

Football 216

Chapter 216 216 Goodbyes

"So how was the kid, Smith?" Rodgers asked, glancing up at the elderly doctor who had just entered his office with a report. He had worked with Dr. Smith for many years and trusted his evaluations implicitly.

Dr. Smith sat down, adjusting his glasses as he opened the report. "Rakim performed exceptionally well, Brendan. He completed the agility drills with increasing efficiency, showing no signs of his previous injury. His endurance and strength are impressive, considering his recent recovery."

Rodgers leaned back, a thoughtful expression on his face. "But is he ready for the senior team? We can't afford to carry dead weight." He asked not looking forward to babysitting a pampered rich kid getting into the team by pulling strings. However, as he considered the fact that he would soon be leaving the club and this wouldn't be his problem anymore he didn't mind as much.

Smith smiled slightly. "Not sure how much of it will translate on the pitch but he is an exemplary athlete. His physical condition is remarkable. The psychological aspect will be the real test. He needs to prove he can handle the pressure." He explained as he went on to show him the data of the test they had done on the kid. If not for the fact the shooting was all over the news and he had seen the healed scar he himself wouldn't believe it.

Rodgers nodded slowly. "Alright. I'll keep an eye on him during training. Matter of fact let him train with the reserves after the first session back." He said after seemingly having figured out what to do with the problem at hand.

"But the first session back is always targeted at fitness," Dr Smith stated wanting to get his friend to reconsider giving the boy a chance. He had been fighting a war of intrigue with the board and the boy would become collateral damage in the fight at this rate. It would be a shame too as from what he had seen of the kid he is very talented with immense potential despite recent setbacks.

"I've made my decision," He stated with a nonchalant tone no longer wanting to discuss this matter topic. To further emphasise his point he threw Rakim's file into one of his cabinets and left it there to be forgotten. The board could force him to sing the kid, but they couldn't force him to play him.

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[16/01/2019, Rakim's Apartment, Glasgow]

Rakim stood by the door, carrying two suitcases out to the car, his mother, Lisa, was preparing to leave for the States. 3 Days after his medical his lone transfers were quickly processed by both Ace and the Celtic club. News of his move created slight waves in the football circles with only a few news broadcasters covering it as his fame was slowly fading.

Rakim chose to ignore the media who continued to paint him as a victim and speculated that he could break at any moment. The only people he interacted with were his 900k-odd fans who had been following his journey. Surprisingly 60% of his fans were girls making his interactions with them rather colourful, (Some women are crazy).

Things continued to move quickly on his end as his mother entered him into a local high school that would allow him to proceed with his education. It would mostly be Online classes and in-person exams and tests when required.

There was a palpable sense of emotion in the air, a mix of pride and sadness. She had been by his side ever since the shooting not leaving him for more than two days. Now however she was letting him live by himself in this unfamiliar city allowing him a measure of freedom.

"You sure you'll be alright here on your own?" Lisa asked, her voice soft yet firm. She was against the idea of letting her 15 soon-to-be 16-year-old son live by himself but her husband managed to convince her. Rakim needed to realise what kind of an athlete he wanted to be on his own accord without her providing him structure.

A smaller club like Celtic would give him the perfect opportunity for this thus she was finally convinced of this idea by her husband. Rakim nodded. "Yeah, Mom I will be fine" He replied to her as he loaded the last of her case in the boot. She had only been here for less than a week yet she somehow managed to gain more stuff.

Lisa pulled him into a tight hug. "I'm proud of you, Rakim I believe you will do great things just keep your head up and make sure to call me when you're in trouble," She told him after releasing him and placing a hand on his cheek. She had seen his growth both as an athlete and more importantly as a person and couldn't be more proud.

How he handled the setback of the shooting left her especially proud. He threw himself back into recovery not lingering on what he had lost but instead focusing on achieving his goals. He did so without a hint of complaining despite having every right to do so in his condition.

At first, she was worried about his behaviour being unhealthy until she realised she was indeed angry. One day when cleaning his room she found a small book with a list of people and companies that had disappointed him throughout the ordeal. He seemed to be channelling his anger and frustration by them in a positive direction something she wasn't sure she could do at his age.

He hugged her again, feeling the familiar warmth of her support holding the woman who had taken it upon herself to raise him. "Thanks, Mom. I won't let you down." He mumbled in her ear letting her know just how high his determination was.

"Don't worry about rent and utilities your dad and I are covering it, just make sure you eat healthy and stay safe. Although Scotland's crime rate is significantly less than the states it doesn't hurt to be careful. Before I forget Liam's Mom Joan will check in on you now and then so keep the place clean and no girls sleeping in your room." Listening to his mother ranting off a few different things for him to be careful of brought a smile to Rakim's lips.

It felt like he was leaving for college or something similar causing his eyes to water slightly. In a sense, he was officially entering the next step of his life and would be considered a young adult from now on. He simply smiled at her letting her get all her words out before she stepped into the car.

After a lingering goodbye, Lisa left, leaving Rakim standing alone in the quiet apartment. He took a deep breath, steeling himself for the challenges ahead. Tomorrow would be his first training session with the senior team. He needed to make a strong impression.

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[8am, Mon 15th /01/19, Lennoxtown Training Centre, Glasgow]

The next morning, Rakim arrived at the training centre early, his nerves a mix of excitement and anxiety. Since he couldn't drive he chartered a taxi until he managed to complete his license. He had spent the night going over his routine, mentally preparing himself for the session ready to prove himself to his new team.

Celtic would have a match in two days signalling the start of the second half of the Scottish premiership. Thus he wanted to present his best self hoping to get some playing time during the match. The facilities

were barely open at this early hour with only a few staff members there. Greeting everyone politely he headed for the changing rooms ready to begin his day.

Morning training wouldn't begin till 10:30 so he wasn't surprised to find the lockerroom deserted. "I thought for sure I'd be first in," He heard a slightly immature voice coming from the entrance startling him slightly and causing him to drop his boots.