

## Football God 50

Chapter 50: Semifinal battle against the Egyptian giants, Al Ahly [1]

Sam may have had a lot of thoughts that bothered him before, but the call from his dad was the magic, helping him shelve all the worries in his mind.

And with all the worries gone, he could focus on his football.

And this time, the focus was narrowed on one game, the semi-final game of the CAF champions league that would take place against the Egyptian footballing giant, Al Ahly in 12 days.

For the next few days, putting in even more work alongside his captain as their friendship grew, the games continued coming.

And with the team in such terrific form, as the schedule came, so did they tick the games away with outstanding results.

Enyimba FC was still in ferocious form in the league, maintaining monopoly over the league table top all the way from January despite their exploits in the champions league also eating into their time and preparations.

After 2 more impressive results in the league, time moved fast and in no time, it was the D-day, semi-final day was here.

Coach Yemi Daniel did well to rest his players in the game leading to the semi-final, the semi-final took precedence over every other game.

That day, Sam called his best friend for the first time in a while. They talked about a lot of things, but he ended the call with just one demand. "Watch me today Ian, today is my moment and I'm going to seize it".

Ian grinned and nodded at his best friend. "I believe you".

Today's game was to be played in Enyimba FC's home stadium.

When the time came, alongside his teammates, Sam walked into the pitch of the Enyimba International Stadium as they were welcomed by the loud roar of their fans. The loud roar of the proud Enyimba FC fans was deafening.

To any Nigerian football club, making it to the quarter-finals of the CAF champions league was an achievement to be proud of, not to talk of the semi-finals.

The fans felt on top of the world and it showed from the noise.

After the toss of a coin by the referee, it was determined that Al Ahly would kick off the game and without hesitation, on the ref's signal, the game commenced.

FWEEEE!

From the first minute of the game, one thing became clear, the Egyptian giants didn't come to Nigeria to play conservative football.

Al Ahly came with the arrogant confidence of a team that regularly made to the later stages of the CAF Champions league. In this game, Enyimba FC were the underdogs and Al Ahly played like it.

Despite this arrogant boldness though, the Enyimba players did not let themselves get intimidated by it, all of them played their football.

Their terrific form since the beginning of the season already imbued these players with confidence, and even against Al Ahly, they played their best football.

A few players were in form on this day, buoyed by the loud voices of the home fans, and 2 names dominated, Austin Oladapo and Samuel Moses.

In the middle of the park, this duo played incredible football, complementing it with an unreal work rate as they helped Enyimba wrestle for superiority against the mighty Al Ahly in the midfield battle.

For the first 30 minutes of the game, it remained tight, no one creating clear cut chances yet as both teams locked down the midfield.

Yet, as the game grew on, the chants increased.

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

"Austin!" "Austin!" "Austin!"

And as the chants increased, the chemistry in the middle of that pitch increased as Sam and Austin simultaneously entered the zone state.

And with it, Enyimba FC finally started dominating possession.

Tiki-taka..., these 2 midfielders rotated in the middle of the pitch, playing short passes, dragging the Al Ahly formation left and right as they dictated play till in the 38th minute, a pass from Austin cut Al Ahly open.

Emeka ran through one-on-one with the Al Ahly goalkeeper but this man was on top of his game, producing an unreal save to deny the Enyimba center forward.

The first clear cut chance of the game was from Enyimba FC.

In the stands, the fans screamed in frustration.

Shortly after that sequence of play though, Al Ahly finally seemed to switch on as these players started running everywhere round the pitch, trying their best to impose themselves in their opponent's home.

Despite the immense work rate and several impressive displays in the first half, the game ended with a first half draw 0-0.

FWEEEE!

Once second half started though, the situation changed, Enyimba FC changed. Their formation didn't change, only the intensity.

As if they switched to an all-out attacking formation, multiple Enyimba FC players bombed down the Al Ahly half buoyed by the loud roars of their fans as they launched attacking raid after raid on the opposition box.

And finally, in the 62nd minute, the deadlock was broken, by a familiar name.

Receiving a cutback pass from his winger just outside the box, in the zone state already, Sam took one delicate touch to control the ball before rifling it with his powerful right leg into the bottom left corner.

The goalkeeper dived but he stood no chance.

In the 62nd minute, Enyimba FC finally scored, courtesy of a moment of individual brilliance from their star midfielder.

"GOALLL...!" Sam pumped his fists in the air, celebrating excitedly.

FWEEE!

Once the game restarted though, Al Ahly came roaring out like Dragons, no longer content in sitting back and defending in the second half.

Exactly 10 minutes later, in the 72nd minute of this game, the Egyptian giants finally stung as their number 10. Scored a similar goal to Sam's, rifling an incredible outside the box shot into the bottom left corner.

"GOALLLL...!" The Al Ahly players celebrated exuberantly.

The game restarted as Enyimba FC kept on pushing for the winner, buoyed by their fans. Against Al Ahly, it was hard but their will prevailed in the end.

In the 84th minute of the game, it was another moment of individual brilliance. After playing a series of one-two passes with his captain just right outside the box, Sam dribbled into the Al Ahly box with deadly intent.

Opposition players swarmed him but undaunted, Sam weaved his way through them using body feints, his physicality, and quick feet like a rugby player forcing his way through opponents.

And then, after penetrating deep enough, just as the Al Ahly goalkeeper charged out to meet him, Sam hit the ball left into empty space, the only empty space now inside the 6-yard box.

Having followed him throughout their time of playing one-two passes, Austin stayed running and at this moment, this midfielder got a free tap-in goal.

Bam!

The net rippled.

"GOALLL...!" Austin celebrated loudly, feeling on top of the world as he pointed at Sam before jumping on his body excitedly.

They Enyimba FC fans celebrated wildly, they've won the game.

But when the game restarted, just a minute after that first goal, the Al Ahly left winger bombed down the pitch before throwing a teasing cross in.

The ball floated above all the Enyimba FC players to the midfielder lurking at the right, this player unleashed a lethal volleyed shot at goal!

Bam!

Ojo, the Enyimba FC goalkeeper was rooted to the spot, only watching as the ball zoomed past him and into the net.

Goal...!

2-2!

The semi-final first leg game was a total thriller, it ended 2-2 as Sam scooped up the man of the match award after his incredible performance.

