

## Football 104

### Chapter 104 104 New Coach (2)

"Guten Mittag kids I hope you are ready for some good old football," Coach Bauer said capturing my and my teammate's attention. Re-tying my laces I switched out my Nike boots for my Adidas ones. I don't really have a preference for what boots I wear so I just pick and choose in the moment.

"I know the week has started off hectic for you, but we got a game to play, I want you all focused on the game out there ignore all distractions and let's have some fun out there," he continued his speech as he started hyping us up making sure everyone was focused.

He started going over what tactics he wanted us to play, mainly what we have been covering during training. The focus of our offence is centred around Ben whose job is to facilitate our attacking chances. We worked on quite a few transition drills throughout the week mostly centred around speeding up our offence.

As Coach Bauer continued reviewing the tactics, I closed my eyes and focused on my breathing. Taking in all the excitement around me I started picturing what I wanted to do in the game. My thoughts didn't have a chance to fester as coach had just finished his pre-match speech.

"Alright Eagles of the three, one, two, three EAGLES," With our shouts reverberating through the changing room we stormed out onto the field. The stands were surprisingly packed with students from the school and some faculty.

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[Red Oak Eagles]

Ben Walker (GK)

Logan Foster (RB), Henric Eriksson (CB), Ole Wagner (CB), Ryan Garcia (Lb)

Max Taylor (RM), Ben Miller (CAM), Rakim Rex (LM),

Tom Walker (ST),

With the warm Florida sun descending the sky it illuminates the world below. At this moment, a game of football is being graced by the blessing of clear skies and hardly any wind movement. The red oak Eagles and Jacksonville Tiger are lining up on the field as both captains came to the centre of the field for a coin toss.

The Eagles are donned in their black and red home jerseys whilst the Tigers are in their sky-blue away jerseys. Tension continues to build up from both sides as the players were just waiting for the starting whistle. Any moment from now this order that continues to persist will usher into absolute chaos as both teams fight for the ball.

Both teams are excited about this matchup for several reasons. The Eagles look to continue their winning streak whilst the Tigers aim to go back to winning ways after losing their previous match. The Tigers seemed to be set up in a 3-4-1 formation choosing to focus on stabilising the midfield rather than the defence.

The meeting between the captains and referee didn't take long as Ole won the coin choosing to kick off the match. Tom their striker jumped up in excitement at the prospect of being able to attack from the get-go. Not Just him though as the two Eagles wingers took a wider stance seem close to the halfway line. Seeing that the opposing wingers are ready to tear up the flanks their direct marker took a step back in preparation.

[Fweeet]

Hearing the sound of the whistle Tom sent a crips pass backward to the waiting feet of Ben. The midfielder calmly controlled the ball as he scanned the area around him. Seeing the tiger tall number nine quickly closing him down he manoeuvred the ball to his left to lure the striker in.

His trick worked as the opposing number nine lunged in for a tackle. Ben reacted quickly though swinging his right leg to scope up the ball and performing a 360 turn. Completely avoiding contact with the opposing striker Ben charged forward with purpose forcing the opponent's midfielders to approach him.

Seeing that one of the opposing central midfield duos is looking to close him down he came to an abrupt stop before sending a teasing aerial ball up the left flank. with the ball sailing in the air Rakim can be seen running down that flank shoulder to shoulder with the opposing right mid.

He seemed to just be able to keep up with the Eagle's speedy winger by utilising his arm to slow him down. Frustrated at the extra weight Rakim swung his arm out in an effort to create separation managing to slap the boy's arm off his shoulder. Free from the defender's hold Rakim accelerated before jumping into the air to meet the aerial ball.

In the air ready to meet the ball with his head the winger suddenly felt a huge presence at his back. Colliding with someone he lost his balance crashing to the ground as one of the tiger's centre-backs headed the ball to one of his teammates. Not sparing the smaller winger a second look he made his way back to his position ready to continue the game.

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"Well, that has never happened," I mumbled to myself as I got up from the ground stretching my hand a little since my landing was a little rough.

[Well, who gave you the Idea you can compete in aerial duels yet?] She responded with a hint of amusement. Thinking about it she is not wrong since most of the kids are two years older than me giving them the physical advantage. But it wasn't until right now that I've ever been confronted with my physical limitation head-on.

Pushing all the distracting thoughts out of my mind I quickly tracked back looking to provide cover. One of their Central midfielders is currently carrying the ball up the middle as their whole midfield is pushed up. Ben stepped up to meet the boy but before he could get close, he sent the ball to his right winger who was free.

seeing that my man was completely free and driving the ball down the flank I accelerated my sprint back. Lucky for me Rayn's defensive presence made him slow down a little as he performed a couple of stepovers. Ryan was holding his ground though trying his best to guide him to the corner flag.

the winger having seemingly enough with the entanglement came to a sudden stop before accelerating down the wing. Already closing in on the duo I started thinking of the best way to support Ryan when something suddenly stood out from my improved vision. The tiger's lone striker who had been in the box this whole time was making a cut to the edge of the box instead of waiting for the cross.

sensing the danger from this subtle move the gears in my head started to connect the dots and in an instant, I knew where to go. Ole was covering the space at the near post so he wouldn't be able to follow their striker and Henric had to pay attention to their midfielders running in.

Trusting my gut, I sprinted to words the edge of our box ready to provide cover. My guess paid off as just as Ryan managed to catch up with their winger, he stopped again with a changing of direction leaving his marker yet another step behind. Ryan held his arm though using him to steady himself not allowing his marking to get away from him. Seeing that he couldn't continue further he drilled a pass with his weaker foot to the edge of the box where his team's striker had appeared.

The boy's left-footed pass had a slight deviation, but it was negligible as it would still reach its target. Seeing that their striker was ready and waiting for the ball I slid into the path of the pass using my hand to angle my turn on the ground. The ball hit my right foot but due to the momentum of my turn, it remained glued to me as I turned.

Not wasting any time, I got up from the ground just in time to face their striker who came to win the ball back. Standing in front of him with the ball at my right foot we made eye contact for a split second before I dropped my right shoulder towards the box. He was quick to react taking a step in that direction to close me down, but I had no intention of endangering my own box.

My left foot bypassed the ball as I used my right to chop the ball towards the by-line. Not a second was wasted as I kicked off my left foot that just landed to chase after the ball. The striker was let in the dust as I scooped up the ball a couple of inches from the line. Driving forward with gusto I started looking around how best to offload this ball.

As m birds' eye like view expanded to take in the possibilities a risky long ball came to mind as I spotted Max making a run on the other side. However, remembering what happened to me I quickly scratched

that off. I still drew my left leg back since out of my prereferral view I spotted the opposing winger coming up from behind me looking to win the ball back.

Performing a quick fake pass as I came to a stop said winger came lunging in front of me. Behind me, the home crowd exaggeratedly exclaimed as if they were reacting to a clip-on YouTube. I could hear a few boys shout "Dang" with one person who was seemingly just behind me saying "Personally I wouldn't let him do that to me." I slight smile graced my face at hearing some of the exclamations, but I didn't let the ego boost encourage me into taking further heroics.

Since my gas was pretty much empty from the back-and-forth sprint, I had no intention of kindling our attack myself. Not wasting time watching him slide by anymore I manoeuvre the ball to my right foot going by him in one motion.

Seeing a clear passing lane, I sent a short pass to Ben in the middle of the field who found himself unguarded. He had stopped at seeing that I was looking to go long, and his two central markers were busy tracking back in hopes of stopping a quick counter. Slightly surprised at receiving the ball he still calmly brought it under his control dribbling forward in hopes of creating a goal-scoring opportunity.