

Football 253

Chapter 253 Winning Isn't for Everyone

[89] He fell over in the next moment as a figure bumped into him but he didn't mind as all his attention was focused on the ball. It was soaring in the air heading in a straight line towards the goal capturing everyone's attention. Both the Celtic fans and the Hearts supporters held their breath in unison.

The ball travelling in the air flew with such force and precision that it seemed destined for the back of the net. Zlamal, having been drawn into the mix during the corner, was helplessly watching as the ball flew towards the empty net. After what seemed like years the ball started descending towards the goal but a loud clang immediately broke everyone's trance.

A loud groan and a collective gasp filled the stadium as the ball struck the crossbar with a resounding clang, bouncing out of play. Hearts supporters, who had been holding their breath, let out a collective sigh of relief, while Celtic fans groaned in disappointment. Rakim who had been on the verge of celebrating his hat-trick, lay on the ground, momentarily stunned by the misfortune.

He could only get up in disbelief shaking his head with a sense of exasperation at missing his chance at scoring his first career hat trick. The corner kick had been perfect, his timing impeccable, but fate had conspired against him at the last moment. He glanced over at the goal, where the ball now lay harmlessly out of play, and shook his head in disbelief.

The crowd's reaction was a stark contrast: Celtic fans were still murmuring in discontent, while the Hearts supporters were clapping and cheering, revelling in their team's narrow escape. The tension in the stadium had shifted from hopeful anticipation to palpable relief. Rakim's teammates rushed over to console him, patting his back and offering encouraging words. Even though the opportunity had slipped through their fingers they were still leading by a score of 1:3.

Rakim took a deep breath, letting his frustration melt away as his teammates rallied around him. Following his near miss that left everyone gobsmacked the match resumed but the pace became much more tame. Both teams seemed to have reached an agreement to run out the last minutes of the clock. Hearts no longer hoped for a comeback and Celtic didn't bother launching another attack.

[91] The fourth official gave them one minute of added time before blowing his whistle 3 times and calling an end to this game. "There you have it folks Celtic comes out on top on match day 28 of the 18/19 Scottish Premiership," Callum McDonald said with excitement after seeing the match had officially ended. He quite enjoyed today's game thus he spent the next few moments talking with Roy about the match.

They continued their discussion, dissecting the key moments of the match as the crowd slowly dispersed from the stadium. The atmosphere outside was a mix of excitement from the victorious Celtic fans and the subdued murmurs from the Hearts supporters. The lights of the stadium began to dim, signalling the end of another thrilling matchday in the Scottish Premiership.

Roy, animatedly gestured with his hands despite no one being able to see him, said, "What a game that was! Rakim the young phenom and I guess now the Dream, leaves this game with a brace and a Man of the Match performance." Callum nodded before joining the conversation "You could see how much it meant to him. It's a shame his last shot didn't go in, but what a strike it was."

Roy, with a thoughtful nod, replied, "Absolutely. The tension was electric when that ball hit the crossbar. It was like time stopped for a second. Luck just wasn't on his side at that moment." As they continued to chat, the players began to trickle off the pitch and into the dressing rooms.

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Rakim was ushered to the press area along with Forrest after getting the match ball and being named man of the match. Clutching the match ball tightly, he followed the press officer and Forest through the bustling corridors of the stadium. Despite the excitement of being named Man of the Match, the back of his mind was still on his last missed shot. Even though he played so well throughout the game, his mistakes lingered in his mind.

He wasn't playing at the level he wanted to be at yet so he felt the need to try harder in training. With that in mind, he was led to the press area which consisted of a board with the league's logo and its various sponsors. Closing his eyes for a second the bright lights of the camera flashed and the buzzing sound of cameras filled the small room.

Journalists were already gathered, eagerly awaiting their chance to ask questions. Forrest being the senior of the two gave an interview first answering a few generic questions mixed with some interesting ones. Rakim simply stood to the side, watching on with interest as the BBC media tried to bait his teammates with some tricky questions. Just as he was getting comfortable watching a reporter from the sun question Forrest's relationship status he got his first question.

A journalist from The Scotsman turned his attention to Rakim, his voice cutting through the hum of the room. "Rakim, congratulations on being named Man of the Match. You had a fantastic game out there. Can you talk us through your emotions when that last shot hit the crossbar? It seemed like a certain hat trick."

Rakim shifted slightly at the sudden address shifting his gaze towards the man as a few mics pointed in his direction. He took a deep breath before responding, his voice steady but reflective. "Thank you. I was already celebrating my first Hattrick on the professional stage but it wasn't meant to be," He paused for a moment before continuing in a much happier tone. "I scored a brace and we won the match so all is good with the world," He told the man with a bright smile holding up the ball in his hand in triumph.

The journalist smiled, clearly pleased with Rakim's positive outlook. "It's great to hear you're taking the good with the bad," he said. "You've been in incredible form lately ever since recovering from the shooting. It's good to see go back to business as usual,"

"Thanks, it just feels great being able to play competitive football again," he replied, his smile fading slightly as the memory of the shooting flashed through his mind.

Another journalist jumped in, eager to keep the conversation going. "Rakim, with today's performance, you have proved your doubters wrong who thought you weren't ready for the professional stage, Do you have any words for them?"

"I don't focus on my doubters much In fact if not for the Rex Nation fighting them I wouldn't notice their existence," Rakim replied in a calm tone leaving the reporters confused for a second. "Rex Nation is what I call my fans who have been on this journey with me since my 7v7 football days,"

The room filled with murmurs as the reporters processed Rakim's statement. It was clear that his response had piqued their interest. One of the journalists, a seasoned veteran from The Daily Record, leaned forward with a curious glint in his eye. "Rex Nation, huh? That's quite the name. How important has their support been in your journey, especially after everything you've been through?"

"Their support is something I'm extremely grateful for, plus without them I wouldn't know which boots to wear during games," Rakim chuckled softly, easing the tension in the room. The journalists, sensing his lighthearted mood, shared in the laughter. The Daily Record journalist, still intrigued, pressed on with another question. "It's clear that your fans mean a lot to you, Rakim. But since you brought it up is there a reason you're seen wearing different boots from different brands in matches?"

Rakim's smile widened as he glanced into one of the cameras from one of the BTspots channels. Slipping off his white Adidas laceless Copa 19+ with green highlights that he wore for today's match holding them up before the Nike badge on his kit letting the camera capture them in full glory.

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