

Greatest 621

Chapter 621 The 2018 FIFA World Cup Challenge

Zachary had a hectic Monday and Tuesday in Turin, Italy, with a jam-packed schedule of meetings with representatives from various companies that sponsored him. He was racing against time to make it to all his appointments. On Tuesday morning, he had a highly anticipated meeting with Nike. The meeting was a crucial one as they were his primary sponsor. It held significant importance on his agenda.

Three years ago, they had offered him an eight-year deal worth a staggering 180 million Euros! Zachary had jumped at the offer and was now earning a jaw-dropping 22.5 million Euros annually as one of their top brand ambassadors.

Zachary was thrilled to meet with the Nike representatives to discuss which boot he would wear at the upcoming World Cup. They strategized how he could promote the shoe at the tournament and make it the talk of the football world. After considering his options, Zachary quickly decided on the Nike Mercurial Roc - a boot designed for players who craved lightning-fast speed and agility. He even got to try them on, along with a stylish Nike tracksuit, for a quick photoshoot before bidding farewell to the Nike team.

He spent the rest of the Tuesday visiting all his friends and acquaintances in Turin. He spent some quality time with his coaches and the technical staff at Juventus, reminiscing about the good times they had shared. As the sun descended toward the horizon in the west, he returned to his sprawling mansion in the tranquil town of Piedmont. The excitement of a new adventure ahead was palpable as he packed his bags and prepared for his next destination. He was ready to join his Ivorian teammates in Edinburgh the following day, where they would play a friendly against Scotland before heading to Russia to compete in the World Cup.

Zachary spent the rest of the evening chatting with his fitness trainer, Bjørn Peters, and the coach's lovely wife, Inger. The trio enjoyed a sumptuous dinner before bidding each other goodnight. Once back in his room, Zachary took a relaxing shower and slipped into his comfy boxers. As he settled into his bed, his curiosity piqued, and he decided to check out his stats and the new system mission that had only been assigned to him a few days ago. "System," he called out in his mind. "Please bring up my current stats on the interface."

"DING"

"Command received," the system AI replied immediately. "User-stats data coming up on the interface."

With that said, the crystal-like display shimmered slightly before showing his primary attribute data.

*USER STATS

->Physical Fitness: SSS

->Soccer Technique: SS+

->Game Intelligence: SS

->Mental Ability and Mindset: SS

->X-Factors: SS+

->GOAT Skills: 12

After analyzing the stats, Zachary gave a nod and requested the system to display a breakdown of all his attributes. "System, can you show me the breakdown of all my attributes?" he asked.

The system responded with a DING sound and instantly presented the desired data on a translucent crystal-like display, making it easy for Zachary to review.

*USER STATS (Breakdown)

->Physical Fitness (Av. Rating: SSS)

Balance and Coordination: SS+

Agility: SSS

Strength: SS+

Stamina: SSS

Endurance Points: 108,500/110,000 (SSS)

->Soccer Technique: (Av. Rating: SS+)

Ball Control: SS

Dribbling Skills: SS+

Passing Accuracy: SS

Body Control: SS+

->Game Intelligence: (Av. Rating: SS)

Spatial Awareness: SS

Tactical Knowledge: S+

Risk Assessment: SS

->Mental Ability and Mindset: (Av. Rating: SS)

Soccer Passion: SSS

Composure and Mental Strength: SS+

Coachability: A+

Self-Motivation: SS+

->X-Factor (Av. Rating: SS+)

Consistency Factor: SSS

Luck Factor: SS+

Supernormal Factor: S+

Match Winning Factor: SSS

As Zachary scrolled through the list of his attributes, he couldn't help but grin. Three years of hard work and dedication had paid off, and he was now a football star with an impressive record. He had not one, but two Champion League trophies, four Serie A titles, and two Coppa Italias under his belt. And that was just the beginning.

What's truly exciting was that completing various system missions over the years had enabled him to upgrade his attributes to a level that was nothing short of amazing. Although Zachary's "Balance & Coordination" and "Strength" attributes were behind at the SS+ grade, all his other physical fitness stats had reached the SSS grade. His soccer technique skills were equally impressive, with two being graded at the SS level and the rest at the SS+ level.

But that's not all. His "Game Intelligence," "Mental Ability and Mindset," and "X-Factor" attributes had also risen over the years. They were all at the SS level or above, making Zachary one of the most well-rounded and skilled football players in the world. All that hard work had definitely paid off.

Zachary couldn't contain his excitement and eagerly called out to the system once again. His curiosity was piqued and he couldn't wait to check out the new system mission. "Hey there, System! Could you bring up the details of the 2018 World Cup Challenge?"

"Command received," said the system AI as the all-familiar translucent crystal-like flickered to show the requested information. "Mission details have been displayed on the interface."

GOAT MISSIONS

#NEW MISSION: 2018 FIFA World Cup Challenge

->The system has detected that the user is part of Ivory Coast's 2018 FIFA World Cup squad. The system has designed an associated mission for the tournament.

->The user needs to accept the mission first to stand a chance of winning rewards after completing the milestones below.

*Milestone 1: Play over 75% of the fixtures of the 2018 FIFA World Cup for Ivory Coast.

*Milestone 2: Help Ivory Coast qualify from group B to the 'round-of-sixteen' stage of the 2018 FIFA World Cup tournament.

*Milestone 3: Help Ivory Coast qualify for the quarter-finals stage of the 2018 FIFA World Cup Tournament.

*Milestone 4: Help Ivory Coast qualify for the semi-final stage of the 2018 FIFA World Cup tournament.

*Milestone 5: Help Ivory Coast qualify for the 2018 FIFA World Cup finals.

*Milestone 6: Help Ivory Coast overcome all odds and become the champions of the 2018 FIFA World Cup tournament.

*Milestone 7: Become the top scorer and win the Golden Boot of the 2018 FIFA World Cup tournament while playing for Ivory Coast.

*Milestone 8: Become the best player of the 2018 FIFA World Cup tournament and win the Golden Ball while playing for Ivory Coast.

*Rewards:

->Milestone 1 completion reward: 1,000 Juju-points

->Milestone 2 completion reward: 40,000 Juju-points

->Milestone 3 completion reward: 100,000 Juju-points

->Milestone 4 completion reward: 200,000 Juju-points

->Milestone 5 completion reward: 500,000 Juju Points

->Milestone 6 completion reward: SSS-grade mental conditioning elixir.

->Milestone 7 completion reward: SSS-grade vitality-enhancing elixir.

->Milestone 8 completion reward: SSS-grade Spatial Awareness Conditioning elixir.

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

->The user can choose not to accept the mission.

*Accept *Reject

*Punishment if the user doesn't realize any of the milestones at the end of the tournament: Minus 500,000 Juju points.

*After accepting the mission, the user has to complete at least one milestone before the tournament ends to escape the penalty.

*Remarks: It is impossible to win the race unless you venture to run, and impossible to win the victory unless you dare to battle.

Chapter 622 Ivorian Teammates

Zachary's eyes lit up as he scanned through the thrilling details of the 2018 FIFA World Cup challenge. Excitement surged through his veins as he didn't hesitate to tap the 'accept' button. He was all set to embark on an exhilarating mission to conquer the system assignment.

The 2018 FIFA World Cup challenge was an adrenaline-pumping, heart-racing mission he had eagerly anticipated for months. He knew that winning the World Cup would be an arduous task, especially as the most formidable footballing nations in the world were fiercely vying for the prestigious trophy.

But the sheer excitement of the challenge was enough to fuel his passion and drive him to push himself beyond his limits. After all, the promised system rewards were beyond incredible, and with each system milestone he achieved, he would unlock bonuses that would gradually elevate his skills to superhuman levels. He yearned to put forth his best effort and overcome all the challenges ahead. He was determined to accomplish all the system mission milestones and obtain the three SSS-grade elixirs. Zachary just finished going through the system's mission and closed the interface. He was feeling completely drained and exhausted, so he decided to call it a day and crawled into his bed. As he lay down on his comfortable bed, he gradually drifted off to sleep. He slept soundly through the night, without any disturbances. He woke up when his phone alarm went off at six, reminding him of the new day ahead. He immediately jumped out of bed and went through his morning yoga routine, stretching his limbs and waking up his muscles. He then headed to the shower, where he spent a few minutes cleaning up and feeling refreshed. After getting dressed, he walked down the luxurious halls of his mansion to the dining hall, where he enjoyed a sumptuous breakfast. He sat at the large mahogany table, savoring the flavorful food and enjoying the serene atmosphere. As he ate, he chatted with his fitness trainer, Bjørn Peters, who had also woken up early to send him off. After breakfast, he said his goodbyes to Bjørn and headed out of the mansion, suitcase in hand. He headed to the driveway, where his sleek Audi Q7 was parked, waiting for him. He hopped in the back seat, and Lorenzo, his driver, started the engine. They were headed to the airport, where he would catch a morning flight from Turin to Edinburgh to meet his Ivorian teammates. As they drove and navigated the early morning traffic, he couldn't help but feel excited for the World Cup adventure that awaited him. He was eager to meet his teammates and start training. They would fight together for the next few weeks as they vied for the coveted World Cup Trophy.

Finally, Zachary made it to the airport after a grueling hour-long journey. Accompanied by his trusted bodyguard and driver, Lorenzo, they breezed through the airport procedures and before they knew it, they were already boarding their flight to Edinburgh.

As they took off, the feeling of excitement and anticipation was palpable. The plane soared high in the sky, and Zachary couldn't help but look out of the small window to take in the breathtaking view. The sun was rising, and the golden hues of the sky added to the captivating moment. The flight to Edinburgh took five hours, but it was a comfortable journey. The cabin crew ensured the passengers were relaxed, and the in-flight entertainment system kept everyone occupied. Zachary spent some time reading a book, while Lorenzo took a nap. As the plane began its descent, Zachary's heart quickened with excitement. He peered out the window, watching as the sprawling city of Edinburgh came into view. Winding roads, bustling streets, and a sea of people below - it was a sight to behold. Zachary couldn't help but marvel at the vibrant colors of the buildings against the lush green landscape. The reason for his visit wasn't leisurely, though. He was there to meet up with his Ivorian teammates and gear up for the friendly match against Scotland the next day. The anticipation was palpable, and Zachary couldn't wait to get started.

The moment the plane's wheels touched the tarmac, Zachary and his trusted bodyguard, Lorenzo, were ready to roll. They sailed through security checks with the finesse of seasoned travelers. Once they got their hands on their luggage, they were greeted by Seko Bakari, the official representative of the Ivorian Football Federation. Seko was the man with the plan, and he led them straight to the Delta Hotel where the Ivorian National Football team was camped out.

After getting settled into his room and freshening up, Zachary couldn't wait to finally meet his Ivorian teammates and coaches. They all convened in one of the conference rooms at 3:00 PM, brimming with excitement and anticipation for the challenges ahead.

As Zachary walked into the room, a familiar voice exclaimed, "There he is, the man himself!" He turned to see none other than Eric Bailly, his former teammate, grinning from ear to ear.

"Hey there, Eric!" Zachary exclaimed as he approached the center back and gave him a warm hug. "It's so great to see you. How have you been? What's been going on with you over at Tottenham these days?"

Eric grinned, "Same old, same old. Just grinding away to keep my spot on the squad. Oh, and by the way, congratulations on winning your second consecutive Champions League trophy."

Zachary couldn't help but chuckle as he thanked his former teammate. After exchanging a few more pleasantries, he made his way around the room, greeting his other Ivorian teammates. The room was filled with some of the biggest names in Ivorian football, including the likes of Serge Aurier, Wilfried Zaha, Serey Dié, Ibrahim Sangaré, Franck Kessié, Max Gradel, Maxwell Cornet, Nicolas Pépé, Jonathan Kodjia, Salomon Kalou, and Gervinho. It was truly a star-studded gathering that left Zachary feeling expectant and excited to be amongst such great company a week before the World Cup.

However, despite the impressive gathering, Zachary couldn't help but feel a tinge of regret. One of the best players to ever play for Ivory Coast, Yaya Touré, was missing from the room. Zachary knew that Yaya had resigned from the Ivorian National team three years prior, but he still couldn't help but think how great it would have been to have him there.

As Zachary and his teammates were engrossed in a lively chat, the door suddenly burst open, and in strode a stern-looking middle-aged man with an entourage of five. It was none other than Hervé Renard, the head coach of the Ivorian National Team, accompanied by his assistants.

Hervé Renard was a legend in the African football scene, having coached the Ivory Coast National team to victory in the African Cup of Nations in January 2015. He had been at the helm of the team since July 2014 and had continued to deliver impressive results. With Zachary joining the team, Hervé Renard's success story only got better, culminating in Ivory Coast's qualification for the 2018 FIFA World Cup. It was an exciting time for the team and a momentous achievement for everyone involved.

Chapter 623 Friendly Against Scotland

As Hervé Renard walked into the room with a grand entrance, Zachary couldn't help but admire how he exuded confidence and ease. The coach went around the room, flashing a warm smile to each of his players and making them feel seen and appreciated. He took the time to engage in small talk, inquiring about everyone's well-being and showing a genuine interest in their lives outside the game.

His players felt a sense of belonging and unity as Hervé's warm and commanding presence filled the room. They knew they were in good hands with a coach who could inspire and motivate them to achieve greatness. As soon as he stepped onto the stage, the coach's charisma permeated the air, attracting everyone's attention and respect. His players were captivated by his words and inspired by his unwavering confidence. After setting the tone with his engaging personality, he began discussing the tactics for Ivory Coast's friendly game against Scotland.

"Tomorrow marks the day we face Scotland in our final friendly match before the World Cup," the coach announced in fluent French. "Since most of you have just joined the team and haven't had the chance to train with your teammates yet, we'll keep the tactics fairly straightforward for tomorrow's game."

"Our game plan remains unchanged from our previous matches. We aim to maintain possession while creating opportunities to score. If there's a turnover, we promptly apply pressure using a high press and try to regain possession as much as possible. Lastly, we deploy a high defensive line and utilize offside traps to frustrate our opponents. I kindly ask you to try your very best to fulfill those requests for tomorrow's game."

"Moving on to the squad," the coach said, scanning the room. "Our starting line-up for the match is as follows: Our keeper will be Sylvain Gbohouo, while Serge Aurier, Eric Bailly, Lamine Koné, and Wilfried Kanon will play as our four defenders. We'll then go with Serey Dié, Franck Kessié, and Zachary Bemba for our midfield. Finally, for our forwards: we'll have Wilfried Zaha and Nicolas Pépé on the flanks while Gervinho will play as our center forward to complete our 4-3-3 formation."

"The players who haven't been mentioned will be on the bench for tomorrow's game," said the coach reassuringly. "But don't worry, there's no limit on substitutes for this friendly match, so everyone will have a chance to step onto the pitch and show off their skills."

"Do you have any questions?" asked the coach.

"No coach," the players responded in near-unison.

Upon completing the squad reading, the coach took a moment to address the players, conveying his contentment with the team's development. "It seems we're on the same page," he said with a smile, "and we're moving in the right direction. However, there's still more work to be done." The coach then announced that the players could take the rest of the day off. However, he emphasized that they had to be fully prepared for the morning training session the following day. "The training session is critical," he stressed, "as we need to fine-tune some of our tactics before our friendly match against Scotland in the evening."

Finally, the coach urged the players to stay focused and disciplined during their rest period. "We need to remain disciplined and keep the momentum going," he said. "We must ensure we're in top shape for the match."

With that said, the coach ended the meeting and sent his players away from the conference room. The players left feeling motivated and eager to work towards their next goal.

Thursday, June 7th, 2018

Easter Road Stadium

Edinburgh, Scotland

The atmosphere was electric in Edinburgh as the sun dipped low in the sky. All eyes were fixed on the football stadium, where Scotland was about to play Ivory Coast in a friendly match. The anticipation was

palpable, with fans on the edge of their seats, eagerly waiting for the game to begin. The energy was infectious, and you couldn't help but feel caught up in the excitement.

On the field, both teams had their top players ready to go. Scotland had an impressive starting line-up featuring the likes of Andrew Robertson, Scott McKenna, John McGinn, and Stuart Armstrong. Meanwhile, Ivory Coast was not to be underestimated, with a formidable team that included Serge Aurier, Eric Bailly, Zachary Bamba, Wilfried Zaha, Nicolas Pépé, and Gervinho, among other prominent names in African football. It was set to be a thrilling match, and the tension was mounting with each passing moment.

At exactly 7:00 PM, the referee glanced at his watch before blowing the kick-off whistle, signaling the start of the battle.

Both teams played it safe while assessing each other's tactics, abilities, and weaknesses in the opening minutes. As a result, the initial phase was uneventful, with neither team willing to take any chances or make mistakes.

Ivory Coast delivered a consistent performance by sticking to their stable game plan. Their strategy involved gradual buildups incorporating short passes and a few runs through the wings. Their game plan routinely paid off as they successfully delivered some well-executed crosses into the box, resulting in some impressive headers that headed straight toward the goal - but were unfortunately thwarted by the Scottish goalkeeper.

While Ivory Coast came out strong and aggressive, the Scottish team took a more cautious approach, prioritizing their defense and determined to not let a single goal slip in during those crucial opening minutes of the match. Executing this strategy demanded plenty of concentration and self-control, but the potential rewards were enormous in the long run.

The score remained deadlocked at 0:0, even after fifteen minutes of gameplay. But despite the lack of significant action on the pitch, the tension in the stadium continued to build as both teams tried to gain an advantage. The crowd cheered every time a player from their team gained possession of the ball, and the players themselves looked focused and determined as they moved the ball around the field. As the minutes ticked by, it became clear that this would be a closely contested match, with neither team willing to give an inch.

The football match continued uneventfully until the 34th minute when Jack Hendry, one of the Scottish defenders, made a terrible mistake that changed the game's tempo. He tried to clear the ball but ended up miskicking it, serving it to the highly agile Gervinho, who was lurking close to the edge of the box.

Being the experienced player he was, Gervinho made the best decision after collecting the ball. He passed it to Zachary, who had just sprinted into the pocket of space close to the border of the final third.

Zachary's eyes scanned the field as he quickly retrieved the ball. His heart was pounding with excitement as he searched for his teammates. He spotted an opening and then, with lightning-fast reflexes, stepped past John McGinn, one of the Scottish defensive midfielders. Zachary then quickly seized the opportunity to take advantage of the opposing team's disorganization caused by the error. Being an SS-graded passing Maestro, he executed a through pass with precision that only he could possess toward the right wing.

The ball soared through the air, guided by Zachary's expert touch. And then, like magic, Wilfried Zaha, Ivory Coast's right winger, appeared like a specter close to the touchline on the right flank. He was sprinting towards Scotland's defensive third at breakneck speed, ready to take on the opposition. Zachary had done his part - now it was up to Zaha to make the most of this golden opportunity.

Chapter 624 In the Lead

Wilfried Zaha was bursting with anticipation as he saw Zachary's timely through pass heading his way. The thrill of playing alongside a skilled midfielder like Zachary was always a highlight for him. Zaha took a calculated risk and made a daring run to outpace the defense, but Zachary's eagle-eye vision spotted him just in the nick of time, and he delivered the ideal pass. It was a moment of pure magic that any footballer would envy.

Zaha didn't let his excitement affect his performance. He connected with Zachary's pass and controlled the ball with an outstretched leg. Then, with lightning-fast reflexes, he whirled around and fed the ball past Graeme Shinnie, Scotland's left-back, before beating him for pace.

As he cut into the pitch from the right flank, Kevin McDonald, one of the Scottish defensive midfielders, tried to stop him. But Zaha was too quick for him, and with a simple change of pace, he effortlessly glided past the midfielder and continued his mad dash towards the box.

Scott McKenna, the Scottish center-back, was the next person in line who tried to stop Zaha. However, Zaha made the right decision and chose not to tango with the defender. Instead, he quickly squared the ball into the box, hoping to find one of his Ivorian teammates.

In the box, Gervinho reacted to Zaha's pass and slid forward, trying to tap the ball into the back of the net. But a slight interference from Jack Hendry, the other Scottish center-back, took the ball away from him, thus denying the Ivorian forward a chance to score.

But was that the end of the wave of attack from Ivory Coast? The answer was a big NO, as the deflected ball glided towards the left flank where Nicolas Pépé, Ivory Coast's left-winger, was lurking.

Nicolas Pépé wasted no time as he collected the ball and bolted towards Scotland's box, his speed fast and furious. His audacious move caught the attention of the entire Scottish defense, and a few defenders scrambled to stop him. They lunged forward, hoping to prevent him from delivering a cross into the area.

However, Nicolas Pépé had a trick up his sleeve. Instead of unleashing a cross into the box, he outsmarted everyone on the pitch by passing the ball backward to the edge of the box where Zachary was arriving.

Zachary's heart raced as the ball glided towards him. It was a make-or-break moment, and he had to rely on his instincts and unleash his ball skills to score a goal. With lightning-fast reflexes, he kicked the ball with all his might, sending it soaring towards Scotland's goal with breathtaking speed and power.

The ball was like a guided missile, rocketing through the air, leaving everyone in awe. But, just as it was about to hit the target, it took a deflection off the thigh of one of the Scottish defenders. It was a moment of pure uncertainty, and before anyone could react, it homed into the back of the net, signifying that Ivory Coast had scored its first goal of the match during the 35th minute of gameplay.

What followed was a period of ecstasy for Zachary and his teammates. Without a moment's delay, they all ran straight to the corner flag, jumping and high-fiving each other in a frenzy of excitement. The air was electric with the energy of their accomplishment, and they yearned to keep going. The game was far from over, but that first goal had lit a fire within them - and they were ready to blaze a trail to the finish line!

Once the players positioned themselves, the referee signaled the start of the game with a whistle, and the match resumed.

The tension was high as the first half of the game between Scotland and Ivory Coast was already coming to a close. Scotland was trailing behind by one goal, but the players were not ready to give up. They decided to take a risk and started attacking with all their might. Long balls and crosses into the box became the order of the evening as the Scottish players pushed forward.

But the Ivorian defenders were not to be underestimated. They remained disciplined and organized, thwarting every attempt that came their way. The Scottish players were frustrated as they struggled to break through the compact defense. And so, as the teams made their way down the tunnel for half-time, the score remained 1:0 in favor of Ivory Coast. But there was still the second half, and it was still anyone's game for the taking.

At half-time, the Ivorian coach, Hervé Renard, made a bold move that got everyone following the friendly game talking. He subbed out every starting player except the goalkeeper and sent out a different team. What was Hervé Renard thinking? Well, the French tactician wanted to use the friendly match as an opportunity to assess the progress made by the players on the bench. He wanted to see if they had what it took to make it to the starting line-up.

Zachary was sitting on the bench during the second half of the game, feeling a bit fidgety. The Ivorian second-string players were now battling against the Scottish side, and he couldn't help but feel a twinge of envy as he watched them run up and down the field. Despite his restlessness, Zachary was still rooting for his team, hoping they would come out on top.

In the meantime, the Scottish players persisted with their strategy, relentlessly attempting to score an equalizer against Ivory Coast by employing long balls and crosses. It was a nail-biting series of minutes for everyone on the bench, and Zachary could feel the tension in the air as the game unfolded before his eyes.

Eric Bailly voiced his concern to Zachary, "The Scots are starting to dictate the pace of the game. If we're not careful, they might score anytime."

"Don't worry," Wilfried Zaha reassured them. "Our boys are still warming up. That's why the Scots have the upper hand at the moment. Once we settle in, we'll regain control of the game. Zachary, what's your opinion?" The forward turned to him.

"Let's wait and see," Zachary responded. Although he had been a member of the Ivory Coast team for three years, he still wasn't well-versed in the team's second-string players. As a result, he couldn't offer an accurate assessment of them.

Wilfried Zaha steered the conversation in a new direction, as nothing noteworthy was yet to happen on the field. "Hey, Zachary!" he called out. "We really missed you during the AFCON last year."

"Unfortunately, I couldn't join you guys due to my injury," Zachary explained. "I kept up with the game on TV and saw that we lost to Egypt in the round of sixteen."

Serge Aurier said from the side, "Oh, don't remind me of that game. We held Egypt for the entire 90 minutes. But we conceded a stupid goal during additional time. It was Mohamed Elneny who scored the winning goal against us."

Eric Bailly sighed deeply and said, "I hope we can perform better in the World Cup and qualify out of the group by beating Portugal and Spain."

Zachary exuded confidence, "We can take on any opponent and go even further in the World Cup. All we need to do is give it our all and leave no room for regrets."

Wilfried Zaha interjected, "Zachary is right! We have to treat every game as the finals. With the best midfielder in the world on our team, we can beat anyone." He gave Zachary a knowing look.

Eric Bailly jokingly remarked, "Yeah, with a Maestro like Zachary on our side, what have we got to fear? As long as we give him the ball, goals will come our way." His comment elicited chuckles from the rest of the group.

"Guys..." Zachary was on the edge of his seat, ready to say something, but he stopped as something crucial happened on the field.

Chapter 625 Game ending & Plans for the World Cup

Zachary's entire focus was now on the field of play.

Scotland had been putting up a persistent offense, with their players constantly pushing forward and attacking Ivory Coast's defense. However, despite their efforts, they couldn't capitalize on their most recent corner kick. To make matters worse, they carelessly lost possession of the ball and served it on the platter to Ivory Coast.

Simon Deli, the substitute center-back, spotted an opportunity to launch a counterattack. He pounced on the loose ball before sending it soaring towards the left wing, where Salomon Kalou waited patiently.

As soon as Salomon received the ball, he wasted no time and made a swift move, expertly controlling it with his chest before propelling it forward and accelerating towards Scotland's side of the pitch with lightning speed.

The atmosphere was electric! The tension was palpable as everyone watched in awe of the Ivory Coast forward, Salomon Kalou. He dashed through the gaps left by the Scottish players, who were caught off guard by his relentless offensive. The crowd was at the edge of their seats as they witnessed his impressive skill and agility.

Suddenly, the Scottish center-back, Scott McKenna, charged forward to stop the counterattack. But Salomon was too fast, and he swiftly squared the ball to find Max Gradel, who was running along with him through the middle.

Max Gradel was an often underrated player - but in that moment, his exceptional talent was apparent to everyone watching. He quickly received a pass from Salomon Kalou, and without hesitation, he darted into the heart of the Scottish defense like a hot knife through butter. His impressive display of skill could single-handedly win games.

Eventually, Max Gradel ran into Jack Hendry, the other Scottish center-back, as he approached the box. But Max didn't try to dribble past the defender. Instead, he played a timely pass towards his left to unleash Jonathan Kodjia, the substitute center-forward, towards Scotland's goal.

Jonathan Kodjia was another hardworking forward on the Ivorian team. He had his game face on and worked tirelessly to stay onside, timing his run to perfection. When Max Gradel's pass came his way, he pounced on it with lightning-fast reflexes, taking a few quick strides into the box. With a deft touch, he lobbed the keeper and found the back of the net, sending the Ivorian bench into a frenzy and securing Ivory Coast's 2nd goal during the 77th minute!

"Whoa, did you see that? It was a thing of beauty!" Eric Bailly exclaimed, his eyes sparkling with excitement. "That counterattack was lightning fast! The Scottish team didn't stand a chance and were caught completely off guard."

Zachary couldn't help but smile as he nodded in agreement. Having teammates like Max Gradel, Jonathan Kodjia, and Salomon Kalou, who could execute lightning-fast counters, filled him with excitement. With their skills on the team, Ivory Coast's chances of making it far in the upcoming FIFA World Cup tournament were much better.

The match wasn't over yet, even after the crowd-pleasing goal celebrations. The Scottish team refused to back down and continued their relentless pursuit of victory. However, the Ivorian players were not to be underestimated - their discipline and tenacity were on full display. And boy, did they put up a fight! They were like an impenetrable fortress, blocking every attempt made by the Scottish team.

As the clock ticked down, the tension was palpable. The Scottish team continued doing everything possible to score, but the Ivorian defense was too strong for them. And in the end, they emerged victorious, with a well-deserved 2:0 win. What a game!

The day after the Ivorian team's friendly match against Scotland, their coach, Hervé Renard, called for a team meeting in the conference room. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the team's performance during the game. Without wasting time, the coach started to coach the team right away.

During the meeting, Hervé Renard pointed out that the team had been too passive during the game. Although they managed to score the first goal, they allowed Scotland to dominate the game, and the opposing team almost scored the equalizer. The coach emphasized that this was not the kind of playstyle he expected from the team and that they needed to improve their performance before facing stronger teams like Portugal or Spain.

Renard also highlighted that if the team continued to play with such lackluster football, they would have conceded three goals or more in a match against stronger teams. Therefore, he urged the team to work on their weaknesses and embrace a more proactive approach in their upcoming games.

"Alright, let's shift our focus from the match with Scotland and concentrate on our upcoming plans," said the coach after reviewing his team's performance. "We will stay in Edinburgh for three days to prepare for the World Cup. During our stay, we have planned a few team training sessions to fine-tune our strategies and assess our World Cup group opponents' match videos. Once we finish our training, we will head to Russia on Tuesday to continue our training while waiting for the World Cup to commence."

"Moving forward," the coach spoke authoritatively, "I need you to maintain discipline throughout our preparations for the World Cup. Stay focused solely on training and avoid any unprofessional behavior. Can I count on you to do that?"

"Yes, coach," the players replied.

"Good," the coach nodded. As he wrapped up the team meeting, he quickly glanced at his notes and looked up at his players. "Now, before we call it a day, let's look at our opening group fixtures for the World Cup. Maxime, could you please help us turn on the screen?" he asked one of his assistants.

Without any hesitation, Maxime nodded and swiftly turned on the screen. He deftly manipulated his tablet and promptly displayed the requested information to the players. The team eagerly glanced at the screen, meticulously analyzing the upcoming matches.

FIFA World Cup Group B

1. Portugal
2. Spain
3. Ivory Coast
4. Iran

FIFA World Cup Group B Fixtures for Ivory Coast

->15th June, 2018: Ivory Coast Vs. Iran (Venue: Krestovsky Stadium, Saint Petersburg)

->20th June, 2018: Portugal Vs. Ivory Coast (Venue: Luzhniki Stadium, Moscow)

->25th June, 2018: Spain Vs. Ivory Coast (Venue: Mordovia Arena, Saransk)

"Alright boys, listen up!" Coach Hervé Renard declared, his voice booming with authority. "Our first game is just seven days away, against Iran. We're not going to beat around the bush here - this game is make or break for our World Cup dreams. And let's face it, our matches against our next opponents - Portugal and Spain will be anything but easy. So, we need to focus all our energy and attention on this first match and give it everything we've got. Are you with me?" x

The players responded with a resounding "Yes, coach!" as they pumped their fists in the air, their eyes filled with determination.

"That's what I like to hear!" The coach grinned, his eyes twinkling with pride. "Alright then, let's get to work. We'll start our training and preparation for the match against Iran tomorrow morning. Dismissed!"

The meeting ended, and Zachary left the conference room along with his teammates while feeling pumped up and ready to take on any challenge that came his way. He knew that with their coach's unwavering support and the morale of his teammates, they could conquer any obstacle and emerge victorious. The road ahead would be tough, but they were ready to give it their all.

Chapter 626 To Russia for the World Cup

After the Ivorian National team played a friendly game against Scotland, they quickly moved on to the next phase of their training. The team was well aware of the immense challenge that awaited them in their opening World Cup group match against Iran. They knew that they had to prepare thoroughly to stand a chance. So, for the next three days, the team was fully committed to intense training exercises with the aim of improving their teamwork and tactics. They worked tirelessly to improve their skills and strategies, leaving no stone unturned.

Throughout their intensive training, the team honed several skills to ensure they were ready for the big stage. With unwavering determination, they put in endless hours of practice to improve their ball

control, passing accuracy, and strategic positioning. They also devoted their time to perfecting specific plays and set pieces - which they planned to unleash during the tournament. Their hard work and dedication were evident in their exceptional performance on the training field. Zachary himself was on fire during the Ivorian National Team training! He was as focused and diligent as ever, pushing himself above and beyond to complete every task assigned by the coaches. Not only that - but his sheer determination and strong work ethic gradually rubbed off on his teammates, inspiring them to get in on the action and train like 'maniacs' themselves.

Zachary himself was on fire during the Ivorian National Team training! He was as focused and diligent as ever, pushing himself above and beyond to complete every task assigned by the coaches. Not only that - but his sheer determination and strong work ethic gradually rubbed off on his teammates, inspiring them to get in on the action and train like 'maniacs' themselves.

Zachary was also pleased with the Ivorian National team's preparations, which sometimes went beyond physical training. Under the guidance of Hervé Renard, their coach, the Ivorian team was also highly invested in establishing a robust team dynamic. They focused on building strong bonds amongst themselves, which would gradually become the backbone of their success on and off the field.

With their rigorous training regime and unyielding commitment, the Ivorian national team steadily built a foundation to become a formidable force in the upcoming World Cup. Equipped with their well-coordinated teamwork and honed strategies, they were geared up to face any adversary that came their way.

Finally, the long-awaited Tuesday arrived, and the Ivorian National team was all set to embark on their journey. With their adrenaline pumping and excitement high up in the air, they took an early morning flight from Edinburgh to Voronezh City in southwestern Russia, where their designated base camp for the World Cup awaited them. Upon arrival, the team checked into their hotel and rested for an entire afternoon before diving into their business again. On Wednesday morning, they dedicated themselves to rigorous training and strategic planning for their upcoming game. They paused and took a break in the afternoon after their coach confirmed their tactics were sound.

On Thursday, the day before their first World Cup game against Iran, the team went through a light training session in the morning to make final adjustments to their tactics. They didn't want to tire themselves out before the big game. So, in the afternoon, they relaxed and rested for a few hours before gathering to watch the World Cup opening ceremony as a team in one of the hotel's conference rooms.

While watching the World Cup opening ceremony, Zachary found himself bored out of his mind. He had to endure a long and tedious speech from the Russian president, followed by irrelevant singing and

dance performances that didn't match his team's aspirations in the tournament. However, Zachary used this time to bond with his Ivorian teammates, which was the only positive aspect of the event.

After the opening ceremony, Zachary and his teammates decided to stay in the conference room. They didn't want to miss the World Cup opening match where Russia was playing against Saudi Arabia.

As they sat glued to the screen, they witnessed Russia trouncing the Saudi Arabian side with a score of five goals to nil. This remarkable achievement marked a great start to Russia's World Cup campaign.

"The Saudi Arabian didn't try their best during the game," observed Coach Hervé Renard after the match. "They didn't work hard off the ball and left their defense vulnerable to the Russian attacks. As a result, they conceded five goals to the hosts. We must not repeat their mistakes during our game against Iran tomorrow, boys. We need to work hard on and off the ball and put up a determined fight against the Iranians if we want to win our opening game. So, are you with me?"

"Yes, coach," the players responded spiritedly.

The coach nodded and glanced at his watch. "It's getting late, and we should grab some dinner before calling it a night. But before we do that, let me announce the squad for tomorrow's game against Iran," said the coach, smiling at his players. "Our starting line-up will be the same as during our friendly against Scotland," he continued. "Our keeper will be Sylvain Gbohouo, who has been in top form lately. As for our defenders, we have Serge Aurier, Eric Bailly, Lamine Koné, and Wilfried Kanon, who are all fierce, determined, and rock-solid in defense. Together, they'll form a formidable backline that our opponents will struggle to penetrate." He moved on to the midfield, saying, "We'll be going with Serey Dié, who is a master at controlling the defensive midfield, Franck Kessié, who is a versatile player with great vision, and Zachary Bemba, who is the best playmaker in the world. Our midfielders will be the engine that drives our team." The coach then revealed the forwards, saying, "For our front line, we'll have Wilfried Zaha and Nicolas Pépé on the flanks. They are both quick and agile. They also have great pace and dribbling skills. And playing as our center forward to complete our 4-3-3 formation, we have Gervinho, one of the most experienced players on our squad."

"Finally, to the substitutes that will make up our bench," continued the coach. "We have Abdoul Karim Cissé, Badra Ali Sangaré, Simon Deli, Ismaël Traoré, Adama Traoré, Mamadou Bagayoko, Cheick Doukouré, Ibrahim Sangaré, Maxwell Cornet, Jean Michaël Seri, Max Gradel, Jonathan Kodjia, and Salomon Kalou."

Upon announcing the squad, the coach smiled and offered his players some further words of motivation. He spoke with a firm and commanding voice, conveying his expectations and goals for the upcoming match. He reminded them of their strengths as a team and emphasized the importance of communication and teamwork on the field. The players listened attentively, some nodding in agreement while others seemed lost in thought. When the coach finished speaking, he looked around at the team, making eye contact with each player before giving them a nod of approval and dismissing them from the conference room.

The following day!

The Ivorian football team had a busy and eventful day ahead of them. They woke up early in the morning, packed their bags, and bid farewell to their comfortable base camp in Voronezh. After that, they boarded a morning flight to Saint Petersburg, where they were scheduled to face off against Iran in a crucial Group B opening match at the Krestovsky Stadium.

Upon their arrival, they were immediately ushered into press conferences, where they faced tricky and challenging questions from journalists. They also had the opportunity to inspect and take in the stunning features of the brand-new Krestovsky Stadium later that morning.

After the press conferences and stadium inspection, the team came together for a sumptuous lunch, where they shared stories, laughed, and bonded over their common goal. They then spent the rest of the day resting, strategizing, and mentally preparing themselves for the upcoming match.

At four o'clock in the afternoon, the Ivorian team exited their hotel and boarded the awaiting bus that would take them to the stadium. Excitement was running high, as they knew they were about to engage in a challenging football match against their Iranian opponents.

The Krestovsky Stadium welcomed them with a spectacle of passionate football fans who had already crowded along the roads, creating an electric atmosphere that filled the air with excitement. The energy around the stadium was sky-high, and you could feel the anticipation building with every passing moment. As the bus pulled up to the stadium gates, Zachary's heart began to race with anticipation. The thunderous cheers of the crowd were so loud that he could feel them vibrating through the windows. His excitement grew as he followed his teammates out of the bus, ready to take on the challenge of the game ahead.

As soon as he stepped outside, Zachary couldn't help but wave back to the enthusiastic fans calling out his name. The rush of adrenaline that surged through his veins was unlike anything he had ever experienced. After he finally walked into the stadium, he felt a mix of emotions as he looked around and saw the sea of fans, all of whom had gathered to watch him and his teammates take on their Iranian opponents. Seeing all the hustle and bustle, Zachary was determined to bring his A-game to the field of play and claim victory over his first opponent in the World Cup. The excitement of playing in his first World Cup was palpable, and he was eager to showcase his skills and quickly make his mark on the tournament.

Chapter 627 A Great Start Against Iran

The Krestovsky Stadium in Saint Petersburg, Russia, was an incredible sight that evening as the World Cup Group B opening match between Ivory and Iran was about to kick off. The brand-new stadium, known for its impressive architecture and outstanding facilities, was fully packed and brimming with an electrifying atmosphere that was hard to ignore.

Fans from all over the world had converged at the stadium, eagerly anticipating the start of the game. The stands were packed with people sporting Ivory Coast's orange colors and Iran's traditional white. The energy and enthusiasm among the crowd were palpable as they eagerly waited for the game to begin.

As the clock approached 5:00 PM, the excitement and anticipation reached a fever pitch as the players emerged from the tunnel and walked onto the field. The stadium erupted with cheers as the teams took their positions and lined up before the tunnel for the pregame ceremonies.

The sheer magnitude of the event was apparent in the sea of colors and flags waving high in the air. The stadium was filled with the sounds of drums, vuvuzelas, and cheers as fans from both sides got ready to sing their national anthems with pride. It was a momentous occasion that brought people together from around the globe to witness the magic of the beautiful game. The passion and devotion of the fans were evident, and it was clear that this was more than just a sport - it was a way of life for many of those in attendance.

Zachary felt emotional as he stood on the field, taking in the sights and sounds around the colossal stadium. The cheers and chants of the passionate fans were deafening, and the palpable energy of the stadium was enough to send shivers down his spine. As the pregame rituals began, he felt his heart rate increase in anticipation of the match ahead.

Dressed in the iconic orange number ten jersey of Ivory Coast, Zachary exuded boundless confidence. His Nike Mercurial Roc boots perfectly matched his outfit, and their sleek design made him feel light on his feet. As the Ivorian national anthem began to play, Zachary closed his eyes and took a deep breath. He felt a sense of pride and responsibility wash over him as he thought about the weight of that particular moment. He understood that all eyes were on him during his debut World Cup match for Ivory Coast, but he didn't let the pressure get to him. He was well-prepared for the challenge and was confident in his abilities to perform at his best.

Although he knew it would be a difficult match against Iran, he had confidence in his and his teammates' abilities. They were determined to put their hearts and souls into the game and leave no stone unturned to ensure victory.

With the reverberating sound of the national anthems still echoing in the stadium, the players from both teams performed the customary pre-match handshake before sprinting onto the pitch. As the excitement built up, the referees called over the captains for the all-important coin toss to decide who would have the first kick. It was a thrilling moment, and both teams were eagerly anticipating the start of what promised to be an epic game. In the end, Iran won the coin toss, implying they would kick-start the game.

Having completed the pre-match procedures, Gervinho, the captain of the Ivorian team, swiftly made his way back from the center of the pitch and signaled for a team huddle. The Ivorian players, including Zachary, gathered around him and took a knee. They said a short prayer and exchanged words of encouragement, gearing up for the game ahead. With renewed energy, they took their positions on the field of play, ready to give it their all and emerge victorious.

As Zachary settled into his attacking midfield position just outside the center circle, he scanned the Iranian players on the opposite side of the pitch. He couldn't recognize any of them from his current or past life, suggesting they may have been players from lower-level leagues without much exposure in Europe's top teams. But he didn't dare underestimate this unfamiliar group of footballers as they were playing with the pride of their national team on the line.

Suddenly, the referee looked at his watch and blew the whistle, signaling the start of the match. Sardar Azmoun, the Iranian center forward, wasted no time and swiftly kicked the ball back into his own half, igniting the crowd's cheers and setting the tone for the game ahead.

The Iranian team looked comfortable as they quickly settled into their 4-1-4-1 starting formation. Omid Ebrahimi, the defensive midfielder, seized the ball and wasted no time before unleashing a fierce pass

towards the left wing. The ball landed perfectly at the feet of Karim Ansarifard, the Iranian left-winger, who was already waiting eagerly to make a move.

Karim was like a bolt of lightning as he deftly collected the ball close to the touchline on the left and began a daring run towards Ivory Coast's half. With incredible speed, he exchanged a one-two with the Iranian captain, Masoud Shojaei, and beat Wilfried Zaha as he charged towards the Ivory Coast's half through the left flank. It seemed like nothing could stop Karim's run until Serge Aurier, the Ivorian right-back, swooped in with a perfectly timed sliding tackle to steal the ball away. This led to a swift turnover as Serey Dié, the Ivorian defensive midfielder, quickly seized the opportunity and snatched the loose ball before passing it on to Franck Kessié, his counterpart in midfield.

Franck Kessié was a force to be reckoned with as he zoomed past the Iranian midfielders, leaving them in his wake. With lightning-fast speed, he played the ball to Zachary, who wasted no time before playing a swift one-two with Nicolas Pépé. It was like watching a well-oiled machine in action as the three players moved in perfect harmony, cutting through Iran's defense like a knife through butter. The crowd was on their feet, roaring with excitement as they watched the exhilarating display of skill and teamwork.

As the three Ivorians approached Iran's box, the tension grew palpable. Zachary received the ball, but an Iranian defender was hot on his heels. With lightning-fast reflexes, he stepped over the ball and executed a sudden change of pace that left the defender in the dust. The crowd erupted in applause as Zachary charged forward, inching closer and closer to the goal. It was a match-determining moment early in the game, and Zachary tried his best to make it count. As he saw an opening for a shot, he steadied himself and unleashed a powerful strike from the edge of the box. His foot connected with the ball with incredible force, sending it past one of the center-backs and hurtling towards the goal. The crowd held its breath, waiting for the moment of impact. It was a spectacular shot, and Zachary could feel the excitement building in his chest. But just when the ball seemed destined for the back of the net, Alireza Beiranvand, the Iranian keeper, sprang into action. He dove with incredible speed and agility, stretching his body to the limit. His fingertips grazed the ball, sending it out of play in a breathtaking display of athleticism to save his team from conceding the 1st goal during the 3rd minute.

What a save!

The stadium buzzed with anticipation as the referee blew the whistle and pointed toward the corner spot. The Ivorian team had prepared for such a moment during their week-long training, and they wasted no time following their coach's pre-match instructions. With a quick glance towards his teammates, Serge Aurier, the Ivorian right back, stepped up to take the corner kick. The crowd held their breath as he sent a perfectly lofted ball toward the crowded box, hoping to add more pressure to the opponents. It was a tense moment, but the Ivorians were laser-focused on the ball, determined to

come out on top. A heated battle ensued inside the box as players from both teams jostled for better positioning, jumping high in the air to reach the incoming corner ball. All tall Ivorian players like Eric Baily, Nicolas Pépé, and Gervinho rose to the challenge, displaying exceptional athleticism and skill. However, Zachary, the young and talented forward of Ivory Coast, was the player who finally emerged victorious. Zachary's skills were on full display as he expertly outwitted his marker, creating space in the crowded box with a clever feint. With the ball flying towards him, he leaped high into the air and timed his header to perfection from an acute angle, sending the ball towards the inside of the far post. The stadium erupted into another frenzy as the ball sailed past the outstretched arms of the goalkeeper and nestled into the back of the net.

Zachary's goal was a testament to his exceptional talent and hard work. The intensity and thrill of the game were set from the outset, as the goal came just four minutes into the game. Rushing towards the corner flag, Zachary slid on his knees for a few meters, basking in the glory of his awe-inspiring moment.

Chapter 628 In the Driving Seat

Kristin Stein was more than just Zachary's personal assistant and publicity secretary. She was his biggest fan, and nothing would have stopped her from attending Zachary's debut match in the World Cup.

She had been eagerly waiting for this moment for weeks, counting down the days until the tournament began. At the moment, she was among thousands of Ivorian fans who had traveled from Africa to witness their team's opening match against the Iranian side.

As soon as Zachary scored the opening goal against Iran, the stadium erupted with an ear-splitting roar of excitement. Kristin could feel the Krestovsky Stadium quaking beneath her feet due to the loud sounds of cheers, drums, and vuvuzelas around her.

She looked around and saw thousands of people jumping up and down, waving flags and chanting "Ivory Coast" and Zachary's name. It was a moment of pure joy and ecstasy for Kristin and every other Ivorian fan in the stadium.

As Kristin continued looking around, she couldn't help but notice the vibrant energy emanating from the group of people seated next to her. They were all acquaintances and some relatives of Zachary, who had come from far and wide to witness his World Cup debut.

Emily, Bjørn Peters, Inger, Céleste Kouame, and Natasha Kone - all of them were cheering and yelling, their voices ringing out loud and clear after Ivory Coast scored the opening goal in the match. The excitement in the air was palpable, and Kristin couldn't help but get swept up in the moment.

"Wow, did you just witness that?!" screamed Emily Anderson, Zachary's agent. "He's done it again! Zachary just scored in the World Cup! This is incredible; I need to share this on my status right now!"

"Man, I hope Zachary scores more goals and becomes the top scorer of the World Cup," exclaimed Bjørn Peters, Zachary's fitness trainer. "If that happens, I could boast about how I trained him to my friends and colleagues and make them all jealous."

Kristin couldn't help but shake her head with a chuckle as she listened to the fitness coach's enthusiastic words. She turned her gaze towards the only person who seemed to maintain their calm amidst all the chaos. It was Céleste Kouame, Zachary's biological mom, who had come all the way to witness her son's World Cup debut. Kristin could see the pride and joy in her eyes after Zachary scored Ivory Coast's opening goal, making his biological mother emotional.

Seated beside Céleste was Natasha Kone, Zachary's step-sister, who was completely losing her mind with excitement. Unlike her mother, the teenage girl had already gone bonkers with joy and was cheering her lungs out with the other Ivorian fans to celebrate their early lead. The stadium was filled with an electric atmosphere, and Kristin felt privileged to be a part of this incredible moment.

"Well, incredible stuff we're seeing on the pitch!" exclaimed Alistair Bruce-Ball, the commentator, his voice echoing through the electrifying atmosphere of the Krestovsky Stadium. "Great start for Ivory Coast as they take the lead against Iran! Zachary Bemba - the young football sensation, has just graced us with a stunning header from an impossible angle in just the fourth minute. This is what we call a perfect start for the African team! And Chris, what's your take on this opening goal of a game?"

"Well, Alistair, Ivory Coast is on fire today!" replied Chris Sutton, the co-commentator. "They have come out all guns blazing, attacking Iran relentlessly from the very beginning. Talented Ivorian players such as Serge Aurier, Zachary Bemba, Franck Kessié, and Nicolas Pépé have already demonstrated their exceptional skills on the field, leaving their opponents in awe. They executed a brilliant counter-attack and won a corner kick that led to the opening goal. This is just the beginning, and I can't wait to see what's in store for us!"

As the match progressed after the goal celebrations, it became apparent that the Ivorian team was on an absolute rampage. After gaining the early lead, they had taken complete control of the game,

displaying spectacular plays that left their opponents struggling to keep up. With precise passing and unmatched individual skills, the Ivorian players had the upper hand over their opponents, pushing all eleven Iranian players back to their own half.

One player who stood out in the first half was Zachary. His performance was nothing short of sensational! He had the entire midfield under his spell, weaving his way around the pitch with the grace of a world-class Maestro. The way he found himself in unmarked pockets of space, received the ball, and unleashed defense-splitting passes that caused chaos in the Iranian defense was nothing short of amazing.

But that wasn't all! Zachary also routinely teamed up with his Ivorian mates, displaying his dribbling skills and executing one-twos with impeccable precision to break through the Iranian defense. His creativity and spatial awareness were out of this world, always bringing out the best in his teammates as they launched wave after wave of fierce attacks on the opposition.

The first half of the match was a rollercoaster of emotions for Zachary and his team, to say the least. Despite their incredible dominance on the field, they failed to extend their lead, thanks to the tenacious Iranian defense and on-form goalkeeper, who prevented them from scoring several times. It was a nail-biting experience for everyone, but fortunately, the Ivorian team remained steady in the driving seat with a score of 1:0 as the teams headed into halftime.

The atmosphere was still hyper as Zachary and his Ivorian teammates walked down the tunnel to the dressing room. High-fives and congratulations were exchanged among everyone, creating a lighthearted and joyous environment. Zachary felt a sense of pride and achievement as he chatted with his teammates about the game's highlights.

Once inside the dressing room, Zachary sat down in the dressing room, feeling tired. He grabbed a bottle of water and some refreshments to quench his thirst.

As he sipped on the water, he couldn't help but feel grateful for the opportunity to play for a giant of African football, the Ivorian National team. The first half of the game against Iran had gone according to plan, and he was looking forward to the second half with renewed confidence.

Just then, Hervé Renard, the coach of the Ivorian National team, stepped up and began to speak. Applauding, he said, "Great job, everyone! I'm pleased with how we played in the first half. We took the game to the Iranians with great enthusiasm from the get-go. Our teamwork was also outstanding, which is why we're ahead."

The coach's demeanor became more solemn as he inquired, "But the question is, have we done enough? Is scoring a single goal against the Iranians, the weakest team in our group, enough to propel us to the next round of the World Cup?"

The coach's words hung in the air with a weighty silence as the team contemplated the gravity of the situation. They knew they had to step up their game and win by a large margin if they wished to secure their place in the following round of the tournament. It was now or never! They had to give it their all to ensure they accumulated a better goal difference against Iran.

"Listen up!" continued the coach. "Our current situation demands our full effort and determination. We're up against some tough teams like Portugal and Spain after Iran. That's why we must capitalize on this opportunity to improve our goal difference and increase our chances of progressing from the group stage."

"We must be ruthless in the second half and score more goals. Zachary, Franck, Pépé, Zaha, and Gervinho! You five are our main attacking players! You need to step up your game. I don't want to see any hesitation, and I want you to be more daring, creative, and clinical in front of the goal. You need to up the tempo and create more chances to score."

"However, we can't afford to lose focus and concede a needless goal while on the offensive. So, we must fall back and defend as a team whenever we do not have the ball."

The coach stood before the team, his voice firm and full of conviction. "I'm not asking you to do the impossible," he said, emphasizing each word. "But I am demanding that you give it your all. We're in this together, and we're going to win together. Let's show the Iranians what we're made of!"

The team was already feeling the heat of the upcoming second half, but their coach's passionate words motivated them. They could sense his determination, and it sparked a fire within them.

"Are we together?" the coach asked, looking at each player in turn.

Excitement and determination filled the air as the players exclaimed, "Yes, coach!" With their confidence and spirit surging, they were ready to take on the upcoming second half. It would be a true-

blue test of their skills and teamwork, but they were determined to face the challenge head-on and come out on top.

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Once inside the dressing room, Zachary sat down in the dressing room, feeling tired. He grabbed a bottle of water and some refreshments to quench his thirst.

As he sipped on the water, he couldn't help but feel grateful for the opportunity to play for a giant of African football, the Ivorian National team. The first half of the game against Iran had gone according to plan, and he was looking forward to the second half with renewed confidence.

Just then, Hervé Renard, the coach of the Ivorian National team, stepped up and began to speak. Applauding, he said, "Great job, everyone! I'm pleased with how we played in the first half. We took the game to the Iranians with great enthusiasm from the get-go. Our teamwork was also outstanding, which is why we're ahead."

The coach's demeanor became more solemn as he inquired, "But the question is, have we done enough? Is scoring a single goal against the Iranians, the weakest team in our group, enough to propel us to the next round of the World Cup?"

The coach's words hung in the air with a weighty silence as the team contemplated the gravity of the situation. They knew they had to step up their game and win by a large margin if they wished to secure

their place in the following round of the tournament. It was now or never! They had to give it their all to ensure they accumulated a better goal difference against Iran.

"Listen up!" continued the coach. "Our current situation demands our full effort and determination. We're up against some tough teams like Portugal and Spain after Iran. That's why we must capitalize on this opportunity to improve our goal difference and increase our chances of progressing from the group stage."

"We must be ruthless in the second half and score more goals. Zachary, Franck, Pépé, Zaha, and Gervinho! You five are our main attacking players! You need to step up your game. I don't want to see any hesitation, and I want you to be more daring, creative, and clinical in front of the goal. You need to up the tempo and create more chances to score."

"However, we can't afford to lose focus and concede a needless goal while on the offensive. So, we must fall back and defend as a team whenever we do not have the ball."

The coach stood before the team, his voice firm and full of conviction. "I'm not asking you to do the impossible," he said, emphasizing each word. "But I am demanding that you give it your all. We're in this together, and we're going to win together. Let's show the Iranians what we're made of!"

The team was already feeling the heat of the upcoming second half, but their coach's passionate words motivated them. They could sense his determination, and it sparked a fire within them.

"Are we together?" the coach asked, looking at each player in turn.

Excitement and determination filled the air as the players exclaimed, "Yes, coach!" With their confidence and spirit surging, they were ready to take on the upcoming second half. It would be a true-blue test of their skills and teamwork, but they were determined to face the challenge head-on and come out on top.

Chapter 630 Post-Match and the Portugal vs. Spain Thriller

After the Ivory Coast and Iran game, Mark Pougatch, the famous sports presenter for ITV, gathered a group of top-notch pundits to discuss the match in a post-match show.

The panel included the likes of Slaven Bilic, Eni Aluko, Ryan Giggs, and Gabriel Clarke, who shared their expert opinions on every aspect of the game. From analyzing the players' performances to uncovering the game's highlights, they dived into every detail to give viewers an unforgettable experience.

As the post-match show heated up, the commentators couldn't help but talk about Zachary's outstanding performance. Everyone was in awe of the star player who played a vital role in all three of Ivory Coast's goals. It was an unforgettable moment for Zachary and his team, and the commentators couldn't stop raving about his brilliant moves.

Ryan Giggs himself couldn't help but marvel at Zachary's effortless goal-scoring skills. "Did you see how he scored Ivory Coast's first goal?" Ryan exclaimed. "It was insane! A header from such a tight angle is never easy, but Zachary made it look like child's play."

"Zachary timed his run perfectly, shook off his marker, and then angled his head just right to direct the ball past the keeper and into the back of the net. The momentum behind the cross did the rest of the job. It's rare to find players possessing the talent and accuracy to execute a flawless header from such an arduous angle. Zachary is truly a master of his craft!"

Slaven Bilic shook his head and commented, "I've been following the World Cup for years and couldn't help but notice something. It's a tough pill to swallow - but we must admit that African teams often struggle with their attacking play."

"African sides usually make poor decisions in the final third and struggle with their technique, resulting in a lack of effectiveness when attempting to score goals. Surprisingly, many of their players play for top European teams. Teams like Nigeria, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, and Ghana have all had strong representatives in European clubs, but for some reason, they don't seem to perform as well for their national teams."

"I think this is about to change during this World Cup, with Zachary taking the stage," continued Slaven. "I say this because what I saw today in the match between Ivory Coast and Iran was not an underperforming Zachary - but the same Zachary who has helped Juventus win many trophies, including two Champions League titles, over the past few years."

"Despite being in a different team, which I have to say was a bit weaker than he's used to, Zachary was still as creative as ever and as sharp as ever in front of goal."

"Let's discuss Ivory Coast's second goal, shall we? It was an incredible display of skill. Zachary made a perfectly timed run, which opened up the entire Iranian midfield. He didn't stop at that but threaded the ball through the defender's legs, finding Nicolas Pépé, who finished the move."

"The same can be said for the third goal. Despite being surrounded by Iranian players, Zachary created space for himself with a simple twist and turn close to the edge of his box. He then launched a counter with a long-range pass using the outside of his boot. This resulted in Salomon Kalou's 92nd-minute goal. Zachary is truly at the top of his game, and if he keeps performing like this, he will undoubtedly help Ivory Coast progress far in this year's World Cup."

With a grin, the presenter, Mark Pougatch, eagerly acknowledged Slaven's contribution. "Thanks for that, Slaven! As we've all witnessed, Ivory Coast and Zachary have just bagged a crucial three points by defeating Iran with a stunning three-nil victory in their opening Group B game. But hold on to your seats, as the road to the World Cup knockout stages has only begun for them. They'll now have to face the mighty Portugal and Spain in their upcoming games, and it'll be a nail-biting journey ahead. Eni, do you think they've got what it takes to make it through?"

"I truly believe they have a shot," Eni Aluko exclaimed, her voice brimming with confidence. "The Ivorian team boasts an incredible lineup this time, featuring talents such as Serge Aurier, Eric Bailly, Wilfried Zaha, Nicolas Pépé, Gervinho, Zachary, and Salomon Kalou, all eager to showcase their skills."

"I can't stress enough the importance of Zachary's influence on the team - he's the driving force behind the Ivorian side, igniting his teammates and propelling the team forward. With his exceptional talent, he's bound to elevate the team's goal-scoring abilities and propel them to great success in the World Cup."

Mark Pougatch flashed a grin as he turned toward the cameras, clearly impressed by Eni's response. After a quick remark, he smoothly redirected the show's attention to the much-anticipated clash between Portugal and Spain.

With both teams boasting football icons such as Bruno Fernandes, Cristiano Ronaldo, Bernardo Silva, Iniesta, Sergio Busquets, Isco, Sergio Ramos, and Gerard Pique, the experts dived into a thorough analysis, holding the audience spellbound until the show's end.

Zachary and his teammates left the Krestovsky Stadium forty minutes after their triumphant three-nil win against Iran. With spirits soaring high, they boarded their team bus, eager to continue the celebrations. Later, after arriving at their hotel in Saint Petersburg, they savored a delicious dinner before gathering in the conference room to catch the thrilling Portugal vs. Spain game.

The football match was nothing short of a nail-biting thriller that kept the spectators on the edge of their seats. It started with a bang, as Cristiano Ronaldo confidently converted a penalty and scored the first goal for Portugal within just 5 minutes of the game.

However, the Spaniards were not ready to give up so easily. They showcased their possession-based style of play and dominated the match for most of the opening minutes. With quick and intricate passing sequences, they created many problems for Portugal's defense, giving them a tough time. Diego Costa, the Spanish striker, was a constant threat upfront and eventually scored an equalizer in the 27th minute.

Just as the excitement started to subside, a sudden twist occurred during the 44th minute. Unfortunately, the Spanish goalkeeper, David de Gea, made a costly mistake, allowing Cristiano Ronaldo to capitalize on the situation and score his second goal of the night. The audience erupted in joy as the Portuguese team gained a much-needed boost in their confidence. x

As the second half kicked off, the tension around the game was still palpable. The Spanish team was determined to turn the match around and started attacking with newfound vigor. The midfield duo of Andrés Iniesta and Sergio Busquets seemed to be everywhere on the field, and their relentless pressure on the Portuguese side was paying off.

Suddenly, the crowd erupted as Diego Costa scored his and Spain's second goal in the 56th minute of the game. It was a moment of pure magic as he outsmarted the defenders and found the back of the net with a shot from inside the box. But the Spanish team was not done yet. And three minutes later, Nacho Fernández scored an absolute screamer from outside the box to give Spain a 3:2 lead against Portugal during the 59th minute.

The Portuguese side was left in utter disbelief as the Spanish fans erupted in joy. It was a stunning turn of events, and the momentum had completely shifted in favor of the Spanish team. But the drama was far from over, and just when it seemed like all hope was lost, Cristiano Ronaldo stepped up and delivered a jaw-dropping free-kick in the 85th minute to complete a hat-trick and level the score once again.

As the clock ticked into injury time, both teams were neck and neck with a 3:3 scoreline. Spain tried to maintain their dominance on the field with their possession play, but they were also on the lookout for any chance to score. However, one small mistake on their part left them vulnerable to a counterattack, which the Portuguese team seized upon with ruthless efficiency.

It all started with João Moutinho, who grabbed the loose ball just outside the box on the left flank and passed it to João Mário, the substitute. João Mário then played a couple of one-twos with none other than the legendary Cristiano Ronaldo, and the duo darted towards Spain's side of the pitch like lightning bolts, leaving their opponents in the dust.

It was a tense moment as the crowd held their breath, anticipating what would happen next. The ball was passed to yet another substitute, Ricardo Quaresma, who finished from inside the box to score Portugal's 4th goal! The stadium erupted with cheers as Portugal took the lead in the game's closing stages.

What an exciting match it was! The fans were on the edge of their seats throughout, and the final result left them absolutely thrilled!

However, Zachary, who was watching the game with his fellow teammates in the conference room, couldn't help but narrow his eyes as the referee blew the final whistle. Something didn't feel right, and he couldn't shake off the feeling of déjà vu, albeit one which was troubling.

Suddenly, it hit him - the 2018 World Cup match between Portugal and Spain during his previous life was also a thriller of goals! Both teams had put up an incredible fight, only to tie 3-3 in the end. But this time, things were different, and Portugal had managed to snatch a late fourth goal to secure a win. Zachary was left wondering, what the heck was going on?

"Man, these two teams are going to be a real challenge for us," Eric Bailly interrupted Zachary's train of thought. "Their attack and midfield are top-notch, world-class. If we want to make it out of the group, we'll need to go all out and give it our best shot."

Gervinho, the captain, spoke up with a confident tone, "Let's not put too much pressure on ourselves. We've got this! As long as we play as a team and give it our all, we can definitely take on Portugal and Spain. It won't be easy, but we're up for the challenge!"

Zachary also chimed in, beaming with enthusiasm, "Gervinho is absolutely right. We only need to focus on our game plan and give it our all. I have a strong feeling that we'll qualify out of the group."

The rest of the team nodded in agreement, exchanging high-fives and words of encouragement. They were all pumped up and ready to show the world what they were made of. As they returned to their rooms for the night, they couldn't wait to hit the training field and start their preparations for the next game.