

## Football 167

### Chapter 167 Semi Final 2

Max, receiving the pass with precision, darted down the right flank, his eyes scanning the field for an opening. The Bears' defenders shifted nervously, aware of the dangers of conceding an early goal. That is especially true for a crucial cup game like this one.

One of the nearest midfielders latched onto him using his shoulder to apply pressure on the smaller winger. Max remained determined in his charge using his hand to keep his marker at bay. Seeing that he couldn't stop Max by himself he called for their team's right back up ahead to join him so they could encircle him.

Max seeing the right back up ahead who was closing in on him remained composed as he increased his speed. His action forced his marker who had been following to push his legs forward desperately. When he finally caught up with him again Max was just two meters away from the right back and they would collide in the next instance.

Seeing that the moment was right the winger let a slight smirk appear on his face as he made brief eye contact with the defender in front of him. Before he could react, Max performed a Ronaldo chop pushing the ball behind the mid-fielder who had just caught up with him.

A light push is all he needed to get around the marker further putting him off balance. With another burst of speed, cut inside, leaving his marker floundering in his wake. The right-back tried his best to react but his own midfielder who tried his best to come to a stop blocked his way. The crowd of parents, students, and supporters exclaimed with excitement upon witnessing this.

The game had just started, and they were already seeing an exciting display of attacking football. On the sidelines, Coach Simmons of the Tampa Bay Bears paced restlessly, his gaze fixed on the unfolding

drama. He knew the importance of not conceding early, especially in a game of this magnitude. "Tighten up!" he bellowed; his voice being easily heard as the crowd for an under-10s game wasn't that intense.

His words that were meant to settle his players only served to put them under more pressure. This resulted in the closest central defender who had been dropping back with his partner changing his tune. Deciding to charge forward after seeing how easily Max took their right-back and midfielder off the board. Another reason was his coach's shout, if he was being honest, he didn't compute what he said but knew he was dissatisfied.

Max, who was now deep within enemy territory had no plans of letting him get close enough to become trouble. Looking forward he spotted Tom signalling for the ball to the open area the CB had just created by charging forward. With a deft flick of his foot, he sent a curled cross towards the penalty area, aiming for Tom's outstretched foot.

Like a sharp knife, the ball glided along the grass kicking up the specks of water from when the ground men watched the park. The ball easily circumvented the charging defender despite his attempt to intercept it. Max's technique when passing the ball was close to perfect which could be seen by the fact the ball didn't deviate from its intended destination.

Tom was ready for the pass as he used his arms to give his marker a light push and stepped in the direction of the ball. His touch was spot on stopping the spinning ball in its tracks as if he had glue on his boots. But just as he was pushing the ball forward so he could take his shoe something undeliverable happened.

The defender he had just pushed away was on the ground with his leg outstretched and performing a clean slide tackle. Tom tried to power through, but the ball sprung into the air with little power and he fell to the ground. The keeper already on his six-yard line didn't hesitate in rushing out and scooped the ball out of the air.

The Eagles supporters in the crowd let out a groan upon seeing their first chance stopped at the final moment. However, they didn't complain after seeing the young centre backs last-minute heroics. The fact he didn't maliciously foul their player prompted them to join the opposing fans in clapping. Acknowledging the difficulties of being the last man and the pressure act in hopes of saving their team deserves their praise.

"You good bro," the defender asked Tom who was lying next to him on the ground hoping he didn't hurt the boy. "Yeah, I'm good that tackle came out of nowhere, I thought for sure I was through," Tom replied with a hearty smile on his face not at all fazed by missing this opportunity. It's not every day that he meets a defender who can push him to play at his best.

He is the type of player who thrives under pressure and lives for the chance to crush his opponents with his goals. The more he faces opponents who can push him the faster he grows as a player. Unlike his friend Rakim who seems to live on the training field always looking for new things to train. The surprising thing his skills continue to grow at a steady speed despite his almost monotonous training.

However, the version of his friend that he likes the most is whenever they go behind or when someone manages to piss him off. He goes from a coach's dream player to one who is out for blood and looking to create goals at all costs. He would personally dribble past four or more players just to prove something to whoever pissed him off. The reason he likes this version of his friend is because of how seamlessly they manage to link up together.

With just a glance they could read each other intention as Rakim would forgo all sense of tactics. This worked out well for Tom who barely listens to coach Bauer's tactical meetings. His only job as a striker is to score goals so he goes wherever he needs to in order to achieve that.

His innate smell for goals allows him to always be in a favourable position to score goals without interrupting his team's tactical charge.

This and his clinical efficiency are the reason why he is the team's ace striker despite his aversion to complex tactics. Back to the match the keeper now in possession of the ball ignored the two fools who were having a conversation in the middle of a match. He jogged to the edge of his box surveying the pitch for a quick counter.

Coach Simmons, on the sidelines, felt relieved upon seeing his players stop their opponent's attack in their tracks. All though he knows that their opponents have made a name for their attacking prowess he hadn't expected it to be this terrifying. Barely a minute into the match they already faced an attack. What worries him is the fact that their left winger who he has personally scouted has yet to touch the ball. The little bugger hadn't even bothered to run forward throughout his team's attack. It was almost as if he was protesting to his playmaker for not sending the ball his way.

Ignoring the left winger who was lazily walking past him on his flank he watched as his keeper threw that ball up the field. "Regroup! Focus!" he shouted, clapping his hands to spur his players on to seize the momentum. His team is not weak in any sense, but they tend to take quite the time to warm up their motors.

They are what you would call a second-half team using the first half to feel out their opponent and fight back with ferocity in the second half. However, Coach Simmons would rather they put this game to bed early rather than chase to catch up in the second half.