

Greatest 581

Chapter 581 One More Win in the Serie A

Zachary didn't immediately leave Bergen after saying his goodbyes to Mr. Stein, the old scout. Instead, he headed to a nearby restaurant with Kristin and Lorenzo, where they enjoyed a sumptuous lunch together.

They discussed various topics while eating and only finished the food an hour later, at around 1:30 PM. They said their goodbyes outside the restaurant and parted ways soon after, with Kristin returning to the hospital to stay with his grandpa.

Zachary, on his part, immediately left the peaceful Bergen with his bodyguard. He headed to the private airstrip and boarded the private chartered jet back to Italy. Their flight was quick and without any issues, and they arrived in Turin three and a half hours later, at around six in the evening.

After exiting the aircraft, Zachary boarded his Audi RS7, driven by his bodyguard Lorenzo. They left the airport and set off for his mansion in Penarol, Piedmont. They cruised at a not-so-speedy pace and arrived about an hour later when evening had just cast its dusky gown over Turin.

Zachary thanked his bodyguard and immediately moved to enter his mansion. He walked through his grand and richly planted courtyards that were like a piece of art under the illumination of the fluorescent lights. He continued moving forward as he felt his mood lighten before entering the house from the side entrance.

He found Jaslene, one of the housemaids, doing some chores in the kitchen. He greeted her with a smile before continuing and entering the lavish-looking living room area.

There, he saw Coach Bjørn Peters, his fitness trainer, who lived with him. The buff guy was chatting with Inger, the wife, as they followed a cooking show on TV. On hearing Zachary's footsteps, they both turned and glanced his way.

"Zachary, you're already back from Norway!" Inger was the first to break the silence with an exclamation. "Welcome back."

"Thanks," Zachary replied and placed his bag on the side. He then greeted Coach Bjørn Peters as he walked into the living room area and settled into one of the rocking chairs.

"You must be exhausted and hungry," the ever-caring Inger said. "I'll prepare something delicious for you to eat. It won't take long." Then, without waiting for Zachary to respond, she rushed off to the kitchen to follow through with what she had just said.

Coach Bjørn Peters looked at her disappear behind the door and turned to face Zachary. "She's quite a good chef. Isn't she?"

"Yes, she is," Zachary replied with a sincere smile. "Thank you for bringing her along to become my chef. I've long graduated from eating substandard food ever since she arrived."

Coach Bjørn Peters smiled back and said, "At least you're honest. She's the best thing that has ever happened in my life." The coach then glanced at Zachary with a strange smile and inquired, "Have you thought of getting a wife of your own?"

Zachary's lips twitched at the corners. "Not at the moment. But I will do the needful when I meet the right person."

Coach Bjørn Peters nodded. "I used to see you with that beautiful lady. What was her name again? It was Camilla, I think. But it has been months since I last saw her. What happened?"

"Things didn't work out, and she left," Zachary said, sighing. "She even got a job far away in Australia."

"Oh, sorry to hear that. But I'm guessing a few months should have elapsed since you separated. Haven't you thought about getting yourself a new girlfriend? She doesn't have to be someone you'll really marry. But she can be someone beautiful and caring that can occasionally take your mind off the stressful day-to-day stuff. Don't you think so?"

Zachary's eyes flashed with a strange light. He leaned back in his seat, wondering why the coach was so talkative about relationship stuff today. He sighed again and said, "I don't wish to enter a relationship to only play around. I'll have to continue waiting until I meet the right person."

If there was one thing that his time with Camilla had taught him, it was that relationships could really get tedious and complicated if genuine feelings were not involved. As such, he had long promised himself that his next relationship would only be with a girl he really loved.

Coach Bjørn Peters sighed after hearing Zachary's response. "I think phrases like 'meeting the right person' and 'encountering a girl one really loves' are overrated in real relationship matters. Remember, love is a choice and a decision because your actions determine if it lives on or ends."

"Instead of waiting for a girl that will give you butterflies and make your heart race, why not go out there and pick yourself a beautiful one with a good character? Then, you can slowly learn and grow to love her as time passes. And I'm sure that if you do your utmost to care for her, she'll also eventually grow to love you back."

Zachary chuckled and shook his head with helplessness. "Why do you sound like a relationship guru today? Why are you giving me so much 'Love Doctor' advice?"

Coach Bjørn Peters grinned. "I'm just trying to be there for my client and friend in a positive way. Aside from advancing your football career, I would also love to see your progress in personal matters. By the way, are you from visiting Mr. Stein in the hospital?"

"Yup." Zachary nodded.

"How's the old scout doing?"

"Not so good," Zachary responded. "He can still converse. But from what I heard from Kristin; his liver has severe problems."

Coach Bjørn Peters sighed and said, "That's too bad. The scout used to be one of the caring ones. He discovered many talents from around the world and brought them to clubs in Scandinavia. Rosenborg and the NF Academy you were previously in also benefited from him considerably. I hope he gets better soon."

"That's my wish, too," Zachary said. He then continued discussing with the fitness coach about inconsequential matters before eventually changing the subject to his personal training.

In particular, they discussed how he could avoid the usual end-of-season fatigue. They explored the prospect of altering the training plans already in place so as to allow him more time to rest during the last few weeks of the season. They also examined the notion of changing his diet to boost his energy levels with the appropriate food.

It was at that point that Inger brought the food. She gave it to Zachary and joined the conversation with her input as his professional chef. Everything progressed smoothly, and they devised a sketch of a training and dieting plan that could reduce his fatigue levels considerably by the time Zachary finished the food.

Zachary thanked the couple for everything after pushing his plate aside. He then exchanged some more small talk with them before picking up his hand luggage bag and heading to his bedroom upstairs.

He hoped to go to bed early and have a good rest. Then, he would have all the required energy to attend Juventus' training the following day.

As planned, Juventus' training resumed the following Friday morning. The two units continued training apart, with one preparing specifically for the Champions League semis against Borussia Dortmund, while another had its eyes on the proceeding Serie A match against Sampdoria.

Zachary was in the first unit since he was one of the best players (if not the best player) in Juventus. He didn't feel fatigued since he had relied on a comfortable private jet to travel to Norway and back. He was energetic the whole day as he went through drills targeted towards refining the tactics for the UEFA Champions League semi-final during the entire course of the day.

The hours on Friday flashed by quickly, and Saturday soon arrived. It was yet another match day for the Juventus team, and the players and technical staff arrived at the Vinovo at around nine.

They boarded their bus a few minutes later and set off for the Stadio Luigi Ferraris in Genoa to play against UC Sampdoria in their 34th Serie A battle of the season.

For that game, Coach Allegri maintained his intent of resting his crucial players for the UEFA Champions League semi-finals against Borussia Dortmund. He once again fielded a team with many second-stringers and opted to leave playmakers like Zachary, Andrea Pirlo, Carlos Tevez, and many others on the bench.

But even then, even with all the missing first-team names, Juventus still showed why they were the giants of Italy when the match commenced at 6:00 PM. The Old Lady players put up a solid performance characterized by zealous defensive tenacity and a few brilliant moments of counterattacking football to topple the tricky Sampdoria side.

Arturo Vidal, one of the few first-team players on the field that day, was the person who eventually exploited one of the rare chances of the game. After making a penetrating run from deep within the midfield, the Chilean outwitted the Sampdoria defense and got to the end of a long cross from Stephan Lichtsteiner. He rose into the air a few yards from the near post and ingeniously headed the ball past the keeper to score Juventus' one and only goal on the night during the 31st minute of gameplay.

After that, the Juventus players maintained their defensive tenacity and whittled down all the remaining minutes, with brilliant defensive efforts matched with an equal measure of counterattacking brilliance. They defended while keeping the Sampdoria players on tenterhooks until the final moment.

With that, they had maintained their 1:0 lead and won yet another Serie A game. They had also extended their season-long unbeaten run and pushed their Serie A tally to a whopping 96 points with four matches remaining to the end of the season. Their next order of business was to welcome Borussia Dortmund to the Juventus Stadium on the coming Tuesday for their first-leg battle of the UEFA Champions League semi-finals.

Chapter 582 First Leg of the UCL Semi-Final Against Borussia Dortmund

Tuesday, May 5th, 2015

Juventus Stadium, Turin, Italy.

Time: 8:40 PM.

Only five minutes were remaining before the first leg of the long-awaited UEFA Champions League semi-final battle between Juventus and Borussia Dortmund. The fans of both teams had already filled up the stands. They were cheering at the top of their lungs while eagerly waiting for the referee to blow the kick-off whistle.

On the pitch, proceedings were also moving forward smoothly. The players had just completed most of their pre-match routines. They were taking their positions while waiting for their captains to finish the mandatory coin toss that would mainly decide which side would kick off the game.

Zachary was obviously among the Juventus starting players. He had rested enough over the past ten days and was as fresh as ever. His energy levels were sky-high, and he was ready to do his best against Borussia Dortmund.

Zachary took his starting attacking midfield position right outside the center circle and started observing the Borussia Dortmund players on the other side of the pitch. He could see famous names from his previous life, like Ciro Immobile, Marco Reus, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, Henrikh Mkhitaryan, Ilkay Gündogan, and Mats Hummels, taking up their positions. They all looked sharp and ready to give their all during the game.

Zachary then turned to Borussia Dortmund's bench and saw another renowned and all-familiar figure from his previous life. The person in question was Jürgen Klopp in the flesh. He was the budding coach of Dortmund who would later manage Liverpool and guide them to Premier League and Champions League glory.

At the moment, Klopp was yet to reach his peak as a football tactician. But even then, he was already a tricky manager to play against since he had a knack for performing during big moments. Moreover, his game already had a flavor of the annoying gegenpressing that would later be his trademark tactic when he reached the peak of his career.

Zachary turned away from the German tactician while fully knowing that the game could be tricky with such an opponent overseeing things. He cast the irrelevant thoughts out of his head and did a few stretches. Then, just as his body warmed up again, he saw the referee initiating the motions to blow the whistle.

The game was about to commence, and Zachary could hear the cheers of the fans hitting a thunderous peak. The atmosphere turned volatile within seconds, tempting him to glance toward the stands. He immediately saw the Juventus fans displaying a tifo that was already lighting up the whole place with its visual imagery comprising of Juventus' traditional colors.

Zachary felt reassured after taking in the sight. He knew that Juventus' job for the semis was already half-done with the support of the fans behind the team. He smiled and returned his attention to the proceedings on the pitch.

The referee soon blew the whistle. On cue, the first leg of the UEFA Champions League semis commenced, with the early pace of the match rivaling the electric intensity inside the stadium.

The Juventus players grabbed the ball from the get-go and maintained possession during the early stages. They arrayed themselves into their 4-3-1-2 formation and exchanged intricate and well-timed passes. They relied on their midfield of Zachary, Andrea Pirlo, Arturo Vidal, and Claudio Marchisio to overwhelm the opponents and dictate the tempo for the first ten minutes.

On the other hand, the Borussia Dortmund players were not so quick to settle into the game. They couldn't even take advantage of their 4-3-3 formation to maintain possession or initiate any form of gegenpressing. They fell back and defended like some typical defensive-minded team while waiting for a chance to counterattack.

With Juventus attacking and Borussia Dortmund defending well, the game fell into a steady rhythm without any team creating clear chances on goal. However, all that changed when Claudio Marchisio played a well-timed through ball to Carlos Tevez during the 14th minute.

The on-form Carlos Tevez used his pace to race past Mats Hummels, the Dortmund center-back, before connecting with the through pass from Claudio Marchisio. Tevez then remained composed and hammered the ball goalward from around the edge of the box. He unleashed a shot towards the inside of the far post, hoping to score Juventus' 1st goal on the night.

However, Tevez's luck wasn't the best that night. The Dortmund keeper reacted and threw himself at the incoming ball. He punched it away from the goal and beyond the box.

It was at that moment that the strategic Ilkay Gündogan went into action. The German midfielder hurriedly collected the ball cleared by the keeper from around the edge of the box. He then played a first-time diagonal pass toward the left wing where Marco Reus, Dortmund's winger for the day, was lurking.

Marco Reus effortlessly controlled the ball close to the center line on the left flank before whirling around and setting off toward the other side of the pitch.

Speed like the wind, Marco skipped past Stephan Lichtsteiner, the Juventus right-back, before squaring the ball into the middle to find Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, the forward running in sync with him.

Aubameyang was just too sharp for Claudio Marchisio while connecting with the pass from Marco Reus. He met the ball with a simple mesmeric touch that took him past the Juventus midfielder. Then, without losing a moment, he played a pass forward to release Ciro Immobile, Dortmund's center-forward, on his way toward the goal.

"Whoosh!"

Immobile was like the wind as he beat the offside trap and controlled the ball mid-stride. He then took another touch and unleashed a goalward shot from around the edge of the box, hoping to score Dortmund's first on the night during the 15th minute.

Fortunately for Juventus, the ever-alert Gianluigi Buffon was on the pitch. The keeper reacted fast and punched the ball to safety and towards the left side of the box.

Patrice Evra, who was nearby, picked up the just-cleared ball. He then wasted no time before whirling around and beyond the reach of Henrikh Mkhitaryan, who was closing him down. And just as quickly, he played a forward pass towards the middle of the field to find Andrea Pirlo.

Andrea Pirlo also worked with the same urgency to advance another attack for Juventus. He evoked his Maestro sorcery and looped the ball over a crowd of players to find Zachary, who had just floated into the right wing.

Another blistering counter for Juventus was on, and Zachary did the needful. He pushed off the ground and controlled the ball with his chest without any pressure. He then turned around and set off for Dortmund's goal while speeding up like a Ferrari on a Formula One race track.

He soon met an obstacle in the form of Ilkay Gündogan, one of the Dortmund midfielders, while cutting into the pitch. But he remained composed and zoomed past the midfielder with a few step-overs followed by a simple change of pace.

Zachary then continued running at the Dortmund defenders while noting everything around him. He circumvented another defender as he approached the final third, and when the angle opened up, he played a well-timed forward pass to Carlos Tevez.

Carlos Tevez was quite ingenious on the striking line. He timed his run to perfection and beat Dortmund's offside trap. He raced through the gap between the opposing center-backs before connecting with Zachary's inviting pass.

All that remained at that moment was the telling touch, and Tevez showed his class and composure as a striker. He calmly drove the ball forward before kicking it goalward. He blasted it past the helpless Dortmund keeper and into the back of the net to score Juventus 1st goal for the day during the 16th minute.

The cheers hit another thunderous peak as Carlos Tevez ran to the touchline to celebrate the goal. They caused the already volatile atmosphere to become more explosive, with some fans even going as far as removing their shirts while yelling at the top of their lungs. They couldn't contain their excitement after their team drew first blood and scored the first goal in the UEFA Champions League semi-finals.

"Well, well, well," Ian Crocker, the commentator, said after the cheers started fading. "It's Juventus one, and Dortmund zero. After a few minutes of nerve-wracking counterattacks from both sides, the Turin-based team has finally found a breakthrough. They scored the first goal on the night through Carlos Tevez during the sixteenth minute. They have gotten the perfect start to this first leg of the UEFA Champions League semi-finals."

"Damn! The football over the past few minutes has been electric," Tony Gale, the other commentator, remarked. "We first saw Juventus launch an attack that set up Tevez for a one-on-one with the Dortmund keeper. However, the Argentine missed the opportunity and allowed the German outfit to launch their own counter."

"But the Dortmund players also wasted their counterattacking opportunity when Ciriaco De Rossi saw his shot saved by Buffon. That set up another counterattack for Juventus, which saw Zlatan Ibrahimovic work his magic on the right flank before cutting into the pitch and finding Tevez again. That time around, Tevez didn't miss. He remained composed and put the ball into the back of the net to score Juventus' 1st for the night."

Chapter 583 A Good and Bad First Half

The game continued after the celebrations.

It was as if the opening goal had injected another wave of energy into the Juventus players. They continued playing intricate passing football, characterized by slow build-ups leading to abrupt through passes into the heart of the opposing defense. Their 4-3-1-2 formation worked wonders, allowing them to control possession over the following few minutes.

The game then fell into a stable rhythm, with everything looking fine and dandy in the case of Juventus. But just as the 22nd minute approached, something unexpected transpired in the heart of the Old Lady's defense.

After receiving a backward pass from Andrea Pirlo, Giorgio Chiellini, one of Juventus' center-backs, was unlucky to slip while trying to play a routine long ball. The mistake cost his team greatly and allowed Marco Reus, Dortmund's winger who happened to be nearby, to take full advantage.

The crafty Marco Reus wasted no time pouncing on the loose ball before any other Juventus defenders could react. He then used his pace to cut into the box before slotting a curling shot past Gianluigi Buffon. His effort was spot on, and he found the inside of the far post to score the first and equalizing goal for Dortmund during the 22nd minute.

"Well, that came out of nowhere," Ian Crocker, the commentator, said as Marco Reus ran to the sidelines to celebrate the goal. "Juventus has been dominating proceedings ever since they scored the opening goal. But one blunder of Giorgio Chiellini, their center-back, gifted the opponents a rare chance to score and bring proceedings back to square one. The score is now 1:1. A game of football can really change within moments."

"Indeed," Tony Gale, the other commentator, concurred. "The goal is even more significant for Dortmund since it's a crucial away goal that can determine whether they qualify if they tie the aggregate score after the second leg of these semi-finals. Unless Juventus scores another goal, the German outfit will head into the second leg with a clear advantage."

In the meantime, the game resumed with a Juventus kick-off. The Old Lady players didn't allow the unexpected goal they conceded to affect them in any way. They stuck to the game plan and continued dictating the tempo with brilliant exchanges, especially in the middle.

Zachary, in particular, became more active. He was constantly on the move in the midfield and occasionally floating into the wings while exchanging passes with his teammates. His ingenious and dynamic playing style brought calm and confidence to his team. It also allowed Juventus to take back control of the game.

Juventus then continued dictating the tempo as the game approached the 30th minute. They even started creating clear goal-scoring chances, with Carlos Tevez coming close to scoring with a header during the 32nd minute and Álvaro Morata wasting a one-on-one opportunity against the Dortmund keeper three minutes later.

The Dortmund players, on their part, remained defensive for most of the game and only launched occasional counterattacks. Due to Juventus' dominance on the field, they didn't even get opportunities to execute Coach Jürgen Klopp's signature gegenpressing. They mostly remained in their half while holding on for dear life against Juventus' relentlessness.

A few minutes passed in that manner, and just when the game was approaching the 40th minute, another momentous change happened. Zachary, who had just floated into the right wing, used his pace to break past Marcel Schmelzer, Dortmund's left-back for the day. He then raced along the touchline on the right side of the pitch before cutting towards the box, momentum like a whirlwind.

Mats Hummels, the Borussia Dortmund captain and center-back, soon came forward to mark him. The defender didn't rush in wholesale. Instead, he approached with caution while aligning his body to block Zachary from cutting past him and into the pitch.

Zachary read Hummels' intent within seconds as he sped forward. He didn't try to dribble and cut into the pitch, as that would slow down the attack. He instead drew back his leg and unleashed a curling chip towards the box where Álvaro Morata was lurking.

In the box, Álvaro Morata reacted instantaneously. He sped forward and raced into the unmarked pocket of space before Sokratis Papastathopoulos, the other Dortmund center-back. The Spaniard then pushed off the ground and headed the ball goalward, intending to score Juventus' second goal on the night.

"BAM!"

The sound of the header smashing against the crossbar reverberated the next moment. Álvaro Morata's effort had missed the mark by centimeters, and the ball had just bounced off the bar before rebounding into the box.

Morata witnessed all this and reacted instinctively. He pounced towards the rebounded ball with all the haste he could muster. But unfortunately for him, he saw Sokratis Papastathopoulos, the Dortmund center-back, clear it away from the box before he could cover half the distance.

In the meantime, the just-cleared ball soared into the air with a whooshing sound before descending into the middle third, close to the center circle. Andrea Pirlo, who happened to be close by, pounced towards it. He then rose in the air and battled an overly zealous Ilkay Gündogan before heading the ball back toward Dortmund's box.

Andrea Pirlo went to the ground while clutching his calf after heading the ball. The aerial battle against Ilkay Gündogan or his poor landing had probably caused him an unexpected injury.

The referee saw all this. But he waved for the game to continue and played an advantage when he saw Zachary collect the ball headed by Andrea Pirlo at the border of the final third.

Zachary, on his part, didn't think twice before advancing the attack. He brought the ball to the ground within an instant before executing a Marseille turn to skip past Henrikh Mkhitaryan, one of the Dortmund midfielders.

Zachary then accelerated to top speed within seconds and approached Dortmund's box while using his SS-graded spatial awareness to keep a handle on what was around him. As he continued running, he saw Tevez making a penetrating dash on the left side of the box. He also caught a glimpse of Álvaro Morata, who had just returned from the offside position and was already waiting near the area for an opportunity.

Zachary caught all the details as he ran at Dortmund's defense. The gears in his mind turned, and he exchanged a one-two with Morata before breaking into the area from the right edge of the box.

At that point, the space had opened up, and only the keeper remained between him and the goal. Not wishing to take unnecessary risks, he took one more touch to draw in the keeper before squaring the ball to Carlos Tevez, who was running in sync with him.

The pass left the keeper and the whole defense out of sorts. It also allowed Tevez to receive the ball unmarked close to the goal. He extended his leg and tapped into the back of the empty net to score Juventus' second for the night during the 41st minute.

The score was then 2:1 in favor of Juventus. But the Old Lady players, including Tevez, the goal scorer, didn't head to the sidelines to celebrate the goal. Instead, they all rushed towards the center circle, where Andrea Pirlo was still painfully clutching his calf as if injured.

On cue, the Juventus medics all rushed on the pitch, hoping to provide first aid and get the Maestro back into the game. But their expressions soon turned somber as they realized Pirlo's injury wasn't light. They wasted no time signaling Coach Max Allegri, who started preparing for an appropriate substitution.

A few more minutes passed, and the medics finally helped Andrea Pirlo off the pitch. Their initial assessment was that he had sprained the calf muscle of his right leg. However, they had to do more tests to determine the extent of the damage and how fast he could recover.

Roberto Pereyra immediately came on for the injured Pirlo. The game continued immediately after, with the Juventus players playing more defensively. They all fell back and started weathering the attacks from Dortmund, intending to guard and maintain their 2:1 lead up to halftime.

However, all that changed when a failed attack from Dortmund presented Zachary with the perfect opportunity to counterattack during the 45th minute. He collected a loose pass from one of the

Dortmund players before twisting and turning to create some space he could utilize. Then, without wasting a second, he looked up and unleashed a racking pass toward the other side of the pitch with the outside of his boot.

His ingenious pass immediately removed the Dortmund midfield and defense from the equation. It flew through the air unimpeded before landing in front of Carlos Tevez, who had long initiated a daring run towards the other side of the pitch.

The counterattack was on, and Carlos Tevez timed his run perfectly without being offside. He was like the wind as he headed the ball forward and past Mats Hummels, the Dortmund center-back. Without slowing down, he continued running while driving the ball onwards with his head.

He eventually brought the ball to the ground after leaving Mats Hummels in the dust. He sprinted forward and then rounded the keeper, who had come out of goal to meet him before sending a shot into the back of the empty net to score Juventus 3rd goal on the night during the 45th minute.

The score was then 3:1 in favor of Juventus, the highlight being that Carlos Tevez had scored all three goals. The Argentine couldn't hide his happiness after finally completing the hat trick. He yelled at the top of his voice while running towards the sidelines to celebrate.

Zachary was also in a good mood, as he had provided all the assists that resulted in all three goals. He was even more delighted when he joined Tevez and his other teammates to celebrate on one side of the pitch. He also couldn't suppress the joy of being part of a winning team.

Chapter 584 Breaking Through the Gegenpressing

The referee blew the whistle for halftime soon after the goal celebrations. The players of both teams immediately headed to their respective dressing rooms for the break.

The Juventus players couldn't contain their happiness since they were already leading by a 3:1 score. Most were all smiles, while a few continuously cracked jokes as they walked toward the dressing room.

On the other hand, the Borussia Dortmund players were in low spirits. They walked with contorted expressions as they traversed the tunnel and eventually arrived in the visitor's dressing room. They then remained silent and gloomy while waiting for their coach's halftime address.

Coach Jürgen Klopp, who had arrived earlier, clapped his hands to draw their attention. He narrowed his eyes and said, "That was a terrible first half."

"We were supposed to use counter-pressing tactics to choke their build-ups before they transitioned into their midfield play. But we didn't work hard to do any pressing up the pitch. We allowed the Juventus defenders and midfielders to play at their own pace. The result is the three goals we conceded during the first half." At this, the coach shook his head.

"Before the game, I emphasized the need for counter-pressing to win against Juventus. When we lose possession, we must run at them like mad and force them to commit errors. We must not give them any second to settle down and pick any of their midfielders or initiate a counter. We must struggle hard to win back the ball and launch another immediate attack against them. The strategy is simple, and it's how we stop Juventus."

Jürgen Klopp's expression turned somber. He spent the next few minutes pointing out the mistakes committed by his players during the first half. He then gave them tips to improve their game as a team before sending them back to the pitch for the second half.

The second half started after the fifteen-minute break, with the Dortmund players exhibiting more energy and spirit on the playing field. They were more active than they were during the first half and fought with their all to win possession during the first few minutes. Then, after getting hold of the ball, they raced out of their half and immediately launched an attack against Juventus' defense.

Ilkay Gündogan was the initiator of the attack. He collected a loose ball close to the center circle and found Henrikh Mkhitaryan, his counterpart in midfield, with a brilliant pass through the middle. His through ball was perfect, and he set Mkhitaryan up for a one-on-one against Arturo Vidal high up the pitch.

Henrikh Mkhitaryan, on his part, played brilliantly and escaped the harassment of Vidal with a well-timed first touch followed by an abrupt 180-degree turn. He then unleashed a first-time lofted diagonal pass towards the left wing, where Marco Reus was lurking.

Marco Reus controlled the ball with his chest in the wing before twisting and turning to skip past Stephan Lichtsteiner, Juventus' right-back for the day. The winger then sprinted along the touchline on the left flank before unleashing a cross towards the box from around the border of the final third.

The tricky lofted ball flung Juventus' box into a volatile state, with Ciro Immobile and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang simultaneously going into action.

The two forwards battled the Juventus defenders, hoping to connect with the incoming cross. They were doing everything possible to get their team a 2nd goal. They wished to reduce the score difference between them and Juventus to only one goal.

But try as they had, their efforts soon became fruitless due to Leonardo Bonucci's game-reading brilliance. The center-back read the incoming cross like an open book before clearing the ball away from the area and towards the left wing.

Patrice Evra, Juventus' left-back, collected the just cleared ball, intending to pass and initiate a counter against Dortmund. But no sooner had he taken a touch than two Dortmund players rushed towards him, all guns blazing as if they wished to commit murder.

Not wishing to lose possession, Patrice Evra acted quickly and passed the ball back to Gianluigi Buffon, the keeper.

Buffon controlled the ball well, close to his goal. But before he could take a second touch, Ciro Immobile, the Dortmund forward, rushed toward him with a speed rivaling that of a predator on the hunt.

Buffon reacted as any experienced keeper and also passed the ball quickly. He played it into the right wing to find Stephan Lichtsteiner, Juventus' right-back.

Stephan Lichtsteiner was comfortable while receiving the ball. But before he could do anything with it, he faced the same problem, eerily similar to what his two teammates had just gone through. Within a blink, he saw Marco Reus, Dortmund's left-winger, closing him down like there was no tomorrow.

Stephan Lichtsteiner hurried to release the ball into the middle towards Claudio Marchisio. But his unsettled mind, mainly caused by the fast-approaching Marco Reus, affected his accuracy, and the pass went slightly off the mark. The ball didn't find its intended target but floated into a pocket of space close to Ilkay Gündogan, the Dortmund midfielder.

On the sidelines, Coach Max Allegri witnessed all this and shook his head. His heart wasn't at ease as he had just seen Borussia Dortmund executing the gegenpressing strategy common in some top teams in Germany.

The strategy was all about counter-pressing. At its core, it required a team to win the ball back from the opposition immediately after losing it, preferably in advanced areas of the pitch.

Dortmund had just done that and forced three Juventus players to commit a few errors. They used their pressing to pressure the opponent and win back the ball immediately after they lost it in advanced areas. Moreover, they had just launched another offensive before Juventus' defense could reorganize itself.

Coach Max Allegri's eyes narrowed as he saw Ilkay Gündogan, the midfielder who had just collected the loose ball, feed it straight into the heart of Juventus' defense. The midfielder effortlessly picked out Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, who had already made a spirited run on the right side of Juventus' box.

Aubameyang, on his part, gathered the ball mid-stride with a brilliant touch that took him past Giorgio Chiellini, Juventus' center-back. Then, without losing a second, he drew his leg back and unleashed a carpet shot towards the bottom left corner.

Fortunately for Juventus, Buffon was once again alert. He reacted brilliantly and dived to punch the ball away from the goal and back into the pitch.

Ciro Immobile, the center-forward lurking in the box, pounced towards the loose ball. The striker moved like an assassin and slid in all guns blazing before kicking it back towards the goal.

Coach Max Allegri felt his heart start to race as he witnessed everything. Time seemed to freeze in his eyes as the ball from Ciriaco De Simone rolled towards the goalline. But just as he was about to break from pressure, a yellow boot abruptly appeared at the last minute and blocked the ball.

Coach Max Allegri let out a breath he didn't know he was holding. He relaxed as his eyes registered that Stephan Lichtsteiner, Juventus' right-back, had acted on time and saved Juventus from conceding the 2nd goal during the 49th minute. Moreover, the defender had also sent the ball away towards the middle third to clear the danger.

"At least we can have a few seconds to relax and reorganize." The thought flashed through Coach Allegri's head as he saw the ball soar above the pitch. He breathed another sigh of relief and prepared to give tactical instructions to his on-pitch players.

But right then, Coach Allegri stopped whatever he was planning when he saw Zachary, his best player, pounce towards the ball that had started descending. His eyes lit up when he witnessed the boy wonder controlling the ball with his chest.

Nuri Sahin, the player playing as Dortmund's defensive midfielder, immediately raced towards Zachary to close him down. However, the latter reacted calmly by spinning around and executing a swift Marseille turn with the ball sticking to his left boot.

The cheers and whistles from Juventus' home fans reached another peak as Zachary completed the move with grace to spin around and away from the opponent. Even more yells of excitement sounded when the boy wonder accelerated to top speed within a second and started racing toward the other side of the pitch like a bullet train on the rails.

Juventus had finally broken through Borussia Dortmund's gegenpressing, and the counterattack was on for the first time during the second half. Zachary continued sprinting forward, doing what he always did best. His long strides consumed yards of space like nothing as he cut through the middle like a specter.

He eventually drove deep into the opposing half and slalomed his way past Sokratis Papastathopoulos, the Dortmund center-back. He then remained composed and played a pass forward to release Álvaro Morata, who had just made a spirited run towards the box.

Morata timed his run well and connected with the ball from Zachary without being offside. He then took another touch and stepped into the box before slotting the ball past the keeper with a well-timed chip. His effort found the back of the net, and with that, he scored Juventus' 4th goal on the night during the 50th minute.

Chapter 585 Concluding A Masterclass of Football Against Dortmund

Juventus FC 4: Borussia Dortmund 1

The stadium's jumbotron showed a fresh score when the game resumed with Dortmund's kick-off. The mood became more electric, with the Juventus fans continuously cheering at the top of their lungs as the match continued. It was like party time in the Juventus Stadium, with the fans already celebrating their likely qualification for the UEFA Champions League final.

"Juve...We're finalists," The zealous supporters shouted again and again. They sang while jumping up and down like little kids who had just received their favorite birthday presents. They couldn't suppress their joy as their team was already leading by a score of 4:1 in the first leg of the Champions League quarter-final against Borussia Dortmund.

In the meantime, the game had taken a strange turn.

The 4th goal was like the last straw that broke the camel's back in the case of Borussia Dortmund. It sapped the life out of the players of the German-based team and caused them to lose the fighting spirit and momentum they had just gained during the second half. Their football turned chaotic without organized tactics, and they started committing many mistakes on the playing field.

Jürgen Klopp, the head coach of Borussia Dortmund, yelled and yelled repeatedly, hoping to use his passionate shouts to re-energize his players. But his boys seemed oblivious to his efforts. They continued playing hopeless football and showed very little zeal to accomplish anything on the playing field.

Under the urging of their coach, the on-form Juventus players obviously didn't miss the signs. They swarmed forward and took advantage of Borussia Dortmund's laxity to go on the offensive. They started playing faster and faster passes through the middle while, at times, unleashing sudden through balls toward their two men on the striking line.

As the game approached the 70th minute, the game became even more one-sided, with Juventus becoming increasingly more dominant on the playing field.

In particular, the Juventus midfielders, like Zachary, Arturo Vidal, Claudio Marchisio, and the substitute - Roberto Pereyra, played the football of their lives. Their intricate exchange of passes and brilliant usage

of space in the middle allowed Juventus to set a blistering tempo against the German outfit. They outwitted the Borussia Dortmund midfielders and began creating more goal-scoring chances.

Juventus' hard work first showed signs of bearing fruits again during the 74th minute, when Zachary dribbled past Ilkay Gündogan and broke into the final third with yet another penetrating run. Zachary then tried his luck from 32 yards away and unleashed a missile of a shot towards the goal. But the keeper saved his effort, and the score remained 4:1 in favor of Juventus.

Two minutes later, during the 76th minute, Juventus got another clear chance when Fernando Llorente, the substitute striker, got to the end of a cross from Patrice Evra. Llorente outwitted Dortmund's lax defense and dispatched a header towards the goal from around the penalty spot. But like before, luck wasn't on Juventus' side, and the ball smashed off the post before heading out of play.

The missed chance didn't discourage the Juventus players, who were already brimming with killing intent. They continued playing direct offensive football to force their opponents into more dire straits until they got a breakthrough during the 81st minute.

Everything started with Stephan Lichtsteiner, Juventus' right-back for the day. He played brilliantly on the right flank and beat Marcel Schmelzer, the Dortmund right-back. Lichtsteiner left the opposing defender in the dust and raced forward before unleashing a curling cross towards the box.

In the box, the lurking Fernando Llorente went into action. He rose from the ground and met the cross from Lichtsteiner with a well-timed header. He effortlessly outwitted the Dortmund defenders and guided the ball toward the goal.

However, the keeper reacted on time and punched the effort back into the pitch. The nearby Mats Hummels completed the defensive play by sweeping the ball away from the box and sending it toward the center of the pitch.

Leonardo Bonucci, the Juventus center-back who had been playing so high up the pitch during the past few minutes, collected the cleared ball. He effortlessly brought it to the ground with his chest before feeding it into the left wing to find Patrice Evra, Juventus' left-back for the day.

Patrice Evra also worked with urgency. He took a single touch before squaring the ball to Roberto Pereyra in the middle.

Roberto Pereyra also received it and played a first-time pass to Arturo Vidal, his counterpart in midfield.

Arturo Vidal continued the fluid passing football by immediately playing the ball to Zachary, who had floated into a narrow pocket of space before the box.

Zachary rushed forward as if about to collect the ball while taking note that Sokratis Papastathopoulos, the Dortmund defender, was on his heels. He raised his leg as if he was about to control it. But at the very last instant, he stopped his actions and let it pass under his foot.

Zachary's 'no-touch' brilliant play took Sokratis Papastathopoulos out of the equation and allowed the lurking Fernando Llorente to collect the ball unmarked. The Juventus forward wasted no time taking another touch before hammering the ball past the keeper and into the back of the net to score Juventus' 5th goal on the night during the 82nd minute.

The score was then 5:1 in favor of Juventus. But the home team didn't put a foot on the braking pedal. Buoyed by the thunderous support from their fans, they continued launching even more attacks until they created another opportunity late in the game during the 91st minute.

Once again, Zachary worked the magic in the middle of the field when a passing mistake by Nuri Sahin, Dortmund's defensive midfielder, allowed him to collect a loose ball close to the border of the final third. He didn't waste a second before playing a forward ball toward the left side of the box, right into the sprinting path of Roberto Pereyra, his counterpart in midfield.

Roberto Pereyra seemed to be having a time of his life on the playing field. He timely beat the offside trap and connected with the inviting pass from Zachary.

Without losing his composure, he left Lukasz Piszczek, Dortmund's right-back, in the dust and drove into the box with a terrifying pace. He squared his body and chipped the ball over the approaching keeper to score Juventus' 6th goal on the night during the 91st minute.

The score was then 6:1 in favor of Juventus, and the home team players finally started showing signs of fatigue. They slowed down the tempo and started playing pointless possession football until the referee blew the final whistle after four minutes of added time.

Proceedings had finally come to a close. The Juventus players were all over the moon in delight after showcasing a football masterclass against Borussia Dortmund in the crucial first leg of the UEFA Champions League semi-final fixture. They were all smiles as they had already secured a five-goal advantage before heading into the second leg in Germany.

Zachary, on his part, was also in a good mood.

Yes, he hadn't scored, which was a bit unfortunate. But he was still content with being involved in all the goals and providing five assists during the just-concluded game. A grin was already outlining his face as he went around the pitch to thank the Juventus fans while at times stopping to hug his teammates.

"Mr. Klopp! What exactly happened out there? Why was it so easy for Juventus to play through your boys?" A reporter asked Jürgen Klopp during the post-match press conference.

Jürgen Klopp sighed and shook his head. "Honestly, I'm not sure myself. We started the game okay and even got ourselves a crucial away goal early. But after that, we seemed to switch off, and everything started going downhill. We allowed their midfielders a lot of freedom. And since they had a player as brilliant as Zachary Bemba overseeing things, they effortlessly punished us. The result is a 6:1 score in their favor."

"Speaking of Zachary," the reporter said, "He didn't score. But he was the best player on the pitch. He was involved in most crucial plays and even provided five assists that resulted in goals. Didn't you have any strategy to contain him at the beginning of the game?"

On hearing the question, Jürgen Klopp sighed and shook his head again. "All I can say is that Juventus was far better than us on the field of play. They showcased a football master class and outwitted us in many areas of the field. We also didn't do enough and allowed their players, like Zachary and Tevez, to punish us. That's why the score ended 6:1 in favor of Juventus."

"One last question," the reporter said before Klopp could walk away. "Do you think you still have a chance to overturn the result when Juventus visits you in Germany next week?"

"Of course," Jürgen Klopp replied. "The chance is obviously slim. But as a professional football team, we will do everything possible to grab it. We'll fight until the very end. And even if we fail, we won't have any regrets since we'll have already done our best to overturn this terrible first-leg score."

"Well, thank you, sir, for answering my questions," the reporter said. "I wish you all the best in your upcoming matches."

Jürgen Klopp nodded and turned to leave. He was in a hurry, maybe to meet his players.

Chapter 586 Result from The Other Semi-Final

The following day was a Wednesday. It was also an off day for the Juventus players, who had just won the first leg of the UEFA Champions League semi-final battle against Borussia Dortmund by a whooping score of 6:1.

With that in mind, Zachary slept until late and only woke up long after sunrise at around 11:00 AM. He quickly went through his morning routine, including his yoga exercises, cleaning up, having breakfast, and chatting with Coach Bjørn Peters. Then, as the clock hands around Turin were about to point to the midday mark, he donned some of his better garments, including jeans, a T-shirt, and white sneakers, before heading out of the house towards his parked Audi RS7.

"Good afternoon, boss!" Lorenzo Riccardo, his bodyguard, greeted him as he approached. As usual, the buff guy was sporting an all-black attire, including a black suit, a long-sleeved T-shirt, shoes of the same color, and dark shades. He just looked suave and imposing as he stood there beside the vehicle.

"Good afternoon, Lorenzo," Zachary returned the guy's greeting with a smile. "You're smart again. You almost look like someone heading to a wedding reception."

"Thanks for the compliment, boss." Lorenzo grinned. He then gave Zachary a once over and said, "You're also smart in your own way, boss."

Zachary's lips twitched at the corners on hearing the compliment. He looked at his loose-fitting T-shirt paired with the faded black jeans and shook his head. "Let's head out," he said, not wishing to linger on

discussing fashion. "It's my off day today. I wish to spend some time visiting museums and other relaxing places today."

"Oh, okay," Lorenzo agreed. "Where are we heading to first, boss?"

"Let's start with the Armeria Reale, the Royal Armory of Turin," Zachary replied. "After touring the place, we'll plan from there and see where to go next."

"Okay, boss," Lorenzo naturally agreed.

The bodyguard took the steering wheel after Zachary settled in the back seat. He started the vehicle, and they soon set off and exited the mansion's gates.

An hour later, they arrived at the Armeria Reale, where Zachary spent another hour admiring art pieces, real cold weapons, and statues of knights from the past era. He had a great and relaxing time at the museum, with the only nuisances being some fans who were constantly interrupting him to ask for autographs or selfies with him.

At around two in the afternoon, he found a random cafe and enjoyed lunch with his bodyguard. But just as he finished eating and was about to leave the place and head to the next museum, more fans approached him and started asking the usual.

Zachary chose to remain accommodating since he was a public figure. He signed as many autographs as possible and posed for a few pics with the zealous fans. He only excused himself about an hour later with the help of the robust Lorenzo before getting into his vehicle.

They set off for the Museo Nazionale dell'Automobile, the next museum on their tour schedule. Zachary had already learned his lesson and done his best to conceal his face with a large hat and tinted glasses by the time they arrived. He didn't attract much attention and was at peace as he took his time to enjoy the collection of cars on display in the museum.

After another hour, Zachary left the automobile museum with a big smile. He felt content after seeing many classic Italian cars, like the Bernardi from 1896, the Fiat from 1899, the Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost from 1914, and the old racing cars by Ferrari and Alfa Romeo.

By then, the sun was already descending towards the west of Turin, and the clock hand on his watch was about to point to the 5:30 PM mark. After considering how the museums could close soon, he decided not to continue his tour. Instead, he instructed Lorenzo to drive him back to his mansion, where he spent most of the evening refining his skills in the system's GOAT Skills Simulator.

His evening hours passed quickly, and he soon enjoyed a sumptuous dinner prepared by Inger, his chef. He felt even more relaxed after enjoying the meal and glanced at his watch.

It was 8:20 PM, and the other UEFA Champions League semi-final between Barcelona and Bayern Munich would commence in twenty-five minutes.

Zachary hurried upstairs to his bedroom's comfy bathroom to shower. He finished cleaning up in only fifteen minutes before returning to the living room downstairs to catch the semi-final on his big screen.

Coach Bjørn Peters, the fitness coach who lived in the mansion, had already settled in one of the cozy sofas before the screen. Beside him was Inger, his wife, who also happened to be Zachary's live-in chef. On noticing Zachary enter, smiles lit up the couple's faces as they welcomed him with favor.

Zachary settled on another sofa and cracked jokes with them as he waited for the semi-final between Barcelona and Bayern Munich to commence. But since only five minutes remained before the big moment, he diverted some of his attention to check out the line-ups of the two teams on the screen.

He immediately saw all the famous names, including Lionel Messi, Neymar, Luis Suárez, Andrés Iniesta, Ivan Rakitic, Sergio Busquets, Jordi Alba, Gerard Piqué, Javier Mascherano, and Dani Alves, on Barcelona's starting line-up.

He then noticed that Bayern Munich had similarly put forward a strong line-up. He could see names like Robert Lewandowski, Thomas Müller, Juan Bernat, Xabi Alonso, Bastian Schweinsteiger, Philipp Lahm, Thiago Alcántara, Jérôme Boateng, Medhi Benatia, Rafinha, and Manuel Neuer on their starting list of players.

After displaying the line-ups, the view on the screen changed to show the technical areas of the two teams. Zachary first noticed some of the notable personalities sitting on Barcelona's bench, including Pedro, Xavi, and the equally famous Luis Enrique - the coach of Barcelona. As for Bayern, there were

substitutes like Mario Götze, Dante, Javi Martínez, and the renowned Coach Pep Guardiola, Bayern's manager.

"These two are all tough teams," Coach Bjørn Peters commented after seeing the players take their positions on the playing field. "Which among them would you prefer to meet in the finals?"

"Why are you asking him about the finals when he hasn't played the second leg?" Inger interrupted before Zachary could reply.

Coach Bjørn Peters scoffed at his wife. "Juventus won the first leg by a score of 6:1 yesterday. Could you also be like Jürgen Klopp, who believes that Dortmund still has a chance to overturn the result during the second leg?"

Inger scoffed back. "What do you know? I'm just looking out for Zachary. I don't wish us to pressure him with unnecessary considerations when he still has to play many more matches before playing the final."

"Do you think he's that delicate?" Coach Bjørn Peters said and turned away from his wife. He faced Zachary and asked again, "Do you prefer to meet Barcelona or Bayern Munich in the finals?"

Zachary was a bit amused after witnessing the couple's bantering. He smiled and replied, "As you said, both are tough teams with strong line-ups and equally brilliant managers. I'm okay with meeting any of the two."

"That's a good mindset," Coach Bjørn Peters agreed. "Finals are always something else, where even a weaker team can overpower a giant of Europe. So, it doesn't matter whether you meet Bayern or Barcelona. Instead, what is crucial is that you make do with the time available to make your best preparation for the final. When the day comes, do your best to win and leave everything else to a higher power."

"Indeed." Zachary nodded and focused his gaze on the screen. For the next ninety-plus minutes, he watched Barcelona display a brilliant performance to thrash Bayern by a score of 3:0 in the first leg of the other UEFA Champions League semi-finals.

The game started at a blazing tempo, with the Barcelona players begging for a penalty just minutes into the match after Jerome Boateng barged into Luis Suarez inside the box. The referee was unmoved. However, the fast start was a clear indication Barcelona meant business.

The hosts built on that momentum and soon overwhelmed the Munich-based team. Tiki-taka became the order of the night, and the incredible Lionel Messi quickly scored a brace inside the first 30 minutes to give Barcelona a deserved 2:0 lead during the first half.

Of course, the Bayern Munich players also had their moments, especially when some great work from Thomas Muller left Lewandowski unguarded within the box during the 36th minute. But the Polish international's header missed the mark, and the score remained 2:0 in favor of Barcelona.

The Bayern Munich players then fell back and defended while pushing for opportunities on the counterattack. But their defensive tenacity couldn't match Barcelona's attacking intensity, which had increased to an unbelievable level after halftime.

The Barcelona players played fine and fluid passing football to break through Bayern's Munich ranks many times. They even created several clear chances on goal. But they 'simply' couldn't put the ball past Neuer, who once again showed why he was among the nominees for the previous year's Ballon d'Or.

The score remained 2:0 in favor of Barcelona until injury time when the Bayern players tried to launch an offensive of their own but messed up terribly.

Things got worse for the Bavarians as Lionel Messi collected a loose pass after the failed attack before initiating a counterattack towards the other side of the pitch.

Lionel Messi dribbled past a few players before playing a forward pass to launch Neymar on a straight path towards the goal. The latter remained composed and rounded Neuer, the on-form Bayern keeper, before putting the ball into the back of the net to score Barcelona's third and final goal on the night.

Zachary sighed as he watched the referee blow the final whistle after five minutes of injury time. He could guess that Juventus would likely face Barcelona in the finals of the UEFA Champions League since the Catalans already had a three-goal advantage before playing the second leg. So, he had to start working hard with the rest of his teammates to prepare for the game.

Chapter 587 Against Cagliari

Three days later, on Saturday, May 9th, team Juventus welcomed Cagliari Calcio at their home ground for their 35th Serie A match that season.

Coach Max Allegri saw no need to rest all his players since Juventus already had a 6:1 advantage over Dortmund while heading into the following Wednesday's second-leg battle of the UEFA Champions League semis. He fielded a relatively strong squad with big names like Zachary, Claudio Marchisio, Arturo Vidal, and Carlos Tevez in the midfield.

The players he chose to rest on the day included the defenders, namely Patrice Evra, Stephan Lichtsteiner, Leonardo Bonucci, Giorgio Chiellini, and Álvaro Morata, the second-striker. Of course, he also left out the injured Andrea Pirlo, who had suffered a calf injury during the Dortmund game.

The game commenced at six in the evening, with Juventus playing as usual and pressuring Cagliari from the get-go. The men in the striped black and white jerseys arrayed themselves into a 4-3-3 attacking formation to break down the opponents with endless barrages of attacks. They exuded energy all over the pitch and didn't look like a team that had just played an intense Champions League semi-final only days ago.

Zachary, on his part, had a personal vendetta against the Cagliari fans, who had booed him with racist chants during the game at their home ground earlier in the season. He channeled the annoyance he felt for them into energy and momentum on the pitch. He relied on those negative feelings to drive himself to work harder against the opponents.

Soon enough, he was like an incarnation of a monster on the pitch. His stamina seemed endless as he played brilliant football to link up with his teammates while searching for opportunities to break through the opposition. His skills were also what one could call divine, and the opponents couldn't find a way to stop him.

His energy and dynamic playing style quickly motivated his teammates to play like him, and it wasn't long before Juventus started creating clear goal-scoring chances. They asked all the crucial questions on the field, with Carlos Tevez coming close to scoring during the 14th minute of gameplay. But a stunning save by the keeper denied the Argentine another goal in the Serie A.

The game continued after that, and Juventus launched another attack within a minute. Zachary won a ground duel against João Pedro, one of Cagliari's midfielders, before driving straight into the heart of the opposing defense. He slalomed past two more opponents with godly speed and well-timed step-overs before unleashing a missile from thirty yards away.

The Cagliari's keeper was again alert and managed to dive in for the save. On a full stretch, he got his hand on the powerful ball and punched it away from his goal.

Fernando Llorente, the ever-lurking striker in the box, reacted as he should on seeing the keeper make the save. He pounced towards the rebounded ball with all the haste he could muster before tapping into the back of the net to score Juventus' 1st goal on the night during the 16th minute.

The score was then 1:0 in favor of Juventus, but the Bianconeri continued playing as before. They built on their momentum and tore through Cagliari's defense time and time again, only to be denied by the keeper's stunning efforts.

The proceedings moved forward in that manner until some intelligent play by Carlos Tevez on the right flank allowed Zachary to find a breakthrough during the 37th minute.

Carlos Tevez was at the top of his game once again. He used his pace to leave Danilo Avelar, Cagliari's left-back, in the dust before cutting into the pitch. He approached the box from the right side and then sent a negative pass towards the arc of the eighteen-yard box, where Zachary was arriving.

Zachary didn't think twice before swinging his left boot to meet the pass from Tevez. His SS-grade core strength attribute and Rocket Launcher skills immediately came into play. He made a first-time connection with the ball and blasted it goalward with all the leg power he could muster.

"Whoosh!"

With a whoosh, the ball flew off like a surface-to-surface missile. It deflected off the leg of a Cagliari defender trying to block it before smashing off the crossbar and homing into the back of the net. As for the keeper, he couldn't react, one because of the deflection and two because of the sheer speed and momentum behind the effort.

The score was then 2:0 in favor of Juventus with only seven minutes to halftime. Usually, teams in such circumstances would slow the tempo and maintain the lead until the half ended. But this was not the case for Zachary and his teammates, who seemed to be out for blood.

The Old Lady players attacked and attacked during those seven minutes. Their efforts bore fruit, and Juventus tore apart the opposition twice before the end of the half. Zachary converted a free-kick during the 42nd minute to score the 3rd before Carlos Tevez added a 4th during the 45th to push the score to 4:0 right before halftime.

Coach Allegri, who was grinning from ear to ear, returned to his usual antics of resting players during the break. He substituted Zachary, Claudio Marchisio, and Carlos Tevez out of the game before bringing on Stefano Sturaro, Kingsley Coman, and Álvaro Morata.

The three substitutions weakened Juventus to a certain extent. But even then, Cagliari didn't get the better of the Bianconeri when the second half started.

Yes, the Old Lady players played at a slower tempo due to their missing playmakers. But they still managed to whittle away at Cagliari's defense with steady build-ups in the middle combined with brilliant moments of wing play by Kingsley Coman.

Kingsley Coman was especially at his best that evening. He won a couple of dribbling duels against the Cagliari left-back and sent a few crosses that almost resulted in goals.

Fernando Llorente was twice the beneficiary of those crosses. But the brilliant efforts of the Cagliari keeper saved the day and denied the Spaniard any opportunity to put his name on the score sheet yet again.

The game soon approached the 75th minute, with Juventus still dictating the tempo with steady possession. It was then that Cagliari took a corner but failed to convert.

The lurking Kingsley Coman immediately came alive to launch a counter. He collected the just-cleared ball from around the arc of the eighteen-yard box before initiating a foot race with the Cagliari players. He cut through the middle like a whirlwind and skipped over a tackle before playing a forward pass to release Álvaro Morata.

Álvaro Morata, who was still a bit fresh after only coming on as a substitute at halftime, didn't disappoint. He calmly connected with the pass from Kingsley before rounding the keeper and scoring Juventus' 5th goal for the night during the 76th minute.

The score was then 5:0 in favor of Juventus, and the situation was getting ugly for the Cagliari players, who showed no signs of recovery. Explore new **n**ovels on [novelbin\(.\)com](http://novelbin(.)com)

They played like amateurs for the rest of the game and continued committing mistakes in midfield and defense. They eventually gifted Juventus another goal during the 88th minute when a loose pass from one of their defenders ended up at the feet of Arturo Vidal, who was lurking in a strategic pocket of space in the final third.

Arturo Vidal remained composed and acted like the seasoned midfielder he was. He fed the ball back into the heart of Cagliari's defense to find Álvaro Morata, who showed his class as a striker and slotted past the keeper from the edge of the box to score Juventus' 6th on the night.

It was another football masterclass by the Juventus players, who continued working hard during the final minutes. They didn't do anything like playing defensive tactics against the weaker Cagliari team. They continued holding on to possession and launching more attacks until the referee blew the whistle after three minutes of added time.

With that, the Juventus players had won another game with a score of six goals. They had also pushed their tally in the Serie A to a whopping 99 points with three games to go before the end of the season. They even had a chance of breaking the 102-point record set by themselves the past season if they could grab four more points from their remaining fixtures.

As a player on such a team, Zachary was in a jolly mood as he moved around the pitch to thank the fans with his teammates. His spirits were already swimming in an ocean of happiness since he had displayed another brilliant performance in the Italian Serie A.

He had scored two more goals against Cagliari and pushed his goal tally for the Serie A season to 33. He was contented as he was already the top scorer and far ahead of the other candidates for the Golden Boot of that season.

Moreover, if he added his goals from the other competitions into the mix, his total for Juventus would rise to 56 goals in just a single season. Such a feat had already allowed him to win all the bonuses Juventus promised him when he signed the contract with the club. With all that in mind, he was even more happy knowing that millions of Euros would soon find their way into his bank account.

Chapter 588 Good Results from Two Games

Per usual practice, the Juventus players took a day off after winning the game against Cagliari. They spent their entire hours on Sunday resting before returning to the training ground on Monday morning.

The football season was in its late stages, and most coaches of top teams were already doing their best to reduce the intensity of the training schedules. They were trying not to burn out the energy of their players when there were still crucial tournaments, like the Champions League and their respective leagues, at stake.

Coach Allegri obviously had such considerations while designing the training for his players over the following two days. On Monday, he took them through only one hour of intensive training and discussed game tactics with them for another hour before sending them to rest for the day. He repeated the same routine on Tuesday, save for the fact that he didn't send the players back home in the afternoon.

The coach instead extended the tactical meeting and picked the line-up for the second leg of the UEFA Champions League semi-final.

The selected players then grouped up with the coaches and technical staff in the evening. They took the team bus to the airport and boarded an evening flight to Germany, eager to play the second leg of Juventus' Champions League semi-final against Borussia Dortmund. They arrived in Dortmund, North Rhine-Westphalia, at around eight and checked into a hotel, where they spent the night.

The coach took them through a one-hour light training session the following morning. He then discussed more tactics against Dortmund with them for two hours before sending them back to the hotel to rest for the day.

They passed the day in a relaxed mood in their respective rooms, only opting to come out for lunch at 1:00 PM and an evening snack at 6:30 PM before they set off for the match venue in their team bus. Under the guidance of the German police, they snaked their way through the streets of Dortmund before eventually arriving at the Signal Iduna Park, Borussia Dortmund's home ground, at 7:30 PM.

The pre-match proceedings moved forward quickly, and the game commenced at 8:45 PM.

Coach Max Allegri had fielded his strongest squad, save for the injured Andrea Pirlo. As such, the on-form Juventus started the game incredibly well despite being away from home.

Carlos Tevez was once again Dortmund's tormentor right from the get-go. Some brilliant midfield play by Juventus saw the Argentine striker connect with a pass from Patrice Evra deep in the opposition's half. Without hesitating, Tevez pulled the trigger from 30 yards out and beat the keeper to score Juventus' 1st goal for the night during the 3rd minute.

It was the perfect start Juventus needed as they had extended their aggregate lead to 7:1 early in the second leg of the semi-final. They decided to conserve strength and slow their tempo of play. They allowed Dortmund to play on them and dominate possession as they defended staunchly without making any mistakes.

The match proceedings moved forward in that manner. But Dortmund's control of the game was not allowing the players of the German outfit to carve out any opportunities. They even tried their best through their wing play to send crosses to Aubameyang, their center-forward. However, Juventus' disciplined defense repeatedly cleared the danger time and time again without any mishaps.

The halftime whistle eventually came with Juventus having been comfortable since their goal and Dortmund finding only half-chances from Marco Reus and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang. As such, the players of the German-based team needed to improve if they hoped to avoid another embarrassing score.

However, the signs of improvement never came after the second half commenced. Yes, the Dortmund players continued dominating possession. But they were poor in the final third and continuously failed to convert their dominance into actual goal-scoring chances. They didn't have even a shot on target during the first fifteen minutes of the second half.

The game continued, and circumstances worsened for Dortmund when the Juventus players started coming out of their shells to launch counterattacks. The initiator was Arturo Vidal, who won a ground duel against Henrikh Mkhitaryan with a sliding tackle before poking the ball towards the nearby Zachary.

Zachary, on his part, didn't do anything flashy after receiving the ball. He acted as a typical midfielder and played a first-time pass towards the left flank. He unleashed a pinpoint ball toward where Carlos Tevez was lurking.

The counterattack was on, and the on-form Carlos Tevez didn't disappoint. He chested the ball to the ground and used his swift pace to beat Sokratis Papastathopoulos, the Dortmund right-back for the day. He cut into the pitch from the left flank before playing a pass to Álvaro Morata, who was eagerly waiting for an opportunity close to the edge of the box.

Morata skillfully controlled the ball close to the edge of the box. He turned and twisted past Mats Hummels, the Dortmund center-back, with the ball glued to his foot. Then, when the angle opened up, he pulled the trigger and slotted the ball past the keeper to score another goal for Juventus.

The score was then 2:0 in favor of Juventus on the night, and the Juventus players must have felt they had already done enough during the semi-final. They comfortably fell back into their half and defended without mishaps until the game ended after four minutes of added time.

With that, Juventus finally emerged victorious in the UEFA Champions League semi-final. They had played a solid two legs of football and defeated Borussia Dortmund by an aggregate score of 8:1 to qualify for the finals in Berlin. They would play against Barcelona, the Spanish team that had overwhelmed Bayern Munich in the other semi-final with a 5:3 aggregate score.

The prospect of playing in the final seemed to re-energize the Juventus players and coaches. Three days later, on Saturday, May 16th, they headed into their next away Serie A fixture with boundless momentum. They showcased another incredible performance and overwhelmed Inter Milan, even while they were playing away from home.

The game didn't start in their favor as Mauro Icardi, one of the opposing center-forwards, put Inter Milan ahead during the 9th minute with a simple tap into the back of the net following a well-taken corner kick. But the Old Lady players didn't give up even after facing the early upset. They showed the character of champions and sustained pressure against the opponent until they found a breakthrough through Zachary during the 36th minute.

Zachary again showed his class and took the opportunity calmly. He converted a free-kick from a tight angle to score his 34th goal in the Serie A that season. He was steadily making firm steps towards winning his first Golden Boot in the Italian League.

The score was then 1:1, but the Juventus players didn't relax. They continued dictating play against Inter Milan through their brilliant exchanges in the middle. They dominated possession and created more and more goal-scoring chances until a foul on Fernando Llorente within the box saw them win a penalty during the 42nd minute.

Fernando Llorente stepped forward and calmly converted the penalty. He sent the keeper the wrong way and found the back of the net to score Juventus 2nd goal that evening.

The score was then 2:1 in favor of the visiting Juventus. The Inter Milan players reacted by launching endless attacks during the second half. They even came close to scoring several times, with Xherdan Shaqiri, Mateo Kovacic, and Marcelo Brozovic all getting clear opportunities to put the ball behind the back of the net during the 51st, 67th, and 73rd minutes respectively. However, the stunning saves from Marco Storari, the stand-in Juventus keeper, allowed the Turin-based team to escape unscathed on all occasions.

The game then proceeded into the late stages, with Inter Milan attacking relentlessly in search of an equalizer while Juventus calmly defended. Like most other adversaries that had already played against Juventus, the Milan-based team seemed to have forgotten that Juventus were dangerous on the counter.

Juventus soon punished them for their oversight when Marco Storari made another stunning save before rushing to the edge of the box and unleashing Zachary on a counterattack with a one-handed throw during the 86th minute.

Zachary did what he usually did best. He calmly collected the ball close to the touchline on the left flank before whirling around and sprinting towards the other side of the pitch with all the speed he could muster. He left most Inter Milan defenders in the dust and eventually cut into the field to head towards Milan's box.

At that juncture, Gary Medel, the defensive midfielder who had stayed back to defend, tried to close Zachary down. But Zachary stepped past him with a swift change of pace before continuing towards the box. He then calmly rounded the approaching keeper and put the ball into the back of the empty net to score Juventus' 3rd goal during the 86th minute.

Zachary didn't halt his run, though. He ran towards the touchline and celebrated his 35th Serie A goal in front of the traveling Juventus fans. He was really having the time of his life playing for Juventus, and he repeatedly pumped his fist again and again to vent his excitement.

After the goal celebrations, the game resumed, with the Juventus players continuing to frustrate Inter Milan with their game management tactics. They played solid defensive football and wasted time whenever they could until the referee blew the final whistle after six minutes of added time.

Chapter 589 Discussing Records

Emilia Vasquez's ESPN Sunday morning sports show commenced at 11:00 AM the following day. With her in the studio were the usual pundits, including Alessandro Costacurta, Joshua Morales, and Charles Adams. She calmly introduced them to the viewers watching before smiling and tackling the main topic to start off her program.

"Our dear viewers," she said while facing the cameras. "Yesterday evening, we all watched Juventus humble Inter Milan with a score of three goals to one, even while playing away from home in Milan. The victory allowed them to extend their lead at the top of the Italian Serie A table to 102 points. With just one more draw, they will shatter the record they set last season and achieve new heights in the Serie A."

"Gentlemen!" She turned away from the cameras and faced her three pundits. "If we're to start counting from the previous season, Juventus have extended their unbeaten run in the Italian Serie A to 45 matches. The last time they faced a defeat was in an away game against Napoli at the end of March last year."

"That aside, they also haven't faced any defeats in all the other competitions this season. They have already played twelve Champions League games, one Supercoppa final, and four matches in the Coppa Italia without losing a game. Their worst results have only been a few draws, meaning their unbeaten run in all competitions is at a whopping 62 games. Such a statistic is insane, especially in top-flight European football.

"Yes, such a statistic is startling," Alessandro Costacurta, one of the pundits, agreed. "Formerly, AC Milan held the longest unbeaten run in Europe after going 58 games unbeaten from 1991 to 1993. Other teams with unbeaten records included Bayern Munich (after playing 53 games from 2012 to 2014 without a loss), Arsenal (with 49 unbeaten runs from 2003 to 2004), and Juventus (with 49 unbeaten games from 2011 to 2012)."

"But as of now, Juventus has smashed all those records and gone 62 games unbeaten. We have to agree that they are currently the best team in Europe. No other can match how they have played and handled matches this season."

"No argument about that," Charles Adams, the other pundit, concurred. "They won the Italian Serie A with eight games to go. Aside from that, they have already won the Supercoppa Italiana and qualified for the Italy Cup and UEFA Champions League finals. Going by the statistics, they are the best team in Europe, and if things continue going their way, they might grab themselves a quadruple this season."

"Gentlemen!" Emilia Vasquez smiled at her pundits. "What do you think has allowed Juventus to achieve such success?"

Joshua Morales sighed and said, "Zachary Bemba. His addition to the team was like fixing the last gear, the last piece missing from Juventus. In just a few months, he has established himself on the team and helped Juventus become more threatening on the attack. Whenever he's on the pitch, you'll always get that feeling that Juventus can score anytime. I think he's the main factor that has allowed the Turin-based team to achieve such heights this season."

"Speaking of Zachary," Emilia Vasquez said, "He scored two more goals during Juventus' game against Inter yesterday. He has now pushed his Serie A goal-tally this season to 35. He has also already found the back of the net twice in the Supercoppa, five times in the Coppa Italia, sixteen times in the UEFA Champions League, and twice more while playing the two international friendlies for Ivory Coast. That puts his total for Juventus at a surprising 58 goals. If we add his two goals for Ivory Coast, he has already found the back of the net sixty times in a single season."

"His stats are insane," Joshua Morales said with a gentle shake of his head. "I have been looking at the records, and the record number of goals scored by a player in a single Serie A season currently stands at 36. Gino Rossetti set the goal-scoring record while playing for Torino during the 1928-29 season. If Zachary can score two more goals during Juventus' remaining two Serie A games, he will push his goal tally to 37 and smash this record to become the all-time top scorer in a single Serie A season."

"Additionally," Joshua Morales continued, "Zachary Bemba has already scored 16 goals in the Champions League this season. If he can score two more, he will smash Cristiano Ronaldo's seventeen-goal-record to become the all-time top scorer in a single UEFA Champions League season."

"Do you think he can break the records?" Emilia Vasquez inquired as the cameras focused back on her.

Joshua Morales smiled. "Smashing the record of the Serie A will depend on whether Coach Max Allegri rests him to preserve his energy for the UEFA Champions League final."

"As we all know, Juventus only has two fixtures remaining in the Serie A. But they still have to play Lazio in next Wednesday's big Coppa Italia final before facing off against Napoli at home three days later on Saturday, May 23rd. They will then return to action after seven days on Saturday, May 30th, when they battle Hellas Verona in their last Serie A fixture, which happens to be an away game. Finally, after all that, they will play the UEFA Champions League final against Barcelona in what could be their most crucial fixture this season on Saturday, June 6th."

"All this seems like a tight schedule, and going by how Coach Max Allegri has been managing his players this season, he will most likely rest Zachary at least for one of the Serie A games. Because of this simple fact, Zachary will have limited opportunities to score more goals. So, unless he scores a brace or a hat trick in a single match, he won't be able to break Gino Rossetti's record of 36 goals in a single season."

"As for breaking Cristiano's Champions League record of 17 goals in a single season, I can't predict that. Juventus will be taking on a Barcelona side that is truly strong, even by the strictest of standards, in the big final in Berlin. Everything is possible in such a final. I can't envision how the game will progress, and neither can I predict whether Zachary will score against Barcelona. We'll have to wait and see whether he can perform beyond expectations and break the record."

"I have also looked at one record that we didn't mention," Charles Adams, the other pundit, said. "It's the phenomenal record set by Lionel Messi during the 2011-12 season. The incredible Argentine playmaker scored a noteworthy 73 goals, which included scoring a La Liga-record 50 goals in only 37 games and finding the net 14 times in the Champions League. And with that, he became the highest-scoring player in a single European season when considering all competitions."

"That's indeed an incredible record by Messi," Alessandro Costacurta remarked. "Zachary only has 60 goals in all competitions and is still 13 away from the 73-goal record with only four games to go. I guess he has no chance of breaking the record this season."

Emilia Vasquez, the host, nodded and smiled. "The Coppa Italia final will kick off at 8:45 PM next Wednesday. Juventus will be facing off against a tricky Lazio side. All eyes will be on the game as it will decide whether the Juventus players can keep their hopes of a quadruple alive by winning yet another trophy this season. Do you see them overcoming Lazio and going with another big prize home?"

Alessandro Costacurta chuckled. "I know that in most cases, anything can happen in a football game. But this time around, I think the saying won't stand."

"Juventus has been in incredible form. Weeks ago, they put six goals past a tricky Borussia Dortmund side during the first leg of the UEFA Champions League semis. Then, later on, they again scored six against Cagliari and beat Dortmund again before humbling Inter Milan with a 3:1 score even while playing away."

"It's unfortunate that Andrea Pirlo, one of their playmakers, is still out of action with a calf injury. But I can still picture them continuing their form by putting up another incredible performance against Lazio. They will most likely defeat the opponent and go home with their 3rd trophy of the season. My prediction is 3:1 or 4:2 in their favor."

"Zachary is the current top scorer of the Coppa Italia with five goals," Emilia Vasquez chimed in. "He's only ahead of Miroslav Klose, the Lazio center-forward, by two goals in the race to win the Coppa Italia Golden Boot. What is the likelihood that the German forward will score two more goals for Lazio during the final to share the honor of winning the Coppa Italia Golden Boot with Zachary?"

Alessandro Costacurta chuckled. "Honestly speaking, Miroslav Klose's chances are minimal. We shouldn't even debate whether he will score the goals and catch up to Zachary. Instead, the more appropriate topic of discussion should be how many times Zachary will find the back of the net in the Coppa Italia final to extend his incredible goal-scoring record this season."

Chapter 590 Eve of the Coppa Italia Finals

For Zachary, time was passing really quickly as he prepared for the Coppa Italia finals against Lazio with his teammates. He was in a Black Mamba state of mind as he went through the team tactical drills on Monday. Then, Tuesday arrived, and he attended the pre-match tactical meeting at around three in the afternoon before saying his goodbyes to those at the training ground and heading home to rest for the day.

Lorenzo Riccardo, his bodyguard/driver, drove him back to his mansion, where he spent the evening hours napping. Training had exhausted him considerably that day, so he slept deeply until his phone's ringtone woke him up.

He opened his eyes groggily and extended his arm to pick up the annoying communication device from his bedside table. On glancing at the screen, he noticed that it was Emily, his agent calling. He turned and made himself comfortable in bed before pressing the accept button and holding the phone against his ear.

"Hello, Zachary," Emily's voice immediately sounded from the other end of the line. "How are you doing?"

"Hello, Emily," he replied. "I'm doing okay. What about you?"

"I'm also okay. I just arrived in Rome to watch your Coppa Italia finals against Lazio tomorrow."

"That's nice," Zachary said. "Should I reserve a match ticket for you?"

"Please do, and thanks," she said with an audible sigh. "The tickets for the finals are selling like hotcakes here. You can't get one unless you go to those expensive dealers. When are you guys arriving in Rome, by the way?"

"Tomorrow in the afternoon," Zachary said. "We'll arrive with the team bus and rest only for an hour or two in Rome before heading to Olimpico di Roma to play the final. That's the plan. But you don't need to worry. I'll send you an electronic match ticket tonight."

Emily chuckled. "That's the least of my worries. By the way, I just received a call from one of Mr. Martin Stein's people. He contacted me to inquire about the plan to start a sports agency and talent development center in Africa. You can imagine my surprise as I knew nothing about such a venture."

"I'm so sorry," Zachary apologized. "I meant to inform you about the project. But the whole thing escaped my mind due to how tight and busy the end-of-the-season schedule has been. But I did agree to start the venture with Mr. Stein. It's something he proposed when I was still in Norway."

"Oh!" Emily said, her tone becoming sharp. "So, where do you plan to set up this project exactly? How much do you intend to invest in this project? Who's going to handle the groundwork for the project? I hope you aren't counting on me to help you do all this."

"Not at all," Zachary said. "Kristin will handle most of the work, especially since this is an idea from her grandfather. She'll be responsible for designing it and taking it off the ground. As for you, I hope you provide some help by doing some supervision, contract work, and feasibility assessment during the course of the project. You're the person I trust most. So, I really do hope you can help me on this one."

"Zachary..." Emily's tone softened. "I'm a football agent, you know. I should be working hard to get more clients, hoping to make it big in the football industry. But here you are, delegating charity work to me."

"That's where you're wrong, my dear agent," Zachary said while pushing himself up from bed. He switched the phone to his other ear and continued, "I think the project proposed by Mr. Stein has the

potential to unearth many talents from Africa. If you can take advantage of it, you could find more promising footballers while doing work on the project. By the way, have I forgotten to mention that I'll be offering you five percent of the shares I receive from the parent company that will handle the entire venture?"

"Really?" Emily's voice rose up a notch.

"Of course, I mean what I say," Zachary assured. "Moreover, I don't just plan to set up the agency and talent development centers in only one country. I want us to tap all of Africa, including West African countries like Ivory Coast, DRC, Cameroon, and Senegal. As you know, all these are places brimming with talented footballers. If you play your cards right, you can discover many neglected promising footballers from there."

There were a few seconds of silence on the other side of the line before Emily spoke again. "Okay, let's say I am in. What exactly do you want me to do? How do you want me to help with the project?"

Zachary smiled, knowing that Emily had bitten the bullet. "The first step is to meet Mr. Stein. He has a lot of promising ideas. You can listen to them and assess whether they're feasible. Then, we can start from there and see how best to start off this venture."

"Okay," Emily said again. "But you owe me for this one."

"Thanks," Zachary said. "You're the best."

"You've learned how to become cheeky," she complained. "The project aside, how are the preparations for the two finals going?"

Zachary sighed. "We're trying our best. All my teammates are training harder than ever. No one has said anything. But I'm sure they wish to win a quadruple this season."

"A quadruple would be interesting," she remarked. "Moreover, it's feasible for your case. You and your Juventus teammates have already won the Supercoppa Italiana and the Italian Serie A. If you win the Coppa Italiana finals tomorrow night, you'll only remain with the Champions League to complete the quadruple. I think you guys can achieve this."

"We'll try our best," Zachary said. "The matches might be difficult. But we'll give our all to take home all the trophies. Then, I can invite you to the after-party."

"You said so yourself," she replied with another soft chuckle. "I'll be waiting for the invite after the Champions League final. But before thinking of all that, make sure you win the game against Lazio tomorrow."

"That's a must," Zachary said.

"Great. We have talked for quite a while. Let me wish you a good night."

"Good night to you, too, and thanks for the call."

"Don't forget my match ticket, and all the best in the final tomorrow. I'll be praying for your win. Good night!"

"Thanks."

She then switched off the phone without saying anything else.

Zachary smiled. He looked at his phone screen and saw many notifications from WhatsApp and his default SMS app. After opening them, he realized most were from his acquaintances wishing him the best in the following day's Coppa Italia finals against Lazio.

Zachary's mood brightened after reading some of the messages. He placed his phone to the side and called out to the system AI in his mind. "System! Please bring up the details of the 2014/15 Coppa Italia Challenge on the interface. I would like to see them."

"DING"

A system notification chimed in his mind.

"The user's command has been received," the system AI said. "The 2014/15 Coppa Italia Challenge Mission details will be coming up on the interface. The user can take his time reading them."

The space before Zachary's eyes flickered with a bright luster after the system AI's voice sounded. On cue, the system's translucent and formless display manifested out of thin air, and he immediately focused on its contents.

GOAT MISSIONS

#The 2014/15 Coppa Italia Challenge

->Mission Status: Accepted and In Progress

*Milestone 1: Play 80% of the 2014/15 Coppa Italia fixtures [In Progress: Played 60% of games so far].

*Milestone 2: Help your teammates become the 2014/15 Coppa Italia Champions [In Progress: Awaiting result from the final].

*Milestone 3: Provide the most assists in the 2014/15 Coppa Italia tournament [In Progress: Awaiting result from the final].

*Milestone 4: Become the top scorer of the 2014/15 Coppa Italia tournament [In Progress: Awaiting result from the final].

*Milestone 5: Become the MVP of the 2014/15 Coppa Italia tournament [In Progress: Awaiting result from the final].

*Rewards:

->Milestone 1 completion reward: 100 Juju-points

->Milestone 2 completion reward: 2000 Juju-points

->Milestone 3 completion reward: 10,000 Juju-points

->Milestone 4 completion reward: 20,000 Juju-points

->Milestone 5 completion reward: A random-effect elixir that can increase one of the user's fitness attributes by an entire grade (The specific attributes that can be improved include Balance and Coordination, Agility, Strength, Stamina, and Endurance).

NB: There will be additional rewards if the user realizes any other milestones that can unlock hidden missions.

*Punishment if the user fails to realize any of the milestones.

->Minus 70,000 Juju-points

*The user has to complete at least one milestone before the tournament ends to escape the penalty.

*Remarks: Every little victory counts. Never underestimate the power of small, consistent wins whose effects compound over time.

Zachary's eyes gleamed with desire after he perused the Mission details again.

He had long been captivated by the reward for milestone 5, which happened to be a random-effect elixir that could increase any of his fitness attributes, including Balance and Coordination, Agility, Strength, and Stamina/Endurance, by an entire grade. As long as he could become the Coppa Italia MVP, he would be able to push one of his stats to the SSS grading. It was a great temptation that he couldn't resist.

"I guess I'll have to work harder than ever during the final against Lazio to really secure this reward." His fighting spirit was like never before as he prepared to play yet another final in his career.