

## Football 119

### Chapter 119 Pasco Middle School Vs Red Oak Eagles

Watching the ball race towards our goal the atmosphere in the pitch was at a standstill. That didn't last long as the ball quickly descended upon our eighteen-yard box. Mike today's starting Keeper quickly backtracked on after seeing the ball headed his way. Reaching just before his line he leaped into the air stretching out his hand just in time to tip the ball over the bar.

An audible gasp reverberated around the entire field as everyone tried to come to grips with what they had witnessed. Perhaps the only person who didn't seem shocked was the defender who took the shot. From the slightly disappointed look on his face, I could tell that he took the shot with full confidence.

"Let that be a wake-up call for you, stay focussed and take control of this game, especially in the midfield were making it too easy for them." Coach Bauer's anxious voice resounded from in front of the bench jolting awake my teammates on the pitch.

Hearing the coach's voice from the side, Ole the ever-reliable captain, immediately started instructing our teammates. Under his command, they quickly set up for the corner kick with everyone coming back to defend except Jake who was ready for a counterattack. The opposing defender wearing the number five who just took the shot decided to stay back to keep an eye on Jake.

He even signalled his two defensive partners to go up and attack the set piece indicating that he could easily handle his opponent. Jake Obviously enraged by his opponent's attitude towards his strength as a striker sent him a glare that seemed to be saying I'll make you pay. However, the defender wearing the number five didn't seem to take him seriously at all.

Whilst their emotional battle was happening the Pasco team got set for their corner kick. The kick taker methodically raised his arm as if he had rehearsed it or maybe it was something he saw on TV. Where he got it from didn't matter as soon as the ball was launched into the box in a curved arc.

Both team's players rose to the sky fighting for a chance to hit the ball with their heads. The two to come out on top of the pack were Jake Smith and the opposing number six. Jake managed to use his weight as leverage to squeeze him away and clear the ball out of the box.

Lucas was first to get to the ball that dropped at the edge of the box wasting no time to clear the ball up the field. Around the halfway line both Blake and his defensive marker raced towards the left wing where the ball was headed. Blake being the faster of the two managed to reach the ball's landing point first receiving it with his chest.

Taking control of the ball as soon as it landed on the ground, he turned around ready to head for the goal. The tall number four who had been marking him this whole time immediately closed down his running route towards the middle forcing him towards the wing. Having no other choice Blake immediately knocked the ball down the flank and chased after it.

The number four who didn't have to dribble a ball managed to easily keep up with him using his arm to make the striker's life hard. They both duelled for strength and speed all the way to the edge of the box. Blake suddenly came to a stop creating a little separation from the defence. Using this chance, he knocked the ball across the defender in an attempt to pierce into the box with a burst of speed.

He didn't get far though as the moment he knocked the ball away from him for more than a meter the defender squeezed in front of him. Using his strong body, he came to a quick stop forcing the striker to collide with him. Not stopping there, the defender scooped up the ball with his left foot and headed out of the box.

Unlike what you would expect he didn't rush to launch an attack up the field but instead calmly strode forward waiting for his teammates to regroup. Blake seeing this attempted to steal the ball from behind but to no avail as the defender nimbly circumvented him with a three-sixty turn. By this time, his teammates were back so he calmly passed the ball down the left flank.

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"Is it just me or are we struggling out there?" Max suddenly asked from the other side of the bench grabbing our attention.

"Yeah, feels like we haven't even launched a proper attack yet," Ben the midfielder commented with a wry smile as we watched Blake lose the ball yet again. At this point, it feels like he is purposefully losing the ball every time he gets it.

"I don't know what that number four said to him, but he needs to get his head in the game," Tom said looking dissatisfied at the fact that the person playing his position was messing up so badly. I can understand how he is feeling since our attacking momentum seems to break down as soon as the ball reaches Blake.

The aggravating thing is the fact that most of the time he loses the ball is because of simple mistakes. He makes no attempt to link up with his midfielders and chooses to try and fight it out himself. That wouldn't be a problem if he had sufficient personal strength which he clearly forgot to bring with him today.

"Why doesn't he just avoid that number five, he's clearly outmatched," Henric asked looking the most unsatisfied from the group subconsciously tapping his cast. Although his injury isn't bad, he still has to wear a cast for two months for precautionary reasons.

"If that was me, I'd take him on for pace or simply dribble past him, Physical confrontation with that guy is just suicide," I told them ending the moment of silence after Henric's question. That seemed to change the mood from bashing on Blake to discussing ways we would deal with the opponent.

Everyone came up with creative ways they would help the team if they were playing. Tom cemented on the fact he wouldn't get bullied like his counterpart out there and he prefers to go for goals in numbers rather than alone. Max simply stated that he would be in his element after seeing a row of beautiful girls cheering for the opposing team.

It's nice to know he doesn't discriminate between our team and the opponent's team's girls. Ben the midfielder was probably the most logical answer out of all of us. He made it clear that he would opt to slow the game down and take control of the midfield, especially with Damian and Finn out there.

Perhaps the only one who could think of a better way to impact the game is Ben the keeper. The reason for this is that Mike is currently having a man-of-the-match performance. If not for his heroics today, we would already be down by three goals and counting. Surprisingly even the reliable Ole is having a tough time bringing the flow of the match under our control.

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Twentieth minute we managed to launch our first effective attack after Mike performed yet another last-minute save. Jumping up from the ground with the ball in his hands he sprinted to the edge of the box. Immediately launching a quick overhand throw down the right flank.

Lucas who had been lazy to come back on defence was seemingly activated after seeing the ballet head in his direction. Nimble adjusting his posture, he knocked the ball into his running path using his upper thigh. Before the opposing left mid and centre mid could react, he dashed in between them catching up with the ball.

Bringing the ball under his control he picked up his pace dashing towards the opposing. The right centre-back was the closest to him and decided to step up to close down his path to the goal. Lucas didn't even try to take him, and he didn't decide to pass Blake who was being marked by the central defender either.

Instead, he played a sharp pass to his right where Finn had sneaked up to the middle of the field. The sed midfielder calmly took control of the ball egging on one of the defenders to close him down. Two of the defenders who didn't have anyone to mark hesitated on whether to close him down.

That moment of hesitation is all Lucas needed to slip past the Right centre back from the flank. Flustered the defender instantly turned towards Lucas completely ignoring Finn who had the ball. Seeing this Finn slotted a through ball into the penalty box directly into the run of Lucas.

managing to leave his bewildered marker behind him he stored forward to face the keeper one-on-one. Not giving the keeper the chance to close him down any further he let loose a powerful shot towards the far corner. The goalie stood no chance to save the shot for that close a distance and could only watch the ball price into his net.