

Football 174

Chapter 174 Semi Final (8)

As the ball soared out of the box, Rakim, who had been lingering just outside the melee, spotted an opportunity. The ball fell like a gift from the skies, descending just a couple of yards to his right at the edge of the penalty area. The pitch fell into a momentary hush as everything seemed to move in slow motion.

Like a pack of hungry wolves seeing a predator threatening their pack, the Bears charged out of the box. However, none of that shook Rakim's composure as he angled his body to the side and swung his right foot in a powerful sidekick. He had no intention of taking control of the ball and playing it safe choosing instead to go for the Hail Mary.

In the next moment, time seemed to remember its purpose as it spun a little faster to make up for the bout of slow motion. With a dull thud, the ball slightly dented on his red Nike cleats and rocketed off his foot. It sliced through the chilly air with a ferocity resembling a cannonball.

The Bears players didn't even have the time to follow the trajectory of the ball. One moment it flew off Rakim's boot and the next it impacted the crossbar. Turning their heads they were hopeful that the woodwork would come to their rescue but what met their eyes was the ball nestled into the back of the net.

A moment of silence hung in the air as the crowd tried to make sense of what they had just witnessed. They watch the Winger execute a superb volley and the opposing goalkeeper scrambling back from his previous heroic save and throwing himself at the incoming bullet of a shot. He came up short through as the velocity on the shot was simply too much for him even as he stretched his fingers to the limit.

Then they saw the ball crash against the crossbar with a resounding clang, the impact sending vibrations throughout the park. Not even being able to gasp at what they thought was a near miss the suspense

was short-lived. The ball, as though blessed by fate itself, bounced downwards, just over the line and nestled itself into the back of the net.

The referee, positioned perfectly at the side of the goal, didn't hesitate. His whistle pierced the air, and he pointed emphatically towards the centre circle, signalling the goal. Rakim, having just unleashed what could only be described as a spectacular volley, Sprinted to the sidelines to celebrate.

He directly took off his shirt swinging it over his head in jubilation as he performed a sui celebration. Not a second later he was mobbed by his teammates as they piled on him in celebration. The crowd who had been stunned by the happenings leading up to the goal finally snapped out cheering in appreciation for the superb goal.

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The celebrations didn't take too long as there were still more than 15 minutes of football still to be played. However, before the match could resume the referee showed Rakim a yellow card for taking off his shirt to which he was met with a wide grin from the young winger. He was just happy at scoring such a spectacular goal.

Ignoring the winger's antics the official was taken aback by the boy's ripped upper body. With a lean six-pack and dynamic shoulder and arm muscles his physique resembled a mix between a swimmer and a martial artist. However, it wasn't the muscles that made him take a second glance it was the small but numerous scars that were slowly fading.

He wouldn't have noticed them if it wasn't for a prominent one running along his back that became eye-catching due to his sweat. Choosing not to ask about it as he had no intentions of sticking his nose in something potentially troublesome he signalled for the match to resume.

The Eagles now led 2:4, a two-goal cushion that felt like a mountain to the Bears with only more than 15 official minutes of game time left on the clock. The Bears, deflated by the stunning goal, struggled to regroup. Their attempts to push forward were half-hearted, the energy sapped from their legs by both the scoreline and the impregnable wall the eagles mounted.

Seeing his players drop in spirit coach Simmons knew he had to do something if he wanted any hopes of winning this match. The 47th minute presented the perfect opportunity after the ball rolled out for a throw-in. He quickly made a tactical adjustment, bringing on two fresh midfielders in a bid to inject some creativity and pace into their play.

He also changes his team's formation from a 4121 to a more attacking-oriented 2132. he hoped to forcibly take control of the midfield and try to mount worthwhile attacks whilst forcing the opposing wingers back to their own box. This strategy would mitigate the risk of a sudden counterattack no matter how fast those wingers may be.

After the changes the Bears initiated a series of quick passes, trying to unsettle the Eagles' formation. Shifting their focus to the wings, they attempted to stretch the Eagles' compact defence and create openings. Their left winger, a nimble player with quick feet, who had just come on began to make incisive runs, cutting back and forth along the sideline.

This forced Max to carefully watch him since his team's central defenders were bogged down by the two roaming strikers. The same went for Rakim on the other wing as he faced a similar challenge. From the looks of it, the Bears wanted to use the winger's defensive weakness to find a breakthrough point.

In the 49th minute, he managed to elude Max through a clever give-and-go with his midfield teammate. Dribbling a couple of steps forward he whipped a dangerous cross into the penalty area. The ball curved towards the far post, where their newly substituted striker timed his run perfectly. However, just as he prepared to head the ball, Ole stepped in with a crucial interception, nodding the ball away to safety.

This feat earned him a thank you from his team as they appreciated his defensive prowess that kept the Eagles' lead intact. Riding the wave of this defensive stand, the Eagles launched a counterattack. Lucas, eager to orchestrate another attack confidently dribbled the ball forward after receiving it at the edge of the box.

He didn't get far though as he quickly found himself pinned down from both sides by two players. In a panic, he tried to turn around but that proved a mistake the very next second. One of the more alert players anticipated his move and stepped in between him and the ball directly snatching it away.

Using his body to bounce off Lucas he charged forward with gusto showing renewed aggression as he neared the edge of the box. The Bears' midfielder, now in possession, drove forward with intensity, his eyes scanning for options. He spotted one of their strikers peeling away from the central defenders and threaded a sharp pass through the narrow space between the Eagles' players.

The striker received the ball in stride and without hesitation, unleashed a fierce shot towards the goal. Ben between the sticks had been closely following the happenings outside of his box was ready and sprung into action, diving to his right. The ball skimmed off his fingertips, altering its trajectory just enough to send it crashing against the post. The sound of the ball hitting the metal echoed through the park as the eagles narrowly escaped.

Henric was the closest player to the deflected ball and wasted no time clearing the ball. With a mighty kick, he sent it flying up the field earning his team a little breathing room. One of the Bears Defenders calmly took control of the ball just past the halfway line. With no opposition player coming to bother him he had all the time in the world to plot his next move.

However with two goals behind he rushed to pass the ball to his midfielders for them to initiate another attack. Reinvigorated by their close chance, their midfield mounted another attack. This time, they concentrated their efforts on exploiting the Eagles' left flank, where Rakim was tailing their right winger.

Having perceived the flanks as the eagle's weakness they started piling more pressure on them. In the 53rd minute, another quick exchange near the midfield saw the Bears' playmaker slip a precise through ball to the right winger, who had cut inside. Slipping past the mark of Rakim he deftly picked up the ball before Jake could get to it.

A short pass to his striker who was holding up Ole and he slipped into the box. Evading a sliding challenge from Finn, he drove the towards goal at an angle from the right side. Not a second later he found himself in possession of the ball one on with the keeper charging at him. Knowing he didn't have the time to deliberate he let loose a powerful shot letting his muscle memory do the aiming.

Ben who had come out sliding on his knees threw himself in the air jumping after the ball that sailed past his right shoulder. Through sheer will and athleticism, he managed to bring a glove to the ball deflecting it away from the goal. The play wasn't over though as the ball flew across his goal three figures rose into the air.

The two Bears strikers came face to face with Henric in an ariel dule their bodies clashing with each other. Luck wasn't on the young Viking's side as he lost the dual crashing with one of the strikers as the other headed the ball into the empty net 3:4.

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