

Football God 171

Chapter 171 A home in London

(Premier league:)

(Fulham – West Ham)

(Date: 14th September, 2024)

After matchday 3 of the 2024/2025 premier league season, matchday 4 would only start in 14 days because the first international break of the new season finally came.

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Thud! Thud!

Somewhere in London, the thudding sound of boots reverberated through the streets of Fulham as 2 young men dressed in track suits jogged along the road.

These 2 young men were Sam and Emile Smith Rowe.

This early in the morning, both professional football players were already out in the streets again as they went at their daily ritual with gusto.

The reason why Emile Smith Rowe was still here in Fulham was simple, Lee Carsley, the new interim boss of the England national team did not call him up to represent his country in the games during the international break.

As for Sam, he was here due to a more peculiar reason.

As both players started jogging close to Craven Cottage, Emile Smith Rowe removed his earpiece before gently tapping Sam by the shoulder as he slowed down, also removing his earpiece while looking at him.

Smith had a partly confused and partly thinking look on his face as he looked at his friend. "Umm, can you tell me how to say don't disturb me in pidgin again?"

Sam chuckled amid rapid breathing. "Simple Smith, no worry me".

"Ah, yes, no worry me". Smith Rowe smiled. "No gimme issue, right?"

"Yeah," Sam nodded. "No gimme issue, no gimme stress, all of them mean don't disturb me".

"See? Pidgin is actually easier than you think".

"I guess so".

If Emile Smith Rowe's parents heard their son speaking like this, they would likely be horrified but that was one of the repercussions of being friends with a Nigerian who grew up in Nigeria.

Pidgin was second nature to them, and since it was so cool to speak, why not teach it to friends who are not conversant with it?

And that was how Emile Smith Rowe started learning pidgin.

As soon as they took a sharp turn inside Craven Cottage, Smith could not help but look at his friend again. "Sam, don't you think you should go home early today?"

"Why?"

"I mean, your girlfriend is waiting for you, right?"

"..." Sam almost tripped.

"M-my what?"

Smith was confused. "Your girlfriend, did I say anything wrong?"

"She's not my girlfriend yet bro!" Sam hissed through gritted teeth. "And don't say it so loud, paparazzi are always following us these days".

Smith Rowe stared at him, surprised but he waited till they were inside the confines of the stadium before resuming the conversation. "You mean to tell me that Kayla is not your girlfriend yet?"

"Yeah". Sam shrugged.

"And you're staying together in the same hotel room?"

Sam was dumbfounded, he stared at Smith Rowe and scratched his black hair. "Yeah?"

"You doofus!" Smith poked him on the head, laughing. "What the hell are you waiting for to ask her out? Christmas?"

"Asking her out," Sam spaced out a bit. "Man, I don't know, I've been meaning to for a time already but I just can't seem to find the courage to do it".

"...!" Now, Smith Rowe was flabbergasted.

He stared at his friend incredulously. "The almighty Zinedine Sam, the light of Fulham, the scorer of clutch goals, too nervous to ask a girl out".

Smith Rowe burst out laughing loudly. "Damn! This is perfect meme material!"

"Shhhh!" Sam was losing it. "You're too loud bro!" He hissed.

Smith Rowe didn't listen to him, laughing his lungs out still. "Honestly bro, this is so hilarious". He said as they made their way to the gym.

As they started training, he continued the conversation. "But bro, honestly, I never saw you as the shy type. I mean, what's there in asking a girl out?"

"Easy for you to say, it's not as if I've done it before".

"...!" Now, Smith Rowe was bamboozled.

He looked at Sam with eyes that seemed to scream 'impossible!' "You mean to tell me you've never had a girlfriend your whole life?"

"..."

"Does that mean you're a virgin?"

"Why should I tell you?" Sam snapped.

"Holy sh*t!" Smith Rowe was losing it. "Damn man, finally, I have something I'm more experienced in that I can teach you".

"Come, listen to me, let me teach you..."

"Get lost!"

Sam felt embarrassed. Like Smith said, people almost never believed him when he said the truth but growing up with such a strict mother, Sam was sometimes too scared and most times too wary of the consequences to approach any person of the opposite sex for romantic purposes.

He was still shocked by how easily his mom accepted Kayla, but still, he was yet to find the confidence to ask her out.

Despite how much he wanted to evade the conversation, Smith Rowe imposed it on him, and eventually, he listened.

Sam promised nothing though, he just said he would try his best.

After his system informed him of completing his daily system quest, he finally bid Smith Rowe farewell not just for today, but for the next few weeks.

This was because, for the first time in Sam's short career, he finally got his first international call up by his home country.

Sam would have a shot at representing Nigeria for the first time.

"Goodluck man, I hope the coach gives you the chance to play". Smith Rowe waved at him as they parted ways.

"Thanks man, I hope I play too".

Getting back to his hotel room, just like Smith Rowe said, Kayla was there waiting for him. She arrived just yesterday to personally wish him happy birthday in her words, and for another important reason that they shared.

Sam was finally ready to buy a house in London.

After doing some internet surfing with Kayla for the past few weeks online, she finally found something that he liked that was within his budget here in Fulham.

Sam settled for a fine luxurious semi-detached house in Fulham.

Houses in London were expensive though. The average price of a house in Fulham, South West London is around 1,126,000 Euros. The average price for a flat in Fulham is 731,000 Euros.

For a terraced property, it was more expensive with the average price at 1,700,000 Euros while for a semi-detached property, it was a whooping average price of 2,582,000 Euros.

Sam didn't have this amount of money to splurge on a house in Fulham. And since he didn't want to stay in a less affluent district in London, he followed Kayla's advice of going for a leasehold instead of a freehold.

That was how he got the luxurious semi-detached house with 5 rooms in Fulham for a leasehold for far less than the price to buy the property outrightly.

Today, with Kayla's help, after completing his daily system quest, Sam finally moved out of the hotel where he had stayed for the first 8 months of his life in England. He had a nice experience at the hotel.

He would give them a 5-star review later.

Moving out with Kayla, Sam could not help but think back to the conversation he had with Smith Rowe as he looked at the girl.

'Damn, that bastard! Now I can't think straight'.

'I'll do it later'.

All they had to do was enter the semi-detached apartment since with Kayla's help, Sam already hired a professional interior designing company to set everything up before they entered.

The house was the perfect home he had always dreamed of.

Inside, Sam felt at peace.

He ate Kayla's food and spent quality time with her through the morning but that evening, both of them finally separated as Sam left for Nigeria.

He responded to the call to duty to represent his country's national football team. Sam was excited for it.

Kayla stayed behind in London, in his house.

On the flight back, Sam could not help but think about his career once again. He never expected to receive his first international call up at the young age of 19.

'My career is really all beds and roses so far'.

On the flight, unable to curb the excitement he felt at the prospect of following in the footsteps of illustrious Nigerian internationals like Justin Jay Jay Okocha and Kanu Nwankwo, he decided to distract himself with something else.

Sam focused on his system, more precisely his system status.

~-----~

[Player status!]

Host: Samuel Moses

Current Career Status: Premier League player, EFL Cup reigning champion

Talent Rating: A+

Player Position: Attacking Midfield

Player Attributes:

*Pace: 81

*Shot: 79

*Pass: 80

*Dribbling: 76

*Defending: 38

*Physicality: 76

*Stamina: 84

Overall Rating: 81

...

[Owned Football Skills:]

[Passive skill: Stalwart]

>You have proven your credentials as a reliable stalwart with well-rounded attributes in the middle of the pitch. You can score, you can assist, you can dribble, and you can press; you are the complete package<

>+10% to all 4 packages when on the pitch<

>All 4 packages refer to your shooting attribute, your passing attribute, your dribbling attribute, and your stamina attribute<

[Active skills:]

[Basic mastery level: La croqueta; body feint; Power shot; step overs, roulette, knuckle shot, overhead kick]

[Intermediate mastery level: Elastico, Cruyff turn]

[Advanced mastery level: Spatial awareness]

...

[Legendary Inheritance: Spatial Awareness]

[Legendary Inheritance: Elastico]

...

[Ability cards:]

>Shoot it like Lewy<

[Card uses remaining: 2]

>Thread it like KDB<

[Card uses remaining: 2]

>Bend it like Beckham<

[Card uses remaining: 2]

...

[Title: Space Interpreter!]

[System Remark: An elite young talent playing in one of the best leagues in the world!]

~-----~

Sam looked outside through the window of the airplane, a smile outlining his lips. 'I've come a long way'. He thought.

Chapter 172 International break [1]

Sam touched down in Nigeria when it was already late, and the first thing that welcomed him on the airport was not his family, but a system notification.

~-----~

[You have received a new system mission: An International!]

[Mission Description: In football, there is a certain pride that comes with representing your country on the international stage; it is the greatest pride of a professional football player. Prove to your coach that selecting you for the Nigerian squad was the right decision and force him into playing you.]

[Mission Objective: Show that you are a worthy Nigerian international!]

[Mission Reward: +3 increase to a random football attribute!]

~-----~

This was the best news that any player going on a mission to represent his country in the footballing landscape could receive.

Sam never expected it, and it made him even happier.

It made him even more determined to perform.

After the system notifications did he finally meet his family who were waiting for him right there in the Abuja airport. Mr. Moses drove his full family on his car to welcome their son back home from England.

After the game on the 31st against Ipswich Town, the next day Kayla came to London to meet Sam, and the next day he completed all his dealings in Fulham.

Today was 2nd of June, a Sunday.

Sam received his call-up to the Nigerian national team on 1st of June, and on that same day, the Nigerian coach sent him the upcoming AFCON qualifying fixtures for the national team.

AFCON was the African version of the Euros and Copa America tournaments in Europe and America, the African Cup of Nations.

(African Cup of Nations qualification- Group stage!)

(Matchday 1 of 6:)

(Nigeria – Benin)

(Date: 7th September, 2024)

...

(Matchday 2 of 6:)

(Rwanda – Nigeria)

(Date: 10th September, 2024)

Sam and his new international teammates would play only 2 games before being released to focus back on club football.

Since the Nigeria squad's home stadium was right here in Abuja, the Nnamdi Azikiwe stadium, Sam stayed in his family mansion in Abuja. That night, he spent time with his family, catching up before sleeping early.

It may not show on his face but Sam was incredibly excited about the opportunity of finally representing his country on the international stage.

He was not just excited at the prospect of representing his country, another reason why he was so excited was because for the first time in his life, he was going to be playing for a side that was not always seen as the underdog.

Yes, in international football, Nigeria was not always the underdog as they had a fairly high rank in the FIFA rankings.

And according to the media, the current Nigerian squad was the most talented in years with some truly big names of football playing for the country.

By representing Nigeria, Sam would get to play with big names like Victor Boniface and Victor Osimhen, 2 of the biggest strikers currently in the world, also the likes of Ademola Lookman and Samuel Chukwueze.

Just thinking about them left Sam more excited than usual.

This was why he slept even earlier than normal today.

Sam wanted to bring his habit from Fulham to the Nigerian national team of being the first player to report to training, and he wanted to start it the next day.

Just like he hoped, sleeping early enabled him to wake up early. The first thing that he did was to complete his daily system quest, after which he drove his father's car to the national stadium in Abuja.

Training was supposed to start by 8 but Sam arrived 45 minutes early, but unlike what he expected, he was not the first player to report to training.

2 players arrived before him.

Ola Aina, the Nigerian wingback and William Troost-Ekong, the Nigerian national team captain reported for training earlier than him.

Sam was surprised, this was his first-time meeting both players.

Seeing him, William paused and smiled. "You're Sam right? The new addition to the squad".

"Yes, nice to meet you sir". Sam went closer and took his hand for a handshake.

"Welcome to the squad".

"Thank you sir".

"No need to call me sir, you can just call me William. We're teammates now".

This was not Sam's first-time hearing this from older teammates but like usual, he declined politely. His mom would kill him if she learned that he was calling a man more than a decade older than him by his first name.

"So, I heard you play for Fulham..."

Engaging in small talk, the 3 players soon got ready before entering the pitch to start warming up.

And just like that, Sam easily got over the dread of his new environment.

A few minutes later, one after the other, new faces started showing up to the stadium and in no time, the coach finally arrived, Finidi George.

Seeing the third coach of his still short professional football career, Sam's eyes lit up with fire since by now, from experience, he already knew what coaches wanted from new players, they wanted to be impressed.

Having impressed coach Yemi Daniel and then coach Marco Silva in Fulham before getting to play regularly, this time again, despite his reputation in Fulham, he had no doubt that he had to go through the same circle again.

But this time, Sam was ready.

Some big names may be with him on the pitch today, but Sam was not deterred or starstruck by them. Having played against countless big names in the premier league already, he was able to stay calm.

All he wanted at this moment was to outperform them. 'I respect you guys, but I must outperform you all!'

'That is the only way to impress the coach!'

And once training started, Sam did what he did best, impress.

With familiar faces like Alex Iwobi and Calvin Bassey in the squad, Sam was able to quickly settle into his mojo, displaying his talent effortlessly.

His confidence oozed anytime he touched the ball.

In just his first training session, his teammates and his coach got to know more about his skills and ability on a football pitch.

For the next few days, Sam continued impressing in training and then, like the rolling pages of a book, days passed and in no time, it was 7th September.

The D-day was here.

The Benin Republic national team arrived in Nigeria for the AFCON qualifying game. For the Nigerian side, Finidi George already released his starting XI long ago.

Just like Sam expected, he was not in the lineup.

He watched from the bench as the international football game started.

Chapter 173 International break [2]

FWEEEE!

From the first minute of this game, one thing became very clear, Nigeria was the superior side.

On paper, they were the superior side and it showed on the pitch.

And since Nigeria was playing at home, buoyed by the loud noise of their home supporters as Sam watched the proceedings from the bench in awe, they dominated the visitors from Benin.

Nigeria started with a 3-4-3 formation against their opponents' 4-1-4-1 formation. Stanley Nwabali, the new face who displaced the former Nigerian number 1 during the last AFCON tournament to become the starting goalkeeper started in between the posts.

Ahead of him was the 3-center back partnership of Samuel Ajayi, William Troost-Ekong, and the solid Calvin Bassey.

The midfield comprised of Ola Aina, Ndidi, Alex Iwobi, and Onyemaechi.

As for the attack, the trio of Samuel Chukwueze, Victor Boniface, and Ademola Lookman started in that order from right to left.

When the game started, Nigeria overwhelmed Benin Republic.

On every aspect of this game, Nigerian dominated. They dominated possession, locked and won the midfield battle; their defenders completely locked the Benin Republic attackers out of the game while their own attackers consistently terrorized the Benin Republic backline.

The Super Eagles were imperious against their opponents, but the only thing lacking from their game so far was a goal.

Despite being dominated, the Benin Republic players all stayed deep, digging in to defend with their lives and it worked for some time, till it no longer worked.

Ademola Lookman, the mercurial winger who was in form opened the scoring during additional time of first half as after a trademark mazy run from the left side of the pitch, he blasted a perfect shot into the bottom right corner of the net, beating the Benin Republic goalkeeper.

"GOALLLL...!" The Nigerian stadium roared to life.

Ecstatic fans of the Super Eagles removed their green and white jerseys, waving it wildly with joy as they celebrated their team.

Acknowledging the adoration directed his way, Ademola Lookman charged towards the corner flag and under all the attention, jumped high and turned in mid-air before dishing out the famous suiii celebration.

"Suiiiiii...!" The large chunk of the fans in the stadium did it with him.

That goal definitely deflated the Benin Republic enthusiasm, Victor Boniface was the one who grabbed the assist for the goal.

The first half ended with Nigeria already leading 1-0.

When second half started, the Benin Republic players finally came out of their shells, proving threatening within the first few minutes of the second half but it was all just the struggles of a cornered rat.

They withered soon after as the Nigerian domination continued.

And just like the first half, the scoring problem seemed to continue till Finidi George finally pulled the plug, making a few substitutions.

Having entered the game to replace Boniface at some point, Victor Osimhen utilized the few time he got as he lashed onto a well-driven cross, powering a header past the Benin Republic goalkeeper into the net in the 78th minute.

"GOALLLL...!" The Nigerian stadium exploded again.

"Victor Osimhen is on the mark again, the Nigerian striker is just electric!"

While the commentator raved, spreading his arms, Victor Osimhen charged towards the corner flag in celebration as his teammates swarmed him.

Watching from the bench, Sam felt his blood boil. He threw a hopeful glance at his coach but Finidi George did not even see it.

Sam was calm though; he was used to this.

That 2nd goal dampened the Benin Republic morale even more and finally, they gave up, fully retreating into their shells to prevent the score line from turning embarrassing but that was a mistake.

In the 83rd minute, Ademola Lookman doubled his tally for the day, making it 3-0 for Nigeria as he scored from a well driven low shot.

The Nigeria players were now enjoying themselves on the pitch.

And this was when in the 86th minute, Finidi George pulled the plug again, substituting Ndidi out and introducing Sam, the youngster into the game.

Sam almost could not believe his ears when the assistant coach informed him of the coach's decision. 'Yes! I hit the jackpot today!'

It was just 4 minutes, but it was 4 minutes of international football!

To Sam, that was all he wanted to make his debut.

When Sam entered the pitch, surprisingly, there was loud applause from the home fans, this was because they knew him mostly from his days in Enyimba FC.

This support made Sam even more excited as he entered the pitch.

'It's just 4 minutes, can I do something?'

'No, that's the wrong thinking,' he grinned. 'I have to do something'.

With the coach's 3-4-3 formation, there was no attacking midfielder, just central and defensive midfielders. When Sam received his international call-up, he already expected a situation like this.

'I won't get to play at my preferred position all the time'.

'This is not Enyimba, nor even Fulham. If I get to play for Barca one day, the same thing may apply though, I must prove that I absolutely own the position before I get to play on it consistently'.

'And here, it's even different. It's a much more daunting task since I'll literally have the coach change his playstyle just to fit me, an attacking midfielder'.

'Well, first, I have to prove my worth'.

When Sam entered the game, he chanted a new mantra. 'Calm! Stay calm'.

This way, he was able to contain the wild emotions of excitement in him, settling down and giving his all to focus on football.

During the first few minutes, Sam's impact was felt immediately in the center of the park as with him, Nigeria was able to hold on to possession more.

Bam! Bam!

He kept on passing balls with artistic fluidity like an elite central midfielder, spraying passes everywhere across the field to his teammates.

A few of his accurate long passes elicited cheers from the home fans.

Sam had very little time, but he did what he needed to do, maintaining a ridiculous 100% passing rate despite giving the most passes since entering the pitch.

On his debut for Nigeria, Sam's game was exceedingly tidy as he just passed, skipping past only 1 challenge at a time as he refrained from flashy dribbling.

He thought this tidiness would be the only aspect of his game he got to show to his coach to impress him but then in the 90th plus 3 minutes, he noticed Ademola Lookman raise an arm up before going on a run on the left side of the pitch.

'It's risky, a 50-50 chance, should I pass?'

Sam was hesitant to botch his pass completion rate, but then, was passing just what he came to do? 'F*ck it! When did I start settling for only passing?'

'Besides, it's Lookman, the man in form!'

BAM!

Hitting the ball perfectly with the inside of his right foot, the ball curled upward past the full Benin Republic defense and then past Ademola Lookman's marker before falling perfectly in the path of the inform Nigerian winger.

The winger's pace was too much for his marker.

Lookman calmly took the ball in his strides, exploding forward with speed and immediately, a section of the home fans in the Nnamdi Azikiwe stadium stood up in excitement.

As the Nigerian winger charged in, Dandjinou, the Benin Republic goalkeeper charged out but maintaining his cool, Ademola Lookman calmly kicked the ball as it rolled in between the legs of the goalkeeper into his net.

"...!" For a brief moment, the stadium was silent, then...

"GOALLLLL...!" The home supporters roared again.

"What a performance from the Nigerian winger! And he got his hattrick! But what a delicious pass from the young teenager on his international debut!"

Ademola Lookman slid on his knees as he charged towards the corner flag in celebration before standing up, turning around and hugging Sam who already ran towards him excitedly to celebrate with him.

Sam felt on top of the moon. 'I got my first assist for Nigeria!'

Chapter 174 International break [3]

Sam's first game on the international stage ended with a 4-0 win to his country where he grabbed an assist and Ademola Lookman got a hattrick.

Ademola Lookman won the man of the match award.

One of the key moments of that memory that made him exceedingly happy after the game was when his coach approached him. "You did well Sam, that was a tidy performance".

'He doesn't hide his praise!' This was a welcome surprise, Sam was excited. 'This means I'll have an easier time of worming my way into his heart'.

To him, that exchange was the best aspect of his debut.

Immediately after the game, Sam drove back to his family home right there in Abuja where he met his father who was already drunk in joy and passion.

Mr. Moses was a lot of things, and one of those things he was biggest in was that he was a patriotic Nigerian despite how bad the Nigerian economy was turning into. And he was an even bigger football fan.

The middle-aged man once tried to play football professionally but failed.

Seeing his son fulfilling this dream on his behalf, playing for a club in England was already a great source of pride for him, but playing for Nigeria?

To Mr. Moses, there was no greater pride than that.

When Sam gave that unreal assist, while watching the game on his TV, this middle-aged man could not hold himself as tears streamed down his eyes.

He felt like the luckiest dad in the whole world.

...

A few days later, Sam joined the rest of his teammates as they went on a trip to Rwanda where they would play their last game of the international break.

The game was scheduled for 10th September.

In this game, the Nigerian coach, Finidi George started with the same line-up and players, making just a single change as he replaced Alex Iwobi with Dele-Bashiru who completed the midfield quadruple today.

Rwanda played with a unique 4-4-1-1 formation.

It was clear that despite playing at home, Rwanda intended to play defensive football. And when the referee's whistle eventually sounded, they did just that.

FWEEEE!

The game started incredibly slowly as this Rwanda side showed their coach's philosophy, playing a slow paced, physical, and grueling game.

The Nigerian defense barely got any work as they snuffed out any Rwandan counterattack on time, but the midfielders and offensive players were having a horror day at work against the defensive block of their opponents.

The players who were supposed to be creative on the pitch were finding it incredibly hard to create anything noteworthy.

In recent times, Nigerian coaches have been heavily criticized by fans for playing boring defensive football despite having such an elite crop of attackers. And maybe they were right because today, there was zero creativity against the Rwandan defense as frustration mounted on the pitch.

Only Ademola Lookman looked lively in attack, constantly driving at the Rwandan defense. He threatened but he got nothing to show for it.

The first half ended in a drab goalless draw.

During half-time, Finidi George was highly critical of his players as he gave a few instructions before sending them back to the pitch with no change made.

And well, that was a decision that the coach learned to rue.

The drab performance continued as the Rwandans showed no intentions of coming out of their shell. Clearly, they were more than glad to settle with a draw.

And despite the boring display, the Rwandan fans showed no signs of displeasure as their voice remained loud. They were firmly behind their team.

'So fans can actually love a display like this'. Sam's eyes widened. 'No, I don't think it's love, they know they're the underdogs so they just want to win'.

'They don't care how their team do it, if they can't win, then a point'.

'They're satisfied with a point'.

Today, Sam's eyes opened to the reality of international football and it was safe to say that it was an eye opener.

But still, he itched to take part in the proceedings. He constantly threw glances his coach's way that were yet to be answered.

After some time, Finidi George finally made a bunch of offensive changes as he swapped out his whole forward trio and 1 of his midfielders, introducing Frank Onyeka, Victor Osimhen, Moses Simon, and Awoniyi.

Immediately, these fresh players injected much needed energy into the game as Nigeria became much more threatening.

Osimhen, the lethal striker repeatedly unleashed dangerous shots after entering the game, but none of it bore fruit yet as the game drew to an end.

This continued till the 80th minute.

At this point, Finidi George felt exhausted since his team already tried everything in their arsenal to break the opponents' defensive block to no avail.

With nothing to lose, he made another change, introducing Sam into this game at the 80th minute.

Sam did not think about anything, not even the opportunity that he just got. As he jogged into this pitch, he thought of only one thing.

'Win!' 'Win!' 'Win!'

He already started chanting the mantra in his head.

It seemed childish, the delusions of someone yet to recognize the immensity of mount Tai but that was Sam's mantra and it worked for him.

As soon as Sam entered this game, it changed. Like a Dragon spreading its dominion over its territory, he chased down every ball that passed through his area in the middle of the pitch with rabid energy.

His energy enabled him to steal the ball within just a minute of entering the pitch. Immediately, the Rwandan players responded to his threat with multiple players swarming him.

Sam didn't panic as with his spatial awareness, his highest mastered skill at the advanced mastery level, he spotted Victor Osimhen's markers briefly leave him in reaction to his movement.

'Wrong move!'

Bam!

Sam moved instinctively, caressing the ball with the outside of his boot while threading it through the Rwandan players with deadly accuracy.

Time seemed to stop as the ball arrived before the Nigerian striker.

"...!" This stadium briefly froze as Victor Osimhen got the ball, unmarked in the 18-yard box.

This striker took one touch of the ball to control it, and then with his second touch he unleashed a powerful shot at goal.

The Rwandan goalkeeper was rooted to the spot, but then...

BAM!

It hit the bar!

Victor Osimhen tried to pounce on the rebound but he was bundled out of the way by the tall and physical Rwandan defenders.

On his knees, Osimhen grabbed his head in agony at the missed opportunity.

"What an impact from the substitute!"

"He almost just became a super sub, what a steal and pass!"

Sam did not listen to the commentator though, he only listened to the voice in his head.

'Win!' 'Win!' 'Win!'

When the game continued, recognizing his threat now, every time Sam received the ball in a dangerous position, multiple Rwandan players moved to respond to his threat but that was not enough to stop Sam.

In the short time he was on the pitch, he set up Moses Simon who took another shot that the in-form Rwandan goalkeeper stopped.

And then, he unleashed a thunderous outside the box shot only for the goalkeeper to tip it over the bar for a corner.

Sam ruffled his black hair in frustration but he quickly recovered, preparing for the corner.

When the corner kick was taken, a determined Sam rose highest, planting a firm header towards goal only for the goalkeeper to catch it again.

"Come on!" Sam screamed as the frustration of his teammates started getting to him; his blood burned hot like a volcano.

90 minutes already elapsed, they had just 4 minutes of extra time.

In the last 4 minutes, every Rwandan player camped in their defense, weathering storm after storm of Nigerian attacks.

Sam's inclusion into the pitch infused rabid attacking energy into the Nigerian side as they kept on going and then in the 90th plus 1 minute, Sam did it.

Showcasing his title as Space Interpreter again, Sam drifted into space in the 18-yard box through the blind spot of the Rwandan defenders like an assassin, ghosting into the box as with his right leg, he latched into Moses Simon's cross.

Bam!

Sam poked the ball into the net; the net rippled.

"GOALLLLL...!" Screaming excitedly, Sam removed his jersey, swinging it wildly as he charged towards the corner flag.

"What a goal from the Nigerian midfielder!"

"Even I didn't see him run, what a frightening command over space!"

"But oh, wait, the referee's assistant just confirmed and raised the flag. Can you believe it? It's offside!"

"What a game this is turning out to be!"

Hearing the commentator's words, Sam stopped his run, placed his arms on his head and looked only to see the offside flag.

"Come on! I was not offside!" He complained loudly but the referee paid him no heed, beckoning for Rwanda to continue play.

The referee did not forget to give him a yellow card for taking off his jersey.

Sam's frustration was rising to a boiling point.

"Come on Sam, the game is not over yet". Osimhen patted him on the shoulder, trying to get him going again.

Even the striker could tell that he was playing at an elite level.

Sam nodded, jogging back but inside. He was boiling with frustration and just as he started jogging, Rwanda played a quick freekick, catching the Nigerian players off-guard who were yet to recover back to their natural positions having just tried to go celebrate with Sam.

Sam spotted the danger immediately. 'This is bad!'

Thud!

He dug into his stamina, engaging in a sprint immediately.

Muhire, the Rwandan second striker caught the Nigerian defenders napping as he caught the ball in his strides just after the halfway line, about to blast past the defenders with his pace when he heard thudding sounds behind him.

Before he knew it, this player felt contact then he was swept off his feet aggressively from behind as he collapsed on the ground.

Immediately, he grabbed his leg, exaggeratedly screaming in pain.

FWEEEE!

"Wow! A straight red card to Sam!"

"Well, it was a sliding tackle from behind so the referee got that right. But it's so cruel for the Nigerian teenager, just after having his goal disallowed".

"He must have let his frustration boil over".

When Sam stood up, only one question rang in his head. 'What have I done?'

Sam was sent off the pitch.

Nigeria drew the game 0-0.

Chapter 175 Adversity and comfort

"Don't think too much about it Sam, the red card was not your fault. You actually took one for the team, so thank you". So Alex Iwobi said.

"Yeah, I understand". So Sam said.

At the end of the game, he even laughed over the fact that he got a red card in just his 2nd international cap but on getting home, when Sam remembered the look the coach directed at him, he became devastated.

...

Ring! Ring!

Silence.

Ring! Ring!

Silence.

A few minutes later, there was a knock on the door before it was pushed open. Mrs. Moses peeped inside her son's room with a concerned look on her face.

"Sam, your food is still waiting for you".

"Sorry mom, I don't feel like eating yet".

Mrs. Moses lingered, then she sighed. "Ok, but at least pick Kayla's call. She's worried about you".

Hearing that, Sam raised his head in the darkness. He just mumbled an ok.

"Your food is waiting for you, anytime you want to eat". Saying that, Mrs. Moses finally left with a look of distress on her face.

Ring! Ring!

When the phone rang again, Sam hesitated slightly before walking over from his bed where he sat previously.

"Hey".

"Hey, babe".

'Babe?' That distracted Sam a bit.

"How are you doing?" Kayla's soft voice sounded again.

"I'm good, I guess".

"You don't sound good".

"Haha, funny".

Kayla stayed silent for a few seconds. "Can I enter? I'm at the door".

Hearing that, Sam was stunned as he looked at his door. "Wait, what? I thought you were in..."

"I took the first flight to come here".

When Sam walked up to his door, he was beyond surprised to see Kayla standing at the door of his room.

Immediately after the game in Rwanda, the Nigerian players took a night flight back and that was how Sam came to his family home. It was already late.

He never expected Kayla to be here by this time.

"Why...?" The question didn't fully leave his lips when Kayla hugged him, shutting him up.

Sam was stunned by the sudden hug, but he didn't question it, he needed it. As soon as Kayla hugged him, he hugged back tightly, squeezing gently.

"It's fine". She whispered to him.

Pent-up emotions that he had been holding back in were washed away by this hug, it was so simple that Sam could not believe it.

All his anger at himself dissipated, and then he sighed in relief. "Thanks for coming Kayla, really".

"It's fine". She smiled as they finally broke away from the hug. "Go wear your clothes, we're going out".

"Really? To where?"

"It's a secret".

While Sam went back inside to wear his clothes, Kayla met with his parents, informing them about certain things and when Sam was ready, they drove off.

That night, Kayla drove him to a popular 5-star hotel there in Maitama, Abuja.

There, she ordered delicious African food from the hotel's restaurant which she feasted on with Sam before eventually leading him to the bar.

Sam was never a heavy drinker but today, with Kayla leading him on, he didn't feel the need to restrain himself as he went loose and drank till satisfaction.

Listening to the music, and aided by the drink, Sam finally started venting his frustration. "I still can't believe I was offside".

"I don't know how they saw it, but I believed I was onside, that was a goal! I saw the video replay, that was a goal".

"I was so sure it was a goal!"

"It's fine," Kayla patted him on the back, reassuring him with her warmth. "Officials make bad decisions in football from time to time".

"Why me?" Sam said in frustration. "Why today of all days? Why when I'm trying to impress the coach to solidify my spot on the team?!"

"I'm so frustrated!"

"You had to see the look on the coach's face after I got sent off. I know, I did let the frustration get to me, but still it was me taking a bullet for the team because I recognized danger".

"If that guy was left free to run, the team would have been in danger. There was a high chance of that resulting in a goal".

"Why can't he see it that way?"

"Ah! I'm so frustrated!"

"It's fine, let it all out, you'll feel better that way".

Kayla was right, after venting for a few minutes, Sam finally calmed down as he no longer felt as frustrated, just a bit dizzy from the alcohol.

"Do you want to dance?" Kayla asked gently.

Hearing that, Sam grinned. "I'm not a good dancer but right now, I really really want to dance".

And so, both of them went to the dance floor as they joined others under the red and blue lights, dancing to their hearts content.

From freestyling to the Nigerian jams playing from the speakers, both of them soon left the rhythm of the music, dancing to their own rhythm instead as together in the dance floor, they hugged each other, Kayla's head on his chest.

And together, they swayed to each other's rhythm.

Feeling her so close to him, her body warmth energizing him, Sam slowly pushed her blonde hair to the side, caressing it gently then he whispered. "Thank you, Kayla, for this moment, I really appreciate it".

Hearing that, she raised her head to look him in the eye.

This close, they could feel each other's breaths as their eyes stared straight into each other's eyes.

Staring into her eyes, Sam felt an urge. Perhaps, if he was sober, he would have been too deterred to do it but thankfully, he was not sober.

Leaning in, Sam kissed Kayla on the lips.

She didn't fight it, responding in kind as she kissed him back.

And in that moment, it was as if a supernova explosion of passion just triggered as both of them lost themselves in the moment, thoroughly savoring it.

When they eventually broke out from the kiss, they looked at each other briefly before kissing again. Now with bated breaths, Kayla subtly suggested. "Maybe let's go to the room?"

"Ok". Sam obliged immediately.

Leaving the bar, they went to the hotel room and immediately they entered inside, they locked the door and switched off the lights.

There was the sound of interlocking lips again in the dark, then the sound of clothes being discarded, then a thudding sound as bodies fell on top the bed.

That night, 2 young adults succumbed to their hormones and the urgings of their passion as they intertwined in the most ancient ritual of the opposite sex.

That night, Sam seized to be a virgin.

Chapter 176 A lucky Sam

11th September, 2024...

In a certain 5-star hotel room in Maitama, Abuja, Kayla Banks woke up.

Rustle!

The soft rustle of curtains stirred her awake as sunlight filtered through sheer fabric, painting golden stripes across the crisp white sheets of the bed.

The room smelled faintly of fresh linen and a hint of something floral, perhaps the bouquet on the desk by the window. She stretched lazily, the plush duvet sliding off her as she blinked into the glowing light of morning.

The bed was a cocoon of comfort, its pillows still holding the delicate imprint of her sleep, but she could not help but feel that something was missing.

A distant hum of life outside filtered through the double-paned glass; a blend of city sounds muffled by the sanctuary of the hotel room.

She sat up, her long black hair tumbling in loose waves over her shoulders, catching the golden morning rays as she finally realized what was missing.

Kayla looked around. 'Where is he?'

As soon as she had this thought, the door to the hotel room was pushed open. Kayla looked over.

...

A few minutes earlier...

Thud! Thud!

A young man energetically jogged through the streets of Maitama, a subtle smile gracing his face as he seemed like the happiest man in the world.

Sam indeed felt like the happiest man in the world.

There was a spring in his steps too as he jogged, and with his headset over his head, he could not help but hum to the music currently playing happily.

He was in a good mood.

That morning, as he jogged, the events of yesterday in Rwanda never seemed to happen at all as they were replaced with just happy memories. Sam felt rejuvenated, he felt energy flooding his body.

Shortly after, Sam got the notification that he was looking for.

~~~~~

[You have completed System Daily Quest: Mentality Monster!]

[You have been rewarded with a low-grade physical conditioning elixir!]

~----~

Immediately after getting this notification, having calculated it perfectly, he quickly took a byline into the hotel building.

Entering inside, he greeted the security personnel with a big smile on his face before walking to his hotel room, only to meet Kayla already awake.

Sam froze for a moment, but then he smiled. "Hey, you're awake".

Still on the bed, Kayla looked at him. "Where did you go to?"

"To jog".

"Really? Even today of all days, you couldn't just stay with me?"

Sam chuckled before presenting something to her on a plate. "I got corn for you on the way". He quickly kissed her on the cheek and dodged before she could lash out, laughing. "I stink, let me go take a quick bath".



"I'm joining you".

"Huh?"

"I'm joining you!"

"..." Sam was speechless.

Well, this was a situation that he had never found himself in before.

After the events of yesternight, though both of them didn't mention it yet, they didn't forget it. Actually, they could not forget it.

Getting intimate for the first time already built this level of instinctive trust and vulnerability between both of them that Sam's thought about this unfamiliar subject changed. 'Maybe bathing together is not so bad after all'.

In the end, they did just that. They took their bath together.

By the time they were done, the hotel workers finally brought food for them. After enjoying the feast prepared by the hotel chef, they ate the corn as additives.

Sitting close to each other, after eating, Sam finally cleared his throat. "Umm, about yesterday..."

"It's fine".

"Huh?"

Kayla looked at him, flashing him a smile. "It's fine, really".

Sam sighed, taking a deep breath. Considering how exposed and carefree Kayla seemed to be, Sam never expected her to be a virgin like him but yesternight, he got a big surprise.

This was why he even felt the need to revisit the event. For a young adult like Kayla to keep her virginity till now, considering how beautiful she was, Sam knew how hard it must have been and was why he respected it even more.

It took trust and a high enough degree of love to do it.

Yes, the world was bad. Yes, the world was corrupt but even in a corrupt world, there are seeds of good and Sam was lucky enough to get one of the good seeds. 'I guess I'm really lucky'. He thought.

Since Kayla said it was fine, he didn't press more but finally, Sam felt ready to say something that he had been holding back since.

Taking a deep breath again, still sitting on the bed, he interlocked his fingers with hers before looking into her eyes. "Kayla, would you be my girlfriend?"

For a few seconds, Kayla just looked at him then she burst out laughing.

Sam felt awkward. "Was it funny?"

"Sam, you're so funny!" Kayla laughed. "So formal, so official, just like the Sam I know". She leaned on his shoulder, still shaking from laughter.

"I should have expected this from you". She chuckled again.

"So, to you, I was not your girlfriend yet all this while?" She sat up again, looking at him with a cute frown. "I feel hurt, damn".

"I've stayed in your family house, I've met your parents, I've even slept in your room multiple times, but yet you never saw me as your girlfriend yet?"

"Umm, I," Sam scratched his head. "I just thought I had to ask first to make it official, you know".

"You doofus!" She pushed him playfully by the head, laughing cutely.

Sam looked at her. "So?"

"Do you even need to ask?" She looked at him. "I accept". She jumped over him, pushing him down into the bed as she looked at him with her azure blue eyes.

Then, she kissed him passionately.

Sam truly felt that he was lucky. 'Can a morning ever go better than this?'

...

That same morning, after getting ready, both of them went to the Moses' family house. One glance at them and Mrs. Moses threw a proud smile at her son, winking slightly as Sam shifted uncomfortably under her gaze.

Anyways, Sam was still beaming with joy.

"Big brother, what happened? Why are you so happy?" Even Sophia noticed as she looked at him curiously.

"Me? Nothing happened, I'm just happy". Sam said, smiling.

Sophia looked at him suspiciously.

That morning, after eating a second round of food at his family house, Sam finally bid his family farewell as he returned to England with Kayla.

The international break was over.

## Chapter 177 A rejuvenated Sam

Sam felt rejuvenated.

"Hey bro, you look really happy, what happened?" Emile Smith Rowe asked as he could not help but notice the strange situation of his friend.

Sam was always lively, but this, this was different.

"I'm happy bro, things have been so smooth lately".

"Really?" Smith looked at him. "I followed the Nigerian games because of you. I saw what happened bro, sorry".

"That?" Sam chuckled, waving his hand dismissively. "I'm already long over that, I'll redeem myself in my next game for Nigeria after my suspension".

"I think that's the first red card of your career, right?"

Hearing that, Sam deflated a bit. "Now that you say it, yeah, I think so but it doesn't matter. It got nothing on me". He grinned.

"I like your mood bro; I hope it reflects on our game in 2 days".

Hearing that, Sam grinned again. "Rest assured bro, it will surely show".

Training, rest, reset..., going through this circle for 2 more days, the D-day finally came. It was time for matchday 4 of the English premier league.

(Premier league:)

(Matchday 4 of 38:)

(Southampton – Man United)

(Date: 14th September, 2024)

...

(Man City – Brentford)

(Date: 14th September, 2024)

...

(Fulham – West Ham)

(Date: 14th September, 2024)

...

(Crystal Palace – Leicester City)

(Date: 14th September, 2024)

...

(Brighton – Ipswich Town)

(Date: 14th September, 2024)

...

(Liverpool – Nottm Forest)

(Date: 14th September, 2024)

...

(Aston Villa – Everton)

(Date: 14th September, 2024)

...

(Bournemouth – Chelsea)

(Date: 14th September, 2024)

...

(Tottenham – Arsenal)

(Date: 15th September, 2024)

...

(Wolves – Newcastle)



(Date: 15th September, 2024)

It was another exciting matchday of the English premier league immediately after the international break and this time, Fulham was taking on West Ham at home. The players in white, black, and red were fired up.

Today, Adama Traore was benched as Raul Jimenez started as the striker, while behind him was the trio of Sam in attacking midfield, while Emile Smith Rowe and Alex Iwobi started in the wings.

Pereira and Lukic started in midfield. Tete, Andersen, Bassey, and Robinson started in defense, while Bernd Leno started in between the posts.

In a packed Craven Cottage filled with tens of thousands of excited Fulham supporters, the referee's whistle went off.

FWEEEE!

The first play of an exciting game was made.

Bam!

Wolves passed to kick off this exciting game.

With the likes of Michail Antonio, Mohamed Kudus, and Jaren Bowen leading from the front, West Ham was a dangerous side.

Aaron Wan-Bissaka, the ex-Manchester United player was their wildcard in defense and this fullback was clearly in form today.

During the first few minutes of this game, both sides were even as they struggled for domination. They shared the possession percentage, threatening at intervals as both sides played their football.

The most exciting battles though were in midfield as the players of both sides slugged it out.

Raul Jimenez though was the star of the opening minutes of this game as Fulham settled, slowly tightening their grip on the game.

After making a rare start in a long time, the striker seemed to have a point to prove as every touch, every pass, and every movement from him was so threatening that he left the West Ham defense on tenterhooks.

And eventually, he got his moment as from the right, Emile Smith Rowe played a pass for the determined striker to run into.

Winning the physical battle with his marker, Raul Jimenez stood his ground, maintained his cool as Areola, the West Ham goalkeeper charged towards him before calmly lobbing the ball above the goalkeeper to score a sumptuous goal in the 24th minute of this game.

"GOALLLL...!" Craven Cottage exploded.

These days, the fans in black, white, and red were used to shouting this a lot. Their team was in truly terrific form.

Charging towards the corner flag energetically with pupils dilated in excitement, Jimenez jumped before bumping his chest with his fist excitedly. "Come on!" He roared.

That goal sent the atmosphere in Craven Cottage fever-high.

The referee's whistle soon sounded to continue play.

This game was not Michail Antonio's game as Fulham's defense locked him out completely, but the duo of Mohamed Kudus and Jaren Bowen worried. All of their dribbling and playmaking was yet to result in a goal though.

"Emile Smith Rowe is so terrific today, while I dare say this is Raul Jimenez's best game in the whole year!"

"Sam is not feeling it yet, but he's not playing bad either. He seems to be enjoying himself on the pitch".

"Fulham are absolutely deadly recently".

"But don't write West Ham off yet, they can still score".

"And oof! What a horror tackle from Rodriguez. He's taken a yellow card for his troubles and conceded a freekick in a truly dangerous position!"

"Jimenez doesn't seem too badly hurt though".

In the 43rd minute of the game, Raul Jimenez won a freekick for his team just outside the West Ham 18-yard box in a dangerous position.

Like in training, Sam stepped up for this freekick.

Walking up to the ball and setting it up, Sam had a teasing smile on his face throughout. He seemed to be enjoying himself a lot today.

As soon as West Ham set up its wall and the referee's whistle sounded, Sam took one last look at goal, did a short run up to the ball, and then...

BAM!

Sam's shot synchronized with the West Ham wall of players' jump.

Well, they paid for their complacency of not putting an extra man to lay down as the ball rolled underneath the wall of players and straight into the bottom right corner of the West Ham net.

The goalkeeper dived but his hand could not reach the ball.

"GOALLLL....!" Craven Cottage roared again.

Smiling brightly, Sam spread his arms as he whirled towards the corner flag in celebration.

"What a goal!" The commentator raved. "Another game, another Sam goal, it's routine at this point".

"Is there anything that Sam cannot do?"

"He can score headers, he can score freekicks, he can score absolute bangers, he can score tap-ins, and he can still assist, and his work rate is so high".

"Ladies and gentlemen, you're seeing a legend in the making".

"Sam is the complete package".

Running to the corner flag, Sam stopped and spread his arms wide, doing the Jude Bellingham celebration as a familiar chant in Craven Cottage started.

"Sam!" "Sam!" "Sam!"

It was 2-0 to Fulham in the 43rd minute of the game.

## Chapter 178 An imperious Sam

The game was tight at first, but after 2 impressive goals from Raul Jimenez and Sam, West Ham were quickly losing grip over the game.

First half ended 2-0 to Fulham.

Half-time was very short to the Fulham players, they could not wait to get back into the pitch for the 2nd half and when they did, the onslaught continued.

The 3rd goal entered in just less than 2 minutes after the game resumed, in the first sequence of play orchestrated by Fulham.

Sam started kick-off, passing to Pereira before starting a run straight down the middle of the pitch alongside Raul Jimenez as the West Ham defense responded to the threat of these 2 players.

While both of them ran and as the West Ham press started, Pereira wiggled from a challenge before spraying the ball to the right-hand side where Emile Smith Rowe lurked.

Having been expecting it, the right winger took the ball, drove forward with it a bit, raised his head to look into the box before unleashing a perfect cross into the box for the 2 players.

The West Ham defenders scrambled to react.

They jumped, but not high enough. With his athletic spring legs like those of a frog, Sam jumped high into the air before planting a power header towards goal, aimed at the top right corner.

Reacting, Areola dived and his hand nicked the ball, but it was not enough.

It snuck past his grasp and into the net.

Craven Cottage was slow to react to this goal this time, but only by a second as the ecstatic Fulham fans quickly roared again in ecstasy.

"GOALLLL...!!!"

Smiling charmingly at the camera, Sam spread his arms in a shrug as he ran towards the corner flag, his smile widening into a grin.

His teammates jumped all over him in celebration.

"Are there anymore superlatives to describe this player? Just look at Fulham's position in the premier league table, that's the best superlative to describe him".

"Samuel Moses is a transformative player!"

"He's a prodigy! A once in generation type of genius!"

"Come next season, big clubs are going to be flocking around him like Ravens around carcass. What a player!"

"And it's how he makes it look so easy! See him Derek, he's enjoying himself!"

"He sure is, he makes it look so easy".

"And he's struck such a great understanding with Smith Rowe. The boy looks like an entirely different player from the one at Arsenal".

"You're right, Smith Rowe has been so good since making the switch to Fulham. The only thing that remains is if he can be consistent about it".

Sam was already enjoying himself since but that second goal..., that second goal seemed to push him over the edge into samba mode.

"Hehehe," Sam felt like black spiderman.

It was 3-0 to Fulham in the 47th minute of the game, and Sam got his brace.

And from there on, it was all Sam.

Sam receives a pass, throws a pass.



Sam receives a pass, wriggle through one or two players, gives a pass.

Sam receives a pass, obliterate his marker with just his first touch, settle down and play a penetrative defense-splitting through pass that cuts the whole West Ham apart like a hot knife through butter.

Sam receives a pass, goes on a mazy run, cutting through multiple players with his silky skills like they were not even there.

"What a prodigy!" The commentator raved.

"This game, every time that Sam has his legs on the ball, the fans are expecting something. You can see it Derek, you can literally feel it".

"Every time he has the ball, it's like something is going to happen".

"Is it only me or does he remind you of Ronaldinho too?"

"He's not Ronaldinho level yet but still, those elasticos of his, they can't help but remind you of a prime Ronaldinho terrorizing defenders for fun".

"Samuel Moses, what a fun player to watch".

"The entertainment level of this game is at 1000% I'm telling you".

As this second half progressed, it became increasingly clear to the West Ham players that in this kind of mood, Sam was simply unstoppable.

The only reason why he didn't get his hattrick yet was because the West Ham players were professional football players. They didn't give up yet, still putting their all into this game and anytime Sam got the ball, 2 players quickly closed him down.

Despite this, he remained a menace on the pitch.

But what is a menace?

Menace is just a show of intention to inflict harm, which meant Sam was more than a menace this game, because he did inflict the third harm to complete a perfect three.

In the 83rd minute, when the West Ham spirits were at an all-time low, after a bursting run from Adama Traore through the right who was already substituted into this game to replace Emile Smith Rowe at some point, the rapid winger threw in a cross that fell into the 18-yard box.

Mavropanos, the West Ham defender rose highest, heading the ball out but it was a poor clearance as it fell just outside the West Ham 18-yard box, where the danger man lurked, Samuel Moses.

Sam rose up after the ball, then with his chest, he controlled it.

Bam!

The ball was perfectly tamed with his chest, then...

Thud!

As soon as Sam landed on his feet even as the nearest West Ham player was already desperately charging forward to close him down, he felt adrenaline flood his body even as his eyes dilated in excitement and focus.

Swinging his right leg backward as Sam landed, he quickly flung it back in an iconic shooting technique, the knuckle ball technique.

POW!

Sam's right leg unleashed a rocket of a shot!

The ball flew up, above all the players in the 18-yard box even as Areola, the West Ham goalkeeper was rooted to the spot, just looking at the ball sail past him.

But just as the ball seemed on a sure path of flying off for a goal kick, it waved, then swerved back down into the top right corner of the net with speed.

The net rippled; another goal.

Craven Cottage exploded, and again, smiling brightly, Sam charged towards the corner flag as he did the Robert Lewandowski celebration.

"Samuel Mosesssssss!!!" The commentator screamed.

"What a boy! What a monster! What a prodigy!"

"I told you right Derek? The boy is a monster!"

"He's gone and scored a hatrick!"

In the 90th plus 5 minutes, Ings, the West Ham substitute scored a late goal, depriving Bernd Leno of a clean sheet but the game was already decided.

Fulham won 4-1 convincingly.

Sam won the man of the match award.

Chapter 179 International mission- make a comeback

Immediately after the end of the game against West Ham, Sam received a series of system notifications and it was not just what he expected.

Apart from his matchday rewards for his performance against West Ham, Sam got an entirely new notification that he did not expect, a new system mission.

~----~

[You have unlocked an International system mission: Make a comeback!]

[Mission Description: International football plays a big role in the reading of an elite professional football player's career. To be recognized as a truly world-class player, you need to prove that you can also do it with your country.]

[Mission Objective: Rise above adversity and make a comeback in the Nigerian national team!]

[Mission Reward: ???]

...

[You have unlocked a new International system mission: Make a statement- I am King!]

[Mission Description: Currently, you are at the periphery of the Nigerian national team. Make a statement display with any opportunity you get to show the whole country and your coach that you are the new King of Nigerian football.]

[Mission Objective: Force the coach of the Nigerian national team to build his team around you!]

[Mission Reward: Legendary Inheritance- Austin Jay Jay Okocha!]

[System Remark: Prove yourself and inherit the legacy of the legendary Nigerian winger who was so good he had to be named twice!]

~----~

Seeing these 2 new system missions, at first, Sam was stunned but then he grinned. 'Hell yeah!' He celebrated in his mind.

Any mission that gave him the chance to get a new legendary inheritance was something that Sam embraced with gusto. Afterall, his elastico and spatial awareness skills were already paying in dividends.

These 2 skills showed him the importance of legendary inheritances.

But Sam did not let the glamor get to his head though, by now, he could already tell that the system was using a carrot and stick method with him.

A legendary inheritance was a once in a lifetime opportunity for professional football players. It was so rare that it was impossible for upcoming football players to get it, the only way to get one was to become a legend of the game and create one. And that was no easy endeavor.

For Sam to get easy access to them like this was a gift, a privilege.

This did not mean getting them would be easy though.

The first mission to get another legendary inheritance that Sam had pending was the mission to get at least 30 goal contributions this season.

At first, looking at it, it seemed easy but in truth, it was incredibly hard.

Not only was Sam plying his trade in the premier league, the toughest league in the world, but which 19-year-old playing in the top 5 European leagues could confidently claim of getting 30 goal contributions in a season?

None at the moment. This showed the difficulty of the mission that Sam had; it was a mission for freaks.

As for the second one, forcing the Nigerian coach to build around him? This was even more ridiculous than the first.

The Nigerian national team was a team fielding big names like Victor Osimhen who still had a contract with Napoli, Victor Boniface of Bayer Leverkusen, Ademola Lookman of Atalanta, amongst other elite players.

It was going to be an uphill task for Sam to upstage all these world beaters to present the case that he was the best player in the national team.

Sam didn't shirk away from the challenge though, rather, he grinned. 'The system is getting to know me better these days, hehe'.

'These are exactly the types of missions that I love most'.

'Impossible missions, but to me,' he grinned. 'Impossible is nothing!'

Talking of legendary inheritances, after getting back to his new home in Fulham, Sam decided to check his player status again with his system. But this time, he focused on a particular aspect, his trump cards.

The things that made him Samuel Moses, the Nigerian Zidane.

~----~

[Owned Football Skills:]

[Passive skill: Stalwart]

[Active skills:]

[Basic mastery level: La croqueta; body feint; Power shot; step overs, roulette, knuckle shot, overhead kick]

[Intermediate mastery level: Elastico, Cruyff turn]



[Advanced mastery level: Spatial awareness]

...

[Legendary Inheritance: Spatial Awareness]

[Legendary Inheritance: Elastico]

...

[Ability cards:]

>Shoot it like Lewy<

[Card uses remaining: 2]

>Thread it like KDB<

[Card uses remaining: 2]

>Bend it like Beckham<

[Card uses remaining: 2]

...

[Title: Space Interpreter!]

[System Remark: An elite young talent playing in one of the best leagues in the world!]

~~~~~

This time, Sam focused on his ability cards.

Sam's passive skill, Stalwart was the perfect representative of his current ability. He was a solid attacking midfielder that could be trusted to perform every game, he had the skills to do it and the mentality to back it up.

But despite all these, his skills, his attributes, there were certain trump cards that Sam only use in situations where it was absolutely needed, his ability cards.

At the moment, he only had 3 ability cards but every single one of them was lethal enough to empower him to turn a game around singlehandedly.

He still vividly remembered the first time he made use of an ability card against Manchester City in the FIFA Club World Cup final. Against Manchester City, with the Shoot it like Lewy ability card, he scored a hatrick against the world-beating Manchester team.

With the Thread it like KDB and Bend it like Beckham ability cards, he had performed similar miracles in other games already.

But Sam didn't want to use them carelessly. Afterall, they were his trump cards.

"No other player in the world has a privilege like this," his eyes gleamed as he whispered. "If I am to have any chance at achieving my ambitious goal for this season, the turning point lies in using my ability cards wisely".

"Which game to use them, and what time".

"I need to be wise".

Sam ended the day with that consciousness in mind. Of course, once the thought of football left his head, he spent the time with his girlfriend cuddling.

Life without Kayla and life with her was so different, Sam loved life now better than it was before.

That night, Coach Marco Silva sent the fixture of the next game to his players.

(EFL Cup:)

(Preston – Fulham)

(Date: 17th September, 2024)

Sam and his teammates had just 2 days to rest and prepare for their next game in Preston.

Chapter 180 An unbeaten run [1]

Kayla was a model, but she was also a student.

She schooled in the Netherlands, a prestigious university where she studied theatre arts, the course of her dream.

Kayla hoped to make it in Hollywood.

It was hard, extremely hard, but it was her dream. And when Sam learned about it, despite the many unpleasant stories that he already heard about Hollywood, he didn't try to kill her dream, rather he supported it.

Sam would support her in the best way he could.

This was why in the 2 days building up to Fulham's EFL Cup game against Preston in away ground, after spending another day with her boyfriend, Kayla finally returned to the Netherlands to focus on her school.

Sam wanted Kayla close after his first intimate encounter with her, but he did not let his emotions override his logic.

He knew that they had to focus on their budding careers and school.

This was why he let her go. Of course, they would still be communicating daily on their phones but with Kayla gone, Sam was able to focus 100% on football again.

He spent the most time with Emile Smith Rowe these days as they jogged together, worked out together, trained together, and played football together.

In this climate, both of their football senses became sharper every day, their chemistry truly becoming telepathic.

Physically and mentally, Sam and Smith Rowe were in their best state.

And then, D-day finally came.

Sam didn't get to play in the last EFL Cup game against Birmingham but this time, Sam started. Coach Marco Silva heavily rotated his starting XI again, but he gave Sam the opportunity to play his first EFL Cup game of the season.

Since the beginning of the season, Fulham already played 5 games and they were in a crazy winning run of 5 games played, 5 games won.

Even if they eventually drew a game, it would still be an unbeaten run and to Fulham fans who were not used to this, this was unprecedented.

Against Preston, their 6th game of the new season, Fulham had the opportunity to extend their winning run and with Sam starting, the Fulham fans had extremely high hopes of doing it.

Today, Muniz led the line as the striker and behind him was the attacking trio of Reiss Nelson, Sam, and Cairney. The midfield comprised of Berge and Reed.

Behind them in defense were Sessegnon, Cuenca, Diop, and Castagne, while the Fulham back-up goalkeeper, Benda started in between the posts.

In paper, Fulham had the slight superiority over their opponents today.

But a major fact of this game was that this was Preston's home.

FWEEEE!

When the whistle sounded, the loud noise of the Preston fans drowned this stadium as they tried to suffocate the Fulham players and disrupt their game.

At first, it worked in the early stages of this game as Preston troubled Fulham, occasionally testing their goalkeeper.

It was a nervy opening for Fulham but they eventually settled into the game, buoyed by Sam's calming presence upfield. The game briefly became even and as time wore on, both sides had their chances.

In the end, the home side drew first blood.

After an incredibly-worked team sequence from the Preston players, the ball found itself in the back of the Fulham net as Benda was rooted to the spot after a pile driver of a shot from outside the box by the Preston midfielder, Ledson.

Preston entered the lead 1-0.

For the rest of the first half, Fulham tried everything to turn the tides around. They dominated but they could not get a goal as Preston defended tightly.

"And what a half we just witnessed!"

"Against all odds, Preston are leading! Well, we should have expected it, this is not a full throttle Fulham team, most of their star players are on the bench".

"Are we going to experience an upset from Preston today?"

"Surely not, right?"

"Surely, Marco Silva is going to bring in the big guns in the 2nd half".

But unlike what the commentator predicted, Coach Marco Silva stuck with his starting lineup, leaving them to continue the second half.

His decision was almost spat on when Preston almost scored an instant second goal just after second half started.

Despite the threats from Preston, Fulham held their nerves and when it was time, they didn't need their stars in the bench, they did it led by their star on the pitch in Samuel Moses.

In the 61st minute, Sam opened the game up as receiving the ball deep, he went on a mazy run into the Preston half.

The Preston midfield was congested as they played with a 4-4-2 formation, but the mercurial midfielder wiggled through them like they were not there.

Sam did not do anything complicated, all he did was a few drop of the shoulders, feints, and a pass that set Reiss Nelson in one-on-one with the Preston goalkeeper.

The winger did not miss, chipping the ball over the goalkeeper to even the score line back to where they started.

In the 61st minute, it was back to 1-1.

All the Preston effort was seemingly deflated like a balloon but unwilling to give up, the Preston players played the game of their life against Fulham.

They threatened, defending like a team but then again, they were playing against a team that had Sam, a generational prodigy of the game.

After introducing Raul Jimenez into the game already at some point, the striker used his impressive strength to good use in the box, holding up play perfectly and once he spotted Sam's run, he chipped the ball into his path in the box.

It was not a perfect pass, it had too much force and it was too high, but then...

Bam!

Jumping and raising his right leg high, Sam displayed unreal technique, bringing the ball under control with a gentle touch and as he descended, the ball descended with him.

By the time Sam's legs touched ground, Preston defenders were already all over him but that was when he did his thing.

Tik! Tak!

With the tip of his boot, he took 2 delicate touches of the ball and that was all it took as the ball evaded them like a snake's deadly bite.

"Uhhhh! An elastico! So cheeky!"

The Preston defenders were made to see stars.

With that elastico, Sam cut through the Preston defense like a hot knife through butter, now one-on-one with the goalkeeper.

Due to his burst of speed after the elastico, he was still unbalanced and noting it, Woodman, the Preston goalkeeper charged out aggressively but Sam's reactions were faster than he expected.

Bam!

A delicate touch from Sam and the ball gently rolled in between the legs of the onrushing goalkeeper.

"Uhhh!" The commentator exclaimed again. "What a cheeky nutmeg! The goal is exposed, it's Sam with the ball now!"

One of the Preston defenders tried to recover and clear the ball but Sam did not let him, using one last burst of speed to charge past the goalkeeper and after the ball then calmly, he poked it in.

The ball rolled into the net.

In the 75th minute, Sam scored the winner, Deepdale stadium was silenced.

Jogging to the side of the post, Sam sat down on the pitch, doing the iconic meditation celebration that was made popular by Erling Haaland.

His teammates swarmed him.

"An assist and a goal, what a player!"

"A generational talent!"

"The silence of this stadium is testament to his greatness. And Oh! The Preston fans have risen, they're giving him a standing ovation!"

"What a wholesome moment, Deepdale Stadium is appreciating greatness!"

"Samuel Moses, what a player".

In the 80th minute, Coach Marco Silva subbed Sam and others out of the game, introducing Emile Smith Rowe and Alex Iwobi.

The game ended 1-2 in Fulham's favor.

And unsurprisingly, Sam won another man of the match award.

Fulham extended their winning and unbeaten run to 6 games.