalkeeper jumped on a full-stretch dive but his fingers could only slightly touch the ball as it wriggled past, nestling into the top left corner of the net.

The net shook, it was a goal.

In the 87th minute of the game, Oche got 1 goal back for his team.

"Goal!" Oche roared, not bothering to celebrate as he rushed into the net, picked up the ball and ran back with it to quickly continue the game.

Sam was still on the ground as this happened, watching, stunned.

He just cost his team a goal.

Austin walked over and offered him a hand, smiling slightly. "It's not your fault," he said. "Next time, don't take the risk though in a situation like that, pass".

Sam looked at his captain, he bit his lips a bit before he nodded.

He stood up. "Thank you".

"Just play better".

FWEEEE!

The game restarted as once again, the Nasarawa United players won back possession before flooding into the Enyimba FC half.

The ending minutes of this game was incredibly nervy as the Nasarawa United players, smelling the equalizing goal played in front of their home fans with incredible intensity like they were on a battlefield.

Enyimba FC weathered the offensive with incredible resilience and this time around, a certain attacking midfielder was no longer impatient.

Sam no longer needed Austin to instruct him, that first mistake was all the lesson he needed to refocus.

Mounting like a rock in his team's half, but a mobile one, Sam made full use of his stamina during the final minutes of this game as he ran everywhere, jumping into tackles and intercepting passes, briefly being the best player of his team entirely due to his work rate.

Like this, Enyimba FC was able to weather the storm for 90 minutes.

By now, Sam was no longer even thinking of his system mission, all that dominated his mind was weathering the storm for his team to hold on to all 3 points by the end of the game.

The referee added 4 additional minutes to the game.

In those final minutes, Nasarawa United mounted the pressure on their opponents but Enyimba FC stood up valiantly to the challenge still.

And in the 93rd minute, merely seconds away from the final whistle, Sam's work rate enabled him to win the ball again just in front of his box.

This time, he didn't kick it away and this time, it was not because of arrogance nor impatience to complete a system goal.

Sam already forgot about the system mission.

The reason why he held on to possession was because of spatial awareness.

Spatial awareness in football is the ability of a footballer to be aware of his surroundings, where his teammates were and where his opponents also were.

Sam never really had this football skill before but the only time that he made use of the system's skills market, he purchased spatial awareness.

At this moment, it was this spatial awareness that enabled Sam to know that there were 2 opposition players behind him, frozen, still not reacting to the fact that he just stole the ball.

Another opposition player was charging in from the right, clearly intent on winning the ball by all means. All this information entered his head in an instant.

But this were not the most important information. The most important information was that Sam was also aware of an ally.

Immediately after he won possession, Chijioke, the left winger of his team noticed. This winger erupted and started running.

Whoosh!

The sliding tackle finally came in.

Trapping this ball with the heel of his boot, Sam dragged it back smoothly as he effortlessly evaded the tackle with the cold calmness of a hitman, then he hit the ball one time towards the left where Chijioke ran.

"The newbie just ignited a counterattack!" The commentator roared.

Chijioke made use of his impressive speed as he bombed down the left hand side of this pitch with incredible speed.

He was not alone, Sam didn't leave him alone either as including him, 3 teammates ran after Chijioke.

Sam, Austin, and Emeka completed the 4-man counter-attacking cohort.

Chijioke didn't take the risk to dribble, he played a slightly over hit cross into the box and Sam jumped, utilizing his tall frame to deftly bring the ball down with his chest on the right side of the 18-yard box.

On the right side of the 18-yard box, Sam had the option to shoot and pass, the opposition defenders were still scrambling to fully recover.

He didn't elicit to shoot though, it was the unlikelier chance to score from this position, instead he looked into the box.

Emeka held off the only defender who already recovered fully with his physicality, calling for the pass. He was the best pass option but at this moment, Sam didn't pass towards him because he was biased.



Instead of passing to Emeka who was slightly to the left side of the 6-yard box, he laid the ball to the center instead where Austin was running in with an opposing player tightly marking him.

Austin was able to outmuscle his opponent though and as the Nasarawa United goalkeeper charged towards him, he poked the ball in-between his legs into the embrace of the net.

"Goal!" Austin celebrated, pumping a fist into the air then he pointed at the newcomer of his team as he ran at Sam before hugging and lifting him up in celebration.

In the last minute of the game, Enyimba FC scored again, making the score line 1-3, breaking multiple Nasarawa hearts.

The game ended shortly after with Austin Oladapo easily scooping the man of the match award after a game-winning performance with a goal and 2 incredible assists to his name.