

Football God 341

Chapter 341 Kylian Mbappe strikes!

In the 23rd minute of this game, the deadlock was broken..., by Real Madrid.

Kylian Mbappe struck!

It was a customary Kylian Mbappe goal, but first, the credit needed to go to the solid defending that was just put out by the men in white.

It was FC Barcelona on the attack.

After winning the ball back in their own half, pass after pass, play after play, the Catalans worked their way up the field till they bore down on Real Madrid's 18-yard box even as the tens of thousands of fans in white all around this stadium drowned them in an ocean of boos.

Bam!

Sam received a pass from Pedri in the 18-yard box and immediately, he heard footsteps behind him even as he instinctively spread his body, protecting the ball.

With a powerful thud, he felt something, someone clattering into him from behind.

He didn't even need to look to know who it was. 'Damn Rudiger...!'

This was not the first time that the imposing German defender tried to rough him up this game. Rudiger had a no-nonsense playstyle of always targeting the opposition's best attacker, and his focus today was on Sam.

But Sam had no intentions of reducing himself to the defender's level, fighting a physical battle with him where he was sure to lose.

Instead of that, he fought with his own strengths.

His movement, his positioning, his interplay, that was what he used to confound Rudiger and at this moment, immediately after he received the ball and Rudiger clattered into him from behind, Sam's brain geared into overdrive.

Whoosh!

Rudiger swung his leg from behind, trying to steal the ball but expecting it, Sam blocked with his own leg, protecting the ball.

Federico Valverde closed down on him from the front, swinging for the ball too but with his leg on top the ball, Sam maintained control his absolute mastery of a football, dragging it back and forth to evade the Uruguayan.

"...!"

Sam was under a lot of pressure; any mistake and he would lose the ball but he didn't make a mistake because he just spotted a run.

Lamine Yamal just moved!

Bam!

Sam cleverly hit the ball with the outside of his left boot, sending it in between the little opening between the defenders as Lamine Yamal got the ball.

As soon as the teenage Spaniard took his first touch of the ball in such a position in the 18-yard box, the whole Real Madrid defense panicked even as the roar and boo of the home fans hit a crescendo.

Yamal barely controlled the ball though when Ferland Mendy, the Real Madrid left back clattered into him from the side.

Holding his ground, the young Spaniard dazzled.

Slowing down and with his left foot, he used a Cruyff turn to kill the ball's momentum, turning towards the right and just as Mendy followed him, he turned back as with the same left leg, he flicked the ball left.

An ultra-smooth body feint!

Mendy was fooled, slipping as he fell on his butt even as Yamal already left.

A brilliant piece of skill from the Barcelona winger to beat his man but apart from Rudiger, Real Madrid had another no-nonsense defender in central defense.

Swoosh!

David Alaba went on a ruthless sliding tackle as soon as Yamal destroyed Mendy, catching the young winger off-guard.

Startled, Yamal jumped, evading the Austrian's sprawling legs even as David Alaba intercepted the ball.

Before he could stand up though, another of his teammate already pounced.

Valverde who was closest to the loose ball pounced, hitting it up field but he didn't hit the ball blindly. It was not a clearance.

Rather, as soon as Alaba intercepted the ball, Valverde looked up field, spotting Kylian Mbappe who suddenly raised his hand, calling for him.

Bam!

Valverde hit the ball immediately, raising it and sending it toward him.

And then...

Bzzz!

A footrace started!

Kylian Mbappe vs Ronald Araujo!

Both were fast, but Mbappe was faster. This meant despite starting behind the defender, Mbappe ate yards of space like they were not there, just barely evading the Uruguayan to get to the ball first just outside the 18-yard box.

From defense to attack, the transition happened in nothing but an instant.

Kylian Mbappe had the ball and he was ahead of him already, but Ronald Araujo was not one to give up though.

Thud!

Maintaining his speed, Ronald Araujo clattered into Mbappe just before he entered the 18-yard box, shoving him with his shoulder.

Instead of resisting though, respecting Araujo's greater physicality, Mbappe rather disengaged from the physical duel.

This was not him giving up though, it was just him simply re-strategizing.

"Close him down!" From the touchline, Hansi Flick yelled at his defender as he realized the Madrid attacker's intentions first.

"...!" Ronald Araujo finally realized.

This position, this sequence..., it was Mbappe's trademark while he still plied his trade for Paris Saint Germain in France.

'NO! I need to close him down...!'

Araujo moved but it was already too late.

By slowing down and disengaging from the physical duel, the French captain, Kylian Mbappe allowed Araujo to overtake him but, in the process, it gave him more time on the ball to pick his moment.

With 2 touches of the ball, Kylian Mbappe regained his balance and then with a 3rd touch, pushing the ball to the right, a move that Araujo failed to intercept, Mbappe set himself up for the shot just outside the 18-yard box.

"...!"

Instantly, the Santiago Bernabeu fell silent in anticipation.

Just like Hansi Flick and then Ronald Araujo recognized this move, they also finally recognized it.

Afterall, it was not just Mbappe's trademark in PSG, it was also Ronaldo's trademark move at some point when he plied his trade for their club.

After setting himself up, Mbappe took a step and then with his right foot...

BAM!

He hit the ball, sending it on a curling trajectory towards the top right corner.

Having had an amazing game so far, Ter Stegen took a step before diving after the ball. He did everything perfectly, just the curl on the ball was too much, and the accuracy called for blood.

Whoosh!

The ball flew through the air, rolling, rotating, curling till it went past the goalkeeper's grasp, nestling into the net.

It was a goal.

"...!"

Silence, at the Bernabeu, then...

"GOALLLLLLLL...!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

Chapter 342 Barcelona responds!

"GOALLLLLLLL...!!!!!!!!!!!"

The Santiago Bernabeu erupted, turning into a cauldron of activity.

The fans in white jumped, screaming for joy, waving their white jerseys with ecstasy written all over their faces as they celebrated.

While Marc Andre Ter Stegen picked the ball out of his own net, Kylian Mbappe already whirled away in celebration as his teammates ran after him, jumping before doing his closed arm celebration.

The Bernabeu was loud and boisterous as Madrid celebrated their goal.

And just like that, 1-0 to Real Madrid.

"..."

Silently, the FC Barcelona players processed the goal, not blaming anybody as they recognized that it resulted from a moment of individual brilliance.

But that brilliance left them looking for their own brilliance.

Their bloods burned with fervor.

'Win!'

The voice was already rearing its head in Sam's head.

'Win!' 'Win!' 'Win!'

Eventually...

FWEEE!

In the 23rd minute of this game, Real Madrid scored but it was just 1 goal and the FC Barcelona players didn't let it demoralize them, making them even more focused and determined to make a comeback.

And when the referee's whistle sounded, they started their quest for a comeback even as once again, Sam led the charge.

That goal didn't change anything.

It was still an end-to-end game, an incredible game of pound-to-pound football.

Madrid attacks, Barca defends...

Barca attacks, Madrid defends...

After that goal, even as Barca attacked, Madrid got the better chances as their attacking players were finally ignited.

Vinicius Jnr. went haywire at some point, going on an incredible solo run and shot that ended with his shot stinging the bar before bouncing back only for the rebound to kickstart a further scramble in the Barcelona box 18.

Rodrygo also got one shot on target, a low shot that forced Ter Stegen into making an awkward save.

Mbappe also shone, utilizing his explosiveness to devastating effect.

He dazzled with his pace and quick feet, confounding the Barca defenders anytime he moved and he already let loose 2 more lethal shots that forced the in-form Ter Stegen into making 2 more incredible saves.

Ter Stegen's performance was solid enough to keep Madrid at bay, long enough for his team's buzzing attack to finally get a tangible result.

Before Madrid could double their lead, Barcelona responded!

It happened in the 34th minute of this game.

Pedri won the ball back from Bellingham and immediately, he played a horizontal pass to the left where a rampaging Alejandro Balde lurked.

The rapid FC Barcelona left back quickly took the ball in his strides.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

Hitting the ball long, he ate yards of space like they were not there, charging down the left flank and evading challenges in the process.

When he ran into Rodrygo, with a simple shift and an explosion of speed, he erupted past the Brazilian winger.

And when he ran into Trent Alexander Arnold in the Madrid half, Balde's electric dribbling ability reared its head as a few step overs later and a drop of the shoulder and the Englishman was left chasing straws.

BZZZ!

Balde pushed the ball in between his legs, nutmegging him as he rushed past him and then he finally raised his head to look into the 18-yard box.

By the side, close to where he made his run, Raphinha ran, aligning his run with his even as the Brazilian asked for the pass.

But Alejandro Balde looked past him, to the 18-yard box.

There, to the right side of the box, Lamine Yamal lurked, Mendy following him closely even as he charged into the box.

Also in the box was Gavi, the attacking midfielder.

But the tallest FC Barcelona player currently in the 18-yard box was Sam.

Despite being the striker of his team, he was the one who was behind, barely inside the 18-yard box but it was a clever move.

This was because with all the defenders preoccupied with marking the runners in blue and red running into their box, anticipating a pass, they had no time to focus on Sam who decided to stay behind just at the edge of the 18-yard box.

'That's it!' Alejandro Balde made his decision, then...

Bam!

He hit an accurate cross with his left foot towards the box.

Whoosh!

The ball floated through the air, rotating. One of the Real Madrid defenders read the trajectory of the ball first..., David Alaba.

As soon as the Austrian did the math, his eyes widened. 'Sam!'

He moved but it was already too late as jumping, Sam cooled the momentum of the ball with his chest just in time as Alaba clattered into him.

Sam's balance was disrupted but spreading his arms in mid-air, he was able to prevent his body from flipping over as he landed on his feet.

His muscles strained as he fought with the Austrian center back, protecting the ball even in the unbalanced stance where he landed.

Bzzz!

Sam noticed Rudiger finally react, rushing to block any possible shot from him but Sam didn't shoot the ball.

Instead, he looked, and noticed him.

Gavi, who was suddenly free due to the attention on him.

Bam!

He hit the ball in a lobbed pass, raising it over Rudiger and towards Gavi who was suddenly isolated in the Real Madrid 18-yard box.

"...!"

Trepidations spread through the Santiago Bernabeu as time seemed to slow down.

Gavi traced the ball with his eyes, calculating its trajectory, having the presence of mind to allow it drop to the optimum position before swinging his leg to take the shot.

But then...

Whoosh!

Somehow, the intelligent David Alaba was able to read Sam's intentions though a bit late, he still reacted.

That sound was the sound of Alaba's last-ditch sliding tackle for the ball and hearing it, Gavi reacted, making a split-second decision to change his action from shooting the ball to cutting it instead.

Bzzz!

That touch sent the sliding David Alaba to the shadow realm, opening him up one on one with Thibaut Courtois, the Real Madrid goalkeeper.

Gavi no longer hesitated.

Bam!

With the outside of his boot, he poked the ball and it moved, flashing past Courtois' side and into the Real Madrid net.

Having risen to their feet from the moment when Sam rose into the air, cooling the ball with his chest, the FC Barcelona fans in the away stands now erupted in their opponent's home with deafening roars of defiance and ecstasy.

"GOALLLLLLLLLLLLLL...!!!"

Chapter 343 This is El Clasico!

"BARCA HAS DONE IT!" The commentators roared.

"The Catalans have done it in Madrid!"

"That's the equalizer!"

"What a goal!"

"So many people involved, so many brilliant plays involved!"

"Balde's run, just beautiful! Sam's physicality against Alaba? Brilliant! And that pass? My God, that was straight out of Mesut Ozil's book!"

"And then that finishing touch?!"

"My oh my! Gavi, come on, this is the Bernabeu short man!"

While the commentators raved, waxing lyrical about the equalizer that suddenly silenced the Santiago Bernabeu, Gavi was already charging away towards the corner flag even as the away stands erupted in ecstasy.

Gavi didn't just run, as he ran, he pumped his fists excitedly, his pupils dilated in the tense energy of this game.

As he pumped his fists, he bent his body, sliding in celebration even as he kept on pumping them fists excitedly.

"COME ON!!!" He roared in Spanish.

His teammates arrived, swarming him, celebrating the goal with him.

The reaction of the home fans?

"BOOOOO....!!!"

That goal only made the atmosphere in this stadium even more hostile.

The Madrid fans went as far as throwing bottles and other things at the celebrating FC Barcelona players, truly making the atmosphere hit a fever pitch.

It took some intervention before the fans and players finally calmed down.

Despite the disruption though, reality was reality.

In the 34th minute of this game, it was now 1-1...

FC Barcelona was back in the game.

Absolute cinema.

"And that is Sam's first El Clasico goal contribution! Does he have what it takes to do more in this game?"

"Surely, this game has more drama, right?"

Yes, there was more drama in this game, the El Clasico kind.

After that goal, once again it was even between both teams, taking them back to square zero where they started but this time, with more drama.

Mbappe already scored, Gavi equalized, and yet both teams wanted more.

FWEEE!

As soon as the referee's whistle sounded, the cinema continued.

And this time, a certain Vinicius Jnr. truly became unleashed.

Real Madrid and FC Barcelona have a roster of superstars, professional football players who were at the peak of the profession but when it comes to thriving in chaos and pressure, few thrived like the Brazilian, Vinicius Jnr.

Barcelona's equalizer didn't demoralize Vinicius at all, rather, it only made the Brazilian want to make his mark in the game even more.

BZZZ!

Vinicius became a monster!

Every single time that he got the ball from the 34th minute onward, the Brazilian dazzled, turning Jules Kounde inside out.

And every single dribble after, he never failed to jump aggressively, pumping his hands to rile up the Madrid fans in white.

In the 38th minute, he went on another solo run, penetrating into the Barca defense and sneaking out a shot that forced Ter Stegen into an awkward save, pushing the ball into the bar for a rebound.

'A chance...!'

Vinicius erupted, chasing after the loose ball but someone went after him. The Uruguayan, Ronald Araujo.

Vinicius arrived at the ball first but immediately after, Ronald Araujo clattered into him, shoving him off the ball with his shoulder in a display of power.

It was a goal kick but that action..., it became a catalyst for violence.

"Bastard! What was that?!" Bellingham who was close by quickly closed the distance to Araujo, shoving him with his arms.

A hot-blooded Araujo reacted immediately, turning towards the Englishman.

Bellingham didn't back down. "F*ck you!"

Of course, Bellingham reacted for a reason, it was a slightly hard tackle. And Vinicius who was at the end of it had no intention of staying quiet.

The Brazilian was known for his fiery personality.

As soon as Vinicius rose back to his feet, he pointed a finger at the Uruguayan, warning him but the Catalan players were having none of it.

Pak!

Pau Cubarsi slapped Vinicius Jnr.'s pointed finger aside!

"...!"

Emotions quickly flared!

FWEEEE!

The referee's whistle quickly sounded as he mediated, trying to calm the situation even as the players of both clubs clashed.

Raphinha charged from where he was, trying to also mediate the situation but he barely spoke when Vinicius shoved him aside with one hand.

"...!" The Brazilian was shocked, he could only laugh.

They were compatriots internationally but clearly, that didn't mean much to Vinicius at this moment as club rivalry took precedence.

The game turned chaotic and heated.

But this was El Clasico!

This was the energy of the great rivalry between the 2 top Spanish clubs.

Sam was at the side but witnessing his teammates clash against those of the Spanish Capital club, he could not stay idle as he also entered the fray, mediating while using the opportunity to exchange a word or two with the opponents.

Since making his debut as a professional football player, this was by far the most heated game that Sam had taken part in.

The energy, the tension, the near violence, everything was next level.

He was not used to it but Sam didn't succumb to it. Having lived through El Clasicos like this as a fan, he adapted properly as a player now.

When the players finally calmed down, the referee finally started his onslaught, brandishing yellow cards like they were freebies.

Ronald Araujo and Vinicius Jnr. received a yellow card, Bellingham and Pau Cubarsi also received yellow cards.

The Real Madrid fans clamored for a penalty for Ronald Araujo clattering into Vinicius in such a manner but the referee was having none of it.

Standing his ground, after both sides accepted his decision, he blew the whistle again to continue this fiery game.

FWEEE!

The game continued.

After that altercation in the 38th minute, both sides were even more eager to sink the other and get the bragging rights at the end of the game.

Vinicius continued dazzling, constantly setting Mbappe up against the stalwart Barca defense.

The Barca attackers were not idle either.

Led by Sam, Raphinha, and Lamine Yamal, they dazzled, going again and again as they threatened the Madrid defense.

Both sides created chances, keeping the fans on edge throughout but in the end, the first half ended in a draw.

Half-time, 1-1.

Even as they walked down the tunnel, Vinicius continued exchanging words with Ronald Araujo, pointing fingers at the Uruguayan.

This was a fiery game.

Chapter 344 The turning point; breaking the stalmate!

In the FC Barcelona dressing room, there was silence for a time, the only sound being the heavy breathing of the players.

Until it was broken by the German coach.

Hansi Flick decided to amp the tempo with his players. "Come on guys!"

He clapped. "You and I know exactly what we came here to do, to win!"

"They're insecure from last season".

"They want to make us lose our cool, they want to unnerve us, that's why they're trying to incite violence on the pitch".

He grinned. "But that only means we're doing the right thing!"

Hansi Flick smiled. "Real Madrid are losing their nerves, and trust me, we have what it takes to make them lose it completely".

"People say they have nerves of steel, I say we can break even steel".

He grinned. "Let's go for the kill this second half!"

"Let's show them who the true King in Spain is!"

With that, the German coach was done, letting his words sink into the head of his players as time for the start of the second half loomed.

In the dressing room, sitting, Sam felt his hands twitching.

His whole body trembled. Sam felt... excited.

'Hehehe,' he grinned. 'Let's show Madrid who's boss!'

A few minutes later, the gladiators from Catalan stepped back into the pitch.

At the opposite side, stepping out of the tunnel, it was clear that the Madrid players also came with more venom to ditch out damage in this 2nd half.

Clearly, Carlo Ancelotti also said something to rile them up.

FWEEEE!

As soon as the referee's whistle sounded, it started, or rather, it continued.

Bam! Bam!

A game of end-to-end football, end to end attack, it continued.

The defenses of both clubs were stretched, pushed to their wit's end simply due to the level of offensive play in this second half.

For the Madridistas...

Vinicius Jnr. was constantly electric, creating something out of nothing.

Kylian Mbappe was explosive, bursting into life on intervals, pushing the Barca defense to the limit in a bid to score the winning goal of this game.

In midfield, Valverde led, having a terrific game.

He was everywhere, in attack, passing, unleashing terrific strikes of the ball. In defense, he was there, sliding everywhere, jumping into tackles with gusto.

Bellingham also had a solid game.

As for the Catalans...

Sam was the thorn that constantly tormented the Madridistas.

With his terrific level of play as a false 9 this game, the rest of the Barca attack raised its level to meet him, Lamine Yamal especially being a menace.

The young Spaniard repeatedly turned Ferland Mendy inside out, creating a few chances already even as Raphinha stayed a bubble of energy in attack.

In midfield, Pedri made things tick for the Catalans still.

He was having a terrific game.

This game was still tied, fiery, and electric.

Both clubs tried their all, utilizing every weapon in their arsenal and yet, a tangible result was yet to materialize in this 2nd half.

50 minutes, no goal...

60 minutes, no goal...

70 minutes, still no goal...

But then just 3 minutes after the 70th minute, Raphinha burst to life, bombing down the left-hand side of the pitch as he played one-two passes with Alejandro Balde, cutting through Madrid defenders like they were not there.

After one final pass from Raphinha, just as Camavinga rushed in, Raphinha nutmegged him, skipping into space and setting himself up to take a shot.

But just before he could take the shot.

Whoosh!

David Alaba slid in aggressively to block the shot.

Making a split-second decision, from a shot, Raphinha changed his mind, pushing the ball to the right where Sam lurked.

Bam!

With his first touch, Sam shifted the ball, away from Rudiger's aggressive charge and leg swing as the defender clattered into him.

Gnashing his teeth to bear the pain of Rudiger's aggressive kick, Sam tracked Raphinha with his eyes.

After that pass, the Brazilian continued his run.

David Alaba already reacted, chasing after him again but the Austrian was not as fast as the Brazilian and besides, Raphinha had a head start in this foot race.

Sam didn't hesitate...

Bam!

He touched the ball a second time, this time being a hit as with the inside of his boot, he delicately flicked the ball up and past Rudiger's reach.

"...!"

Rudiger reacted, moving his head after the ball to intercept it.

He could not intercept the ball, but he managed to graze it with his head, changing its trajectory a bit but mid-motion, Raphinha reacted to the ball's position.

Behind the Brazilian...

Thud! Thud!

David Alaba chased.

From the left, Carvajal charged in with a look like he was ready to kill while from the right, Mendy charged in with a calculating gleam in his eye.

Raphinha had no time to think, and so he simply shut his head down and did what he practiced all his life to do best, hit the ball.

In that awkward position, Raphinha jumped slightly and then, he swung his left leg with all the power that he could muster.

BAM!

Raphinha hit the ball with his left leg on a volley across the face of goal!

Like a rocket, it flashed with speed, disappearing even as Raphinha collapsed to the pitch, somersaulting.

As for the ball...

With wide eyes, Thibaut Courtois followed the ball as it flashed across the face of goal. He dived, stretching his tall frame as he reached for the ball.

His reaction was perfect, but the power behind that shot was just too much.

The ball flashed past his grasp.

Whoosh!

Mendy slid after the ball, swinging his leg and trying to intercept it but it was not enough as the ball rapidly flashed past him too.

In the end, the players in the white of the Spanish Capital club could only watch with desperate looks on their faces as the ball nestled into the net.

Raphinha somersaulted and quickly jumped back to his feet, pumping a fist in celebration.
"GOALLL!!!" He screamed.

"GOALLLLL.....!!!!!!!"

The away section in the Santiago Bernabeu exploded again.

It was pure chaos; it was pure cinema.

Chapter 345 A masterpiece at the Bernabeu!

"GOALLLLLLL...!!!" The commentators screamed.

"Raphinha with the thunderbolt!"

"What a hit!"

"Courtois definitely didn't see that coming!"

After his somersault, jumping back to his feet, Raphinha was already charging towards the corner flag to celebrate even as Sam and the rest of his teammates charged after him, celebrating excitedly.

Arriving at the corner flag, the Brazilian jumped high, pumping a fist in celebration even as the stunned Real Madrid fans watched them spitefully.

Sam jumped on Raphinha's back, celebrating the goal with him.

When Yamal arrived, he led the way, starting the Brazilian samba dance.

As soon as Raphinha realized what the young Spaniard was doing, with a big smile on his face, he joined. Sam was awful at dancing but eager to join in on the fun, he also joined in on the dance even as Balde also danced with them.

"What a comeback from FC Barcelona!"

"And just like that, they're in front!"

"But this boy, Samuel Moses, can we just talk about his quality?"

"Can we talk about the quality in that assist?"

"I mean, come on, that's his 2nd assist this game! The Madrid defense is doing a good job at marking him not to take a good sight of goal, but still, his playmaking skills are tearing Madrid apart".

"That pass to set up Gavi was crazy, but this was even crazier!"

"What a pass!"

"He is the model false 9!"

"But what a change. Earlier in the season, the football world was set ablaze as FC Barcelona unveiled their newly signed attacking midfielder".

"To think that this midfielder would be such a lethal striker now".

"Barcelona truly are blessed to have him".

That goal... only left more nerves dangling in this game.

The tension in this game didn't decrease, rather it increased, Real Madrid suddenly feeling the heat.

Having lost all 3 games against the Catalan giants during the previous season, Real Madrid were desperate to make their comeback and get a win.

They were under a lot of pressure to perform at the El Clasico, Kylian Mbappe especially who was yet to taste a victory at the El Clasico.

They were not even satisfied with ending this game in a stalemate.

And to think now, they were not even drawing, but were rather losing...

...to hell with courtesy!

FWEEE!

As soon as the referee's whistle sounded in the 74th minute of this game after Raphinha's goal, the signal for the game to continue, Jose Mourinho's Real Madrid suddenly seemed to have reincarnated in this current crop of players donning the white of the Spanish Capital club.

Real Madrid lost it completely.

After playing fair, curbing their desire to incite violence amid high tension since, to still be losing after all that?

It was demoralizing, and so Madrid decided to switch it up!

They decided to turn the game on its head!

Thud! Thud!

The Madrid players no longer just chased the ball, they sought murder!

But the fact that they sought murder didn't mean Barca would roll over on their belly for them though. Rather, it was the sudden change that took over the Catalan's game that incited their desire for violence even more.

After Raphinha's goal, suddenly infused with more confidence as they were now leading in this game, FC Barcelona truly awakened, rearing its head.

The Catalans started their football heritage.

Pressed to quickly win the ball back and score again to make it a deadlock once again, the Real Madrid players chased the ball everywhere, including the forwards like Mbappe and Vinicius and yet that was where Barca shone.

Tiki! Taka!

Prime FC Barcelona seemed to have reincarnated.

Sam seemed to turn into a prime Lionel Messi, Yamal turning into a prime Neymar as with their one-two passes and silky dribbling skills, they began cutting the Real Madrid defense open again and again like a hot knife through butter.

Bzzz!

Every touch, every body movement, it was done with lethal intent, turning the players facing them inside out and forcing them to embrace the dark side.

In midfield, Pedri and Gavi seemed to turn into reincarnations of Xavi and Iniesta as they dictated the play in the middle of the park.

Bam! Bam!

They passed the ball in consistent and dizzying triangular patterns, dancing circles around the pursuing Real Madrid players.

Raphinha remained a bubble of energy, a constant source of strength.

And then supporting him on the left was an Alejandro Balde who also seemed to transmogrify in this game, turning into a prime Jordi Alba.

The young Spaniard bombed up and down the left-hand side of the pitch like a tireless machine whose sole purpose was sinking Madrid to defeat.

On the right, Jules Kounde was no Dani Alves but the right back did his defending to a tee, frustrating the suddenly tame Madrid attack.

With every play, every touch of the ball, every minute that passed, Madrid players became more frustrated and the frustration began spilling.

'Kill him!' The Jose Mourinho spirit whispered.

Whoosh!

Ferland Mendy was the first to lose his head, taking Yamal down in an extremely dangerous tackle as the Spaniard continued teasing him.

The referee's whistle sounded immediately as the left back got a yellow card.

And yet Barca didn't stop due to that.

Barcelona continued tormenting them and in reply, they played ugly. Rudiger led the charge, seemingly transforming into a prime and ruthless Sergio Ramos.

Real Madrid were being toyed with at the Bernabeu!

This was not just any performance from FC Barcelona, this was a masterpiece!

A game of heavyweights where the Catalans taught their bitter rivals an unforgettable lesson in football.

In the 83rd minute of the game, it finally happened.

FWEEEE!

The referee blew his whistle again, this time brandishing a straight red card to Carvajal who took down Raphinha after another marauding attack.

The veteran Spanish right back muttered some curses before trudging off the field angrily, nerves were at their highest in this game.

Sam stood over the ball to take the freekick as he was greeted by an ocean of boos from the Real Madrid players.

After a short run, Sam took an accurate freekick, sending it towards the top right corner but Courtois pulled off an incredible save, tipping the ball over for a corner.

When the corner was cleared, Rudiger almost took out Araujo in the process of clearing the ball.

The game was truly heated.

But then just 2 more minutes later, Barca did it again, they scored.

And this time, Sam did it.

He got his name on the scoresheet finally.

Chapter 346 The King!

After the unsuccessful corner kick, Real Madrid started their customary counterattack even that late in the game.

Bam!

Again, Federico Valverde arrived at Rudiger's clearance first, flicking the ball to a free Camavinga just before Frankie De Jong could steal it.

With the ball, the Frenchman kicked it long, quickly kickstarting a counterattack as he ran with the ball.

He didn't run with it for long though, kicking it to the left where an adrenaline-infused Vinicius Jnr. lurked.

As soon as the ball touched Vinicius' leg in the right, tens of thousands of fans in white stood up around this stadium, anticipating a miracle.

Afterall, this was usually the time when they did it, the time when they created miracles, clutching victory from the jaws of defeat.

Comeback was Real Madrid's staple food; they were infamous and well around the football world known for it.

Just last season, they did it countless times.

Against Dortmund, they did it, Vinicius leading the charge as he scored a hattrick in the dying minutes of the game to complete an incredible comeback against their German opponents.

Not just against Dortmund, that same last season, they did it against Manchester City in the playoff round of the UEFA champions league where they came from losing 2-1 in the 85th minute to winning 2-3 by the final whistle.

And not just last season, they've done it countless times in the big stages where the whole world was watching.

Seasons earlier in the UEFA champions league, in the big stage of the semifinals against Manchester City, they also did it, Rodrygo scoring 2 stoppage time goals in quick succession to draw them from the jaws of defeat, eliminating Man City's 2-goal lead only for Benzema to get the decisive winner in additional time.

Creating incredible comebacks..., that was what Madrid was known for.

And this was why as soon as the ball got to Vinicius, the Madrid fans stood up, anticipating, hoping for a miracle.

And Vinicius was already in the zone state.

As soon as the ball got to him, with a drop of the shoulder, he left Koude for dead but instead of running with the ball, he instead hit it with his right leg, unleashing a terrific trivela pass into space.

Thud!

Kylian Mbappe dug in, erupting in a sprint after the ball.

Ronald Araujo pursued!

"...!"

In that moment, the FC Barcelona fans had their hearts in their throats as they feared for the worse.

Thud!

Mbappe dug in, shoving Araujo aside with his hand and overtaking him in the foot race in the process even as all his body entered an excited state, moving with determined focus and intent.

Marc Andre Ter Stegen charged out, but he was not fast enough.

Mbappe got to the ball first.

"...!"

Silence descended across the Bernabeu.

Kylian Mbappe took one touch of the ball to set himself up, unwilling to make any mistake when he took his shot but that moment of hesitation did him in.

Whoosh!

Slightly behind him, from the side, as soon as Mbappe took that first touch, Ronald Araujo dove in aggressively on a sliding tackle.

It was a risky move but he got it right, getting the ball first as he kicked it away from Mbappe's foot to the right.

There, Pedri already arrived.

As soon as the Spaniard got the ball, he turned around and looked upward before quickly hitting it.

Bam!

Pedri sent the ball up and high, to the right side of the pitch, where a certain Lamine Yamal was now unmarked.

Eager to score the equalizer, Real Madrid sent too many players up field as soon as they started the counterattack, now opening them up.

With a body feint, a step over, and a la croqueta, Lamine Yamal sent Ferland Mendy to the shadow realm once again in this game.

Driving into the box, just before he could run into Rudiger, Yamal flicked the ball towards a certain Sam who was in the box.

Bzzz!

David Alaba having read the Spaniard's intention reacted fast.

But Sam was backing down to no Alaba!

He also jumped after the lobbed ball, clattering into Alaba in the process but Sam managed to stay composed in the air to control the ball with his chest.

Alaba grabbed his left hand, dragging him to the ground even as he collapsed but straining his muscles and standing his ground, with eyes burning with fire, Sam followed the ball with his eyes.

And as he fell with the Austrian, he raised his right leg, swung, and then...

POW!

Sam was falling but he still managed to generate enough power to unleash an absolute thunderbolt, sending it towards the bottom left corner.

His shooting technique was perfect.

Once again, Thibaut Courtois did everything right, diving after the ball but for the 3rd time, he was beaten in this game.

The ball snuck into the net.

Real Madrid fans prayed for a miracle when Vinicius had the ball, a miracle did happen just mere seconds later, but not quite the miracle that they expected.

Sam got his first El Clasico goal!

"GOALLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLL!!!" The commentators roared even as the away stands at the Santiago Bernabeu went haywire.

"HE'S ARRIVED!"

"HE'S STRUCK!"

"ZINEDINE SAMMMMM, HE'S ARRIVED!"

"THE KING!"

"King of the Santiago Bernabeu!"

"King of the Spotify Camp Nou!"

"The new King of Spanish Football, remember the name, Samuel Moses!"

"HE'S HERE!!!"

"Who is Kylian Mbappe? Who is Vinicius Jnr? He is Sam! Samuel Moses!"

Sam charged towards the corner flag, sliding on his knees before a stunned and dumpfounded Santiago Bernabeu.

His teammates celebrated with him.

And just like that, Real Madrid was butchered.

FWEEEE!

The referee's whistle sounded but there was nothing more to do.

Carlo Ancelotti finally pulled the plug, taking off his superstars like Mbappe and Vinicius, giving the youngsters, Endrick and Brahim Diaz a learning opportunity.

That move said it all, Real Madrid already gave up on the game.

And it played out just like everybody watching this game expected. With the superstars gone, the youngsters just threw stones against a stalwart wall, trying their tricks and flicks against an unbreakable FC Barcelona side.

In the 90th minute, Sam was taken out of the game by Hansi Flick as he received a standing ovation from the FC Barcelona fans.

And incredibly, a few Real Madrid fans put their hate aside, applauding his performance today.

They already admitted defeat, and in so doing, they appreciated what he did on the pitch today. It was incredible.

On the pitch today, he was a genius.

A few more minutes later, the referee's whistle sounded again, finally bringing the game to an end.

With a 1-3 scoreline, FC Barcelona won.

And with 2 assists and 1 goal accompanied by a man of the match award, Sam's first El Clasico was an unforgettable one.

He was the King.

Chapter 347 Reactions

During the post-match interview, all eyes were on him, the King.

As the recipient of the man of the match award in this game, Sam came out representing FC Barcelona, taking the interview on their behalf.

As he walked towards the interview crew, all the cameras focused on him.

All attention was on him, and Sam didn't shy due to it.

Rather, he basked in it, rubbing his nose as he felt on top of the world.

'Ahh..., this feeling, I'll get addicted it!' He smiled.

"What a game you had Sam!" The male reporter said with a big smile on his face. "What a game! You truly killed it out there today man".

"This is the Bernabeu, and yet, you showed no respect," he laughed. "2 assists and 1 goal, what a performance, Sam how do you feel after all that?"

"Terrific!" Sam laughed. "I won't even try to be modest, I feel like a superhero".

"I still remember a few days ago while jogging alongside Gavi, Pedri, Yamal, and Balde. We met a few Barca fans on the road who demanded for us to win, saying we must win". He looked at the camera. "Guys, we did it, we won!"

He chuckled. "Getting to fulfill the dream of fans like that, it's a dream come true for me". He grinned. "That's why I feel like a superhero".

"Honestly, I feel great!"

The reporter smiled. "I can't help but recall that this game was not all bed and roses for you and your teammates, Madrid got the lead first".

"At that moment, what were you feeling? What was going through your mind? Did you know then that you would win?"

"Ah," Sam scoffed, laughing. "I'm no prophet". He smiled. "Besides, this is the Bernabeu, this is Real Madrid, there's no guarantee to win in this stadium".

"I never knew we would win, and I believe my teammates felt the same way. We just didn't want to lose without putting up a fight".

"We came to the Bernabeu with a certain mentality".

His eyes gleamed as he smiled. "We came to play our hearts out".

"If we lost, so be it, at least we'd go home with the knowledge that we gave our all on the pitch. That's enough for us".

"And since we won," he grinned again. "Thank God!" He laughed.

"What a mentality to have!" The reporter smiled. "I think a lot more footballers would benefit by having a mentality like yours".

Sam just smiled.

"With this victory, you've widened the gap between your club and Real Madrid. You now have a significant 4-point gap at the top of the table, do you think Barcelona has what it takes to retain the Spanish La Liga title?"

Sam went over his thoughts before answering carefully. "The Spanish La Liga is one of the hardest league titles to win in the world, I can't underestimate it".

"All I know is that we'll give our all to fight to the very end".

"Talking about our credentials of winning it, of course, I believe we're well equipped to retain the La Liga title".

"Beating Madrid in their home, I think that's the greatest proof of it".

"But we won't become complacent due to that. Every game apart from this one is as important, after all, they all give 3 points for a victory".

"We'll keep on doing our best, fighting for every point in every game and hopefully, come season end, our efforts are rewarded".

"Well said". The reporter smiled.

"One more thing Sam. After your performance today, social media has been set ablaze, they're calling you the King of Spain!"

The reporter smiled shrewdly. "What do you think?"

Sam chuckled. "If they think I'm King, so be it".

"Don't even think I'll be modest, I worked hard for it".

The reporter laughed. "Well said, I like you Sam".

"Do have a great day, and thanks for having me".

"You too".

With that, Sam trudged off back to meet his teammates with his swagger in his steps, amid the rapid clicking of cameras.

He was sure that a certain Kayla would be grumbling at home already.

'After this game, my social media popularity..., heh'. He smirked.

...

Just like expected, after the game at the Santiago Bernabeu, the football world was taken by storm as reactions followed the aftermath.

Explosive reactions.

(ESPN News:)

(King Sam at the Bernabeu! Samuel Moses leads the destruction at the Bernabeu, leading FC Barcelona to a famous victory against Real Madrid with Raphinha and Gavi acting as capable support casts! The faith of the striking position at Barca is in safe hands, Barcelona players ratings vs Real Madrid:)

(Goalkeeper & Defense:)

(Marc Andre Ter Stegen: 7/10)

>The German is looking more assured in between the sticks as he dutifully protected the goal with some good saves when Madrid began piling the pressure at 1-1, including sensational saves against Mbappe and Vinicius<

(Jules Kounde: 6/10)

>Offered little in attack, but understandable since he went up against Vinicius Jnr. Did his fair bit of defending, though lost to the Brazilian a few times<

(Ronald Araujo: 7.5/10)

>A rock in defense. Marshalled the defense well against Real Madrid's rapid attack, playing the offside trap to perfection alongside his partners in defense<

(Pau Cubarsi: 8/10)

>Was a rock alongside Ronald Araujo. Did all the defending bits with little to no mistakes, and also impressed with his passing from the back. A solid performance<

(Alejandro Balde: 7.5/10)

>A great threat going forward, constantly bombing up and down the pitch and combining with Raphinha to devastating effect. Played the decisive pass that led to one of the goals<

(Midfield:)

(Frankie De Jong: 6/10)

>Got stuck in as usual doing his stuff, but sometimes struggled against Real Madrid's physical midfield<

(Pedri: 7.5/10)

>A beacon in midfield. Pedri strutted his stuff like usual, doing the tiny bits, playing passes and dictating play from the middle of the park. A solid display<

(Gavi: 7.5/10)

>A bubble of energy all over the pitch. Struggled to make much of an impact in the 2nd half, but took his goal well in the 1st<

(Attack:)

(Lamine Yamal: 8/10)

>Mendy will be seeing him in his nightmares tonight. Absolutely electric with his dribbling, turning Mendy inside out and more than one occasion. Did his fair bit of playmaking in helping defeat the Merengues<

(Samuel Moses: 9.5/10)

>What else is there to say? The King! Absolutely bossed the game from the first minute, assisting Gavi for the 1st goal, assisting Raphinha for the 2nd goal, and scoring the 3rd goal himself. An unforgettable performance<

(Raphinha: 8/10)

>Not his best day against Carvajal but he never gave up, doing his thing on the pitch and then taking his goal with aplomb when the opportunity presented itself. A solid showing<

The rating by ESPN News reflected the feeling among the football community.

Tonight, it was all FC Barcelona and Sam was at the helm of the conversations. After today's display, to a lot of football fans around the world, Sam was up there at the very top tier of footballers in the world.

He was a balon d'or contender!

He was having a terrific season, and may go all the way to win it all come season end.

They could not wait to see more of him.

Chapter 348 Preparations for the biggest award ceremony in football

After the game at the Santiago Bernabeu, a big celebration started in Barcelona as the fans in blue and red flooded the streets.

New banners of Sam were made all across the city of Barcelona.

Banners dubbing him the King.

With that performance against their bitter rivals in their own stadium, Sam truly bought the hearts of every FC Barcelona fans, including the greatest skeptics.

They all now believed in him.

That night alone, the FC Barcelona online store experienced a sudden upsurge in the number of orders for Sam's No. 40 jersey.

More fans now wanted to wear Sam's no. on their back, flaunting it everywhere they went. Sam became an even bigger hit overnight.

The players also celebrated their victory as they returned to Barcelona from Madrid. After getting home though, Sam bid farewell to his friends in the squad before driving straight home.

He did the rest of the celebration at home with his girlfriend.

Kayla surprised him after such a performance on getting home. She made his favorite food again, Banga Soup and starch to celebrate the occasion.

Sam ate to his fill, feeling lucky for dating her again.

That night, laying down on his bed with his girlfriend sleeping in his arms, Sam reminisced, looking back on all he had achieved in his football career at the young age of just 20.

Yes, he rarely kept track since he was so busy but he was 20 now.

It still felt like just yesterday when he was 17.

'Time moves so fast'.

In the end, he just focused on his statistics for this season.

He normally didn't pay much attention to them but after arriving home and eating, Kayla showed him some posts on social media that raved about him, and the incredible reactions to his performance today.

Among them, he saw multiple posts highlighting his stats for the season.

(2025/2026 Football Season:)

(All Competitions:)

(Goals: 14)

(Assists: 7)

(Games: 10)

(21 goals + assists in 10 games)

"Hehe," he chuckled. "Great for my debut season in La Liga".

"I wonder how it'd be at the end of the season".

That night, Sam slept soundly like a baby.

The next day, Sam did something that he had not done before, he invited his friends in the FC Barcelona squad to visit him for dinner.

And then, later in the night after a training-day off since Hansi Flick gave his players a break after the impressive victory against Real Madrid, Gavi, Pedri, Lamine Yamal, and Alejandro Balde visited Sam.

And for the first time in their lives, the 4 Spanish players got exposed to the beauty of African delicacies, delicately prepared by Kayla.

At first, it was weird, the sight, the smell, but the taste..., boy was it heavenly!

Lamine Yamal was the first to fall in love.

Balde quickly followed, and eventually Gavi and Pedri also ate the food.

After eating, spending quality time together, they discussed different topics but the main topic of their discussion was the big footballing event that was scheduled to take place tomorrow, 28th October.

Tomorrow, the biggest award ceremony in football was to take place, France Football's Balon D'or ceremony.

The Balon D'or was the biggest individual award in football, and so the award ceremony was held in high esteem in the football community.

And for the first time in his career, Sam was invited for the ceremony.

Alongside his teammates, his friends who visited him today, tomorrow, they would be in Paris for the award ceremony.

After his record-breaking 2nd season with Fulham in the English premier league, leading them to a history-making season, Sam's efforts were finally about to be recognized and rewarded by football's big awards.

He already got the PFA Footballer of the Season for the English Premier league, his biggest individual award so far, and Sam was due for more.

That evening, in his mansion in Barcelona, Sam discussed the ceremony with his friends, debating the type of suit that they would wear tomorrow.

They also guessed what position each of them would take in the Balon D'or rankings when the final ranking was released tomorrow at the ceremony.

Individually, they had terrific campaigns last season but none of them were quite confident of lifting the big trophy, the Balon D'or award itself.

"Tomorrow, we'll know who lifts it".

With that, Sam finally bid his friends farewell, doing the final fashion brainstorming with his girlfriend before going to sleep.

Fortunately, Kayla managed to choose a fashionable Gucci suit for him.

His preparations for the ceremony were complete.

...

The next day, Sam gave himself completely to his girlfriend as Kayla did what she did best, prepping him for the big occasion.

She did her magic so perfectly that when Sam came out of his mansion, he looked like a model about to enter the walkway.

She grinned. "You look dashing!"

"Thank you, my love". Blowing a kiss at her, he entered his luxury car and quickly drove off to where he was scheduled to meet his teammates who were also invited to the ceremony in Paris.

After arriving at the hotel, Sam met up with his teammates who were also invited for the ceremony.

Barcelona's President, Joan Laporta was also there at the hotel alongside Hansi Flick, the FC Barcelona coach.

The President would be following his players to the ceremony.

After making their final preparations at the hotel, making sure that everything was in order, the contingent from FC Barcelona finally went to the airport where they took their private jet to France, Paris.

They arrived to much fanfare.

Click! Click!

The cameras went haywire in Paris, FC Barcelona fans who were based there coming out to welcome their beloved club's superstars.

And like expected, most of the attention was on Sam and Lamine Yamal.

Raphinha, Pedri, Gavi, and other superstars of the Catalan club received their fair share of attention as they got a triumphant welcome in Paris.

About an hour later, when the ceremony was scheduled to start, Sam and his teammates finally entered the walkway.

Today, Sam looked especially dashing.

The cameras focused on him.

Chapter 349 France football's ballon d'Or ceremony [1]

The Ballon d'or gala was a spectacle of elegance, excess, and electric anticipation. The venue, the grand Parisian theater adorned with golden lights and velvet carpets buzzed with the energy of football royalty.

Cameras flashed incessantly, capturing every high-profile arrival as the world's greatest players, past and present, graced the red carpet.

The scent of expensive cologne, the low hum of excited chatter, and the presence of legends turned the evening into something otherworldly; a cathedral of footballing greatness.

And then came Sam's entrance.

Click! Click!

The sound of snapping cameras intensified, focusing on him.

Sam entered the walkway.

Dressed in his pristine black Gucci suit, tailored to perfection, the subtle gold accents on his lapel glinted under the flashing lights of the cameras.

His gait was effortless, a blend of natural swagger and quiet authority, the kind cultivated by years of proving doubters wrong.

Sam was a Nigerian sensation, football's newest superstar player who took the world by storm and was already a household name. He walked into the walkway with the confidence of a man who knew he belonged.

As soon as he stepped out of his luxury car, a wave of noise erupted, fans chanting his name, reporters scrambling to ask questions, and fellow professionals turning their heads.

This was Sam's first ballon d'or gala, but he was not someone that could be ignored, not anymore.

The cameras lingered on him longer than usual, sensing that he was not just another attendee. Rather, he was a story.

Microphones were thrust in his direction.

"Sam! Did you expect to be here this soon?" A reporter called out.

He smirked, adjusting his gold cufflinks. "If you know football, you know I was always going to be here," he said, his deep but confident voice cutting through the cacophony of noise.

Sam took time to build his confidence, time and effort, and it was not going to crumble just because he attended such a high-profile gala.

At this moment, he was an even blend of charisma, talent, and audacity, the perfect storm for a new era of superstardom.

After Sam entered, he was quickly followed by his teammates and behind them, the established legends of the game arrived with the aura of men accustomed to such nights in Paris.

Cafu of Brazil soon arrived, the legendary Brazilian fullback. With his arrival, it didn't take long for other of his national team compatriots to arrive.

Roberto Carlos arrived before Ronaldo Nazario's arrival.

A few other legends arrived before one of them stole the limelight.

"CR7!"

"CR7!" The reporters called, entering a frenzy.

Cristiano Ronaldo arrived.

The Portuguese superstar, once a multiple-time reigning champion of the ballon d'or award himself arrived in all his grace and charisma.

Draped in a designer tuxedo, he waved to the crowd. His arrival was met with a mixture of respect and excitement, the reporters and cameramen not quite getting enough of him before he entered the venue.

And then Ronaldinho's arrival.

The Brazilian magician, known for his dribbling artistry, entered with a beaming smile, shaking hands with former teammates and exchanging inside jokes.

The atmosphere was lighthearted and full of footballing brilliance.

Inside, noticing all the commotion outside, in all honesty, Sam felt his heart beating fast in the presence of so many football legends.

Inside, the theater radiated class.

Golden chandeliers bathed the hall in warm light, and the stage, draped in black and gold, bore the iconic silhouette of football's most coveted individual prize.

The atmosphere was both celebratory and tense. Behind the smiles and handshakes, there was an undercurrent of fierce ambition.

Afterall, last year, with Rodri's ballon d'or win effectively ending the Messi and Ronaldo duopoly that lasted decades, football was ready to enter a new age of new ballon d'or winners.

As the host took the stage, the room fell into silence.

Speeches, highlight reels, and tributes played, celebrating a year of unforgettable goals, impossible saves, and moments that had defined an era.

The nominees sat in the front rows; their faces composed but their hands betraying nerves. Sam was among the nominees.

In a way, it was just a customary thing, the nerves of being in this moment.

In truth, most of the nominees already knew who the winner was going to be despite Rodri's shocking victory last year over Vinicius Jnr. of Real Madrid.

As the announcer opened the envelope and smiled knowingly, the room seemed to hold its breath. The golden stage lights reflected off the pristine surface of the Ballon d'or trophy, the weight of football history resting on that final name.

Then came the moment.

"And the winner of the Ballon d'or..., Mohamed Salah!"

For a second, there was silence, a collective pause before the entire hall erupted into applause.

Clap! Clap!

Some stood immediately, clapping with genuine admiration. Others, especially the younger challengers forced polite smiles, disguising the disappointment that burned beneath.

As for Salah's reaction?

At first, Salah sat still, processing the moment. Then, with a deep exhale, he stood up slowly, his usual humility wrapped around like a second skin.

A soft, appreciative smile formed on his face as he embraced those around him; his teammates, rivals, and former winners who acknowledged his greatness.

The cameras captured everything; his eyes glistening slightly, his hand momentarily placed over his heart in gratitude.

A champion who had been relentlessly consistent, resilient, and spectacular finally getting his due after leading Liverpool to the UEFA champions league trophy.

As he walked to the stage, he passed Sam, the Nigerian star who had been in the conversation all year and who was the architect behind stealing a 2nd premier league title from him.

Sam, leaning back in his chair, gave a small nod, acknowledgement from one era's rising force to another's enduring legend.

Truly, Salah's story was admirable and inspiring.

During his return to the English premier league and debut for Liverpool back in the 2017/2018 season, Salah had a record-breaking season in the premier league, smashing a lot of goalscoring records and leading Liverpool to the UEFA champions league final alongside his strike partners in Mane and Roberto Firmino only to fall to Ronaldo's unstoppable Real Madrid side.

After that first season, he was consistently good but never quite hit the same heights, making the ballon d'or award to elude him every time.

Nobody expected him to win it now, when he was well into his 30s already.

It truly was a story of perseverance, Salah's never-give-up spirit.

He was an inspiration to fans and players around the world.

He finally arrived at the podium.

Chapter 350 France football's ballon d'Or ceremony [2]

Now standing at the podium, Salah looked at the golden trophy, tracking its surface with his fingers before gently lifting it.

Clap! Clap!

The roar of the crowd surged again; fans, footballers, and icons applauding and recognizing a player who had defied odds at every step of his journey.

He cleared his throat, the weight of history pressing down.

Then, with humility and pride, he spoke. "This award..., this isn't just for me," he began, his voice steady. "It's for everyone who believed".

He grinned. "It's for Egypt, for Africa, for every kid who dreams with a ball at their feet".

"I am the first African to win the ballon d'or award since the legend, George Weah," he said, his voice turning emotional. "It's an honor".

The crowd cheered louder, and the camera panned to icons of African football; some with knowing smiles, others nodding in pride.

Tonight was more than a personal victory; it was a statement.

Didier Drogba, the former Chelsea striker and Ivory Coast legend who worked for France Football in particular had a big smile on his face as he presented the trophy to the deserving and record-breaking Egyptian.

As Salah lifted the Ballon d'Or high above his head, the golden glow illuminated his face, etching the image into football history.

A night that would be remembered, a night where hard work, consistency, and sheer brilliance triumphed.

With the main award claimed already, highlights of Salah's legendary season finally played out on the big screen, showing his biggest clutch moments for Liverpool in the previous season.

At some point, last season, it seemed like anything Salah does would lead to a goal as he entered God-mode, breaking even Lionel Messi's record by scoring and assisting in more than 10 games in a single football campaign.

And then came his heroics in the UEFA champions league.

His heroics against PSG in the round of 16, further heroics against Arsenal, all leading to the blockbuster final, Salah was unplayable in the previous season.

The only reason why he didn't have a perfect season was a certain Nigerian who also took the English premier league by storm in the previous season, a certain brat going by the name of Samuel Moses.

Without any respect for his elders, Sam disrupted Salah's perfect legendary season, depriving him of the English premier league by creating history with Fulham FC, winning the club its first English premier league title.

After that, as the night progressed, the atmosphere in the grand hall of the Ballon d'Or gala remained electric.

The tension from the main award had barely settled when the next announcement arrived.

"And now, the Golden Boy Award, given to the best young player in world football". The host continued.

The screen behind the stage flashed with the faces of the nominees, young prodigies who had set the football world ablaze with their talent in the past season.

But one name stood out all year, one player who had shattered expectations, terrorized defenses, and announced himself as football's next force.

The announcer smiled, savoring the moment.

"And the Golden Boy of the year is... Samuel Moses!"

Sam's moment..., finally.

Clap! Clap!

The room immediately erupted with applause, but Sam himself?

He barely reacted at first. Dressed in his sharp black Gucci shirt, he leaned back slightly, as if he had expected this all along.

No sudden gasps, no hands over his mouth; just a small, knowing smirk.

'Finally!' He thought.

The camera zoomed in as he exhaled through his nose, shaking his head lightly before rising to his feet with the aura of a man who had arrived.

A few pats on the back, a handshake from Ronaldo Nazario, and then a hug with Gavi, Pedri, and a fist bump with Lamine Yamal, all recipients who had won this award before, he finally began his slow, deliberate walk to the stage.

"You deserve it!" Yamal said energetically in Spanish behind him.

As he climbed the steps, he spotted Salah in the front row, holding his Ballon d'Or trophy.

Their eyes met for a second, a brief, unspoken exchange between Africa's present King and its next challenger.

Salah gave him a small nod of approval.

Back on the pitch while plying their trades for Liverpool and Fulham respectively, they were rivals on the pitch but on this stage, they were African counterparts chasing greatness together.

Sam stepped up to the podium, where the gleaming Golden Boy trophy awaited him. There, he picked it up, its weight solid in his hands, then he turned to face the audience.

Facing the audience, he took a deep breath, looking out over the sea of footballing royalty.

And then, with a confident but measured tone, he spoke. "I could say I didn't expect this, but... I'd be lying".

Laughter rippled through the crowd, some amused, some nodding in agreement. Sam wasn't here to play humble. He had dominated, and he knew it.

"This isn't just my win," he continued, his voice calm yet powerful. "It's for every kid watching from the streets, from the academies, from places where dreams seem too far away".

He grinned. "I'm proof that nothing is impossible".

His words hung in the air, carrying weight far beyond the glitz of the gala.

And then he lifted the Golden Boy trophy high, its golden shine illuminating his face, a face that from tonight, would be remembered as the next great superstar in world football.

As he walked back to his seat, the cameras stayed on him longer than usual. This was no ordinary winner.

This was a statement, a warning to the world.

Football had just welcomed its next legend.

With that, the final full ranking for the 2024 Ballon d'Or was finally released.

[2025 Ballon D'or Ranking:]

[1. Mohamed Salah]

[2. Jamal Musiala]

[3. Trent Alexander Arnold]

[4. Kylian Mbappe]

[5. Samuel Moses]

[6. Harry Kane]

[7. Vinicius Jnr.]

[8. Alexis Mac Allister]

[9. Raphinha]

[10. Pedri]

[9. Jude Bellingham]

[10. Virgil Van Dijk]

[11. Robert Lewandowski]

[12. Lamine Yamal]

[13. Ryan Gravenberch]

[14. Erling Haaland]

[15. Florian Wirtz]

[16. Ademola Lookman]

[17. Alejandro Balde]

[18. Federico Valverde]

[19. Gavi]

[20. Cole Palmer]

[21. Allison Becker]

[22. Bukayo Saka]

[23. Antonio Rudiger]

[24. Ibrahima Konate]

[25. William Saliba]

[26. Vitinha]

[27. Joshua Kimmich]

[28. Pau Cubarsi]

[29. Luis Diaz]

The Ballon d'Or ceremony finally came to an end.