

Football 254

Chapter 254 Next Day

Rakim woke up around noon the next morning with a relaxed expression feeling a little sore from yesterday's match. He took his time getting out of bed, savouring the stillness of the apartment. The sunlight streamed through the blinds, casting warm patterns on the floor. After glancing at his phone to check for any messages, he started his day with his usual morning routine.

First, he changed into comfortable workout gear and unrolled his yoga mat in the living room. His body was sore with each pose but still went through with it. He took his time to savour the sensations of his body slowly loosening up. Since he had undergone this routine after yesterday's game he felt much better this morning. Through a series of poses, he felt the tension gradually melt away. The familiar stretches and pull of his muscles grounded him, bringing a sense of calm and focus.

After finishing his yoga session, he picked up one of his pre-packed gym bags going for a swim in the housing complex gym. The housing complex's gym was quiet at this time of day, with only a few people scattered around using the equipment. He made his way to the pool area, where the gentle lapping of water echoed in the spacious room.

The pool was pristine, the water shimmering under the overhead lights. Getting changed in one of the stalls he stored his bag away dressed in nothing but swim trunks and a fit bit. Without hesitation, he jumped feet first into the water feeling the initial shock of the cold water sending a shiver through him.

He started with a few warm-up laps, focusing on his breathing and the rhythm of his strokes. As he moved through the water, his mind cleared, and the lingering soreness in his muscles began to ease. Each lap felt smoother than the last, and the water seemed to carry away any remaining tension from his body.

After a solid thirty minutes of swimming, Rakim slowed down, finally stopping at the edge of the pool. He rested there, letting his body float for a moment, staring up at the ceiling as his breath slowly returned to normal. The swimming had done wonders, and he felt rejuvenated.

He wasn't done though as he headed for the steam room next which was a way of letting his muscles relax. Grabbing his towel from the poolside rack he picked up a complimentary water bottle before heading to the steam room. Taking off his swim cap he revealed his dreadlocks tied in a bun still as dry as before his swim.

The steam room was a small, dimly lit space, with wooden benches lining the walls. As he stepped inside, the heat wrapped around him like a heavy blanket, instantly soothing his tired muscles. He took a seat on the top bench, letting the warmth sink into his skin.

The steam room was quiet, save for the occasional hiss as steam was released, filling the room with a thick, comforting fog. Rakim leaned back against the wall, closing his eyes and focusing on his breathing. The heat was intense, but he welcomed it, feeling the tightness in his body dissolve with each deep breath.

As the minutes passed, Rakim's thoughts began to drift. He replayed moments from yesterday's match in his mind, analysing his performance, and thinking about what he could improve for the next game. Despite the soreness he had felt earlier, he was satisfied with how he had played.

'Eva show me my match report please,' He asked her after spending a few moments just enjoying the silence. After the game things had been too hectic for him leading to him forgetting to check the system after.

{Of course,} she coolly replied before pulling up the system screen in the following moment.

[Ding: Post-Match Review]

>Goals scored: (2) = 200Sp

>Assists: (0) = 0Sp

>Cards: 0 (Yellow) = 0Sp

>Final Match score: 1:3 Winn = 30Sp

>Match Rating: 9.4

'Feels good to get my first career win,' he thought to himself with a light smile feeling more satisfied with his performance. Last night he was too caught up on his missed chance that he failed to fully take in this moment.

{you played quite well, I would recommend that you start developing a play style for the long term. Ever since your shooting, you have been avoiding head-on confrontations, somewhere in your subconscious you are afraid of getting hurt again. so I suggest that you strengthen your physical confrontation ability and tackle the mental block holding you back.} She told him in a serious tone sounding genuinely worried about what she deemed as bad habits that he was picking up.

'don't think I am...' he tried to argue but before he could continue the mechanical voice of a system announcement sounded.

[Ding: You have been made aware of a developing flaw and must decide how to tackle it. The singularity cannot have a flaw that can be used to hold against his title as a GOAT candidate.]

[Ding: EGO Mission Untouchable activated]

Dribble Past 7 defenders blocking your way forward: 0/7

Maintain Control of the ball through traffic under all costs: 0/3

Win the ball off a player with a standing tackle: 0/1

Rewards: 10SP

Punishment: -500SP, Concede Goat race early

(Note: there comes a time in a young player's career when they must either tackle their flaws head-on or be content with their success and build upon a shaky foundation.)

'F**k is it being series?' Rakim couldn't help but ask himself but he already knew the answer to that question. Because unlike Eva the lovely AI assistant it doesn't have a single sarcastic code in its being.

{Don't even think of blaming me,} Eva quickly defended herself knowing that the likelihood of her catching blame was high.

'I know but isn't it safer to play in a way that I avoid confrontations,' He still asked as he loved the feeling of dancing around players without them being able to even touch him.

{Yes it's safer now that you're young, but it puts a lot of stress on your ankles and as you get older you will become more injury prone despite having the ankle brace badge. Longevity and consistency are also factors in the determination of a goat candidate. Being able to maintain a high level of playing is crucial to even be considered in that conversation.} She responded coolly taking on her teacher mode making sure he understood the importance of this.

{When you get old in the later stages of your career this playstyle will no longer work, and you will find yourself having to retire early or risk tarnishing your legacy. An example of a perfect Goat candidate is The King, despite the game of basketball changing rapidly he has been adapting and even thriving under it without needing to take a break from the game.}

Rakim leaned back further against the wall, letting Eva's words sink in. He had always admired players who could glide past defenders with grace, avoiding contact while still maintaining control. But Eva's point was valid; longevity and adaptability were crucial for anyone aspiring to be the greatest.

Ronaldinho was a perfect example of this as despite entering his prime at the age of 28 he was forced to leave Barca. After that, he spent 3 seasons in the Serie A before leaving the main stage of football at age 31. Sure a lot of outside influence played a role in that decision, but primarily it was due to injury troubles that made him decline in his prime.

For arguably the most gifted player to walk this earth to leave the main stage at that tender age of 31 is worrying. Thinking about this forced Rakim to seriously consider what he would moving forward as he could risk his longevity in the game. Whilst Rakim was having an existential crisis a whole different crisis swept across the Nike board based in Miami.