

Greatest 591

Chapter 591 Excitement for the Coppa Italia Finals

Wednesday, May 20th, 2015.

Olimpico di Roma, Italy

The sunset was glorious, all rosy and salmon-pink. Its golden rays shone relentlessly on the countless football fans slowly making their way into the gates of the renowned Olimpico di Roma. Nonetheless, most of them didn't mind the discomfort as all they could think about was the Coppa Italia finals between Juventus and Lazio commencing in about two hours.

Paolo Favero, a staunch Juventus supporter, was already wearing his stripped black and white jersey as he waited to enter the stadium with his family. He looked at the boisterous scenes around him with eyes gleaming with excitement. His hopes had already soared as he glanced at all the other fans in Juventus colors who were also waiting to pass through security and enter the match venue.

The last time Juventus won the Coppa Italia was all the way back in 1995. Twenty years had passed since then, and the club had added plenty of silverware to their trophy collection in Turin. But they were still facing a drought for the Coppa Italia title. It was as if someone had cursed them never to win that domestic competition, and no matter how hard they tried, they couldn't accomplish Coppa Italia glory.

"This time, for sure," Paolo Favero thought. "We must defeat Lazio and take home this trophy. With the form we're in, no one can stop us."

"Dad! Enemy spotted in the vicinity." One of his two boys suddenly yelled and pointed to a fan in Lazio's blue shirt who happened to wander into the Juventus crowd.

The boy was not the only one looking at the overconfident Lazio fan. All the other Juventus supporters around the place had started eyeing him as if he was an enemy who had killed their entire family. There were even those who were more undisciplined and booed the fan directly.

"Danilo, dear!" Paolo Favero's wife called out to her son. "Can you not go around calling people enemies? He's not an enemy. He's just a supporter of an opposing team, here to enjoy the game like you."

"No, he is an enemy," Paolo Favero emphasized while eyeing the Lazio fan sharply. "But boys, you don't need to worry about him. We'll defeat him on the pitch when the match commences."

He could often compromise and agree with his wife on other matters. But not on an issue as sensitive as this. God forbid! But what if she misguided his two sons and influenced them to support some other team? He felt he must make matters regarding Juventus clear to his two boys.

"Look at you misguiding the kids," his wife complained. "First, you allowed them to leave home on a school night. Now, you're pointing out imaginary enemies to them."

"Dear, we already talked about this," he said. "We agreed that they would watch the finals before returning their focus to their homework..."

It was at that time that some other commotion arose around the place. Thinking of a 'certain' possibility, Paolo Favero discarded all he was about to say. He whipped his head around and immediately saw Juventus' bus slowly snaking through the crowd of supporters, who had already gone bonkers with boundless excitement.

"Juve, Oye..."

"Zachary, Oye..."

"Buffon, Oye..."

The fans shouted again and again as the bus slowly approached the gates. The whole place turned more boisterous and superheated. The excitement had descended with the arrival of team Juventus.

Zachary watched all the enthusiastic fans through the bus window. Although he had already experienced the Italian football culture countless times, he still couldn't get used to how supercharged the football fans could be, especially before and after games.

To them, it was as if a football match was something to die for or probably a religion. They would always be in hyper states whenever it was a match day. They would always go far and beyond to support their respective teams. It was even more so on that day of the Coppa Italia final.

The intensity of the cheers increased a notch as the bus halted in a designated area before the stadium. The fans grew even wilder and yelled the names of the Juventus players who were alighting from the bus.

As usual, Zachary was among the last to exit the vehicle. He maintained a professional smile and waved to the excited fans. He then followed after his teammates and quickly entered the tunnel, eager to play the Coppa Italia final.

He had already done all his preparations and even enjoyed a peaceful rest the previous night. He felt refreshed and energetic. He felt like he was in his best state, and all that remained was to step onto the pitch and destroy the opponents. He had to do his best to put up an incredible performance so he could secure the random-effect elixir from the system.

Proceedings moved fast from there on. The Juventus players arrived in the dressing room and quickly donned their gear. Then, they underwent their dynamic pre-match warm-up in front of the tens of thousands of fans already in the stadium before returning to the dressing room to prepare for the game.

In the meantime, Coach Max Allegri was studying the opponent's line-up. He was in a deep state of concentration as he looked at the names on the chart while considering how his tactics could come into play against Lazio.

Stefano Pioli, the Lazio coach, had gone with a 3-4-2-1 formation for the final. It was a balanced set-up with a lot of central focus. It had a strong core, with most of the players occupying the middle areas of the field.

It was also a defensively sound formation, with two defensive midfielders, two attacking wingbacks, and a duo of creative attacking midfielders all attacking as one and falling back to support the three defenders whenever necessary. It was definitely an annoying structure for opponents with a strong midfield.

"This sly bastard..."

Coach Allegri immediately read the intent behind Stefano Pioli's set-up. The Lazio coach probably planned to concentrate his team's efforts in the middle areas to mitigate the threat of Juventus' midfield of Zachary, Claudio Marchisio, and Vidal. The man intended to crowd the middle and use superior numbers to balance out Juventus' brilliance in those zones.

But could the strategy work? Coach Max Allegri laughed. As an experienced football tactician, he had already predicted such a set-up while designing the gameplan for the final. As long as his players, like Zachary Bemba, Patrice Evra, Carlos Tevez, and Stephan Lichtsteiner, fulfilled their responsibilities, he was confident that he would repeatedly break through the opponent's set-up and eventually win the game.

Feeling confident, he placed the opponent's line-up to the side and took center stage in the dressing room. He smiled when he saw that all his players had finished donning their match gear. Then, he glanced at his watch and noted that only ten minutes remained until the kick-off before quickly tackling the crucial business of addressing his players.

"Listen, guys," he said. "We've already trained enough for the past few days. So, I won't waste time discussing tactics at this last minute. But all I'm asking is that you head into the final with the attitude of champions. I want to see you working hard on the pitch."

"I want to see you playing brilliant team football that doesn't include stupid mistakes while on the ball. I want to see you dominate the game from the get-go and quickly destroy the opponent. I want to see you frustrating the opponent with quick goals and possession football so they won't develop any hopes of winning the final in their minds."

"Zachary Bemba, Carlos Tevez, and the others with attacking responsibilities!" He swept his gaze across the players in question.

"Yes, coach," they replied.

"I want to see your magic on the pitch from the very first minute. I want to see you try to break them down with an attack during the opening few minutes before they can settle into the game. If possible, we must score a goal before they can gain any rhythm in this final. Are we together?"

"Coach, we'll try," Zachary replied.

"I'll do my best," Carlos Tevez said.

"Great," The coach nodded and turned towards his three defenders. "Bonucci, Chiellini, and Barzagli! I want to see only neat football at our backline. I want to see you release the ball promptly. I also want to see you clear every danger that comes your way without creating troublesome situations for the team. But I don't want to see us concede a goal from the first minute until the final whistle sounds. Understood?"

"Yes, coach. We'll try our best..." The three defenders replied.

"Good!" The coach glanced at his watch. Only seven minutes were remaining to the start of the game. He smiled and continued, "It's time, and I have probably already said whatever I wanted to say. Just head out there and play as usual. Just head on to the pitch and destroy the opponents. Just go and win us the Coppa Italia. We're Juventus!" He ended his speech with a cheer.

"We're Juventus!" The players yelled back in unison.

Coach Max Allegri smiled. He called a few players, like Zachary, Carlos Tevez, and Arturo Vidal, to the side to emphasize a few points of the game plan. Then, after ensuring they had understood everything, he sent them out of the dressing room along with his other players to the pitch. He had done his job as a coach, and all that remained was for his players to enforce his tactics on the playing field.

Chapter 592 Relentless Attacking from the Get-Go

FWEEEEEEE

The referee blew the whistle at 8:45 PM and signaled the Juventus players to kick off the Coppa Italia final. Carlos Tevez, the striker already standing over the ball placed at the center spot, immediately passed it back into his midfield to find Claudio Marchisio, one of Juventus' central midfielders for the day.

Claudio Marchisio, on his part, didn't do anything splashy with the ball. He took a single touch before dispatching it to his left to find Arturo Vidal, one of his counterparts in midfield.

By then, Miroslav Klose, the Lazio center forward, had already stormed into Juventus' half to close down the ball. However, Arturo Vidal remained confident and composed while facing the incoming opponent. The Chilean even took two more touches before playing the ball into the wing to find Patrice Evra, Juventus' left wing-back for the day.

Patrice Evra was also without any pressure. He calmly collected the ball close to the touchline on the left flank before playing a one-two with Vidal to escape the harassment of Dušan Basta, the player playing as the wide right midfielder for Lazio.

Then, when the space opened up, Evra pushed forward and soon stepped past the center line. Ștefan Radu, one of Lazio's three center-backs, rushed forward to close the Frenchman down. However, Evra didn't choose to take him on but instead squared the ball into the middle to find Zachary.

The coach's pre-game address flashed through Zachary's mind as he connected with the pass from Evra. The manager had said to go all out and attempt to find a goal within the opening minutes before the opponents could settle down into the game. Zachary, being the daredevil he was, immediately followed the coach's instructions that suited his tastes.

Without hesitation, he hit his top speed and set off towards Lazio's box. He dribbled the ball forward and cut through the middle before coming across the first obstacle in the form of Danilo Cataldi, one of Lazio's defensive midfielders.

He didn't lose his composure and stepped past the Lazio man with a few well-timed side steps, plus an almost instantaneous acceleration. He continued driving towards Lazio's backline, where he found two more roadblocks in the form of Stefan de Vrij and Santiago Gentiletti, the other two opposing center-backs.

Zachary didn't choose to take them on, though. His SS-graded spatial awareness and ball technique attributes came into play, and he played a forward ball to Carlos Tevez, who was already waiting in a pocket of space on the right side of the box.

Carlos Tevez, on his part, was unselfish after connecting with the pass. He just flicked the ball with his first touch towards the sprinting path of Zachary, who was already continuing his run into the box.

Zachary smiled, and his blood boiled with anticipation when he saw the Argentine play him on with a first-time snappy flick. He wriggled through the space between the Lazio center-backs and collected the ball mid-stride.

Of course, the defenders attempted to stop him. But he remained composed and took another deft touch to open the space and step into the box. The angle naturally opened up, and he hammered the ball goalward, hoping to score Juventus 1st goal for the night during the very 1st minute.

Unfortunately, Etrit Berisha, the Lazio keeper, was alert. He dived and stretched out his body to block the shot, which was on course toward the inside of the far post. But even then, he didn't clear the danger and instead pushed the ball back into the box.

Chaos immediately descended in the box as the players of both sides struggled to get to the ball first. They all rushed forward with eyes full of vibrance, yearning to beat their opponents to it. Even the Lazio keeper swiftly crawled forward, hoping to get another hand on the ball and clear it away.

Eventually, Fernando Llorente, the striker ever-lurking in the box, was the one who came out on top. The Juventus forward beat everyone to the bouncing ball and immediately guided it back toward the goal with his knee.

It was a tense moment. The passing of time seemed to slow down as all eyes and cameras focused on the ball heading toward the back of the net. But at the very last moment, Ștefan Radu, the Lazio captain and center-back, swooped in and blocked the ball before it could cross the line. Moreover, the Lazio man didn't just stop at that but also cleared it away and sent it flying with a stunning volley.

However, had he completely cleared away the danger? The answer was a big no as Claudio Marchisio, the Juventus midfielder waiting at the border of the final third, immediately collected the just-cleared

ball. Without giving the opponents time to settle down, he fed it into the right wing to find Stephan Lichtsteiner, who had been left unmarked for some seconds.

Stephan Lichtsteiner was swifter than ever while connecting with the pass. He effortlessly controlled the ball in open space on the right side of the box before drawing his leg back and unleashing a lofted pass towards the area.

Disorder again swept through Lazio's box as the cross from Lichtsteiner flew in like a surface-to-surface missile.

The Lazio center backs in the area pushed off the ground to clear it away with their heads but missed. The Juventus strikers, including Carlos Tevez and Fernando Llorente, tried to go for glory and guide it into the net but also missed. The ball just eluded them and continued flying towards the outer left side of the box until a silhouette wearing a Juventus jersey pounced on it.

The person who had taken action was Zachary. He had chosen a strategic spot in the box and bided his time until he saw the ball evade all the other players. Then, when it was only meters away, he reacted and swung his outstretched leg at it. He caught it on a first-time volley with a bang and sent it bolting toward the goal like a bullet from a sniper.

Whoosh!

A whooshing sound followed the bang as the ball rocketed through the spaces between the players in the box. The keeper once again reacted and tried to save the day. But the sheer velocity behind the effort rendered the poor guy's efforts useless, and the ball flashed just inches away from his outstretched fingers before homing into the back of the net.

Zachary immediately felt like he was swimming in an ocean of happiness when he saw the ball nestle into the back of the net. He had scored yet again and taken his tally for the Coppa Italia to 6 goals. He ran towards the touchline and celebrated like mad as he was already on course to win his first Golden Boot in Italy.

SS Lazio 0: Juventus FC 1

In the meantime, the cheers hit a thunderous crescendo as the info on the stadium's jumbotron changed to show the new score.

Juventus had set a lightning-fast tempo right from the get-go and immediately scored a goal during the 3rd minute of gameplay. They were already firmly in the driving seat of the final, even before Lazio could start playing.

Coach Max Allegri watched his players celebrating and nodded to himself. Everything had gone according to plan, with Juventus launching a wave of attack and sustaining pressure on Lazio right after kick-off. The efforts had paid off, and his team was on the right track to win yet another trophy that season.

"Don't relax," he yelled towards his players when they finished celebrating the goal. "Proceed according to plan and continue attacking. But watch out for their counterattacks..."

Coach Allegri paced the entire length of his technical area as he continued shouting instructions at his players. He repeatedly reminded them of their positions and roles to ensure they didn't commit any errors. Then, after the game restarted, he calmly folded his arms across his chest and continued enjoying the performance of his players.

The Lazio players appeared to have woken up after conceding the goal. They started arraying themselves into their 3-4-2-1 formation while linking play through the middle. They seemed to want to use their superior numbers in midfield to overwhelm Juventus in the middle zones.

But was it a good idea to try and overpower a team like Juventus through the middle? The answer was a no, and Juventus soon showed why when Arturo Vidal executed a bold sliding tackle to win possession from Felipe Anderson close to the center line on the right flank during the 11th minute.

Patrice Evra, the wing-back lurking nearby, immediately pounced towards the loose ball. He swiftly collected it and skipped past Senad Lulić, Lazio's wide midfielder, with a swift turn. Then, without

waiting for any other opponent to close him down, he unleashed a forward pass, hoping to find Zachary, who had just moved into a pocket of space close to the border of the final third.

Zachary immediately escaped his marker and connected with the pass on the turn. He then executed a few side steps and stepped past an opponent. But before he could take another stride forward, Danilo Cataldi, another Lazio defensive midfielder, swept in with a sliding tackle. The Lazio man caught his calf with the studs of his boot before sending him tumbling to the ground.

Chapter 593 A Scare

A bolt of pain shot through Zachary when the opponent's boot connected with his calf. He winced despite himself as he tumbled toward the ground at the border of the final third.

"Foul!"

"Yellow Card!"

"Red Card!"

A wave of cries and pleas for the foul and the corresponding disciplinary action immediately arose in the stadium. All the Juventus players, coaches, and most fans combined their voices to demand justice for Zachary. They yelled and yelled to ensure that the player who had committed the foul didn't get away scot-free.

But the referee clearly didn't need the reminders. He blew the whistle and arrived on the scene within seconds before showing a yellow card to Danilo Cataldi, the midfielder who had committed the foul against Zachary.

The ref then checked on Zachary, who was still in pain on the ground. After noticing his condition, he immediately signaled to the technical area for the medics to come onto the pitch.

As the situation seemed quite critical, the medics arrived in a matter of seconds. They applied first aid and started checking the extent of the damage as the whole Juventus side sank into a tense state.

Fans, coaches, and teammates were anxious as they feared the worst. They all watched with creased brows as they waited for the verdict of the medics, which seemed to be taking forever.

"This could be bad," Fabio Crudeli, the commentator, said. "Zachary rarely ever stays on the ground after facing a tackle. He's always eager to get back up and restart the game as soon as possible. That's why I find this situation worrying."

"Indeed, he was clearly in pain when he went down after facing that tackle from Danilo Cataldi," David Ferrini, the co-commentator, replied. "The situation could turn into a nightmare for Juventus as they head into the Champions League final that is only two and a half weeks away. They have already lost Andrea Pirlo to injury. It'll be the worst possible situation if they again lose Zachary before facing off against Barcelona."

"Zachary had really started the game well," Fabio Crudeli remarked. "He was involved in every wave of attack that Juventus launched against Lazio and even scored the first goal. Moreover, he's just a few goals away from breaking a few records. I really hope there's nothing wrong with him."

"The medics are helping him off the pitch," David Ferrini said. "He's limping and can't walk by himself. I can also see Roberto Pereyra, one of Juventus' substitute midfielders, warming on the sidelines. Do you think he will continue?"

"If I were the Juventus coach, I would stay on the side of caution and take him out of the game," Fabio Crudeli said. "But I'm not sure what Coach Max Allegri will do. I guess it will depend on what the medics tell him."

"True!" David Ferrini said. "Let's wait and see what happens."

Emily Anderson was tense when she saw Zachary limping off the pitch in pain. A small voice in her mind repeatedly clamored that the worst had happened. But she chose to ignore the thought and continued watching on with worry.

Of course, she had heard the words of the two commentators that were full of negativity. But she just scoffed at them and continued praying for her client. She wanted him to be well. She wanted him to play all of Juventus' remaining crucial games so he could push his career to another level.

She was seated in Juventus' side of the stadium. The fans around her were likewise worried as they waited for the verdict of the medics. Was he okay, and would he return? Their body language said all they were thinking as they continued waiting.

Then, the moment came when Zachary finished talking to the medics and started jogging on the sidelines. At first, he was struggling and running unnaturally. But after a few strides, he appeared to shake off whatever pain he was facing and started sprinting along the touchline.

All the Juventus fans in the stadium, including Emily, immediately stood up and started cheering. It was as if they had just won another final, and their voices and applause quickly hit a crescendo.

"Zachary! Clap! Clap! Zachary..."

Emily didn't know who started yelling Zachary's name. But within moments, she heard all those around her growing more and more animated as they repeated the same word. It was as if they hoped to boost Zachary's recovery with their voices.

In the meantime, Zachary was still doing a few sprints along the sidelines to run off the pain from the knock. He felt warm when he heard the cheers of the fans and started working harder. Soon enough, he shook off the pain before approaching Juventus' technical area again.

"How are you feeling?" Coach Max Allegri was the first to step forward and ask. "Do you think you can continue?"

"Yes, I can," he answered right away. "I no longer feel any pain in my leg."

"Ohh!" Coach Allegri said. He looked at the nearby medics as if asking them for confirmation.

"He could have suffered a slight impact injury," one of the medics said. "But it doesn't appear serious at first glance. He can continue."

Coach Max Allegri let out a breath and turned back to Zachary. "Okay, you can return. But if you feel any discomfort, remember to tell us. I don't need to caution you about the disadvantages of hiding any injury!"

"Yes, coach."

"Good, off you go. Try to play non-contact football that focuses on passing instead of dribbling. Release the ball as fast as possible to prevent the opponents from tackling you. Okay!"

"Okay. Point noted."

The game had already restarted even when Juventus was still down to ten men. A few minutes ago, Carlos Tevez had taken the free-kick. But his accuracy wasn't spot-on, and he had instead hit the defensive wall and failed to convert.

Fortunately, the ball had headed out of play for a Juventus corner kick. But even then, the Juventus players had failed to capitalize on the opportunity and guide the ball into the back of the net. They had instead gifted possession to the Lazio players, who quickly launched a counterattack against Juventus.

The Lazio players were like a pack of wolves as they streamed through the middle and advanced the attack. They exploited their temporary numerical advantage and effortlessly cut through Juventus' midfield, which still lacked Zachary's presence. They exchanged intricate and snappy passes through the middle until they fed the ball to Felipe Anderson, one of their attacking midfielders.

"Ref! Ref..."

Zachary shouted from the sidelines, hoping to re-enter the game quickly. But both the referee and the fourth official ignored him, and he continued waiting along the touchline while witnessing the opponents attack his team. It wasn't a good experience. Nevertheless, he didn't lose his cool and forced himself to remain calm as he watched Felipe Anderson thread a pass forward, hoping to find Miroslav Klose, the Lazio center-forward.

Miroslav Klose swiftly escaped from Giorgio Chiellini and connected with the ball on the half-turn. The German then turned and twisted at the edge of the box before blasting the ball goalward, hoping to score Lazio's 1st goal on the night during the 16th minute.

Zachary fidgeted as he watched the ball zooming towards the inside of the far post. Fortunately, Marco Storari, the stand-in goalkeeper, was alert and saved Juventus from the precarious situation. Like a Ninja, the shot-stopper executed a dive on a full stretch before snatching the ball out of the air.

"Ref, can I enter now?" Zachary asked the fourth official after seeing Marco Storari make the save.

The fourth official signaled the referee, who, in turn, waved to allow Zachary on the pitch.

Zachary's heart boiled with excitement as he re-entered the game. He took a position beside the touchline on the left flank and started yelling out to Marco Storari, the keeper, to send the ball his way.

Marco Storari, on his part, didn't disappoint. He leaped up from the ground like a cat that had caught the scent of catnip before racing towards the edge of the box and unleashing a goal kick towards the left far side of the field.

Adrenaline pumped through Zachary's system as he saw the ball soar toward the left flank. The pass wasn't that accurate since Marco Storari had overhit it and almost sent it towards the corner flag.

But that small challenge didn't discourage Zachary, who was already chasing after the flying ball like his life was on the line. His strides covered dozens of yards in seconds, and he got to it just in time with an outstretched left leg.

He slid forward for a few meters and controlled the ball on the touchline before it was about to bounce out of play on the left flank. Then, without a moment to lose, he picked himself on the ground, eager to launch another attack.

Just then, Ștefan Radu, the Lazio captain and defender, rushed forward, hoping to stop the potential attack. The Lazio man was coming in all guns blazing with a sliding tackle.

However, Zachary dug his boot under the ball and looped it over the defender. Without losing composure, he followed that up with a leap over the helpless guy, who continued sliding out of the pitch. Then, after reorienting himself, he accelerated and took off towards Lazio's goal like the wind.

His SS-grade agility worked wonders, and he approached the box from the left side in a flash. Santiago Gentiletti, the other center-back, rushed forward to stop him. But he chose not to take on the defender and instead squared the ball into the area toward the lurking Fernando Llorente.

Fernando Llorente did what was expected of him as a striker. He connected with Zachary's pass and effortlessly tapped the ball into the back of the net to score Juventus' 2nd goal on the night during the 17th minute.

Chapter 594 A Game of Ups and Downs

"GOAAAAL!" Fabio Crudeli, the commentator, yelled at the top of his voice in concert with the thunderous cheers around the stadium. "It's Juventus two and Lazio zero. A well-worked-out counter that saw the ball move from the keeper to Zachary and finally to Fernando Llorente allowed them to extend their lead during the 17th minute. They are now firmly in the driving seat in this Coppa Italia semi-final."

"Why do I have the feeling that the referee somehow helped Juventus," David Ferrini, the other commentator, said. "He delayed Zachary's return until Lazio failed to convert their attack. Then, he waved Zachary on before the Lazio players could reshape up in defense and gifted him the perfect opportunity to advance the counter."

Fabio Crudeli chuckled. "But Zachary's absence also allowed Lazio to dominate the previous few minutes of the game. So, you could also say that the referee directly helped Lazio by delaying Zachary's return."

David Ferrini nodded. "Zachary seems to have recovered well after facing that tackle from Danilo Cataldi. His speed and brilliance on the ball are as great as ever. He worked hard to keep the ball from

Marco Storari in play before driving toward the box and finding Fernando Llorente with a pin-point pass. Fernando Llorente completed the counter with a tap into the back of the net to score Juventus' second goal. But I think eighty percent of the credit for the goal should go to Zachary.

"True," Fabio Crudeli said. "He looked as dangerous as ever while cutting in from the left flank. Let's hope he will do the same when he plays against Barcelona in the Champions League finals two and a half weeks later."

The game restarted after the celebrations with a Lazio kick-off.

The Lazio men connected a few passes, hoping to maintain possession and settle down after conceding the goal. But the Juventus players gave them no time to build anything on the field.

The men in the striped black and white jerseys worked harder than ever immediately after the restart. They high-pressed the opponents and put them under immense pressure with their untiring runs. Eventually, they forced them to play the ball long towards Juventus' side of the field during the 21st minute.

Andrea Barzagli, one of the Juventus center-backs, immediately took action and received the ball deep in Juventus' half. Then, without hesitating, he fed it into the middle to find Claudio Marchisio, who had floated into an unmarked pocket of space outside the center circle.

Claudio Marchisio worked with urgency after receiving the ball. He took only a single touch before playing it into the left wing to find Patrice Evra, who had long initiated a spirited run towards Lazio's side of the field.

The ever-tenacious Evra didn't disappoint. He leaped and chested the ball to the ground without any pressure. He then drove along the touchline and penetrated Lazio's half before coming across an obstacle in the form of Danilo Cataldi, one of Lazio's defensive midfielders.

Evra confidently fed the ball forward before trying to go around from the other side. But before the Frenchman could realize his plan, the already-charged Danilo Cataldi slid in with merciless impetus and tackled him with a two-legged tackle.

"Aahhh!"

Patrice Evra immediately let out a painful gasp as he tumbled to the ground. He rolled around a few times while holding his ankle.

"Ref!" Giorgio Chiellini, the acting captain, rushed towards the referee and held out his two fingers. "This is the second time Danilo is endangering the safety of our players. The first time, he almost took Zachary out of the game. Now, we don't know whether he has injured Evra. For how long will you allow this to go on..."

Giorgio Chiellini stopped midsentence as something else had transpired at the scene of the tackle. Patrice Evra had just picked himself from the ground before shoving away Danilo Cataldi, the player who had just brought him to the ground with a two-legged lunge.

Danilo Cataldi was also not to be outdone. He returned the favor by bumping his chest against Evra and thus began the period of chaos on the pitch.

The other players from both teams rushed to the scene and involved themselves in the messy confusion. Some went forward to hold Evra and Danilo back, while others joined in on the pushing and shoving. Shit had gone down quickly, and the fight had escalated.

Upon seeing all this, the referee didn't lose a second before running past Giorgio Chiellini and hurrying to the scene to stop the fight. The linesmen also rushed in from the sidelines and started working hard to separate the players involved in the scuffle. Fortunately, their efforts bore fruit, and order returned to the pitch in less than a minute.

But what was unfortunate for the players was that the ref didn't just stop at stopping the fight. He instead exchanged a few words with the linesman before walking back to the scene and delivering a yellow card to Patrice Evra, who had initiated the fight. Then, as a final act, he showed the second yellow card to Danilo, followed by a red card, before signaling the player to walk off the pitch.

The Juventus fans immediately cheered to celebrate the red card decision, especially since Danilo was the same player who almost took Zachary, their team's playmaker, out of the game a few minutes prior.

Besides, they were also delighted by the red card since they would play the rest of the game with a numerical advantage.

As for the Lazio supporters, they were in a gloomy mood. Most booed the referee, while others started walking towards the stadium's exit. Their expressions plainly expressed what they felt. They couldn't stomach their team's performance in the Coppa Italia finals. They were fed up with the game.

"It's just the 23rd minute," Fabio Crudeli, the commentator, remarked. "But we've already had enough drama in the game, and the Lazio fans are beginning to exit the stadium. What a superheated final we're having on our hands! Do you think the referee was right to show Danilo a red card?"

"I think the answer is yes," David Ferrini, the other commentator, replied. "Danilo has played a rough game tonight. He first took down Zachary and got himself a yellow card during the 11th minute. Then, just now, during the 21st minute, he has again taken down Patrice Evra with a two-legged lunge. Not counting his involvement in the scuffle, I think the two fouls are enough to gain him a red card sending off."

"True!" Fabio Crudeli agreed. "The Lazio side is now down to ten men in this Coppa Italia final. They will have to play the remaining sixty-plus minutes with a numerical disadvantage. Do you think they can put up a fight against Juventus and still salvage something out of this game?"

"To be honest," David Ferrini said, "I think they don't have a chance. Let's not forget that they failed to sustain any pressure against Juventus when they still had eleven men on the playing field. Now that they are down to ten, they need prayers and all the luck they can get to avoid a thorough smashing in this Coppa Italia final."

The game had just recommenced with the Juventus players taking the free-kick short. Andrea Barzagli had just taken it and played the ball to Leonardo Bonucci, his counterpart in defense, to kickstart another period of dominance by Juventus.

Even with the clear advantage of two goals, the Old Lady players didn't step on their brakes. They repeatedly arrayed themselves into their 3-5-2-flat formation and relied on their numerical advantage to sustain pressure on Lazio. They continuously utilized slow build-ups to set the tempo in their defense and midfield before trying to create goal-scoring opportunities with sudden through balls.

The Lazio players, on their part, had reacted by falling back into their half to defend. They had already parked the bus containing all their field players before their goal, hoping to prevent Juventus from doing any more damage against them. They were defending as a team, clearly not wishing to concede another goal before halftime.

But could their efforts save them against the flying Juventus? The answer was obvious, especially when Patrice Evra and Stephan Lichtsteiner, the two wing-backs, started making much more daring overlaps through the flanks.

The two players repeatedly connected with passes from Zachary and the other Juventus midfielders before making spirited runs towards the other side of the pitch. Their wing-play on the night was exceptional, and they continuously sent crosses towards the box, hoping to find Carlos Tevez and Fernando Llorente, Juventus' two strikers. They didn't rest on their laurels until they created another goal-scoring chance during the 32nd minute.

The opportunity began with a curling cross from Patrice Evra, which flew into the area. Carlos Tevez, one of the Juventus strikers, escaped the harassment of the Lazio defenders and connected with the cross on the volley to unleash a shot towards the goal. However, his effort smashed off the post before floating towards the right side of the box.

Arturo Vidal, who was lurking nearby, immediately pounced towards the ball. He controlled it well and quickly unleashed a chip towards Fernando Llorente, the Juventus striker still lurking in the box. However, lady luck seemed to not be on the striker's side, and one of the defenders cleared the ball before he could get his head on it.

The just-cleared ball then flew through the air before descending and bouncing around the arc of the eighteen-yard box. It was at that point that the waiting Zachary took action. He met it on a volley and blasted it back towards the goal. His leg power and shooting technique worked wonders, and his thunderous effort straightaway beat the keeper and found the top right corner. He raised his arms to celebrate as he had just scored the 3rd goal for Juventus during the 33rd minute.

Chapter 595 Coppa Italia in the Bag

The score was then 3:0 in favor of Juventus. But that didn't stop the Juventus players from continuing their relentless attacks. They cornered Lazio over the following few minutes to create many chances that almost resulted in goals.

The main highlight was when Fernando Llorente connected with a well-taken corner kick to plant a goalward header from close to the near post during the 39th minute. However, Etrit Berisha, the on-form Lazio keeper, was alert again and managed to push the effort out of play for another corner-kick.

Stephan Lichtsteiner, the Juventus right wing-back, quickly took the resulting corner-kick and sent a curling cross towards the box.

Zachary went into action again to meet the incoming ball. He escaped the harassment of his marker before rising from the ground and producing another fine header a few meters away from the far post. But luck wasn't on his side that time, and his effort smashed off the post before bouncing in the box.

Stefan de Vrij, one of the three Lazio center-backs, immediately cleared the just rebounded ball. He smashed it with all the power he could muster, sending it flying towards Juventus' side of the pitch.

But before the Lazio players could relax, Patrice Evra, who had stayed back to defend, collected the ball right after it bounced in Juventus' half. The Frenchman hammered it back into the heart of Lazio's defense to initiate another attack on the opponents.

Arturo Vidal, the player lurking around a pocket of space outside the Lazio box, outwitted his opponent and headed the ball towards the right flank. His heading accuracy was spot-on, and he effortlessly found Stephan Lichtsteiner, who was still unmarked in the wing.

Stephan Lichtsteiner, on his part, controlled the ball well. Then, he accelerated and cut into the pitch to approach the box from the right side. He bided his time and waited until one of the defenders rushed forward to close him down before unleashing a negative pass toward the arc of the eighteen-yard box.

Claudio Marchisio, who was already waiting in the arc, reacted appropriately. He connected with the pass from Lichtsteiner and swiftly controlled the ball. Then, he took another touch to find the best angle before blasting the ball towards Lazio's goal.

His shooting technique was spot on, and the shot managed to bend around the defenders before heading towards the inside of the far post. But just at the last moment, the gloved fingertips of the Lazio keeper grazed the ball's surface and altered its trajectory by a slight margin. The minute change sent the effort smashing onto the post and bouncing back into the area.

The eyes of Zachary, who was lurking nearby, lit up when he saw the ball rebound towards him. Without hesitation, he lunged forward and met it with an outstretched boot. He pocked it past the keeper and into the back of the net to effortlessly score Juventus' 4th goal for the night during the 40th minute.

"There it is again," Fabio Crudele, the commentator, yelled as Zachary ran towards the touchline to celebrate. "Zachary has found the back of the net for the third time to complete a hat-trick and score Juventus 4th goal on the night during the 40th minute. He has also pushed his Coppa Italia goal-tally to eight with that effort. He's already the sure favorite to take home the Golden Boot, and I don't think Miroslav Klose can still close the gap to share the honors."

"Well, Zachary's sharpness has been exceptional during this final," David Ferrini, the other commentator, said. "He has been constantly moving around to search for opportunities. He has also linked up well with his teammates to allow them to dominate Lazio in the midfield. If the status quo on the field remains constant, he will go home with the Man of the Match accolade after the final."

The game continued after the goal celebrations, with Juventus continuing to dominate the proceedings by relying on their numerical advantage and superior number of phenomenal creative players.

This was team Juventus at their domineering best, controlling possession with a maestro's grip and pulling Lazio apart as they pleased. They created two more goal-scoring opportunities before halftime, with Carlos Tevez and Fernando connecting with pin-point through-balls in the box during the 43rd and 46th minutes, respectively. However, the Lazio keeper was alert again and managed to save Lazio from further embarrassment on all occasions.

The first half eventually ended with Juventus still leading by four goals to nil. Coach Max Allegri was already smiling from ear to ear when the Juventus players returned to the dressing room for the

halftime break. He smiled and gave Zachary a bear hug. "Nice play," he said and then started patting his back.

"Thanks, coach," Zachary replied, and all the players in the dressing room started whistling and clapping their hands. They were congratulating Zachary for scoring yet another hat trick in their own way.

"How is that leg of yours, by the way?" Coach Max Allegri asked after the others stopped applauding. "That tackle from Danilo caught you straight on the calf. It could have caused some damage."

"I think the leg is fine," Zachary said while swinging his foot. "I can still continue."

Coach Max Allegri smiled but shook his head. "That's not a good idea. You and Evra should sit out the second half. We're already ahead by four goals. I don't wish to risk any players who might have sustained some injuries. Okay?"

"Yes, coach," Zachary said and nodded.

"Great." The coach smiled. "You have already done your job, and we're already winning. Just sit back and allow your teammates to complete the rest."

"Okay," Zachary said. He then nodded at the coach before settling on one of the benches to drink water.

Soon afterward, Coach Allegri finished his halftime pep talk, and the players returned to the pitch. Of course, Zachary and Evra didn't follow the rest. They instead donned their jackets and settled on the bench with the other substitutes to enjoy the rest of the game.

Roberto Pereyra took Zachary's place, while Simone Padoin replaced Patrice Evra. The game began immediately after at a much more sedate pace, with Juventus playing steady football that lacked urgency. As for the Lazio players, they were defending tenaciously and waiting for opportunities on the counterattack.

However, the early red card had done Lazio in, and those counterattacking opportunities never came. The men in blue couldn't extricate themselves from the precarious situation they had found themselves in. They could only defend with all their men and hold on for dear life as the game progressed.

Of course, the Juventus players were not about to show them mercy. They upped the tempo and eventually created an opportunity to score during the 78th minute.

Roberto Pereyra, the substitute, did some fine work in the middle of the field. He exchanged swift one-twos with Arturo Vidal to break through the ranks of the Lazio players before penetrating the final third. Then, he remained composed and played a forward pass to Carlos Tevez, who slotted the ball past the keeper to score the 5th goal for Juventus on the night.

The score was then 5:0, and the Juventus players started slowing the tempo down. They managed the rest of the game well and gave away nothing in the final minutes. They didn't allow Lazio even a single opportunity to get a consolation until the game ended after five minutes of injury time.

With that, Juventus had finally won the final against Lazio with a 5:0 score, and the celebrations commenced. The Old Lady players and technical staff all started jubilating as they had added another trophy to their collection. They went around the pitch, hugging one another and occasionally thanking the fans, who were equally boisterous.

Zachary was obviously among the jubilating players. The cheers of the Juventus fans felt like the best music to him. It was as if he was drunk on happiness since he had scored a hat trick on the night and contributed considerably to his team winning the finals.

He felt like he was living the sweetest dream ever, as he had also ended the Coppa Italia as the undisputable top scorer with eight goals. He was about to win another Golden Boot from another competition, and hopefully, he would also be securing a potent elixir from the system soon.

"Now, only the UEFA Champions League remains," Zachary thought and clenched his fists. He felt a fire burning in his heart as he enjoyed another moment of success in his football career.

Minutes passed as Zachary and his teammates celebrated. Eventually, the moment arrived when they received the trophy in front of their equally excited fans. They became crazier with their festivities and ran around the pitch for more than fifteen minutes before taking the jublations to their dressing room. They would surely be getting very little sleep that night, especially since they had just won their third major trophy of the season.

Chapter 596 After the Final

Zachary returned to his hotel room after taking several interviews with reporters and then spending an hour celebrating with teammates and coaches. As he expected, a system notification sounded in his mind after he closed the door and switched on the light.

"Congratulations to the user for completing the 2014/15 Coppa Italia Challenge mission," the system AI's apathetic voice sounded at that moment. "The user can check out the interface for more details on the mission completion details and associated rewards."

Zachary's eyes gleamed with excitement as he placed his gym bag and the box containing his Coppa Italia golden boot and medal to the side. He forgot the pain he felt in his calf due to the tackle he faced during his match and settled on the bed. Then, without further ado, he began perusing the contents of the mission completion message.

#5 new messages

CONGRATULATIONS

->You have completed the system mission (2014/15 Coppa Italia Challenge).

->Mission Summary

*Milestone 1: Play 80% of the 2014/15 Coppa Italia fixtures (Completed; Rating A+; Rewarded 100 Juju points).

*Milestone 2: Help your teammates become the 2014/15 Coppa Italia Champions (Completed by helping Juventus defeat SS Lazio during the final; Rating S+; Rewarded 2,000 Juju points).

*Milestone 3: Provide the most assists in the 2014/15 Coppa Italia tournament (Not Completed; Rating D, No Reward).

*Milestone 4: Become the top scorer of the 2014/15 Coppa Italia tournament (Completed by scoring eight goals during the tournament; Rating S+; Reward 20,000 Juju points).

*Milestone 5: Become the MVP of the 2014/15 Coppa Italia tournament (By far the best player according to system statistical computations. Completion with Rating S+ and rewarded a dosage of 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.).

->Mission completed almost with perfection.

Overall Mission Rating: S

->Mission Rewards

1) A total of 22,100 Juju-points

2) An S-grade random-effect elixir that can increase one of the user's fitness attributes by an entire grade.

->Bonus Rewards

You have earned 5,000 Bonus Juju points.

Tang Mu grinned when he confirmed that he had secured the random-effect elixir from the system. All his physical fitness attributes, including agility, strength, stamina, endurance, and balance & coordination, were already at the SS grading. So, as long as he consumed the elixir, he would immediately push one of them to the SSS grading.

The SSS grade in fitness was like an untouched level that he hadn't seen any player possessing after repeatedly using the system's snooping tool. And not even world-class players like Cristiano Ronaldo, Pirlo, and Gareth Bale had pushed those few attributes to that level.

Of course, most possessed the SSS-grade game intelligence that allowed them to perform incredibly well on the field. However, their agility, strength, stamina, endurance, and balance & coordination were still at the level of the SS grading. As such, if Zachary could push one of his physical fitness attributes to the SSS grading, he would be standing at the top of the football world, at least fitness-wise.

"System," he called out in his mind. "Please bring up my current physical fitness and technique attributes."

"Command received," the apathetic voice of the System AI immediately sounded in his mind. "The user's fitness and technique attributes will be coming up shortly."

As the voice ceased, the translucent and intangible crystal-like display before Zachary flickered and displayed the requested information. His eyes lit up, and he started studying his attributes.

*USER STATS

->Physical Fitness (Av. Rating: SS)

Balance and Coordination: SS

Agility: SS

Strength: SS

Stamina: SS

Endurance Points: 2,300/72,000 (SS)

->Soccer Technique: [Av. Rating: SS]

Ball Control: SS

Dribbling Skills: SS

Passing Accuracy: SS

Body Control: SS

"The best outcome would be to improve my agility stat after consuming the random effect elixir," Zachary thought while looking at his attributes. "I could then possess the speed that could give Usain Bolt a run for his money while also retaining my ball skills. At that time, I would become a real nightmare for all the defenders I faced."

Zachary felt hopeful. But no matter how eager he was, he understood that immediately consuming the elixir was a terrible idea.

He knew that elevating one of his physical fitness attributes, like agility, by a whole grade would throw his rhythm off. He would then struggle to perform as usual during the crucial UEFA Champions League final that was only two and a half weeks away.

"Bzzt Bzzzt! Bzzt Bzzzt!"

Right then, his phone vibrated from one of his pockets. He fished it out and glanced at the screen. He smiled when he realized it was Emily calling before pressing the accept button and holding the device against his ear.

"Hi, Zachary," her bubbly voice immediately sounded from the other end of the line. "Congrats upon winning yet another trophy and Golden Boot. Remember to take me out to celebrate."

Zachary chuckled and replied, "I surely will. Come to Turin any time, and I'll take you out for dinner."

"You said it yourself," Emily said. "I hope you don't forget."

"I won't," Zachary promised.

"I was worried when I saw you go down in pain after facing that tackle from Danilo," she said with concern. "Are you okay? Is your leg fine?"

Zachary sighed and chose to be honest with his agent. "There's some pain around my calf muscle. I don't think it's anything serious. But I might still have to rest on the sidelines for a few days to recover."

"Taking time to recover is the best choice," she said. "Make sure that you see a physician as soon as possible. And remember not to strain your leg unnecessarily before you understand the extent of your injury."

"Of course, that's what I plan to do," Zachary said. "I will visit the team physician tomorrow after returning to Turin."

"Great," Emily said, her voice filled with relief. "You and your Juventus have now completed a treble, including the Supercoppa, the Coppa Italia, and the Serie A trophy you're yet to receive. Only the Champions League remains before you and your teammates etch your names in the history books by winning a quadruple."

"Yes, only the UEFA Champions League final against Barcelona remains," Zachary said. "It will surely be a tough battle when we face the Catalans. But we'll try our best to win. We'll go all out to bring the trophy back to Turin."

"I will be praying for you to achieve all the glory," Emily said. "You must be tired after playing the final. I'll now leave you to rest. Congratulations again upon winning the Coppa Italia. Keep working hard, and you'll continue achieving more glory."

"Thank you, my dear agent," Zachary said. "Your words have already filled my soul with motivation. I will do my best to continue performing well."

"There you go, being cheeky again," Emily said. "Good night!"

"Good night to you, too."

She then switched off the phone.

Zachary was just about to place the phone to the side. But it once again vibrated, indicating some incoming messages. He swiftly opened them and noticed they were from his acquaintances and old teammates congratulating him upon winning the Coppa Italia.

Zachary felt warm, especially when he saw the WhatsApp message from Kristin. The girl congratulated him on the Coppa Italia victory and also inquired if he was okay after facing the dangerous tackle during the game.

He replied that he was alright and thanked the girl for her concern. He then asked about her grandfather's health, and she responded that the old scout was undergoing treatment and improving. But she emphasized that the hospital was not about to discharge him.

Zachary comforted her with a few words and encouraged her to stay strong before ending the chat. But before he could place the phone down, it vibrated and indicated another incoming call. He glanced at the screen and immediately pressed the accept button when he noticed it was Paul Kasongo, his friend and former teammate, calling.

"Yo, Judas!" Kasongo's voice sounded from the other end of the line when he held the phone against his ear. The guy had started calling Zachary the name after he switched his national allegiance to play for Ivory Coast.

"Yo, short man!" Zachary replied with a chuckle. "You're calling so late!"

Kasongo sighed audibly. "I just watched your game. Man! Even though you played a single half, you performed like the GOAT. Congratulations upon winning another trophy."

"Thanks," Zachary said. "How are you doing, by the way? How's life at Tottenham?"

"Same old," Kasongo said. "I'm still working hard to secure a permanent starting position on the team. Hopefully, I can do so next season."

"Just continue working hard," Zachary said. "You'll achieve your goal."

"True that," Kasongo said. "It has been long since we got together. Maybe we can plan to go on holiday together after your Champions League finals against Barca. What do you think?"

"That's a good plan," Zachary said. "Let's talk more about it after the final."

"Great," Kasongo said. "I will get in touch then. Otherwise, let me leave you to sleep. Goodbye and good night!"

"Good night to you, too," Zachary said.

He ended the call and then switched off the phone before it could vibrate again. He placed it on his bedside table before undressing and heading to the bathroom. Within fifteen minutes, he finished showering and immediately jumped into bed, eager to rest for the night.

Chapter 597 The Diagnosis

The Juventus players, coaches, and the rest of the technical staff took their team bus and departed from Rome the following day. They arrived in Turin two and a half hours later, around midday, only to be received with yet another hero's welcome.

Thousands of supporters donning Juventus' stripped black and white colors lined and crowded the streets leading to the Vinovo to welcome the Coppa Italia champions. They cheered, waved, danced, and played all sorts of musical instruments as the Juventus bus slowly made its way towards the gates of the training center. It was like a festival in that part of Turin.

The only blemish to the celebrations was that there was no trophy parade, especially since there were still crucial matches, like the Champions League final, for the Juventus players and coaches to consider. They all remained seated in the bus without showcasing the Coppa Italia medals and trophy they had won the previous night. Only a few overexcited players occasionally pushed their heads out of the bus windows to wave to the similarly enthusiastic fans as the bus moved forward.

After thirty more minutes, the bus finally snaked its way out of the crowds of supporters and entered the gates of the Vinovo. The driver expertly brought it to a halt, and without further ado, the players started walking out.

The first ones to step out were the two Juventus medics, followed by Zachary, who could only walk with a pronounced limp. The injury he received after taking the tackle from Danilo had worsened overnight. He even had to hold on to the shoulder of one of the medics for support as he stepped down from the bus.

The reporters waiting beyond the barricades immediately filmed Zachary with their phones and cameras as they saw him limping out of the bus. The hubbub of activity increased among their ranks, and some didn't lose time before starting to yell out their questions.

"Zachary," one reporter shouted, "How do you feel? Are you seriously injured?"

"Zachary! Do you think you can return to training soon?"

"Zachary! Do you think you will play in the Champions League final against Barcelona?"

Zachary felt helpless when his ears picked up the questions from the reporters. He was already in a bad mood after he found that his injury had worsened overnight. He felt even worse when all those voices began clamoring around him to inquire when he would return to training or if he would play the Champions League final in two and a half weeks.

"Ignore them," Coach Max Allegri's voice suddenly sounded behind Zachary. "Don't worry about the inconsequential things. At the moment, you only need to go to the hospital for further diagnosis. We'll think and talk about everything else later. Understood?"

"Yes, coach," Zachary said.

By then, his other teammates had stepped out of the bus. They also wished him the best and encouraged him to stay positive while heading to the hospital. In return, he thanked them for their concern and encouraging words before leaving with Luca and Marco, the two medics.

They soon boarded a Juventus van and quickly departed the Vinovo under the witness of the reporters and hundreds of fans present. Within forty minutes, they arrived at the Juventus Stadium.

They parked the car and headed straight to the J|Medical, where Zachary underwent several stringent diagnostic tests to determine the extent of his injury. The top specialists at the health center associated with Juventus quickly found the root of the matter and brought him to one of the waiting rooms to discuss his injury.

"It's nice to meet you, Zachary," the medic in the white lab coat said after they settled down on the sofas in the room. "I go by the name of Marcello Bassi. I'm a physiotherapist here and a big fan of yours and the Juventus team behind you."

"Nice to meet you too, Dr. Bassi," Zachary said with a smile. "It's always great to meet a Juventus fan."

"But it doesn't beat the feeling of meeting a Juventus star out of the training facilities." The doctor chuckled. "By the way, no need to address me formally. Just call me Macello, and that will do."

"Okay, Marcello, it is," Zachary said. He glanced at the file before the medic and continued, "I'm a big boy. Just give it to me straight. Is my injury serious?"

Dr. Marcello Bassi smiled assuringly. "You suffered a mild calf contusion after taking a blow to your lower leg. Fortunately, the on-pitch medics handled the first aid quite well, and you only need around twelve days to recover completely."

"Twelve days!" Zachary frowned. "Today is Thursday, May 21st. If I factor in twelve days of recovery, I can only return to training on Monday, June 1st. That will only be four days before the day of the Champions League final against Barcelona. Is there a way we can shorten my recovery time?"

"No," the doctor said. "The time I have given is the shortest we can go before allowing you to return to your routine schedule of training and playing matches. Moreover, this time may lengthen to fourteen or twenty-one days if you don't follow our advice and take proper measures to care for your injury."

"I see," Zachary said and expelled a heavy breath. He felt depressed when he learned he would have to sit out Juventus' last two Serie A fixtures. That was even more so when he recalled that he would no longer have an opportunity to break the record of 36 Serie A goals a season set by Gino Rossetti when he played for Torino during the 1928-29 season.

"Look on the bright side," Dr. Marcello Bassi said after taking in his reaction. "The injury could have turned out worse, and you might have had to stay out of action for maybe a month. But what you suffered is only a mild calf contusion. If we manage it well, you will recover and have four days to prepare for the Champions League final against Barcelona. In my books, this is the best outcome, as you'll be able to partake in the only remaining game that still matters for Juventus."

"That's indeed so," Zachary said with a smile. Of course, he knew he had gotten off lucky with a twelve-day injury. But as a footballer who loved being on the pitch, he couldn't help but be greedy for more. "So, what should I do to completely recover from this injury within the twelve days you mentioned?" He sighed and faced the doctor.

"Now, you are talking." Dr. Marcello Bassi grinned and clapped his hands. "Firstly, you must not strain the leg during the next twelve days. That means no exercising and no kicking the ball. Do you copy?"

"Yes, doctor," Zachary answered.

The doctor nodded and continued. "Secondly, you must understand that the whole team, including your coach and the Juventus board, are worried sick about your situation. They have already tasked me with ensuring you don't mess up during your recovery. So, you'll be coming here every day, and I and the other experts here at J|Medical will take you through the rehabilitation process ourselves. Understood?"

"Yes, doctor," Zachary replied.

The doctor nodded, about to say something else. But just suddenly, the phone he had placed on the side vibrated. He mumbled a sorry and picked up the communication gadget before glancing at the screen.

"It's Coach Massimiliano Allegri himself!" He exclaimed and raised his head to look at Zachary. "He might be following up on your case. Sorry! I need to pick this up."

"No worries," Zachary said with a smile. "Just go ahead and take the call."

The doctor nodded and pressed the accept button. He then spent the next two minutes conversing with the coach, the subject being Zachary's injury. He explained the nature of Zachary's injury and mentioned the recovery time about twice before eventually ending the call.

No sooner had he put the phone back on the table than Zachary's own began ringing. He fished it out of his pocket and glanced at the screen. "The coach is also calling me," he said to the doctor before pressing the accept button.

"Hello, coach," he spoke into the phone after holding it against his ear.

"Hello, Zachary," Coach Max Allegri replied from the other end of the line. "I've just heard the diagnosis of your injury from Dr. Marcello Bassi. It's good news that you only require around twelve days to recover. So, this is my advice. Don't worry about other matters. You must follow the doctor's instructions strictly and ensure you're back to full fitness in the stipulated time. Then, I and the other coaches will do our jobs to prepare you for the UEFA Champions League final during the remaining four days. Okay?"

"Yes, coach," Zachary said like a dutiful soldier. "I'll follow the doctor's instructions to the letter."

"That's good," Coach Max Allegri said. "I have said all I have to say. Let me leave you in the hands of the doctor, and I wish you a quick recovery."

"Thanks, coach."

"You're welcome."

The coach then ended the call.

Zachary smiled and pushed the phone back into his pocket. He then glanced at the quietly waiting Dr. Marcello Bassi, and they soon began discussing the rehabilitation plan for his injury.

Chapter 598 Final Serie A Home Game of the Season

Zachary began undergoing treatment after discussing his rehabilitation plan with the doctor. The medics at J|Medical were quite attentive to him, and they immediately started helping him through the recovery process that would last an estimated twelve days.

As he yearned to return to full fitness within the stipulated time, he followed the doctor's instructions and focused only on his recovery. He missed his yoga routine and didn't head to the training ground the following morning. He instead returned to J|Medical and continued with his rehabilitation.

In the meantime, his teammates had commenced preparations for Juventus' next home Serie A game against Napoli. Under the supervision of the hyper Coach Max Allegri, they went through two drilling sessions on Friday during the morning and afternoon hours. Then, when Saturday arrived, they headed to the Juventus Stadium in the evening, one to welcome Napoli for their second last battle for that Serie A season, and two, to finally receive their Serie A trophy after the match.

For the game against Napoli, Coach Allegri once again rested most of his players who had played the Coppa Italia final during midweek. He played a defense of four second-string players, including Kwadwo Asamoah, Angelo Ogbonna, Andrea Barzagli, and Simone Padoin. He then fielded a midfield with Arturo Vidal, Claudio Marchisio, Stefano Sturaro, and Roberto Pereyra. And lastly, he fielded a striking line of Álvaro Morata and Kingsley Coman to complete his 4-3-1-2 formation.

The fans couldn't hide their worries, as it seemed like Juventus was giving up the match when the line-ups came out. Even the commentators lamented how all the big names, like Leonardo Bonucci, Giorgio Chiellini, Patrice Evra, Carlos Tevez, Fernando Llorente, and the two injured players - Andrea Pirlo and Zachary Bemba, were missing. They even predicted Juventus would lose to Napoli, which had brought out all the big guns like Gonzalo Higuaín, Dries Mertens, and Lorenzo Insigne, among other first-team players.

Fortunately, the before-the-game parading of the Coppa Italia trophy by the Juventus players seemed to wash away all the worries about the squad. Everything proceeded smoothly, and by the time the match kicked off at six in the evening, a festive atmosphere had long eclipsed the entire Juventus Stadium.

Since it was the day of the Serie A trophy presentation, Zachary, who could only walk with the help of crutches, had also headed to the Juventus Stadium with the team. He sat on the bench during the game and watched his teammates play brilliantly against the opponents.

He smiled when he saw the Juventus players swiftly settle into a steady playing cadence, incorporating slow exchanges of passes at the back followed by lightning-fast transitions in the midfield. They

dominated possession and sustained pressure against the opponent until a rare goal-scoring opportunity arose during the 13th minute.

The opportunity all began with a daring run through the right wing by Kingsley Coman. The Frenchman beat Faouzi Ghoulam, the Napoli left-back, before cutting into the pitch and squaring the ball to Roberto Pereyra, who had floated into an unmarked pocket of space before the box.

Roberto Pereyra showed why he was a brilliant attacking midfielder. He controlled the ball well and immediately fed it between the legs of Miguel Britos, the Napoli center-back. He stepped past the already-defeated defender with swift acceleration before pulling the trigger and blasting the ball past the keeper to score Juventus' 1st goal during the 13th minute.

The score was then 1:0 in favor of Juventus, and the game resumed after the goal celebrations. The Napoli players seemed to have gotten the perfect wake-up call after conceding the goal. They swiftly settled down and started playing clever football, highlighted by their spirited runs through the wings followed by crosses into the box. They attacked and attacked, hoping to score an equalizer as soon as possible.

However, the Juventus players played as usual on the defensive end. They remained organized and composed at the back while defending tenaciously to protect their goal. They calmly thwarted Napoli's attacks several times and maintained their 1:0 lead until the first half ended.

After the fifteen-minute break, the second half started with the Napoli players continuing from where they had left off. They repeatedly unleashed long balls and crosses into the box, hoping to find Gonzalo Higuaín, their center forward. They increased the tempo and launched attacks on Juventus' defense, wishing to create an opportunity to score the equalizing goal.

Their efforts bore fruit during the 50th minute when Kwadwo Asamoah, Juventus' left-back for the day, brought down José Callejón, the Napoli right winger, who had just penetrated the box. The foul was clear to everyone watching, and the referee showed Asamoah the yellow card before awarding a penalty to Napoli.

Gonzalo Higuaín stepped forward and took the penalty. But Gianluigi Buffon read him like an open book and dived the right way to save the effort. Unfortunately for Juventus, Buffon only managed to push the ball back into the box and allowed David López, the Napoli midfielder, to convert on the rebound. The Napoli man remained composed and slotted the ball past Buffon to score Napoli's 1st goal on the evening.

The score was 1:1, and the proceedings returned to square one. The Napoli players gained more momentum from the goal they had just scored and continued attacking. They worked harder than ever to create opportunities while remaining on guard against Juventus' counterattacks. However, a rare mistake nullified all their hard work when Walter Gargano, one of their defensive midfielders, took too many touches deep within his half and allowed Claudio Marchisio to rob him of possession during the 77th minute.

Arturo Vidal, the Juventus midfielder lurking nearby, didn't waste time before pouncing on the ball. He fed it forward to Álvaro Morata, who, in turn, played brilliantly and squared it to find Stefano Sturaro, one of Juventus' midfielders for the day.

The latter also remained composed and pulled the trigger from a tight angle. He expertly chipped the ball over the keeper and into the back of the net to score Juventus' 2nd goal on the evening during the 77th minute.

The score was then 2:1 in favor of Juventus, with only thirteen minutes of authorized playing time remaining. However, the Napoli players didn't lose heart and continued attacking. They played exceptionally well and came close to scoring several times. But then again, they always lacked that final finishing touch and repeatedly failed to put the ball into the back of the net.

The ninety minutes eventually elapsed, and injury time arrived while team Napoli was still going all out to find the equalizer. It was then another twist in the game happened.

The Juventus players won a rare corner kick after failing to convert a counterattack. Stefano Sturaro took the corner kick and sent a curling cross into the area. However, Lorenzo Insigne, the Napoli winger who had fallen back to defend, handled the ball within the box while trying to clear it away.

It was the perfect end that Juventus had been looking for, and Simone Pepe, the substitute, stepped forward to convert the penalty. He effortlessly sent the keeper the wrong way and found the back of the net to score Juventus' 3rd goal on the night.

The score was then 3:1 in favor of Juventus, and the game resumed after the celebrations. The Juventus players resorted to what they do best and managed the game well in the final two minutes of injury time. They held on tenaciously and maintained their 3:1 lead until the referee blew the whistle to end the game.

With that, the Juventus players had won yet another game and pushed their Serie A season tally to 105 points. They had also broken the 102 maximum points a season record set by themselves the previous season.

But all that didn't matter since their game against Napoli was their final home game for that Serie A season. They didn't care about anything else as it was finally the day they would receive their rightful Serie A trophy. They couldn't contain their delight and started celebrating before their fans, who responded with their own thunderous cheers.

Zachary was still under strict orders from the doctor not to strain his leg unnecessarily. He moved with the help of crutches and joined his excited teammates on the pitch. He didn't do anything excessive but only walked around slowly while waving to the fans and sometimes bumping fists with his teammates.

Some, like Patrice Evra and Giorgio Chiellini, tried to approach and lift him. But he quickly waved them away with the excuse of not wishing to worsen his injury with uncontrolled movements.

Eventually, he felt tired of walking with the crutches and stopped somewhere in the middle of the pitch. It was then that a few reporters stealthily tried to approach him. But the medics and assistant coaches, who were nearby, quickly chased them away.

Zachary was inwardly grateful to the men who were keeping watch for him. He smiled and stayed in one place as his ears continued picking up the cheers from the stands. His heart soon started pounding with boundless excitement as he awaited another defining moment of his career when he would receive his first Serie A trophy and golden boot.

Chapter 599: Serie A Trophy Presentation

The cheers around the Juventus Stadium continued increasing in volume as the trophy presentation drew closer with the passing of every second.

Talk about a festive carnival: that was what was transpiring in this famous football ground in Turin, with all the home fans yelling and singing at the top of their lungs without a care for anything else in the world. Their faces were depictions of heartfelt delights with all their smiles and the joyful atmosphere around them as they waited for their team to receive their rightful Serie A title.

In the meantime, the organizers had already set up everything necessary for the trophy presentation on the pitch. The podium was already in place, and the individuals to present the accolades had already taken their positions. The Juventus players, on their part, had already crowded a few meters from the podium while basking in the glory and joy of lifting yet another trophy.

Just then, the mellifluous voice of the ceremony commentator sounded, "Ladies and Gentlemen! The faithful of the Old Lady! The unwavering fans of the great Juventus! Let me take this opportunity to present the first player to ascend the podium to receive a medal. He is none other than our dearest and most brilliant attacking midfielder, the nightmare of opponents, and the one whose talent knows no bounds - Zachary Bemba."

"He has already scored 35 Serie A goals this season and is already ahead of the second-ranked top-scorer of the tournament by 13 goals. So, the Serie A management and other stakeholders have unanimously agreed to hand him the Player-of-the-Season Accolade with the Serie A Golden Boot tonight, even before the last match day."

"The faithful of the Old Lady! Let's put our hands together for this young footballer who has achieved so much in his first season at Juventus. Let's applaud Zachary Bemba as he ascends the podium."

As the voice ceased, Zachary's ears picked up even more explosive cheers sounding all over the stadium. He felt warm and proud from the bottom of his heart and started making his way up the podium with the help of his crutches.

The medics, who were nearby, hurried forth to help him up the stairs. But he waved them away for one simple reason. He wanted to ascend the podium and receive his first Serie A winner's medal with his own strength. And not even the mild calf contusion would stop him from achieving his small wish.

The cheers increased in volume after Zachary reached the top of the podium. Then, they exploded into a thunderous peak, like dozens of TNT vocal bombs detonating all at once, when Zachary finally received his Serie A medal, Golden Boot, and Player-of-the-Season award.

What followed was obvious. Thousands of Juventus supporters chanted his name as he placed his crutches to the side and raised his accolades above his head. The voices even increased beyond their previous peaks as he posed for the cameras with his three awards.

At that exact moment, Zachary's feelings were complicated. He felt contentment, pride, happiness, relief, and a little remorseful as he stood on the podium, basking in all the glory.

Yes, he was happy that he played so well the entire season and received the recognition of everyone after receiving the accolades. But he also felt some regret threatening to bubble within him after recalling that he couldn't share all his success with the only person who had done her best to push him up from the ground, even with her limited resources in both his lives. He felt his eyes threatening to turn misty as he couldn't share his glory with his late grandma.

After a few seconds, Zachary sighed and pushed back the tears before walking towards the other side of the podium with the help of his crutches. He paused when he passed by the Serie A trophy standing in the center and felt his mood improve after he bent forward and kissed its surface. Then, he hurried to the side to wait for his teammates and coaches to ascend the stage.

"Ladies and Gentlemen!" The voice of the commentator sounded again. "The next to ascend the podium is Carlos Tevez. He has been a faithful servant of the Old Lady and scored eighteen Serie A goals this season. Please put your hands together for Tevez as he receives the 'Best Forward of The Season Award' and his Serie A medal."

More cheers sounded, and Tevez quickly ascended the podium. He received his medals from the officials with a smile before kissing the trophy and joining Zachary on the side.

"The faithful of the Old Lady!" The mellifluous voice of the ceremony commentator sounded yet again. "Our next player to step on the podium is Giorgio Chiellini, our rock in defense. Please put your hands together as he receives the 'Best Defender of the Season Award' and his Serie A medal."

Amid the thunderous cheers, Giorgio Chiellini ascended the stage and received his medals before kissing the trophy and joining Tevez and Zachary.

"The faithful of the Old Lady! Words alone cannot describe how much this coach has achieved at the club during his first season in charge of Juventus. Ladies and Gentlemen! I present Massimiliano Allegri, our manager and the tactical brain behind our team. Please put your hands together for this gentleman as he ascends the podium to receive the 'Serie A Coach of the Season' and his medal."

The cheers hit an even more explosive peak immediately after the commentator mentioned Massimiliano Allegri's name. The man himself didn't seem fazed by the thunderous atmosphere in any way. He calmly straightened his tie as the cameras focused on him before ascending the stairs and receiving his awards. He then exchanged words with the Serie A officials presenting the accolades for a few dozen seconds before heading to the side to wait for the big moment.

The voice of the ceremony commentator continued sounding as more and more players ascended the podium and received their accolades. Proceedings moved forward fast, and the assistant coaches and the technical staff also received their honors under the witness of the thousands of Juventus supporters. Then, the big moment finally arrived, and one of the officials finally picked up the trophy and slowly walked forward before handing it to Gianluigi Buffon, the captain.

Gianluigi Buffon also did his part and slowly raised the Italian Serie A trophy above his head as the fireworks went off in the background. After that was an hour of festivities as the Juventus supporters and fans continued going wild with excitement while celebrating their team's fourth consecutive Serie A title.

All in all, it was a 'crazily festive' night at the Juventus Stadium.

Zachary had to return to J|Medical for his calf contusion rehabilitation treatment early the following morning. With that in mind, he excused himself from the celebrations early before having Lorenzo, his bodyguard, drive him back to his mansion in Pinerolo Piedmont. He arrived around 10 PM and found Bjørn Peters, his live-in fitness coach, still seated in the living room, along with his wife Inger, who also happened to be Zachary's live-in chef.

"Zachary! Welcome back," Inger was the first to greet him. "Congratulations upon winning the Serie A trophy. I'm really happy for you." She stepped forward to hug him.

"Thanks, Inger," Zachary replied. He placed his crutches to the side and accepted the hug while nodding at his fitness coach.

"Why are you looking at me with a guilty expression?" Bjørn Peters questioned with a smile as he rose up from the sofa. "I'm also quite happy for you. Congratulations once again, big man! I can now brag to my peers that my client has won another major trophy in Europe." He also stepped forward for a hug.

"Thanks, coach," Zachary replied and stepped away from Inger. He then accepted the bear hug from his fitness coach before moving to the side.

"Zachary! Are you hungry?" Inger, the ever-dutiful live-in chef, asked. "I could make something delicious for you real quick."

"No worries, Inger," Zachary replied. "I ate with the team after the game. I'm already full and only yearning to head to bed and rest."

"Where are your Serie A medals?" Inger asked again.

"Still in the car," Zachary replied. "There was no way I could carry them while walking with the crutches. So, I instructed Lorenzo to bring them inside the house later."

"That makes sense," Inger said.

"How's your injury, by the way?" Coach Bjørn Peters interjected.

"I feel like I'm recovering well after undergoing three days of treatment sessions at the J|Medical," Zachary replied with a smile. "The pain around my calf muscles has also largely disappeared. However, the medics have advised me to continue using crutches to avoid straining the leg. They say that the crutches are crucial to my recuperation if I wish to heal within the twelve days they set for me."

"They are right," Coach Bjørn Peters said with a nod. "What usually makes player injuries worse is not following medical instructions and straining the hurt muscle, joint, or bone before full recovery. So, I hope you remain obedient to the doctors without doing anything stupid."

"I won't," Zachary promised and glanced at his watch. "It's getting late. I'll be heading up to my room to sleep. So, goodnight."

"Okay, then," Coach Bjørn Peters replied. "Let's wish you a good night too. We'll talk again tomorrow."

"Thanks," Zachary said and nodded at his fitness coach again. He then picked up his crutches and laboriously ascended the stairs. He eventually arrived at his bedroom door and entered the spacious and comfy place.

"Ding!"

The all-familiar system notification sounded in his mind after he closed the door behind him.

"Congratulations to the user for completing most of the major milestones of the 2014/15 Italian Serie A Challenge mission," the system AI's apathetic voice followed. "The user can check out the interface for more details on the mission completion details and associated rewards."

Chapter 600 Final Game of the Season

Despite having expected the system notification, Zachary still felt excitement sweep over him when he heard it in his mind. He hurriedly placed his crutches to the side before settling on his bed and instructing the system AI to bring up the mission completion details.

#4 new messages

CONGRATULATIONS

->You have completed the system mission (2014/15 Italian Serie A Challenge).

->Mission Summary

*Milestone 1: Play 65% of the fixtures of the 2014/15 Serie A season. The user must be part of the starting eleven or a playing substitute in at least 25 of the total 38 Serie A matches (Completed; Rating S; Rewarded 2,000 Juju points).

*Milestone 2: Help your teammates become the 2014/15 Italian Serie A Champions (Completed; Rating S+; Rewarded 2,000 Juju points).

*Milestone 3: Provide the most assists in the 2014/15 Italian Serie A season (Awaiting results from the final Serie A game against Hellas Verona).

*Milestone 4: Become the top scorer of the 2014/15 Italian Serie A season (User has already scored 35 goals and is ahead of the second-ranked player on the top-scorers list by 13 goals. The system has deemed the user to have already completed the milestone with a rating of S+ and rewarded 20,000 Juju points).

*Milestone 5: Become the MVP of the 2014/15 Italian Serie A season (User has completed the mission by winning the Serie A Player-of-the-Season accolade; Rating S+; Rewarded 30,000 Juju points).

*Milestone 6: Score 40 or more goals during the 2014/15 Serie A Season (Awaiting results from the final Serie A game against Hellas Verona).

*Milestone 7: Help your teammates achieve an unbeaten run throughout the 2014/15 Italian Serie A. The user must work hard to ensure Juventus doesn't lose even a 'single' match from the beginning to the end of the season (Awaiting results from the final Serie A game against Hellas Verona).

->The system will tally the rest of the mission completion details after Juventus' final Serie A game against Hellas Verona.

->The system encourages the user to work hard during the final game to complete the remaining milestones and attain the maximum rewards.

"How am I supposed to work hard when I'm injured?" Zachary sighed and shook his head.

Juventus' away game against Verona was on Saturday, May 30th, 2015. However, the earliest he could fully recover (according to the medics at J|Medical) would be two days after the game on Monday, June 1st. That meant he could only hope and pray that his teammates would go all out to get at least a draw, even in his absence, if he wished to win the other mission prizes from the system.

"Well," Zachary thought. "The team is powerful even without me. They should be able to attain a draw against Hellas Verona even while playing at half their best. Let's hope that luck will be on their side."

Zachary pushed his worries to the back of his mind and dismissed the system interface. He then quickly took a shower before drying himself and jumping into bed for the night.

He woke up early the following morning and returned to J|Medical, where he continued undergoing rehabilitation. His treatment was quite rewarding, and he felt most of the discomfort in his calf disappear by the end of the session. But even then, he followed the doctor's instructions and continued relying on his crutches for support while walking.

The following six days were even more tedious, especially since he couldn't train or kick the ball. He felt bored as he had to do repetitive rehabilitation exercises to strengthen his calf muscles without further hurting them.

Fortunately, his yearning to return to full fitness eclipsed all hardships. He remained motivated, especially since he could perceive his injury healing at a noticeable rate with the passing of each day.

Eventually, Saturday, May 30, the day when Juventus' would play the away game against Hellas Verona, arrived. By then, the doctors had already cleared him to walk without crutches, and he eagerly traveled with his teammates to Verona, hoping that they would achieve at least a draw, which would, in turn, allow him to win another S-grade elixir from the system.

Proceedings went according to schedule, and the game started at 6:00 PM in the almost fully packed Stadio Marcantonio Bentegodi. He sat on the bench during the entire match and watched his teammates put up a barely acceptable performance against the opponents.

Maybe it was due to Juventus having already won all the trophies in Italy, including the Supercoppa, the Coppa Italia, and the Serie A, that season. Or perhaps it was because it was the last Serie A match day. But the Old Lady players seemed to lack fighting spirit on the pitch and only played at a sub-par level against the weaker Hellas Verona side.

Roberto Pereyra was the exception. He played like a world-class attacking midfielder from the get-go and looked sharp every time he got hold of the ball.

The highlight of his performance was when he connected with a through pass from Claudio Marchisio before dribbling past one of the defenders and pulling the trigger from around twenty-eight yards out. His shooting technique was superb, and he found the back of the net with the missile of an effort to score Juventus' 1st goal during the 41st minute.

The score was then 1:0 in favor of Juventus, and Zachary sighed with relief as he watched his teammates celebrating the opening goal. His hopes soared as he thought the lead would motivate them to play better football and thrash Verona by a score of two or more goals. However, right after the second half started, he noticed that he couldn't have been more wrong.

The Hellas Verona players came out of the dugout with boundless team spirit. They played brilliant football right from the restart and launched an immediate attack against Juventus. They penetrated Juventus' half by relying on Juanito Gómez, their left-winger, who effortlessly beat Simone Padoin in a one-on-one battle before squaring the ball into the middle.

Leandro Greco, a Hellas Verona attacking midfielder, collected the ball around the edge of the final third before exchanging a brilliant one-two with Luca Toni, the Verona center-forward, to beat Arturo Vidal. The angle then opened up, and Greco pulled the trigger from thirty-two yards out, hoping to score Hellas Verona's 1st goal during the 46th minute.

Unfortunately for him, there was Buffon in Juventus' goal. The experienced keeper threw his body at the thunderous long-distance effort before punching the ball out of play for a corner kick.

But was Juventus out of the woods yet? The answer soon became apparent when Boško Janković, the Hellas Verona right-winger, took the corner kick. He unleashed a tricky cross that eluded all the players crowding in the box before eventually finding its way to Luca Toni, the striker lurking close to the far post.

Luca Toni, on his part, performed his job well as a center-forward. He met the ball with a diving header and guided it into the back of the net to score Hellas Verona's first goal of the evening during the 48th minute.

The game resumed after the goal celebrations, with the Verona players continuing to play a solid game, incorporating stable defending and long balls forward. They played brilliantly for the next ten minutes and came close to scoring twice.

The momentum was on their side, and they continued attacking. Unfortunately for them, Juventus relied on their Champion's luck and counterattacked after they failed to convert yet another opportunity.

Roberto Pereyra was once again the man of the hour. He took advantage of a rare mistake from one of the Verona midfielders to win back possession before setting up Carlos Tevez with a long ball over the top.

Tevez, on his part, was brilliant as ever. He easily beat an opponent with his swift pace on the right flank before squaring the ball to set up Fernando Llorente, who converted from inside the box to score Juventus 2nd goal during the 59th minute.

The score was then 2:1, and the Juventus players fell back and started defending while waiting for the final whistle. They played with spirit and purpose, hoping to see the game through before returning home with another win.

However, another twist eventually occurred in the game during the 90th minute. Arturo Vidal, who had been brilliant the entire game, committed a rare mistake and brought one of the Verona midfielders to the ground a few meters away from the box.

The referee awarded the free kick, and the Verona players readily took advantage of the opportunity to hit back at Juventus. Juanito Gómez was the man of the hour, who sent a perfect curve ball over the defensive wall to find the back of the net and score the equalizer during the game's closing stages.

The score was then 2:2, and Zachary could only sigh from the bench as he watched the Verona players celebrating their equalizing goal. After witnessing how circumstances had progressed on the pitch over the past few minutes, he even feared the worst could happen.

Fortunately, his worries didn't come true. The Juventus players seemed to have received a wake-up call after conceding the goal. They defended tenaciously throughout the closing stages until the referee blew the whistle after six minutes of injury time.