

Football 288

Chapter 288 Celtic Vs Rangers (4)

The goal came in the 73rd minute, levelling the score at 1-1, and the match, already a physical and emotional warzone, reached a fever pitch. Celtic's defence, so sturdy throughout the match, had finally cracked, and Neil Lennon wasted no time in responding. From the touchline, he signalled for one final substitution—Scott Brown, Celtic's s Captain, made way for Callum McGregor in the 75th minute, hoping to inject fresh legs and shore up their midfield.

Celtic restarted with fire in their eyes, and the play resumed at a blistering pace. Forrest and Sinclair linked up with Rogic in midfield, weaving quick passes through Rangers' midfield, looking for any opportunity to reclaim their lead. In the 78th minute, Sinclair found space on the left, fed by a slick pass from Rogic, and darted toward the penalty area. Tavernier shadowed him, but Sinclair danced past, cutting inside on his right foot and curling a shot toward the far post. The stadium held its breath as the ball spun through the air—but McGregor, leapt across his line and palmed the ball out for a corner, denying Celtic a moment of glory.

"Unbelievable!" Samuel groaned, hands on his head. Chris, grinning like a Cheshire cat, clapped his friend on the back. "McGregor's on fire today. Yer boys'll have to try harder than that."

In the ensuing moments, Gerrard made another crucial change, swapping Daniel Candeias for the veteran Jermain Defoe in the 80th minute looking to go all out in the last ten minutes. The introduction of Defoe signalled Gerrard's intent, and the players responded in kind attacking with much more determination than before. Rangers were going for the win; despite their earlier struggles and the fact they were a man down.

Defoe's presence immediately caused panic in Celtic's backline, his experience and guile adding a new dimension to Rangers' attack. Gerrard made his final move, by bringing on Steven Davis to replace a weary Scott Arfield. Davis, with his calm composure, slotted into midfield, aiming to control some of the momentum in midfield. That would prove to be hard as Celtic started to use their numerical supremacy keeping the ball under their control.

The rain continued to pour, turning the match into a treacherous contest of endurance and nerves. Both teams fought tooth and nail, sliding into tackles and launching long balls forward, hoping for one last moment of magic. Celtic, despite dominating possession, found it increasingly difficult to break through Rangers' reorganized defence. Kamara, fresh-legged and hungry, was everywhere, breaking up play and driving his team forward.

As the clock ticked into stoppage time, tension gripped the stadium. Celtic won a corner in the 87th minute, and Sinclair stood over the ball, his eyes scanning the crowded penalty area. He whipped in a dangerous, curling cross that found the head of Boyata, who rose above Worrall and Goldson. The header was powerful, thundering toward the top corner, but once again, McGregor was equal to it. He flung himself across goal, tipping the ball over the bar with his fingertips.

"McGregor, man o' the match," Samuel muttered begrudgingly as he stood with his arms crossed, his eyes still fixed on the pitch.

Chris, biting his lip, nodded in agreement. "Aye, he's kept us in it."

The tension was unbearable. Both teams knew this was their final chance to snatch victory from the jaws of a draw. The rain was relentless, drumming down on the soaked players as they gritted their teeth for one last push.

As Rangers cleared the corner, the ball broke to Kent, who immediately charged up field, using his pace to eat up the sodden turf. Celtic's defence scrambled to get back, but Kent was already in full stride. Lustig closed in on him as Kent darted down the left wing. He played a neat one-two with Defoe, who held off his marker with all the cunning of a seasoned striker. The ball was threaded back into Kent's path, sending him tearing into the final third.

Sensing the danger, Ajer stepped forward to challenge, but Kent, slippery on the wet surface, feinted right and darted left, leaving the Celtic defender off balance. With a quick glance up, Kent saw Tavernier overlapping on the right. He switched the play with a low, skidding pass that zipped through the rain-soaked grass, catching Celtic off guard. Tavernier, surging forward like a train, collected the ball in stride just outside the box.

The noise in the stands reached a fever pitch as Tavernier squared up against Tierney, Celtic's left-back. The rain splashed up with every step as the two locked eyes, both knowing what was at stake. Tavernier faked a cross, then drove inside, creating a small pocket of space for himself on his weaker left foot. Without hesitation, he unleashed a stinging shot, a low drive aimed at the far post.

Bain dove desperately, stretching every muscle in his body, but the ball was slick, skipping off the surface like a stone across a pond. His outstretched fingertips grazed the ball, but it wasn't enough to divert its path. The ball ricocheted off the inside of the post, trickling along the goal line before finally nestling in the back of the net. For a split second, silence hung in the air —then pandemonium ensued.

The Rangers fans erupted, their roars cutting through the rain-soaked air. Tavernier, arms raised high, sprinted toward the corner flag, mobbed by his teammates. Defoe, Kamara, and Davis piled on top of him as the Rangers bench exploded in jubilation.

Chris screamed at the top of his lungs, slapping Samuel on the back, spilling his beer in wild celebration. "I told ye! I bloody told ye! We never quit!"

Samuel stood there, stunned. "Nae way... nae way!" His eyes flicked to the scoreboard. The clock read 90+2. Time was slipping away fast.

With only moments left in the game, Celtic were staring defeat in the face. Down 2-1, the rain continued to hammer the pitch, turning the final minutes into a chaotic, desperate scramble for possession. The clock was ticking, and every second that passed felt like an eternity. The crowd's tension was palpable, with Rangers fans roaring in celebration and Celtic supporters urging their team on for one last push.

Rakim, who had been relatively quiet for much of the second half, suddenly found himself in space on the right wing. The ball rolled toward him, slick with rain, but his control was effortless. With a quick glance up field, he felt his blood pumping as the rain continued to batter his field of vision only exciting him more.

At first, he looked for a pass to play but all the nearby ones were closed down and any high pass would only end with them losing possession. However, most importantly something in him urged him to take this into his own hands much like Kobie wouldn't trust anyone with the last shot of the match. He was experiencing a similar feeling causing a wide smile to appear on his face as he continued to be drenched by the rain. It just so happened that the broadcasters decided to zoom in on his face at that moment catching his excited smile in HD and 4K quality.

As Rakim's smile flashed across television screens in homes and pubs across Glasgow, and wider Scotland a wave of mixed emotions swept over the viewers. Celtic fans, drenched in the tension of the moment, clung to a desperate hope. "What's he smiling about? There's no time left!" someone in a crowded pub exclaimed, his pint forgotten in his hand.

His angry outburst instantly ignited a powder keg as angry Celtic fans all over Scotland found an outlet for their frustration. "What's this prick smiling about were losing, quickly pass the ball to Forrest you Black F**ker," an intoxicated man draped in a Scott Browns skit exclaimed as he jumped up from his bar stool instantly causing an uproar in the pub.

"What's this Monkey smiling about, I knew there was a reason, Sir Brendan Rodgers didn't want him," His friend a skinny fellow intoned slapping the table in frustration almost spilling his pint of lager. They were currently at The Brazen Head pub in Glasgow the premier spot for Celtic fans who couldn't get a match ticket.

"Oi you Bastards apologise before I book you a ticket to the Royal Infirmary," A young lad no older than 20, exclaimed in anger directly jumping up from his booth followed by a group of 3 boys directly leaving the girls they were with. Instantly the rowdy Celtic fans who had their eyes glued to the screen instantly focussed on them seemingly sensing a fight.

"Oi you fuckers sit down or leave crack even a single glass and the lot of you are barred." Boab the burly bartender exclaimed from behind the counter directly pulling out his baseball bat.