

Rise of a Football God

#Chapter 4: Doomed aspirations [2] - Read Rise of a Football God Chapter 4: Doomed aspirations [2]

(First day- 1st leg fixtures)

(Team A vs Team C: 3-0)

(Man of the match: Samuel George; 45 minutes played, 1 goal, 1 assist)

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(Team B vs Team D: 2-2)

(Man of the match: Muhammad Yusuf; 80 minutes played, 2 goals)

Fwip!

The electronic sound of a device reverberated as the white Spanish scout scrolled through the data on his iPad.

He was a Spanish man with neatly trimmed brown beards and brown hair. He wore a casual tracksuit to compliment the hot climate of his current location.

He inclined his head to look at the black Nigerian coach standing before him. "That boy in the first game, Samuel, right? He's good but I can't help but notice the sudden injury he sustained at the end of the game".

He stared at the Nigerian coach in the eye. "You know who I work for so don't play games with me, be sincere, tell me his injury history".

Coach Samson sighed. "Like you said, Sam is good, he has always been good, better than his mates but 2 years ago, he had an accident".

The Spanish coach looked at him, leaning closer as he was suddenly more interested. "What happened?"

The Nigerian coach sighed again. "When Sam was 11, while playing a football game in the neighborhood, he was unlucky enough to be on the end of a rough tackle and he ended up twisting his knee".

"It left him bedridden for months, but the past year already showed that he lived past it, I never expected him to suffer this again".

Hearing that, the Spanish coach shook his head and focused back on his iPad. "Samuel," he commented idly. "He would have made a very fine midfielder if properly groomed".

"Mr. Gerard, what do you mean?"

The Spanish coach looked up again at the Nigerian coach. "No offense but Nigeria doesn't have the best reputation when it comes to the medical sector".

"Most of your players whose skill were recognized by scouts and taken abroad to play football had their careers ruined by injury, and this can be attributed to the poor medical facilities of the country".

"I'm sorry, but Sam is no longer in my considerations".

"Only the best of the best can get the rare opportunity of being integrated into the famed La Masia academy".

"Scouting an injury-prone player won't do my credentials much good".

Coach Samson had a pained look on his face but he nodded in a mature manner. "I understand..., what a pity". He lamented still.

Focused on his iPad, the Spanish coach spoke again. "Tell me more about that Muhammad Kudus, I am more interested in him".

"Wale too, for his age, he's already showing admirable leadership traits and his mentality on the field is commendable".

"For the first day, my eyes are on these two".

"Ok, Mr. Gerard".

With that, both coaches started their work and analysis long after the players who participated in the first day games already left home.

Of course, after dislocating his ankle, Sam could not go home alone. His best friend who crashed in on the venue of the tournament after school was the one at hand to call for help to carry the 13-year-old boy home.

Getting home, Sam met a storm.

"Ohhhh Jesus!" He was met with his mom's dramatic wailing.

"This boy will not kill me!" She screamed at the top of her lungs. "Stop playing football, that's all I ever demanded from you".

"Is that too much to do for your mother, the woman who took you in for 9 months and pushed you out with her waist? Is that too much?"

"Take this knife," Mrs. George pushed a knife into her son's arms. "Take, Sam, take, take and kill me!"

"Just take my life!"

Sam felt guilty, he was also in a world of pain, he could barely focus.

His dad already left to beg the local bone corrector to come attend to his son. Almost 40 minutes later, 40 minutes of agony for Sam, the skinny middle-aged man finally arrived with his dad on a dirty white singlet and banana boxers.

His breath reeked of alcohol. "This leg again," he said with a frown immediately as soon as he laid his eyes on Sam.

For the next few minutes, Sam felt like Lucifer himself came from hell to drag him to the abyss as he felt agony while the man worked on his leg.

About 2 dozen minutes later, he felt better but the pain lingered.

The middle-aged man called his dad aside and whispered to him but Sam eavesdropped so he heard everything. "His leg is gone". The man said.

"He can't play real football with that anymore, it's like an egg, if he doesn't want to become cripple, he must pamper and take care of it".

There were a few seconds of silence as Mr. George turned his head to spy on his son, and then he finally spoke, thanking the man sincerely.

Apparently, he would come back everyday to check on the ankle.

Once the man left, as his dad entered the sitting room of their single room apartment again, Sam broke down in tears.

He couldn't hold them back, he just couldn't.

"Come here, my son". His old man drew him into an embrace.

Once he was done crying his eyes out, he faced his mom's lecture.

"No football again!" She screamed in his face even as tears rolled down her eyes. "Promise me".

Sam stared at his mom.

"Promise me!"

Silence.

"Promise me Sam or just kill me now!"

Tears welled in Sam's eyes again. He looked at his younger sister who was just 10 who sat timidly at the corner, then back at his dad. His dad refused to meet his gaze, averting it. Seeing that, his tears flowed freely.

"Promise me Sam!"

Sam looked at his mom with tears and snot all over his face. "I promise".

"No playing football, no watching football".

Sam nodded. "Yes mom".

"Including you too!" She turned to glare at her husband.

He didn't look her way; he could only grumble an 'ok' in reply.

After that did she finally pull her son into her motherly embrace, consoling him and attending to his leg. She soon left to go make Sam's best native food, fufu and Banga soup.

Alone, Sam laid down on the floor, ignoring the numbing pain of his ankle as he looked listlessly at the ceiling.

And like that, this chapter of his life came to an end.

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2 days later, the outcome of the European talent trial was decided.

Against all odds, on the second day of the tournament, Team C pulled off a great upset, scoring 3 goals in the final 5 minutes of the second leg game, ending the game 4-1 and 4-4 on aggregates to take the game to penalties.

Team A lost in penalties.

In the second fixture of the day, Team D prevailed over Team B after a cagey affair that ended with a boring 1-0 scoreline and 3-2 on aggregate, enough to take Team D over the line.

In the final, Team C thrashed Team D 5-2, winning the tournament.

The top scorer of the tournament received a monetary prize of 200,000 naira, the best player received a monetary price of 300,000 naira, while the real lucky ones were the 2 lucky players selected by Mr. George, the Spanish coach.

Out of 100 under-15 players, Muhammad Kudus and surprisingly, Wale were the chosen ones who got the once in a lifetime opportunity to go to the famed La Masia Academy to train on a scholarship.

Sam learned of the result but he didn't pay much attention to it.

Afterall, it no longer concerned him.

His football career was over, or so he thought.