

## Football 169

### Chapter 169 Semi Final (4)

Watching the ball deciding in front of him the Bears right back slowed down after seeing that it would head out for a goal kick. Rakim had other ideas though as he appeared on the left side of the defender stretching his right foot towards the descending ball. The boy in blue didn't expect that his marker hadn't given up despite the fact ball was obviously a lost cause.

Before he even had the chance to compute what his opponent was up to, he watched in disbelief as the ball flew over his head. Rakim didn't plan on trapping the ball but instead chose to flick it backward. The crowd behind the goal watched in disbelief as the winger with the number 22 turned on his axis and calmly plucked the ball out of the air.

With a bright smile, he charged forward along the baseline, not at all afraid of the approaching keeper. As the two got close to each other Rakim didn't make the expected move to shoot. Instead, as the goalkeeper lunged towards him, anticipating a confrontation, the winger suddenly stopped performing a quick drag back.

With a deft touch, he executed it perfectly managing to peg the defender who had been trying his best to catch up with him. As Rakim managed to avoid the confrontation the goalkeeper was left sprawling onto the ground, clutching at the air. Nudging the ball to his right he gained slight breathing room sending a grounded pass across the now-empty goal.

The ball speedily streaked across the six-yard line as Tom battled two defenders to reach the ball first. His superior agility and acceleration worked in his favour as he surpassed his marker and brought his foot to the ball., Tom redirected the ball with a swift, but controlled touch, sending it hurtling towards the back of the net.

The Eagles supporters cheered excitedly after seeing their team quickly respond to their opponent's goal. 1:1 is what the score sheet read much to the Bears player's disappointment. The most disappointed was their keeper who had let himself get baited into lunging prematurely. This directly translated into the opposing striker's ease at scoring.

None of his woes mattered to the celebrating eagles who happily gathered around the striker and the winger. Rakim, the architect of this miraculous play, was held in a headlock by the striker as he pulled him along in a cheery mood.

"You should do that again bro, I'll put it into the back of the net every time, you don't even have to lure the keeper out next time," Tom told Rakim with a boastful smile as they jogged back to their half. Throughout the season he had gotten accustomed to his wingers on the flank sending dangerous crosses making it a part of his strengths.

"You will have to get more active then, those two are sticking to you like Max when he sees a girl," Rakim responded with a light smirk causing most of the guys to burst into laughter Tom included. "Hey, it's not any girls just the beautiful ones," Max proudly defended himself as he sprinted back to his position.

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Both team's players' morale remained high as the deadlock continued to mount. Rakim started receiving more special attention from his opposing players not giving even the slightest bit of breathing room. He would often find himself surrounded by three players at a time once he received the ball.

Max received the same treatment only he managed to use his superior physical prowess to fight with his markers. His scrappy style of dribbling, once he found himself in trouble, helped him escape a few

troublesome situations. However, this also resulted in him often time losing the ball when he dared to charge into two oncoming players.

One of those moments appeared in the 12 minutes of the match as he received a hasty pass from Henric. The pass was meant as a clearance, but the tall Nordic defender remained calm as he managed to send the ball to his teammate. Max who spotted the ball rushed down his wing ready to receive the ball.

One of the bear's markers was hot on his tail ready to steal the ball but the winger remained alert. Using his hand to hold back his marker he flicked the oncoming ball behind him and in fluid motion, he circumvented the confused boy at his other side. With an eager smile, he deftly controls the ball bringing it back to the ground as he charged down his wing.

However, just as he gained traction on his wing the nearest midfielder blocked off his passing lane towards the middle as the left back eagerly charged at him. To make matters worse the LCB confidently stepped forward blocking off the passing lane forward to his striker.

Like a synchronised dance routine, the bears shifted their defensive attention towards the right flank. At this moment Max was feeling the entire defensive pressure of the entire team. However, he didn't panic as he started performing a couple of stepovers as the left back neared him.

Just as the two of them were set to collide he performed a swift Marseille turn into the space between the left back and midfielder. He managed to get through but didn't get further as he found himself tumbling to the ground as a player in blue slid by knocking the ball out of the park.

"Thought you bet huh, well think again," a sturdy boy with short black hair stated with a smile as he looked down at Max who was still on the ground. Looking up Max noticed that it was the same player he had mercilessly flicked the ball by just moments ago.

From his sweaty and laboured breathing, one could easily tell that he had sprinted back ever since Max went past him. The crowd's laughter after the winger made him look goofy must have spurred his fighting spirit. This finally resulted in him being able to redeem himself with his risky but timely slide tackle.

Even though defence isn't one of his strengths he was surprisingly good at slide tackles having a 60% success rate. Luckily for Max, he was on the right side of that ratio not suffering any injuries from the boy's tackle. He alone has managed to injure 7 players throughout the season but to his defence, only 1 was a season-ending injury.

"Why are you talking so much when you needed 3 guys to stop little old me, it must be hard keeping up with me I'll go a little easier on you guys," Max retorted with a teasing smile as he got up from the ground dusting off the bits of grass of his body.

His shit-eating grin and nonchalant demeanour immediately enraged the three opposing players. Max didn't care how much they stared at him as long as he managed to get a rise from them. As long as they focus on proving him wrong, they won't even realise when they make mistakes which he can utilise.

The winger who had taken him down almost lost his cool but thankfully his two other teammates quickly held him back. Max didn't care though as he stuck out his tongue one last time before picking up the ball for a throw-in.