

Football God 33

Chapter 33: First home game; Enyimba FC vs Akwa United

Not getting selected in Coach Yemi Daniel's starting lineup at first left Sam semi-depressed. He was sure that he did enough to enter the starting lineup already, but thankfully, he managed to pull himself off it with some help.

Returning home after scoring the hat trick, Sam distracted himself by watching a movie and when it was evening, he called his mom.

"What?!"

"You scored a hatching and that crook of a coach still didn't decide to put you in his starting 11?!"

"Mom, calm down". Sam hissed. "You'll wake dad up".

Well, his dad was already awake. "What happened?"

In the end, Sam had no choice but to tell his father everything.

Once he was done speaking, Mr. Moses chuckled.

"What's so funny?" Of course, his wife snapped.

He chuckled still. "Sam".

"Yes, dad".

"Do you remember when Lionel Messi was 17 like you?"

"Umm, yeah, he's my idol so of course I know".

"Good, then you should also know that even a player of Lionel Messi's stature didn't start his career starting every game outright as a starting 11 player".

"Lionel Messi worked his way into the starting 11 of that glorious FC Barcelona team through hard work, and most importantly, his performances on the pitch. Son, strive to do the same".

"Don't concern yourself with your coach's decisions, he knows more than you do. A season of football is not played like a sprint, rather, it's a marathon".

"Be patient son, your time to shine will come".

"Just stay diligent, humble, and try your best to take every chance that you get to play with aplomb".

"Do you listen to rap?"

"Huh?"

Mr. Moses stared at his son. "Go listen to Eminem, Lose Yourself. Use it to distract yourself from this thing you're feeling, and wait for your moment".

Surprisingly, that was all Sam needed to shake himself off the disappointment. That night, unlike he feared, he slept feeling fulfilled, knowing that there was always another day for him to prove himself again.

In the next day's training game, somehow, without another energy elixir, Sam managed to beat yesterday's training game performance as he put in a clinical display, singlehandedly winning his team the game by chipping in with 2 goals and 2 assists, trashing team B 4-2 this time.

Of course, his performance was buoyed by Austin Oladapo's reassuring presence in team A this time.

Still, his performances in the last 2 days was impactful, evident from the difference in how his teammates now looked at him.

Most of them, especially the midfielders now saw him as a threat.

They could tell that this 17-year-old midfielder had what it took to take their position in the starting XI without much fuss, they were flustered.

Luckily on their part, despite Sam's convincing performances in the past 2 training games, Coach Yemi Daniel stuck with his preferred starting 11 lineup.

Sam was not discouraged though. 'My moment will come'. He thought.

Like the rolling pages of a book, the days moved fast and in no time, the D-day was here.

It was 18th Jan, 2023.

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Sam's first professional home game experience reception..., it was vastly different and at the same time just as he expected it to be, a contrasting feeling.

The first thing that caught his attention was the energy of the fans.

Thousands of Enyimba FC fans on the stadium sang loudly, cheering their team on even as the game was yet to start.

The boundless energy from the fans was infectious, dousing Sam with so much energy that he felt like a fan-favorite gladiator entering his favored coliseum.

His blood boiled despite the fact that he was not starting.

He knew that his teammates felt the same way, they were all determined to give their fans what they came to see, a good show.

Without hesitation, after the players of both teams lined up on the pitch, the referee blew his whistle to commence the game.

FWEEEEEE!

From the first whistle, Enyimba FC went on the offensive, bearing down on their opposition half with the overbearing arrogance of an overlord.

Also, from the first whistle, it was clear that Akwa United came to their opponent's home to play defensive football as literally all their players except their sole striker stayed back to defend.

With 10 players behind the ball, Akwa United defended with their lives, jumping into tackles and blocking shots relentlessly for 10 minutes.

Throughout most of the 10 minutes, the fans in the stands kept on chanting excitedly, happy at the football that their team was playing.

Enyimba FC dominated possession, 81% to 19%, dominating all parameters from shots taken to shots on target, yet, they failed to penetrate the Akwa United goalie.

This goalkeeper managed to pull off a few incredible saves when called upon, but the true reason why Enyimba FC was yet to score a goal was because of the staunch performance that was being put out by the Akwa United defense.

These players put their body on the line, defending valiantly as they frustrated the Enyimba United attackers.

After 10 minutes, not able to keep the intensity, Enyimba FC finally lowered their tempo as they took more time on the ball, progressing forward patiently.

Despite their change of approach, one thing that stayed constant in this game as the time ticked on was the valiant defending put out by Akwa United.

At some point in the game, more confident as their opponents grew tired, they finally left their shell, going on a few attacking runs towards the opposition half as they threatened through counter-attacking situations.

For 40 minutes, Enyimba FC failed to score a goal.

In the 41st minute of the game, Akwa United finally unleashed their first shot on target but Ojo, the Enyimba FC goalkeeper was on hand to make an easy save.

In the final minutes of the first half, the Enyimba FC players literally camped in their opponent's half, launching raids of attack after attack but yet, the staunch Akwa United defense held.

Despite their statistical domination, Enyimba FC ended up being frustrated as the first half of this game ended 0-0.

When half-time came, in the dressing room, Coach Yemi Daniel was furious as he berated a few players due to how they couldn't capitalize and fully utilize the opportunities that they had in the first half, mostly Olisema and Emeka.

Watching his coach berate his rival, Sam secretly felt glad.

He didn't expect much though but to his shock, Coach Yemi Daniel pulled the plug on the game early. "Olisema, you're being substituted, you won't start the second half". The coach was truly furious.

This coach looked round his team with red eyes. "Samuel Moses".

"Yes, coach". Sam responded.

"Get ready, you're entering the game in the second half and you better make this decision worth it".

"Yes, coach". Sam nodded respectfully. Inside, he was overwhelmed by joy.

'My moment, finally!' He thought.

When the second half started, Enyimba FC made 2 changes, taking Olisema off for the new boy, Sam while also taking off the normal starting right back of the team, Sadiq Abubakar for the more attacking right back.

And with that, the second half of this fiery game started.