

Football 124

Chapter 124 First Day At Ace Academy

"You excited about your first official day at the academy tomorrow?" Dad suddenly asked me to cause me to look up from my plate.

"Yeah, I can't wait especially with all the different academies we visited throughout the week," I answered him with a smile of excitement as I started thinking about how much fun I would have. With the School team only training twice a week the extra days of training are appreciated.

Although it will cut into my free time but since I am six years old what can I really do with my free time. Other than doing training on my own or getting into trouble around the house which I can blame on Zeus. There's not really much I do; Liam has his taekwondo practice on most of the days I'm free so I can't really hang out with him.

Now that I have joined The Ace Academy my week has gotten a lot busier. Mondays and Fridays I'm with the school team and Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays the Academy. Thursdays is a school team training session day but after talking with the coach he agreed for me to train at the academy. According to him the systematic training at the academy will do me a lot of good so He doesn't mind if I miss Thursdays as long as I give it my all on Mondays.

All that aside Dad, Emma and I spent the entire week visiting different academies looking for the best fit for me. It got to the point that Emma might have developed a phobia to some of the academies or maybe just a slight dislike. Mom could only make it to a few since she had to deal with her new clients. The Barcelona academy was Dad's personal favourite at first due to the reputation and the philosophy they preach.

However, upon our visit, we quickly realised that I would probably just be another number in their program. After going through a training session with them they were happy to have me join their

program but didn't seem too enthusiastic about me. Guess they are used to having a lot of talents wanting to join them and even though I'm good for my age it's not enough for them to miss my absence.

Dad the avid believer in my talent that he is didn't give up there, even after seeing the neutral reaction of the coach and manager they stuck us with. However, their lack of optimism about my future when offering us a contract was the last straw. We didn't expect an offer that would sweep us off our feet but a fair enough one would have been nice. Their offer was for me to join them on a six-month probation and upon evaluation I could get a year-long extension.

While that might seem normal for a giant like Barcelona the fact that they wanted to add a two-year exclusivity clause is not. Basically, the contract read that I can train with them for six months and if they like me, I get to join but if they don't, I'm not allowed to join another academy for two years. I know what you're thinking I've got the system, and it should be easy for me to impress them.

Well, that excuse wouldn't fly with Dad, then again I didn't tell him about the system. However, I don't think it would matter even if I told him about it as he had no plans of letting me join them after that chat. His exact words were 'In life, there is no need to force something, especially If you have enough self-belief to achieve your goals another way'. If that wasn't crazy enough for you, did I mention they wanted me to leave the school team and just focus on training with them?

Yeah, I love my team too much to give up on them just as we are getting started. Plus, I don't want to make playing football feel like a job just yet. Preferably I would like to always play with as much passion and fun as the first time I got to lace up at the Nike Camp. I know that is unlikely to happen with how hard the next few levels are going to be but I'm going to try my hardest to accomplish it.

Dad must have thought I was sad by the setback and needed a pep talk which for the records I did not. After all, Eva did plenty to keep my spirits up plus, she had a few choice words for the evaluators. However, I do appreciate his care for me and his unwillingness to let other's opinions affect his belief in my talent.

Although I was not sad about their lack of trust in my future prospects the fact that they tried to basically ban me for two years rubbed me the wrong way. Don't get me wrong I do not mind it if they don't think I am good enough to join them. However, the fact that they tried to hinder my path to becoming a better footballer is something I can't accept.

After all, there's no guarantee that just by being good, I'm guaranteed to join their academy. From my past experience and hearsay from passing news the world runs on benefit. Especially for famous football teams like Barcelona where kids would give anything to join them. For example, if someone pulls strings to get in and I end up not making it I'll have nowhere to cry about my misfortune.

~~~

The next day came in no time but unlike my usual quiet Saturday, I had places to be and people to see. Yeah, I've been waiting for a while to be able to say that and actually mean it for once. Anyway, the morning went by quickly as I had to get up pretty early since training starts at 8 a.m. Dad will be dropping me off since Mom has to take Emma to her Dance practice.

So, after a quick shower, a change of clothing and a banana strawberry smoothie later we hit the road. Oh, did I mention the fact that Dad drives a small Porsche Panarea whilst Mom drives a massive white Range Rover? Well, at least one of the two is compensated for something or maybe it's just personal preference. The roads weren't too busy so it didn't take us long to get there which I was happy about.

With a quick goodbye, I entered a new chapter in my life trying to navigate this massive sports complex. Dad offered to go with me but I thought I had it and sent him off to socialise with people his age. For the record, I did not have it and got lost like a total of three times, and at some point, I found myself at the entrance again. Lucky for me a good Samaritan also known as groundsman Joe led me to the changing rooms.

Lucky for me I was twenty minutes early, so I had plenty of time to get lost, but my luck ran out there. After lacing up my boots and taking a second to calm my emotions I realised that I was completely alone in the room. Making my way outside there was still no one in sight so I decided to just keep turning left along the way. I figured that since I kept turning right when I got here the opposite would lead to a different result. After all Albert did say continuing to attempt the same thing and expecting a different result is the definition of insanity.

~~~

[You know you don't necessarily need to join an academy, there is plenty of example of players who made it by just playing for their local club or school,] Eva reminded me again for what is probably the tenth time. It seems the experience at the academy rubbed her the wrong way and she has developed a little animosity against them.

'I know that's what I thought after all the less-than-desired meetings with other academies but other than you Coach Oscar is probably the most enthusiastic about my future prospects in football,' I inwardly responded with a smile just thinking about how he pestered my parents all week.

Although my family loves watching me play their enthusiasm would probably be the same if I played cheese. However, Coach Oscar is different his enthusiasm comes from a place of love for the game itself. Hearing him analyse my gameplay and the little mistakes that I make without even realising it is eye-opening, to say the least.

Seeing him genuinely care about my future as a player even though I might not join the academy is what finally moved me. I knew that I would be in good hands if I learned from this man, especially with how much he cared. After all, I heard someone say, 'a coach that loves the way you play is better than a one that appreciates your strength.'

"Your first day?" a girl with lush black hair in a ponytail that cascaded down her back to around her midsection asked me from my side causing me to focus on her. Dressed in the same black and blue training strip that I was wearing indicated that she was also a player there. That is not all that surprising considering I have seen quite a few girls train here during my visit.

What surprised me though is the fact that she seemed to be of Asian descent as she has the signature facial characteristics. She does however have a slight tan from the Florida weather indicating that she's a local. Not that I care about that though since I've seen a few Asian people in school it's just my first time talking to one.

Don't get me wrong It's not that I actively avoid them or anything we just haven't crossed paths. That may be due to how comfortable I am in my friend group and never really had to go out and make new friends. This must be one of the advantages of having an elder sister or brother. Back on topic for me, it's kind of like meeting a celebrity although I am a little prejudiced in my thinking that she would also like anime.

You can't fault me though since none of my friends are really that into anime like I am. Liam didn't show much interest until we stumbled on Hajime no Ippo and he started wanting to become him in real life. Emma and her friends have shown little interest in it only entertaining it because of me. Heck, they only like Sailor Moon and that is only due to the fact they love the pretty dresses.

So, you can't fault me for wanting the stereotype that all Asian people like anime to be true. Although the voice in my head kept telling me that I knew better and shouldn't hitch my hopes on it. Yes, the voice I am talking about is Eva who by the way for some reason also loves Sailor Moon.

"Yeah, I'm a little nervous but even more excited," I told her after a while of just curiously staring at her, which I hope didn't weird her out too much. Lucky for me she didn't seem to mind or maybe just didn't care in the first place.