

Football 287

Chapter 287 Celtic Vs Rangers (3)

As the second half kicked off, Neil Lennon made a quick change, replacing Jonny Hayes with Scott Sinclair. The fresh legs of Sinclair added an extra spark to Celtic's attack, and the fans roared in approval as the home side started the half with renewed energy.

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Almost immediately after the substitution, an incident occurred. As Celtic tried to break forward, Edouard challenged Worrall for a loose ball near the halfway line. The striker went in hard, a bit too reckless, and the referee didn't hesitate to pull out a yellow card for Edouard. Rangers players swarmed the ref, demanding more, but the yellow stood.

Edouard walked away, clearly frustrated, but he had to be careful now, walking a fine line with a caution so early in the half. He quickly sobered up from the adrenaline filled emotion as the rain of boos from the rangers' fans assaulted him. They showed him no pity letting him know exactly what they thought of his actions.

His tackle set the tone for the second half as both teams entered a slugger fest of a match as their bodies clashed with each other. No quarter was the theme as no one was allowed to relaxedly breath with the ball at their feet. The pot of tension had been brewing since the get go and was now finally being ignited now that one of the two teams had taken the lead.

Jack found himself nimbly stealing the ball off Ntcham who received a hasty pass Tierney who was getting pressed hard by Morelos and Candeias. He didn't get far though as Scott Brown came sliding in hot cleanly winging the ball and sending him to the ground. Sending Rakim on a run down the right flank he got no further than five meters before tumbling to the ground after a rough tackle from Worrall.

Despite receiving a freekick he was visibly annoyed especially when the resulting set piece ended up in McGregor's comfortable arms.

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In the 50th minute, the physicality continued and as the second half wore on, tensions continued to rise. Rangers' Andy Halliday, already on a yellow card, had a brief confrontation with Scott Sinclair, who was making his presence felt after his substitution. The two went back and forth in the next few plays fight for every play and touch of the ball inevitably getting a little physical as they fought for possession of the ball.

Halliday's frustration finally boiled over, and he threw an elbow at Sinclair during a tussle for possession. The referee, who had been closely monitoring the situation, brandished a yellow card, leading to a red card much to the dismay of Rangers' supporters. Rangers were now down to ten men as they watched Halliday exit the pitch with a livid expression.

As if to make matters worse rain started to fall on the pitch starting off slow but quickly picking up in intensity much like the match down below. The surface quickly became slippery adding another layer of chaos to the already frenetic pace of the game. The atmosphere became even more charged as Celtic tried to capitalize on their numerical advantage. Sinclair, Forrest and Rakim linked up well, moving the ball quickly and creating space.

Sinclair's fresh energy was causing problems for the tired Rangers defence as he made his presence known. Tavernier Rangers right back didn't have a moment of rest forced to use his experience to keep the winger in check. Rakim on the other wing built on the momentum of his goal as he did his best to create chances whenever possible.

[60]

As the rain picked up, both teams seemed to embrace the chaos. Sliding tackles became more frequent, and the pitch started to feel like an ice rink. In the 60th minute, Rangers' Joe Worrall clattered into Celtic's Tom Rogic, who had just come on for Oliver Ntcham a few minutes prior. The challenge was reckless, and Rogic went down hard, clutching his ankle. The Celtic fans erupted in fury, and the referee wasted no time in pulling out a yellow card for Worrall. He protested, but it was a clear booking, and Rangers were now walking a tightrope with several key players on cautions.

The free kick that followed didn't amount to much, but the tempo was unrelenting. Rangers, despite being behind, pressed forward with determination not willing to go down without a fight. Morelos especially chased down every ball that was played his fight through tight marking.

In the 64th minute, Rangers had a rare opportunity to break forward. Morelos, who had been battling fiercely with Celtic's backline, latched onto a long ball played over the top. With his strength, he shrugged off Boyata's challenge and drove towards the penalty area. Just as he was about to pull the trigger, Celtic's goalkeeper, Bain, came rushing out, closing down the angle and smothering the shot at point-blank range. The Rangers fans groaned in frustration as, yet another chance slipped away.

Immediately following the miss, Celtic countered at breakneck speed. Forrest, who had been quiet for much of the second half, sprang into life. He darted down the right wing, using his pace to leave Barisic trailing behind. A quick one-two with Rakim left Forrest clear on the edge of the box. He sent a low cross zipping through the six-yard box, but it was just out of Sinclair's reach. The ball sailed inches wide of the far post, much to the relief of the Rangers defence.

The match continued with ferocious intensity, and Neil Lennon decided to make another change. He subbed off Olivier Ntcham, who had looked tired, and brought on Tom Rogic to inject some fresh creativity into Celtic's midfield. Rogic's arrival was met with a roar from the home fans warmly welcoming the Australian playmaker.

Steven Gerrard, sensing the need for fresh legs, made a critical substitution in the 79th minute. Ryan Jack, who had been solid but looked spent after his earlier physical exchanges, was replaced by Glen Kamara. Kamara's introduction gave Rangers a bit more composure in the middle of the park, as they desperately sought to claw their way back into the game.

Almost immediately after coming on, Kamara made an impact, winning the ball in midfield and sending a perfectly weighted pass down the left flank to Kent. The winger cut inside, driving toward Celtic's penalty area, despite the downpour his legs pumped with power eating up yard of grass. baiting Rodgic with a cut inward he breezed by him as the midfielder lost his balance on the slippery surface.

Lustig stepped up to block his way, but the right back didn't dare to lunge in, and that hesitation was all Kent needed to send a sharp through ball into the box. With the wet surface the ball skipped on the turf with speed much like a rock skimmed over a pond. Boyata and Ajer sandwiched Morles as they all raced into the box trying to reach the ball first, but the striker had a plan this time.

Anticipating the ball's path and seeing Bain Rushing out of his line to close him down he slid in feet first sliding faster on the ground than the two chasing him. Reaching the ball first he swung his boot trying his best to guide the ball to the far corner hoping to beat the on-rushing Bain. With a soft thud his boot connected with the ball kicking up a bit of water before sending it slicing towards the goal.

With the ball's swift momentum, it slipped past Bain's desperate lunge and like a missile hitting its mark it sniffed of the far post before nestling itself into the back of the net. The time that had seemed to stop as the play unfolded restarted with a torrent of cheers. Ranger's fans, drenched from the downpour, leapt to their feet in joyous disbelief, their roar echoing around the stadium. Morelos, sliding on his knees through the sodden grass, punched the air with both fists, the relief and triumph unmistakable on his face.

"Get in there!" Chris shouted, spilling a bit of his beer in the excitement. Samuel grimaced but nodded grudgingly. "Alright, alright, I'll gie ye that one. But don't get too comfortable, mate."