

Champions 801

Chapter 801: One Goal and a Red Card

Guardiola stood outside the penalty area and shouted at the closed gate, "Tony Twain, you coward! Which man would hide inside! Have the courage to come out and fight with me!"

Twain hid behind the tall gate and replied, "You have no right to decide whether I'm a man or not. Didn't you call yourself the best in the world? Come in if you can, then! What kind of a hero are you if you can't do that much?"

"Have the guts to come out! "

"Hmph, I just don't want, are you going to bite me?"

"You're a shameless old thief! Come out quickly and face me!"

"And if I don't? What are you gonna do?"

"Ha! Don't dare come out like a man to fight in the right way. The ladies who can only hide in their necks! "

"Haha! Whether I am a man or not, do you want to come in and experience it for yourself? "

" Well, you shameless Twain, if I count till three, would you still not come out? "

"What would you do if I don't come out! "

"If you don't come out... you don't come out then I'll force myself in "

" Well, well, I still have that patience for you to try out! "

"One!"

"Go on. "

"Two!"

This time, he did not wait for Guardiola to count to three. The opposing suddenly opened the door, and a horde of troops rushed out, killing him with a surprise!

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"Pepe intercepted the ball that Bojan passed to Silva, and he got the position of the ball right and decided to cut into the way in advance! He passed the ball to George Wood who received him!"

It was George Wood who brought the ball forward. He relied on his body to lean on Iniesta, who had come forward to defend himself, and then deflected the ball to Lennon on the sideline. Lennon led Nottingham Forest's quick counter-attack.

"Nottingham Forest have had few decent chances to counter-attack so far and their counter-attack is not a threat because of the lack of troops in front. Will it be the same this time?"

No, it was very different this time! After Wood passed the ball, instead of staying in the backfield ready to defend, he followed Lennon through the midfield.

“Lennon is very fast! Barcelona had collective pressure and the back was empty. This was a great opportunity to fight back!”

Lahm had just pressed up the attack and was now desperately chasing behind Lennon’s ass, but he could not keep up with Lennon’s dribbling. Pique, who is in charge of the centre-forward, was moving towards Lennon, aiming to block his former team-mate in front.

Pique knew Lennon and Lennon was as familiar with Pique, so when he saw Pique coming up he knew that the middle way was bound to be empty. At this moment, he had to see if he had that awareness and techniques to pass that ball.

Who was running the middle road? Ibišević!

Lennon passed the ball out when Pique rushed up to seal himself, but instead of stopping after the pass, he continued to run.

All Nottingham Forest players do not stop after they pass the ball on the counter-attack, but instead kept running. This was an important condition of the counter-attack – playing in place would not ever play a quick counter attack for a lifetime.

Lennon was running forward with Matías Fernández on the other side. He was also running forward along with Şahin and George Wood, and even Thiago was sprinting at full speed. This was their chance after waiting through the first half of the opportunity, they definitely could not let it go!

Ibišević received the ball and then Puyol forced him to pass it to Fernández on his right. With Alves’ assists too far ahead, at this time he was still chasing back behind Fernández, but in front of Fernández there was a clear pitch!

“Barcelona’s defence is completely empty! None of them thought that Nottingham Forest’s counter-attack would come so resolutely and deadly!”

Twain crossed his legs outside the field, a proud smile on his face.

“Now it’s three on two ... No, four, five on four! ”

Rahm managed to get back, but he ran towards the middle instead of chasing Lennon. Nottingham Forest’s chances of hitting the ball to the left were too small at this time. The endpoint of the attack must still be in the middle road, so only returning to defense on the middle round was the correct choice.

Their full back Yaya Touré returned back to place as well. After Matías Fernández cut into the penalty area, Puyol ran over and Ibišević had Yaya Toure guarding him, and he could focus all his attention on Fernández.

Seeing how he was unable to shoot directly, Fernández sent the ball back with a quick stop. Ibišević took the lead and rushed to the front, the football was clearly not meant for him. Şahin received the football when no one was defending, and he did not hesitate to directly kick the shot!

“Şahin shot from afar! ”

Fortunately, Valdes was quick-witted and focused and not fooled by Fernández’s neche.

While he was defending Fernández, he was also mindful of the players in the middle room.

Valdés wanted to hold the football directly, but when the football hit his fingertips, he found that the football had a strong spin and it was impossible to hold the football. At that moment he just wanted to hit the ball out. But the football hit his fingertips and bounced off!

“Vedad Ibišević! He appeared where the ball was landing... and did a header! Goal! Goal! GOOOOAL!”

Yaya Touré lost his target in the instant of Şahin’s shot as he turned his attention to the shot.” Ibišević overtook from his side and waited for Valdés’s chance to fumble the ball.

Barcelona’s players had doubts about Forest’s goal, believing that Ibišević might have been offside before Şahin’s shot, but in fact he moved forward after Şahin’s shot and did not go offside.

Twain stood up from his seat and clapped loudly, he was very excited. He finally got an away goal! Guardiola, on the other hand, waved a little helplessly. He knew Nottingham Forest would fight back, but did not expect it to happen so suddenly. Because that was when his team was at its best, it seemed like a step away from breaking the door. He did not expect Nottingham Forest to go against the flow and level the scores with a counter-attack.

Ibišević’s goal was followed by his celebration of slapping faces, while England’s narrator was particularly excited. “This was his 20th goal of the season! Hey, Mr Carl Spicer, are you watching this match? Are you ready to bid farewell to your hair? Haha!”

Although what Ibišević was targeting was Carl Spicer, but Barcelona fans who don’t know the inside story and took his actions as a provocation by the Nottingham Forest players as they jeered for a while .

Amidst the jeering, Ibišević changed his celebration. He put his finger to his lips and signaled everyone in the stands to shut up. This was really a provocation to the Barcelona fans.

“Well done, Super Ibi!” Nottingham Forest fans stood in solidarity with Ibišević in the stands, using their songs to fight the jeers of the Barcelona fans.

Forest’s players congratulated Ibišević on scoring his 20th goal and helping their Chief win the bet with Carl Spicer.

“Going back to England, we’re going to urge Spicer to deliver on his promise as soon as possible. It’s best if he just bring a shaver to the live stage, haha!”

Twain, who scored an away goal, was in a good mood and had begun to look forward to how to humiliate Spicer. Perhaps in the future, he would need to call the other person “Bald Spicer”?

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The scoreline was tied, giving Barcelona’s players a slight impact. Their attack afterwards was less aggressive as it had been before, as there were always fears of another sharp counter-attack from

Nottingham Forest. Nottingham Forest's attack was a bit exuberant and they were going to take the opportunity to go down again and score two goals to basically set the tone for the second leg.

Unfortunately, they were a little less fortunate and Barcelona's defence was not as vain. Pique put the ball out of the penalty area twice in a row to defuse Nottingham Forest's attack.

The game then returned to its former form — Barcelona's successive attacks and Nottingham Forest's shrinking defence. But there was a slight change: Barcelona began to pay great attention to their own backs at the same time as the attack, and Alves and Rahm's assists were clearly reduced. Nottingham Forest, on the other hand, were more determined and willing to put in their forces when they fought back.

It seemed that no one wanted to end the game with a 1:1 score.

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Messi was back in the game after the 70th minute. He constantly and successfully broke through Nottingham Forest's defenses to shoot at the goal, but they were both saved by Akinfeev. After a period of silence, Messi used these two shots to tell the Forest crowd that he was the most threatening player in the game and they would die if they ignored him.

One thing Messi knew was that Pepe, Barnes and Thiago in front of him now had a yellow card and, no matter what, he had to make sure that one of the three men was sent off, preferably the centre-back, if possible, or he cut in-ways from the side several times, looking for Pepe.

Pepe also found Messi's intentions, but there was nothing he could do about it because he could run away due to the yellow card he was holding. He had to do what he usually does, he just needed to pay attention to his defensive action and not give Messi the possibility of success. Even if foul was the only way to stop his opponent, the location of the foul could not be in the penalty zone.

In the 77th minute, Messi forced a breakthrough George Wood. Wood wanted to stop it with a foul, but he was so flexible that a little bit of the gap allowed him to break through. Now he could face Pepe directly and if he could pass by Pepe, the only person in front of him would be only Akinfeev.

Pepe stretched his foot to intercept the ball but Messi pulled the ball away. Messi, who had flicked the football, did not follow to run from Pepe. In that moment, his body seemed to have become awkward, as if he did not dodge and hit Pepe head-on, rolled over and fell to the ground, not forgetting to clutch his ankle.

The referee's whistle was heard along with boos from The Barcelona fans.

"That was a foul! He even kicked down Messi! Pepe looks to be in trouble..."

Pepe pulled Messi up, constantly waving his hand to signal to the referee that it was not a foul. The reason he was so anxious was because he had seen the referee put his hand towards his chest pocket. What did that action mean?

"No!" Twain also shouted when he saw this scene. "This was not a foul! It's definitely not enough for a yellow card foul! You f*cking referee, you're doing this on purpose, huh!"

His shouting and swearing did not prevent the referee from showing Pepe a second yellow card, and the Brazilian was sent off! A group of Nottingham Forest players swarmed up and surrounded the referee as they could not accept the result.

“In fact, there is not much to argue. If Pepe did not foul, Messi will pass by him, and then directly to the goalkeeper Akinfeev. He was the last ball! It’s not wrong to give a yellow card!”

When Twain saw the referee pull out a red card, he jumped like a flash lightning onto the pitch. The score line-up was levelled and, as the game wore on, the situation should have become more and more favourable to Nottingham Forest. Now the main centre-back was sent off, and in the face of Barcelona’s wrath, how could Nottingham Forest play?

In a contest with a team like Barcelona, it was very different to have one person fewer. There would never be a situation where that one person did not make a difference.

The fourth official came up to call Twain to stop a little, and only then did Twain stop scolding to turn and walk back. Pepe’s penalty was immutable, and to be fair it was a foul, so he could only accept it.

The referee dispersed the crowd and urged Pepe to leave the scene quickly. The Brazilian defender left with jeers from the home fans. But instead of returning to the locker room, he stood at the mouth of the aisle and continued to keep an eye on the game.

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Pepe was sent off and Twain was forced to replace him. Using Woodgate to replace Şahin. When Şahin came down, Twain came up to shake his hand and comforted him. There was really no choice... Şahin’s performance was not bad, and he indirectly assisted Ibišević’s goal. But in this case the two backs certainly could not change, the striker as well because Twain still wanted to fight back. If he changed one side, both sides would not be balanced, then the person who could be substituted out was the front midfielder Şahin.

“You did a good job, Nuri. There’s nothing to be frustrating about, it’s just our luck ... It’s a little bad. ...”

Twain said it for Şahin and himself.

It was a difficult match... keeping this goal might have become his highest target.

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“Barcelona stepped up their attack against Nottingham Forest who was lacking a player, and they were on full-back attack to end their opponents by taking the opportunity! Pepe’s unexpected departure has caused Nottingham Forest a lot of trouble. Maybe Tony Twain should consider to take the score 1 : 1 away from Nou Camp Stadium being his biggest victory. But will Guardiola give him that chance? This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Barcelona! I think Nottingham Forest is in danger. ”

“That’s well said, Calvin. But I don’t think it’s unacceptable that Nottingham Forest to lose to Barcelona on 1 : 2, they still had a home game and what happens then would not be easy for anyone to say. If Guardiola think he wins for sure, he would regret going to England. With about 12 minutes left in the game, Barcelona would have preferred to score two more goals so that Nottingham Forest’s promotion hopes could be wiped out! With Barcelona’s offensive ability, I doubt it’s an impossible task...”

Chapter 802: The Second Red Card

However, they did not expect that after Woodgate was brought on, Twain had instructed the England center back to bring a new command to his teammates on the field.

“We need to attack. The boss wants us to find a way to attack.” Woodgate took advantage of a dead ball to gather everyone to announce the latest decision. He said, “He stated that Barcelona’s mind is full of how to score goals against us now and will never think that we have the strength to fight back, so their defense exists only in name. As long as we can seize the opportunity, the initiative will come to our side.”

The others nodded in agreement. Having been with the boss for a long time, they seemed to understand this principle—riches could be gained from danger. The more impossible the area was, the more likely it was, while the more dangerous it was, the safer it could be.

When the game resumed, Barcelona continued to focus on how to break through to take the lead. Their rear defensive line was, as Twain put it, existed only in name. Nottingham Forest first bunched themselves into a ball like a hedgehog, leaving Barcelona, desperate for goals, nowhere to go. Then those little eyes began to look for a path to victory in the midst of a tumultuous situation.

Heaven helped those who helped themselves!

Barcelona attacked so aggressively that it lost its sense of measure. Alves, Lahm and even Puyol all crossed the center line, with the intention to “fight and attack in half of the field” against Nottingham Forest. Even Valdés unwittingly moved his position outside the penalty area while he focused on his team’s offensive.

With one player short, Nottingham Forest had been acting like a stray dog during this time. Who would have thought such a team could still threaten the opponent’s goal?

Nottingham Forest, the “stray dog” managed to do it against reason.

Messi’s sudden shot from the penalty area was pounced on by Akinfeev. After Woodgate received the ball, he was immediately marked by Bojan. Barcelona wanted to counterattack after it counter press in the front field. Woodgate could not turn around and he passed the ball to Baines on the sideline under extremely difficult circumstances.

Messi rushed up when he saw Baines take the ball.

Barcelona’s use of counter press in the front field made it hard for the Forest team to get the ball out. But it also created a problem—with every line pressed up, it caused their rear defensive line to press too far in front, leaving a large tract of empty space behind the defenders. A long pass could penetrate and basically did not require any technical skills to do so.

Messi’s counter press was amateurish. After all, he was not a professional defender. After Baines guarded the football, he saw Alves rush up. He could not afford to delay and passed the football to his own teammate, George Wood.

Reasonably speaking, he should pass the football to Fernández when Alves came up and open up the way from his side. Wood did not choose such an obvious method. He suddenly turned to send out an obliquely long pass and passed the ball in the exact opposite direction.

Over there, Lennon was sprinting at high speed, ready to receive the ball. As for Lahm? He was already thrown behind him by his sudden start.

Wood's long pass was precise, passing from one sideline to another. He was even able to send the ball to Lennon's front, taking full advantage of the latter's speed.

Lennon lived up to expectations and caught up with the football.

Then Nottingham Forest fought back at full speed, with Ibišević, Fernández and even Tiago all rushing up.

Nottingham Forest's speed of counterattack was astonishing. Barcelona's run-back speed was simply not up to speed!

In the backfield, there were only both Piqué and Puyol. Piqué went to defend against Lennon, and Puyol was guarding from a distance while monitoring Ibišević's movements.

Lennon saw Piqué again and glanced at the middle again. He saw that Ibišević was almost in place, and that Fernández was waiting at the far end. He was certain that his pass would be absolutely safe if he passed it over. So, he lifted his feet while running and crossed the football out. The football flew over Puyol's head and dropped to the rear.

Ibišević slightly slowed down and did not get the ball!

"Oh, what a shame..."

The Barcelona fans in the stands did not think so and their boos suddenly became louder.

Although Ibišević did not receive the ball, Fernández on the other side managed to catch the ball.

While receiving the ball, Fernández also turned the ball toward the middle and stopped the ball to adjust in one go.

Alves was still chasing from behind but Fernández was just one step away from the penalty area.

"It's a one-on-one face-off with the goalkeeper! He burst into the penalty area!"

Valdés left the goal to strike but gave Fernández a chance to lob a shot instead. He lifted his left foot up in the run and picked the ball over Valdés' head!

At that moment, the hearts of the Barcelona fans collectively stopped beating and their breathing froze. Everyone watched the football pass over Valdés' head and crash into the goal...

The Nottingham Forest fans, who were overwhelmingly in the minority, erupted with volcanic-like energy at the moment. Their cheers resounded across the skies above Camp Nou.

"Incredible! Nottingham Forest reversed the score with one player short!!" The commentator was going crazy... He did not expect the game to turn out to have such an ending.

Twain jumped from his seat and ran to the sidelines with his arms raised up. You sent off one of my men and I scored a goal against you. What a good deal this was!

“We’ve won, ah ha ha!” He laughed and said to Dunn and Kerlake.

Frustrated throughout the game, the elated Nottingham Forest players ran to the front field to hug Fernández and celebrate the goal.

But in such a joyous scene, the team captain, George Wood was yelling in the backfield. From his hand gestures, it looked like he wanted his teammates to hurry back...

What was going on?

“Wait, wait!” The commentator called out too, “Offside! The assistant referee raises the flag. When Lennon passed the ball, were Fernández and Ibišević both in an offside position? Maybe we’ll take a look at the replay. But now... Barcelona quickly sends out a free kick as the Nottingham Forest players celebrate in front of the goal. Now it’s their turn to fight back! George Wood is beckoning his teammates to return to defend. Currently, the Forest team’s rear half of the field only has him, Woodgate and the goalkeeper, Akinfeev. It’s almost unguarded! What’s going on? Look at the Nottingham Forest players’ expressions. They are completely stunned and even forgot to return to defend!”

Only a few people were trying their utmost to run back. But by this time, Barcelona had already passed the ball to the front of Nottingham Forest’s penalty area...

The referee did not stop Barcelona’s attack. He thought that Barcelona did not break the rules because the game had not been suspended.

Tony Twain could not believe his eyes on the sidelines, either. His hands, which had been held high to celebrate the victory, were now holding his head as he stared at what was happening on the field with an incredulous expression.

George Wood had only one way to save the team now. It was not to be a superman to keep all the Barcelona players out and then kick the ball out of bounds. But... it was to foul.

He was like a severely overloaded heavy-duty truck, charging toward Messi who was dribbling the ball at full force. This time, even if he broke both Messi’s legs, he was going to stop Barcelona from scoring!

Messi saw his intentions. Before Wood rushed up, he passed the football out and then jumped to duck Wood. Despite this, he was still struck by Wood and rolled in the air before he fell to the ground. It looked vicious but his mission was completed.

The football was successfully sent to Bojan’s feet and he was not in an offside position!

Before Woodgate could come up and block, Bojan made a decisive kick, and the football flew over Woodgate and then over Akinfeev to accurately drilled into the goal!

This time, it was the Barcelona fans’ turn to cheer. And the assistant referee’s spoiler flag was not raised. He just ran toward the center line—which meant that the goal was valid.

“The ball’s in! It’s a game full of ups and downs! Nottingham Forest’s recent counterattack was ruled invalid, but Barcelona’s counterattack was effective. 2:1! Barcelona is ahead! With five minutes to go until the end of the game, Nottingham Forest was dealt a heavy blow!”

The Barcelona players began to celebrate the successful counterattack, while the Nottingham Forest players angrily surrounded the referee, demanding an explanation from the man.

“Why was our goal considered offside and their goal was not an issue?”

“Why did not you whistle when they kicked off so quickly?”

“The decision was so inexplicable! I’m definitely not in an offside position!”

“You scum...” This player’s mouth was covered by a slightly more sensible teammate.

But someone else helped him with his foul language.

After realizing that Barcelona’s goal was valid, Twain seemed ignited by TNT explosive off the pitch. At this point, even if the sky came falling down, it would not stop him from bursting into a string of obscenities at the referee.

“You motherf**king bastard! Where’s your damned conscience today?! What qualifications do you have to stand on the pitch in that suit?” He rushed into the field and pointed to the referee while shouting the abuses.

Instead of immediately confronting him, the referee showed a yellow card instead to Wood, who had just struck Messi!

The Nottingham Forest fans in the stands booed with all they had at the black-clad referee.

The move was nothing short of adding fuel to the fire on the angry Nottingham Forest players. A group of people surrounded the referee to tug at him aggressively. They opened up their mouths as if they wanted to gobble up the small statured referee in front of them. Fernández even received a yellow card for protesting the penalty. If someone had not pulled him away, he would have rushed up and punched the Italian referee.

“Ha!” Twain laughed instead of getting angry. He said, “You even gave my men yellow cards! If I were George and Matías, I would f**king give you a red card! You son of bitch corrupt referee!”

The fourth official came over once again and said sternly, “Mr. Twain! Please mind your language...”

“Mr. Fourth Official, please ask your referee to pay attention to his conscience!” Twain retorted with a bad attitude, “What is this? What is this? You’re practically killing us! You murdered our goal and made a false countercharge! That’s just great! Is this UEFA’s must-kill tactic? Sent off my center back, blew up my goal to give a goal to Barcelona! That’s fantastic, just great! I must applaud you! I should be proud to have made you go through so much trouble to get rid of us! I’m so f**king proud!!”

The more Twain scolded, the more furious he became. Beads of spittle sprayed the face of the fourth official, and the fourth official’s face gradually darkened.

“There’s no problem with our goal. You’ll see that there’s no problem with a thousand replays! Barcelona’s goal shouldn’t have happened! You bunch of UEFA robbers! Utterly shameless! You robbed us of our championship title in Paris in 2006. And what else do you want to rob this time? You don’t want us to advance? Don’t be too pleased with yourselves! Don’t be too happy too soon!”

Twain held his head against the fourth official and scolded.

The fourth official pressed the microphone attached to his ear and informed some men to deal with the mad dog in front of him.

It was not easy for the referee, who was heavily surrounded on the field to break out, so the fourth official was abused by Twain for almost a minute. The game simply could not continue during this period. The Barcelona players waited for Nottingham Forest to kick off after they finished celebrating the goal only to find that they all surrounded the referee for an explanation. While the Nottingham Forest manager on the sidelines was up against the fourth official. The Barcelona fans in the stands continuously booed at Nottingham Forest.

It was a mess!

Guardiola stood on the sidelines and happily to watch the show. Anyway, he had nothing to lose from the delay. It was Nottingham Forest which was unlucky. They got so many yellow cards during this game and now it appeared as if Tony Twain did not want to stay in the technical area... Although the next round was at the Forest team’s home ground, Nottingham Forest was no longer a threat.

He now specially hoped that Twain would scold more viciously and even directly punch. Although he had no grievances with the UEFA, it would have ensured that Twain would be sent off.

The referee finally broke through the siege of the Nottingham Forest players and ran toward Twain. The Forest players chased behind him and continued to protest along the way. But the referee turned a deaf ear.

He ran to the sidelines. The fourth official turned away from Twain’s spitting range and lowered his head to say a few words to the referee. Then he saw the referee walk up to Twain and point to him to speak in a stern tone, “You need to take responsibility for everything you say, Mr. Manager.”

Twain looked like he was still bantering and said, “Of course I’ll be responsible. You want me to repeat what I just said in front of your face? I’d love to, Mr. Referee.”

“I’m warning you, Mr. Manager...”

“Don’t pretend, Mr. Referee. You blasted one of our goals and then helped Barcelona score the winning goal. You robbed us of our victory by holding a knife to my throat. And now you dare come here and point at my nose to warn me? What do you want to warn me about? You want to warn me for telling the truth? You want to warn me for accidentally pricking your soft, tender heart? Oh, baby, that must have been my intention...” Tony Twain eloquent and fast talk rebuked the referee till he could not say a word for a long time. But he also had his way.

He put his hand into his chest pocket. When he did this action to a manager, he certainly would not immediately show a yellow card.

Twain began to clap while his mouth still provoked nonstop, "Well done! F**king well done! Mr. Black Shirt, why don't you just sent off my entire team? You see, half of them already have a yellow card. You just have to find any excuse and they will all go!"

The referee ignored Twain's provocation and showed him a red card.

The stands behind the Nottingham Forest technical area sounded with gleeful cheers and laughter.

"Look at what just happened on the sidelines! Tony Twain was sent off with a red card for contradicting the referee! For Nottingham Forest, it's really... terrible, terrible! They have a center back sent off, are trailing by 1:2 and the manager is now ejected from the pitch...The game can be declared over early, right?"

"But it is truly a 'wonderful' game. One climax after another toward the end, wave after wave..."

Twain turned and walked toward the tunnel. The fourth official shouted to his back, "I will put all these down in detail in the report of the game, Mr. Twain!"

"Whatever, Mr. Robber of the UEFA." Twain waved without care.

"I'll write that remark down too!"

Twain did not pay any more attention to him. When he walked to the mouth of the tunnel, unable to quell the anger in his chest, he decided to do a move to vent.

He held up his right hand and did a money-counting action under the attention of several cameras and more than eighty thousand people in the stadium...

The smiles on the faces of the mocking Barcelona fans froze, while Twain turned his face and did not want to watch any more.

After a brief uproar, lighters, coins, mobile phones and everything else that could be thrown, rained down at the mouth of the tunnel.

But Twain had long since disappeared into the tunnel while they were in still in shock.

"....." The commentator spoke up after a moment of shocked silence. "I dare say that Tony Twain's actions will cause him a lot of trouble after the game. This is not just a matter of a suspension for two games with a red card... Does he know what he's doing?"

The guest commenter replied, "Of course he knows. He is setting himself against the whole world."

Chapter 803: Snap My Fingers

"It's common to see a player being sent off with a red card for contradicting the referee, but it's not every day you can see a manager fighting nonstop with the referee and the fourth official on the sidelines and finally being sent off with a red card. Last night, Tony Twain played out such a passionate scene for us at Camp Nou..."

As the television footage switched, the recording of last night's final moments of the match between Barcelona and Nottingham Forest emerged onscreen. In the image, Tony Twain had one hand on the hip and a finger pointed at the referee while he jabbered nonstop. He looked agitated as if he wanted to throw a punch at the other man.

When the referee pulled out a red card to send him off, he walked to the entrance of the tunnel and made a money-counting action. This completely infuriated the Barcelona fans at the stadium, and it could be seen clearly in the imagery that lighters, coins and other debris came raining down.

At the post-match press conference, when Twain reappeared in front of the reporters, the Catalan reporters even directed hisses of displeasure at him. Twain turned a deaf ear to this. He sat down and initiated to speak about two things:

"Firstly, the referee is Italian; secondly, we will be promoted."

Having said those two remarks, he got up and walked away without even shaking hands with Guardiola. It was clear that he was still indignant and unable to calm down.

The television presenter commented, "He still seems to think he has not done enough to stir things up. He has added fuel to the fire again. I'm sure the UEFA definitely won't let him go this time."

In fact, Twain was reprimanded in person by Allan Adams before the UEFA came knocking.

Allan Adams and Evan Doughty came to Barcelona together. They had wanted to watch a great game in the box at Camp Nou. But they did not expect to see such a scene ...

By the end of the game, when Twain returned to the locker room after the press conference, the players had already left. The men waiting for him in the locker room was the club chairman and marketing manager.

"Tony, you'd better explain it to us." Allan suppressed his anger and glared at Twain, while Evan remained silent beside him.

"There's nothing to explain. You saw it."

"It's still normal to be sent off with a red card ... But what did you mean by that action after? Are you accusing Barcelona of bribing the referee? Do you have any proof?"

"I just snapped my fingers." Twain shrugged.

"You can tell this nonsense to the officials at the UEFA disciplinary committee!" Allan was so infuriated by Twain's indifferent attitude and explanation that he wanted to smash something. He said, "You're the manager of Nottingham Forest and you're in the public eye all the time. In a sense, you are more like the symbol and representative of this club than Evan. You can't express your emotions so recklessly. You represent the image of Nottingham Forest! Your actions caused us to offend almost all of our friends in the circle!"

Twain looked at the angry Allan and said nothing. But his eyes and expressions unmistakably told the other party that he was not willing to back down.

“All right, Allan.” At this time Evan stepped forward as the chairman and friend to smooth things over and slightly ease the tense atmosphere. He said, “I’m sure Tony must have been dizzy with anger at the time. To be honest, there was no problem with our goal, I’ve watched the replay. The commentator also talked about the issue after. But neither the result of the game nor the penalty could be changed. You’re not the manager and in that position, so you’ll never know how much psychological pressure is on them.”

Having said that, he walked up to Twain and lightly patted him on the shoulder.

“Tony, you’re in big trouble this time. The club can’t absolve you of your actions. You have to deal with it yourself.”

Although he always did not see eye to eye with Allan, Twain still did what he was told in the face of Evan. He nodded and softened his stance by a lot. He said, “I’m sorry, Evan. I was too agitated...”

Hearing him say so, Allan gave him a hard look. Why didn’t you say that when you were facing me?

“There’s no problem with your heart, is there?” Evan pointed to Twain’s left chest area.

Twain shook his head and said, “Everything is fine.”

“You’d better call Shania. If she’s watching the game, she’ll be freaked out by your last five minutes of excited performance. Did you turn off your phone?”

The moment he said so, Twain remembered the matter. He did switch off his cell phone, but Shania was far away in the United States. It was hard to say whether she would be watching the game.

“Well, Allan. Let’s go first.” Evan intended to give Twain some alone time and space.

Before Allan left, he did not forget to point at Twain and warned him, “You’d better be prepared, Tony. This time, this is not something that can be solved by paying a fine of a few thousand pounds.”

Twain ignored him.

After everyone had left, he pulled out his cell phone and turned it on. Then he dialed Shania’s cell phone number.

“Tony!” It was rare for Shania not to call him “Uncle Tony.” She sounded angry from her tone.

“Looks like you watched the game, Shania?” Twain twisted his lips and smiled somewhat helplessly.

“Of course, I did. Were you trying to scare me? What was going on in those minutes?”

“Well, we were treated unfairly, and I’m a little angry...”

“I don’t care about that, Tony! I don’t care about the matters in football. Why did I watch the game? I only care about you. Seeing you lose your temper there; do you know how worried I am about your heart?”

“... I’m sorry, Shania. I’m sorry...” Twain was unable to put forward any convincing argument at this time, so he could only apologize.

“When will you get rid of your bad temper, Tony?” Although she was younger than Twain, Shania currently used the tone of an elder to chide her husband. She said, “You’re always so easily agitated. One remark from another person and you will be all fired up. You’re already in your forties, Tony. Why are you still acting like a child?”

“Well, my temper is a lot better now....” Twain recalled in his mind that before his transmigration, he was simply quite loathsome and never give face to others, like a stone in a latrine, smelly and hard. “It’s just that there are times when I really can’t control everything on my own. You know, Shania, sometimes it’s not of my own volition...”

“All right, Uncle Tony!” Shania interrupted Twain’s explanation, “As long as you’re okay. Sometimes I really don’t know what to say to you. You’re always so stubborn... Perhaps you have to give up this career completely to give me a peace of mind. But I also know you will never do so. So, what else can I say?”

Shania’s tone was much softer, and she also called Twain “Uncle Tony” again. But Twain still felt a little guilty. Sometimes he momentarily gave free rein to his emotions but alarmed Shania. He did not care how the UEFA punished himself, how the rival fans would love to kill him, how the media condemned him in speech and writing, and Allan’s rebukes to his face, but he had to care about Shania. Because, like what a Canadian country singer with the same name as Shania, sang—“You’re Still the One.”

“I’m sorry Shania. I promise I’ll try to be restrained in the future. I’ll think of you when I want to lose my temper. Ah —just the thought of you calms my emotions...”

“You’re so corny, Uncle Tony!” Shania laughed at the other end of the line.

When he heard Shania laugh, Twain also laughed along. His heart finally settled, because Shania was not angry with him.

After he ended the phone conversation with Shania, Twain walked out of the locker room. Some media still blocked him on the way to the bus, trying to get him say more explosive content. But Twain shook his head and stayed silent on any questions. He had already said what he wanted to say and also said what should have not been said. He too had done what he should and should not do. Now he would just have to deal with how people were going to evaluate the matter, how the UEFA would punish him, and what trouble he was going to face. It was no use talking about it.

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The UEFA acted swiftly. Just as Twain and his team had stepped off the plane and re-entered England, the initial penalty was already out.

Tony Twain was suspended for two additional games on top of the ban of two games from the red card and fined fifty thousand pounds for contradicting the referee, verbally abusing the fourth official and making an insulting gesture to provoke the Barcelona fans. Furthermore, the matter was not over yet. The UEFA would call for a hearing at a later date to bring Twain in to question him on what his actions and words on the sidelines meant, and whether there was any evidence to prove that the referee had accepted a bribe from Barcelona. If he did not produce the evidence, he could face a far more serious punishment.

But since the UEFA was a big bureaucratic organization, it might take a long time for a specific hearing to be held. Twain still had time to prepare...

Twain certainly would not resign to his fate. He told reporters at the airport during the interview, claiming that his action was not counting money, but a snapping of his fingers—these two actions really looked very similar ...

The important thing was that Twain did not put his thumb on his index finger and middle finger to rub them back and forth. If that was the case, it would be “counting money” without a doubt. But Twain only rubbed his fingers a little. Snapping his fingers required only a bit of rubbing.

In addition, Twain also had prepared other materials for his counterattack. He insisted that Nottingham Forest had been treated unfairly at Camp Nou. The Catalan media had criticized his team for being rough and the lethal tactics against Messi were contrary to sportsmanship. Twain snorted at it, “If I really want to deal with Messi using that kind of means, I can guarantee that he won’t last on the pitch for five minutes.”

A reporter asked Twain that it should be true that Nottingham Forest had a lot of yellow cards. Twain asked in return, “In Derbi barceloní, both teams, Barcelona and RCD Espanyol had a lot of yellow cards. What did that imply?”

Twain also continued to attack the referee and assistant referee at the airport. He said anyone who watched Nottingham Forest’s second goal replay would admit this point—Fernández’s goal was fine and not in an offside position. Ibišević might have been in an offside position, but he was not actually involved in the offensive or interfering with the defense. It made no sense to rule the goal invalid and immediately allow the other side to quickly kickoff until there was a goal. He was not afraid of even going to the UEFA hearing. If the UEFA did not give him an explanation, he would even go to the Court of Arbitration for Sport. In short—if you want to fight me, I will fight with you to the end!

Twain’s attitude was tough, and Barcelona was not soft, either. In a post-match interview, Guardiola mentioned the controversial goal. First of all, this was what he said about Nottingham Forest’s goal being invalidated, “I’m not a referee and I was not near that part of the sidelines, so I did not know what happened. But I think if both the referee and the assistant referee thought it was in an offside position, then it was definitely in an offside position.”

Then he talked about his team’s goal, “There was no problem with our goal. It was absolutely not against the rules. The referee signaled for the game to continue, so we kickoff the attack. I don’t think there’s any reason for us to stop and wait for the other team to return to its defensive positions to start attacking. As long as we did not break the rules, it was fine.” Anyway, he pushed the problem to the rules and the referee. If there was any problem, it laid with the referee. We were only following the referee’s instructions...

Following which, he was asked about his opinion on Tony Twain’s strings of actions. He said, “I could understand how he felt at the time. Of course, there are times when there are surprises on the football field. But regardless, he should respect the referee. He’s a role model for the players... What did he say? I’m sorry it is so noisy here; I can’t hear you. What about his gesture? I don’t know what that meant. Maybe only he knows... I didn’t see it either. I only saw it on the news after someone told me about it. I don’t care what his gesture meant.”

Finally, he responded to the media reports of “Barcelona had bribed the referee” and said, “This is complete nonsense! How can Barcelona, a powerhouse club which enjoys immense prestige all over the world, do such a thing? We have the strength to win any game and don’t need anyone’s help. I didn’t hear Twain say we bribed the referee. If he did say that, the Barcelona club will definitely make a complain to the UEFA. He must give us a reasonable explanation.” He did not forget to show his rarely displayed sense of humor. He said, “It would be more effective to use that money to pay our players a winning bonus than to bribe the referees. Ha.”

The Barcelona Football Club also stated they would pursue this matter with Twain to the end. They would definitely appeal to the UEFA for the insults they had been subjected to.

Unlike Barcelona’s unyielding stance, Nottingham Forest was a bit ambiguous. They simply stated that they would gather evidence for the “offside goal” in the game to report to the UEFA. They refused to acknowledge all the other personal complaints about Twain and Barcelona.

Any mess that Tony Twain had made, he had to clean it up himself.

Chapter 804: A Gift for Barcelona

When the team returned to Wilford from London’s Heathrow Airport, they were dismissed on the spot and given a half-day break. They would resume training tomorrow morning. But Twain and the two assistant managers did not have a break. He brought the two men straight to the training base to handle the day-to-day maintenance of the training ground.

The person in charge of this department was Thompson Isaksson, an elderly man who had worked his entire life in the turf maintenance at Wilford. He now continued to serve the club, leading sixteen men. The seventeen-member team was responsible for the day-to-day maintenance of a total of eight training grounds at the North and South Wilford training bases. The work included leveling the site, turf maintenance and some special requirements from the coaching staff.

Twain came to them this time for “some special requirements.”

“Thompson, which is the worst training ground in the First Team’s training base?” Twain got right to the point and asked the old man which momentarily stumped him so that he did not respond right away.

South Wilford was the First Team’s training base with four standard training grounds. Each of the grounds was the same size as the City Ground stadium. The fields with the best conditions were number one and two, where the Forest First Team and reserves often trained and played internal games on. Within such a venue, even the turf was the same as what the City Ground stadium used, and it had the best maintenance.

Twain saw that Thompson looked uncomfortable, so he smiled and said, “Don’t think too much, old man. I’m not here to criticize. Just tell me which training ground had the worst conditions.”

“Well... Number three.” Isaksson replied.

“How bad is it?”

“Well ... We haven't had the time to level the ground and the grass growth is not satisfactory. Usually the team never used that space, so we didn't do much...” He still thought Twain was here to ask to criticize, and hurriedly explained on behalf of his team.

Twain patted him on the shoulder and said, “Bring us along to take a look.”

So, the old man awkwardly led the way in front, followed by the three coaches, which somehow looked like a criminal being escorted.....

The number three training ground was located in the most remote corner of the training base, surrounded by dense woods. It was largely invisible from the outside. This training ground was the first field to be used by Nottingham Forest when it moved the training base from the City Ground stadium. Later because the facilities were more complete in three other fields and after the more conveniently located training grounds were completed in succession, this location was gradually forgotten. The First Team's three training grounds were basically adequate for usage, so this fourth place was left idle here and neglected.

Twain knew about the situation but today he wanted to confirm it with his own eyes.

Hidden deep in the dense forest, the number three training ground revealed a barren and dilapidated air from which Twain could even detect a hint of the 1980s.

“It was first used when I was already at the club...” Isaksson could not help but sigh with regret when he saw the training ground. “It was lively at the time. Then it gradually died out. Coupled with the club's poor financial situation the end of the last century and no extra money to maintain so many training grounds at the same time, this place was completely abandoned ...”

The group of people walked down the field themselves. Twain found that it was just as Isaksson had said. The training ground was no different from a wasteland due to the lack of maintenance and management. Although it did not have an overgrown of weeds and hares roaming about, it was largely different from the other three leveled training ground that were like green meadows.

“The ground is uneven ... Oh, be careful!” Kerslake stopped Dunn beside him. He was walking when he twisted his ankle.

Dunn took a breath and seemed to have sprained his ankle. “It's nothing...”

“The quality of the grass is not good. It's too hard. One can easily get scratched training here.” Isaksson added while he gave Dunn an apologetic glance at the same time. As one of the groundsman, every site was their area of responsibility, so they would feel guilty if someone were to be hurt.

After he carefully walked a lap, Twain stood on the sidelines to look around again, and then snapped his fingers, “Very good.”

“Very good?” Isaksson did not understand what the manager meant when he said that.

“Level the ground a little. Pay attention, Thompson, I'm talking about just level it a little. Just slightly. Do you get me?”

Isaksson looked at Twain and shook his head with a look of confusion. He could not understand his words.

“Well... That is to say, while keeping to its original appearance is important, try to make sure that one doesn't sprain one's ankle while walking on the training ground.”

“Keeping it to its original appearance? What does that mean?” David Kerslake was also surprised, so he asked next to Isaksson.

“I need to maintain the little bumps in this pitch, keep the grass rough and for the football to fall unevenly on top.” Twain explained.

“Why?” Isaksson and Kerslake asked the question almost at the same time. Only Dunn at the side suddenly looked pensive. When Kerslake saw it, he wanted to pinch his neck and said, “Say it if you know something! Dunn!”

Dunn shook his head and said, “I just thought maybe Tony is up to something no good again...”

“That's the idea I came up with on the flight.” Twain chuckled, “I can't be in charge of the next game. I'm afraid the UEFA people won't even let me in the locker room. I think it's a loss for us when we are up against a team like Barcelona, so I have to make up for this loss from somewhere else. You've all seen the quality of the pitches at Camp Nou, haven't you?”

“Of course, it's much better than this... er, training ground under our feet. They have a five-star stadium.” Kerslake had wanted to say, “this rotten vegetable patch under our feet.” But he suddenly thought of Isaksson by his side. It would be too unfair to say that to an old employee.

“Ha, you're right, David. Their turf is of an excellent quality, which is also to be expected. After all, for a team that always likes to keep the football under its feet rather than at the top of its head, the requirements of the field must be very high. We have to use all means and methods to create trouble for them. In addition to the tactical and psychological means, I thought of the venue. A terrible field can greatly limit their play.”

“But Tony. That will also limit our play.” Kerslake was puzzled.

“So that's why I'm here today to handle the matter. Starting from tomorrow until the end of the game against Barcelona, we've got to carry out our training on this training ground, such as getting our players to get used to the feeling of playing on this ground as quickly as possible and avoiding injury as much as possible. And then on the day of the match, I'll ask that the City Ground stadium to be turned to this.” He pointed to under his feet.

Kerslake swallowed when he heard Twain said that. He thought about how Dunn sprained his ankle just now from just walking on top of the field. If they were to use all their energy to sprint and do their moves on this kind of field...

It was as Dunn said. This was really not a “good idea.”

After he explained to Kerslake, Twain turned to Isaksson who had been listening in a daze and said, “You only have half a day. Can you do it?”

“Ah, uh... If it's just to 'slightly' level it, I think there's no problem, Mr. Twain.”

“In that case, I'll leave it in your good hands, Thompson. Without letting our people easily get hurt here and if we win Barcelona in the end, I'll send you a good bottle of wine!”

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On the way out of number three training ground, Kerslake raised his objection to Twain's approach. He did not really think it was necessary to do so.

"I don't think there's such a big gap between us and Barcelona that we will need to resort to such an unusual means to secure victory, Tony."

"Truthfully, David. The gap between us and them is indeed that great. Do you think we can win easily just because we are back at our home ground? Pepe can't play while Baines and Fernández have accumulated enough yellow cards to be suspended. And as for me, I can only sit in the stands and wish you all good luck. But who are they missing? No one. Now come to think of it, we were too restrained in the first round..." Twain smacked his lips and rubbed his chin.

"Limit their play with terrible field conditions and frequent fouls, disrupt their inherent game rhythm and mess up the game situation as much as possible. Lastly... instruct our team to only practice long balls this week and I want to change the striker."

Kerslake saw Twain's expression and he already guessed who he wanted to replace, so he was even more surprised, "Are you serious, Tony? That kid had only played three times as a substitute in the league tournament and did not even score one goal. If you let him play in such an important game, aren't you afraid of ruining him?!"

"He's not going to collapse at the first blow like you'd imagine, David. I know what I'm doing." Twain gave a shrug and said, "The only regret is that he's still not strong enough... How nice it would be if he were a combination of Žigić and Ibrahimović..."

"Dream on!" Kerslake threw out the remark in frustration.

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The next day, Twain came to Wilford early in the morning, ahead of most of the staff and players, as well as all the reporters. He went straight to number three training ground.

The early morning mist still shrouded the small forest. The number three training ground was faintly discernible amid the white fog. The scene reminded Twain of the Journey to the West story he read at a young age. The white fog lingering in the Heavenly Court was almost like this.

No one was there because he came too early. Twain went off the field to walk a lap and then jogged another lap. Following which, he nodded with satisfaction alone and said, "Well done."

Isaksson was undoubtedly a veteran worker who had worked here for decades and had good techniques. The work was fully in line with Twain's wretched requirements.

To ensure that the ground was uneven, and the quality of the turf was scraggly, but to also ensure that their own people training on top of it would not be easily injured, it was certainly risky. But that was not something that the groundsmen could control. These were matters for the coaching staff to consider.

Stepping on the still-uneven field, Twain began to chuckle deviously to himself.

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The players arrived at Wilford for training as usual with the reporters huddled outside the venue to wait for fifteen minutes of public filming. Of course, more reporters were here to interview Tony Twain. They still wanted to hear the latest developments in the war of words between the two teams.

But what they saw was disappointing.

Tony Twain did not appear in front of everyone from beginning to the end. Kerslake was the only coach on the training ground.

The players were as surprised as the reporters. They went out to get ready for training after they changed into their training clothes in the locker room, only to find that apart from the assistant manager, David Kerslake, none of the other coaches were to be seen.

After everyone had gathered, Kerslake spoke, "Guys, we're training at a different place today."

Huh?" Everyone's reaction was one of puzzlement.

"Go to the number three training ground." Kerslake pointed to a direction. Everyone looked over and could only see a dense forest.

"Where is it?" The vast majority of the players did not know the exact location because they had never trained in that place before. Some people thought that South Wilford had only three training grounds, number one, two and four.

"Don't ask. Just follow me." Kerslake turned and walked toward the dense forest.

"But the reporters..." Some of the players looked back at a group of media outside the barbed wire.

"Ignore them." Kerslake did not even turn his head.

The reporters outside the field were surprised to see the team suddenly march together to the most distant part of the training ground. Just as they did not know what was going on, the press officer appeared in front of the crowd with a smile.

"Mr. Twain suddenly informed the team to seal off the training. I'm sorry, everyone."

This was not the first time they had encountered such a situation, but the reporters still openly voiced their complaints.

"When has there ever been a manager who treats the media in such a manner?"

"Is he scared witless by Barcelona? Does he need to have a closed-door training for an away game again Norwich City, a league opponent at the bottom of the rankings?"

"Actually, I think he doesn't want to be surrounded by us and be asked questions about that gesture of his..."

Pierce Brosnan shook his head in the crowd. He could not understand what Tony Twain had in mind.

A group of reporters left reluctantly in the midst of their complaints.

Meanwhile, the Nottingham Forest players stared blankly at their "new training ground."

Twain was grinning in front of them, as if here were Mr. Devil himself to lure them to jump into the lava hell.

“This is the new training ground you will use in the coming week. It looks great, doesn’t it?”

Eastwood mumbled to himself in a low voice among the crowd, “This is probably the worst training ground I’ve ever seen...” He had the right of speech and people would believe his words because he was the only one among the players who had played in the amateur league.

“It looks like a vegetable patch in a farm. Actually, it is a vegetable patch.”

Twain’s expression when he said this made the people who saw it wanted to beat him.

The color of the grass varied in the regular football field-sized training ground with patches everywhere. In some areas, there was no grass at all, and the color of the soil was directly exposed. It looked like a head being carelessly shaved with a pair of blunt hair clippers.

“You have to be careful. It’s not as flat as it looks... So, today’s warm-up has to be longer than previous days. No slacking off. Otherwise, don’t complain that I did not warn you in advance after you sprain your ankle.” After he said that, signaled to Kerslake to step forward and continue.

Kerslake stepped forward with today’s training schedule.

“Guys, our training assignment today is...” At this point, he thought it was amusing, but he had to look serious and keep pretending, “to adapt to this site!”

Some of the players laughed. Kerslake immediately gave a glare and said, “This is not a joke! We are pressed for time. You only have one day to get used to... the feeling of playing football on this vegetable field! If anyone is injured here the next day, you will not get my sympathy!” He pointed to the other side, where the team doctor’s unit was on standby under the leadership of Fleming with his “Super Mario beard.” Everyone looked at them with a serious expression. They were no strangers to that look in their eyes. Whenever a player was seriously injured during a game, Fleming and his colleagues would look at the injured area with that look in their eyes and then turn around to make a substitution gesture to Twain.

When they looked at the situation, the laughter in the team gradually subsided until it completely disappeared. They realized that the boss was not prompted by a sudden impulse to play a joke on them. He was for real. It was a very serious matter.

After he saw that all the players realized the importance of the matter, Kerslake raised his voice, “Warm up! Fully warm up! Loosen up every part of your body and every joint! Even if your ankle twists to ninety degrees, it won’t hurt easily! Then use your bodies to firmly remember the feeling of running every step here! Remember the parts which are deep and shallow, the areas which have pits and bumps, where the football has irregular movements when it falls... Don’t remember them in your hearts or minds, remember them with your bodies! If anyone gets hurt, it’s because your body doesn’t remember! Finally, I ask you to keep your mouths shut on the contents of this week’s training!”

His voice was concealed by the dense forest. No outsider could hear them. The reporters would absolutely not obtain any content to do with Nottingham Forest’s closed-door special training this week.

To welcome their distinguished guests from afar, Tony Twain racked his brains and spent one week's time to prepare a big gift for them.

He hoped they would like it.

Chapter 805: POMO

Ahead of the match against Nottingham Forest and Norwich City, the media rushed to report this piece of news:

The host of Sky TV's <Football Matters>, Carl Spicer appeared with a shaved head on last night's show. It had been confirmed that Spicer had been willing to concede that he lost his wager with Tony Twain and shaved his hair. Mr. Carl Spicer became the second public figure to have lost a bet with Tony Twain. The first public figure to lose his beard was Mark Lawrenson. His beard has not grown back to date...

It was certainly a scandal for Spicer, but a good thing to Sky TV. Because they could make use of this opportunity to further drum up publicity for the show. Therefore, they went around promoting Carl Spicer would appear with "a brand-new look" in the upcoming show before the program was aired. The show set a new high in the ratings on that day.

Twain also did not forget to add salt to the wound and mocked Spicer in his column, "He should thank me for insisting on this bet at the time. I heard that their ratings have skyrocketed and that is all to my credit. I think Sky should seriously consider giving me a bonus."

In the visiting team's locker room, the Forest players marked Ibišević's twentieth goal of the season. But he was not in the starting lineup for this game.

The media were aware of the starting lineup a day before. Tony Twain had rotated the team and had nothing to hide.

The striker who replaced Ibišević to start in the game was not Eastwood, nor Agbonlahor, but the young player, Aaron Mitchell. It was his first appearance for Nottingham Forest in an official tournament.

Such an arrangement was not surprising. After all, Nottingham Forest would face the strong rival, Barcelona at home next week. There was really no need to send the strongest lineup to play against an opponent like Norwich City.

Aaron Mitchell might see this day as the most memorable day of his career, because when he was still a center back, he never thought he could make his league debut so quickly as a member of Nottingham Forest.

But Twain did not take any special care of the lucky kid. What he said to the whole team was also what he had to say to the kid.

"I don't know if you'll feel the uneven ground under your feet when you walk onto the pitch later."

The players laughed. They had been training on that terrible training ground for the last half of the week, with three players injured on the first day. Eastwood was one of them, but luckily he did enough warm-up and was not seriously injured. In order to seize the time, Twain even got here to play the away

game on the morning of the game itself. For the sake of the Champions League, he was ready to give up the preparations for this league game.

“Norwich City’s turf quality and pitch are certainly not as good as Camp Nou, but it must be a lot better than that training ground of ours. Don’t forget your body’s memories because of this venue. To be honest, I won’t give you any pressure for this game. It does not matter if you win or lose. You just take it that you’re training in that rotten field. Keeping your bodies’ memories is your only task in this game.”

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After the game began, the Nottingham Forest players played a state that was surprising to the outsiders. It was not a matter of them being slow to warm up. The Forest players played as if they did not know how to play football collectively and acted clumsily.

From the simplest action of running, when the football that was obviously closer to the Forest players, the Forest team would certainly have gotten it under general conditions.

But during this game, the Nottingham Forest players appeared as if they could not run. They looked like they did not have the energy to start running and completely could not catch up with the Norwich City players mid-run. In this way, they just watched the football being taken away by the opponent first.

“I really suspect that the Forest players went out last night and got prostitutes. Otherwise, how else to explain the weakness in their legs?” The commentator also thought the Forest team’s playing was really ugly like this.

“The desire to win is not strong and their bodies are not right. What did Tony Twain train for those three days of closed-door training?”

“Only God knows...”

Aaron Mitchell was brought off after sixty-five minutes of his debut. His own personal play was not ideal due to the team’s inexplicable “poor state” on the pitch. He could not perform the headers and footwork skills which he was good at. On the contrary, because his body was slightly thin, he was also at a disadvantage in the confrontation against the opposing center back.

Ibišević, who was brought on, did not see any improvement in his form too. The commentators found it even more difficult to understand—“Why is Nottingham Forest’s entire team, from its starting lineup to its substitutes, in such a bad form? Are they voodooed?”

In the end, everyone was in a poor form and unable to find their competitive form on the pitch from start to finish. Unexpectedly, Nottingham Forest, which acted as if it could not play football, lost 1:0 to Norwich City in the away game, causing the biggest upset in the current round of the league tournament. One must know that beforehand, Norwich City was at the bottom of the rankings and almost certain to be relegated.

After the game in the mixed zone, the Nottingham Forest players who lost were the targets of the media’s pursuit instead. All the reporters wanted to ask the Forest players one question, “Can you explain your poor performance in this game?”

Most players might refuse to answer the questions because they were in a bad mood from losing the game. The few people who answered, would not really say anything of value such as, "A thing like a player's form cannot be pinpointed. We feel that there's no problem, but problems may crop up during a game, so we do not know what went wrong."

Well, these players were clearly reluctant to cooperate with the reporters. Perhaps they felt that their performances were terrible, and they were too ashamed to answer such questions. So, the reporters turned to their attention to the post-match press conference, planning to hear what Twain had to say. According to precedent, Tony Twain must be furious that his team played such a bad game.

But what did they see at the scene?

Tony Twain sat smiling in front of a row of microphones, speak frankly with assurance about the just-concluded game.

"Football is like this, you can never say that just because we are strong, we deserve to win. You can't celebrate victory in advance before the game starts. No one knows what the outcome is till the last second. I'm really sorry about the result of this match."

Could anyone see the slightest expression of "sorry" on his face?

"The team was not in form and I'm angry."

Was he really angry? "Angry with a smile?"

"Finally, I would like to congratulate Mr. Glen Roeder. His team played a beautiful game." Twain stood up and shook hands with a beaming Roeder next to him. The two men were also quite connected— Twain's debut match against West Ham United was led by this man. At the time, he showed off his "big mouth" for the first time at the press conference. He not only successfully cursed West Ham United's relegation, but also found out for the first time where the English Football Association's front door was.

Now, eight years later, Mr. Roeder appeared before Twain again after he had suffered a heart attack and a cerebral thrombosis. This time, though, he was neither the West Ham United manager nor Newcastle United's acting manager, but the manager of the newly promoted team, Norwich City. He led the team to promotion last season but was likely to lead the team back to the English Football League Championship this season. At this crucial time, to be able to beat a strong enemy like Nottingham Forest, it was naturally help provided in the hour of need.

Unfortunately, even so, he could not be the leading character at the press conference. Instead, it was the defeated Twain who became the focus of attention. Had it not been for Twain's initiative to stand up and shake his hand to congratulate him, he did not know how long he would have to wait for the reporters to turn their attention to him.

Norwich City's victory over Nottingham Forest was an upset after the game, but the articles which appeared in the important placements were the media analysis on why Nottingham Forest had suddenly been unable to find its form. Poor Mr. Glen Roeder...

Some people said it was due to the rotation that Twain did to prepare for the game against Barcelona. But with the Forest team's strength, even if with a full rotation, it should not be defeated by a low-level team like Norwich City, should it?

Other people said it was the away loss to Barcelona that had a profound impact on Nottingham Forest. Cracks had appeared in their originally invulnerable locker room and Tony Twain, who only knew how to be hopping mad and scold people, could no longer control his star players. Today's Nottingham Forest was like a sheet of loose sand, with its morale at rock bottom after two consecutive losses. Barcelona's chance was here.

Moreover, Twain's unusual performance in the post-match press conference suggested that he had a falling out with the club's top brass after he lost control of the team. He had sent the helve after the hatchet. There had been rumors that once he lost to Barcelona, Tony Twain would be out of Wilford. And the Manchester United club had signed a deal with Twain in private. He would immediately go to Manchester United after he left Nottingham Forest.

These rumors were half-truths. Some of which simply did not hold up while some seemed to contain some truth. The real and fake news mingled together. The readers could not discern the truth and could only be led by the nose by the media.

Twain chose to remain silent over these media reports. Nottingham Forest also chose silence. It was like a nuclear submarine diving into the deep sea and lying in the dark, so that the enemy could not figure out where they were going or what they were planning to do.

The only trouble was that some people among Nottingham Forest's fan base also believed the rumors. After all, the game was really ugly to watch. It was almost on par with their home loss to Bolton Wanderers in that year. And Tony Twain unexpectedly did not lose his temper. No wonder some of the Forest fans had the wrong idea.

But based on this point, Nottingham Forest did well in its secrecy.

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While the rumors continued to spread about Tony Twain's imminent departure outside, the Nottingham Forest players continued to train on the rotten ground. After these few days of "trampling", the site became even worse.

But it did not have much impact on the training, as Nottingham Forest did not do much ground coordination training. The focus of the team's training this week was in the air—long balls.

The attacking players in the front field were asked to simply manage the ball after they had taken the ball. The simpler the better, the faster the better. They did not need to think about brilliant ground coordination—in fact a lot of players did think so at the beginning, but when they saw that the passes they were sending could not roll to where they wanted the ball to go on such a field, they gave up the unrealistic idea.

To put it bluntly, the only trick to playing on such an uneven ground with patchy grass was to minimize the contact between the football and the ground, so a high ball was the way to go.

When the defenders were marked as they took the ball, they must stride forward; when the two defensive midfielders switch between offense and defense, they did not use a short pass, but a long pass; the wingers frequently used cross passes at a forty-five-degree angle, rather than crossed from the byline. Then they would place a tall center forward who was outstanding at header shots in the

forefront. The football would go where the tall center forward was. In addition to practicing extra set piece plays, the set pieces, whether offensive or defensive, would become the game's top priority. Because Twain was well aware that his tactics might not get more direct shooting opportunities, so he needed other means to score. A set piece was the best option.

The Nottingham Forest players would not be too unfamiliar with the style of play, nor would they think it was a new thing to do from the boss' moment of impulse. Because even when the Forest team played most beautifully, they could see this "efficiency football" or "ugly football" in their tactics. Otherwise, why did the media always criticize them?

The Nottingham Forest coaches were also not surprised. Because Tony Twain's initial success at the Forest team was based on efficiency football and "useless possession." It was only later that he revised his tactics a little to make the Forest team's style of play richer and better. Only this time Twain took the "useless possession" to the extreme and used a famous extreme—POMO ("Positions of Maximum Opportunity"), meaning "the areas of the field from where goals were most often scored. It was the famous "English style long ball."

Almost all England coaches knew and were familiar with this theory, because the theory was founded by Charles Hughes, who had the greatest influence on English football in the last century. He also used his position as the Director of Coaching for The English Football Association in the 1960s till 1990s to greatly promote the idea. It was the culprit in why the English football technical style had not progressed or even regressed.

It was a classic example of "an armchair strategist" in football. The theory was invulnerable, but the actual situation acted in a way that defeated one's purpose. It was not the same thing at all. Even so, why did Twain suddenly decide to use this extreme tactic?

Since POMO had been popularized in England for thirty years and had far-reaching influence, there must be some merit to it. Even if it was small, George Graham's Arsenal achieved success with it in the early 1990s. Although they played rough football that made the Arsenal fans tired of them too, they won the championship title, and that was the redeeming quality.

The terrible pitch was clearly well suited to the use of long balls. Twain said he would do whatever it took to win, so it would be no big deal to briefly resurrected the "notorious" POMO once in Nottingham Forest.

Every winner would still smile even if he was scolded by people, while the loser would not be happy even if he received more praise.

There was always one reason for the Catalan media to attack Twain—he played extremely ugly football which was full of the utilitarian stench, and he was England's biggest football hooligan.

Then Twain would tell them: since you talk so much about ugly utilitarian football, have you ever seen the ugliest and most utilitarian football? It doesn't matter if you have never seen it. I shall open your eyes soon!

Chapter 806: Aaron's Troubles

Aaron Mitchell has never felt this valued in his entire life. The attention that he has been given so far exceeds the attention that he received during the very first time he played for Nottingham Forest in a Premier League match.

All eyes were on Mitchell as the team conducted physiotherapy, tactical drills and training sessions that worked on improving the players' techniques, set pieces and strength this week.

The kind of attention that was given to him was not one whereby the coaches approach him to ask dumb questions such as if he was feeling happy. The kind of attention that was given to him came in the form of the coaches' chastisements towards him following an increase in intensity in the training that he was given.

Using the strength training session as an example, Mitchell was informed that he had to do more strength training so as to enhance his overall physicality when he was first promoted into the first team, but the coaches became even stricter with their demands of him this week.

Luckily, the physiotherapy sessions following the training session have also been enhanced, if not Mitchell really doubted that he would be able to last for long.

The situation suddenly turned for the better in the middle of the week two days before the Champions League game. Mitchell was on his way to the gym to continue with his strength training when he was held back by Dunn.

"You don't need to do additional strength training today, Mitchell."

"But I'm fine. I want to..." Mitchell was a little taken aback and he did not react in time.

"You don't need to do additional strength training tomorrow either." Dunn smiled at him. "I want you to rest up for these two days."

Mitchell was baffled. The Chinese assistant manager was speaking in English, but Mitchell realized that he completely did not understand what he meant.

Dunn felt a little awkward as he looked at the confused expression upon Mitchell's face. He should not be revealing the starting list to the players without Tony's approval, but seeing how the lad has worked hard and pulled through his tough training for the past couple of days and how he was endearing...

Perhaps it would be all right to tell him as a reward?

"Yeah, Mitchell. You will start in the game two days later."

Mitchell nodded his head and did not appear to be surprised in the slightest. It took him a while to react, and when he did, he nearly jumped into the air.

He bulged his eyes and stared at the assistant manager before him. "What did you just say, Mr. Dunn?"

"I'm not dreaming am I, Mr. Dunn?"

Dunn shook his head. "Rest up these two days. And don't tell anyone."

Mitchell immediately covered his mouth and nodded his head. He thanked Dunn and ran away gleefully.

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Aaron Mitchell's father was an ordinary workman who was also a loyal fan of Nottingham Forest, which was why he chose to send his son to Forest's football academy. He was overjoyed for days when his son got promoted to the first team by Twain, and he went about bragging to every person that he met that his son was a football star.

His son, on the other hand, was not as excited as he was. He was well aware about how competitive it gets in the team and he kept raining on his father's parade. He did not want him to get his hopes up.

Every time Mitchell did that however, his father would start acting authoritative and pretend he is about to slap him by raising his hand.

"Get your act together! Some French bastard whom I've forgotten the name once said, any football player who doesn't want to be a football star is not a good player!"

Mitchell has always acted in a much more mature manner as compared to his excited father. However, there was a turn of events today.

He deliberately hid the smile on his face the moment he entered the door.

"Good afternoon, Dad!"

"What good afternoon? It's almost night time!" His father was doing carpentry work in the garden and he responded to Mitchell without turning around.

"How's training?"

"I'm doing okay!"

"You make me think you are not training in your team at all when you say that." His father's words sounded muffled since he was biting onto nails, but Mitchell could make out what his father was trying to say.

"I'm doing great!"

"That's more like it..."

"Where's mum?"

"Making dinner."

"Heh heh." Mitchell broke into a laugh suddenly. His father was surprised by his sudden laughter and dropped the hammer that he was holding. It nearly hit and hurt his fingers.

"Hey! You!" His father was about to chide him, but he realized his son was already gone by then.

He stood rooted at the ground for a moment. "Did he get stimulated by something today?"

During dinner, neither the father nor the mother could focus on eating their dinners. They had their eyes on their son, who was smiling to himself.

Eventually, Mitchell's father opened his mouth to break the peculiar silence that they were in.

“Aaron, do you have a girl that you like?”

Mitchell found it odd that his father would suddenly ask a question like that.

He shook his head. “I haven’t liked anyone for a long time. Don’t you know that, Dad? My height makes it hard for me to find someone suitable...”

It was certainly difficult for Mitchell to find a girlfriend with him being 2.02m tall. How awkward would it be if his girlfriend found it easier to give him a blowjob than to kiss him?

His father used to joke that he would have to look for a girlfriend in the girls’ basketball team.

But... The girls in the basketball team all look a little...

“That’s odd. Then why are you smiling to yourself if you don’t have a girlfriend?”

“Ah! That’s because...” Mitchell nearly divulged the information that he was going to be in the starting list for the Champions League match, but he suddenly remembered Dunn’s words about keeping it a secret.

He quickly changed what he was about to say. “Nothing. I’m just happy! Oh, right, Dad. Will you be going down to the stadium to watch the Champions League game?”

“When has your Dad ever missed watching a Forest game at the City Ground Stadium? Are you doubting my loyalty to Forest?”

“Heh heh.” Mitchell laughed again. “That’s good, that’s good.”

His laughter made his father feel uncomfortable from top to toe.

“Mitchell! Stop laughing like that, you are not a girl! Hearing your laughter makes me lose my appetite to eat!”

His father knew that he was hiding something from him, but he could not force him to speak. The authority that he held as his father would also not be able to help him get his son to speak. He felt very upset at the fact that there was nothing he could do...

“All right, all right. Let’s just eat.” Mitchell’s mother spoke up to ease the mood.

Mitchell did not care about how his father seemed to stare daggers at him. All that was in his mind right now was not his father’s reaction, but the Champions League instead.

He felt as though the sounds of the Champions League had rung by his ears. The sound set his heart ablaze and he became so excited that goosebumps broke out all over his body.

He imagined tens of thousands of people at the stadium chanting his name at the top of their voices.

He was finally going to fight against a strong European team. He was not just going to make an appearance in an insignificant competition at an insignificant time.

He once dreamed of donning Nottingham Forest’s red jersey and making an appearance in a top-level European match as a child. Now, he was not too far from making his dream a reality.

Mitchell's mother felt a little worried after seeing her son's behavior. She knew that the team had increased his training load for the past couple of days. Her son had also come home a few days ago telling her how he was exhausted. She feared that Aaron was overly worn out.

"Rest up earlier tonight, Aaron."

"I will, Mum. I will rest right after finishing dinner."

Mitchell continued eating his dinner without haste. When he was done, he pushed his utensils forward and stood to his feet. He then said good night to his parents before going upstairs.

The two adults who were left behind looked at each other. They did not understand what was going on.

Mitchell's father felt a little dejected and frustrated for not knowing what his child was thinking about earlier.

His wife laughed upon seeing the expression on his face. "Our son's all grown up now. He even has secrets that he keeps from us now."

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Mitchell laid on the bed and forced himself to sleep even though it was barely nine at night. However, he could not fall asleep no matter how hard he tried, because he was too excited. He did not think he would fall asleep even if it reached 12 midnight.

He still wondered if everything that had happened today was just a dream. Maybe he had been hallucinating back then...

If the person who broke the news to him had been Kerslake instead of Dunn, he would have just passed the entire thing off as a joke.

How does it feel like to play in the Champions League?

He has watched numerous Champions League matches either on television or at the stadium in person. However, he has never stepped on the pitch to play in a game before.

Watching a match and playing in one were two completely different experiences. How would he perform when he has to play in the game? Will he get too nervous and not be able to perform at half of his usual standard as a result? Or will he get too excited instead and not be able to perform at half of his usual standard as a result?

Gah, let's not think about such dreadful possibilities!

"... The fourth official has raised the board. 3 minutes of stoppage time! Loud boos ring out in the City Ground Stadium. How can there only be 3 minutes of stoppage time added when there were numerous fouls and substitutions made in the second half? It's bizarre."

"The score right now is 0:0. If the score stays this way till the end of the match, then Barcelona will successfully progress into the next round of the Champions League. That is definitely not something that Tony Twain wishes to see. He is standing by the pitch and gesturing to his players to press forward and attack. There are only 3 minutes left for him. Can his team create a miracle?"

“Nottingham Forest has earned a corner. Even their goalkeeper Akinfeev has rushed over to Barcelona’s penalty box. This might be Forest’s last attack of the match! Aaron Mitchell, being the tallest on the pitch, has been tightly marked by three defenders. His height advantage and ability to head the ball are all very important to Forest’s set pieces.”

“The ball goes into the penalty box... Aaron Mitchell jumps into the air! No one can stop him! All the energy that has been building up within him has finally been released! He jumps higher than anyone else! Higher than Víctor Valdés’ hands! He heads the ball towards the net!”

“GOOOOAL! GOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOAL! GOAL!”

Mitchell jumped off his bed and began running about his room with his two arms outstretched. He went ‘GOOOOAL’ as he jumped up and down here and there and stomped his foot on the ground.

“Aaron Mitchell!” Sounds of his father shouting in exasperation and knocking furiously on the door rang out in the room. “What on earth are you doing? The dust on the ceiling have all fallen into the soup! Do you want me to call an ambulance over for you?”

Mitchell turned a deaf ear to his father’s furious knocks and chastisements.

Right now, he was in the City Ground Stadium. His powerful header has just saved his team from the abyss, and it has also sent Barcelona into that very same abyss to fill up the void left behind.

He hugged his team mates around him and also ran to give the assistant manager, Dunn, who had told him the good news, a hug. He hugged every person possible to try and release the emotions that had built up within him.

He has rose to fame with this goal!

“Bam!”

His father was left with no other choice but to charge into Mitchell’s room after seeing that the noises coming from his room showed no signs of stopping.

He stood before Mitchell and was just about to admonish him when his son pounced on him and wrapped his arms tightly around him. Mitchell then mumbled by his father’s ear, “Die Barcelona! We have progressed to the next round! We have progressed! I am the hero!”

“You are the one who should die!” His father had been fuming over his son’s actions thus far and he slapped him on the back of the head.

Mitchell woke up after getting slapped. There was a look of bewilderment on his face as he looked at his father who was in his arms.

“Huh?”

“Did you think you were hugging some big-breasted beauty?” His father had a smile on his face that sent chills down Mitchell’s spine.

He knew he was going to be in for a hard time...

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The next day, Twain noticed that Aaron Mitchell was not in a good state and was also not able to focus during the training sessions on the pitch.

Twain found it odd. This was not how Mitchell acted like in the past. Mitchell has always been fully focused, hardworking and earnest during training. If not, Twain would not have arranged for him to make an appearance in the second leg match against Barcelona. Any player that Twain sets his sights on was a player who did not have any problems with his attitude.

Now that there was an issue with Mitchell's attitude, and for it to have happened in just one night...

Twain felt that there was a need to have a talk with him. It was not just because of the issue with his attitude. Another important reason was that Mitchell would definitely sprain his ankle in no time if he were to keep going through training in the state that he was in. If he were to sprain his ankle, then Twain's plan would go haywire.

Thus, he walked to the side of the pitch and called Mitchell over to ask him what was going on.

"Mitchell, were you not able to sleep well last night?" Twain noticed that Mitchell's eyes were bloodshot.

"Uh, yes, boss." Mitchell did not dare to lie to Twain.

"Can you tell me the reason?"

Mitchell glanced at the expressionless Dunn who stood next to boss and contemplated if he should say the truth.

Assistant manager Dunn told him not to tell anyone, but boss is the leader of the entire team, which means that the news that Dunn relayed to him must have come from the boss himself...

If that is the case, then it should be fine to tell boss, right?

"Yeah... Assistant manager Dunn told me that I will be starting in the match against Barcelona yesterday..."

Twain turned to look at Dunn. The latter had a deadpan expression on his face, as though he had nothing to do with whatever Mitchell just said.

He decided to make himself clear to Mitchell before settling things with Dunn.

"That's right, you were put in the starting list by me." Twain quickly made a gesture where he pressed both his hands down. "But, don't get excited just yet. Look at how you have been performing during training so far. Do you think that's all you need to do to start in games? There's still a day and a half to go till the match. I can still change my starting list at any time."

The smile that had emerged on Mitchell's face vanished after hearing Twain's words.

"I don't care how much you might be looking forward to the match tomorrow. You better get back onto the pitch and give your 100 per cent to the training! I want you to be fully focused on it!" The expression on Twain's face was grave and frightening. "If you continue to have your heads in the clouds and you

injure your leg in the process, then you might as well give up any shred of hope that you might have about starting in the game tomorrow.”

Twain’s words allowed Mitchell to come to his senses.

Getting distracted while training on the pitch was a very dangerous thing...

“Did you tell others about it?” Twain asked.

Mitchell immediately shook his head. He was never someone who liked to go around bragging about his achievements, and he also did not tell his father the truth when he tried to force the words out of him yesterday.

Twain smiled and patted him on the back. “Great. You just avoided the possibility of embarrassing yourself before your friends.”

Mitchell felt an overwhelming chill down his spine. He knew his boss was not joking with him. If he did not perform well during training, he would definitely be taken off the starting list.

Hence, he rushed back to join in the training once again and did not dare to think about whether or not he would start in the game anymore.

After he finished dealing with Mitchell, Twain turned to look at Dunn.

“I just thought of giving him a reward for all the hard work that he has been putting in for the past couple of days...” Dunn knew what Twain was about to say, so he responded before Twain opened his mouth.

“But you almost caused harm to him.” Twain’s expression was still as grave as when he spoke to Mitchell earlier.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t know...” Dunn knew he was in the wrong. Everyone knows how well Mitchell has been performing. It was true that his performance had only become worse after he heard his words.

Twain did not feel like admonishing his partner. Dunn has always done an excellent job most of the time, and he hardly makes an error.

He just gets soft-hearted from time to time, just like a girl...

Twain consoled Dunn. “I suppose all’s well ends well. This incident actually turned out to be a valuable experience for him. His mentality is much better now. This will help us greatly during our future matches.” His eyes were fixed on Mitchell as he finished his words.

Chapter 807: Adapting to the Field

The day before the game, the Barcelona team arrived in Birmingham by plane, followed by a special bus to Nottingham, where they had a simple adaptation to the ground training, all they had to do was wait for the game to arrive.

At the airport, Messi and Guardiola were the targets of a chase by journalists. Both men were very low-key; they did not say they would definitely win, just that anything was possible in a football match. It was home court for Nottingham Forest and everyone knew Nottingham Forest's home game would be difficult, so they did not think it is right to take it lightly. That was what the Barcelona players thought, and only they knew what they truly thought internally.

At the airport, Barcelona, Europe's most-watched team, was warmly welcomed by the media, and the density of the flash lit up every time a Barcelona player walked out of the hall. Later, The Catalan newspaper Le Monde ran the headline "The Arrival of the Champions", which revealed Barcelona's ambitions.

After putting their luggage in the hotel, Barcelona immediately went to the city's stadium for training on the pitch. Tony Twain was giving his players a tactical lesson at Welford when assistant coach Kerslake, tasked by Twain, snuck into the City Stadium with the home team as an excuse to watch Barcelona's warm-up training in the box.

Guardiola clearly knew the little tricks the home team liked to play, so he did not plan any training sessions in the afternoon that might reveal their tactical content. All he wanted was to adapt to the pitch.

The coach in Barcelona's coaching staff laughed after seeing the turf on the city pitch, "They really are a small club, this stadium is not as good as our training ground."

"I heard their new stadium ruined the finances of the team, it's normal to not have enough money to maintain the turf."

"I really don't know where Tony Twain's ridiculous confidence came from, is this the turf he's really giving us?"

"The stadium, which can only hold 30,000 people, looks like a high school stadium."

The turf they saw certainly was not the best, but this was what Tony Twain intended. Just yesterday he asked the grass workers at the city's stadium not to put on the best turf, but to keep the grass that had been used frequently before.

Guardiola listened to his colleagues' comments on the pitch but did not make any comments himself. This field was indeed not as good as the one in Nou Camp, but this was normal. The San Siro stadium had also been ridiculed for its quality of turf.

He did not care much about the condition of the venue but instead more about Tony Twain's tactics. He had studied Twain before, and he knew almost exactly what tactics Twain would use in the game — defensive counter-attacks. It was nothing new. While on a tie, he would use defensive counter-attack, while leading he would still use defensive counter-attack, and while behind he will still use defensive counter-attack, while playing on away he would use defensive counter-attack, back at home still defensive counter-attack. His tactical manual may simply only read "Defensive Counterattack".

Even in the face of a 1:2 situation when they were behind, Guardiola did not believe that Twain would come out against Barcelona since he was a coward. He would never know the beauty of the attack as his mind was full of utilitarian paste.

Out of the football philosophy of the gap between heaven and hell, Guardiola did not think much of Tony Twain. The only reason why people thought he did not hate Twain was because he did not publicise it. But in fact he hated Twain more than anyone. Others hate Twain perhaps just because of his unbridled mouth, while Guardiola hated Twain's ambitions and thoughts of rising being a gulf that could never be filled. Twain and Mourinho would sit down one day for a drink and laugh over their feud, but this would never happen with Guardiola.

Guardiola already had plans in mind. If Twain continued to use the tactic of defensive counter-attacks, Barcelona would not mind defending the counter-attack as drawing the game was advantageous for Barcelona. This game, from whatever angle, was more favourable to the visiting team Barcelona. For the home team, the score of 1:2 was not fatal, and even the suspensions of Pepe and Barnes and Fernandez were not too difficult, but the most fatal factor was that man could not appear on the sidelines to lead the team. Without Twain's on-field command, Nottingham Forest's level would have to be reduced by a notch, and the players who had lost their main bone would play erratically and become a loose-haven. Inter Milan in 08-09 were Guardiola's example, with Mourinho's home win over the Nottingham Forest without their leader, it was as easy as stepping on ants.

If Nottingham Forest were to press out and go for a shot, it would be more in line with Guardiola's expectations. Then Barcelona would play against Nottingham Forest's offense. He was not afraid of losing the ball. Tony Twain should be the one who was afraid, because Nottingham Forest only had one away goal, and Barcelona's chances would be unlimited during those 90 minutes. With Barcelona's invincible offense, did anyone believe they were unable to score against Nottingham Forest during their offensive conflict? Even if Barcelona did lose on 2-3 on away in the end, it would be Barcelona who had scored one more away goals than Nottingham Forest.

Anyway, no matter how Tony Twain reacted, this time he was doomed to failure. The initiative would always be on the Barcelona side. If Guardiola had read the classic Oriental Chinese book The Journey to the West, he would have felt that Tony Twain would be that preposterous Monkey King who liked to jump around in front of the media. and he would be Buddha who had everything under his control. No matter how incredible that monkey might be, it would never escape his five-fingered mountain.

After a hastily finished training at the City Stadium, Guardiola took his team back to his hotel, where they held tactical meetings and made final arrangements for tomorrow's game.

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While Guardiola led the team to the ground at the City Stadium, Twain was giving the team a tactical lesson. The last day of training before the game was almost all theory lesson, and he was more detailed than ever because he could not even step in the dressing room the next day.

UEFA was wary of him this time. He was not allowed to wear any communication equipment. They also drew on the lessons of Mourinho's coaching at Porto did not allow an assistant to sit next to him on the stands. Tomorrow, he would be thoroughly checked by two UEFA supervisors before he went to the stands to watch the game. UEFA did not mind picking people who had great opinions against Tony Twain to complete this task, because it would help them better put an end to the tricks of Twain.

In the final tactical lesson, Twain analysed the video of the first leg between Barcelona and Nottingham Forest with full details and made a targeted arrangement for his players. He believed Barcelona would

continue to attack away from home, but he had not ruled out Guardiola's sudden decision to take a point and hold on to a 2-1 away side.

"I was sent off for a red card, Pepe was red-carded and Barnes was suspended for one game for accumulating a yellow card. The outside world feels that our prospects are bleak. Guardiola may think their chances have come, but I hope you show them whose chance is actually coming. Our core tactic in this game is fouls." Twain raised his thumb, "Bad pitches will limit their play, but that's not enough. You have to thoroughly disrupt the rhythm of Barcelona with frequent fouls and oppressive defences. If you lose the ball in the front of the field then snatch it back, don't limit your dangerous actions in less dangerous places, foul frequently, then they will know their place and be scared.

"Remember, it's important to play like this from the start of the game. Barcelona's hopes of qualifying are greater than ours, or so it seems. So it's easier for their players to cherish their chances of playing. They don't want to be injured in this game and miss the semi-finals and finals that follow. Psychologically, their desire to win is inferior to ours. What kind of team is Barcelona? Their tactics are impeccable and are the best in Europe today. But psychologically..." Twain shook his finger and laughed, "The artist is always short of a bare-knuckle temperament that is not afraid to die.

"Capitalise on our strengths to nullify theirs and they'll start to break down from the bottom of their hearts. Body! Speed! Resistance! And in the air." Twain looked at Aaron Mitchell. "Mitchell, now that you're aware, I don't have to talk more about it. Tomorrow's game you start to play center forward. We need your height and header skills, don't even think about dribbling in this game. If you do, I'll replace you. Do you understand?"

The head spoke to himself very seriously, and Mitchell nodded hurriedly. His starting did not surprise his teammates, as the training sessions of the day were always around Mitchell, even the fools could see it.

"Your task is simple: squeeze into the other side's penalty area when we reach the front and get into position for a header. When we're still in the backfield, you retreat to the near midfield to prepare for the call-up, use your header to pass the ball to the team-mates on the counter-attack, or protect the football while waiting for support.

Mitchell continued to nod.

After instructing Mitchell, Twain set his sights on the team, "The key to winning this game is in the air. Barcelona's air defence is weak, Pique can not be used as four people. As long as we have the power to take control of the air, Barcelona can only wait for us to be slowly slaughtered, even with their outstanding skill and footwork. Does anyone think doing this is dirty?"

No one dared to make noise; only a fool would make noise now.

"It seems that no one has an opinion, then that's fine. Let me tell you the unbreakable truth of a football field. What is ugliness? Only failure is ugly! Those who shout 'ugly victory' are people who are sore! If you don't believe then look. When they win, no matter what they do, they will never say they are ugly. Barcelona thought they were the most gorgeous, and we were ugly representatives, so let them gorgeously die! In front of the ugly!"

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After ending his tactical class, Tony Twain did not return home straight like other coaches, but instead he drove hurriedly into the city stadium. By the time he arrived at the City Stadium, The Barcelona team had long since left. In addition to him, there was Thompson Isaksson who arrived from the Welford training base and his team. In addition, he met Kerslake.

“Do you get anything?” he asked casually.

Kerslake pouted, “Guardiola was very cunning. Nothing is planned for the play. Even after the reporters walked away, it was still like that.”

Twain shrugged, “That’s normal. Think about what we did at the Nou Camp.”

Then he turned to Isaksson. “Thompson, I have a request.”

Isaksson nodded before Twain went on. Twain was surprised, “I haven’t said what the request is.”

“The ideas our coach Tony Twain thinks of is definitely something bad, I have already guessed. You want us to make this field exactly like that one right?”

Twain made a thumbs-up, “Absolutely! But my demands are more strict. I hope you can copy the No.3 training ground into the city pitch. Ctrl-C and Ctrl-V. Down to the bumps, everything has to be the same. Can you do it?”

Isaksson frowned for a moment, then nodded, “I think it’s ok, we’re professionals in maintaining the turf, and every detail of the venue has long been in mind. Just a simple copy, I think it should be possible.”

Twain breathed a sigh of relief, and he clapped, “Thank you so much!” But you only have one night’s time, okay?

“You need to ask the stadium keeper to turn on the lights, but I don’t know if the stadium keeper will agree to do this, The pitch is sacred to them.” Isaksson’s dilemma was visible on his face.

“That’s not a problem, tell me everything that you need, the club would fully support. It’s just time-pressing and it has to be done by tomorrow morning, and I don’t want the damn media to catch on to anything.”

Isaksson looked back at his team and turned around with a proud look on his face, “They followed me for more than a decade, and they were my Nottingham Forest team, Mr Twain.”

Twain smiled and extended his hand, “I dedicate my victory to you, gentlemen!”

“But the game hasn’t played yet, Mr. Twain.” Isaksson said as he extended his hand.

“Two Nottingham Forest teams working together, it is a definite win!”

The hands of the two men were clasped together.

“Let’s show Barcelona what we have!”

Chapter 808: Do I Need to Take Off My Pants?

On April 22nd, the sky over Nottingham, which had been cloudy for several days, finally cleared. Barcelona, which had been worried about rain, could breathe a sigh of relief now. With the favorable weather, the time to kill Nottingham Forest had arrived!

“The English are good at playing in the rain because it’s always raining over their heads.” The Catalan reporters liked to joke about such things when they chatted with each other. Compared to the sunny Barcelona, the weather in England was damp enough to make people become moldy.

“As long as the weather is good and the venue is good, victory will definitely belong to us!”

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When the sun shone in the middle of the City Ground stadium, Thompson Isaksson, who had been busy all night, was resting in a seat in the technical area. As a sixty-something-year-old man, working all night was a big strain on his body, but he and his team had finally completed the task given by Tony Twain on time.

His old partner and longtime mate, Glenn Shelvey, stood on the sidelines and looked at the pitch that they had spent the night working through.

“I thought I’d never had the experience of messing up a good piece of field and still have a sense of accomplishment.”

Isaksson sat behind him and chuckled.

“Sometimes I really don’t know what Tony Twain’s brain is made up of. He can always come up with a lot of shady ideas to deal with others. Make the pitch look like a rotten field and let everyone play on this ground... I’m afraid there’s not a second manager in the world who will do that.”

Shelvey had been muttering lots of words to himself in front of Isaksson, but he did not continue the thread. He pointed to the particular seat he was resting on while he enjoyed what it felt like to be a manager.

Shelvey looked back at him and found that his old mate with a look of enjoyment. Then he noticed the seat.

“How does it feel like to be Tony Twain?” He asked.

Isaksson shrugged, “With no cheering fans and team for me to direct ... It feels a long way off.”

Shelvey smiled and patted Isaksson on the shoulder, “With those things around, I don’t think your heart can stand it!”

“That’s true, a manager is under too much pressure. In the previous Champions League game, when I saw Mr. Twain squabble with the fourth official on the sidelines, I felt a little discomfort in my heart...” Isaksson touched his left chest, “I really admire Mr. Twain. He’s actually someone who had a heart surgery.”

After talking about a few things that had nothing to do with work, Isaksson stood up and looked at the venue, nodding with satisfaction, “I guarantee that Mr. Twain will be satisfied with the pitch. Let’s knock off work now!”

“We’re done!” Shelvey shouted to the other workers, and then he turned to ask Isaksson next to him, “Are you going for a drink, old chap?”

Isaksson waved his hands and said, “You go with them. I’ve got to go back to catch some sleep and then come watch Barcelona’s exciting performance on our pitch tonight.”

“Ha!”

The two men looked at each other and smiled.

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Aaron Mitchell got up early in the morning. Although there was no training on the day of the match, the team had to go to Wilford in the morning and then take the bus to the hotel. They would be on a break until they leave for the City Ground stadium an hour before the game.

During the meal, Mitchell found that his hands were shaking slightly. Was he too excited or too nervous?

He hurriedly found an excuse to go to the restroom and splashed cold water on his head.

After splashing some water on his head, he looked at the mirror to see his look of a drowned rat and repeated over and over again, “Aaron Mitchell, it’s just a regular game. Yes, all the games are just regular games. What are you nervous about?” He clenched his fists hard as he tried to see if he was still shaking.

He gritted his teeth, clenched his fists with all his strength, and stared at the man in the mirror as if he was looking at the enemy who killed his father.

After a while, he felt that his body did not tremble slightly for no reason, so he wiped any traces of water on his head and came out.

His father and mother looked strangely at their son and thought the boy’s mind was getting increasingly harder to guess.

But today was the match, so it was not good to ask too many questions that would interfere with their son’s mood and state as parents. As their son often said, “The form is not something that can be pinpoint. It can inexplicably come and go.”

It was not until Mitchell went out the door that his parents looked at each other.

“I feel that our son is a little out of sorts these days.”

“Today is the game. He’s a little nervous, isn’t he?”

“He’s not playing. So, what’s he nervous about?” As a father, he always held out hope for his son, but he was also a clearheaded fan who knew that Tony Twain could not give his son any chances in such an important game.

“Is he hitting his puberty now?” His father finally murmured.

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When Mitchell hurried to Wilford, his teammates who had made the squad list were almost there. They even joked with Mitchell when they saw him come over, "Were you too nervous to get some sleep last night, Aaron?"

"I slept well, Freddy!" Mitchell shot back.

Looking at his serious expression, everyone laughed. If he was really not nervous, he would not have such an expression.

"Hey, relax, Aaron. The game hasn't started yet!"

"Don't take Barcelona too seriously. It's not as good as your opponents in the training session!"

"Are you saying we're very strong?"

"Of course! Nottingham Forest is the strongest!"

"Remember how you felt during training? It's the same in the game!"

"It's only the Champions League quarterfinals! I play games like this every year..."

"Stop bragging, Freddy. We were absent from the quarterfinals for two years."

"Hey, Aaron. Just imagine for a moment that Barcelona's tallest center back is that kid, Piqué, but he's still shorter than you by a head! Then you won't be afraid!"

"Are you talking about Piqué? Ah, I know that boy well." Pepe, who had just arrived, stepped in and said, "He's got great stamina, but he's still not quite there yet in terms of skills and awareness. I'm better than him! Unfortunately, he went to Barcelona. Otherwise, if he had been with me, he would definitely progress quickly..." He shook his head with a look of regret.

"I think Aaron's going to be marked by Piqué. If you're going to pit body to body and fight hard with him... To be honest, I don't think you'll get the upper hand, Aaron." He then gave Mitchell a word of advice as Piqué's ex-partner. "I think you should try to use your own skills..."

"But the boss doesn't want me to rely too much on my footwork skills..."

"Don't be a fool! Techniques are not just about footwork. Your awareness, your positional play, these are all techniques!" Pepe wished he could give Mitchell a knock on the head.

"A high-level technique of tricking an opposing defender away with a positional play can only be grasped by a superb striker like me!" Freddy Eastwood was ruthlessly despised by his teammates for putting on an act of a capable player in front of everyone.

Everyone's comments gave Mitchell the idea, and he was not nervous. Of course, he would think about tonight's game, but he did not feel other emotions other than looking forward to it.

He was certain that he was really ready this time.

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"We got the whole world in our hands! We got the whole world in our hands! We're invincible and ever victorious... Forest, Forest! Nottingham Forest!"

When the lights first came on in the evening, a large group of fans sang out outside the window.

Mitchell's father said goodbye to his wife at the door, and then hung the Forest team scarf around his neck as he opened the door to walk out. He greeted several familiar fans and then began to flow with the stream of people in red. As they continued to pass by the houses and streets, more and more people joined them, like a rushing river, sweeping everything along its way as it rolled toward the sea.

They sang Nottingham Forest's team song as they made their progress towards the City Ground Stadium.

On this night, countless such groups flocked from all directions to the brightly lit City Ground stadium. They did not know each other ordinarily, but at this moment they were all comrades who fought side by side.

The Barcelona fans, on the other hand, gathered outside the City Ground stadium to wait for admission, heavily protected or more likely surrounded by a number of police officers. They were also chanting Barcelona's anthem. Their shouts of "Barça! Barça! Bar—ça!" could be heard from afar. They might be small in numbers, but their voices were not small.

They were more optimistic. In a pre-match interview with the media, they confidently expressed that Barcelona would win the game. "We have Messi! We also have Xavi and the Pale Knight! We have Bojan! We are the best in the world! What does Nottingham Forest have? Tony Twain, Tony Twain, Tony Twain... Where is he now? In the stands! Hahahaha!"

In response, the Nottingham Forest fans began to act like pundits who were familiar with the history of competition between the two teams in front of the cameras, telling the Catalan media that Barcelona had been knocked out twice in the two times they played against Nottingham Forest other than the 2006 final. "What about the championship title? We don't think about that kind of thing. We tell you, tonight we just want to see Barcelona go home in tears to find its mommy! All the champions have to bow down when they face Nottingham Forest. Inter Milan had just lost, and Barcelona will not be an exception too!"

"Even though the game hasn't started yet, I'd like to say... this is going to be a tough game!" The BBC reporter said at the end when he reported back from the scene.

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The buses from Nottingham Forest and Barcelona arrived at the same time, with the distance between the two buses no more than twenty meters, front and back. With the help of a police car to clear the way, they all smoothly made it through the crowded Trent River.

The players filed down from the bus. Some people were still in the mood to wave to the surrounding press and fans and showed confident smiles.

Tony Twain was in the crowd, but he could not follow the team to the locker room. The two inspectors sent by the UEFA watched him at the entrance of the tunnel.

"Hey, Mr. Twain! Can you accept an interview?"

"Manager Twain, I have a question..."

Twain glanced at the two inspectors standing at the entrance, smiled at them, and stopped here to accept interviews from the reporters.

“I’d love to. Do you have any questions to ask?”

“In a game up against Barcelona, you’re banned from the game and could not even enter the locker room. I would to ask if this will have a negative impact on your team?”

“There’s no adverse effect. My coaching staff are very good, and my players know what they have to do. I’ll watch the game like an ordinary fan in the stands.” When Twain finishing saying, he pried opened his shirt collar and showed the media what he wore today—there was a red Nottingham Forest home jersey underneath!

He also pulled a Nottingham Forest scarf, also in red, from his suit pocket. He hung it around his neck and looked like those ordinary fans outside.

“In a pre-match interview, Guardiola said he was very glad you couldn’t direct the game on the sidelines. What’s your take on it?”

“Is he praising me?” Twain laughed and said, “The enemy’s fear is my glory. But what I want to say to him is he can laugh all he wants because I’m afraid he won’t be able to laugh when the game is over!”

“It looks like you’re confident you can win the game. But where did you get your confidence from, Mr. Twain?”

“My team.” Twain had a look of pride on his face when he answered the question, “They’re the best team in the world.”

“All husbands think their wives are the best, don’t they, Mr. Twain!” A Catalan reporter raised a different opinion.

Twain glanced at him and noticed the Barcelona badge on the collar of his suit. He was convinced that the man was a Barcelona fan.

“Oh, no, this gentleman. The words of wisdom I’ve heard is that another person’s wife is always good, and only one’s own child is the best.”

Having said that, he stopped the interview and went straight to the two UEFA match inspectors. He opened his arms as he walked up to the two men and said, “Do you need me to take off my pants?”

The two inspectors looked at each other and wondered why Twain said so.

“To look for any miniature microphones or other high-tech gadgets like a wireless transmitter in my anus.”

Hearing him say so, the two inspectors looked as if they ate shit.

“We... We’re not in prison here, Mr. Twain.” One of them suppressed the surge of disgust to reply.

“Isn’t it? I think you two look a bit like the prison wardens.” Twain snorted and walked past the two men.

“Where are you going, Mr. Twain?”

“Don’t worry. I’m not going to the locker room. I’m just going to the restroom.” Twain looked back at them and said, “Are you coming together with me? Don’t be shy. I’ll be the host. By the way, you can see if I’m going to put any miniature microphones, satellite phones in my anus...”

“Mr. Twain!” One of them finally could not bear it to say, “We just had dinner!”

Twain raised his hands and made an apologetic gesture, “But I’m doing this for your own good. If I really connect with the coaching staff through those high-tech gadgets, how are you going to account for it when you get back, right?”

“I’ve never seen a coach who would bugger himself for a win in a game.” The other man spoke a little viciously. Obviously his prejudices about Twain were deep. Or it could be said that through the little amount of interaction just now, he had firmly become “anti-Twain.”

But Twain winked at him and uttered words which completely disgusted him, “I will, Mr. Inspector. I will do whatever it takes to win.”

At the time, the two UEFA inspectors simply thought that Twain deliberately made these angry remarks to disgust them. However, it was not long before they knew that everything Tony Twain said was true...

Tony Twain never lied. He would do whatever it took to win.

Chapter 809: Two Identical Leaves

Although Tony Twain did not really take off his pants, he did get a check-up by the two inspectors. His entire body was rummaged through to prove that he did not have any communication devices on him. The battery in his cell phone was removed in front of his face. As the battery was taken out, a thought flashed in Twain’s mind. He wanted to simply entrust someone in China to buy him a knockoff cell phone so that even if the battery was removed, the cell phone could still be used. It would throw those ignorant guys off their guard!

Twain was amused by his idea.

The two inspectors next to him looked grim instead.

“Looks like you’re in a good mood, Mr. Twain. Aren’t you worried about the game at all?” One of them beat about the bush to try and provoke Twain.

“I don’t need to worry about the winner.” Twain shrugged and asked, “Are you done with the inspection?”

“Yes, there’s no problem. You can go to the stands.” The two men made a gesture. They would not follow Twain to the stands. They were seated in the box. The Nottingham Forest club treated them well.

Twain turned around and walked away. He did not even say “goodbye.”

The two inspectors were still indignant about the treatment they received.

“We’ll see if you’re still so cocky after the game!”

They said viciously to Twain’s back.

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There were more and more fans in the stands, and all kinds of songs and chants reverberated through the air in the City Ground stadium.

Tony Twain walked up the steps to the grandstand.

“Hey, guys!” He stood in front of his fans with their backs toward him and shouted out a greeting.

“Forest, Forest! Nottingham Forest!!” The group of people only turned back after the last phrase. The fat leader laughed and announced, “Look who’s here, guys! The poor man who is punished to the stands—Tony! Welcome to the Robin Hood grandstand!”

Fat John gave Tony Twain a warm bear hug. He was so enthusiastic with his hug that Twain was almost breathless.

After John had hugged him, the others came up to hug and welcome him here.

Taking off his suit, he wore a red Forest jersey with a scarf around his neck which made him look no different from the average fan. It was not easy to find him among the fans.

“Tony, what’s going on with the stadium?” Skinny Bill pointed to the pitch under the grandstand.

Twain gave a glance and immediately laughed. Isaksson did a good job. It looked exactly visually the same as Wilford’s number three training ground.

“Are our turf maintenance workers asleep on their jobs? How can we play on such a field?”

Someone in the crowd echoed.

Twain chuckled and said, “Doesn’t it look shocking? It’s going to an exciting game!”

“Ah — you did it on purpose!” Bill reacted and pointed to Twain to say, “You badass!”

“Badass! Badass! Tony’s a badass!” The fans next to them immediately shouted the slogan, like how they cheered the team on during the game.

“I prepared a little gift for Barcelona. I hope they like it.”

The crowd laughed.

“But for a venue like this, our guys can’t adapt as well...” Some people were still doubtful.

“Ha! What do you think we have been doing during the week of closed-door training?” Without Twain clearing up the confusion this time, John laughed first. He already understood it.

Twain looked at the group of fans looking excited and stood at the side, laughing without saying a word. To be honest, it was a shame not to be able to stand on the sidelines and watch Mr. Guardiola’s expression when he saw the pitch...

When everyone was done laughing, he asked, “The club did not tell me where my seat is. They only said to just to sit with you guys. So... Where’s my seat?”

John pointed to the middle, “Right in the center! Between us.”

“Very good!”

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Kerslake’s loud voice rang in the home team’s locker room, “Warm up! Warm! Fully warm-up! Keeping in mind the conditions of the field, you have to warm up more seriously than in any other games! You can be shoved by your opponent on the pitch, but I don’t want you to run and hurt your ankle! Think about what you’ve been doing all week. How can that kind of thing still happen to you?”

Kerslake paced back and forth in the locker room, but everyone treated him like he was the background music. Someone even asked Dunn, “Where will the boss be during the game is?”

“In the north grandstand.” Dunn replied.

The north grandstand, or as Fat John called it the “Robin Hood Grandstand”, was the area where Nottingham Forest’s most hardcore and most ardent fans gathered. Every football club’s home stadium had such a grandstand, with some in the north stands and some in the south stands. The north stands of the City Ground stadium were next to the Trent River, with the home stadium, Meadow Lane of their same city archrival, Notts County across the river.

“The boss must be like a fish to the water there.”

“Heh heh, that’s right. He’s Nottingham Forest’s number one big diehard fan!”

Dunn had a feeling that the atmosphere that had just been a little on edge because of Kerslake’s constant clamor slowly eased after they knew of Tony’s position. The manager was indeed the backbone of a team. No matter how well the assistant manager did, he could not steal the manager’s light ...

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The first team to warm up was Barcelona. Twain was able to tell the difference from the level of the boos that rang out in the stadium. So, he got up and left his seat to stand up and look down.

He very much wanted to see the marvelous looks on the Barcelona players when they saw the pitch. It was a bit of a cheap thrill for him...

The Barcelona players ran out of the tunnel in succession and then stopped without fail the moment they first stepped on the pitch. Then they looked at the field in front of them in disbelief. Some of them even wanted to turn back.

“What’s going on in their minds now? I bet they must be thinking—strange, we’re on the wrong field!” Sitting in the corner of the grandstand, a fifty-year-old man and a sixty-something-year-old man rocked with laughter and said, “The field was not like this yesterday when they did their adaptive training! Hahahaha—”

Glenn Shelvey slapped Thompson Isaksson's thigh and almost fell to the ground. Isaksson was also overjoyed as he admired their masterpiece after a night of hard work.

Guardiola and the members of the coaching staff followed the players out, only to find them standing on the sidelines and not warming up on the pitch.

Vilanova, Guardiola's assistant and his assistant manager at Barça's second team, thought it was strange and asked, "What are you doing? Why aren't you warming up?"

"Coach, this ground..." Puyol stood up as the team captain to bring it up to the coaches on behalf of the team.

"What happened to the field?"

"It doesn't feel like how it was yesterday..." The professional players were very sensitive to the pitch. Although the training ground was bad yesterday, it was not quite the same as today's.

Guardiola did not listen to them continue. Instead, he personally stepped on the field to get a first-hand experience to have a say.

He had only walked a few steps when he knitted his brows.

"Scumbag!" He swore under his breath.

"Josep, what's going on?" The second assistant manager, Eusebio (an assistant to the former manager, Rijkaard and not the Portuguese named "Black Panther" Eusébio) noticed his strange look and asked.

"They changed the turf and the pitch was specially treated." Guardiola looked up toward the technical area and found it empty, which he then recalled that Tony Twain was banned from the game. He should look toward the stands if he were to look for him.

Eusebio was a little taken aback. He said, "Is there such a thing? Wasn't it still normal when we came to adapt to the field yesterday?"

"Maybe they changed it after we warmed up...they must have done it overnight."

Eusebio was shocked by Tony Twain's despicable action. "How could he do this!"

Just at this time, Nottingham Forest also came out to warm up. Eusebio immediately saw Dunn, who was always inseparable from Twain. He rushed up to personally asked, "Mr. Coach, would you care to explain what is going on with your pitch?"

Dunn looked confused and said, "Is that Catalan? Or Spanish? Please speak English."

Eusebio only realized that he had not spoken the lingua franca and came out with his hometown language in a moment of excitement after he saw Dunn's reaction. He had to readjust his mood and angrily pointed to the different colors of the turf on the pitch again in English to demand, "Such terrible turf. It's very bumpy when our team stepped on it. How is this field suitable for a match? Don't you have anything to say?"

Dunn suddenly realized, "Oh, the City Ground stadium recently maintained the previous used turf, so it was replaced..."

“Did they replace it with such patchy turf?” Eusebio was infuriated when he heard Dunn say that.

“We’re a small club and financially tight, so we did not have any good turf to spare. I’m really sorry.” Dunn bowed slightly and looked sheepish. It made it impossible for the Barcelona people to lose their temper...

In fact, all that he had said to answer to Barcelona’s questioning were prepared by Twain who anticipated that the big difference in the before and after situation with this kind of turf would cause some people to take notice. So, he prepared the corresponding answer in advance so that it was naturally foolproof.

Moreover, the Nottingham Forest club did inform the UEFA a few days in advance that they were going to maintain the turf. It was normal to change the turf, so the UEFA did not take it seriously either. They just nodded in agreement and said, “You can change it!”

The end result was a field which stunned Barcelona and the most powerful stadium in history, which was unforeseen by the UEFA.

The two UEFA inspectors, who were accustomed to the ways of the world, were also in shock for a long while when they saw the field. They thought they had gone to Meadow Lane on the other side of the river—for a Premier League football club that had competed in the UEFA Champions League for a long time, won two Champions Leagues titles and one Premier League title in the past few years, to be so terrible to this extent...it rendered them speechless.

Eusebio had wanted to say more but was stopped by Guardiola.

“We have been screwed by them. There’s nothing more to say. It’s impossible to change the ground back. Since they’ve insisted that it is to maintain the turf, it means they’ve taken everything into account.”

Eusebio was upset and said, “We can report to the UEFA...”

Dunn suddenly pricked his ears next to him and piped up, “The UEFA?”

It was a sensitive moment. A week before the game, the English media seized on the close relationship between Barcelona and the UEFA and repeatedly speculated to insist on proving that the UEFA had dark secrets and that Barcelona’s home victory was given by the UEFA. Anyway, it was not a day or two that the UEFA was not happy with English football and the English media, which would not even give face to their own people, would definitely not give face to the UEFA. Therefore, “The UEFA” was almost a prohibited word at this time. Whenever Barcelona mentioned the UEFA, it would lead to other people to associate the two...

Eusebio turned back to him and said unkindly, “I thought you didn’t understand Catalan?!”

Dunn just put on the kind of fake smile that East Asians gave and said nothing.

Eusebio was completely at a loss as to what to do with these shameless scoundrels that he could only be pulled away by Guardiola and walked away from Dunn.

“It’s no use complaining to the UEFA. The game is about to start. Will the UEFA change the game date due to a small matter like the turf? Furthermore, the field can still be played in—We just need to tell our

players to be careful. But after the game, we will report the state of the City Ground's pitch to the fourth official." Guardiola looked helpless. He had been thinking about Tony Twain for the past week and what kind of tactics he was going to come up with since he could not direct the game. But he did not think Tony Twain did not play by the rules and played such a hand.

He carried out such an operation on the pitch and meticulously set up the plan from beginning to end with no oversight. It was truly "obtaining the victory by fair means or foul" ...

But with such a rotten field, my team cannot play, don't tell me your team play on it?

Just when he thought that the game might not be as bad as people had thought, Guardiola suddenly remembered that Nottingham Forest had been in closed-door training the past week before the game. They even canceled a routine press conference with the local media without fear of offending them, so that no one knew what they were practicing...

Maybe, perhaps... They were training on a training ground that was similar to this one?

When Guardiola stirred suddenly, he realized that his back was sweaty and breaking out in cold sweat.

That Tony Twain!

He unconsciously clenched his fists.

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While the assistant coach was arguing with Dunn, the Barcelona players at the side huddled around in whispers. Someone even ran to ask Piqué because he was the only one of these people present who had the experience of playing for Tony Twain.

Piqué could only speak honestly, "He is such a person ... In order to achieve his purpose, he can use all means available ..."

"Wow, didn't it feel awful to play for him?" Someone gave a gasp of surprise.

When Piqué heard what they said about Tony Twain, he muttered with a wry smile, "It's okay..."

He then looked at the empty Nottingham Forest technical area. He could imagine how the Nottingham Forest players would feel—it must have been great!

Because when he was at Nottingham Forest, every time the boss pulled such a stunt against an enemy, it would always draw approving responses.

"We will do everything that makes our opponents uncomfortable, and that's going to benefit us."

This was what the boss had said before. At this moment, it was somewhat awkward to recall such a scene because he had become the "opponent" in that remark.

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"Warm up!" Vilanova shouted from the sidelines, urging the players to warm up. "But be careful, don't get hurt. The pitch is in a terrible condition. Do not get hurt!"

The moment he shouted that all the Barcelona players who were warming up on the pitch became constrained. Because no one wanted to leave the game because of an injury during the warm-up before the game started, especially the star players who had been placed on the starting lineup...

On the contrary, when the Nottingham Forest players stepped onto the pitch, there was a hint of pleasant surprise on their faces at the same time.

They thought it felt familiar, too familiar... Because the stadium's field felt exactly the same as the number three training ground!

"Did they move number three here?" Akinfeev even removed his gloves and bent down to touch the turf to get a real feel.

"After training there for a week, this suddenly feels familiar... Hey, look at the Barcelona players. Haha!" Pepe suddenly pointed to the opposite side and laughed.

Everyone followed his hand to look over and laughed as well. The Barcelona players did their warm-up as if they were in a minefield. Every one of them stood on tip toes as if they could not wait to fly and not to suffer from using such a terrible pitch.

"Look at them. I feel like we are going to win the game!" Lennon exclaimed excitedly beside him.

George Wood poured cold water on him instead and said, "Don't underestimate the opponent."

"Well, guys! Chat time is over!" Kerslake's loud voice chased them down from the locker room to the field. The group of people ran up one by one, as if to deliberately provoke Barcelona. Unlike the opponent's overcautious movements, their pace was strong, they moved nimbly, and were in high spirits. They moved on the bumpy pitch like they were on an even field.

It was the result of a twice daily drills for a week at the cost of three injured players.

This was the real home ground—no one in the world could adapt to the turf on the City Ground stadium now except them.

A philosopher liked to say: No two leaves are alike in the world.

The Nottingham Forest players would argue against him this evening in this way: No, there are two identical leaves in the world, one at Wilford and one at the City Ground stadium.

Chapter 810: The Puppet Master

"To our friends and spectators, welcome to the UEFA Champions League quarterfinals of the 10-11 season. We are now broadcasting live the high-profile game for you at the City Ground stadium, with Nottingham Forest taking on Barcelona at home!"

"Well, we say it's the City Ground stadium, but I believe a lot of people must think we're talking nonsense." The guest commenter next to him interjected.

The commentator laughed, "I couldn't believe it at first—Nottingham Forest's pitch is so poor... Half a week ago, Nottingham Forest said it was carrying out maintenance works and turf replacement. Who

would have thought that such turf would turn out a few days later? Are we watching a friendly match between Nottingham Forest and an amateur team?”

The guest cleared his throat and said, “By putting it this way, you’d better watch out for protests from Barcelona. You actually liken them to ‘an amateur team.’”

“Ha!” The commentator laughed drily and hurriedly changed the subject., “There’s still some time before the start of the game and we’ve got the starting lineup from both sides. Barcelona’s list is not surprising, extending the same lineup in the last round. Speaking of which, Tony Twain was really wronged by the Catalan media—he really did not use any lethal tactics against Messi and the others. Messi, Bojan ... Even Iniesta, who had only just returned from the recovery of his injury, continues to be in the starting lineup. George Wood also did not to mark Messi in the last game and did not stand out in his performance.”

“Well, let us take a look at Nottingham Forest... Will you look at that! Compared with Barcelona’s stability, the Nottingham Forest team has changed a lot!” The commentator raised his voice and there was a deliberate sense of mystery.

“First of all, there’s a big adjustment in the rear defensive line. Leighton Baines was automatically suspended for one game due to the accumulation of yellow cards. His replacement is Joe Mattock, who is thought to be England’s new star defender. Even though he’s young, he already has a record of two appearances in the starting lineup for the England nation team. He has been placed in an important role by Twain since Gareth Bale’s injury. He has received many opportunities to be in the starting lineup for the league tournament and is currently rotating with Baines in the left back position. With Baines currently suspended, he’s naturally the one to replace him. This is not the first time he has played in the Champions League. But it is believed this young player will still be a key target for Barcelona to break through from as they have Messi and Alves on this side. We can take a good look at young Joe Mattock’s performance this game. Hopefully he will not betray Twain’s trust...”

“As for the center back here, Pepe is suspended by his red card and the player who replaces him is Woodgate. His partner is Kompany. The right back has also been replaced. Rafinha is said to have suffered some injuries in training. Nkoulou has appeared in this position. With a height of 1.88 meters, he can actually play as the center back. He has played in both positions in the league tournament.”

“In the midfield, Fernández is suspended for accumulating yellow cards, like Baines. Twain arranges for Lennon to play on the left and Bentley on the right. It’s no surprise that Cohen didn’t appear on the starting lineup. The middle is still the unshakable George Wood and Tiago’s partner. Since Twain started using the double defensive midfielder, Tiago found new lease of life. Şahin did not start in the game because Tony Twain did not use his recent favorite 4-5-1. Instead he went back to the old 4-4-2 formation. All right, ladies and gentlemen, here comes the main highlight!”

“Let’s see who the two strikers are in the starting lineup?!”

“Agbonlahor!”

The guest commenter next to him corresponded with his commentary to say, “There’s no issue with it. Agbonlahor is very fast and if Tony Twain wants to fight back, he’s a very good player to deploy.

Eastwood is also injured in training and unable to play in the game. There are only a few strikers to choose from..."

"That's right, but they still have Ibišević. The Super Ibi who scored two goals in a row at Camp Nou and that last goal might have helped the Forest team win the game if it hadn't been for the referee's whistle! But he's not on the starting list! Yes, you heard right. He's not on the starting list and he's not injured. He's fit as a fiddle, in good shape and can overcome Camp Nou. But he is not on the starting list. Why is he not on the starting list? That we don't know. Maybe Tony Twain, who is watching from the stands, will know. I believe that if Nottingham Forest lose the game after and is eliminated, he will definitely be bombarded by the media with this question. Having said all that jabber, who is the player that replaced Ibišević?"

Aaron Mitchell's head shot, and name appeared on the screen.

"That's right, it's this kid, Aaron Mitchell. The young striker, who was born on May 5th, 1990 and about to turn twenty-one, was only transferred from the reserves to the First Team by Twain in January of this season. He had made five appearances on the bench and made one appearance in the starting lineup for the league tournament, with a total of one hundred and seventeen minutes. He has not made his debut in the Champions League and appeared once in the starting lineup for the FA Cup but did not score any goal. His record is clean like a piece of white paper. That's not a good thing for a striker. What's more, before he became a striker, Aaron Mitchell played seven years as a defender in the youth team and one year as a goalkeeper... It wasn't until the age of eighteen that he started playing as a striker at Twain's suggestion and then went unnoticed. We don't have any information on hand about him. Maybe Tony Twain doesn't have, either. He is neither the player with the highest goal score in the youth team nor an effective hitter who consistently scores in the Premier Reserve League. We know nothing other than he is very tall. Why would Tony Twain let such a player be in the starting lineup for such an important game?"

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The commentator's doubts were also the doubts of all media reporters. According to Tony Twain's practice of not releasing the starting lineup until the last minute, they had just gotten the Forest team's squad list. Everyone was "stunned" by the name of the starting striker.

The English reporters took it slightly better. They at least knew who the written name, "Aaron Mitchell" was because he had just made his Premier League debut in the last round, albeit without any contribution. The media in Catalonia, Spain, were baffled. They even had to ask, "Is there such a player in the Nottingham Forest First Team?"

It was not that the English media would nod and go "Oh, all right." when they know who Aaron Mitchell was.

In fact, their response was—

"Is Tony Twain crazy?! What's he doing? Ibišević is not injured and has no problem with his form. Why must he use this young boy?!"

"Lord knows. He's been acting out of character since his sudden outburst at Camp Nou..."

“No, I think it’s been harder to pin him down since he had a heart attack. Before he was like a hot-blooded young man, now he is a sinister and cunning middle-aged man.”

“Is he having a menopause?”

“I think he’s covering his ass and getting ready for the defeat of the game. Once he loses the game, he can put the blame on the boy—I have high hopes for him, but his performance... Everybody saw it!”

“You all seem to know Tony Twain well.” Pierce Brosnan, who had been quiet, finally could not stand it and retorted.

“Ah, look who’s here. The big reporter who knows Tony Twain the best, Pierce Brosnan. Are you saying that you know some inside information?”

Brosnan shook his head awkwardly and said, “I have no idea too...”

A burst of laughter rang out in the crowd. “You have no idea too? Today is full of surprises. I thought Mr. Tony Twain will give you some exclusive information!”

“Anyway, Tony Twain is not the kind of manager who will put the blame on the players after a defeat in the game.” Brosnan might not understand the tactics, but he believed he knew Tony Twain’s character better than these people. “He will only place the blame on himself, and I’ve only even seen a few managers like that.”

The reporters saw that Brosnan was so serious and suddenly felt it was dull—Everyone was joking just now. If you have to talk about it so seriously, then that takes the fun out. You missed the point if you’re being so serious!

The group of people dispersed with the doubt of why Tony Twain had to used Aaron Mitchell and not Ibišević as they got ready to focus on the start of the game.

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The outside media would certainly regard Aaron Mitchell’s performance with preconceived ideas and be determined to find faults. But in the home team’s locker room, Mitchell did not feel any difference in the mood.

It was a Champions League quarterfinal game and he was part of the team, that was all.

Dunn was explaining the tactics and the things for everyone to take note of in the game for the last time.

After Dunn finished speaking, he suddenly turned on the television and DVD player, saying he wanted to show the players a video.

This surprised many people. They had watched Barcelona’s game video countless times, and long understood this opponent clearly. There was no need to watch any video with ten minutes to go before their appearance.

“This is not a video analysis of the opponent.” Dunn explained and then pressed the play button.

Suddenly a clamor which could only exist in a stadium assaulted their senses. It did not seem to come from the tiny square of screen on the TV rack.

“... Offside? Is the ball in an offside position? ... Barcelona scored! A beautiful counterattack! The Nottingham Forest players cannot believe their eyes. The referee invalidated one of their goals with a whistle and almost immediately ruled Barcelona’s goal valid. The situation turned around in an instant! ... Tony Twain is in a heated confrontation with the fourth official on the sidelines. He looks furious. If we had copied NBA and gave every manager a microphone, that would have been fantastic... A red card! Tony Twain was sent off to the stands by the referee! The game suddenly reaches another climax toward the end! The Nottingham Forest players surround the referee but cannot change his mind. Their manager, Tony Twain has been kicked off the pitch again!”

What was shown on the screen was, of course, the mess in the final stages of the game.

After the video finished playing, Dunn said, “Tony wanted me to show you this segment of the video. He hoped that you would not forget how the other side treated us in the last game, and what we were made to suffer. We are slightly inferior in terms of strength in this game, but he wants you to put aside the disparity in strength and teach your opponent a hard lesson. Teach those who want us to lose... a good lesson!”

Although Dunn did his best and tried very hard to show vehemence in his speech, he was not Twain after all. The effect of his speech was diminished. Fortunately, the players were outraged by the video just now. Because that reminded them of the scene in the last moment of the first round. No one would feel comfortable after experiencing such a stinging defeat.

In fact, each of them had a ball of fire in their hearts. A week of closed-door training did not extinguish the fire gradually but made it burn brighter. Because Tony Twain would always bring up the matter this week and tell them they had been insulted in the away game, so they must take revenge on the home ground.

It was now time for this ball of anger to explode!

While the man sitting in the stands had been planning for a week to take revenge today. Even though he was not in the locker room, his influence was still there.

From the transformation of the training ground, a notice to replace the turf in the City Ground stadium, the ongoing war of words with Barcelona, repeatedly connecting them with the UEFA to remind the public of the close relationship between the UEFA and Barcelona, the change in the formation and strikers, using a young player whom Barcelona was completely unfamiliar with, to using the video as a catalyst in the locker room for the last time, he calculated everything. Now everything was ready except for only one tiny crucial detail.

If anyone thought that Nottingham Forest was finished and scattered because Tony Twain was banned, then they were gravely mistaken!

He was no longer as simple as the king of Nottingham Forest for the game. He was the puppet master of Nottingham Forest...

Even if he was not in the technical area, he could still control every detail of the team.

The moment the Barcelona team filed out of the tunnel, they had in fact embarked on the road to hell in Tony Twain's eyes.

Hey, Mr. Guardiola, do you see the sea of red in front of you? That's not our Nottingham Forest fans. It's the red lava that spews out of the eighteen levels of hell! It's erupting and surging in front of your eyes. Do you feel the broiling heat hitting you in the face?

Welcome to hell.