

## Football 272

### Chapter 272 Altercation

The stadium erupted into a mix of gasps and groans as Johnston collapsed, his face contorted in pain. The referee hurried over to check on the injured player, and the game came to an abrupt halt. Robson stood frozen, his face flushed with embarrassment and concern.

All his teammates rushed to his side, while the rest of the Celtic bench scrambled to get a medic onto the pitch. The Celtic medical team arrived swiftly, and Johnston was carefully helped off the pitch, still wincing with pain. The game paused as the referee ensured that Johnston was in safe hands. Robson, meanwhile, could only stand with his head bowed, visibly shaken by the unfortunate incident.

Callum McDonald and Roy Townsley, while narrating the scene, echoed the concern of the fans. "This is a tough blow for Celtic," Callum said, his voice laden with sympathy. "Johnston looked like he took a serious hit. We hope he's okay."

"Indeed," Roy agreed. "It's been a physical game from the start, but no one wants to see a player injured like this. It'll be interesting to see how this impacts the match."

As the medical staff tended to Johnston, the Celtic players gathered in a huddle, their focus now split between checking on their teammate and reassessing their strategy. Coach Lennon was seen furiously gesturing from the sidelines, trying to keep his team's spirits up and refocus them on the task at hand. Before the match could continue He signalled a change Bringing on Rakim who had been warming up on the sidelines.

"Alright laddy, I'll be putting you on for Johnston and you'll play the number 10 role, don't give me that look I need some of that creativity in the midfield. Don't hold onto the ball too long in there it's called the meat grinder for a reason," Coach Lennon told him with a serious smile making full use of the moments it took the 4th official to facilitate the change. He didn't have too long though as the referee

blew his whistle signalling a change and the board with his number 45 in green and Johnston 73 in red lit up.

The referee's whistle broke the silence, and Rakim stepped onto the pitch, taking Johnston's place in the number 10 role. The game resumed with a quick drop ball, and Scott Brown sent a long ball to the Dundee side in a show of sportsmanship.

~~~

[57]

Rakim, now part of the action, immediately made his presence known. His fresh legs and creative energy were just what Celtic needed to break through Dundee's defence. Almost every fourth touch of the ball was to his feet as he manoeuvred around the middle of the field. Taking on a free role he connected with his teammates playing a couple of slow one-twos before suddenly changing direction and unleashing a sharp pass to one of his teammates.

It was in the 57th minute when he got control of the ball after Forrest nimbly stole the ball from O'Sullivan's feet after a hospital pass from one of his teammates. Collecting the ball from him he sent it back to Toljan with his first touch just in time to escape a tackle from Woods. Accelerating into an open space he called for the ball once again and received it he did.

He noticed a nearby player coming to close him down and decided to flick the ball behind him as he turned with the moment beating Woods who had once again caught up with him. Latching onto the descending ball he dribbled the ball forward instantly picking up speed as he crossed the halfway line. His first obstacle came in the form of Robson who approached him at a steady pace ready to stop him in his tracks.

Not scared in the slightest though Rakim performed a quick feint as they neared each other. Just before they could collide he came to a sudden stop confusing the opposing midfielder who had been anticipating a clash. However, before he could even react to the sudden change Rakim blew past him leaving nothing but a gust of wind.

A bright smile crept on his face as he nudged the ball forward quickly eating up yards as he moved forward. His next obstacle came in the form of McGowan who left his defensive line to stop him. Scanning the field ahead of him he spotted both Forest and Sinclair making a run on their respective wings. Indecisive on whether to pass the ball the answer came in the form of his goal sense suddenly activating showing him a spot just past the right side of the penalty spot.

With his destination decided he performed a couple of stepovers causing McGowan's sway to block him off, but before he could react Rakim performed a reverse elastico to glide past him. Keeping the ball in the air he hurdled over the slide tackle of a Dundee player earning quite a few gasps from the onlookers. The moment he landed he didn't hesitate to send a piercing pass forward with the outside of his right foot.

The pass, cut a deceptive curve, slicing through the Dundee defence like a hot knife through butter. D. O'Dea tried to lunge in the ball's way but he came up short as it remained out of his reach. It curved sharply towards the right side confusing Edouard who had made a run into the box but he got his answer in the next second. A green shirt wearing the number 49 seemingly teleported in the ball's path sliding in with momentum connecting sweetly with the ball.

Forrest's shot was one of pure power only using a minimal amount of effort to guide it to the near corner. The ball left his boot sending it rocketing toward the top-left corner of the net. Dieng, despite his impressive performance so far, was caught flat-footed by the sheer speed of the strike. He stretched desperately, but the ball was unstoppable.

"GOAL! GOAL! GOAL!" Callum McDonald's voice rang out with pure exhilaration. "James Forrest has equalized for Celtic with a stunning finish!" The away fans erupted in jubilation, their cheers echoing around the Scot Foam Stadium. The Celtic players swarmed Forrest, embracing him and celebrating the vital goal. Coach Lennon, standing on the sidelines, pumped his fists in triumph, his faith in his team visibly restored.

"Dundee's defence had been holding strong until now, but that was a masterclass in attacking play," Roy Townsley commented, his voice tinged with excitement. "Forrest's goal could very well turn the tide in Celtic's favour." As the celebrations continued, Dundee's players looked deflated, their earlier confidence now shaken. Rakim who had been at the heart of the play wasn't spared from the rowdy celebrations of his older teammates.

[61]

Dundee, realizing the urgency of their situation, quickly regrouped. The coach's instructions were clear: regain composure and reassert their defensive solidity. McGowan and his defensive partners tightened their formation, preparing for the inevitable onslaught from Celtic, who were now buoyed by their equalizer.

The game resumed with Dundee's kick-off, but the energy had clearly shifted. Celtic pressed high, their confidence visibly restored. Rakim, now fully immersed in the match, showcased his creative flair with deft touches and sharp passes. He was everywhere, a constant thorn in Dundee's side, linking play and probing for gaps.

The minutes ticked by, with Celtic increasingly dominant. Their passing became sharper, and their runs more dangerous. A few near misses and a couple of smart saves by Dieng kept Dundee in the game, but it was clear that the home side was on the back foot. Around the 64th minute, their coach made a desperate change in hopes of giving his team some sort of fight.

It worked as they tightened up the midfield playing a more physical game resulting in a lot of stops in the game's flow. Quite a few times Rakim and the rest of his midfield teammates found themselves could the moment they crossed the halfway line. The Dundee players seemed to have decided to stop their attacks before they could even get started.

65th minute Rakim found himself yanked to the ground after taking control of a throw-in and deftly manoeuvring past Robson. A few minutes later Brown was roughly taken to the ground with a poorly timed slide tackle along the left flank. It was Robson again and this time he entered the Ref's books earning himself a yellow card.

However, he would soon learn that Scott was the wrong person to play dirty with as the midfielder retaliated with a shoulder tackle that resembled a spear in WWE. The midfielder had just won the rebound of the resulting set piece and was about to take the ball forward only to be taken down in the next second. Both of them jumped up from the ground and started squaring off, getting into each other's faces ready to swing at any moment.