

Football God 401

Chapter 401: Back to Barcelona

Sam's vacation finally came to an end.

After more than a month since he played his last game for FC Barcelona, going for the AFCON tournament with the Nigerian squad, triumphantly, he finally returned to the city of Barcelona.

That morning in Dubai, he finally bid farewell to his girlfriend.

Kayla had school work that she needed to attend to, and so as he returned to Barcelona, she also returned to the Netherlands.

26th January, 2026...

On a cool afternoon in the city of Barcelona, Sam finally returned.

His friends were not there to welcome him though. Afterall, that evening, FC Barcelona had a date with Valencia in the Spotify Camp Nou, another league game.

The Valencia game was another reason why Sam decided to end his vacation yesterday and return to Barcelona today.

After more than a month of deprivation from club football, Sam was eager to get back to his mojo, and he knew that the key was watching his teammates in action against Valencia at the Spotify Camp Nou.

The game was scheduled for evening.

After returning to Barcelona in the afternoon, Sam entered his house for the first time in more than a month. Later, he visited his girlfriend's African restaurant where he ate a sumptuous African meal.

Sam never realized it but he missed the city of Barcelona already.

It was just a month and yet, it felt like...

'Feels like forever'. He sighed.

Spending the rest of the day to wind down from his journey, in the evening, he finally drove his car to the Spotify Camp Nou.

As soon as the familiar white GLE 53 AMG pulled up at the stadium, a mini commotion erupted at the Spotify Camp Nou. FC Barcelona fans followed Sam's incredible exploits in the AFCON tournament, but they had no idea when Sam would return to the club.

The media already queried Hansi Flick a few times during interviews but the German coach kept his lips sealed, revealing no information on Sam.

This was why his sudden arrival elicited such a reaction.

The ecstatic fans swarmed Sam's car, forcing the security to intervene. Having expected such a reception though, Sam was prepared.

Coming out of his car, he waved at the fans with a big smile on his face. Before entering the stadium, he indulged some of them, signing autographs on shirts that they provided while taking pictures with others.

Only after this did he enter the stadium.

As soon as Sam entered inside the stadium, it was announced, eliciting even more reactions from the tens of thousands of fans inside the stadium.

Only when he was inside did Sam realize how much he missed the passionate energy of this stadium in every home game. The energy of the fans was infectious, making his blood boil despite the fact that he wasn't going to participate in this game.

And then, the players finally came out of the tunnel to loud noise.

By now, his teammates also already learned of his arrival.

As soon as they entered the pitch, from the VIP stands where he sat, Sam waved at them wildly, eliciting smiles from some of them.

Hansi Flick started with the best XI that he had available in Sam's absence.

Starting in their regular 4-2-3-1 formation, Marc Andre Ter Stegen started in between the posts for the Catalan giants, while ahead of him was a defensive quadruple comprising Alejandro Balde, Pau Cubarsi, Ronald Araujo, and Jules Kounde, the rock-solid quadruple.

Ahead of them was the midfield duo of Pedri and Frankie De Jong. Further ahead was the quadruple in attack; Lamine Yamal in right wing, Raphinha in left wing, Dani Olmo in attacking midfield, and Ferran Torres as the starting striker.

As for Valencia?

Starting in the same 4-2-3-1 formation, Mamardashvili started in between the posts for the visitors with a defensive quadruple of Foulquier, Tarrega, Mosquera, and Gaya ahead of him.

In midfield was the duo of Guerra and Barrenechea, while further ahead was the quadruple comprising Rioja in right wing, Almeida in attacking midfield, Lopez in left wing, and Sadiq Umar as the striker.

On paper, FC Barcelona was the vastly superior side.

But when the whistle sounded, things didn't go all the Catalan side's way.

Valencia started kickoff, starting and successfully executing a devastating sequence that was definitely straight from the practice ground.

As soon as Guerra passed the ball, Almeida received it, leaving the ball for Guerra to hit it again straight towards FC Barcelona's side of the pitch, catching Barca's offside trap off-guard.

Whoosh!

Having practiced this countless times in training, as soon as the pass was hit, Sadiq Umar, the Valencia striker erupted with immense speed.

Ronald Araujo reacted but his reaction was not quite fast enough.

Like a flash of blur, he blitzed past the defense, took one touch of the ball and as Ter Stegen rushed towards him, he rifled the ball into the net past the helpless goalkeeper, scoring the first goal of the game in the 1st minute!

"..."

Silene reigned in the Spotify Camp Nou, and then...

BOOOOOM!

The away stands erupted as shocked and ecstatic Valencia fans rose to their feet, celebrating at the top of their lungs.

Pumping his fists passionately, Sadiq Umar charged towards the corner flag and once he arrived, he jumped high into the sky and did a popular celebration.

"SUIIIII...!!!"

He hit the suiii celebration at the Spotify Camp Nou!

That goal... stunned Barcelona.

Clearly, they did not see it coming.

And just like that, 0-1 to Valencia in the 1st minute.

After that goal, Valencia started defending as Barcelona soon took control of the game, launching raid after raid of attacks on the enemy box.

But Valencia held, they played an ultra-defensive low block, frustrating the attempts of the Catalan giants.

Watching from the stands, Sam felt frustrated.

'F*ck! F*ck! F*ck!'

'Turn this around!' He silently cheered his teammates on.

Not tonight though. His witch didn't come in the first half as the game ended 0-1 in Valencia's favor.

Against all odds, Valencia held on.

But there were 45 minutes remaining in this game.

Chapter 402: A Pedri masterclass

In the dressing room, Hansi Flick raged, berating his defenders for switching off in the 1st minute of the game and letting that goal in.

The German coach was understandably furious.

Valencia's strategy was clear. After getting that first goal, they were content with playing with 10 men behind the ball, defending for their lives.

Hansi Flick calmed down; he knew that raging won't solve the problem.

After his initial rant, the German coach focused on his strategy board, identifying the defensive strengths of the opposition team, highlighting their best defensive players, including devising a plan to break down that defense.

To win, Hansi Flick knew that he had to create a tactical masterpiece specially targeted at the opponent's strategy, and that was what he did.

He already did his best; the rest was up to his players.

The players returned to the pitch and this time; a tense Sam could no longer hold his nerves.

From the VIP stands, he cheered them on. "Come on boys!"

"You can do this!"

Sam's sudden cheer changed the energy in this stadium, not just among the players on the pitch, but also among the fans in the stands.

If Sam could cheer, who were they not to cheer?

And then...

BOOM!

The noise at the Spotify Camp Nou rose even more, hitting a crescendo.

FWEEEE!

The referee's whistle sounded again, and all hell broke loose.

The whole FC Barcelona team jerked to life like an ancient slumbering beast that finally awoke from its ancient slumber.

This 2nd half, buoyed by the loud noise being made by their fans, the Barca team played entertaining football like a well-oiled machine.

They overwhelmed Valencia, dominating possession.

And Raphinha was the Starman at first.

Leading the attack, the energetic Brazilian led his teammates by example, pressuring the Valencia defense for every ball, unleashing dangerous shots at every opportunity he got, stinging the palms of the Valencia goalkeeper.

Valencia was hanging on for dear life, and it was working despite the pressure.

At this point, it was literally 80%-20% possession but it didn't matter because FC Barcelona could not score.

50 minutes, no goal...

60 minutes, no goal...

70 minutes, no goal...

And then, Pedri Gonzalez erupted.

From the beginning of this game, all the way from the 1st half, Pedri had been having an amazing game, controlling the tempo of the game as he pinged perfect passes left and right, absolutely bossing the midfield.

And yet, in the 2nd half, as the desperation for a goal increased, Pedri finally entered the zone state, taking his game to the next level.

In the 72nd minute, Lamine Yamal started a mazy dribble from the right, turning 2 Valencia players inside out before passing to Pedri just outside the ball.

Bam!

Pedri's first touch reminded of a prime Andres Iniesta!

The Spaniard's first touch enabled him to nutmeg Barrenechea, the Valencia midfielder before skipping into the Valencia 18-yard box.

Challenges came immediately but keeping his cool, Pedri cut through 2 more players with a perfect la croqueta and just as Tarrega, the Valencia centerback was about to crash into him with his tall frame, Pedri spun like a roulette wheel.

Literally rotating on top of the ball, with a roulette skill, he ditched the center back for no man's land, now one-on-one with the goalkeeper.

Mamardashvili charged out of his post to confront the midfielder.

Instead of being intimidated, Pedri taunted the goalkeeper, feinting a shot.

That was enough for the Valencia goalkeeper to drop to the ground, and that was when Pedri finally hit it, lobbing the goalkeeper to score an outrageous goal.

"GOALLLLLLLLL...!!!"

The Spotify Camp Nou seethed like a boiling sea!

Pedri celebrated by punching a fist at the fans in excitement but then quickly rushing into the box, he picked the ball and ran off, eager to continue the game.

Pedri was eager for a reason.

He was already in the zone state.

The game restarted, and then just 3 minutes after his goal, Pedri did it again, sliding a pass for Dani Olmo who without missing a beat slotted past the goalkeeper.

"GOALLLLLLLLL...!!!"

The Spotify Camp Nou seethed with even more noise.

2 goals in 4 minutes, and just like that, Valencia's advantage was gone.

Barca was leading now!

Valencia finally decided to come out of their shell, eager to attack and get a second goal to even the score line but coming out left them open.

In the 78th minute, Gavi replaced Dani Olmo.

In the 80th minute, Gavi assisted Lamine Yamal, playing the ball for the teenage wonder to cut into the middle before unleashing a deadly curler into the net, thoroughly beating Valencia's goalkeeper.

80 minutes, 3-1...

From 0-1 to 3-1 in how many minutes, but Barca was not done yet.

In the 87th minute, just before coming off the pitch, Pedri added the final nail to the coffin, playing a ridiculous defense-splitting pass that cut Valencia open like a hot knife through butter, setting up Gavi one-on-one with the goalkeeper.

Gavi hit the ball first time, sending it in-between the legs of the goalkeeper to score Barcelona's 4th goal of the match.

By the 4th goal, having lost his composure in the passion of the sport, Sam was screaming at the top of his lungs in the VIP spot, celebrating exuberantly.

At the end of 90 minutes, FC Barcelona had already thoroughly defeated their opponents, teaching them an unforgettable lesson in their home grown.

Valencia was schooled, and humbled.

FC Barcelona won the game 4-1.

Pedri Gonzalez won the man of the match award with his 1 goal and 2 assists. He was unplayable this game, especially the 2nd half.

And with that, FC Barcelona secured another win, strangling their hold on the La Liga title race battle against Real Madrid.

After the game, Sam entered the pitch to an explosion of cheers and applause.

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

Sam didn't play but the fans sang his name at the top of their lungs still. Hearing his name being sang, Sam smiled, blowing a kiss at them.

He would be available for FC Barcelona's next game.

He was back.

Chapter 403: Into the deep end [1]

Sam may just be coming back from the AFCON tournament, having won it, but he knew that to him, the season was far from ending.

Rather, the true difficult part of an elite club's season just started.

Unlike other clubs like Fulham where he played before in England, big clubs like FC Barcelona truly become busy at the business end of the season.

The games stack up, coming in fast and hard, and this was because unlike small clubs, they compete in multiple tournaments.

This season, FC Barcelona was competing in not just the Spanish La Liga, but the Supercopa de Espana, the Copa del Rey, and the UEFA Champions League.

And at this stage of the season, having won the Supercopa de Espana already, FC Barcelona was still in the 3 other competitions, and it was ramping up.

They were now into the deep.

This was why immediately after the game against Valencia on the 26th of January, after a day of rest on 27th that Hansi Flick gave to his players, from the 28th, Sam joined his club teammates in training again.

He was back, back to the grueling schedule of club football.

Hansi Flick already sent his players the fixtures for FC Barcelona's next 5 games, he also sent it to Sam since he was now back in the fold.

(FC Barcelona fixtures:)

(UEFA Champions League:)

(Matchday 8 of 8:)

(Barcelona – Atalanta)

(Date: 29th January, 2026)

...

(La Liga:)

(Barcelona – Alaves)

(Date: 2nd February, 2026)

...

(Copa del Rey:)

(Quarterfinal:)

(Valencia – Barcelona)

(Date: 6th February, 2026)

...

(La Liga:)

(Sevilla – Barcelona)

(Date: 9th February, 2026)

...

(Barcelona – Ray Vallecano)

(Date: 17th February, 2026)

At some point between this fixture of 5 matches, it would be a game every 3 days for FC Barcelona.

For Hansi Flick, the FC Barcelona head coach, it was not just about making his players play at their best anymore, it was now also about making them play at their best while managing them enough to make sure that they don't burn out.

The deep end of every football season for big clubs was always like this, packed and full of action, and Sam was ready for it.

This was why from 27th January, he finally resumed his hobby with his friends, jogging through the streets of FC Barcelona again with Pedri, Gavi, Lamine Yamal, and Alejandro Balde.

Jogging alongside them, Sam felt like it had been forever since they did this.

"I never knew how much I missed this till now". He laughed.

Lamine Yamal smiled and said in Spanish. "Me too".

Of course, after getting close to the Spotify Camp Nou, they did their customary competition and like usual, Sam won the race.

But this time, there was a shocker.

Lamine Yamal did the impossible, blitzing past Gavi to clinch 2nd position in the sprint race for the first time since they started.

The rest were shocked, their eyes wide. "Your speed has improved?"

Lamine Yamal grinned, feeling mischievous. "I've been working with my personal trainer to improve my physicality, and with it, my speed has been improving too".

"Apparently, speed is in a way tied to physicality".

"I just have to learn a few techniques about my running technique. With the right technique, I can be faster, so that's that". He smiled bashfully.

"Wow...", Sam was amazed. "You have to introduce me to that personal trainer of yours!"

"Me too!" Pedri said with all seriousness.

In the end, Gavi and Alejandro Balde also showed their willingness, making Lamine Yamal to promise to introduce the trainer to them.

After that, they entered the gym, did the usual for the day, and then...

Ding!

~----~

[You have completed Daily System Quest: Mentality Monster!]

[You have been rewarded with low-grade physical conditioning elixir!]

~----~

After that, Sam drove home, eager to enjoy the day off too.

Speaking of the system, after Sam played his last AFCON game against Morocco, winning and bringing the trophy home, his system lit up with series of notifications, no doubt related to his seasonal system quest.

But Sam didn't have the time to go through them because of the chaos of the celebrations, and then his vacation that followed soon after.

He never had time to focus on his system since that time. But now, on getting home, after taking a cold shower, he laid down on his bed and focused on it.

~----~

[Congratulations! You have completed Season Quest 4 in your Season System Quests: Supercopa de Espana!]

[You have been rewarded with 5,000 Skill Points!]

[You have been rewarded with an Advanced-tier skill mastery Upgrade Card!]

>NOTE: The Advanced-tier skill mastery Upgrade Card can be used to upgrade the mastery of any skill below the Advanced level to the Advanced level<

...

[Congratulations! You have completed Season Quest 6 in your Season System Quests: AFCON 2025 Tournament!]

[You completed Mission 1: Win the AFCON trophy!]

[You completed Mission 2: Win the Golden Ball award!]

[You completed Mission 3: Win the Golden Boot award!]

[Calculating completing rating, please wait...]

[Calculation complete!]

[Congratulations! You have received a perfect completion rating of S-tier!]

[Your completion rating has exceeded the reward tier of the system!]

[Automatically combining normal rewards to create a new fitting reward!]

[Please wait...]

[You have been rewarded with a Legendary Passive Skill: Clutch Player!]

>Clutch Player: This passive skill triggers only during the biggest games, in the biggest stages. When triggered, all your abilities and attributes increase by 50%, making you a far deadlier, and lethal footballer. The X-Factor favors you, making you a clutch player<

~----~

Sam stared at the notifications before him with an incredulous expression on his face. In the end, he muttered. "Damn!"

"Clutch player is actually a passive skill?!"

Saying that, the first name that came to his head was. "Didier Drogba!"

Sam grinned. "Now, I finally understand!"

Didier Drogba, the ex-Chelsea striker was never outrightly the best player in the world but the Ivorian legend had a reputation for coming up clutch every time in the biggest stages.

Sam had no doubt that the Chelsea legend had this passive skill.

Sam already built a reputation for himself as a clutch player before now, and to think he now had the passive skill too.

Sam smiled. "The season's about to get even more exciting..."

Chapter 404: Into the deep end [2]

Due to how busy he was, schedules piled up to the brim, it had been a long time since Sam last looked at his system player status.

And finally, he looked at it, first navigating to his skills tab.

Afterall, he just got rewarded with an Advanced-tier skill mastery Upgrade Card for a trophy he won that he didn't even play in the final.

Benefits of playing for a big club.

Sam sighed. "Should I perhaps invite the squad to a dinner party in my house and host them, just to thank them?"

He chuckled. "Maybe I'll do that at the end of the season".

"For now, let's feast".

He didn't hesitate, quickly scrolling through his skills.

By now, every single skill that he had was already ingrained in his bones. He knew his body like the back of his hand, and knew exactly what he was capable of with a ball at his feet.

Compared to when he just started, compared to when he even first entered FC Barcelona, his mastery of his body was now at its peak.

His body to mind coordination was literally perfect.

With this in mind, he went through his skills. Unknown to him, after his exploits in the AFCON tournament, even without the help of the system, some of his skills already upgraded on their own.

The best example was his Elastico dribble skill. After his exploits in the AFCON tournament, from the intermediate mastery level where it was before, Sam's mastery of the Elastico was now at the Advanced level.

With a grin on his face, after going through the skills, he choose one of them to use the Advanced-tier skill mastery Upgrade Card on.

[Target Skill Acquired: Knuckle Ball Technique]

[You have made use of the Advanced-tier skill mastery Upgrade Card!]

[Upgrading basic mastery skill, please wait...]

[Upgrade complete!]

[Congratulations! Your mastery of the Knuckle Ball Technique is now at the Advanced level!]

[Your Shooting Attribute has increased by +1!]

To Sam, his prominent football ability was his dribbling skills.

His dribbling was almost perfect, devastating on the football pitch. And after the AFCON tournament, it was his dribbling skills that improved the most.

Playing as a striker for FC Barcelona now due to Robert Lewandowski's ACL injury, his shooting was important to him.

Sam's shooting was not shabby in anyway, elite even, but still, he wanted to take it one step further when given the chance. This was why instead of choosing a dribbling skill to upgrade, he choose the knuckle ball technique.

Another reason was because the skill was still at the basic mastery level since. By taking it all the way to the Advanced mastery level at a go, it would result in the greatest increase to his overall football ability.

After the upgrade, relaxed on his bed with a smile on his face, Sam finally focused on his system player status again.

~-----~

[Player status!]

Host: Samuel Moses

Current Career Status: Reigning Premier League champion, Reigning FA Cup champion, Reigning Supercopa de Espana champion, Reigning AFCON champion

Talent Rating: S

Player Position: Attacking Midfield/Striker

Player Attributes:

*Pace: 86

*Shot: 88

*Pass: 85

*Dribbling: 89

*Defending: 40

*Physicality: 82

*Stamina: 90

Overall Rating: 88

...

[Owned Football Skills:]

[Passive skill: Stalwart]

>You have proven your credentials as a reliable stalwart with well-rounded attributes in the middle of the pitch. You can score, you can assist, you can dribble, and you can press; you are the complete package<

>+10% to all 4 packages when on the pitch<

>All 4 packages refer to your shooting attribute, your passing attribute, your dribbling attribute, and your stamina attribute<

[Passive Skill: Clutch Player]

>Clutch Player: This passive skill triggers only during the biggest games, in the biggest stages. When triggered, all your abilities and attributes increase by 50%, making you a far deadlier, and lethal footballer. The X-Factor favors you, making you a clutch player<

[Active skills:]

[Basic mastery level: Step overs; overhead kick; trivela shot]

[Intermediate mastery level: Cruyff turn; La croqueta; Power header; Roulette; Overhead Kick; Rainbow Flick; Penalty Technique; Scissor Kick]

[Advanced mastery level: Spatial awareness; Power shot; Body feint; Elastico; Knuckle Ball Technique]

[Perfect mastery level: Freekick Technique]

...

[Legendary Inheritance: Elastico]

[Legendary Inheritance: Spatial Awareness]

[Legendary Inheritance: Power Shot]

...

[Ability cards:]

>Shoot it like Lewy<

[Card uses remaining: 2]

>Thread it like KDB<

[Card uses remaining: 2]

>Bend it like Beckham<

[Card uses remaining: 2]

...

[Trophies won:]

>NPFL title ×1<

>CAF Champions League trophy ×1<

>EFL Cup title ×1<

>Premier League title ×1<

>FA Cup title ×1<

...

[Title: Space Interpreter!]

[Title: Legs of Steel!]

[System Remark: An elite young talent playing in one of the best leagues in the world!]

~-----~

And all of a sudden, Sam's basic mastery skills were the lowest in his repertoire. He was an even better footballer now.

During the course of the AFCON tournament, his skills improved a lot. Not just his skills, but his attributes too.

At some point, his Stamina attribute finally broke the threshold to 90.

Not just his Stamina, his dribbling, shooting, and physicality attributes also improved. Honestly, staring at the status, Sam felt a bit scared.

He could not believe he was the one with these ridiculous stats.

"I'm no longer a Lion Cub". He thought with a chuckle.

With that, resting his head comfortably, he finally slept.

...

The next day, Sam woke up early, quickly catching up with his friends as they started their hobby early.

After completing his daily system quest alongside his friends, they finally reported for team training again under Hansi Flick's guidance.

The Barcelona head coach drilled them till they were tired, after which they went home. The next day, they did the same thing, and again, and again till D-day finally came.

In the blink of an eye, it was already 29th.

They were caught in the eye of the storm, trapped in the deep end.

They were not scared though, rather, they were determined to continue their trophy bids this season.

Sam went straight back into Hansi Flick's starting XI.

He felt hyped for the game.

'Bring it on!'

Chapter 405: Into the deep end [3]

Sam didn't realize how much he missed club football till he was back on the pitch, at the Spotify Camp Nou.

29th January, 2026...

(UEFA Champions League:)

(Matchday 8 of 8:)

(Barcelona – Atalanta)

The Spotify Camp Nou was a cauldron of anticipation, a behemoth of footballing history thrumming with restless energy as FC Barcelona prepared to face Atalanta in a high-stakes UEFA Champions League group phase game.

It was matchday 8 of 8, the final game of the league phase of the new UEFA Champions League format before the playoff games.

For FC Barcelona, the game didn't hold much significance since they already qualified to the round of 16, currently leading the UEFA Champions League table.

As for their Italian opponents today though, Atalanta, their spot in the knockout stage of the UEFA Champions League was not secure yet which made this game a high-stakes game for them.

If Atalanta wanted to make it to the playoffs, from where they could fight for a spot in the round of 16 stage of the UEFA Champions League, they must win this game against the Spanish club in away ground.

The Italian club and its players came to Spain with only one thing in mind, to win and snatch home a victory.

But of course, FC Barcelona also wanted to win even if it meant very little to them. Afterall, this was a club with demands to win every single game.

A big club.

The air crackled with electricity, a symphony of drums, chants, and the deafening roar of nearly 100,000 Cules, their voices merging into a singular, unrelenting force that blasted through the gigantic stadium.

The blaugrana mosaic stretched across the stadium, a stunning display of club pride as fans held up their colored placards, creating a breathtaking sea of blue and red.

The hallowed pitch gleamed under the floodlights, the grass pristine and perfectly manicured, a stage awaiting footballing artistry.

The Champions League anthem soon filled the air, evoking goosebumps as the players emerged from the tunnel, their faces set with focus and determination.

On the touchline, the 2 coaches embraced.

All the while, Atalanta's traveling supporters, though vastly outnumbered, carved out their own defiant presence in the stands, their black and blue banners waving fiercely, singing in unison to remind the world that they too belonged on this grand stage.

The sense of history and expectation was overwhelming; Barcelona, a club with an insatiable hunger for European glory, versus Atalanta, the fearless underdogs from the Italian Serie A known for their relentless attacking football.

Like expected, both squads started with their best starting XI.

Plunging Sam straight back into the starting XI, Hansi Flick's FC Barcelona started in their customary 4-2-3-1 formation with Marc Andre Ter Stegen in between the posts, and the defensive quadruple of Alejandro Balde, Pau Cubarsi, Inigo Martinez, and Jules Kounde ahead of him.

In midfield was the duo of Pedri and Frankie De Jong, while further ahead in attack was the quadruple that the world feared.

Gavi started in attacking midfield, while to his left and right respectively were Raphinha and Lamine Yamal. Leading the line was a familiar face, Samuel Moses.

Sam was back in his striker position.

It was a fearsome lineup.

But Atalanta's lineup was also one to cause trepidations in any opponent.

Starting in a 3-4-3 formation, Carnesechhi started in between the posts as the goalkeeper, while ahead of him was the defensive trio of Kolasinac, Hien, and Djimsiti.

The midfield quadruple comprised of Zappacosta, Pasalic, de Roon, and Bellanova. De Ketelaere played as the striker, while to his left and right were Ademola Lookman and Retegui respectively.

This was a team that already built a fearsome reputation for their compact and seamless team play in the European stage.

And tonight, they were to clash against the Catalan giants.

On the stadium, the roar reached a crescendo.

The referee glanced at his watch, and for a brief moment, a tense silence fell before the opening whistle. Then, in an instant, the storm was unleashed.

FWEEEE!

That sound cut through the temporary stillness on the pitch, making the players explode into action.

The game started.

Barcelona vs Atalanta was always going to be an exciting affair, but nobody expected what transpired on the pitch within the next few minutes.

At the Spotify Camp Nou, the backyard of the fearsome Catalan giants, Atalanta showed no hesitation or fear, playing their game to their fullest potential.

Atalanta played fearlessly at the Spotify Camp Nou, making it an exciting spectacle as they played a game of end-to-end football at their opponent's home.

And of course, most of it went through one player, the Atalanta player that was having another electric season, Ademola Lookman.

After winning the AFCON trophy together with Nigeria just about a week ago, now, Sam's International teammate, Ademola Lookman locked horns with him, eager to doom him to defeat.

In the 18th minute of the game, after another dizzying dribble into the box, Ademola Lookman finally did it, making Pau Cubarsi to overcommit in a tackle.

FWEEEE!

As soon as the referee's whistle sounded, he pointed to the spot.

It was a penalty!

The Blaugrana fans protested the decision of course but it changed nothing. Against Marc Andre Ter Stegen, after exchanging an embrace with Lookman who won the penalty, De Ketelaere, Atalanta's striker stepped up to take the penalty.

After a confident short run, the striker sent Marc Andre Ter Stegen one way, sending the ball the other way into the top left corner of the net.

"...!"

Silence, for a few fractions of a second, and then...

BOOM!

The Spotify Camp Nou erupted, at least, the away stands.

The few thousand traveling Atalanta away supporters roared, screaming at the top of their lungs even as Kelelaere celebrated their goal.

Against all odds, in the 18th minute, Atalanta scored in FC Barcelona's home stadium, snatching the lead in this high-stakes UEFA Champions League game.

But their lead didn't last long.

8 minutes later, FC Barcelona made its comeback.

Lamine Yamal scored.

Chapter 406: Into the deep end [4]

8 minutes after De Kelelaere's goal, in the 26th minute of the game, Lamine Yamal scored, drawing FC Barcelona level.

Sam played his part in the goal.

Winning an aerial duel between him and one of the tall Atalanta defenders, Sam was able to head the ball towards Gavi who quickly pushed it towards Lamine Yamal, and trust the teenage wonder.

Bam!

One slick touch to receive the ball, calming it, another touch to skip past a challenge, a flick to skip past another challenge, and then a volleyed shot, striking the ball while it still floated in the air.

Carnesecchi, Atalanta's goalkeeper stood no chance despite the fact that he clearly saw the ball as Yamal hit it with venom on his left foot.

The ball tore its way through the air, leaving a slight whistling sound in its wake as it nestled into the very bottom right corner, leaving the poor goalkeeper no chance.

Lamine Yamal quickly charged towards the corner flag with Gavi and Sam following him in tow, and then Sam hugged him, lifting him up excitedly.

As soon as he dropped the Spanish teenage wonder, together, the 3 players did a dance celebration, doing a viral dance challenge.

And this time, Sam didn't fumble. He did the dance well having practiced it ahead of time due to Lamine Yamal's urging.

At the end, amid the roar of the fans, he laughed.

"And just like that, FC Barcelona are level!"

"Honestly, what a team Hansi Flick has assembled in this squad".

"Last season, they were fearsome but with Sam, they are on another level completely. It's almost as if they don't know how to lose at all".

"This Barcelona side is scary honestly; it reminds of the all-conquering Barcelona sides of the early 2010s that ruled with Lionel Messi as the King".

"As an FC Barcelona fan, what a moment to be alive!"

"To witness the new King play, Samuel Moses!"

"And to witness the Prince alongside him, Lamine Yamal!"

After that goal, making it 1-1, this game became even tighter but the defense of both clubs managed to hold firm, playing at an elite level to hold off the onslaught of the world-class attack of both teams.

In the 43rd minute, De Ketelaere scored again, making it a brace but before the Italians could celebrate, the referee's whistle sounded.

It was an offside.

The audible groans from the Atalanta fans could be heard around the stadium. And in the end, the first half came to an end 1-1.

During halftime, Hansi Flick took it easy on his players, telling them to enjoy themselves on the pitch and when second half started, that was exactly what they did. Barca's midfield finally stepped up.

In the first half, they failed to hold on to possession due to Atalanta's seamless teamwork but in the second, Pedri Gonzalez finally stepped up.

In the 2nd half, Pedri became unplayable!

The ball could not be taken off the feet of the Spanish maestro as with it, he glided through the midfield like a kite, zipping back and forth, evading challenges, shifting and shuffling the ball, and playing those neat and tidy passes.

With Pedri playing like a man reborn suddenly in the 2nd half, FC Barcelona dominated possession, tightening their grip on the game, but then... after 10 minutes of this, Atalanta struck on the counterattack.

"OH! Pasalic has won back the ball!"

"He's passed to de Roon, and then to Zappacosta, and then a long ball to Ademola Lookman!"

"The Nigerian International has the ball!"

"Barcelona's dominating midfield have been cut through for the first time this second half, will it prove costly?"

Yes, it proved costly.

Catching Jules Kounde out of position, Lookman just managed to beat the Barcelona offside trap, beating Inigo Martinez for pace as he charged towards the Barca 18-yard box with the ball.

And just as Ter Stegen rushed out to meet him, calmly, he curled the ball towards the right, placing it into the net out of the goalkeeper's reach.

As the stadium erupted, without stopping his run, Ademola Lookman simply made a byline to the corner flag, placing one hand to his lips in celebration.

In response, provoked by that gesture, FC Barcelona fans roared.

"BOOOOOO...!!!"

They drowned the Nigerian International in boos.

Well... that gesture from Ademola Lookman, the shush celebration, it was a mistake. But that was the turning point, the gesture that awoke the slumbering beast.

And all of a sudden, Barca fans no longer took the game casually.

All of a sudden, they wanted a bloodbath.

All of a sudden, they wanted a slaughter.

BOOM!

Like a war chant, they roared at the top of their lungs, showing their intention to their players and well, the players played for the fans.

If that was what they wanted, then they'd do it.

Ademola Lookman scored in the 55th minute of the game, making it 1-2, but then it started...

FC Barcelona erupted, upping the tempo of the game.

In the middle of the park, Pedri and Frankie De Jong became beacons of light in darkness, supplying light to the attack in need of service.

Raphinha got the second goal.

Not in the 60th minute, not in the 70th minute, but in the 81st minute, buoyed by the loud roar of determined Barca fans.

After receiving a pass from Gavi, the Brazilian executed an immaculate touch to beat his man, and then rifled a shot past Atalanta's goalkeeper, beating him at his near post to equalize the game.

81 minute, 2-2...

And yet, that was not all.

While Atalanta held for its life, desperate to hold on to the draw at the very least, Sam finally erupted, coming up clutch.

Well, something influenced it actually.

[Your passive skill has triggered: Clutch Player!]

[All your abilities and attributes have increased by 50%!]

Sam scored from a dead-ball situation, leaping highest, outmuscling the Atalanta defender and planting an unstoppable header towards goal... in the 90th minute, clutch!

He made his return in grand style.

Charging towards his corner flag, Sam kissed the FC Barcelona badge before turning and showing his jersey to the fans, pointing to his name.

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

The familiar chants erupted at the Spotify Camp Nou.

FC Barcelona won the game 3-2.

Chapter 407: Into the deep end [5]

[FC Barcelona]

[Samuel Moses]

[Statistics for 2025/2026 Season:]

[Goals: 44]

[Assists: 28]

[Games: 30]

In his room in Barcelona, framed on a wall, Sam looked at his achievements so far for the 2025/2026 season with a big smile on his face.

He started a habit since his days in Fulham of framing his achievements on his wall in a football season once they started impressing him.

And this season? This was his third picture frame.

This was because of the impressive season he was having.

In terms of trophies, Sam was on course to having the best season of his professional football career but that was not the most impressive thing.

After Hansi Flick made the bold change on the wake of Robert Lewandowski's injury, pushing him to play as a striker, Sam's numbers skyrocketed, truly entering that level of monstrous performances.

Going to the AFCON tournament and returning to his attacking midfield role didn't change any of it, Sam's attacking instincts were now honed to a truly frightening level.

Afterall, he learned from one of the best of the best in Robert Lewandowski.

Not just that, he had a system too.

But both were not the true reason for his ridiculous numbers this season. The main reason was because of his hard work.

All the way from that Christmas game, then in the NPFL, then in the CAF Champions League, to the English Premier League, EFL Cup, English FA Cup, to the Spanish La Liga, UEFA Champions League, and the AFCON tournament.

Through all these different tournaments, from being an inexperienced 17-year-old with little to no experience in the professional stage, Sam had worked his way to this moment, the enigmatic maverick that he was.

The pride of Catalan, the new King of FC Barcelona.

The new King of the UEFA Champions League, and Nigeria's new superstar that led them to a first AFCON trophy in over 10 years.

He was having a truly monstrous season.

A combined figure of 72 goals and assists at this stage of the season in just 30 games was truly a monstrous return.

It meant Sam averaged 2 goal contributions every game!

This was crazy.

But Sam was not done yet. Looking at the picture frame, he only felt motivated by it, this was not the peak of human performance yet.

Thinking of a certain little genius, the previous King of Camp Nou, the Argentine Maestro, Lionel Messi, and thinking of what he did in that legendary 2012 season, Sam felt adrenaline coursing through him.

'This is not the limit of human performance'.

'Not yet'.

'I still have a long way to go'.

'The system said it could make me a Football God huh?' He grinned. 'But why wait till I'm 25 first?'

'Why wait till I'm 30?'

'Can't I become the Football God from the age of 20?'

After breaking so many records already, most FC Barcelona debut records with his legendary season already, now Sam set his sights higher, not just aiming for the Ballon d'Or anymore, but aiming to create an all-time great season.

A season so great that when others look at it, they look on in awe.

A season so great that it becomes synonymous with excellence.

A season so great that it becomes synonymous with the Ballon d'Or.

Sam grinned. "Yeah, we can make it happen". He muttered.

That night, after taking his bath, he had a call with his family, teasing his sister who was finally about to travel to England to stay with Ian.

After that call, he also called his girlfriend, speaking till it was late.

Only after that did Sam sleep.

He slept soundly.

The next day, he woke up like nothing happened but the blood coursing through his veins flowed with greater speed, burned with greater fervor.

Sam wanted to do more.

He knew he could do more, and he was determined to do more.

When he jogged with his friends that morning, he so out jogged them that they stared at him like he was a monster. Even during the last 50 meters sprint, Sam gave them a sizeable gap, making Gavi look at him with a frown.

"Bastardo!" The short Spaniard grunted. "You ate a Bull?"

Sam grinned. "As a matter of fact, yes, I did eat a Bull".

When they entered the gym, he worked out like a man on steroids, doing all the reps and workouts on record time, and doing even more than usual.

When the system notification sounded, informing him that he had completed his daily system quest, Sam did not feel satisfied at all.

He wanted more.

And later in the day when he reported for team training with his teammates, his mood spilled to the pitch.

By now, his teammates were used to him doing crazy things on the training ground. But today? Sam did not just do crazy things.

He did things that left them wondering if he was still human.

Sam played at an extraterrestrial level.

Watching him play, Hansi Flick had a smile on his face like a lovesick man looking at his wife with adoration and affection.

It was no debate, Sam was a shoe-in for FC Barcelona's next game in the Spanish La Liga against Alaves in a few days.

Sam was truly in the deep end now.

And in the blink of an eye, the days rolled and it was D-day.

FC Barcelona welcomed Alaves to the Spotify Camp Nou.

Like expected, the Catalan giants dominated the visitors throughout the first half but the deadlock was not broken till additional time of first half when Raphinha scored from a volley after a Pedri pass.

The first half came to an end 1-0 in Barca's favor.

But when second half started, it was painted blue and red and one player's name was heard throughout the stadium... SAMUEL MOSES.

In the 2nd half, Sam erupted.

He took the game by the scruff of the neck, becoming unplayable.

In the 53rd minute, he scored his first goal from a scissor kick after a Lamine Yamal pass. 4 minutes later, in the 57th minute, he led a counterattack, going on an incredible solo run all the way from his half.

He ran through 4 Alaves players before lobbing the goalkeeper to score his 3rd goal of the game and just before he was substituted in the 78th minute, he scored again in the 77th minute, making it a hatrick.

Another hatrick for the season!

This time, Sam leaped highest from a corner kick, powering in a header to effectively seal FC Barcelona's win.

He won the man of the match award; it was no contest.

Sam... was in the zone.

Chapter 408: Into the deep end [6]

With Alaves out of the way, swatted away like a mere bug, FC Barcelona set their sights on the Copa del Rey quarterfinal.

It was a clash against Valencia.

(Copa del Rey:)

(Quarterfinal:)

(Valencia – Barcelona)

(Date: 6th February, 2026)

Despite being played in away ground, it didn't matter.

FC Barcelona blew their opponents away in a hurricane of Catalan energy, winning the Copa del Rey clash 0-5.

Sam didn't score a single goal but he won the man of the match award, why?

On this game, Sam embraced the nature of a false 9, torturing a Valencia defense that was set up to frustrate him.

Yes, they frustrated him on the goalscoring front, but Sam ended up doing even more on the playmaking front, giving 4 assists in this game alone!

On that day, the Valencia defenders learned to fear the Nigerian International.

His first assist and FC Barcelona's first goal came from a backheel touch, a delicate flick of the ball that landed it perfectly in Lamine Yamal's path, enabling the Spanish teenage wonder to score an easy goal.

That first goal entered in the 12th minute.

11 minutes later, in the 23rd minute, Sam dropped deep and after receiving a pass from Pedri, he turned and hit it one time, sending an incredible trivela pass to Lamine Yamal's path a second time.

Their chemistry on the pitch was telepathic.

This time, the Spanish teenage wonder had to do more but Lamine Yamal was up to the job.

Blasting past his marker with speed, the teenage wonder took the ball on his lap, perfectly controlling it and taming its momentum and then with his right foot, he volleyed it past a sprawling goalkeeper.

Lamine Yamal whirled off towards the corner flag, sliding on his knees in celebration as the traveling FC Barcelona fans celebrated excitedly with him.

The 3rd goal came in the 39th minute, courtesy of Sam again.

This time, it was his dribbling that pried the tight Valencia defense open.

Turning the defenders here and there with his quick feet, penetrating into them with a devilish La Croqueta, he saw Raphinha's run and pushed the ball in his path, in time for the rapid Brazilian to whip a shot past the goalkeeper into the net, scoring FC Barcelona's 3rd goal of the night.

The first half came to an end 0-3 in Barca's favor.

And then, in the 2nd half, there was a personal record breaker.

Not with the 4th goal though. Gavi hustled the 4th goal of the game for himself, lashing into a loose ball in the box after a corner kick and rifling it into the roof of the net, leaving the goalkeeper no chance.

The 4th goal entered in the 61st minute.

But the 5th goal? It came in the 70th minute, and Sam got his 4th assist.

Guess who the goal scorer was?

Lamine Yamal.

After making his debut a few seasons ago, the Spanish teenage wonder finally scored his first professional hattrick.

Having dropped deep, Sam received a pass from Pedri and threaded it, cutting the Valencia defense open like a hot knife through butter, setting Yamal who did the rest, rounding the goalkeeper to score an amazing goal.

"GOALLLLL...!!!"

Once the realization hit him that he just scored his first professional hattrick goal, Yamal couldn't even celebrate, overwhelmed by emotion.

Sam ran towards him, hugging him and raising him above his feet.

Their teammates swarmed them, celebrating with them. And at the end of it all, having recovered a bit, Lamine Yamal finally celebrated.

Making a love fans towards the away fans, he stopped Sam who was about to leave and then placing one knee down, he took Sam's leg, wiping dust off it.

Sam assisted all 3 of his goals and Lamine Yamal acknowledged it.

The FC Barcelona fans went crazy in the away stands.

At this point, there was no way out for Valencia. Hansi Flick made changes, shaking his team up, resting guys like Sam and Lamine Yamal.

The game ended 0-5 in Barca's favor.

With that performance, Sam took his tally to 47 goals and 32 assists in just 32 f*cking games!

He was not slowing down at all.

Rather, he seemed to be accelerating even.

He was having a truly all-time great season if he continued at this pace. Hell, it was a great season already, it was a matter of how great he could go now.

...

(La Liga:)

(Sevilla – Barcelona)

(Date: 9th February, 2026)

Sevilla welcomed FC Barcelona.

Wary of the rampant Catalans, Sevilla played a very aggressive game and they targeted one player, Samuel Moses.

The defenders tackled him so hard, playing tactical fouls, dragging his chest, cleverly matching his leg that the FC Barcelona fans feared for his fitness, raining down boos and complaining to the referee.

In the end, one of those tackles attracted a red card eventually in the 71st minute of the game after Sam's right ankle started bleeding.

At that point, he was already bruised and battered.

But still, after that red card in the 71st minute, Sam still ended up scoring the game winning goal from the freekick that followed.

He played a perfect freekick, rounding the wall of players before sending it into the top right corner, leaving Sevilla's goalkeeper no chance.

"GOALLLLLLL...!!!"

The stadium erupted, passionate Barca fans roaring at the top of their lungs.

Concerned about his fitness, after that goal, Hansi Flick subbed Sam out of the game and FC Barcelona were able to see the game out.

Another 3 points bagged.

Sam won another man of the match award.

But after the end of the game, after a medical diagnosis, Sam was identified to have suffered a minor ankle injury.

FC Barcelona fans feared for their fate.

...

(La Liga:)

(Barcelona – Rayo Vallecano)

(Date: 17th February, 2026)

Before 17th, Sam already recovered but being cautious, Hansi Flick started him on the bench.

For the first time in a long time, Sam started on the bench.

But FC Barcelona fans didn't care. At the start of the game, his name was still the name that was being chanted at the top of their voices.

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

It was a household name now.

Chapter 409 409: Into the deep end [7]

From the beginning of the match, one thing was clear, Rayo Vallecano stood no chance against FC Barcelona at the Spotify Camp Nou.

At least, this was what people thought.

But well, when the game started, Rayo Vallecano showed grit.

The visitors embraced their place as the inferior side, playing a Jose Mourinho-style football, playing with 10 men behind the ball. And somehow, it was working, their low block keeping Barcelona's fearsome attack at bay.

With Sam not in the field of play, Ferran Torres took his place as the striker today and though the Spaniard was not as effective as the Nigerian International, he was still playing a decent game.

Behind him, and to his left and right, Gavi, Raphinha, and Lamine Yamal played well, torching the Rayo Vallecano defenders at every given opportunity, stringing together impressive plays, but it was never quite enough.

That finishing touch was not just there.

FC Barcelona had a lot of shots, and yet, it was not until the 33rd minute of the match when Raphinha got the first shot on target, forcing the goalkeeper to make an impressive save.

And shockingly, that was the only shot on target in the first half.

It was one of the worst first halves to a game that FC Barcelona had played all season. And during halftime, Hansi Flick was understandably furious, having a go at his players.

But in the end, the coach didn't make a change, not yet.

He sent his players back to the pitch like that.

Just 3 minutes after the restart though, in the 48th minute of the game, the electric Brazilian winger, Raphinha roared to life.

It was a penetrative pass from Pedri that started the sequence and then taking the ball in his strides, with a body feint, double step overs, a nutmeg and an explosion of speed, Raphinha beat 2 players, charging into the box.

There, as the Rayo Vallecano goalkeeper charged out, Raphinha maintained his cool and unleashed a shot that flashed across the face of goal, towards the right corner post.

Bang!

It hit the bottom post, and snuck inside the net.

Silence, for about a second, then...

"GOALLLLLLL...!!!"

The Spotify Camp Nou roared to life.

Ecstatic fans hugged each other, celebrating among themselves, acknowledging the Brazilian, Raphinha who charged towards the corner flag, doing the calma celebration.

The circumstances building up to that goal, after such a disappointing first half, everything made that goal just so iconic.

It was Raphinha's moment, and he basked in the attention.

After that goal, Rayo Vallecano now desperate for their own goal finally came out of their turtle shell and that decision opened them up even more, giving the fearsome Barca attack more freedom to express their talent.

Lamine Yamal stung first, dribbling past his marker, then cutting in before curling a lethal shot towards goal only for it to hit the post.

The teenage wonder placed his hands on his head, unable to believe that he just missed that chance.

And then, Lamine Yamal set Raphinha up again only for the Rayo Vallecano goalkeeper to pull off an amazing save.

For the next 20 minutes, FC Barcelona threatened without scoring and then in the 68th minute of the game, Hansi Flick finally made a double change.

He took off Gavi and Ferran Torres, introducing Dani Olmo and Sam.

That change killed off the game in imperious fashion.

Just 2 minutes after coming on, in the Rayo Vallecano 18-yard box, Dani Olmo received a pass from Pedri. Calmly, the attacking midfielder received the ball with his chest but he didn't just receive it.

With one movement, he received the ball and passed it on.

Cleverly placing his body at an angle, the ball hit his chest, then floated past his markers and landed in Sam's front.

It was an awkward angle but by now, Sam already mastered the technique to unleash lethal shots even from such awkward angles.

Leaning his body backwards, his right leg flung and struck the ball.

BAM!

From that awkward angle, he was able to apply enough force.

The Rayo Vallecano goalkeeper dived but then the ball hit one of the defenders' legs, causing a deflection.

From the right where Sam hit it towards, the ball bounced towards the left, leaving the Rayo Vallecano goalkeeper sprawling helplessly in despair.

It was a huge deflection, but the goal was still rewarded as a Sam goal since the initial shot was also goal-bound.

Jogging to the corner flag, Sam did Lewandowski's celebration, making a tribute to the FC Barcelona veteran striker who was still injured.

And just like that, FC Barcelona secured another La Liga win.

The game ended 2-0 at the Spotify Camp Nou.

And this time, Raphinha won the man of the match award.

...

(La Liga:)

(Elche – Barcelona)

(Date: 22nd February, 2026)

It was another game in away ground but once again, FC Barcelona was the overwhelmingly superior side.

FC Barcelona was slowly putting together an all-time great season.

They tore Elche apart in 90 minutes, securing a comfortable 0-3 victory.

This time, Sam's goalscoring and assist momentum was finally halted as he didn't register a goal or assist in this game but well, even without scoring, he was once again at his playmaking best.

He didn't claim any of the 3 assists but his prints were all over all 3 goals, either starting the creativity with an amazing pass, or claiming the pre-assist.

After another impressive performance, despite not getting a goal or assist, he ended up winning another man of the match award.

FC Barcelona secured another 3 points.

...

(Copa del Rey:)

(Semifinal- Leg 1 of 2:)

(Barcelona – Atletico Madrid)

A blockbuster game!

Having missed the La Liga game against Atletico Madrid due to his international obligations, a game which his club ended up suffering in, Sam finally got his chance to exert revenge on one of the La Liga heavy hitters.

The first leg of the clash was at the Spotify Camp Nou, and the whole squad was determined to demolish Atletico Madrid.

But things didn't go exactly to plan though.

Straight from the first minute, things started going awry as Julian Alvarez received a dangerous pass from deep, outsmarting FC Barcelona's high line defense, going behind them and scoring a smart goal past Ter Stegen.

And just like that, Atletico Madrid were ahead in this semifinal clash.

1 minute, 0-1...

That goal stunned the hosts.

But FC Barcelona drilled under Hansi Flick already developed a thick skin and fearsome mentality. They quickly shook off the shock of the goal and focused on their game, executing the gameplan.

But then, it all went awry again.

In the 18th minute, Rodrigo De Paul, the Argentine International and Atletico Madrid midfielder scored a screamer of a volley from outside the box.

The ball flew with venom, beating Ter Stegen and nestling into the top corner to score Atletico Madrid's 2nd goal of the game.

18 minutes, 0-2...

FC Barcelona was stunned; the Spotify Camp Nou was silenced.

For a brief moment, FC Barcelona's unbreakable carapace finally seemed to have cracked, their fearsome form dipping, fear seeping in but then Sam erupted.

"Come on guys! We can do it!"

The voice was already rearing in his head.

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

Sam grinned. 'Ah..., it's been long since I felt like this'.

'The feeling of being the one chasing the winner'.

It made him feel a sense of déjà vu, remembering fond memories back in Fulham and Enyimba FC. Days when he strived for every single win.

And so, Sam embraced the moment.

Atletico Madrid held on with their fearsome defense throughout the first half. The second half started just like the first, Atletico Madrid being the superior side, but then..., FC Barcelona had Samuel Moses.

And Sam struck, like fire!

In the 53rd minute of the game, he unleashed a thunderous shot from over 30 yards out having observed Jan Oblak slightly out of position.

The Atletico Madrid goalkeeper tried to recover but it was already too late.

53 minutes, 1-2...

But then, the Madrid side struck again just 5 minutes later.

Julian Alvarez got his brace, lashing into an Antoine Griezmann perfect cross and heading the ball across goal and into the net.

58 minutes, 1-3...

FC Barcelona didn't give up though.

In the 69th minute, Sam breezed into the Atletico Madrid 18-yard box, skipping past challenges like they were not there and just as he was about to shoot, someone tripped him from behind, entangling his leg.

It was Cesar Aspilicueta, the Spanish defender.

"Arghhhh!" Screaming, Sam clutched his leg and collapsed in the box in pain, and then...

FWEEEE!

The referee blew his whistle, awarding a penalty and also fishing out a straight red card for the defender.

The Madrid side tried to protest the decision but the referee didn't change his mind. And so, Cesar Aspilicueta trudged out of the field.

In the 69th minute, Sam took the penalty, and scored.

69 minutes, 2-3...

Diego Simeone, the Atletico Madrid coach made changes, taking off Julian Alvarez and putting in the big man, Alexander Sorloth.

FC Barcelona continued toiling, pressuring Atletico Madrid but then in the 76th minute, against the run of play, Sorloth scored from a devastating counterattack that left the Catalan giants exposed.

76 minutes, 2-4...

FC Barcelona seemed done, totally out of the game, till they were not.

The Catalan defiance reared its head.

In the 80th minute of the game, Pedri slipped in a past for Lamine Yamal, the teenage wonder leaving multiple players in his wake before sneaking a shot into the bottom right corner and into the net.

80 minutes, 3-4...

Could Barcelona do it? Could they?

Yes, they could?

In the 89th minute, Sam entered the battle, leaping highest to power a header into the net from a Lamine Yamal cross.

"GOALLLLLLLLL...!!!"

The Spotify Camp Nou turned upside down!

Chapter 410 410: Into the deep end [8]

Another FC Barcelona game, another Sam clutch moment.

Another FC Barcelona game, another Sam hatrick.

Another FC Barcelona game, another Sam MVP performance.

To fans of the Catalan persuasion, it was just another day for a Sam magic. Well, the fact that he did it against Atletico Madrid added another layer to the achievement but still, Sam was Sam.

The game ended 4-4.

FC Barcelona did not win the epic Copa del Rey semifinal clash due to multiple defensive blunders from their defense, but still, the fans did not focus on it, sparing the blushes of the Barca defenders all due to one player's brilliance... Samuel Moses.

Sam's hatrick stole the show on the night.

There were a lot of standout performers in the game, honorable mentions being Julian Alvarez, Rodrigo De Paul, Lamine Yamal, Pedri, but none of them quite stole the show like Sam did.

When FC Barcelona needed him the most, the King showed up again.

Like usual, he was simply clutch.

It was a draw but from the excitement among the FC Barcelona fans at the end of the game, you'd be forgiven to think they won the game by a landslide.

And at the end of the game, the FC Barcelona fans did something special, something that Sam would likely not forget in a long time.

As soon as the game came to an end, a large section of the FC Barcelona fanbase in the fans seethed like an ocean, simultaneously spreading a gigantic banner that covered a large part of the stadium stands.

It was a banner of Sam; it depicted him in the iconic FC Barcelona jersey, one leg on the ball and with him kissing the badge.

[SAMUEL MOSES]

[50 Goals]

In the buildup to the game, Sam was at 49 goals after just 35 games, a figure that no other striker across Europe came close to matching, not even the likes of Erling Haaland who was in formidable form with Manchester City.

Sam was head and shoulders above every other attacking player in Europe this season when it came to both the eye test and the numbers.

This season? He was simply unplayable.

The FC Barcelona fans prepared the banner ahead of the game. Based on the generational run of form that he was in this season; the FC Barcelona fans were sure that he would take his tally to 50 goals for this season this game.

And Sam didn't disappoint. Heck, he went and did more than was expected, scoring a hatrick to make it 52 goals in just 36 games... crazy!

But it didn't matter, what mattered that he now had more than 50 goals.

And so at the end of the game, a large section of the fans in the stadium unveiled the banner, waving it as it attracted a lot of attention, including media attention as the cameras focused on the banner.

It was a truly incredible moment.

And the fans didn't stop at that, they started the already familiar chant in the Spotify Camp Nou.

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

Hearing it this time, Sam could not help but feel the shivers.

This time, it sounded different. It sounded closer to the familiar 'Messi' 'Messi' chants that once used to blast through the old Camp Nou stadium anytime the magical Argentine did a moment of magic.

The adoration, the respect, the love, Sam could feel all of it.

Hearing it, he felt emotional.

Lamine Yamal slapped his back, laughing as he pushed him towards the fans. "Go thank them".

Sam briefly turned to glare at his friend but he didn't stop moving.

When he arrived before the fans, Sam waved. That simple gesture made the chants rise through the roof, turning into a howling cacophony.

'They're so simple to please, huh?' Sam smiled.

That game was memorable for him for multiple different reasons, he would never forget it.

And the next day, FC Barcelona finally made an announcement.

Sam was to finally inherit the No. 10 jersey that belonged to the legendary Lionel Messi, that was briefly worn by Ansu Fati.

That decision resulted in another mass celebration across the FC Barcelona fanbase. They were having the time of their lives.

And then, life moved on.

Afterall, the 2025/2026 football campaign was already in the deep end.

With the Copa del Rey semifinal first leg clash out of the way, D-day for another FC Barcelona game soon came.

(La Liga:)

(Barcelona – Real Sociedad)

(Date: 2nd March, 2026)

Another Spanish La Liga game in which Sam starred.

After the epic clash against Atletico Madrid in the semifinal of the Copa del Rey, the squad had up to 7 days of rest, more than enough time for the team to prepare adequately for the game.

Once again, for this game, Hansi Flick tweaked his formation as he was eager to rest some of his players for more important games.

Starting in their regular 4-2-3-1 formation, the attacking trio was the same with Raphinha, Sam, and Lamine Yamal in attack.

In attacking midfield, Hansi Flick rested Gavi, starting Dani Olmo.

And then further back in midfield, Hansi Flick finally made the big decision, resting Pedri as he started both Eric Garcia and Frankie De Jong.

Gerard Martin took Alejandro Balde's position in left back, while the rest of the defense remained untouched; Inigo Martinez, Pau Cubarsi, and Jules Kounde all starting with Marc Andre Ter Stegen in between the posts.

Against this FC Barcelona side, Real Sociedad came to the Spotify Camp Nou with bold intentions, with the belief that they could get something home.

It didn't work though.

The midfield was shaky, yes. Gerard Martin was not exactly reliable, yes, but none of that was able to stop the churning FC Barcelona machine.

Sam turned provider for the first goal in the 31st minute, setting up Eric Garcia to score a simple goal.

And then in the second half, in the 64th minute, Raphinha flashed a cross across the face of goal that Sam pounced on, lashing on to tap into an empty net.

2 more goal contributions to his tally for the season.

Sam won another man of the match award.