

## Football 282

### Chapter 282 Glasgow Derby

The sun hung low over Celtic Park, casting a soft golden hue on the immaculate green pitch as fans began to stream into the stadium. The Glasgow Derby, the fierce battle between Celtic and Rangers, was only minutes away, but the tension in the air was already palpable. Both sets of supporters, draped in their respective green-and-white or blue-and-white scarves, filled the stands, their voices building in volume as kick-off neared.

On the field, the players were going through their final warm-ups, the atmosphere charged with anticipation. Celtic, led by Neil Lennon, were out first, their players passing the ball between them with crisp accuracy. Callum McGregor was stretching near the touchline, while Kieran Tierney jogged back and forth, eyes focused ahead.

However, it was Rakim who drew most of the supporter's attention with the unique food he was wearing on his head. His sister had posted pictures of him in the black and golden hood taken in a photo shoot in her with the #ShowOfYourSibling. Rakim hadn't planned for her to leak the photos, but it worked in their favour as it rode the wave he had indirectly created.

This caused a little buzz, especially with his hair style, as he had the tips of his thin dreads dyed blond. They were bundled into group of 3 and braided into larger free-falling dreadlocks. Donned in the hood he added with the professional pictures of the photo shoot made him look quite handsome.

So, seeing the young wunderkind warming up in the hood nearby fans couldn't help themselves to snap up pictures of him. This was his first Glasgow derby, and he could understand why the people here took it so seriously. His teammates had made sure to drum in the importance of the crosstown derby throughout their week of preparation.

Celtic had been dominating the league in this decade on course to achieve a 10-year streak of them being champions. Whilst Rangers had more trophies in their cabinet, they faced liquidation back in 2012 and struggled 4 years to reach the SPL again. Still their rivalry only continued to heat up whenever they faced each other as the town was divided into a sea of green and blue.

Thus, Rakim was pretty excited to be a part of such a rivalry that was 130 years old since their first meeting. He was taking the whole atmosphere under his hood as calmly juggled the ball at his feet as if it was second nature.

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Callum McDonald's voice came through the speakers with his typical enthusiasm. "Well, Roy, it's certainly a special atmosphere today, isn't it? You can feel the energy in Celtic Park. Rakim Rex looks calm as ever, despite this being his first Glasgow Derby. There's a buzz around the young man, and it's not hard to see why with the form he has been since arriving in our neck of the woods. It's clear they're excited to see how he'll fare against Rangers today."

Roy Townsley, always the more measured voice in the booth, replied, "No doubt about it, Callum. But he's got a big test ahead of him. This match is different, as you know. You don't just play in an Old Firm derby — you battle. And for all of Rakim's skill and flair, he's going to need to show he can handle the physicality of Rangers, especially in the midfield where they won't give him a moment to breathe."

As the players completed their final stretches, Rangers came onto the pitch. Led by Steven Gerrard, the visitors looked focused and determined. Alfredo Morelos, the ever-dangerous striker, glanced over at the Celtic end, unbothered by the jeers that rang out from the home crowd. Ryan Kent and Daniel Candeias were in light jogs down the wings, their pace a clear threat to Celtic's defence.

"Rangers coming out now," Callum continued, "and you can feel the tension ramping up another notch. Alfredo Morelos has been a real thorn in Celtic's side recently, he's the player Neil Lennon's defence will have to be especially wary of. And of course, Ryan Kent, blistering pace down that left wing, could cause some real trouble for Lustig and Ajer."

Roy agreed. "It's not just Morelos and Kent though, Callum. Rangers have been strong all around the pitch under Gerrard. The defence, especially Goldson and McCrorie, have tightened up this season. They'll try to frustrate Celtic and hit on the counter with those wide players."

The two teams continued their drills as the stadium swelled to near capacity. The roar of the Celtic faithful grew louder with every minute as they belted out the club's anthems, filling the air with a thunderous passion. The Rangers supporters in the corner, though outnumbered, were equally vocal, determined to back their team in enemy territory.

"You know, Roy," Callum said with a smirk, "there's a certain magic to this fixture. Doesn't matter if one team's been dominant or the other's been struggling. On Derby Day, form goes out the window."

"Too right," Roy nodded. "It's all about who wants it more on the day. Celtic's been the dominant force in Scotland for years, but Gerrard's Rangers have shown they're closing the gap. Today could be a real test of how far they've come." The two commentators continued to discuss the magic of the old firm for another 20 minutes with both of them analysing the recent forms of both teams.

Statistics told them that Celtic should naturally win this altercation, but both knew anything could happen. With both of them supporting their respective team it made for quite the interesting commentary for the listeners. Especially when the two decided to engage in a friendly wager that would see the loser wearing the winner's team's kit for their next on-air interview.

At quarter to 12:00 the referee's whistle echoed across the pitch, signalling the end of the warm-up, motioning for the players to begin making their way toward the tunnel, ready to emerge for the real thing. The anticipation reached its boiling point, and both sets of fans knew that the next 90 minutes could define their season.

In the locker rooms both coaches gathered their soldiers giving two distinctively different speeches. Neil the Irish man he was gave a speech that was more like a call to arms getting the players blood pumping. From the way he was telling you would think they hadn't already won the league this season and this was their last chance of glory.

Neil Lennon paced back and forth in the Celtic dressing room, his voice rising in intensity as he addressed his squad. His fiery personality on full display, the players knew this was the moment their manager lived for.

"Listen up, lads! This isn't just another game. This is the Derby! This is the fight for Glasgow, for your pride, for everything we've worked for since I joined you. Its more about simply executing tactics and being in good form, it's about showing them who runs this city. Show no mercy, give no quarter. You go out there, and you battle. From the first whistle to the last, you let them know they're in our house. Every challenge, every ball you make it count."

Lennon stopped in front of captain Scott Brown, locking eyes with his midfield general. "Broony, you're the heart of this team. I want them to feel you from the first tackle. Lead by example, show these lads what this badge means."

Turning to the rest of the squad, he raised his voice. "Tierney, Ajer, Edouard — all of you, this is the day you step up. Forget the league, forget the standings. This is war, and you are soldiers. Now, go out there and make history!" Lennon's speech echoed in the players' minds as they stood up, ready to walk through walls for their manager.

"As for you lad," he said locking gaze with Rakim who was sitting on the bench with the Titan-hood on his and gold Under Armour boots strapped to his feet matching his new hair colour. "Welcome to the Old Firm," He simply said with a wide smile before being drowned in a roar of voices from the players letting out their pent-up excitement. Rakim feeling all this added with the roar of the crowd felt his blood boiling ready to cause some carnage.