

Football 134

Chapter 134 Penalty

[BEEEP]

With the referee's whistle signalling the green light for the Striker to take his shot a short silence hovered over the field. Only the East Rivers number 9 and Ben were the only players in the box with almost everyone else eagerly waiting at the edge of the box. Palpebral tension could be felt as Ben continued to jump up and down his line as the opposing number 9 took three steps back.

The player quickly approached the ball whilst Ben continued to point to the right side of the net. Shaking his head slightly the striker closed in on the ball and swung his right foot with full force. Instinctively or maybe intentionally the strike sent his shot to the left side of the goal. However, to his utter horror, Ben had sprung to that side comfortably catching the ball within his arm.

Before he knew it Ben crashed onto the ground firmly holding the ball in his grasp, but he didn't stay down for long. He jumped up from the ground lightly tossing the ball into the air and powerfully swung his right foot. "You should have shot right," he told the striker who still had a dazed look in front of the penalty spot.

Not minding the striker, he watched his pass head straight towards the halfway line where his cousin Tom was. The Striker didn't have the luxury of comfortably receiving the ball since a defender was closely marking him. Left with no other choice he rose into the air to meet the ball swinging his head to the right.

Crisply connecting with the ball, he sent it flying over the nearby defender who was marking Rakim. The younger boy reacted to his pass surprisingly fast getting in behind the defender, bringing the ball down with a deft touch. Springing into action he took off towards the opposing penalty box leaving his marker behind him.

The only person in his way was a defender who had decided to hang back just in case Tom and Rakim beat his teammates. It seems like his thinking was along the right track, but he didn't anticipate just how fast his opponent would be. Remembering his training he slowly closed the distance with the smaller striker angling his body in a way to force him to the right flank.

Rakim seeing the defender's action did not slow down his pace and instead chose to increase his speed. Swaying his body slightly he used his left foot to push the ball in that direction heading across the defender's stance. Seeing this the defender quickly struck out his foot to poke at the ball. What he didn't expect though was for his opponent to suddenly drag the ball back and poke it through his legs.

Before he could even react to what happened he felt the wind and what seemed like hair brush past his right cheek. Looking back, he watched the striker chase after the ball entering the box at a high speed. Rakim who had just gotten past the last defender had just managed to latch onto the ball when the keeper came sliding towards him.

Sensing the danger and seeing that there is no way of bypassing him from the sides he had to act quick. Quickly swinging his left foot that had just latched onto the ball he gently chipped forward into the air. Doing his best to avoid the keeper's slide he watched sail past his gloves and head for the goal. Only when the ball fell into the net did he notice that he had been tripped by the keeper's boots.

His apparent fall didn't bother him though as he sprung up from the ground animatedly celebrating his goal. It didn't take long for him to be enveloped by his happy teammates who celebrated his goal. The East River players could only watch them in despair wondering how their penalty resulted in them another goal.

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'(sigh) they went crazy those last five minutes,' I subconsciously thought to myself as I made my way to the changing room. The first half ended with a score of 3:0 but with how fiercely they attacked us in those dying minutes gave off the impression they were the ones winning.

[You guys got really lucky that Ben decided to pull through for you,] Eva said pointing out the fact that our defence was lacklustre at best in the last five minutes. It's not all the defender's fault since our midfield was just overrun by the opponents who started playing with a lot of desperation.

I guess we weren't expecting them to dig deep and try their hardest to score a goal since most teams we have played would have given up by now. It also didn't help Max isn't that strong when it comes to his defence.

'I know with the way he was playing I wouldn't take him off if I was coach,' I answered her after remembering how he denied them a goal from close range.

The East Rivers striker in an effort to redeem himself cleverly broke past the marking of Logan and slipped into the box. Ole couldn't get to him on time due to the speed of their transition allowing him to be in a one-on-one with the keeper. Ben the alert keeper he is had already crossed half of his box by the time the striker entered the box.

Slightly startled at Ben's speed and the pressure he brought with him the striker knew he had to act quick. But remembering the fact he didn't convert the penalty, he gritted his teeth and decided to go for power. Swinging his right foot, he blasted the ball with all his power determined to get it past him.

From such a close-range Ben didn't have time to adjust his footing or even think and had to act on instinct. Raising his arm, he managed to connect his elbow with the ball sending it towards Ryan. The defender flustered at suddenly getting the ball decided to just clear it with a powerful kick.

However, his kick didn't go far rebounding off the unsuspecting Finn's chest causing him to fall on his back. This mistake by the Eagles allowed one of the East Rivers midfielders to snatch the loose ball and send a shot towards the mostly empty net. Already celebrating his goal, the midfielder was left stupefied when Ben the Eagles keeper leapt towards the goal like a dolphin.

In a show of heroics, he stretched out his right hand to the ball bringing his fingertips to it. Barley managing to tip the ball against the bar before flailing into his own goal. The danger wasn't over though as the ball fell into the path of the East River striker giving him a chance at redemption. Deciding to play it safe he passed the ball towards the net towards the bottom left corner.

However, to his utter horror, the keeper who fell into his net lunged headfirst towards the ball and used his hand to swat it away. Luckily for him, the ball rolled towards Ole who immediately cleared it up the right flank sending it out for a throw-in.

It wasn't all Ben's heroics that resulted in them not being able to score as Ole performed quite a few defensive stops. He seemed to have gotten serious after seeing Ben save three consecutive shots in a row. With him becoming more active in his movements made it a lot harder for the opponents to easily get into the box.

Quite a few times he could be seen throwing his body in the line of long shots or sliding in to stop or intercept the opponent. He also got a lot more vocal instructing Logan and Ryan on what to watch out for. With both Ole and Ben showing up in those dangerous moments it allowed us to get through the first half with a clean sheet.