

Football God 211

Chapter 211The London Rumble [1]

They dubbed it the London Rumble.

That evening, North London became explosive.

Passionate Chelsea fans in blue across North London came out in numbers, going on a blue parade around the city of London.

Blue ribbons, blue smoke, blue buses, Chelsea fans pulled out all stops, shutting London down on the 26th all in the preparation and passion for the game.

The fans in blue made their voices heard hours before the game.

From their actions, it was clear that they demanded nothing from their team but victory. Yes, Fulham was topping the premier league table.

Yes, Fulham was a team in incredible form, but Chelsea was equipped with the tools to win this game and since they were playing at home, the Chelsea fans wanted nothing but a convincing victory.

This was why they did all this fanfare.

When the Fulham team bus rolled into town, they were assaulted by a tirade of blue. Passionate Chelsea fans welcomed them to their part of town, raining insults at them, shoving offensive banners in their faces.

It was absolute chaos.

The Fulham team bus needed security before it was able to make its way inside Stamford Bridge. This encounter alone already unnerved the Fulham players, which meant the fans in blue already partially achieved their goals.

Sam knew what was happening. It was pretty normal in football; fans go to pretty extreme lengths just to put their opponents off their game.

It was working, the Fulham players were barely holding on to their nerves.

Sam was also affected but unlike them, he had an inner voice that reared its head whenever he was challenged.

The fan service already registered as a challenge to his brain.

'Win!'

The voice was already rearing its head.

As they came down, Sam said just a single word to his teammates before leading the way out. "Let's go get another famous win!"

With that, he stepped out of the bus first.

"BOOOOO...!"

Instantly, Sam was drowned by a tirade of boos.

Passionate Chelsea fans booed him loudly, showing him the middle finger while also yelling offensive words at him.

Sam simply took one look at the fans in blue and then, calmly, he wore his headset before trudging down into the stadium.

His teammates took a line from his playbook, putting their headsets on just as they stepped out of the team bus as they increased their music volume, drowning the noise being made by the Chelsea fans.

It worked.

Listening to music, they felt their tensed minds relaxing. And then, they finally entered their dressing room for the final preparations before the game.

A few minutes later, both squads emerged out of the tunnel.

There was no last-minute change to both team lineups, Chelsea and Fulham both started with their strongest lineups.

For Chelsea, Robert Sanchez started in between the posts while their 4-man defense comprised of Malo Gusto, Adarabioyo, Levi Colwill, and Marc Cucurella. Ahead of them was the midfield duo of Moises Caicedo and Enzo Fernandez.

The 4-man attack comprised of Noni Madueke, Cole Palmer, Jadon Sancho, and the resurgent Nicolas Jackson.

Playing the same 4-2-3-1 formation, Fulham slapped Chelsea with their own lineup of players, promising an exciting clash in Stamford Bridge.

Again, Raul Jimenez led the line as the striker while behind him was the trio of Alex Iwobi, Sam, and Emile Smith Rowe. Further behind them was the midfield duo of Lukic and Pereira.

Their 4-man defense comprised of Robinson, Diop, Calvin Bassey, and Tete while Bernd Leno naturally started in between the posts.

Due to the fan service from the home fans before the game, even before a ball was kicked, the tension in this stadium was already palpable.

FWEEEE!

As soon as the referee's whistle sounded, it was like the horn to kickstart a war was finally blown as it exploded.

The battlefield was already set, it was Stamford Bridge.

The stakes were highest, 3 points were up for grabs. The armies of both sides were ready and determined, and their Generals were laser focused, ready to lead their troops into battle, a prelude to a titanic struggle.

From the very first minute of this game, Chelsea took the game to Fulham after the referee's whistle sounded, forcing the West London club to defend.

For another game in this premier league season, Sam was forced back to help his team defend and he did it with gusto. This was because just like his teammates, he could sense the threat that this Chelsea team posed to them.

From the midfield to attack, Chelsea was having a terrific game.

Cole Palmer and Enzo Fernandez created the attacking thrust, utilizing their creativity to constantly break Fulham down, forcing them into compromising situations where they had to improvise to survive.

During the first few minutes of this game, it was wave after wave of Chelsea attacks even as the home fans in Stamford Bridge roared their players on.

It was a wonder why Chelsea didn't get a goal yet by the 10th minute.

But the North London club learned to rue their inability to score because after the 10th minute, Fulham was no longer content with absorbing pressure.

Like a caterpillar unfurling from its cocoon and becoming a butterfly, Fulham soon transformed, spreading its wings and taking flight.

And of course, this resurgence was led by a certain player, Samuel Moses.

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

The Sam chants broke out in Stamford Bridge by the away fans.

The home fan did not let it though as they drowned it with boos but in the zone state already, Sam did not let any of the noise affect him.

Sam was not the first player to enter the zone state though.

Cole Palmer entered the zone state first, directing the Chelsea attack and once Sam also entered the state of flow, he led Fulham on the counterattack.

It became an end-to-end game of endless action.

And just as Fulham was becoming threatening, another Chelsea player entered the zone state in Moises Caicedo.

That night, the Ecuadorian International seemed to reincarnate, channeling the spirit of a prime N'golo Kante.

That night, OG Chelsea fans didn't see Caicedo, all they saw was the endless energy of N'golo Kante gliding through the pitch, causing mayhem, stealing balls, and creating counterattacking opportunities for Chelsea.

With help from the Ecuadorian international, Cole Palmer took it a step further and in the 33rd minute of this game, the Englishman created Chelsea's closest chance of this first half.

POW!

Cole Palmer's direct shot forced Bernd Leno into an impressive save, stinging the Fulham goalkeeper's arms.

While he worried for Chelsea, Sam also worried for Fulham.

With these 2 attacking midfielders taking the game by the scruff of the neck, the fans across this stadium had their hearts in their throat for most of this first half and then incredibly, despite the venom filled in this half, it ended in a goalless draw.

The first half had no goals in it but still, it was exceedingly exciting.

It was a half for the ages.

Truly, it was the London Rumble.

Chapter 212 [Bonus Chapter] The London Rumble [2]

"Do you think we can't win?" Coach Marco Silva confronted his players as soon as they were in the dressing room during half-time.

"Come on guys!" He clapped. "We can do this!"

"Let's shock them, let's stun them, let's make them remember and learn to dread us!"

"Let's go out there and score a goal!"

"Come on!"

Coach Marco Silva's little team talk left the blood of his players boiling as they came out for the 2nd half, and it was the same mood in the Chelsea team.

Enzo Maresca seemed to have promised them heaven and earth because the Chelsea players came out of the tunnel with a fire burning in their eyes.

FWEEEE!

When the referee's whistle sounded, this game continued, with even more fire, more venom, and more intensity.

The second half was even more chaotic than the first as both teams showed their desperation, wanting to get a goal first.

In this second half, offensively, 2 players remained the standout, Cole Palmer and Sam as every other player was no more than support to them. The intensity of this game was too much for them to thrive.

It was a war on the pitch.

The little flicks from Cole Palmer, the body feints, the tight-control and dribbling, the flair, attracting dangerous challenges from the Fulham players as they started slowly accumulating yellow cards.

Every time that the ball touched his leg and he moved with it, the away fan section felt like they would die of anxiety.

The same applied for the Chelsea fans, caused by Sam.

While Cole Palmer's game had more flair to it and was more refined, Sam's game was more brutal and direct, straight to the point.

His was the mazy runs, the powerful outbursts of speed, the nutmegs, the silky elasticos, the powerful shoulder shoves in a display of physicality, and then the occasional long range piledriver that stung Robert Sanchez's gloves, Sam played like an absolute tank, a gladiator.

Every time that he had the ball close to the Chelsea 18-yard box, the Chelsea defense moved, scrambling backward in response to his movements.

This game was exciting, far too exciting, the Chelsea and Fulham fans were bearing witness to a game for the ages.

Another impressive figure in this game as the second half wore on was Enzo Fernandez. Settling into his mojo, the Argentine international seemed to transform into a prime Toni Kroos, mounting in the base of the Chelsea midfield like a fortress.

And from that point, he sprayed pin-point passes left and right around the pitch, both short and long ones with deadly accuracy, dictating Chelsea's tempo and aiding Cole Palmer's brilliance.

With him taking care of the control part though, there was another teammate of his that protected the defense, most especially when Fulham's Zinedine Sam went on his marauding runs.

This game, the Ecuadorian International, Moises Caicedo was like the impenetrable ancient wall of China.

Aggressive, physical, and skilled, Moises Caicedo played like a monster.

He jumped into tackles with gusto, not scared of diving into sliding tackles just to win the ball back. He was Sam's greatest bane this game even as Sam torched him a few times already.

So long as Fulham didn't score yet though, Moises Caicedo was satisfied, Sam could torch and humiliate him how many times he wanted.

This game was a masterpiece!

Despite all the excitement though, despite all the chances that were created, despite the individual brilliance in display, by the 70th minute of this game, the game remained a goalless draw.

It was crazy, far too crazy to be real.

By the 75th minute, it seemed like this game was going to be a straight draw when after relentless pressure all game, Cole Palmer went on another of his dizzying runs and this time, an unlikely opponent brought him down close to the Fulham 18-yard box.

Hot-headed from 75 minutes of non-stop action, in the zone state, Sam could not hold himself as tracking back, he slid in, tripping Cole Palmer just outside the box.

FWEEEE!

The referee gave Sam a yellow card, awarding a freekick to Chelsea.

"BOOOO...!" A loud chorus of boos resounded from the Chelsea fans again as they directed their hate at the Fulham superstar.

Jumping to his feet, Sam extended a hand to help Cole Palmer up only for the Englishman to slap his hand aside, helping himself up.

"...!" For a moment, Sam felt like a switch just sparked inside of him as he lost his head.

That moment in this game almost caused a fight on the pitch as the referee had to give 2 more yellow cards before the players from both sides who got involved were separated and pacified.

That near fight only increased the tension in this game. And in that tension was when Cole Palmer stood before the ball to take the freekick.

Taking a deep breath, the Englishman took a look at goal and after the referee's whistle, he went on an angled run, then...

BAM!

With his lethal left foot, he kicked the ball, curling it past the wall of Fulham players as it honed towards the top left corner like a missile.

Bernd Leno dived after the ball but after saving his team so many times this game already, for the first time, this goalkeeper failed to be superman.

The ball tore its way into the net.

"...!" There was a brief silence of disbelief in Stamford Bridge, and then...

"GOALLLLLLLLLLL...!!!" Stamford Bridge erupted.

"PALMERRRRRR!!!" The commentator roared.

"What a goal! What a freekick! What a befitting way to score the only goal of the most exciting game of the season!"

"Cold Palmer strikes again!"

"This boy has got ice in his veins!"

With sweat all over his face, Cole Palmer jogged towards the corner flag, doing his iconic shivering celebration as Stamford Bridge worshipped him.

While Chelsea celebrated, Fulham was devastated.

After playing such a great game for 78 minutes, matching Chelsea's intensity at every turn, in the end, Cole Palmer's brilliance did them in.

They finally understood what their opponents felt when Sam created his moments of magic, it was just too unfair.

But then...

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

The devil in a certain boy's head was already turning rabid, slowly turning him into a devil incarnate on the pitch.

There was still 12 minutes of normal time.

To the devil incarnate at this moment, that was more than enough time!

Chapter 213 [Bonus Chapter] The London Rumble [3]

FWEEEE!

The referee's whistle sounded again to continue the game.

In this game, Sam had been insulted, fouled, and challenged, but it was only after Cole Palmer's incredible freekick goal did he truly feel desperate.

Sam was not about to be upstaged!

It was a rare selfish moment on his part.

At this moment, Sam was not thinking about Fulham, nor about the team's victory, all he cared about at this moment was his pride, he was not about to be upstaged by the Englishman!

It was selfish but like they say, sometimes, it's that little bit of selfishness and arrogance that separates legends from the mere elites.

After Cole Palmer's goal, Sam became the devil's incarnate.

After that goal, for the first time since last season, Sam felt his teammates truly lose hope in a game. After all, they've given far beyond 100% in this game, this was already their best football and to still lose with that? They lost hope.

But Sam did not lose hope.

The game continued. Cole Palmer continued playing at an extraterrestrial level, Moises Caicedo kept on keeping tabs on Sam, while Enzo Fernandez kept on stretching Fulham's defense with his passing range.

At some point, the Ecuadorian International was tasked to mark Sam, limiting the influence of the Nigerian International in Fulham's attack.

Coach Marco Silva already made multiple changes, switching almost his full starting offense but yet, it was not bearing fruit.

80 minutes, no goal...

82 minutes, no goal...

85 minutes, no goal...

It seemed like Fulham was about to suffer its second defeat of the season, but then in the 87th minute, it happened.

It was a Chelsea corner kick.

After the ball was floated into the box, Sam helped his team defend, rising highest as he cleared the ball out only for a scramble to start just outside the box.

After the chaotic scramble, as Sam charged out of his box, the ball was sent in his direction and immediately, he leaped high, taming the ball with his chest.

Bam!

Sam felt an opposition player slam into his back, having jumped after him to vie for the ball.

He lost his balance in mid-air but quickly spreading his arms like a bird floating in the sky, he was able to barely stabilize himself as he landed.

As soon as Sam landed was when he learned that the player that jumped after him was Moises Caicedo, his bodyguard during the second half of this game.

Like him, this guy was already in the zone state.

His tackling skills were sharp and at an ultra-instinct level, his battle with Sam this game was legendary, having been torched a few times and having stopped him a few times in his tracks too.

But this time, Sam refused to be stopped.

As Moises Caicedo threatened, Sam held the ball, patient, teasing and luring the Ecuadorian International in and as soon as Caicedo bought it, sticking his leg out, Sam erupted like a Phoenix.

Bam! Bam!

Moving with lightning-fast speed, Sam kicked the ball twice in rapid succession, deleting this player with a silky la croqueta.

Moises Caicedo slipped, falling to his butt but instantly, almost as if he bounced off the ground, the Ecuadorian International sprang back to his feet and went on the chase.

Sam already exploded away with speed, abusing his pace but Moises Caicedo was no weakling either when it came to a speed war.

Moises Caicedo chased Sam all the way from the Fulham 18-yard box, crossing the half-way line, and going deep into Chelsea's half.

"BOOOOO...!!!" Sam endured a chorus of loud boos from the Chelsea fans, but to him, they all felt like background noise.

His brain easily abstracted it all out, focusing on only what was before him, his ball, the pitch, and his opponents.

Running with the ball was slower than running without it, this was why Moises Caicedo eventually overtook Sam just before they got to the Chelsea 18-yard box, forcing Sam to slow down as he scanned around for options.

To Sam's dismay, there was no help, he was the fastest Fulham player since Adama Traore was not on the pitch.

There was no support for him and unless he wanted the rest of the Chelsea players to recover, he had to go at it alone.

That was all that Sam needed to know.

His eyes briefly clashed with Moises Caicedo's, and sparks of electricity seemed to explode between the both of them.

Whoosh!

Caicedo stuck out his leg again but reacting faster, Sam dragged the ball backward and as Caicedo pushed forward, Sam did this player dirty.

Ping! Pang!

His leg moved in a blur, hitting the ball rapidly with the same leg twice as he deleted the Ecuadorian International a second time within just a few seconds with a skill move, this time the elastico.

Moises Caicedo staggered unsteadily, losing his balance as Sam charged past him into the 18-yard box finally, clashing with Chelsea's last man in defense, Adarabioyo.

Fully acknowledging his former teammates' threat, Adarabioyo paid full attention to Sam's movement, marking him perfectly till Caicedo reacted again, recovering for the second time despite being torched.

Moises Caicedo was a beast this game.

As the Ecuadorian International charged in this time, Sam flicked the ball to his right, about to set himself up and finally, Caicedo made a mistake.

Being torched twice in such convincing fashion definitely already got to his nerves and this time, unwilling to let Sam squirm away, he stuck his leg out recklessly. He did not catch the ball, instead catching the player.

Wrapping his legs around Sam's ankle, this Chelsea player collapsed with Sam in tow as Sam fell down in an awkward angle.

"Woah! What a nasty fall!" The commentator exclaimed.

"Is it just me or did Sam's ankle seemed to twist there?"

"Hope it's not serious, but what will the referee make of this?"

FWEEEE!

"He's done it now!" The commentator screamed. "Red card to Moises Caicedo, penalty kick to Fulham!"

Immediately after, Sam stood up to his feet, bumping fists with his teammates that finally arrived at the 18-yard box.

Moises Caicedo didn't stay in the pitch for long, trudging off with his head down to a loud round of applause from the Chelsea fans.

The fans didn't seem to care that he just got a reckless red card and forced Chelsea into a penalty situation.

While Caicedo walked off, Muniz walked towards Sam with the ball and whispered to him, handing the ball over to him. "Take it".

This time, Sam did not stand on ceremony.

Placing the ball down, he waited for the referee's whistle to sound even as the home fans drowned him in the loudest tirade of boos.

FWEEEE!

Calmly, Sam ran towards the ball and then...

BAM!

Sam hit this ball with power with his right foot towards the top left corner. Robert Sanchez dived the right way, but still, he stood no chance.

"GOALLLLL...!" The commentator screamed.

"What a game! Oh freaking gods..., what a game this has been!"

"Cole Palmer scored the first goal, Sam got the equalizer, what a game!"

For the first time this game, Sam finally managed to briefly silence Stamford Bridge as the home fans glared at him in resentment and resignation.

Charging towards the corner flag, Sam pointed at his head in celebration but as the adrenaline started dying, that was when he felt it, a sharp pang of pain.

Suddenly screaming, Sam collapsed to the pitch, clutching his ankle.

"OH! What is this? An emergency, Sam is down!"

"He's clutching his ankle; I did say it looked like he twisted his ankle!"

Sam could not even hear the commentator anymore as he was in a whole world of pain, he felt like he would die. The medical staff rushed into the pitch as Sam was stretchered off the pitch in tears.

Again, Stamford Bridge was silenced as this happened.

With Sam out of the game, the fire in the game died. A few more minutes later, the game finally ended 1-1, a draw.

It was an unforgettable game.

Chapter 214 [Bonus Chapter] Extent of injury

(Premier league:)

(Matchday 18 of 38:)

(Man City 3-0 Everton)

(Date: 26th December, 2024)

...

(Newcastle 1-1 Aston Villa)

(Date: 26th December, 2024)

...

(Nottm Forest 2-2 Tottenham)

(Date: 26th December, 2024)

...

(Bournemouth 1-0 Crystal Palace)

(Date: 26th December, 2024)

...

(Chelsea 1-1 Fulham)

(Date: 26th December, 2024)

...

(Southampton 0-2 West Ham)

(Date: 26th December, 2024)

...

(Wolves 1-3 Man United)

(Date: 26th December, 2024)

...

(Liverpool 2-0 Leicester City)

(Date: 26th December, 2024)

...

(Brighton 3-2 Brentford)

(Date: 27th December, 2024)

...

(Arsenal 4-1 Ipswich Town)

(Date: 27th December, 2024)

...

(Updated premier league table standings:)

(1. Fulham GP: 18/ W:14/ D:3/ L:1/ Pts: 46)

(2. Liverpool GP: 17/ W:12/ D:2/ L:2/ Pts: 42)

(3. Chelsea GP: 18/ W:11/ D:5/ L:2/ Pts: 38)

(4. Arsenal GP: 18/ W:10/ D:6/ L:2/ Pts: 36)

(5. Nottm Forest GP: 18/ W:8/ D:6/ L:4/ Pts: 30)

(6. Brighton GP: 18/ W:8/ D:6/ L:4/ Pts: 30)

(7. Man City GP: 18/ W:8/ D:5/ L:5/ Pts: 29)

(8. Newcastle GP: 18/ W:7/ D:6/ L:5/ Pts: 27)

(9. Aston Villa GP: 18/ W:7/ D:5/ L:7/ Pts: 26)

(10. Bournemouth GP: 18/ W:8/ D:4/ L:6/ Pts: 28)

(11. Brentford GP: 18/ W:7/ D:3/ L:8/ Pts: 24)

(12. Man United GP: 18/ W:7/ D:4/ L:7/ Pts: 25)

(13. Tottenham GP: 18/ W:7/ D:2/ L:9/ Pts: 23)

(14. West Ham GP: 18/ W:6/ D:4/ L:8/ Pts: 22)

(15. Crystal Palace GP: 18/ W:3/ D:7/ L:8/ Pts: 16)

(16. Leicester GP: 18/ W:3/ D:6/ L:9/ Pts: 15)

(17.Everton GP: 17/ W:3/ D:5/ L:9/ Pts: 14)

(18. Ipswich Town GP: 18/ W:2/ D:6/ L:10/ Pts: 12)

(19. Wolves GP: 18/ W:1/ D:4/ L:13/ Pts: 7)

(20. Southampton GP: 18/ W:1/ D:1/ L:16/ Pts: 4)

After 18 matchdays of the 2024/2025 premier league season, this was how the premier league table looked like.

There were a few highlights of matchday 18. Despite the fact that it was done against an inferior opponent, Manchester City finally rose above their rut, returning to winning ways with a convincing 3-0 win over Everton.

Manchester United's win over Wolves was another highlight, especially to the fans in the red part of Manchester, and then was Southampton's plight.

Southampton was setting a record that no premier league team wanted. In 18 matchdays, incredibly, they've amassed only 4 points out of 18 games!

With only 1 win and 1 draw, and then 16 losses, they were truly on a generational losing form.

Despite all these results, the main highlight of matchday 18 was still the exciting clash between Chelsea and Fulham in Stamford Bridge that was dubbed the best game of the season.

Despite the exciting nature of that game though, very little focus was placed on the game itself as the main focus was directed towards a player that got injured during the match, Samuel Moses.

After another scintillating performance by the Nigerian International, Sam won another man of the match award, this time in Stamford Bridge but the price that he paid for his performance was a horrible injury.

Sam was stretchered off the pitch in tears!

Fulham fans across the world felt horrible, gripped by anxiety as they feared for the worst to their star player.

They could only wait agonizingly, awaiting the prognosis of the Fulham medical team after Sam was taken to the hospital.

Fulham fans were not the only ones who felt the impact of Sam's injury though, the ripple of this injury was felt across the premier league.

This season, Sam truly announced his name to the world with his scintillating performances, consistently terrorizing the best sides of the premier league.

These days, premier league clubs approached Fulham with special plans to contain Sam, this was how high his importance already rose to rival clubs.

And now, with his sudden injury, its ripples were felt.

Some felt sympathy, and though they all expressed it, some premier league rivals secretly felt joy as one of their biggest rivals just lost their best player.

To them, if Sam's injury was as severe as Rodri's, ruling him out for the rest of the season would be the best-case scenario.

Popular news outlets and TVs carried the news around England and beyond.

[Twitter:]

: 'Zinedine Sam is out'- Fulham's talisman and no. 11, Samuel Moses succumbs to injury in the epic clash against Chelsea in Stamford Bridge. The initial prognosis is still being made by the doctors in Fulham.]

...

[Twitter:]

[Yahoo Sports: The epic premier league between Chelsea and Fulham at Stamford Bridge ends in an exciting 1-1 draw, with both teams sharing the spoils, but the entertainment value of the game was marred by the injury to Fulham's talismanic superstar, Samuel Moses.]

...

[Twitter:]

[Sportskeeda: 'Sam is out!'- Samuel Moses, Fulham's attacking midfielder succumbs to another ankle injury, something that has worried him in his short career. Is this something for Fulham to worry about?]

...

[YouTube:]

[CHELSEA 1-1 FULHAM- Matchday 18- Premier league 24/25; full highlights.]

...

[Twitter:]

[FOX Sports: Cole Palmer scores for Chelsea while Samuel Moses scores for Fulham being before injured as Chelsea draws Fulham in Stamford Bridge.]

...

[England National TV:]

[Breaking News: Fulham's superstar, Samuel Moses sustains an injury during the top of the table clash against Chelsea in Stamford Bridge. Initial diagnosis indicates that it's an ankle injury, the extent of the injury and for how long he will be on the sidelines for to recover is yet to be determined.]

A worried Mrs. Moses tried all means to reach her son, calling Sam's phone till it became hot until Emile Smith Rowe answered the call, telling the Nigerian mother that his son was fine but was undergoing tests.

In less than an hour after Sam was taken to the hospital, Emile Smith Rowe and Ian also arrived at the hospital to stay with him.

It was almost as if the whole world turned upside down due to his injury.

It was not until Ian spoke with Kayla that she finally calmed down, but she still took the next flight to England already.

While all this happened and the doctors kept on doing their tests, Sam sighed because even before their test results arrived, he already knew everything about his current status through his system.

~----~

[You have sustained an injury!]

[Injury Type: High ankle sprain!]

[Severity: High]

[Injury Description: Click to expand!]

...

[Treatment: Surgery by an Orthopedic Surgeon!]

[Approximate recovery time: 4 months]

~----~

Sam felt his world go dark.

Chapter 215 [Bonus Chapter] Disaster

When the diagnosis from the medical professionals working for Fulham finally arrived, Emile Smith Rowe and Ian felt their whole world crashing down.

The mere sight of surgery was all they needed for their mood to come crashing down to the abyss.

When Coach Marco Silva got the report, this coach also felt like his whole world came crashing down.

In the end, this coach chuckled mirthfully. "Life, always the big bastard".

"Just when I'm having the best season of my life, you have to hit me with this, a severe injury to my best player".

"What a life".

When the news was eventually released on Fulham's official social media handles, the footballing landscape of the English premier league experienced an upheaval as the name 'Samuel Moses' started trending again.

Even while he was injured, Sam was trending.

The main talk of football fans in England revolved around Sam, his performances this season, and then his unfortunate injury.

Despite the fact that they sympathized with him, the main focus quickly switched from Sam as it transferred to Fulham.

How would Fulham cope without their talisman?

The prognosis of Sam's injury showed that he would be out for approximately 4 months, and that was on the basis that his ankle showed no complications after the surgery and even that was not guaranteed.

If complications arose in his recovery process, Fulham may lose Sam for up to 6 months which may as well be the rest of the season.

Fulham was in a crisis!

This was the verdict of neutral premier league fans who evaluated the situation. Afterall, Sam was the cornerstone of Fulham's remarkable rise this season, sitting at the top of the premier league table.

Even someone with zero knowledge of football could tell Sam's influence in this Fulham team after watching their game only once.

This was why fans predicted Fulham's fall after Sam's injury.

The whole Fulham team was playing at a level higher than last season, but Sam was still the cornerstone that brought the X factor, pushing them over the line in tough games. Without him, Fulham would struggle to win games.

It was with his presence that his teammates played at such an elite level, making them seem better than they actually were.

Without Sam, the prediction was that the true Fulham would be exposed.

If neutral fans could see this, the Fulham squad itself and their coach who spent every single training session with him could see even more.

Coach Marco Silva knew that his club was now facing a crisis.

Sam's injury was a disaster that left him panicking. But in the end, there was nothing he could do. This coach simply decided to visit his star player in the hospital.

"Hey buddy, how are you feeling?"

Sam chuckled. "I feel better than before".

At this moment, his ankle was suspended at a specific angle where he no longer felt the sharp pang of pain attributed to his injury.

Coach Marco Silva could not help but look at his star player's bandaged ankle, he patted him by the knee. "Don't worry Sam, you'll be fine".

Hearing that from his coach, Sam could not help but feel bad as he thought of the team. "How are the guys?"

"They're good". Marco Silva forced a smile.

He patted Sam again. "When is your surgery scheduled for?"

"I'll have it in 2 days".

"Good," he patted Sam on the knee again, grinning. "You focus on recovering from your injury, leave the rest to us".

Coach Marco Silva patted his chest. "We'll take it from here".

Sam did not sense any confidence from his coach's voice, but he did sense conviction, an unshakable determination to give his best.

Sam was satisfied with that.

He smiled. "I'll be cheering you guys on from here".

After leaving a get well soon flower at his bed side, Coach Marco Silva finally left. That night, Kayla arrived in England.

She stayed with him at the hospital, allowing Ian and Emile Smith Rowe to leave and finally get some rest. Alone with his girlfriend was when Sam finally allowed himself to vent, letting his tears flow as he let out all his frustration.

"This same ankle again!" Sam was frustrated.

Kayla hugged him, letting him vent so he could feel better and a few minutes later, he did feel better.

An injury was the last thing that Sam wanted when his career was going so swimmingly, but sometimes, things go out of your control and life just happens.

When he collapsed on the pitch, Sam felt like his world was going to end but now, after venting, he felt better.

Kayla staying at his side gave him strength.

"This injury is not the end of the world!"

'It's not like I'll be injured forever, I'll eventually recover, all I need is time. Besides, we're still top of the table'.

'Who knows? Maybe they can really take it from where I stopped'. Instead of focusing on the negative, Sam tried to focus on the positive.

Feeling better now, he finally dialed his mother's number.

He refused to speak to her since, this was because of his fear that his mom would lose it once she heard the dejection in his voice.

But now, feeling a bit better, he finally called her on a video call.

Trust Mrs. Moses, she was all over him as soon as the call connected.

"Sam! Finally," she heaved a huge sigh of relief, making a prayer sign to God. "How are you feeling? How's your leg?"

"That bastard! How dare he injure my son?!"

"I'll kill him!"

"Does he know the God that I serve? He wanted to kill you but my God didn't let it, thank God you were only injured".

Sam chuckled exasperatedly. "Yeah, yeah".

"How are you feeling?"

"I'm better," Sam said before switching the camera, focusing on his leg.

"Jesus!" He heard his mom exclaim loudly. "My son...!" She lamented.

In the end, Sam's mom became a motivational speaker, telling him how this was not the end of the world and how it was just a hurdle in his career.

Sam was suspicious. 'Dad definitely told her what to say!'

In the end, his mom ended it with a long prayer session, wishing him quick recovery. That night, Kayla stayed with him at the hospital.

...

The next morning, Sam was surprised as the whole Fulham squad came to the hospital to visit him with flowers.

Sam never knew how important he was till that morning.

"..." He was speechless.

He felt overwhelmed, he felt important and it warmed his heart.

In the end, engaging in light banter with his teammates even as they mocked his injury, looking down on him for being weak, Sam was surprised to discover that they still found a reason to laugh even in the disaster.

And that... filled him with hope.

Hope for life without him in the Fulham team.

Chapter 216 Life without the Zidane from Nigeria

Life without Sam... was hard.

The Fulham players learned this in the next few days in training as they got prepared to take it up from where Sam dropped them at.

They were determined to salvage the situation and prove to Sam that the team could function even without him, but it was hard.

Only when he was not around did they fully grasp what Sam brought to the team. Not even his ability on the pitch, but his energy, his mamba spirit.

When Sam was around, the Fulham players felt endless energy to perform simply because of Sam's energy and the joy that he attributed to training.

Around him, they derived joy from training and giving their all.

Around him, they derived pleasure from pushing themselves to the limit, preparing as best as they could for games and performing the same way in games, but with the Nigerian Zidane gone this suddenly became a job again.

It was no longer as enjoyable, rather, training returned to what it was before, a job that they had to attend to due to their contract as professional football players.

The Fulham players knew that this thinking was negative and harmful, they knew that it was bad but it was easier than said to just change it.

They were struggling to cope already without Sam.

(Premier league:)

(Fulham – Bournemouth)

(Date: 29th December, 2024)

...

(EFL Cup Quarter final:)

(Crystal Palace – Fulham)

(Date: 2nd January, 2025)

Fulham's next 2 games were important games, 1 in the premier league and the other in the EFL Cup.

Fulham was still in the running for the 3 competitions that they played in this season, the premier league, the EFL Cup, and the FA Cup.

After narrowly clawing their way through the third round by beating Preston, they welcomed Arsenal at home in a blockbuster encounter on October 30th.

In that game, Sam was an unused sub as even without his help, Raul Jimenez took the game by the scruff of the neck, scoring a hatrick after being subbed on in the second half to doom Arsenal to a 3-1 defeat.

After that game, they progressed to the quarter finals. The quarter final clash of the EFL Cup was supposed to take place this month but due to extreme weather conditions, the game was postponed to 2nd of January.

On the wake of Sam's injury, these 2 games were the priority that the Fulham squad focused on, determined to get good results from.

Despite the situation, Coach Marco Silva tried his best to salvage it, pushing his team to train to the best of their ability in preparation for it.

While this happened, Sam also faced his own problems in the hospital.

...

After 2 days, Sam finally had his ankle surgery but before that, he spent some time with his system to determine certain things.

First things first, Sam had no intentions of staying on the sidelines for 4 months, he would rather die!

And luckily for him, unlike any other professional football player in the world, he actually had an alternative.

This was why he sought it before the surgery.

~----~

[Daily system quest; Mentality Monster has been suspended until you are fit to run again!]

[WARNING: The quest was only suspended, not waived, which means you will run the laps that you're skipping now plus the ones in the future when you're finally fit to run again!]

...

Sam almost choked on the tea that Kayla served him when he saw this notification but managing to hold himself on time and muttering a curse, he finally navigated to the part of his system that he wanted.

Some time ago, after he hit the milestone of 1 year since he started completing his daily system quest, his system gave him crazy rewards.

One of the rewards was the high-grade vitality elixir that actually managed to improve his pace, and the other was the high-grade physical conditioning elixir.

Though he already consumed the high-grade vitality elixir, he kept the other, saving it for scenarios exactly like what he currently found himself in.

And now, he wanted to know the effects it would have on his recovery time if he ingested the high-grade physical conditioning elixir after his surgery.

...

[You have accessed your Inventory:]

[Inventory Slot: High-grade physical conditioning elixir]

>High-grade physical conditioning elixir: This is a miraculous elixir that is capable of completely eliminating fatigue, making post-match recovery instantaneous. It also accelerates recovery time from injuries<

...

[If ingested after having your surgery and it was successful, the recovery time from your injury will be reduced by 3/4th]

[Projected injury recovery time: 1 month]

~~~~~

That was all that Sam needed to see to go through with it.

In 2 days when he finally had the surgery, he entered the theater with confidence, totally relaxed as he was put to sleep, enabling the surgeons to do their work and they did it perfectly.

Throughout, Kayla was a nerve wreck as she watched her boyfriend's leg being dissected and worked on by these surgeons from outside.

In the end though, it was a successful surgery.

The surgeons recommended for Sam to spend 5 days recuperating in the hospital before being discharged and Sam did just that like an obedient patient.

During this time though, on the night after his surgery when Kayla already slept at his bedside and the CCTV camera could not see him, Sam finally did it, ingesting the high-grade physical conditioning elixir.

Immediately after he ingested it, Sam regretted not waiting for a better time to take it as he almost screamed in pain.

Unlike when he ingested the high-grade vitality elixir and he felt a hot burning sensation course through his body, this time it was raw physical pain as he felt like holy hands were massaging his body, not just his body but his bones too!

Because he was injured, it was painful and it was even more painful when this massage finally concentrated on his leg.

It took all of his willpower for Sam not to scream and wake up Kayla.

At the end of it all, he was left sweating profusely and eventually, his system lit up with a new notification.

Staring at the notification, Sam grinned.

~-----~

[You have ingested a high-grade physical conditioning elixir!]

[Your physical constitution has...]

Chapter 217 Matchday 19; against Bournemouth

~-----~

[You have ingested a high-grade physical conditioning elixir!]

[Your physical constitution has improved!]

[Your bone structure and constitution has improved!]

[Your physicality attribute has increased by +3!]

[Your injury recovery time has been reduced!]

[Recovery time: 1 month]

[Full recovery date: 27th January, 2025]

...

[Player Attributes:]

Player Attributes:

\*Pace: 81

\*Shot: 85

\*Pass: 80

\*Dribbling: 78

\*Defending: 38

\*Physicality: 79

\*Stamina: 84



Overall Rating: 83

~-----~

Not only did his injury recovery time lessen considerably, but his physicality attribute experienced an upgrade to boot!

Staring at the notifications on his system screen, Sam could not help but grin happily. It truly felt nice to have a system.

The effects of the high-grade physical conditioning elixir were so thorough that he felt like he had been recuperating for months already.

All the niggling pain, the uncomfortable feeling in his ankle after the surgery, all of it was gone like it was never there.

Sam was convinced that his system already accelerated his recovery process to the level where he could start walking immediately but of course, he would not walk now, that would attract too much attention.

He would play the part and recuperate normally in the hospital.

...

While Sam recuperated at the hospital, his teammates prepared for their next game which was a premier league home clash against Bournemouth.

After the game against Chelsea on the 26th, the Fulham players had only 3 days of rest before their clash against Bournemouth. A day after Sam's surgery, it was finally D-day when his teammates were put to the test.

Craven Cottage was filled to the brim with tens of thousands of fans, and the home fans did a surprising gesture as giant banners of Sam in Fulham's white and black jersey were paraded in the stadium stands.

{Samuel Moses}

{No. 11}

{Get well soon champ, we miss you!}

The biggest banner of all had Sam's image, his name, his jersey number, and then that write-up.

Watching the game from the hospital on the hospital TV, Sam could not help but smile as he felt a warm feeling in his heart.

After that fanfare did the attention finally turn to the game.

Like expected, both teams approached this game with their strongest lineup.

Occupying 10th position in the league, Bournemouth were in a positive run of form and with Fulham's talisman out, this team came to Craven Cottage with high hopes of getting something back home.

For Fulham, Raul Jimenez started as the striker while behind him was the trio of Alex Iwobi, Emile Smith Rowe, and Adama Traore.

Further behind them was the duo of Lukic and Andreas Pereira, while the 4-man defense comprised of Robinson, Diop, Calvin Bassey, and Tete while Bernd Leno naturally started in between the posts.

For Bournemouth, starting in the same 4-2-3-1 formation as Fulham, Evanilson started up top as the striker while behind him was the dynamic trio of Semenyo, Kluivert, and Ouattara.

Behind them was the midfield duo of Christie and Cook, while their 4-man defense comprised of Smith, Zabarnyi, Huijsen, and Kerkez.

Kepa Arrizabalaga, the ex-Chelsea goalkeeper was their no. 1 who started in between the posts as the last man in defense to thwart Fulham attacks.

Under the loud noise being made by the Fulham fans to support their team, the referee's whistle finally went off, giving the signal to start the game.

FWEEEE!

Bournemouth started kickoff but from the first whistle of this game, Fulham came charging out with energy like Sharks that smelled blood.

Their high-energy press forced Bournemouth to play backwards, all the way to their goalkeeper and that ended up being a mistake because as soon as the defender passed back, Raul Jimenez engaged in a sprint.

While Kepa waited for the ball to get to him, the Fulham striker ate yards of space, chasing after the ball and by the time it got to him, the goalkeeper was already panicking as he tried to clear it in a fluster.

As soon as he hit the ball, Jimenez jumped, placing his leg on the path of the ball as it hit his leg.

Bam!

The ball rebounded, straight into the Bournemouth net.

"GOALLLL...!!!" Craven Cottage erupted.

In just the 1st minute of this game, their team actually managed to score already, putting themselves on the lead.

In the hospital, Sam pumped a fist at the air in celebration.

The mood in Craven Cottage improved immediately as the home fans started singing songs, it was clear that their team was cruising to victory this game.

That first goal set the tempo for Fulham's domination. Even with Sam not on the pitch, the impact was hardly felt as the Fulham players desperate to prove themselves used Bournemouth as the experimental board for their conviction.

Bournemouth was run ragged in the first half, the only blemish to Fulham's play being that they could not get the second goal.

When second half eventually started, the Fulham domination continued and 15 minutes after the restart, in the 60th minute, Fulham finally got their second goal of the game as Adama Traore scored an incredible solo goal after a simple pass from Emile Smith Rowe to set him up.

By the 60th minute, Fulham was already cruising to victory, it was easier than the home fans and even Coach Marco Silva expected.

Bournemouth barely threatened as Fulham continued dominating, until the 86th minute when Bernd Leno was stunned.

It was a blind cross into the box from Ouattara, the Bournemouth winger. Nobody expected Evanilson, the Bournemouth striker to successfully squeeze past Fulham's 2 center backs, poking the ball past Leno and into the net.

"...!" Craven Cottage was stunned, nobody saw Bournemouth scoring a goal due to how they dominated this game since the first minute.

But it was just one goal, they were still leading.

That goal was a fluke, no way was Bournemouth going to score another goal but then, 2 minutes of additional time after fulltime, Bournemouth had a corner kick and that was where scenes from a nightmare happened in Craven Cottage.

As soon as the corner kick was floated in, Zabarnyi, the Bournemouth center back rose highest in the Fulham box, planting a powerful header towards goal that beat Bernd Leno.

"...!" Watching the ball in the back of their net, the Fulham players and fans felt like they were dreaming as they watched, baffled.

The away fan section erupted for the first time this game.

An ecstatic Zabarnyi jumped, pumping his fists excitedly as he screamed at the top of his lungs. That shocker was a wake-up call for Fulham.

The remaining minutes of additional time could be described in a simple sentence; Fulham attacks, Bournemouth defends.

The Bournemouth coach made changes, flooding the pitch with defensive players as they defended with their lives in the last few minutes.

Raid after raid of Fulham attacks were launched, led by Emile Smith Rowe and Muniz who was already introduced into the game at some point but a rugged Bournemouth defense was able to hold the fort.

FWEEEE!

When the final whistle sounded, the Fulham players could not believe it.

They actually drew the game!

Chapter 218 Tough time; traveling for an EFL Cup game

Sam's demeanor was moody after the game, something that Kayla was not used to seeing and it was safe to say that the English woman was worried.

That evening, Sam finally experienced and understood what Fulham fans felt when he and his teammates fail to clinch the victory, surrendering leads to draw or even lose the game.

Before, he always saw it from a first person POV on the pitch where he was giving his all, fighting to clinch the victory.

Since making the switch from Enyimba FC to Fulham FC, losing no longer became as regular for the West London club but still, Fulham lost games.

On the pitch, after losing, Sam felt devastated every single time but it was a feeling that he could always shrug and move on from quickly simply because he was exhausted after giving his all on the pitch, and also because Coach Marco Silva urged them to forget about the result, focusing on their next game.

But as a fan, there was no coach to massage their hurt egos and sooth their heartbroken hearts, they had to face the heartbreak alone.

And today, Sam finally experienced it first-hand.

As an avid FC Barcelona fan, Sam knew this feeling which was most prominent in his life in the 2018/2019 season when Liverpool did that unforgettable comeback against Barca in the champions league semifinals.

It was the same feeling when a prime Bayern Munich side led by a prime Lewandowski thrashed FC Barcelona 8-2.

In those nights, Sam could not sleep, he felt like he would die.

'Damn!' He sighed. 'It's not easy to be a football fan'.

In the end, he could not bear to see Kayla so worried while not understanding exactly what happened to him. She failed to make the connection that it was the result of today's game that was affecting him.

Heck, it was not even a loss but after seeing his club go 2 goals ahead of their opponents so convincingly, to suddenly lose it all in such fashion was so heartbreaking to Sam.

In the end, he let it out, telling his girlfriend exactly what was wrong with him and for a moment, Kayla was stunned and amused.

"Wow..., I never could have thought". She chuckled.



Sam pouted. "Are you mocking me?"

"No, I mean, no," she laughed, covering her mouth.

Sam scowled. "Never mind".

"No, come on," she went closer but seeing Sam resist her approach, she feigned crying. "Come on babe, I'll cry".

In the end, Sam allowed his girlfriend to comfort him. In that moment, he thought. 'It feels so good to have a girlfriend'.

But then he had another thought. 'What of those Fulham fans who don't have girlfriends?' His eyes widened. 'How do they deal with the pain?'

He suddenly felt devastated again.

...

After the game, the mood in the Fulham dressing room felt like a funeral as the players rued their missed chances and how they threw the game away so easily to their opponents despite dominating throughout.

In the end, the experienced Coach Marco Silva motivated his team. "Don't worry, it's just a draw, not a loss".

"Instead of wallowing in sorrow like this, use it as motivation towards our next game. You must not make the same mistake!" His voice rose up a crescendo.

"You must not make the same mistake, got me?"

"Yes coach".

With that, they left.

...

The worst part of football was that the scheduling didn't give a damn about your feelings, or your current mental state.

After that damning draw against Bournemouth at home despite dominating the game, all the Fulham players were mentally affected but football didn't give a damn, they still had another game to play in just 3 games.

And so, the Fulham players were forced to pick themselves up and return to training, preparing for their next game in the EFL Cup.

(EFL Cup Quarter final:)

(Crystal Palace – Fulham)

(Date: 2nd January, 2025)

Having won the EFL Cup last season, it was another opportunity for them to extend history in this club and win it for a second successive year since they were already in the quarter finals.

In the build-up to the game, the Fulham squad felt optimistic about their chances, so much that after such a grueling run of games, Coach Marco Silva decided to rotate his team for the EFL Cup game.

After such a run of games, fatigue was already affecting most of his players, the Fulham coach had no choice but to make the decision.

Like that, time moved and in no time, it was D-day.

The final Fulham starting XI was already finalized.

Muniz started in attack but behind him was another crop of faces entirely as Harry Wilson, Pereira, and Adama Traore started behind him. Fulham's midfield and defense experienced changes, including the goalkeeper position for this game.

It was a different look Fulham in South Norwood as Crystal Palace welcomed them in their Selhurst Park Stadium.

Unlike Fulham who took the risk of making changes, Crystal Palace kept their strongest lineup for this quarter final game.

Starting in their usual 3-4-2-1 formation, Juan Philippe Mateta led the line as the striker and behind him was the duo of Eberechi Eze and Ismaila Sarr.

Further behind them comprised the midfield quadruple of Mitchell, Lerma, Hughes, and Kporha. The 3-man defense comprised of March Guehi, Lacroix, and the ex-Chelsea defender, Trevor Chalobah.

Dean Henderson started in between the posts for Crystal Palace.

The home fans in Selhurst Park did their best to create a hostile environment for the visitors as their loud noise rose through the roof.

It was a tough time for Fulham as they had to scale through games without their talisman in Sam, but this team was determined to rise to the occasion.

After letting up against Bournemouth already, they had no intentions of doing it a second time, this was why all the Fulham players retained their focus despite the hostile environment that was created by the Crystal Palace fans.

And then, the referee's whistle finally went off, signaling the start of the game.

FWEEEE!

## Chapter 219 EFL Cup clash

In Selhurst Park, Fulham and Crystal Palace clashed.

As soon as the referee's whistle went off, Fulham kicked off the game.

From the beginning, a team full of Fulham youngsters surged, determined to prove their ability as they took the game to Crystal Palace.

They wanted to score an early goal.

During the early proceedings of this game, Fulham was the one holding the advantage over their opponents as despite playing at home, Crystal Palace were forced to defend against them.

For almost 3 minutes after the start of this game, Fulham retained possession, pinging passes around with Andreas Pereira at its core.

They got themselves into a few dangerous positions, Muniz coming closest as his low-driven shot beat the Crystal Palace goalkeeper only to hit the post and rebound back into the Crystal Palace 6-yard box.

Before Muniz could pounce, Lacroix did, clearing the ball up field.

Bam!

While almost the full Crystal Palace players went back to defend against Fulham's relentless attack, a certain player stayed up top and now as soon as the ball was cleared up field, he reacted.

As soon as Mateta reacted, Diop did the same thing as he tried to keep the imposing striker in check but the massive Mateta beat him for strength, shoving him aside with his shoulder as he tried to control the ball.

Bam!

But it was a miss-control, Mateta's touch was too heavy as the ball hit his leg and accelerated past him towards Fulham's 18-yard box.

The imposing striker pursued, but another Fulham player also reacted.

When the ball was cleared up field, Bernd Leno could only hope on his defender to stop the rampaging Mateta but when he could not, he already expected the worst... till that poor touch.

"...!" This goalkeeper immediately felt like an electricity charge was just passed through his brain, and his body reacted instinctively.

He charged out of his area, chasing after the ball to clear it the sweeper goalkeeper style.

For a few moments, time seemed to freeze in Selhurst Park as 2 players chased after the same ball from opposite sides, but..., Mateta was faster.

The imposing striker had more distance to cover to the ball, and the fact that the ball was moving away from him made him disadvantaged but still, his long legs rapidly ate yards of space like they were not there.

Thud! Thud!

The home fans watched with bated breaths.

"And ohhhh! He's done it, Mateta arrives first!"

Knowing that he would lose the racing contest, Bernd Leno made his body big, sliding forward but the intelligent striker predicted his actions.

With a delicate flick, Mateta raised the ball above and past the sprawling Bernd Leno as he also jumped past him.

With that, the last Fulham player was eliminated.

Mateta had a free goal to himself!

Not playing with his food, Mateta hit it one time as the ball rolled into the net without resistance, and then Selhurst Park exploded.

"GOALLLLL...!"

This striker jogged towards the corner flag, jumped and pumped a fist in the air in celebration as he rode the energy of the home fans.

In just the 4th minute of this game, Fulham started trailing.

When the referee's whistle sounded again to continue play, both sides finally settled into the game, locking it up completely.

Defensive excellence was the watchword for this game as both defenses stayed on top of their game under pressure, excellently thwarting the offensive players, leaving them toothless.

At first, Fulham tried to chase the equalizer until they could no longer chase.

In the end, this was a heavily rotated team compared to Crystal Palace's strong lineup. The experience and ability of the Crystal Palace players started kicking in as the game wore on, granting them dominion over the game.

During the late stages of the first half, they dominated, threatening to score again and again as Fulham were forced to desperately defend their goal.

The first half eventually ended 1-0 with Crystal Palace leading.



During half-time, a dissatisfied Coach Marco Silva gave his players an absolute verbal dressing down before sending them back to the pitch without changes. He hoped for his words to kickstart a fire inside them.

At first, it seemed to work after the second half started as Fulham erupted, taking the game to the Crystal Palace half to exert their authority.

This only stayed for like 10 minutes though, after, exhaustion kicked in again as Crystal Palace regained their domination.

The home fans were absolutely enjoying what they were seeing as their extremely loud noise slowly buoyed their team to victory.

In the 70th minute with nothing changing, Coach Marco Silva was finally fed up as he pulled the plug in the game.

He used all 3 of his subs, introducing Alex Iwobi, Emile Smith Rowe, and Calvin Bassey to add some fire and backbone to his team.

As soon as all 3 players entered the game in the 70th minute, the game visibly changed as Fulham became much more threatening. With Diop's original partner in crime back, the defense was also much more solid.

They took their time to settle into the game before beginning to wrestle for authority over the game, and then they succeeded.

BAM!

Alex Iwobi came closest, unleashing a thunderous outside the box shot in the 76th minute that hit the post.

In the 78th minute, after a mazy dribble, cutting through Crystal Palace players, Emile Smith Rowe squeezed a shot in that beat Dean Henderson only for Crystal Palace to be saved by a stupendous Marc Guehi goal line clearance.

The Englishman grabbed his head, screaming in frustration.

The God of luck seemed to have abandoned Fulham today as they kept trying with no results to show, and in the 85th minute, they were punished again.

Having been substituted into the game at some point, Eddie Nketiah, the ex-Arsenal forward finally sent a dagger through Fulham fans around the world as he scored a solo goal in the 85th minute to seal this game.

At a certain hospital, a certain patient truly felt like his heart stopped beating.

"GOALLLLL...!" Selhurst Park erupted again.

The Fulham squad dissolved into chaos as they started arguing between themselves on the pitch, pointing fingers.

When the chaos eventually stopped and the referee's whistle sounded again, the fire in Fulham died.

They played the rest of the game meekly, surrendering to their opponents.

When the final whistle was blown by the referee, Crystal Palace won 2-0, progressing to the semifinal of the EFL Cup.

Palace caused a major upset. Despite Sam's absence, a lot of fans still expected the reigning EFL Cup champions to progress further in the competition.

Fulham truly had fallen.

Chapter 220 Crisis in Fulham?

(Premier league:)

(Matchday 19 of 38:)

(Leicester City 1-1 Man City)

(Date: 29th December, 2024)

...

(Everton 1-2 Nottm Forest)

(Date: 29th December, 2024)

...

(Crystal Palace 2-0 Southampton)

(Date: 29th December, 2024)

...

(Tottenham 3-1 Wolves)

(Date: 29th December, 2024)

...

(Fulham 2-2 Bournemouth)

(Date: 29th December, 2024)

...

(West Ham 2-4 Liverpool)

(Date: 29th December, 2024)

...

(Ipswich Town 1-1 Chelsea)

(Date: 30th December, 2024)

...

(Aston Villa 2-1 Brighton)

(Date: 30th December, 2024)

...

(Man United 0-3 Newcastle)

(Date: 30th December, 2024)

...

(Brentford 0-0 Arsenal)

(Date: 1st, January, 2025)

...

(Updated premier league table standings:)

(1. Fulham GP: 19/ W:14/ D:4/ L:1/ Pts: 47)

(2. Liverpool GP: 18/ W:13/ D:2/ L:2/ Pts: 45)

(3. Chelsea GP: 19/ W:11/ D:6/ L:2/ Pts: 39)

(4. Arsenal GP: 19/ W:10/ D:7/ L:2/ Pts: 37)

(5. Nottm Forest GP: 19/ W:9/ D:6/ L:4/ Pts: 33)

(6. Brighton GP: 19/ W:8/ D:6/ L:5/ Pts: 30)

(7. Man City GP: 19/ W:8/ D:6/ L:5/ Pts: 30)

(8. Newcastle GP: 19/ W:8/ D:6/ L:5/ Pts: 30)

(9. Aston Villa GP: 19/ W:8/ D:5/ L:7/ Pts: 29)

(10. Bournemouth GP: 19/ W:8/ D:5/ L:6/ Pts: 29)

(11. Tottenham GP: 19/ W:8/ D:2/ L:9/ Pts: 26)

(12. Brentford GP: 19/ W:7/ D:4/ L:8/ Pts: 25)

(13. Man United GP: 19/ W:7/ D:4/ L:8/ Pts: 25)

(14. West Ham GP: 19/ W:6/ D:4/ L:9/ Pts: 22)

(15. Crystal Palace GP: 19/ W:4/ D:7/ L:8/ Pts: 19)

(16. Leicester GP: 19/ W:3/ D:7/ L:9/ Pts: 16)

(17. Everton GP: 18/ W:3/ D:5/ L:10/ Pts: 14)

(18. Ipswich Town GP: 19/ W:2/ D:7/ L:10/ Pts: 13)

(19. Wolves GP: 19/ W:1/ D:4/ L:14/ Pts: 7)

(20. Southampton GP: 19/ W:1/ D:1/ L:17/ Pts: 4)

...

(EFL Cup:)

(Quarter final:)

(Crystal Palace 2-0 Fulham)

(2nd January, 2025)

"Happy new year Max"



"The premier league finally passed its halfway point. In the drama generated by the results of this matchday, what are your thoughts about matchday 19 of the English premier league?"

Hearing that question, the pundit of the popular sports show smiled wryly. "If I should use only a few words, I'd say the highlights of the Matchday are Man City's crisis, Fulham's crisis, and Liverpool's opportunity".

"Despite their win last time out in the premier league, the champions are back to bad habits again this season as they drew against Leicester in away ground".

"Man City is definitely in a crisis and if things are to change for the club, they have to look for alternatives in the January transfer window".

"They're still feeling the impact of losing Rodri".

"I've been saying it for a long time but with this, I hope people finally agrees with me that Rodri deserved the balon d'or. Just look at how Manchester City plays without him, they're like a predator who lost its spine".

"They still have all those world-class players, but without that spine to act as the support and keep them steady, they look so vulnerable".

"They're really down in confidence right now".

"Just look at how Leicester, a lowly Leicester ran them down today, it's crazy honestly. And last week, should I go back to that Aston Villa game?"

"It's a wonder that they actually managed to escape from that game with a point, Aston Villa were just better on every aspect of the game. The champions were dominated, outplayed, and outfought on every side".

"Morgan Rogers especially, their former academy player was a thorn on their side throughout. You just had to see him gliding through Manchester City so freely".

"With Rodri in that team, that would be impossible". This pundit shook his head.

"As for Fulham, they're definitely in a crisis!"

"That's 2 games without Sam translating to 2 straight losses!"

"I quantify that Bournemouth game as a loss too, because they were in such a good winning position before the collapse".

"The game against Bournemouth was more of a defensive collapse at the death, but the EFL Cup game against Crystal Palace is a clear sign of how spineless Fulham can be without the black mamba on the pitch".

The host chuckled. "Max, you're using the term spine a lot today".

"Because that's what it is!" Charles said, exasperated. "Without Sam today, they were more or less toothless to create anything of note in attack". He shook his head again.

"I just wonder if they can actually improve, or if it'll just continue like this, or if they'll even get worse?"

"Honestly, the projected 4 months of Sam's recovery is a lot of time".

Talking about Sam, this pundit's face became a bit dejected. "For such a young player, long term injuries are not what you'd hope on even your enemy".

"After recovering, most of them suffer from a dip in confidence and it affects their gameplay a lot".

"I know Sam will recover but still, I can't help this anxious feeling".

The show's host chuckled again. "Max, if I didn't know you before now, I'd believe you're actually a Fulham fan. Are you that big of a Sam believer?"

"Yes," Max laughed. "Call me Chief Priest Max, I'm the leader of the Sam supremacy church!"

Charles laughed. "So, Max, what is your prediction on how the premier league title momentum would go on from here?"

Max shook his head again. "I see Fulham dropping a lot in Sam's absence. Since Liverpool have a game in hand, hypothetically, we can say they're now level on points at the top of the premier league table".

"Besides, Chelsea and Arsenal are hot on their necks. Unless a miracle happens, in 4 months, I don't even see Fulham still in the top 4 spot, that's how dire of a crisis they're currently in".

"A brutal analysis like usual," the host chuckled. "The Max I know is back".

...

While the premier league footballing landscape reacted to the results of matchday 19 including Fulham being eliminated out of the EFL Cup, a certain dejected player was finally discharged from the hospital.

It took more than 5 days but Sam was finally discharged.

As his girlfriend drove him home, Sam could not help a big frown creeping up his face simply due to the notification that was currently hovering before his vision.

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[Season Quest 3: EFL Cup]

[Mission 1: Win the EFL Cup with Fulham FC!]

[You have failed this system mission!]

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'Dammit!'