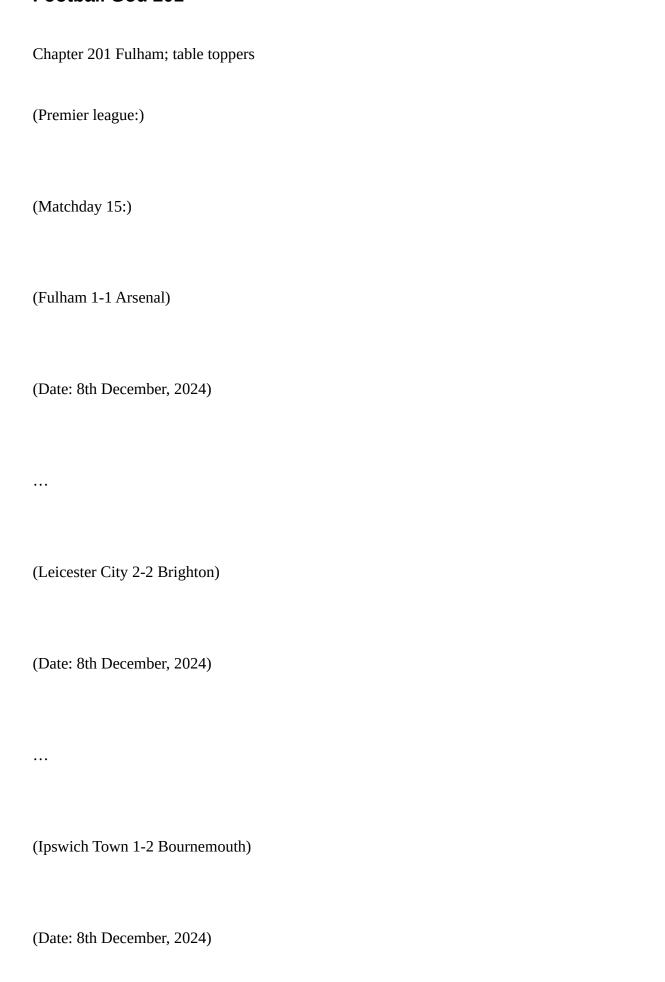
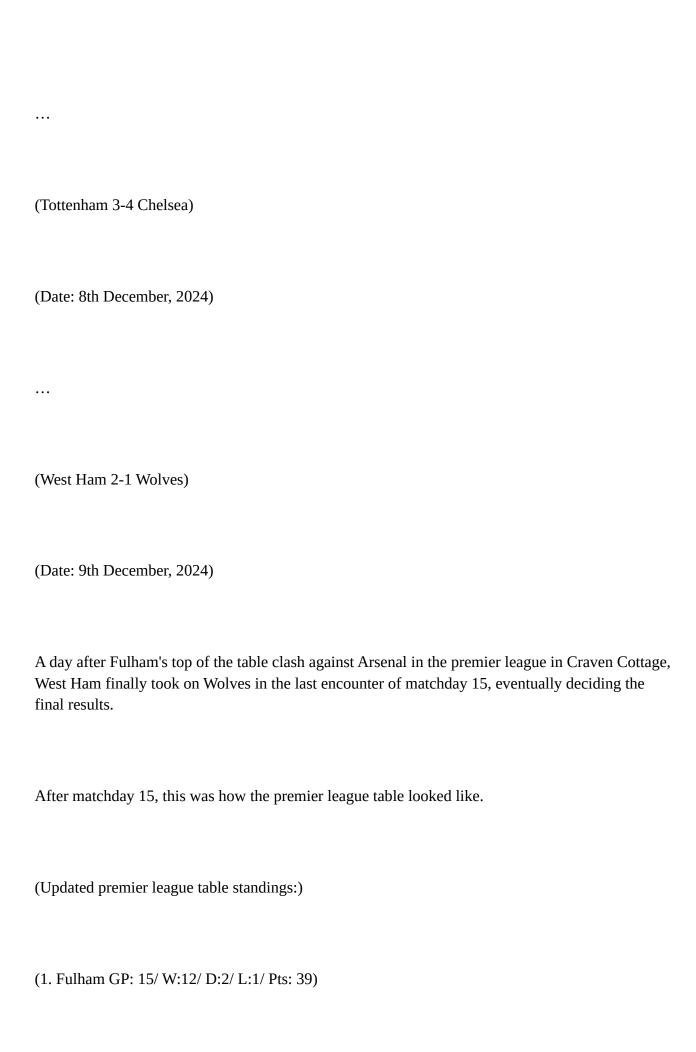
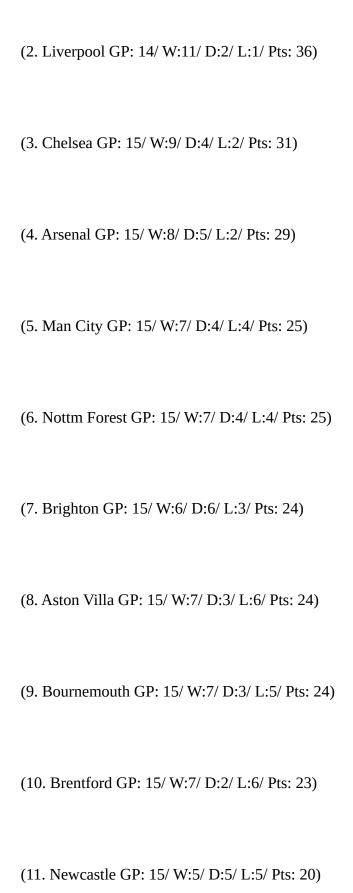
## **Football God 201**

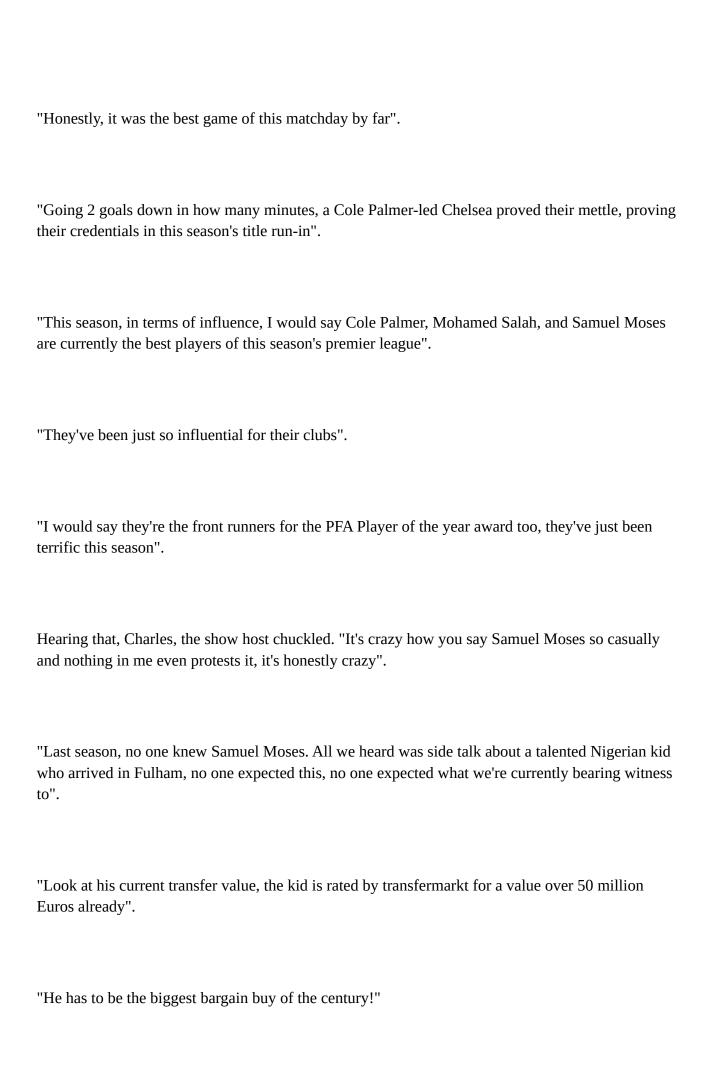






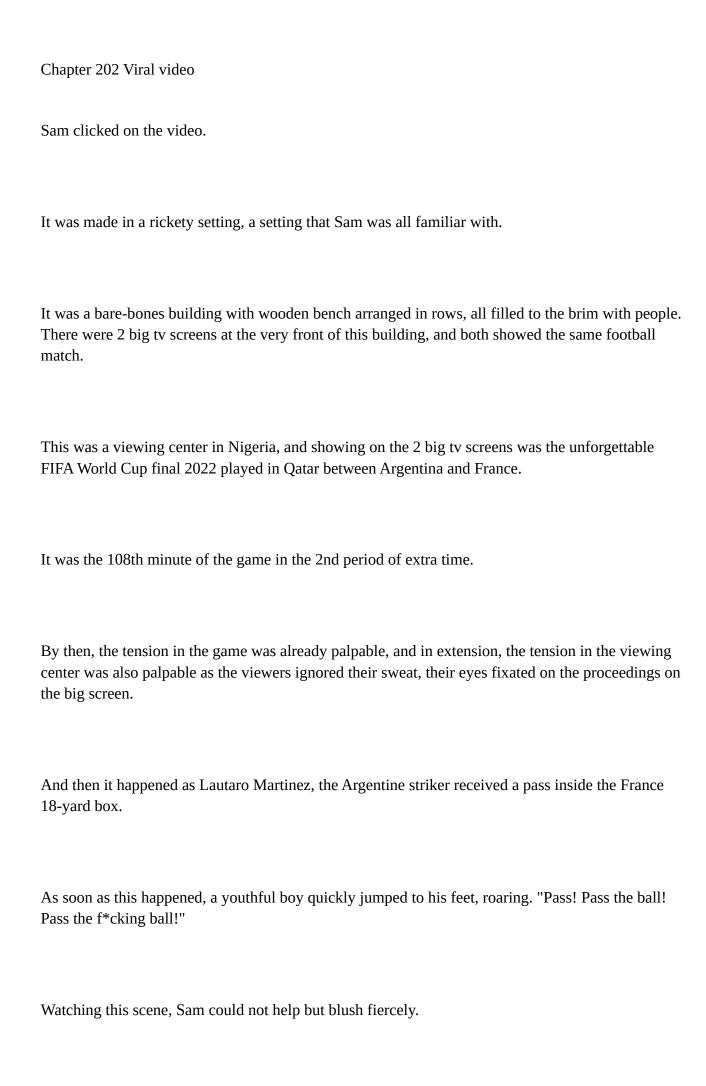


"Max, again, it's another matchday of the English premier league. I have to say yes, you got me on this one, Fulham have really exceeded my expectations by far this season. But I still believe that they won't win the league".
"So, tell me, with the Merseyside derby at Goodison Park between Everton and Liverpool postponed, of the 9 matches that were played in this matchday, which of them do you think was the best and provided the most entertainment value".
After listening to the question, Max, the premier league pundit flashed a smile. "My biased mind would say Fulham vs Arsenal. I mean, the S factor partnership was in full display, you needed to see Sam operate man". He laughed.
"But then, if I say that, I would be lying to my true self".
"Despite how much I don't want to admit it, Charles, I have no choice but to accept it that Tottenham vs Chelsea was the true outstanding game of this matchday and it was not even close".
"Chelsea traveled to the home of fierce rivals Tottenham Hotspur, and while they had one of the worst starts to a London derby you could possibly have, Enzo Maresca's men rose to the occasion and pulled off a magnificent comeback, needing two penalties in their favor to do it".
"But man, what a game it was!"
"The true definition of an end-to-end game!"
"My inner yearning for a mind-blowing story could not help but think if Tottenham would actually score an equalizer in stoppage time after Heung Min Son put that 3rd goal behind the Chelsea net".





Cole Palmer just barely got the edge over Sam in the voting.
The result of the poll caused a ripple effect across social media as it brought more renown to Sam, increasing his popularity even more.
And as his popularity increased was when a certain video suddenly became viral, trending on all viewing social media platforms.
Sam rarely paid attention to social media but he was surprised when even Emile Smith Rowe asked him to enter his tik tok or YouTube account and search for Samuel Moses.
At first, he was reluctant despite the fact that it was Smith Rowe asking until he received a call from a certain phone number.
(Incoming call from Favorite)
Sam's eyes widened as he got a call from Kayla. 'What happened? Is it that serious?'
When he picked up the call, Kayla said only a single sentence. "Come online, I sent you a video on WhatsApp".
'Huh?' Even more curious now, after the call, Sam finally opened his phone.
As soon as he clicked on the video, his jaw dropped in shock immediately.



The video was not of the best quality, and the youthful boy on the video looked darker and younger than the current him, but Sam had no doubt that this was him on the night of the most memorable game of his life.
'Damn! Who made a video of me?' He lamented.
The video continued
As the youthful boy screamed, filled with tension, instead of passing, Lautaro Martinez took a shot.
Bam!
It hit the French goalkeeper, Hugo Iloris.
"F*ck!" Sam could not help but mutter again as he watched the recording, having been transported back to the unforgettable day that it happened.
On that day, he also cursed; he was already cursing when Lionel Messi pounced, poking the rebounded ball back in.
Jules Kounde, the French fullback who currently plied his trade for FC Barcelona in La Liga did a goal line clearance but goal line technology judged the ball to have crossed the line.

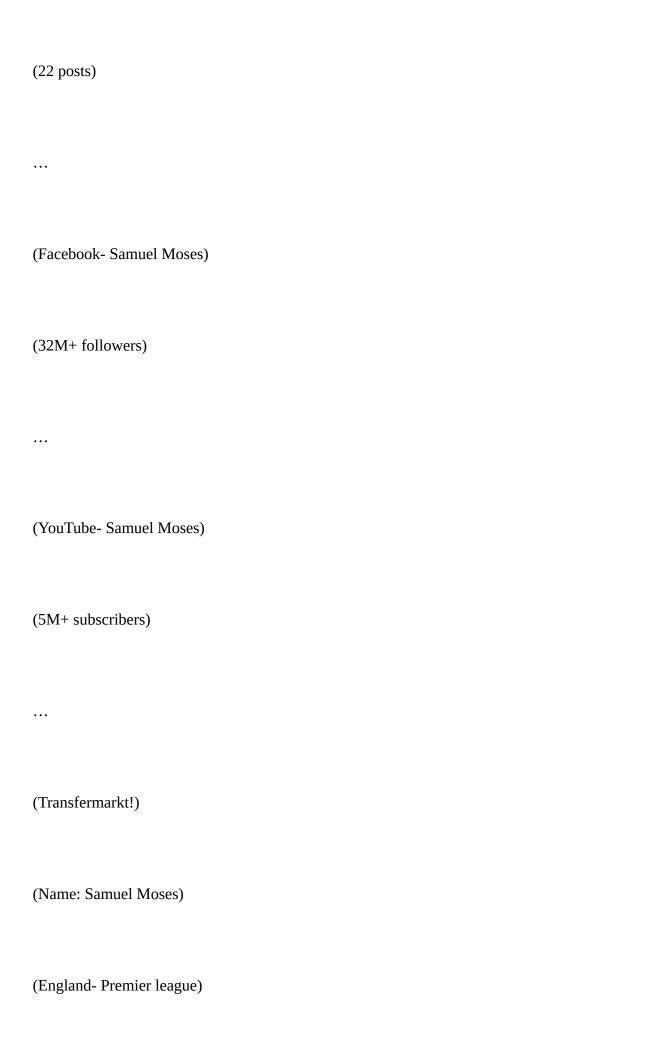
"GOALLLLL!" The viewing center erupted with the roars of ecstatic Argentina fans, and Sam was at the forefront of the celebrations.
Unbounded, no longer caring about how he looked, Sam pulled off his Argentina jersey, leaving only his white singlet as he waved the jersey wildly while running to the front of this viewing center.
By now, he already lost his composure in the emotion of this incredible football game. He was on a high where he no longer cared about anybody.
He celebrated like a mad man, not caring how he looked. At some point, he even hugged his dad excitedly without knowing it.
The other Argentina fans also celebrated wildly.
This was where the video came to an end.
Sam felt a deep sense of nostalgia as he watched the video, but at the same time, his face turned a deep shade of pink as he blushed. 'Curse the bastard who took this video!' Tears streamed down his face.
He finally understood why everyone wanted him to go on social media.
At that moment, his phone rang again.

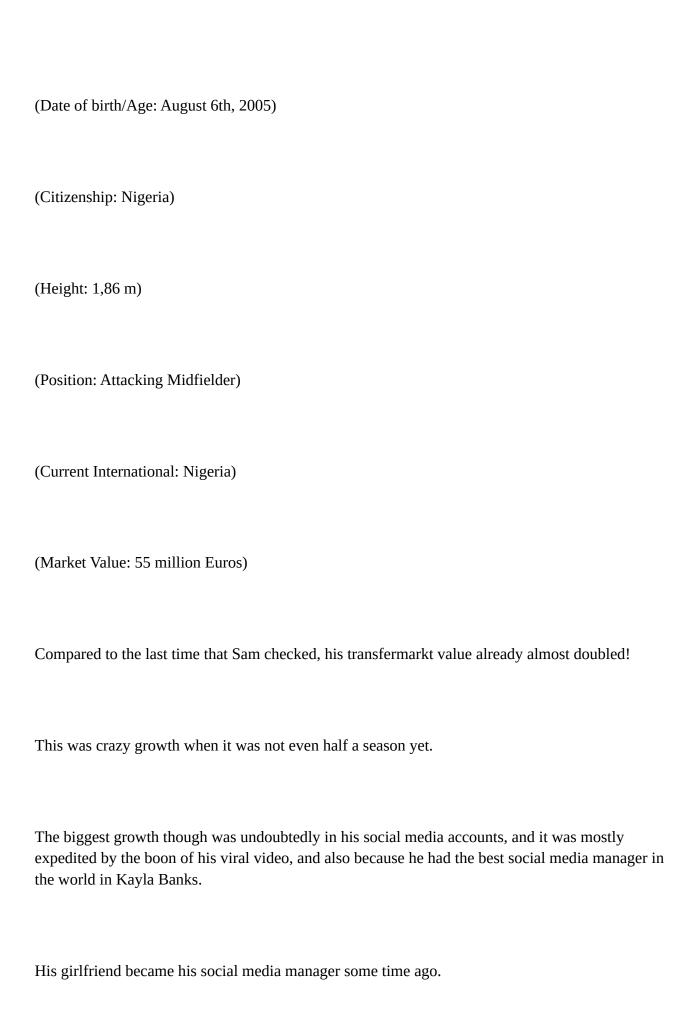




{Trenches-is-where-I-come-from: To the Coach of the Nigerian national team, I hope you're seeing this, you better select Sam and play him in our next international game. The boy is too valuable and likeable to leave behind.}
{Manchester-United-till-I-die: Who else does Sam's celebration remind of Ryan Gigg's legendary solo goal against Arsenal in the FA Cup?}
{Flying-Emirates-is-my-home replied to Manchester-United-till-I-die: No one, you're the only one who's reminded of that}
{Fish-in-the-sea replied to Flying-Emirates-is-my-home: emote laughing emoji; emote laughing emoji} emoji; emote laughing emoji}
{Manchester-United-till-I-die replied to Flying-Emirates-is-my-home: Lol, salty Arsenal fan}
{Flying-Emirates-is-my-home replied to Manchester-United-till-I-die: Lol, delusional Manchester United fan, I don't talk with Europa league club fans}
{Manchester-United-till-I-die replied to Flying-Emirates-is-my-home: Hahaha, where is your champions league trophy?}
{Flying-Emirates-is-my-home replied to Manchester-United-till-I-die: At least I'm not 14th in the premier league table lol}
{Manchester-United-till-I-die replied to Flying-Emirates-is-my-home: Hehe, forever 1st runner ups, the immortal league bottlers}

{Fish-in-the-sea replied to Manchester-United-till-I-die: emote laughing-crying emoji; Emotional damage! I'm dying in laughter lmao- emote laughing emoji}
Reading through the comment section, before Sam knew it, there was a big smile on his face as he read.
"Hehe," he chuckled.
Chapter 203 Back-to-back challenge
After Sam's video back from late 2022 went viral, his popularity grew even more as a lot of more football fans knew about him.
He was now so popular that even non-football fans now knew about him.
And this popularity translated in all his social media pages as within just a few days after the Arsenal game, they surged, almost tripling in followership.
And it was not just his social media pages either, compared to late last season or even early in this season, his transfermarkt value already experienced a big change after the string of performances that he was putting out this season, dragging Fulham to the top of the premier league table.
(Instagram – Samuel Moses)
(15M+ followers)



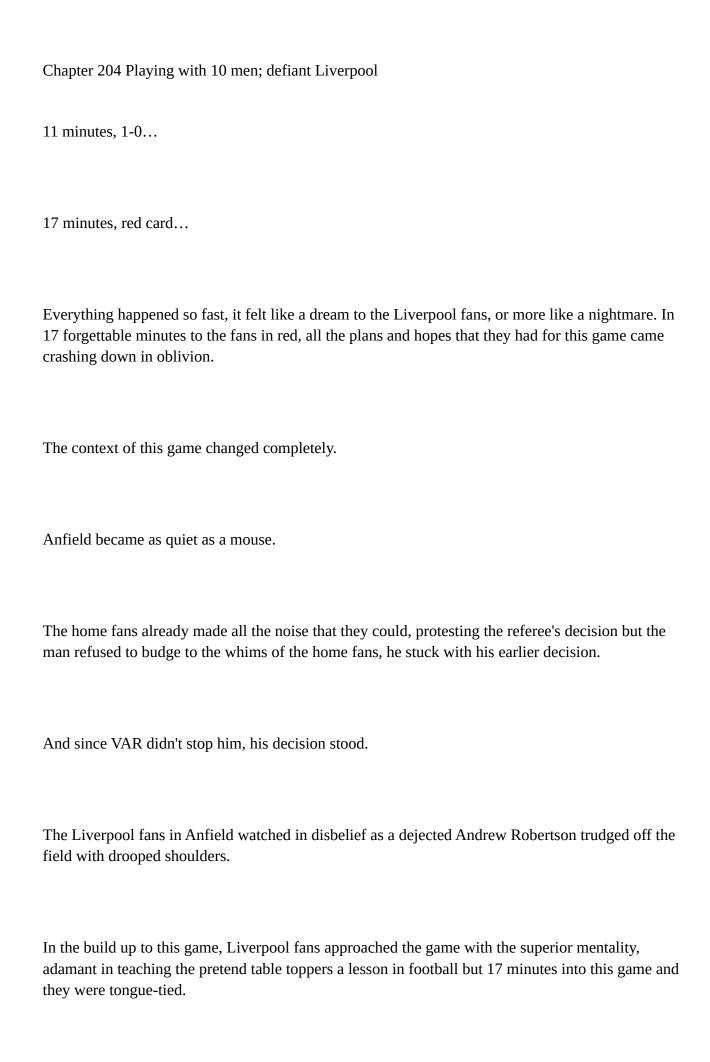


Since then, in all the major social media platforms where Sam was barely active, his stock started rising as he got more and more followers.
Sam never had a YouTube account before but after taking over as his manager, Kayla did the job for him, creating a YouTube account on his behalf.
And within that short time, to get up to 5M+ subscribers already was crazy!
After every game that Fulham played, Kayla never failed to post, engaging his fans to grow his accounts. And it was even more effective since Sam never failed to perform in every single game that he played in.
It was like the concept of fatigue never worked against him.
One of the biggest arguments against this high-flying Fulham side was that once the season starts ramping up, and the games started coming thick and fast, they would be hit by exhaustion which will be their true reality check.
In reality, even Fulham fans were realistic, scared of the impact that fatigue would have on their team as the season progressed.
Fatigue did start hitting already, but the impact was nowhere as much as they expected, this was because of the overall effort put by the players into training.

Since Sam's arrival to the club, Fulham FC already changed fundamentally as a club. It was a club that now had high standards of discipline.
With Coach Marco Silva not hesitating to place Sam on a pedestal to his other players, making them look up to him, this coach watched as the spirit in his team was transmuted from complacency to that of mentality monsters.
None of the veterans in Fulham were fine with losing so consistently to the young Nigerian midfielder, nor the young players in the club either.
Watching Sam train so hard despite being so good already, putting his 110% in training every time, the rest were all forced to do the same.
This was why this season, the effect fatigue had on the Fulham players was so minimal, and this also translated to injuries.
Since the season started, no main Fulham player has succumbed to injury yet because their consistency in training kept their body at the perfect level always.
And since they were now even going as far as rationing their diet, the ones that could, the Fulham squad was in its best physical shape in decades.
And an ecstatic Coach Marco Silva was the one reaping the rewards as he watched himself slowly become a legend, leading his club to the top of the English premier league table. The pressure was much but they were surviving.
And it was not over yet, not nearly.

After the grueling challenge of Arsenal at Craven Cottage on 8th December, Fulham's next engagement was still in the premier league and this time, it was an even more daunting challenge.
This time, Sam and his teammates were traveling to Anfield to face Liverpool, their biggest rivals at the top of the table.
It was going to be another top of the table clash.
And in terms of difficulty, this could not compare to the game against Arsenal at all since they played at home in Craven Cottage. This time, the Fulham players would be traveling to one of the most difficult stadiums in the world.
Having experienced first-hand the sheer atmosphere that could be created in that stadium last season, Sam knew exactly the type of challenge that his team was about to face.
'This is what will truly define our season'.
'The decider that'll tell if we're just pretenders or true challengers!
As for what Sam wanted? 'I will prove that we are true challengers!'
The build-up to this game was brutal as not only did the media fan the flames, putting the pressure on the Fulham players, Liverpool players also went to the media, making comments that added even more drama to this game.

Liverpool and Fulham had never been rivals but due to the comments and atmosphere leading to the game, it felt like El Clasico.
And despite the imperious form that Fulham had been in lately, the odds and comments from neutral fans online still went against them.
To most football fans around the world, Fulham's run of form was still nothing but a fluke, the true Fulham would be exposed soon enough.
And what better place to expose them than Anfield, the killer of enemy dreams?
A fan even said that if Fulham won, he would cut his manhood as proof of his conviction, causing a stir online and adding even more spice to this game.
With all these going on, time moved and very shortly, it was D-day.
(Premier league:)
(Matchday 16 of 38:)
(Liverpool – Fulham)
(Date: 14th December, 2024)



At this moment, the home fans already adopted the us against the world mentality, mostly due to the referee's decision.
Their already loud voice since the beginning of this game truly went through the roof this time, turning Anfield into a literal microphone to channel their loud voices as the referee got prepared to blow his whistle to restart play.
And when the whistle eventually sounded, the game continued, but in an entirely different vein.
FWEEEEE!
A lot of people expected Arne Slot to make a defensive change after Andrew Robertson's red card but this coach didn't, rather giving his players the go ahead to take the game to their opponents.
And the Liverpool fans responded to their coach's instructions with gusto.
Liverpool was no weak team; it was a strong premier league team comprised of talented young lads and centurion veterans of countless battles on the pitch from the Egyptian King, Mohamed Salah to Trent Alexander-Arnold, to Virgil Van Dijk.
They were a well-equipped weapon of mass destruction.
Besides, Anfield was the best advantage that they could ever hope for, a stadium where they were famous for historically creating miracles.



The atmosphere in Anfield now was like a battlefield.
Despite Liverpool's seemingly unstoppable drive and relentless energy though, in the end, the reality was that they were playing with less men than their opponents and Fulham was not going to let that advantage slide easily, not with the black mamba himself playing for them.
The home fans may be doing their best to create a hostile environment for them, but the Fulham players did not lose their ability to play football so easily.
They followed the mamba spirit exuding from their talisman, Samuel Moses.
The S factor did not really work this game as the energetic Liverpool players locked Sam and Smith out through their sheer work rate, preventing them from connecting to devastating effect the way that they normally did but this did not stop Sam from doing ridiculous things on this pitch.
Afterall, before the S factor became a thing, he was used to creating miracles on his own on a football pitch.
The more Liverpool played, suffocating this game, the more Sam's competitive spirit grew and the closer he got to the state of flow.
When Liverpool threatened to score, Sam was the tip of Fulham's spear that retaliated, constantly taking the battle to their opponents with his mazy runs, stunning physicality, and incredible technique.

From the halfway line up, Sam was a threat wherever he got the ball.
With a defender gone, the Liverpool defense was more open for him to play his penetrative through passes.
Virgil Van Dijk's impressive defensive display this game was the only reason why Sam's name was not yet on the scoresheet.
Last time out, it was the Frenchman, William Saliba against Arsenal and now, the Netherlands International was hoping to do the same thing against the electric Sam. For now, and maybe till the end of this game, it was working.
In the end, despite an incredible first half, after those early shocking proceedings, this game became all bark and no bite.
The first half ended with Fulham still leading 0-1 in Anfield.
During half-time, a slightly uneasy Coach Marco Silva simply told his players to calm down, to not fall into Liverpool's intensity trap.
This coach was uneasy simply because this was Anfield.
And just like he predicted, Liverpool came out for the second half with even more intensity, Mohamed Salah especially playing like a man possessed.









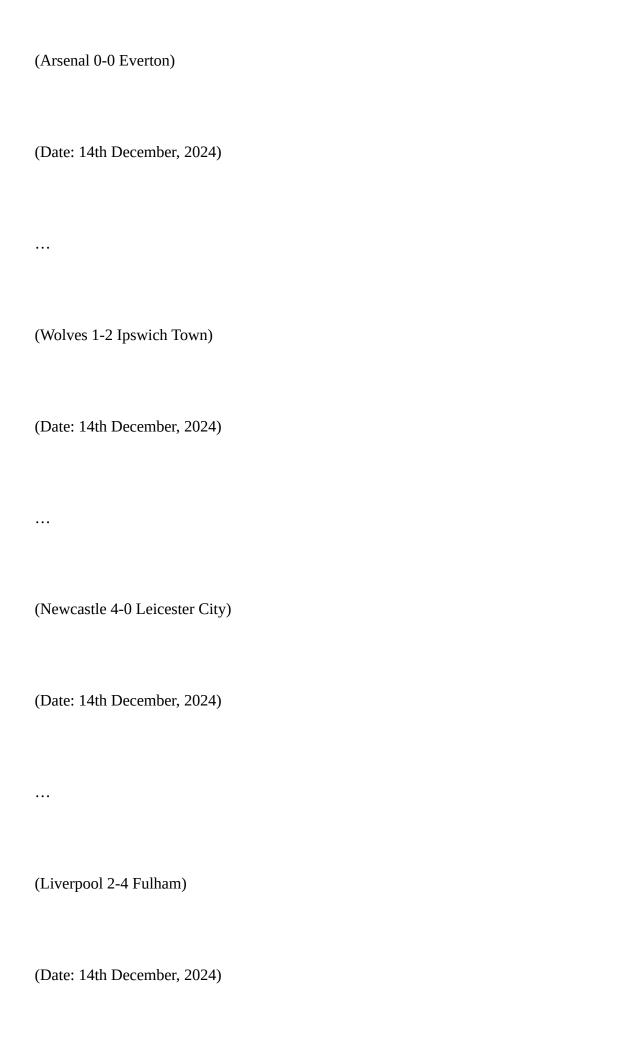


After Diogo Jota equalized, Liverpool was chasing the winner till exactly the 90th minute of this game when Sam pulled a trick out of his magic box full of tricks, stunning Anfield and all its inhabitants.
Lukic won back the ball, passing to Sam and then from deep, he went on a marauding run, cutting through the Liverpool half like a formless Wraith.
In the zone already, using feints, subtle shifts and shuffles of the ball, and delicately timed la croquetas, Sam penetrated through the Liverpool players like they were not there till he met a roadblock in Virgil Van Dijk.
Thud!
Not willing to take the risk, Sam stopped in his tracks but without pause, he quickly shifted the ball to his right side, and then
POW!
With his dominant right foot, Sam unleashed a thunderous piledriver shot towards goal.
Virgil Van Dijk tried to block the shot but he didn't react on time as the ball went past him, flying towards goal like an unstoppable rocket.

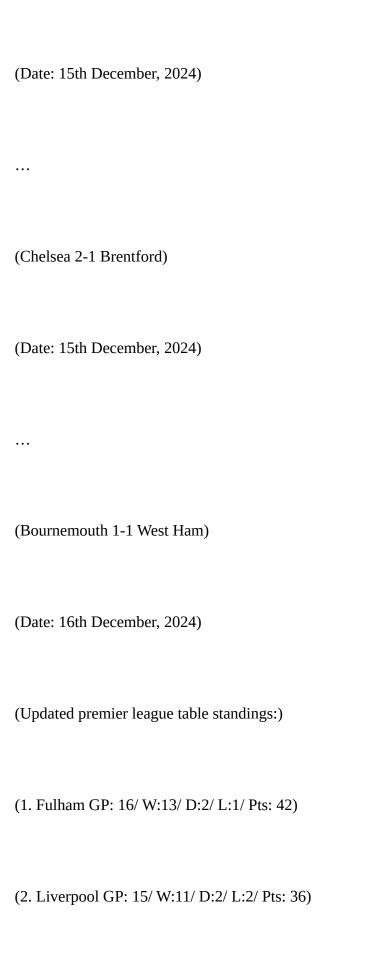


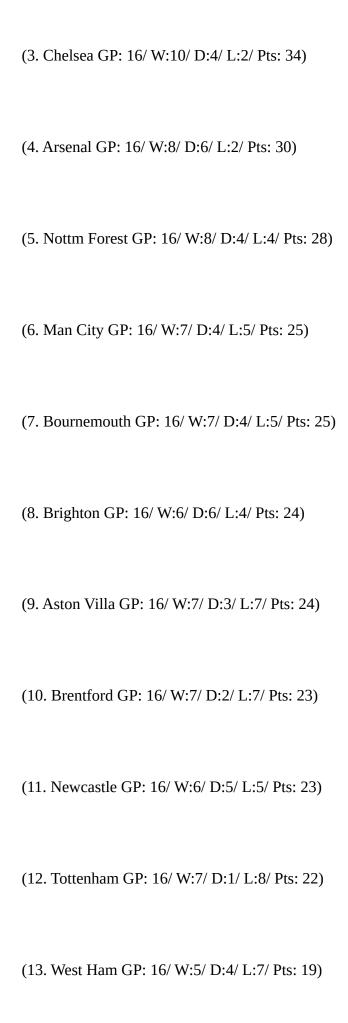
In the 90th plus 5 minutes, Sam doubled his goal tally for this game, scoring his second goal of this game and it was an absolute beauty.
Having been locked out for much of this game but with space all of a sudden to operate due to Liverpool's urgent need for another equalizing goal, Emile Smith Rowe got all the time he needed to float a dangerous pass into the box.
At first, it seemed like the pass was aimed towards Muniz who lurked in the box but no, it was aimed at the player whose late run just brought him into the box as the ball descended.
The ball was too high for Sam though and having read the danger, Virgil Van Dijk already reacted, charging towards his position to clear the ball.
Sam had no time to control this ball due to the impending arrival of the imposing Netherlands International, and so, he simply decided not to control it.
Thud!
Kicking the ground, Sam leaped and then twisting his body in mid-air, he swung his right leg with venom at the ball in the air, executing an incredible scissor kick that packed a lot of punch with it.
BAM!
Alisson was rooted to the spot; he didn't even move.

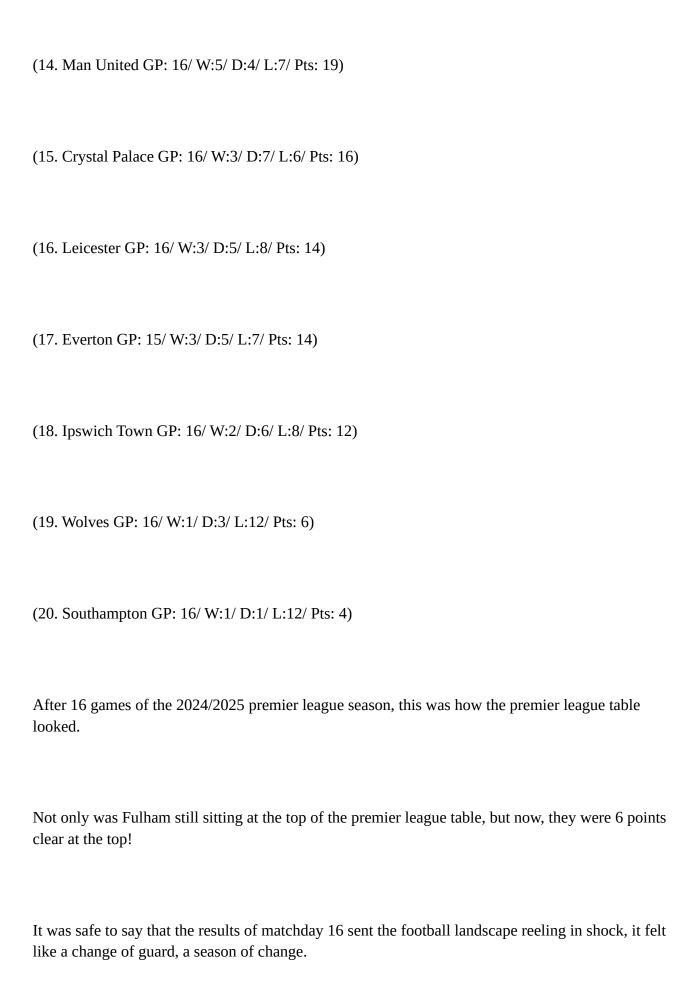
The ball was hit with so much power that it almost tore the net apart.
Anfield was once again silent, while the away fan section exploded soon after even as a mind blown commentator screamed shrilly at the top of his voice.
"Zinedine Sam!"
"Zinedine Sam!"
"Zinedine Sam!"
"This boy is just too good to be true!"
"Remember the name, Samuel Moses!"
Fulham won the game 2-4 after an unforgettable battle on the pitch. Chapter 206 Title favorites?
(Premier league results:)
(Matchday 16 of 38:)











The highlight of the matchday was Fulham's incredible top of the table clash against Liverpool. In truth, realistic Fulham fans never thought their team could win against Liverpool, that was how high the odds were against Fulham.
No neutral premier league fan actually expected them to draw the game either, that was Anfield!
And yet, not only did Fulham not draw, they actually won in Anfield.
To the world of football, this was big news.
And it was not the only big news that came out of matchday 16, another noteworthy news was the result of the Manchester derby.
Manchester United vs Manchester City is an old derby game with a lot of history, from Rooney's overhead kick stunner, to Aguero's last minute goal stealing the premier league title from their local rivals, this derby was expressed in a lot of different ways and in matchday 16, this derby created more history.
Manchester City was playing bad, enduring an extended rough patch of form but still, many thought of them as the favorites going into the first Manchester derby of the season.
Afterall, the game was played at the Etihad.
Till the 88th minute of the game, Manchester City seemed in cruise control till Bruno Fernandes' penalty kick in the 88th minute drew them level, and then Amad Diallo's stunning goal in stoppage time painted Manchester red.

Manchester United fans across the world went bonkers in celebration, it was a landmark moment in the Ruben Amorim era for the reds.
Despite the fact that they still sat in 14th position in the league, Manchester United fans did not care as they celebrated like they already won the league.
Another highlight of matchday 16 was Tottenham's 0-5 hammering of Southampton. All 5 goals came in the first half, making it a truly scintillating half.
Arsenal's draw against Everton also raised a lot of eyebrows since technically, they were still in the title race but it didn't draw nearly as much attention as the already aforementioned matches.
And this attention was not just on social media, popular TV news and shows broadcasted the result of the matchday, including a familiar TV show.
"Max, tell me your verdict of matchday 16 of the premier league".
The premier league pundit grinned after listening to the host's words, and then suddenly jumping from his chair, he screamed. "Zinedine Sam!"
"Zinedine Sam!"

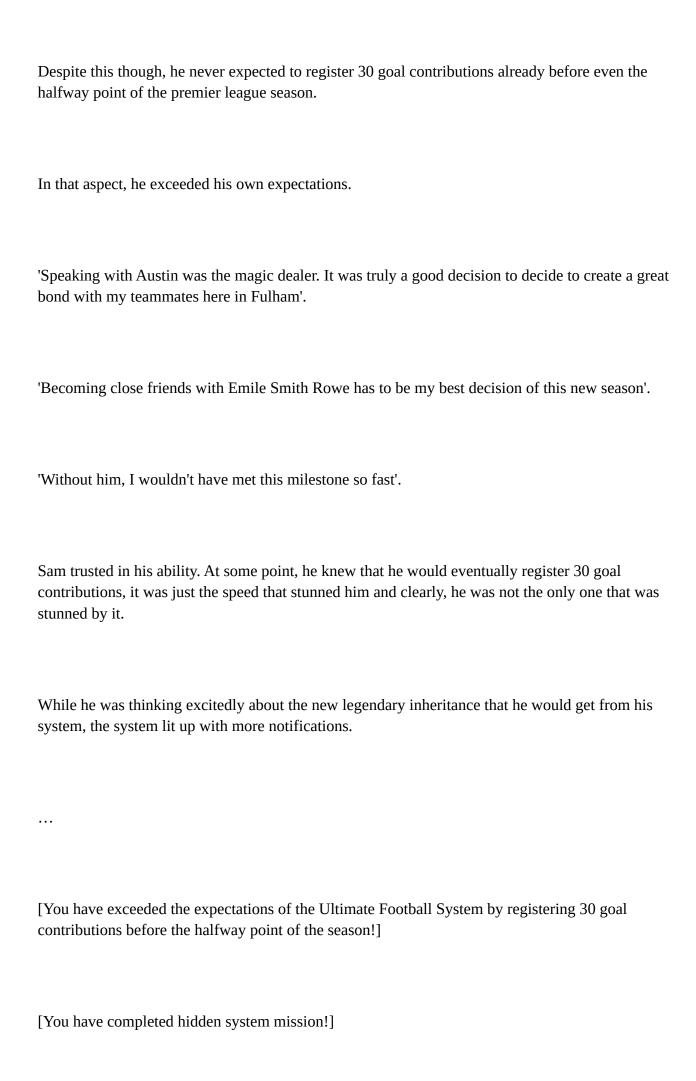


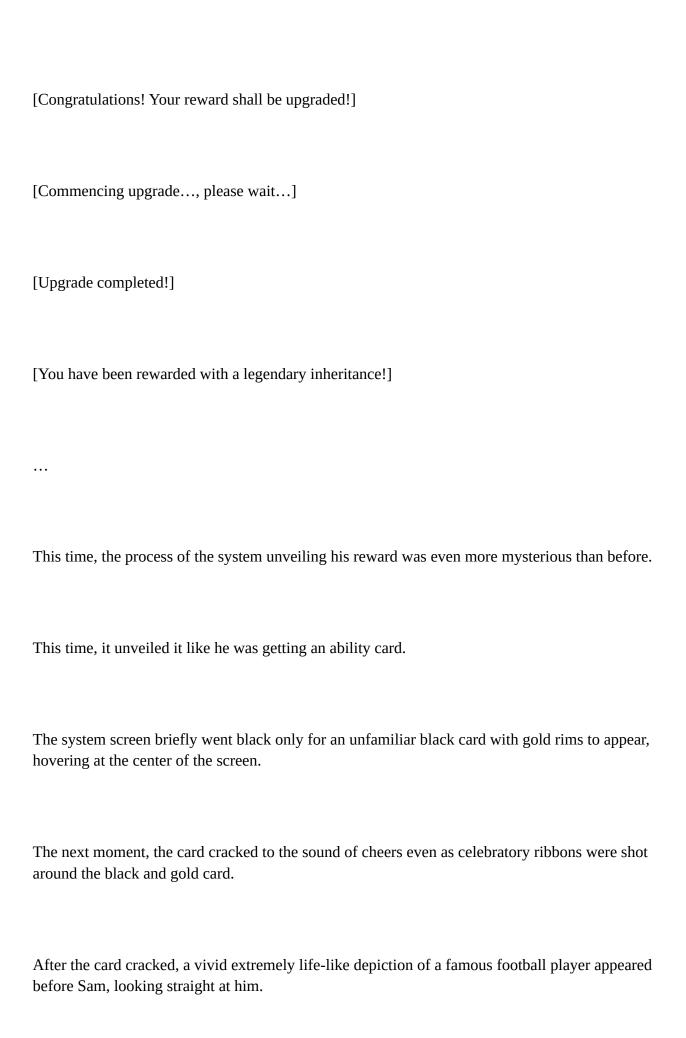


"Wow Max, honestly, I've never seen you this passionate about any club or any one player before. This is surprising".
"So, would you say Fulham are now favorites to win the league title?"
"Definitely!"
Well, across the world, the name, Samuel Moses was truly being remembered as Sam went viral again across social media.
Chapter 207 Feeling on top of the world
After the game against Liverpool, Sam felt on top of the world for various different reasons.
First was the sheer boasting factor that was birth from beating Liverpool in Anfield courtesy of his game-winning goals and man of the match display.
Second was going 6 points clear at the top of the premier league table. Despite the fact that Liverpool had a game in hand, this was still an impressive feat from a Fulham perspective.
After the game, an emotional Coach Marco Silva could not hold himself as on the way back on their team bus, this coach went bonkers, popping champagne and drenching his players in it right there in the team bus.
In Fulham, it was like a festival day.

The celebrations were everywhere as Fulham fans flooded the streets in the thousands, celebrating their victory against Liverpool like they already won the league. It was the perfect statement victory against their doubters.
At the moment, Fulham was the team on top of the premier league.
Other factors affected their form. Afterall, compared to them, while playing in the league, Liverpool and other big teams also played grueling games in the revamped UEFA champions league.
But to Fulham, none of that mattered. In the grand scheme of things, it was just excuses, they secured their spot at the top through sweat and blood.
This was why collectively; they felt on top of the world.
But experience taught them not to get too lost in the moment though. Afterall, it was just one win, the premier league was far from being over.
Like a man once famously said, a league season is a marathon, not a sprint.
If Fulham are to go all the way and win the league, they must approach the season like a marathon, taking it one step at a time and staying disciplined to ensure that they were always in their best state to face challenges.
Personally, for Sam, another reason why he felt on top of the world was because after his 1 assist and 2 goals against Liverpool, he finally took his tally for the season to 17 goals and 13 assists in just 19 games!

It was a milestone that was special to him because with that, he finally crossed 30 goal contributions for the $2024/2025$ season.
And it was not even halfway across the premier league season yet!
~~
[You have completed Season Quest 5: 30 goal contributions!]
[Mission Requirement: Register at least 30 goal contributions in the 2024/2025 professional football season!]
[You have been rewarded with a legendary inheritance!]
•••
Early in the season after playing their first game against Manchester United, Sam finally got a notification informing him of new season system quests.
He got 5 new season system quests and of them all, only season quest 5 did not require him playing all the way to the end of the season before he saw results.



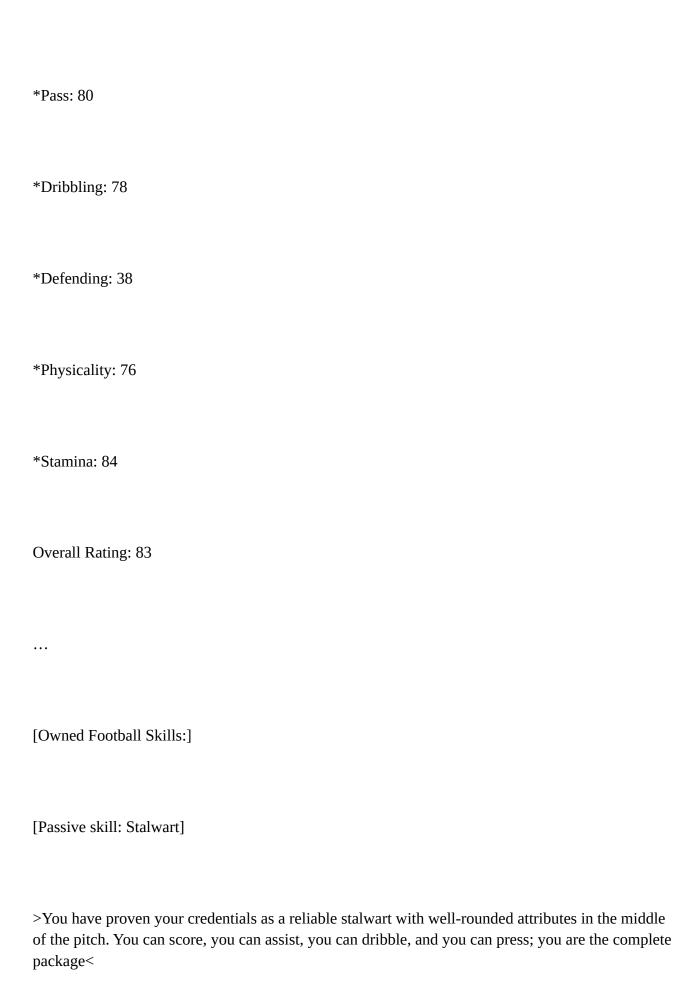


"!" Sam felt breathless.
The face looking at him was a face that Sam would never forget even if he was in his deathbed. This football player was that legendary, and famous.
This player wore a familiar white jersey with gold strips at its corners. He had gold-dyed noodle hair, and at the moment, he was holding a football on his right hand, a confident gleam in his eyes.
"It's Cristiano Ronaldo!" Sam screamed in his hotel room.
And then, it was unveiled.
•••
[You have been rewarded with a Legendary Inheritance!]
[You have been rewarded with the advanced mastery of the Legendary Football Skill: Power Shot!]
[NOTE:]
>You have inherited the legendary inheritance of one of the greatest legends in the history of football, the great Portuguese, Manchester United, and Real Madrid legend, Cristiano Ronaldo<

>Cristiano Ronaldo is a legend of the game who made the Power Shot skill his trademark during his legendary stints in Manchester United and Real Madrid<
>CR7's trademark was cutting in from the left, and unleashing thunderous shots that left the goalkeeper no chance<
>You've awakened the advanced mastery of the Power Shot skill. To get to the legendary mastery level through your inheritance, all you have to do is train and get better, the other requirements have already been fulfilled by your inheritance<
•••
[You have gained the football Title: Legs of Steel!]
[Your shooting attribute has increased by +5!]
[Your overall player rating has increased by +1!]
Chapter 208 [Bonus Chapter] CR7's heir
In the world of football, fans tend to hype new players up, dubbing them the new Messi, the new Ronaldo, or even attributing them to nations like the Turkish Messi. But all of them were fake, till now.

In his room, Sam got an upgrade that would make any offensive football player in the world incredibly envious, he became Cristiano Ronaldo's heir!
Sam was an avid Lionel Messi fan but who cared?
Which sane football player aiming for the top of the footballing world would pass up on an opportunity to inherit a legendary skill from Lionel Messi's rival?
Sam loved Lionel Messi, but he respected Cristiano Ronaldo.
At the peak of his powers, Lionel Messi was above every other footballer at such a stratosphere that it took a special kind of player to compete with him at this peak, and that special kind of player was Cristiano Ronaldo.
Like Messi himself once put it during a rating a world-class players, it was him and Ronaldo, then everyone else.
That was how high they were above everybody.
Against Messi's sheer talent and brilliance, the Portuguese legend became the first black mamba of football before Sam, challenging the legendary Argentine head-to-head for almost 2 decades through his sheer hard work.
Sam would be a fool not to respect him.

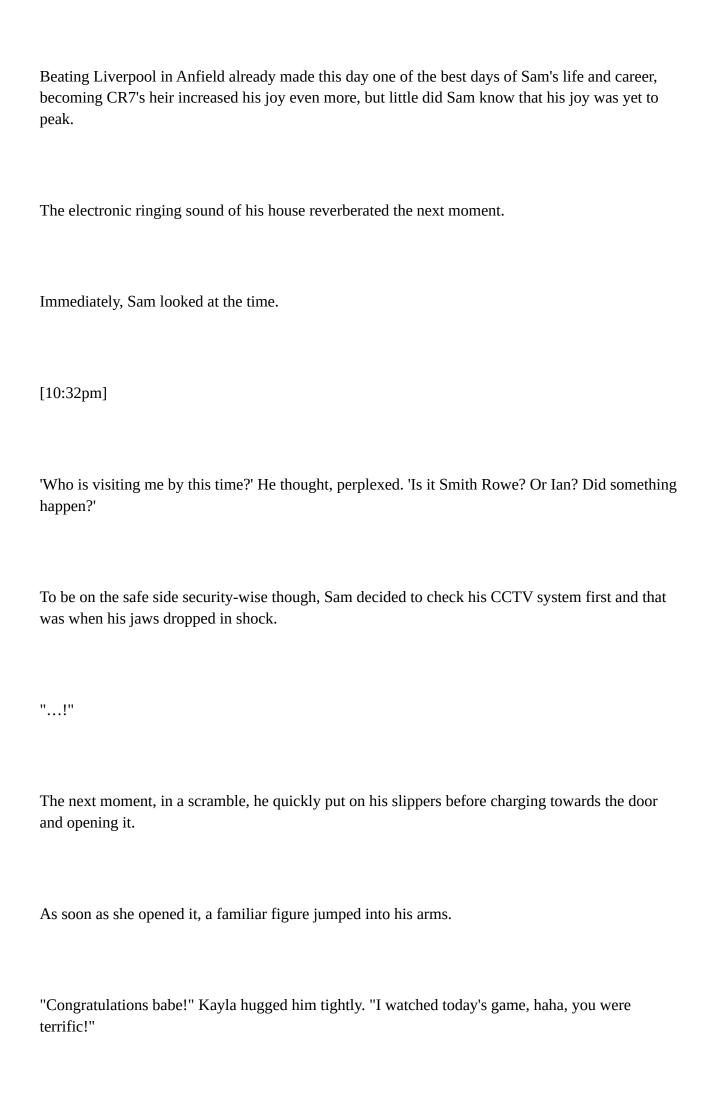
And now, he just became CR7's heir.
After the series of notifications that Sam got after the Liverpool game, this was how Sam's system player status now looked like.
~~
[Player status!]
Host: Samuel Moses
Current Career Status: Premier League player, EFL Cup reigning champion
Talent Rating: A+
Player Position: Attacking Midfield
Player Attributes:
*Pace: 81
*Shot: 85



>+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: Body feint; step overs; roulette; knuckle shot; overhead kick; rainbow flick; trivela shot, basic penalty technique, basic freekick technique]
[Intermediate mastery level: Elastico; Cruyff turn; La croqueta]
[Advanced mastery level: Spatial awareness; Power shot]
····
[Legendary Inheritance: Elastico]
[Legendary Inheritance: Spatial Awareness]
[Legendary Inheritance: Power Shot]

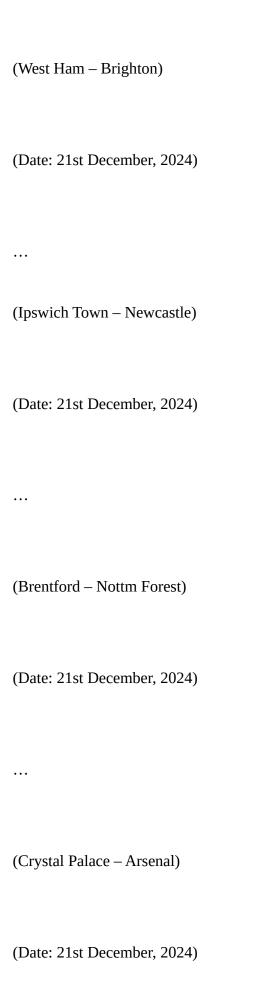
[Ability cards:]	
>Shoot it like Lewy<	
[Card uses remaining: 2]	
>Thread it like KDB<	
[Card uses remaining: 2]	
>Bend it like Beckham<	
[Card uses remaining: 2]	
[Title: Space Interpreter!]	



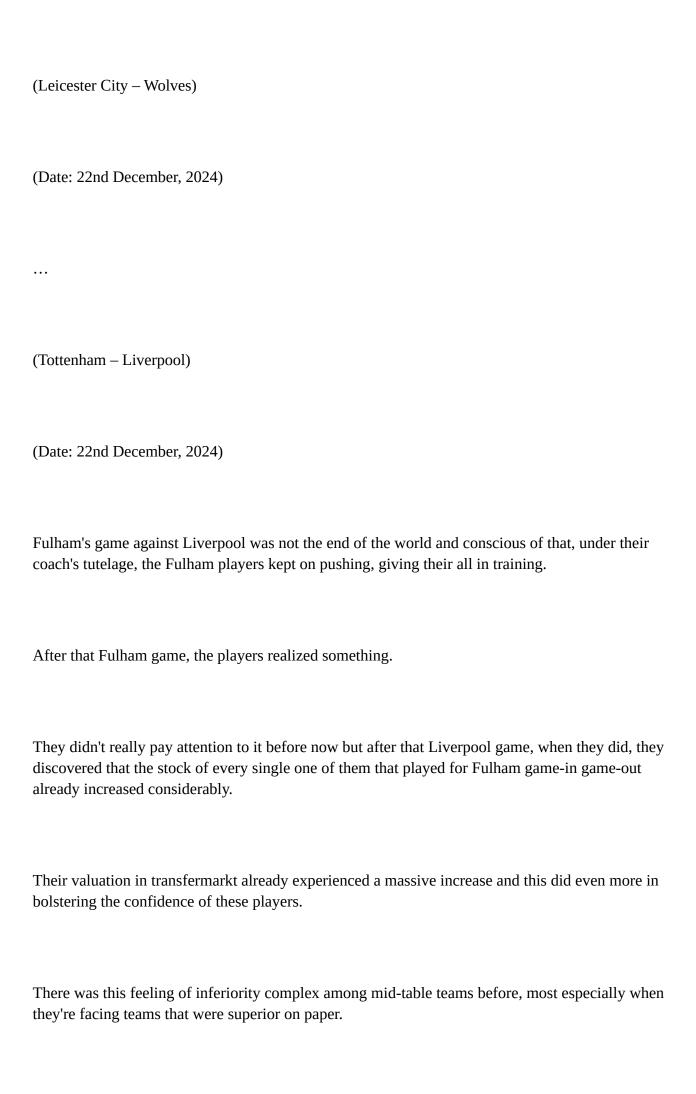


Sam had so many questions in his mind, like, 'what are you doing here? What about school? How did you suddenly come to England?'
Despite his many questions though, he shelved all of them aside simply because it felt incredibly good to meet his girlfriend again.
Together, they went inside as Kayla finally explained her impromptu visit.
She guessed that he would be in a good mood after his masterpiece performance in beating Liverpool, and since she was already a bit bored of school, she made the impromptu decision to embark on the trip and surprise him to celebrate today's victory physically with him.
And here she was.
Sam did not care about the details though; all he cared about was that his girlfriend was here with him. He was incredibly happy.
That night, Kayla decided to reward him with food as she went into the kitchen to make a new Nigerian food recipe that she learned.
It was already far past Sam's bedtime but for his girlfriend, he was ready to indulge for just one night.
That night, Sam ate with his girlfriend, enjoying her delicious food and having a nice time together.

And later into the night, they got intimate as Sam had a second intimate encounter with his girlfriend.
It was a feeling that he was never going to get bored of.
Truly, today ranked extremely highly in the list of the best days of his life.
By the time that Sam finally slept with his girlfriend in his arms, he felt like a fulfilled man who was successful and had achieved it all.
He felt on top of the world. Chapter 209 [Bonus Chapter] Matchday 17
(Premier league:)
(Matchday 17 of 38:)
(Aston Villa – Man City)
(Date: 21st December, 2024)
•••



```
(Everton – Chelsea)
(Date: 22nd December, 2024)
(Man United – Bournemouth)
(Date: 22nd December, 2024)
(Fulham – Southampton)
(Date: 22nd December, 2024)
```



But now, after the victory against Liverpool, Fulham truly shed their identity as a mid-table team this season and their mentality changed with it.
Even in training, they now played like players playing for a big club, there was no margin for error in their game anymore.
The only acceptable outcome from them in games was perfection if they truly wanted to go all the way and win the premier league trophy.
After the Liverpool game, they had 18 days of rest to prepare for their next game and they did not waste it, continuing to give their all in training like upcoming stars who aimed to impress their coach.
They didn't care that their next opponent was going to be Southampton, the club currently in the worst form in the premier league.
They would prepare for it like any other game.
Like this, the days passed and in no time, D-day was here.
Like expected, both teams started with their strongest lineups.
For Fulham, Raul Jimenez once again led the line as the starting striker, while behind him was the trio of Harry Wilson who was returning from injury, Sam, and Emile Smith Rowe.

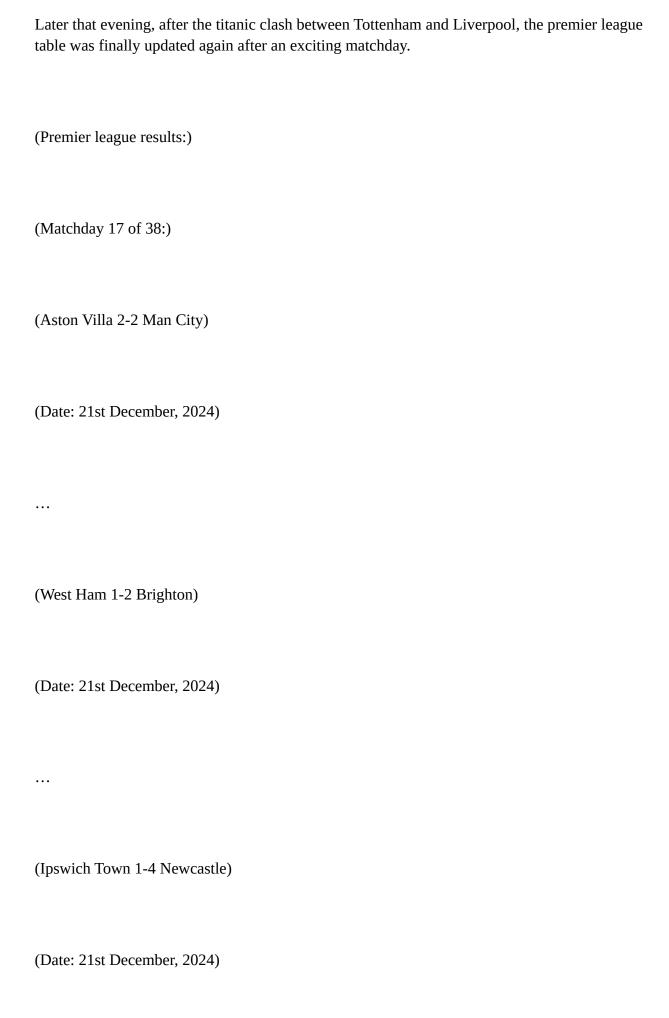
Behind the forwards was the duo of Lukic and Berge, while the 4-man defense comprised of Antonee Robinson, Cuenca, Diop, and Tete. Bernd Leno naturally started in between the posts for Fulham.
For Southampton, McCarthy started in between the posts. Walker-Peters, Harwood, Bednarek, and Manning started ahead of the goalkeeper, while the 3-man center midfield comprised of Aribo, Downes, and Fernandes.
Dibling started as the sole attacking midfielder, while ahead of him was the offensive duo of Armstrong and Sulemana.
They played in a 4-3-1-2 formation.
It was another Fulham home game played in Craven Cottage.
On paper, Fulham were poised to blow Southampton out of the water and as soon as the first whistle from the referee blew, Fulham did just that, coming out of their shell like an apex predator that smelled blood.
And in this game, with Alex Iwobi rested, the S factor partnership struck in all it's deadliness as within just 3 minutes, the first goal entered.
After a series of tiki taka passes to cut through the Southampton formation, Sam released the final pass back to Emile Smith Rowe who poked it in behind the defense for Raul Jimenez to run into one-on-one with the goalkeeper.

McCarthy, the Southampton goalkeeper charged out immediately to snuff out the danger but keeping his cool, Raul Jimenez calmly rounded the goalkeeper before poking into an empty net to score his team's first goal.
The crowd in Craven Cottage didn't roar as loud as they did at other times when their team scored, they simply sang their club songs, cheering on their players as they were feeling in a good football mood.
They knew that their team would win, just by how many goals.
After that first goal though, Southampton improved, matching Fulham's intensity. Even as their attack remained blunt against Fulham's defense, they were able to stay compact and defensively disciplined, keeping the rampant Fulham attackers at bay.
10 minutes, 1-0
20 minutes, 1-0
30 minutes, 1-0
This game was seemingly about to dissolve into a boring affair where Fulham just attacked fruitlessly and Southampton defended, till a certain player decided to take matters into his own hands and entertain the home supporters.
Still feeling in the mood of his girlfriend having visited after the Liverpool game, culminating in one of the best days of his life, Sam's good mood translated into samba football on his part.

He didn't even go full throttle to flex his ability as CR7's heir in this game yet, he simply decided to enjoy his football.
And then, Sam did it, spraying passes left and right, cutting the Southampton defense down time and time again with his passes like some otherworldly Butcher that decided to ascend from the abyss to torment humans.
He was Southampton's ever-present nightmare and finally, the result came as in the 37th minute, Sam set up Emile Smith Rowe, slipping the ball in for him to rifle into the net, doubling Fulham's lead.
37 minutes, 2-0
3 minutes later, Sam did it again, setting up Emile Smith Rowe again with a perfectly weighted lobbed pass in the Southampton 18-yard box for the in-form winger to poke into an empty net from close range.
40 minutes, 3-0
Fulham was tearing Southampton apart.
But then, not satisfied yet, Sam did it again 5 minutes later, setting up Emile Smith Rowe for the third time this game.



With Sam out of the game, Fulham's threat in front of goal lessened considerably as Southampton finally started coming out of their box.
They tried to create a few chances for their forwards but none of them was concrete enough, the rugged Fulham defense kept every attacking opportunity that they created at bay.
In the end, even Emile Smith Rowe was taken off in the 65th minute of this game after one of the best games of his career.
Fulham was still winning 4-0.
In the 72nd minute, Fulham finally added the nail to the coffin as Raul Jimenez set Pereira up to slam in the 5th goal of this game, dooming Southampton to sure defeat and shutting off all non-existent hopes of a comeback.
By the 90th minute, the body language of the Southampton players made it seem like they could not wait to leave the pitch.
This was not just any defeat; it was a mutilation.
Emile Smith Rowe won another man of the match award for the season after contributing with 4 incredible goal contributions.







٠	٠	•

(Updated premier league table standings:)

(1. Fulham GP: 17/W:14/D:2/L:1/Pts: 45)

(2. Liverpool GP: 17/W:11/D:2/L:2/Pts: 39)

(3. Chelsea GP: 17/W:11/D:4/L:2/Pts: 37)

(4. Arsenal GP: 17/W:9/D:6/L:2/Pts: 33)

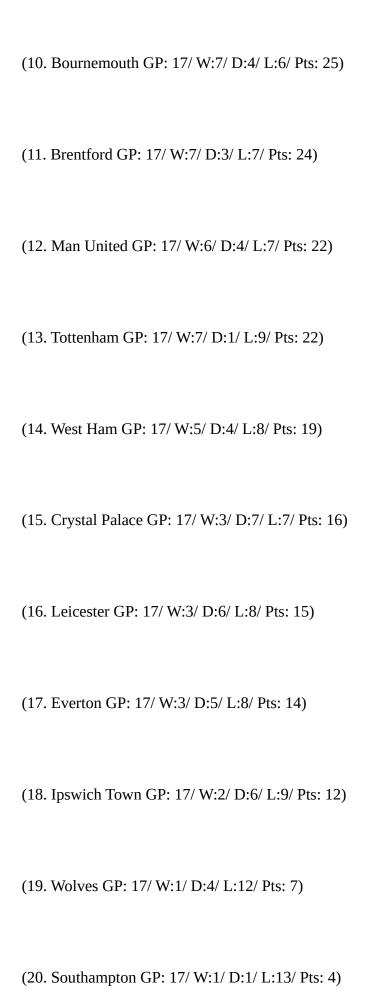
(5. Nottm Forest GP: 17/ W:8/ D:5/ L:4/ Pts: 29)

(6. Brighton GP: 17/W:7/D:6/L:4/Pts: 27)

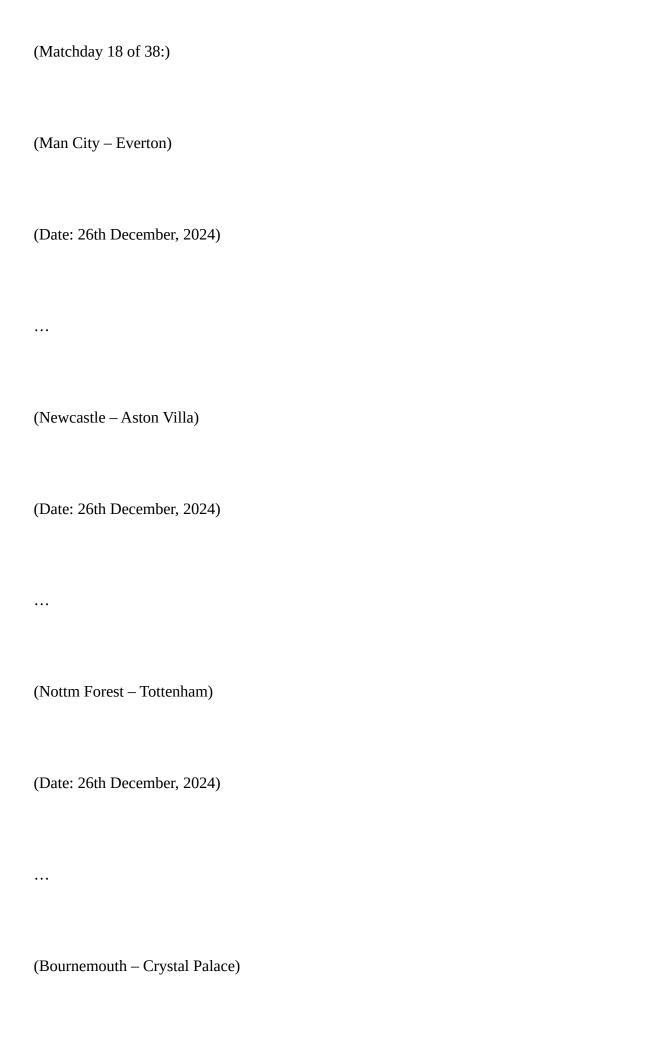
(7. Man City GP: 17/W:7/D:5/L:5/Pts: 26)

(8. Newcastle GP: 17/ W:7/ D:5/ L:5/ Pts: 26)

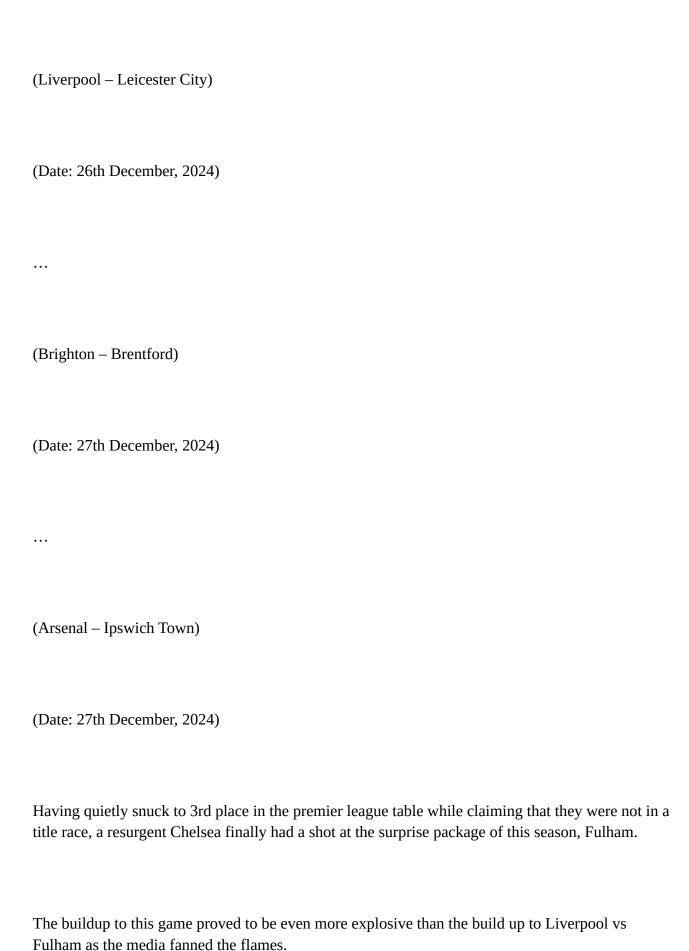
(9. Aston Villa GP: 17/ W:7/ D:4/ L:7/ Pts: 25)



After 17 matchdays of the English premier league, this was how the premier league table looked. Fulham was still leading the line with 6 points.
This was no longer a shock to the premier league audience though, this time, the shock was that Manchester City, the reigning premier league champions finally dropped to 7th position in the league after their run of atrocious results.
Manchester City was truly going through a crisis, nothing seemed to be working for them at the moment.
On the pitch, under the eye test, Man City seemed to have regained their mojo and were playing well but the X factor was just not in their favor.
Fulham did not have time to worry about the form of the champions though, this was because their next game was a troubling one.
After clashing against almost all the top clubs in the English premier league and surviving this season already, they were now finally about to clash with the club that was rated as currently the most in-form team alongside them.
Chelsea was in imperious form, and now, these 2 teams were set to clash in a London derby that was going to send ripples through the premier league scene.
(Premier league:)







The game was dubbed the London Rumble.
It was a chance for Fulham to prove their credentials for the umpteenth time this season, proving that they were not up there by mistake and it was also a chance for Chelsea to show their credentials in front of their home fans.
It was a Chelsea home game meaning the fans in blue would be welcoming the high-flying Fulham in Stamford Bridge.
It was going to be a tough game but the Fulham players were undeterred.
They approached it like every other game this season, giving their all in training, staying at an elite level throughout.
With them doing their part, time did its part, accelerating and in the blink of an eye, it was 26th, it was D-day.
Chelsea welcomed Fulham to Stamford Bridge.