

Football 263

Chapter 263 Vs Aberdeen (3)

Stewart took a few steps back, eyeing the goal and waiting for the referee's signal. As the whistle blew, he sprinted forward and struck the ball cleanly with his right foot. The ball curled menacingly over the wall, heading for the top corner. Bain, who had been in stellar form all match, leapt acrobatically, stretching every muscle to reach it.

The ball grazed his fingertips, deflecting it onto the crossbar with a resounding clang. That wasn't enough though as the ball hit the inside of the bar before falling into the back of the net. 2:1 the goal stunned everyone for a moment as it ignited the away fans who had been lifeless so far.

They let themselves be known as the pride for their team shone through. This went especially for Stewart who received warm applause from them drowning out the angry jeers from the home fans.

[42]

Aberdeen's goal brought a renewed energy to the match, turning what had seemed like a comfortable lead for Celtic into a tense battle. The home crowd, once buzzing with confidence, grew anxious, urging their team to respond quickly. Celtic restarted the game, but the momentum had clearly shifted in Aberdeen's favour.

Celtic tried to regain control through their usual possession-based play, but Aberdeen pressed high, making it difficult for the home side to find their rhythm. Scott Brown and Nir Bitton worked tirelessly in midfield to break up Aberdeen's attacks, but the visitors were relentless, sensing an opportunity to draw level before halftime.

45]

As the clock ticked towards the 45th minute, Aberdeen launched another attack. This time, Lewis Ferguson drove forward, shrugging off challenges as he advanced into Celtic's half. He played a sharp one-two with McLennan, creating space to run into. With a burst of speed, Ferguson broke free of his marker and unleashed a powerful shot from just outside the box. The ball flew towards the top corner, but once again, Scott Bain came to Celtic's rescue, tipping the ball over the bar with his fingertips.

Stewart whipped in the resulting corner, but Bain confidently punched it away, clearing the immediate danger. The referee's whistle blew shortly after, signalling the end of the first half. Both teams headed to the dressing rooms, Celtic leading 2-1, but Aberdeen clearly in the ascendancy.

~~~

[46]

The second half began with Celtic making a tactical adjustment, bringing on Odsonne Edouard to add creativity to the midfield and to help regain control. Aberdeen also made a change in the form of James Wilson going off and Dean Campbell coming on trying to get some fresh legs on. They emerged from the tunnel with the same intensity, determined to capitalize on their late first-half momentum.

Celtic had the first chance of the second half when Rakim received the ball on the right flank. He took on Max Lowe, Aberdeen's left-back, beating him with a clever step-over before cutting inside. He then unleashed a curling shot with his left foot aimed at the far post, but Joe Lewis was equal to it, diving low to his left to make the save.

Aberdeen immediately countered, with Greg Stewart driving down the right wing. He crossed the ball into the box, where Sam Cosgrove was waiting. Cosgrove, towering over Kristoffer Ajer, outjumped him and headed the ball towards the bottom corner. Bain was beaten, but the ball narrowly missed the post, much to the relief of the Celtic fans.

[55]

The game continued to be an end-to-end affair, with both teams creating chances. Celtic came close again in the 55th minute when Sinclair found himself in space on the edge of the box. Instead of shooting, he cleverly threaded a pass to Oliver Burke, who had made a run behind the Aberdeen defence. Burke took the shot first time, aiming for the far corner, but once again, Joe Lewis was up to the task of guiding the ball away from his goal.

Celtic failed to convert the resulting corner with a tough clearance from McKenna putting his head through the ball. The ball flew out of the box but they learned from their mistakes from earlier as Rakim found himself sandwiched by two defenders. One of their players fished it out of the air and guided it away from danger initiating a counter.

Stewart picked it up on his right flank and immediately dashed down his wing not willing to let Tierney catch up to him. He wasn't quick enough thus he decided to send a long ball over the top to into the run of Dean Campbell, who found himself one-on-one with Bain. Campbell calmly faced the on-charging Bain as they met one another right as he entered the box.

Not hesitating he swung his boot to the ball looking as if he was going for the chip and Bain seemed to be expecting it. The keeper stayed on his feet springing into the air but the expected chip never arrived as Campbell slotted the ball past him. Before the keeper could even scramble to get back he slotted the ball into the empty net as he sprinted towards the sideline to celebrate his goal.

2:2, The equalizer sent shockwaves through Celtic Park. The Aberdeen fans erupted in celebration, their voices now a significant force in the stadium. The Celtic supporters, were now tense, sensing that the match was slipping away from them. On the pitch, Celtic players looked momentarily stunned, but Scott Brown was quick to rally them back into action. "Heads up! We're still in this!" he barked, urging them to focus on regaining control of the match.

[57]

Lennon used the chance to bring Johnston and Timothy Weah on for Sinclair and Burk who had been rather quiet this match. He was unwilling to let this match end in a draw after dominating most of the match. Aberdeen's coach Derek McInnes also used this chance to make some changes wanting to stabilise the score. He brought on Stevie May and Ethan Ross to replace both Connor McLennan and Greg Stewart hoping to stabilise the wings and make life difficult for the young wunderkind.

The substitutions added fresh energy to both sides, but it was Celtic who gnarly regained the lead within minutes of the changes. Timothy Weah, with his electrifying pace, immediately caused problems for the Aberdeen defence. Receiving the ball from Scott Brown in midfield, he darted down the left wing, leaving Aberdeen's right-back, Dominic Ball, trailing behind. Weah's cross into the box was perfectly weighted, finding the head of Mikey Johnston, who had ghosted in between the defenders. Johnston's header was powerful and on target, but once again, Joe Lewis pulled off a fantastic save, tipping the ball over the bar.

The crowd groaned in frustration as Celtic prepared to take yet another corner. Rakim jogged over to the corner flag, with a bit of swagger his confidence unshaken despite Aberdeen's resurgence. He waited a few minutes for the players in the box to get set before raising his arm calling for a set piece tactics aimed for the back post. Thus as all the players gathered quite far in the back end of the box looking to run into that area RAKim quickly closed in on that ball.

He approached the ball at a sharp 45-degree angle wrapping his foot around the ball and sending a curling shot towards Gaol. "Oh Goodness, he goes for goal," Roy Townsley exclaimed in the commentary

booth as he watched the ball curve sharply to ward the front post leaving everyone in the box confused. Joe Lewis was the first to realise the course of the ball immediately scrambling towards the front post.

He dove towards it with his hands outstretched but knew he wouldn't reach it, and could only pray for a miracle. The Miracle came the next second as a dull dong rang out, with the ball hitting the woodwork much to the disbelief of Celtic fans. The ball ricocheted off the post and bounced out towards the edge of the box, where Scott Brown was waiting. With a single touch, he controlled the ball and immediately set his sights on goal. His shot was powerful, but a well-timed block from Aberdeen's Scott McKenna denied Celtic a third goal, sending the ball out for yet another corner.

The tension in the stadium once again settled into the stadium as Rakim once again made his way to the corner flag. "They won't let him try that again," Callum McDonald stated with a smile as he watched the Aberdeen players maintain a balanced formation in the box despite Celtic's odd actions. "Yeah if I was them I'd hope the winger doesn't have any other tricks up his sleeve," Roy commented as he watched Rakim shake his head in disbelief at missing by near inches.