

Football 242

Chapter 242 Vs Valencia (5)

[Time stamps in games]

"Tough Crowd," Lee Kang-in who had come in for Wass told him with a wry smile as he looked at the angry away crowd. The 18-year-old South Korean had never seen a team's fans boo their own player no matter how bad he was. Most would just stay silent but these crazy Celtic fans were booing a 15-year-old Kid making his debut.

"Naw I had a talent show when I was 10 with a tougher crowd, doing the robot after forgetting my part in Hamlet didn't go over well," I responded remembering that embarrassing experience of my life.

To be fair it wasn't my fault with all the football training and school studies It was honestly the school's fault for making me take part in the class play. So when I found myself under the spotlight I didn't bolt choosing instead to break off into an impromptu robot.

Lee Kang-in chuckled, shaking his head. "Guess performing under pressure is something you're used to then," he said, his eyes scanning the restless crowd. The boos had grown louder, a cacophony of frustration directed at the two young players who had come on the field. Kang-in had been in high-pressure situations before, but this was something else entirely.

I nodded, remembering that day all too well. "Yeah, but I never thought that my Professional debut would be like this," I joked, trying to lighten the mood. Kang-in smiled, but his eyes strayed to Johnston, who was having a harder time regaining his composure amidst the hostility.

"You think he'll be alright?" Kang-in asked with genuine concern in his voice. I shrugged. "Hard to say. This could either make him or break him, you know? Some players thrive under this kind of pressure, others crumble."

Kang-in nodded thoughtfully. "It's tough being a young player. You're still figuring yourself out, both as a person and a player, and then you get thrown into the deep end like this."

"Yeah, and with fans like these who need's enemies..." I gestured towards the crowd, their voices a relentless wave of boos and jeers. "Wait aren't you also 20, so he's got no excuse if even I am calm" I questioned after remembering hearing the coaches talk about him in one of the pre-match tactics.

"hahaha... Yeah, I sometimes forget," He chuckled with a sheepish smile as he scratched the back of his head sounding genuinely surprised at the realisation.

"Anyways nice to meet you I'm Rakim, the kid who will make your next 10 minutes a nightmare," I responded with a smile as the official was finally ready to restart the match. The stunned look on his face brought a smile to my face, especially as he struggled to compute my words. He seemed to be deciding whether to be mad at me but settled with accepting the challenge instead.

~~~

[78] The match resumed with a Valencia throw-in along their left flank. Lato took his time to scan the field before launching the ball towards Guedes, who was closely marked by Ajer. Guedes managed to control the ball deftly, shielding it from the defender's challenge and laying it back to Parejo. The Valencia captain, ever composed, switched the play to the right side where Kang-in was making an overlapping run.

Kang-in took the ball in stride, his first touch impeccable as he advanced down the right wing. His eyes scanned the field quickly, assessing his options. Rakim tracked back from his blindspot and with a perfectly timed tackle, he nimbly stole the ball from the latter's feet just as he was looking for an option.

The Celtic fans, who had been relentless in their jeering, erupted into cheers but none of that mattered to the winger. Turning around he nimbly dodged the oncoming Soler by shifting the ball between his legs. Navigating past traffic he came to a sudden stop just as he cut back out to the wing, just in time to avoid the feet of Kang-in who tracked back.

Kang-in was caught off guard by Rakim's quick movements, but he didn't give up the chase. The South Korean midfielder, known for his agility didn't want to let the young Celtic winger get the better of him. He lunged forward, attempting to recover the ball, but Rakim deftly shielded it with his body, spinning away from him before accelerating down the wing.

Quickly reaching the halfway line he sent a swift pass forward to the middle where Johnston was lurking. The striker received the ball under much pressure from Diakhaby barely managing to hold onto the ball. Still, he managed to battle through the contest of strength as he looked up trying to find one of his teammates.

Yet he was left disappointed as the rest of his teammates had gotten too used to staying defensive. Thus they were too late to shift into gear once the two fresh players launched an attack. Feeling overwhelmed he was forced to return the ball to the speeding Rakim, who dashed up the wing.

Turning that way he sent a through ball into the final third using the space that the out-of-position Kang-in left. Using the midfielder as a winger had backfired as he had charged forward too much granting Rakim this chance. Utilising the space in front of him he dribbled the ball forwards quickly eating up yards.

His acceleration with the ball was superb quickly creating a gap to the nearby players Chasing after him. Valencia's high back line now worked against them as the winger had nothing but green grass in front of him. Cutting a diagonal line as he charged forward the winger was almost at the box just daring the Neto to make a move.

Rakim's pace and control were a sight to behold as he surged towards the Valencia goal. The Celtic fans, who had been muted for much of the game, now rose to their feet, sensing a moment of magic. Rakim's eyes were focused, and he had only one thought in mind to make something happen.

As he closed in on the penalty area, he glanced up briefly, taking stock of his options. He glanced up, assessing Neto's position and the approaching defenders. His mind raced with possibilities, but he stayed calm, his feet deftly manoeuvring the ball. Neto began to advance, trying to narrow the angle, but Rakim kept his composure.

Set to clash with each other around the penalty spot Rakim swung his left foot seemingly ready to chip the keeper. Neto seeing this tensed his body ready to jump up from his low stance, but the expected chip never came. Instead, he watched with disbelief as the winger poked the ball through his open legs.

With how tense he was and the fact he was anticipating springing up, he wasn't able to react in time. By the time he closed his legs, it was too late as the winger rounded him before slotting the ball into the empty net. The stadium erupted in an explosion of noise, the previously anxious Celtic fans now roaring in delight.

Rakim with a broad smile picked up the ball from the net before rushing back to his side. He didn't forget to put his hand to his ear letting the previously booing fans that he hadn't forgiven them. "Well, there you have the young Lyon Roars in his debut as he creates his team's first goal in both legs of the Europa League," Callum McDonaldRoared after calming down from the high he felt when the winger was racing towards goal.

The Previously calm mood of the stadium had now turned electric after just 1 minute of the winger coming onto the field. The Valencia Players who had been dominating most of the second half now had stunned looks on their face. None of this mattered to Rakim though as he placed the ball down on the centre spot. Valencia 1:1 Celtic.