

## Football 219

### Chapter 219 1st Training (3)

Rakim took his place on the left wing, mirroring Scott Sinclair on the opposite team. The game started, and Rakim quickly found himself immersed in the action. However, he wasn't receiving too many passes as his team seemed to ostracise him. The only occasional passes he received were from Karamoko who would pass him the ball when he was the best option.

Determined to prove himself, Rakim made the most of every touch he got but made sure not to overdo it. Many times his coaches at Ace and other camps had told him that the worst thing a new player can do is trying too hard. Thus he would receive the ball deftly with his feet before nimbly manoeuvring past the nearest marker and finding one of his teammates.

He would also make runs in open areas presenting a good passing option regardless of whether he received the ball or not. Coaches weren't fools and if a player lost the ball despite an easy passing option being available it would reflect poorly on them. Thus the young winger didn't mind being ignored by some of his teammates especially when they proceeded to lose the ball.

In this 7 V 7 drill consisting of a midfield line and forward line maintaining fluidity quickly became important. Thus the midfielder tried to maintain poses as much as possible before launching attacks. After several minutes, an opportunity finally presented itself. Rakim, seeing a gap in the defence, sprinted down the left flank. Karamoko, recognizing the chance, sent a perfectly weighted through ball into his path.

Rakim controlled it with ease, his mind already calculating the next move. Catching something out of the corner of his eye he suddenly dragged the ball back side-stepping a slide tackle. Not wasting another moment he pushed the ball forward speeding down the wing.

Dribbling the ball down the wing Rakim felt a sense of excitement fall over him as he took in his surroundings. The ball was seemingly glued to his feet without him having to actively pay attention to it. Snapping out of the reverie he was feeling he scanned the pitch, he had a few options: he could try to cut inside, send a cross into the box, or take a shot himself. Assessing the positioning of his teammates and the defenders, he decided to go for a quick cross.

With a sudden shift of momentum, he moved the ball in front of his left foot before the opposing defender could close him down. Without hesitation, he sent a whipped cross into the box. The ball soared past the nearby defenders before falling around the penalty spot.

Griffiths his team's striker received the ball with his back turned to the goal as he held a defender back. With this being a positional exercise without a keeper the coaches used smaller goals. Unfortunately under the pressure of his marker, he fumbled the shot, sending it wide of the goal. Letting out a frustrated sigh he quickly shook it off, before heading back into position.

Coach Andrews blew his whistle, halting the play. "Good run, Rakim! That's what I want to see. Keep those crosses coming, and Griffiths you gotta do better with those opportunities!" he shouted, his eyes scanning the players.

Rakim nodded, appreciating the coach's encouragement. He jogged back to his position, ready to perform again. Due to his successful run, his teammates started to pass to him more frequently, realizing the value he could bring to their plays. They were all professionals and wouldn't let pleasing one of their teammates stop them from performing well.

After a couple of back-and-forths of both teams, They initiated another promising attack. Rakim received a pass from Scott Brown and deftly manoeuvred past a defender with a quick step-over. He drove towards the box, faking a shot to send another defender off balance before slipping a through ball to the striker, who blasted it into the net.

Applauding Griffiths for converting this chance they shared a curt nod before heading back into position. Providing a striker assist is the easier way to gain their favour and Rakim was experiencing that. He continued to send favourable passes to his teammates using his superior vision to pick out the best passing option.

Often times he would dance by his marker almost treating them like cones and initiating more attacks. Rakim's effort bore fruit as his performance began to shift the dynamics on the field. As his teammates started recognizing his skill, their initial hesitation faded. Passes flowed more smoothly to him, and he felt the growing cohesion within the team.

It wasn't long before Coach Andrews noticed this nodding to himself as one team started to easily decimate the other. Once they initiated an attack on the left flank it didn't take them long to arrive in the opposing box. It wasn't that their opponents didn't put in much effort on defence either but Rakim seemed to just glide past them.

Safe to say that Rakim made a good impression on one of his new coaches he started paying more attention towards them. "Great teamwork, everyone! Bibs I need to see more from you," Coach Andrews' voice carried across the field, blending with the sounds of cleats on grass and the rhythmic thud of the ball being passed.

His words had an immediate effect, prompting the opposing players to actively mark Rakim. By tightening the pressure on him they made it harder for him to connect with his teammates. They managed to stop him for a while until Rakim suddenly changed his approach. Instead of making random runs, he started floating between opposing players.

This had an immediate effect as his marker didn't know whether to pass him on or stick with him. Using this to his advantage the left wing-back charged and passed them heading down the left wing. Tierney's speed with the ball was phenomenal as he quickly initiated an attack. Gaining some space from the defender in front of him he sent a grounded cross into the box.

The low cross zipped into the box, cutting through the defenders like a knife. However, before it could reach the legs of Griffiths one of the opposing defenders intercepted the ball with an outstretched foot. His timely interception sent the ball rolling out of the box away from danger. However just as he was about to breathe a sigh of relief he saw the neon boots Raking swing towards the ball.

With a soft thud, the ball was lifted above knee height rounding the downed defender and slotted into the back of the net. As the ball nestled into the back of the net, a cheer erupted from Rakim's team. They were having fun scoring goals and showing off their skill and thus wormed up to their new young addition.

After a short break, Coach Andrews called them back. "Alright, let's switch it up. We're going to do some tactical drills now. Focus on maintaining formation and quick transitions."

The players split into their teams again this time using the Elvenerside pitch, with Rakim staying on the left wing. The drill had everyone involved as the coaches worked on simulating a real match as much as possible. The tactical drills were more structured, requiring precise positioning and fast, accurate passing. Rakim enjoyed the challenge, using his vision and agility to navigate the play.

During one drill, he found himself in possession of the ball near the halfway line. He scanned the field, noticing an overlapping run from Tierney on the left. Timing it perfectly he performed a Ronaldo chop sending a pass through the legs of James Forest into the path of Tierney. Tierney sprinted onto it speeding down the flank and delivered a high cross into the box.