

# THE GREATEST OF ALL TIME

## Chapter 3 - Solo Training

Zachary was jogging at a steady pace.

He was mindful of neither the ever-present potholes in the dirt-roads of eastern Bukavu nor the mud heaps brought about by the rain of the previous day.

He hummed the Chris Brown song (Don't Wake Me Up) that was supposed to be released two years later.

Zachary smiled softly. He was in a good mood.

Above him loomed the blue sky with just a few stratus clouds making their unhurried way toward Lake Kivu in the north. The sun was already a golden ball of yellow above, promising more heat as the day progressed. All in all, he could not have asked for better weather to complete the system mission.

It had been six days since Zachary returned to the past, and he was very close to completing the tasks in his first system mission.

He had been exercising like there was not a tomorrow in his vocabulary.

With the G.O.A.T system, he had the motivation to work hard and thus never once thought about giving up when the going got tough.

Every morning, he would start with a routine of one hundred seat-ups, then do fifty press-ups before jogging ten or more miles around the dirt roads of Bukavu. He would then complete his day's training in the evening by going through six rounds of Hatha-yoga routines. His daily yoga practice always included the serpent, bow, peacock, tortoise, eagle, and Matsyendra poses.

In his previous lifetime, he had come across an article explaining how yoga was essential to improving the flexibility and body coordination of any sportsman. Zachary was determined to stick to this practice as it would reduce the risk of him getting injured later in his career.

He feared getting injured again the most. Injuries would diminish the player's form and destroy careers if not meticulously handled. Fôllôw *n*ew stories at [nov\(e\)lb/in\(.\)com](http://nov(e)lb/in(.)com)

An injury had been the start of Zachary's downfall in his previous lifetime. But he was determined not to let it affect him in his new one.

Throughout the past six days, his injured ankle had hurt like hell after continuing to support his strenuous exercise without much rest. It had swollen and taken on a reddish hue like that of a perfectly boiled shrimp. But Zachary had chosen to ignore the pain and continue the tedious tasks imposed on him by the system.

A few times when he felt he could not hold on, he just had to think about the great heights achieved by some of the top athletes from poor backgrounds in his previous lifetime. Soccer stars like Sadio Mane, Frank Ribery, and Cristiano Ronaldo had made it to the top by capitalizing on their talent. Through sheer hard work and their unrelenting attitude towards soccer, they had almost achieved the G.O.A.T status supported by the common consensus of the pro-sports community.

Zachary believed that the pain and fatigue he was feeling at that moment was his weakness leaving the body.

He could see the bigger picture.

The climb might be tough and challenging, but if he ever made it to the top of the soccer world, the view would be worth it. So, he decided to work harder than any athlete alive and see if he could also become one of the greats. He

would try becoming the best or die trying. With a cheat system aiding in his rise, he would not settle for less.

Zachary was in the zone and felt like running was a form of whole-body meditation. He continued his steady motion at a steady pace pushing away the pain and fatigue from his mind while humming song after song to psyche himself up.

On the nearly empty Bukavu dirt-roads, he had no worries. Zachary didn't need to fret about high-interest loans like in his previous life, no problematic girlfriend, no therapist. It was just him cutting across the warm breeze caressing his skin.

Stick sweat soaked his oversized tracksuit while his old second-hand Nike sneakers were all covered in mud. He panted as he wiped his mouth on his sleeve. He could only imagine how badly he stunk.

As he rounded a bend heading back towards his grandma's farm, a Ding sounded in his head.

The sound elevated his mood as it was the now-familiar system notification indicating that he had completed one of the mission tasks.

But Zachary resisted the urge to open the system User-Interface and continued jogging across the plains, up the hill, until he was back to his grandma's house.

Once he stopped running, the perspiration lay cool on his skin, cooled further by the noon breeze, and he began to shiver.

He hurriedly washed up before stretching to cool down his muscles. He was then just about to start his yoga routine when he was interrupted by the high-pitched voice of his grandma.

"Zachary," she yelled. "You're running on that foot again. Didn't Dr. Kazadi tell you to desist from straining it for three months? Child, I don't have any more money to take you to the main hospital." She was speaking in Swahili - one of the local languages in Bukavu.

"Grandma, I'm now fine," he lied, voice humble. "I will be okay by the time school starts once again. I want to be ready for the school team trials."

[Sorry, grandma. I can't tell you everything now. But I'll surprise you in the future.] Zachary vowed inwardly.

"Are you sure?" She asked. "I will come and take a look at that foot myself. I won't trust your words." She added.

"No, Grandma," Zachary hurriedly yelled back while bolting the wooden door to his room from the inside. "I am currently dressing. Maybe later."

"I can tell that you are lying," the voice of his grandma had risen a crescendo.

"That does it. Tomorrow, I will ask Dr. Kazadi to look at your ankle again. If he says that it's okay, then you can do whatever you want. But I don't want to see you out running before that." His grandmother warned, voice somber.

"Yes, grandma," Zachary replied humbly.

[I will have completed my mission by tomorrow. If the elixir reward can right away heal all my torn ligaments and dislocated bones, then there'll be no need to worry.] He thought.

He once again focused on his training and went through his Yoga routine. Today, he had woken up very early and worked extra hard to finish the mission before lunchtime. He was eager to receive the first rewards from the system. He would then be able to gauge if the G.O.A.T system was as badass as the ones in most of the web novels he had read.

In a few minutes, he completed the yoga routine, and the Ding sound once again resounded in his mind.

Without even taking a minute to relax, he summoned the system's user interface to check the changes in his stats.

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SOCCER G.O.A.T SYSTEM

SYSTEM LEVEL: 1 (15/100 juju-points to level-up)

USER: Zachary Bemba

AGE: 15 years

TALENT ASSESSMENT: Grade-D

JUJU-POINTS: 15 (1 msg)

(Evaluation: A pitiful boy far from becoming a professional soccer player)

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USER MENU

\*USER STATS

\*G.O.A.T MISSIONS (4 msg)

\*SYSTEM SHOP (temporarily-unlocked)

\*SYSTEM LOTTERY (temporarily-unlocked)

\*SNOOPING TOOL (locked)

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NB: Pls level-up system to unlock more functions.

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Zachary instantly noticed the juju-points, G.O.AT-missions, system-shop, and system-lottery tabs blinking red on the user interface. With his expertise gained through reading web novels, he could tell that he had received new messages or status changes in those tabs.

So, he tapped on the tab towards the top of the virtual blue screen.

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JUJU-POINTS: 15 (1 msg)

-> You have completed mission – Preparations to Become a Soccer G.O.AT. You have earned 15 juju-points.

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NB: Please complete more system tasks, win matches, and gain fame to gain more juju-points.

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Zachary understood the message at first glance. He closed the tab in a way similar to that of navigating the android tabs of a smartphone and then fixed his attention on the G.O.A.T mission tabs.

[What rewards will I get from the system?] He wondered.

[Will the vitality enhancing elixir cure me?]

[What if this is a dream? Am I just about to wake?] A lot of doubts ran through his mind making his brain tingle with anxiety.

But he suppressed them and tapped on the G.O.A.T missions tab.

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"DING"

#4 new messages

## CONGRATULATIONS

-> You have completed mission (Preparations to Become a Soccer G.O.A.T).

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->Mission-Rewards

1) B-grade vitality enhancing elixir (Available in system-shop; temporarily unlocked. NB: The user must consume the elixir within 5 seconds after being removed from system shop.)

2) A random G.O.A.T skill (Available in system-lottery; temporarily unlocked)

3) 5 juju points

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->Mission Summary

\*Task 1: Run 70 miles within a week. (74/70 miles completed; rating A+)

\*Task 2: Complete 100 seat-ups daily for a week. (Av. 200/100 seat-ups completed daily; Rating S)

\*Task 3: Complete 50 press-ups daily for a week. (Av. 64/50 press-ups completed daily; Rating A+)

\*Task 4: Complete four rounds of half a dozen Hatha-Yoga routine daily for a week. (Av. 6/4 rounds of Hatha-yoga poses completed; Rating A+)

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Overall Mission Rating: A+

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->Bonus rewards

You have earned 10 bonus juju-points

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