

Football 255

Chapter 255 Meeting

"Alright, let's get started," said Jason Hart, the Head of the Player Scouting Division, as he settled into his chair at the sleek glass table that dominated the room. The walls of the Miami headquarters' conference room were lined with framed jerseys, shoes, and iconic moments from Nike's history reminders of the brand's legacy in sports. The Miami sunlight streaming through the tall windows highlighted the tension in the room, a tension that had been building ever since Rakim's interview had hit the airwaves.

Despite playing for a minor league the young phenom has quite the knack in creating buzz, especially since his debut in Spain. Now after last night's game and his viral celebration that was still making the rounds forces this entire meeting. Karen Matthews, the Marketing Head, sat across from him, scrolling through her tablet. Her face was a mask of focus, though a slight frown tugged at the corners of her mouth. Next to her, Greg Thompson, the Head of Brand Image, leaned back in his chair, arms crossed, his expression unreadable.

"So," Jason began, clearing his throat, "I'm assuming everyone's seen the interview by now?" Karen looked up, her eyes narrowing slightly. "You mean the one where the brightest young prospect we had been grooming for years decided to hold up a pair of Adidas boots while throwing shade at us? Yeah, I've seen it."

Greg sighed, tapping his fingers on the armrest. "Well, this blew up in our faces whose idea was it to pause our cooperation with him after the shooting," He asked with annoyance visible on his face as he knew this blunder would lead back to them since they were the ones to first sign him. Now that Rakim's team has cancelled their cooperation the better he plays the more it hurts them making them look incompetent.

Jason rubbed his temples, feeling the weight of the situation. "It was a collective decision at the time. The board thought distancing ourselves until the controversy died down was the best course of action. We didn't anticipate him bouncing back so quickly, Added to the fact he refuses to wear anything Nike except for the team's jersey makes things difficult"

"If that isn't enough he's been switching between different brands of boots, we tried to build up contact with him or his representation, but it's been radio silent on their end," Greg said with a look of annoyance as he started recalling all the times he had personally reached out to the Rex Family. However, no one from their company has been able to so much as meet anyone related to them, even business talks in their retail store have been strained.

Karen tapped her tablet, bringing up the latest social media metrics. "We need to address this, and fast. The 'Winning isn't for Everyone' clip has been shared millions of times. It's a PR disaster, and it's only growing. Adidas is capitalizing on it, Rakim's image with those boots over our logo is practically their new campaign."

Greg leaned forward, his fingers steepled in front of him. "This is bigger than just a rogue player. It's about how we're perceived now. Rakim's influence is skyrocketing, and the fact he's doing all of this without any backing from us is dangerous. If we don't act, it could set a precedent for other athletes to challenge us publicly."

Jason nodded, glancing at the framed jerseys on the wall, symbols of past victories and partnerships that had helped build Nike into a powerhouse. "We need to decide on how to handle this, and it needs to be smart. Rakim was supposed to be our next big thing, homegrown right here in the USA someone to carry our brand into the future."

"Just his potential and the possibility of him representing the nation on a global stage would have been huge for us. Now however his signature is up for grabs to the highest bidder due to us putting his youth contract on hold. So what are we to do?" Jason continued with a slight frown not liking how things had developed.

Karen's frustration was evident as she turned to Jason. "Wasn't it you who decided this after conversing with his former agent Oliver Burke, in exchange for signing the striker Matteo Smith." She was not

willing to take the heat for this fallback as her division had no hand in this blunder. The usual procedure would be to wait and hear the specialist's decision but the comma scared the board off. Everyone wanted to cut their loss as fast as possible and when Oliver Burke offered up his other rising striker they all practically jumped at the chance.

Jason nodded reluctantly. "Yes, it was. The board was nervous about the investment we made in him and when he got shot each day was costing them too much money. Burke offered Smith as a more stable investment and at the time, we jumped at the chance to secure him."

Karen's frustration was palpable. "And now, look where we are. Rakim's signature is up for grabs, and his potential to represent the nation could allow another company to get a foothold in the US if he continues his performances."

Greg sighed again, rubbing his temples. "The board needs to make a decision fast. We either find a way to mend fences with Rakim and his team or risk losing him to our competitors. The latter would not only be a financial loss but a massive blow to our brand's image."

Jason leaned back in his chair, his eyes scanning the room as he considered their options. "We could try to reach out to Rakim's team again and offer a new, more attractive deal to entice him back. Or, we could consider a different approach after all Nike doesn't lack talents so let us just push one of them forward and let the fans battle it out." His words hung in the air for a second leaving a moment for the two others to consider how they would tackle this mess.

Karen's gaze was intense as she considered the possibilities. "We need to be proactive, not reactive. If we're going to approach Rakim again, we need to come up with something that acknowledges the misstep and offers him something substantial. Maybe a personal endorsement deal combined with a charity initiative that aligns with his values?"

Greg nodded thoughtfully. "And if we decide to focus on another athlete, we need to make sure we have a solid plan to elevate their profile quickly. We can't afford another misstep."

Jason glanced at both of them, weighing their suggestions. "Alright, let's put together a strategy for both scenarios. Reach out to Rakim's team with a revised proposal and see if we can address the issues directly. Meanwhile, identify some of our other rising stars who could serve as a strong alternative if needed. We need to act swiftly and decisively."

The meeting concluded with a sense of urgency hanging in the air. As the three executives dispersed, each was focused on executing the plans that could dictate the future of their brand. Whether Rakim would be a part of those plans would be decided on how their plans concluded.