

## Football 295

Chapter 295 295 WINNING ISN'T FOR EVERYONE

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The next day after the old firm the world who paid attention to Rakim woke up to a flood of advertisement with him as the leading figure. The flood gates of the Titan-Fit ad campaign had been open at 12pm and the algorithm did the rest. The money that Rex Fashion & Sport in corporate spent also did its job in boosting the visibility of the ads.

From billboards suddenly appearing in cities to adverts appearing on TV they didn't hold back knowing how important it was for them. They were making the jump from a retail store to that of a brand that they can rely on as a stable growth model. That's what led to Mike a seasoned office worker questioning his life as he saw the ad playing in-between the morning ESPN segment.

His Tv screen turned dark almost making him question whether it was broken especially after hearing the various voices chattering in the back ground. "He'll never be great again, mark my words. He was shot, I've seen player's careers end after just taking a small tumble never mind being shot. Why we still talking about him S10 is the next big thing. Rakim Rex was a great talent, emphasis on was."

Those where just the few prominent voices that he heard over the various shouts that came his Tv as it stayed dark. Just as he thought that his TV was kaput bright floodlights appeared on the screen pausing his movements just as he was about to press the off button on his remote. He instantly recognised the soccer match that was going on as different torrent of shout was heard through his Tv.

He didn't get to focus on that though as the camera suddenly dived down to the field as a bird like transition happened. Now in first person perspective he watched as the guy received the ball with his chest firmly trapping it beneath his boots. His boots were black except for the solitary image of a white

and gold gladiator helmet. He didn't get to focus on that though as the player was quickly surrounded by defenders who seemed far more than what Mike believed a soccer team could field.

Surprisingly the players looked robotic with glowing lines running through their bodies but the thing that caught his attention was their faces. Not really their faces but the grey and dark blue masks they wore and after squinting his eyes he was able to read some of them. The grey mask had depressing phrases on them like "You never be good enough," whilst the blue ones took a more personal turn.

"Why am I even trying, I'm nothing, I should just give up," safe to say after reading that much just from the brief moments he had seen in the ad Mike was fully enamoured. "Hahahah, let's get this over with," he heard the player who faced off against the alien robot alien say as he nudged the ball forward dribbling towards them not shying away from the challenge.

Mike leaned forward, already captivated by the ad despite not being a huge fan of the football the rest of the world played. Forgetting he was eating cereal he did not notice that his \$100 tie was dipped in his bowl. Or maybe he did but he was more engrossed in watching the happening on the tv that seemed to become more vibrant as the figure performed two step overs before passing the first defender.

Beating him he accelerated onto the next, as the defenders surged toward him like a mechanical wave. Their movements were stiff at first, precise and calculated as though pre-programmed for this very moment. The camera angle shifted, following Rakim's swift footwork as he glided past the second defender who had come to stop him.

Using another body feint that caused the glowing lines on the opponent's armour to flickered wildly for a brief moment as if in confusion. This was all he needed to pivot his run with a quick change of direction to escape the defenders defensive range. Without missing a beat Mike watched in astonishment still in first person perspective as the player flicked the ball into the air, executing a clean sombrero over the third defender's head.

Time seemed to slow down at that moment as the camera switched to a normal match perspective allowing him to see the move in its full glory. This was the first time he got to see the protagonist of the ad and the first thing that caught his eyes where his flowing dreads that were dyed blond. Next was the gold and black coloured training outfit he was wearing that seemed to hug his well-defined body perfectly.

Not getting to dwell on that though he watched that as the ball soared over, the defender's body. It began to distort, thick plumes of smoke rising from his limbs as they twisted grotesquely. His legs elongated unnaturally, arms expanding into dark tendrils as he tried to recover from the failed challenge. The words on his mask, "You'll never be good enough," began to fade, replaced by an eerie, glowing inscription: "Failure breeds monsters."

But the player he now recognised as Rakim didn't stop there. He'd be stupid if he didn't recognise him after all the clues and the fact, he had been the only soccer player to make major news for a shooting in the states. The scene transitioned back to first person perspective as he took the ball down on his chest, smoothly transitioning into a rainbow flick to dodge the next defender. This one was even more bizarre.

The defender's limbs multiplied, turning into spider-like appendages that clattered menacingly against the field. His mask shifted into a deep shade of red, emblazoned with a phrase that sent a chill through Mike: "Why do you even try?" Mike leaned forward in his seat, the world around him fading as he became absorbed in the surreal ad.

Rakim wasn't fazed by the transformation of his opponents as he continued onwards. None of the negativity or the challenges seemed to be able to faze him as he dribbled past a few more defenders. Each time he executed a mesmerising skill that allowed him to weave past them and keeping those watching glued to him alone.

He pivoted sharply, executing a Ronaldo Chop to evade two more defenders who had turned into smoky, shadow-like creatures, their movements erratic, flailing in vain to catch him. Their masks no longer had words, just hollow, glowing eyes filled with desperation. It was as if their very essence had been drained by Rakim's audacity to outplay them.

That's when Rakim's voice echoed through the ad "Dout's don't stop me... it only fuels me." The defenders, now twisted and monstrous, swarmed around him one last time. In a blur of skill and precision, Rakim pulled off an elastico followed by a flip-flap, sending the final defenders stumbling over themselves. Not hesitating he swung his foot letting loose a thunderous shot as sparks formed around the ball before it flew towards the goal.

Mike didn't get to see the outcome of the shot though as the ball blacked out the screen as gold and white gladiator helmet appeared. It acted as the A for TITAN-FIT which now appeared prominently on the screen with two lightning bolts at then ends. Below it was the words "Winning isn't for everyone,"

Mike blinked, the ad's abrupt conclusion snapping him back to reality. He sat there, mouth agape, cereal forgotten as the world outside continued its mundane rhythm. The voices of the sports commentators faded into the background, overshadowed by the chaotic brilliance he'd just seen. "Winning isn't for everyone," he muttered to himself, the phrase echoing. What does that even mean for me?

He had all ways loved being active and played a lot of sports in his youth, but real life had taken over and his career needs took precedent. He can count 2 hands the amount of time he has had to make concessions just in order to survive and get ahead. However, thinking of the ad made him remember his younger years where he lived healthy and actually spend time traveling. Unlike now where his life Soley revolves around job and the barley gets to see his family.