

## Football 252

### Chapter 252 Vs HEARTS (5)

[61] As the match resumed, Hearts looked determined to bounce back quickly from their setback. The equalizer had given them a surge of confidence, but Rakim's goal seemed to have taken the wind out of their sails momentarily. Still, they pressed forward with renewed energy, keen on restoring parity once again.

[64] Hearts were awarded a free kick just outside the Celtic penalty area after a clumsy challenge by Bitton on Djoum. Bozanic, brimming with confidence from his earlier penalty, stood over the ball. The tension was palpable as the referee's whistle blew. Vanecek curled the ball around the wall, aiming for the top corner, but Bain was equal to the task, diving to his right and tipping the ball over the bar.

[67] Celtic began to regain control of the match, with Rakim at the heart of their attacking play. Every time he touched the ball, there was a buzz of anticipation in the crowd. His confidence was growing with each passing minute, and it was clear that the Hearts defenders were wary of him.

[70] Rakim received the ball near the halfway line, quickly turning away from his marker with a sharp pivot. He darted down the wing, his speed and close control making it difficult for the Hearts players to dispossess him. As he approached the edge of the box, he cut inside, wrong-footing Souttar once again. Instead of going for goal, he played a clever reverse pass into the path of Edouard, who was making a late run into the box.

Edouard took the shot first time, but Zlamal was alert, diving low to his left to parry the ball away. The rebound fell to Forrest, but his follow-up was blocked by a desperate sliding tackle from Berra. Burke tried to reach the ball first but was preempted by Berra who put his foot through the ball sending flying out for a throw-in.

"What an assist that would have been!" Callum shouted, barely able to contain his excitement. "The young man is trying to make things happen out there."

"I agree That pass was inch-perfect. Edouard was unlucky not to score." Roy said, clearly impressed.

[75] With time ticking away, Hearts began to push more men forward, desperate to find an equalizer. They won a series of corners, each one more threatening than the last. Celtic's defence was being tested, and Bain had to be at his best to keep out a powerful header from Ikeazu that seemed destined for the back of the net.

[78] Celtic decided to make a change, with manager Neil Lennon opting to bring on fresh legs to help secure the lead. Mikael Lustig replaced Jeremy Toljan who had accumulated a yellow and was being consistently beaten on his wing due to fatigue and hesitations.

[81] Hearts were throwing everything they had at Celtic, but the visitors were holding firm. A long ball from the back found Clare, who brought it down beautifully on his chest before laying it off to Djoum. Djoum drove forward, skipping past a couple of challenges before being brought down just outside the box by Bitton.

The referee awarded another free kick to Hearts in a dangerous position. This time, it was Clare who took it, his effort curling just over the crossbar, much to the relief of the Celtic supporters.

[83] With the match entering its final stages, Celtic looked to hit Hearts on the counter-attack. Rakim, still full of energy, led the charge. He picked up the ball in his own half and drove forward at pace, leaving two Hearts players in his wake through the use of a Zidane roulette.

Dodging a slide tackle by flicking the ball over the player he continued his charge down the wing. Like a cat on the hunt, his movements were nimble and direct always looking to move forward. Sending a pass inward towards Edouard he overlapped him as he cut inward only to find the ball in front of him again.

It seemed Like the striker had read his mind playing the ball perfectly into his stride. Not hesitating shot the ball with power the moment he spotted a shooting lane between Soutter and Berra. The shot was a similar curler to his first goal attempt but from much further out.

The ball swished through the air with a lot of topspin as it homed in on the top right corner. Zlamal couldn't even react in time as the ball impacted the inside of the net as an avalanche of jubilation filled the stadium. Rakim was once again racing off to the sidelines breaking off into his dance that the Celtic fans had now come to love, as it meant a goal for them.

[84] "Rakim Rex does it again!" Callum McDonald shouted, his voice nearly drowned out by the deafening roar of the Celtic fans. "What a strike! That young man is simply unstoppable today!"

"You've got to admire the audacity," Roy Townsley added, his tone filled with admiration. "He had options, but he backed himself and hit it from a distance. And what a finish—Zlamal didn't stand a chance."

"RAKIM The Dream! RAKIM, RAKIM, RAKIM, Oh he's as fast as lightning," Whilst the two commentators were busy interacting with each other as they watched the replay, the Celtic fans loud singing suddenly caught them by surprise.

"Look at that he's already got his own song, Quit a fitting one if I might say so myself," Roy said with a hint of bemusement as he subconsciously started to hum along with the words.

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[86] As the game restarted, Hearts looked visibly deflated. The young Celtic winger had not only put them behind once more but had also crushed their spirit with his spectacular second goal. They continued to push forward, but their attacks now lacked the sharpness and urgency from earlier in the match. Passes were misplaced, and runs mistimed, as the frustration began to set in.

Celtic, on the other hand, were brimming with confidence. With a two-goal cushion and the clock ticking down, they were content to sit back and soak up the pressure, launching swift counter-attacks whenever the opportunity arose. Rakim, remained full of swagger as he continued to dip in his bag of tricks by being a thorn in Hearts' side, tracking back to help in defence before springing forward at every chance.

[88] Hearts were awarded a corner that could possibly be their last in the game. For some reason, which neither commentator understood Zlamal, the Hearts goalkeeper, was urged forward by his teammates. It seemed they were desperate to salvage something from the match. Thus all 10 men wearing the purple hearts kit were crowded into the Celtic penalty box.

Clare swung the ball in aiming for the area around the penalty spot and paid off as Haring rose the highest in the mix of bodies. However, before his head could connect with the ball a white glove appeared punching the ball away with all its might. The ball was sent flying out of the box in a straight line looking to drop in the area just past the D.

Lee was standing just a few yards behind acting as a last man just in case of such a situation. However just as he was waiting for the ball to decent so he could trap it a figure came flying in. All he saw was a long outstretched leg and dreads with the ends dyed blue fluttering in the air.

He felt frozen in that moment as Rakim deftly locked the ball past him and continued to chase it. The moment passed quickly though as his instincts kicked back in and he turned on his axis running shoulder to shoulder with Rakim. He tried to push him with his arm as he approached the ball but the winger simply used the momentum to knock the ball forward again.

the two of them raced up the field followed by a crowd of players resembling an American football match without pads. Rakim dug deep turning on the jets as he used his arm to hold off Lee. Catching up to the ball at the halfway line he lightly bumped his shoulder before cutting across him.

That helped him get away for a second before feeling a strong tug on his shirt. He chose to ignore it though as his legs carried him forward digging deep into the grass. A crisp rip resounded as the side of his shirt ripped off allowing him to gain the bit of freedom he needed.

Scanning around him himself with a quick head swivel he instantly made out that if he didn't get rid of the ball he would be surrounded in the next moment. Due to expending a lot of energy for his burst of speed getting to the rebound and battling Lee, he didn't have enough in the tank to outrun the one chasing. No longer hesitating, he swung his left foot, which was more convenient, and sent the ball rocketing towards the empty net.