

Football God 231

Chapter 231 Trending

"Have you watched the video?"

"What video?"

"About Samuel Moses".

"Sam? Is he not injured?"

"Yes you doofus! But that video says otherwise, watch it".

Skeptical, the boy wearing a Fulham home jersey took the phone from his girlfriend and looked at the pictures first.

Despite the fact that he tried hard to hide his identity, even wearing a hoodie and a hood, this avid Fulham fan recognized him immediately. "It's Sam!"

More curious now, he clicked on the video.

It was not just a normal video; it was a video edit.

As soon as the video started, the first thought that this boy had was. 'The soundtrack is so nice'.

The video started with Fulham's first game of the premier league season, when a certain Zinedine Sam took the game by the scruff of the neck, scoring a double in Old Trafford to sink the Manchester Old Dog.

From there, it transitioned smoothly from one scene to another, showing Sam's most iconic and memorable moments of this premier league season.

And then, it also showed when he got injured.

After his injury, the graphics of the video dampened immediately, becoming black and gray, emphasizing the tragedy of the situation even as the soundtrack sharply reduced its volume.

It continued for about a second or so, and then..., it exploded.

The soundtrack came back with full force, blasting with deep bass as a new video was shown, that of the same person in black training clothes, a hoodie, and a hood jogging through a tiled street.

The editing, the graphics, the person, and the soundtrack already made this edit iconic but then it was the voice that screamed in the background that gave the boy watching it chills.

"He's... BACK!!!"

The boy felt goosepimples as his hair stood on end.

And as soon as the video edit came to an end, this boy jumped for joy, hugging his girlfriend excitedly. "That's Sam! I swear that's Sam!"

"Hahahaha, the gods have answered our prayers!"

"He's back!"

"I don't know how but he's back!"

All across Fulham, every person who paid remote attention to Fulham FC were having one of the best days of their lives due to a simple video edit.

The joy spreading among them was pure and infectious and it was caused by just one-man jogging, Samuel Moses.

Due to that video edit, Sam started trending.

Besides, it just coincided with the Man United defeat too much. After losing at home, the Fulham fans were dejected, the arrival of that video could not have been more timely as it ignited their passion all over again.

To them, the King was back!

...

Sam was trending, but it brought some alarming calls with it.

As soon as he completed his daily system quest for the first time in a month, returning back to his apartment filled with sweat and with a big smile on his face was when Kayla showed him the video already trending.

As soon as he saw the video, stunned, Sam looked outside, recognizing where it was taken. "I didn't even know!"

Kayla chuckled but then she looked at his leg. "Can you tell me exactly what is going on now".

She was happy for him but at the same time worried. For the past 1 month, she saw firsthand how fast he was recovering from his ankle injury but at the same time, she could not forget the doctor's warning back at the hospital.

This was why she wanted to confirm.

And just as she asked, Sam's phone started ringing.

(Incoming call from Coach Marco Silva...)

He barely picked his phone when 2 new notifications superimposed with the first one.

(Incoming call from Smith Rowe...)

(Incoming call from Fulham Doctor...)

Sam was stunned and exasperated. "Really?"

Kayla chuckled. "Really".

Well, he had no choice but to pick his coach's phone call first.

Coach Marco Silva tried to keep his voice subdued but it was a pathetic effort, his excitement could be heard through the phone. "Sam, will you tell me what's going on now? Explain that video".

Sam chuckled. "There's nothing to explain, I've recovered".

There was silence for a few seconds. "What do you mean you've recovered?"

"Exactly what it sounds like, I've fully recovered from my ankle injury".

Coach Marco Silva cleared his throat. "Please if it's convenient with you, I want you to join the next flight to England".

"We need to run some tests with our Doctor, I'm currently on my way to the hospital. I hope to meet you there let's confirm everything".

"Woah!" Sam was surprised. "So fast?"

"Haha," his coach laughed. "All is fair in football and war".

Sam chuckled.

In the end, after cutting the call, he also spoke with his friend and the Fulham Doctor who already scheduled a session with him.

He didn't make any promises though, he wanted to speak with his girlfriend first. But after he cut the call, as soon as he turned to look at Kayla's face, he already saw his answer in her eyes.

Kayla scoffed. "What is that reaction for?"

"You think it's been easy for me watching you switch on and off between depression and fake joy for a whole month?"

"My worst fear has been how you'll endure that for 4 months. If you're really recovered, I need to confirm it too, I'll be the happiest woman in the world!"

Sam chuckled and leaned closer, kissing her on the forehead. "You're the best!"

...

About an hour later, Sam and Kayla got on the next flight to England. A few hours later, they arrived and went straight to the hospital.

In the hospital, not only was Coach Marco Silva there, Ian, Emile Smith Rowe, Alex Iwobi, and even Cairney, Fulham's captain was there.

Sam was amazed. "They've really missed me, huh?"

When the tests were being run, all of them waited outside with bated breaths, anxiously pacing up and down and when the results eventually came out, they could not breathe.

According to the Doctor. "It's a miracle!"

"I've never seen anyone recover so fast from such a cruciate ankle injury".

A miracle? All of them now believed in miracles, that's what they've been praying for since Sam got injured.

It was confirmed, Sam... was back!

Chapter 232 The positive vibes are back

(Premier league:)

(Matchday 24 of 38:)

(Nottm Forest – Brighton)

(Date: 1st February, 2025)

...

(Newcastle – Fulham)

(Date: 1st February, 2025)

...

(Everton – Leicester City)

(Date: 1st February, 2025)

...

(Ipswich Town – Southampton)

(Date: 1st February, 2025)

...

(Bournemouth – Liverpool)

(Date: 1st February, 2025)

...

(Wolves – Aston Villa)

(Date: 1st February, 2025)

...

(Man United – Crystal Palace)

(Date: 2nd February, 2025)

...

(Brentford – Tottenham)

(Date: 2nd February, 2025)

...

(Arsenal – Man City)

(Date: 2nd February, 2025)

...

(Chelsea – West Ham)

(Date: 3rd February, 2025)

"Max, it's another exciting matchday of the English premier league, what do you think is the trending news of this new matchday and which do you think is going to be the most exciting matchup?"

Max, the premier league pundit smiled at the show host. "From a historical point of view, Arsenal vs Man City is the highlight game of matchday 24".

"The champions have been a shadow of their former self in recent months. They've been struggling all season".

"And the fact remains that the game will be played at the Emirates Stadium".

"In past seasons, Arsenal never really had much luck against Manchester City when they clash. Mikel Arteta even had to tweak his coaching style, adapting a bit of the dark arts just to get a result against Pep Guardiola's team".

"I still remember that particular game during their title run-in 2 seasons ago when Kevin De Bruyne singlehanded tore Arsenal apart, scoring 2 goals".

"Besides, this fixture did not lack drama this season either as earlier in the season, it was this same fixture that produced Erling Haaland's infamous 'stay humble eh' that was directed at Mikel Arteta, the Arsenal coach". The pundit chuckled.

"Since then, Man City have been a shadow of their former selves. Some say its karma but the fact remains that their squad comprises of veteran players that have won a lot of trophies in the game".

"You can't really brutally criticize a club with talents at the level of Erling Haaland, Kevin De Bruyne, Phil Foden, and Bernardo Silva in their ranks, most especially after their success in recent years".

"Another thing though, we're used to other football clubs having an off season but for Man City and maybe Real Madrid too, we automatically view these 2 football clubs as above every other club".

"That is why we're being extra critical of Man City this season. I still feel that it's the lag and fatigue of their incredible success in recent seasons finally settling in".

"I believe that next season, the Pep Guardiola juggernaut will be off again".

"Who knows? Maybe we won't even have to wait that long, maybe they'll just go ahead to create an upset against Arsenal".

"Or there's always the scenario of Arsenal simply blowing them out of the way". Max chuckled in a good-natured manner. "Either way it goes, it will be an extremely exciting clash to neutral fans, this is why I rate it as the most anticipated and exciting game of matchday 24".

"And of course, a lot of people these days want to watch Liverpool play. The Egyptian King is putting together a season even greater than his legendary debut season for Liverpool, seeing him in action is a treat to fans".

"The odds are on them to extend their lead at the summit of the premier league table".

"And of course Fulham". Saying to this point, Max grinned. "There have been a lot of rumors swirling around in Fulham these days".

Hearing that, Charles laughed. "Do you think they're just rumors? Didn't you watch the video?"

"I did but that's it, just a video".

"We're in an era of revolutionary A.I and bots. I won't be surprised if that video was photoshopped and created in a lab, technology is capable of just about anything these days".

"Besides, neither Sam in any of his social media platforms nor Fulham have released any official news about the rumors".

"Some feel that they're just using it to create hype around their team again to distract from their recent run of less than impressive results, they believe that Fulham were the ones who created the video".

"There's so many Sam conspiracy theories flying about these days". Max chuckled again.

"So, what do you think Max?" Charles looked at the pundit.

Hearing that, the premier league pundit rubbed his chin. "What I think? I don't really think anything, I just want Sam to recover as fast as possible".

"From the beginning, I've never shied from it. All I needed was to watch the young Nigerian prodigy in action a few times and I'm his number 1 fan". He laughed.

"Despite all of that, in the end, no matter how much I want to believe it, the truth is that it is impossible to recover from such a cruciate ankle injury so fast".

"It's just like Rodri's injury, hoping that because Man City is going through such a rough patch of form, the Spaniard suddenly recovers from his ACL injury to help the team".

"Yeah, Man City fans do wish though but it'll always remain that, just wishes".

"I think that's the same situation with Sam".

"All of you seem to forget but Sam actually had a surgery!" His voice rose up a crescendo for emphasis as he said this. "Do you all think it's normal to recover from a surgery in just a month?"

"In the end, yeah," he nodded. "Though I hate to admit it, I have a stronger belief that they're just rumors created by Fulham fans to comfort themselves.

"We still have 3 more months before we'll see Sam on the pitch again".

"As for their fixture itself, Newcastle United against Fulham is going to be an absolutely exciting matchup.

"Newcastle United is currently having somewhat of a mixed season, but of course, they'll relish the opportunity to take points off a weakened Fulham at home. So yeah, my money is on Newcastle winning the game".

Hearing that, Charles chuckled. "Max, Sam won't like that".

The pundit shook his head. "Sorry buddy, if you don't like that, you better work hard to return to the pitch as soon as possible".

Chuckling again, Charles, the host paid attention to the camera one last time. "And that, fans, is our take before we delve into the action of matchday 24".

"Stay tuned and don't miss an inch of the action!"

...

These days, the media and a lot of attention was on Fulham.

Some of the veteran players in Fulham missed the days when they were just side characters in the premier league. These days, they were one of the protagonists that fans and paparazzi stalked, wanting to get information from.

And in recent days, it was always one question. "Is it true that Sam is back from his injury?"

"Where is he?"

"Why has he not made an appearance in public yet?"

"Will he play in the game against Newcastle United?"

From just pestering, all the stalking and questioning quickly grew annoying but the Fulham players learned to cope with it.

The reason why all of them kept quiet was simple. Coach Marco Silva had no intentions of announcing the sudden recovery of his star player to the world, he wanted to use Sam's return as a hidden trump card in the Newcastle game.

Though the Newcastle United coach was more inclined to believe that it was just propaganda by Fulham, he won't stop worrying about the hidden threat of a returning Sam. All in all, it was part of Coach Marco Silva's psychological warfare in the buildup to the game.

After the run of results in recent weeks, this coach was ready to use any means to get his team back to consistent winning ways.

While the outside world was left in the dark, speculating and asking questions, the same thing could not be said about the Fulham players though.

Fulham training was now behind closed-doors in preparation for the Newcastle United game and that was where they re-bonded with their superstar teammate, Samuel Moses.

Sam was just returning from injury and he just started closed-door training with them, it was clear that he was not in perfect football shape yet.

He was lacking a bit of sharpness but it didn't really show much, this was because with Sam's return, the positive vibes returned to training.

Even when he was not fully fit, Sam still loved training.

And with his return, his teammates loved training again.

Noticing this change, Coach Marco Silva truly felt blessed. "I think I may have used all my luck in another life to get to coach a player like Sam". He muttered, overwhelmed by emotions.

Just like that, taking it one day at a time, the suddenly more positive Fulham team trained as they prepared for their next game.

And just like that, in no time, D-day was here.

It was February 1st...

Just like expected, both teams started with their strongest lineups, approaching this game with the intention to claim all 3 points as the battle for this season final table placement grew hotter.

And when Fulham's squad for the game was dropped by Coach Marco Silva 30 minutes into the game, the premier league was shocked.

Samuel Moses... was part of the squad lineup!

Chapter 233 A pivotal game; against Newcastle United

(Premier league:)

(Matchday 24 of 38:)

(Newcastle vs Fulham)

(Date: 1st February, 2025)

Fulham's squad for this game caused a stir in the footballing world.

After just a month since the horror Chelsea game where Sam sustained an ankle injury, he was back in the Fulham squad!

Of course, he did not make it to the starting XI straight away but still, the mere sight of his name in the Fulham squad that was traveling to Newcastle sent ripples of shock through the football world.

'What?!'

'Was Sam really recovered?'

'How?!'

'How could he recover from such a serious ankle injury in just a month?'

Not just premier league football fans, most importantly, the Newcastle United coach was extremely perplexed by the squad of their opponents for this game but he quickly embraced the cruel reality, time was not waiting for him.

It was too late to change formations.

So, the Newcastle United coach simply focused on helping his players implement his gameplan as best as they could after they entered the pitch.

Fulham's starting XI was still the same as the one they've been using since. Raul Jimenez started as the striker, while behind him was the trio of Alex Iwobi, Emile Smith Rowe, and Adama Traore.

In midfield was the midfield duo of Lukic and Pereira, while the 4-man defense comprised of Antonee Robinson, Diop, Calvin Bassey, and Castagne.

And of course, Bernd Leno started in between the posts.

For Newcastle United, they started with their regular 4-3-3 formation. Martin Dubravka started in between the posts while their 4-man defense comprised of Trippier, Schar, Danny Burn, and Hall.

Their midfield trio comprised Bruno Guimaraes, Tonali, and Joelinton while their offensive trio comprised Murphy, Aleksandr Isak, and Anthony Gordon.

It was a deadly Newcastle side.

The atmosphere in St. James' Park, Newcastle United's home stadium was electric as the home supporters made a lot of noise.

But even in this noise, a certain chant could be heard prominently from the away stands as soon as the camera focused on a certain player in the Fulham bench.

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

The noise rose from the away stands like a war chant, incredulously contending with the noise that was being made by the home supporters.

The commentator chuckled. "What an atmosphere in St. James' Park".

"Fulham's traveling fans are having a field day". He laughed. "But you can't blame them, even I, the commentator is flabbergasted".

"Sam is back! Can you believe that?"

"I'm not a Doctor but even I know when a medical report sounds serious. We all expected the young Nigerian to be out for at least 4 months".

"Recovering in just 1 month?" The commentator sighed exaggeratedly. "T-that's just bonkers man!"

"This adds an extra layer of excitement to this game".

"Will we get to see Sam play today?"

"Well, we can only watch and see".

FWEEEE!

As soon as the referee's whistle sounded, Fulham kicked off the game under the roar of the home supporters surrounding this stadium.

Sam's addition to the Fulham squad already added an extra layer of tension to this game, and it made the home supporters even more hostile to the visiting team as they suddenly felt nervous.

Their nervousness translated into more hostility for the opposition team.

"BOOO!"

"BOOO...!"

As soon as Fulham kicked off the game, the home supporters drowned them in an ocean of boos, trying their best to get into their head.

It worked as Fulham soon lost possession.

And from there on, the battle in St. James' Park started. During the first few minutes of this game, it was an even game as both teams played conservatively, remaining defensively disciplined.

During the build-up to this game, both teams approached this game offensively with the only intention of winning and getting away with all 3 points.

But Sam's presence in this stadium already rattled nerves, changing the narrative. His presence acted as a catalyst.

His catalytic presence made the Newcastle team more defensive-minded, suddenly too nervous to push too many men forward in attack as they didn't want their opponents to get the first goal.

As for the Fulham team? With Sam's presence making this stadium so hostile, they also retreated into themselves like a turtle, defending.

For 30 minutes, there was barely any significant action as both sides played conservatively, till a moment of magic from a certain winger.

After a scramble for the ball in the middle of the pitch that Lukic won, the midfielder sprayed a pass to the left where Alex Iwobi lurked.

Taking the ball in his strides, the Nigerian international beat his man with skill before playing a trivela pass into space with the outside of his boot.

"Ohhhh...! What a pass!"

That killer pass from Alex Iwobi obliterated the whole Newcastle United defense, setting up a rapid Raul Jimenez one-on-one with the goalkeeper.

Noting the threat, Martin Dubravka, Newcastle United's goalkeeper charged out, putting pressure on the striker but with cool composure, Jimenez hit the ball, sending it in between the legs of the onrushing goalkeeper and into the net.

"GOALLLL...!!!" The away fan section in St. James' Park exploded.

Charging towards the corner flag, Raul Jimenez kissed the Fulham badge before turning and pointing at his jersey number in celebration even as the hostile Newcastle United fans drowned him in boos.

In the 33rd minute of this game, Jimenez scored, giving Fulham the lead in away ground in a tough and hostile atmosphere.

From that moment on, the momentum finally tilted, going full Fulham.

For the next few minutes, Fulham dominated this game, torturing the Newcastle United backline as Emile Smith Rowe finally started letting his presence known, spraying passes left and right.

2 more chances were created for Raul Jimenez only for Newcastle United to be saved by their impressive goalkeeper within a time frame of just 7 minutes.

But then, in the 40th minute of this game, it all changed.

After a desperate clearance from the box by Calvin Bassey after a Newcastle United clearance, the ball floated outside the box to where Bruno Guimaraes, the Newcastle midfielder lurked.

Bam!

With a delicate touch outside the box, this midfielder tamed the ball and then with another touch to set himself up, he launched his leg backward to gather momentum and power, then...

POW!

The sound as Guimaraes' leg hit the ball reverberated like a gunshot.

It was a knuckle shot!

The ball rose above the heads of Fulham players who tried to put their body on the line to block the shot, rising high into the air and just as Bernd Leno just watched it rising above his net, the ball seemed to pause..., and then it dipped.

"...!" The Fulham goalkeeper was alarmed but it was already too late.

The ball found its way into the net.

"...!" St. James Park was briefly silenced, and then...

"GOALLL...!!!" The home fans found their voice.

In the 40th minute of this game, Bruno Guimareas brought the home side level, adding even more drama value to this game.

Chapter 234 A Bruno Guimaraes show

"What... a goal!!!!" The commentator raved.

"And Bruno Guimaraes, the stalwart Brazilian midfielder shows up for Newcastle again, and what a way to do it, stylish and brutal!"

"That goal is straight out of the top drawer!"

As the commentator raved, Bruno Guimaraes, the Brazilian midfielder who just stunned Fulham was already charging towards the corner flag even as with the home fans already on their feet, they paid attention to him excitedly.

On getting to the corner flag, this midfielder slid on his knees and when he got back up, he pumped his fists excitedly.

"Come on!" He roared.

The fans roared with him even as his teammates swarmed him.

And just like that, this game was back to square 1 where it started.

40 minutes, 1-1...

The Fulham players were stunned by that goal, it came out of nowhere but they were not done yet. The scoreline was still level.

FWEEE!

After the referee's whistle sounded to continue play, the game continued but the players could not help but notice something immediately.

Something was different about this game, and it was a Bruno Guimaraes-sized change.

After that goal, this midfielder already entered the zone state and within those final 5 minutes of this first half, this midfielder tortured Fulham.

In terms of work rate, he seemed to become a horse as he ran everywhere, chasing the ball down and perfectly winning it as for the last few minutes of this game, he heavily dominated the Fulham midfielders.

He ran Emile Smith Rowe and the others ragged but that was not his greatest trait during this 5 minutes, rather, it was his passing.

After that goal, whatever Bruno Guimaraes touched seemed to become gold. His first touch, his dribbling, his tackling, everything increased to an elite level.

Within the last 5 minutes after he scored the equalizing goal, he set up the Newcastle attackers up 3 different times with clear goal-scoring opportunities!

The first one was the most ingenious, fooling the whole Fulham defense as he slipped a Messi-class pass in for Aleksandr Isak, the Newcastle striker to run into. This striker's loose touch enabled Bernd Leno to quickly close the distance, pulling off a sensational save.

The second time, he fed it to Anthony Gordon as the rapid winger cooked Castagne for pace, charging into the 18-yard box and unleashing a powerful shot only for his shot to rattle off the crossbar and out for a goal kick.

The young English winger grabbed his head, not believing that he just missed such a clear opportunity to score and put his team ahead.

Guimaraes' level in the final minutes of this game was imperious as he thoroughly tormented the Fulham players, making them look like amateurs.

He was truly playing on a god-level at this moment.

And then in the 45th minute, he created his last chance of the first half as raising a perfectly weighted pass above the Fulham defense, he set Aleksandr Isak once again one-on-one with Bernd Leno.

Leno was being overworked in the final minutes of this half.

Just as Bernd Leno was about to charge out even as Calvin Bassey rapidly tried to close the distance to the striker, instead of controlling the ball like Leno expected, Isak simply tracked the ball with his eyes and then...

BAM!

His right boot hit the ball with power as he executed a perfect shooting technique, catching Leno off-guard.

It was a perfectly hit shot towards the bottom right corner of the net, and it finally beat Leno, sneaking in.

"GOALLLL...!" St. James' Park clamored again in ecstasy.

As the striker whirled off away in celebration, pointing at the incredible Bruno Guimaraes excitedly, the Fulham players were left standing, baffled, wondering where it all went on in this game.

They were winning before!

The first half came to an end with Fulham losing 2-1 to Newcastle United.

During half-time, Coach Marco Silva had a heated time with his players though he knew that it was an opposition players' brilliance that did his team in.

Still, they were professional players, he expected more from them.

When second half started, Fulham approached this game with more fire and zeal but to their despair, they soon discovered that Bruno Guimaraes' voodoo was yet to expire as this midfielder created another moment of magic.

This time, he started it, and ended it.

After winning the ball back in midfield, Bruno Guimaraes sprayed it to the left again where Anthony Gordon lurked.

Castagne quickly closed the winger down but electric like usual, utilizing his rapid feet and trickery, Gordon nutmegged the Fulham right back, exploding off with his pace and leaving him in the dust.

As he charged in, he looked into the box and observed his options, then he floated a cross into the box targeting Aleksandr Isak.

Isak jumped, but Calvin Bassey also jumped as these 2 players engaged in a tussle in the air for the box.

Bassey was more physical, and knowing that he would win the duel, hearing someone call his name from behind, instead of trying to head the ball towards goal and score, Isak instead used his taller frame to barely hit the ball backward.

As the ball floated backward, time seemed to freeze...

Thud!

Familiar black and white sprayed hair appeared, a focused fire burning in the depths of the owner's eyes as the Brazilian raised his right leg, lashing into the floating ball on a volley as he unleashed a powerful shot towards goal.

BAM!

"..."

Bernd Leno was rooted to the spot.

One moment, he saw the ball ahead of him and the next, the ball was already inside his net.

"BRUNO GUIMARAES...!!!" The commentator roared.

"What a goal from the Brazilian midfielder!"

"Today is the Bruno Guimaraes show!"

"2 goals and 1 assist, the Brazilian is in imperious form today! 3-1 to Newcastle United now, surely with that he's won his team the game!"

In the 68th minute of this game, Bruno Guimaraes got a brace.

And immediately after, a familiar player stood up from the Fulham bench, removing the bib and jogging along the touchline as he warmed up.

"...!" For a brief moment, there was silence in the stunned away stands and then...

BOOM!

Ecstatic Fulham fans exploded in cheer joy.

At this moment, they were losing, trailing 2 goals behind their opponents in the 68th minute but the sight of Sam warming up meant the whole world to them.

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

Familiar chants broke out in St. James' Park again.

"Wow..., can you believe this?"

"Sam is really warming up, he's about to be introduced into the game!"

"But, at this point, is there anything even he can do?"

"The game seems unsalvageable at this point".

The commentator's partner quickly interjected. "Nothing is set in stone, this is football. Besides, he's called Zinedine Sam for a reason".

"You're right, but he's just coming off of an injury, he won't be as sharp as he was before immediately".

"We can only watch and see".

In the 72nd minute of this game, Sam was finally introduced into this game amid loud cheers from the away stand to play the last 18 minutes of this game.

Could he add another album to the Zinedine Sam collection?

Chapter 235 The King... is back!

Sam replaced Adama Traore in the Fulham lineup.

Thud! Thud!

As he jogged into the pitch, there was a light-hearted smile on his face but inside his head was a completely different scenario.

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

The mamba spirit was already rearing its head.

These days, he didn't even need to do anything special to channel it, the desire to win was already ingrained into him. It was part and parcel of him.

It was just 1 month that he spent in the sideline but to Sam, it felt like a lifetime ago since he entered a football pitch to play a professional football game.

Watching his team drop points from winning positions, most recently the loss against Manchester United left him incredibly frustrated.

He could not wait to get back on the pitch and do what he does best.

And now that he finally got the opportunity, all the hormones inside his body worked in tandem, triggering such dopamine in his head and igniting such strong adrenaline in his veins that made him feel like a warrior stepping into a battlefield.

He felt like an ice mutant stepping into coals of fire, the contrasting temperature triggering an explosive reaction inside of him.

FWEEEE!

As soon as the referee's whistle sounded to continue this game, Sam erupted, doing what he never got tired of doing, chasing after the ball!

He abused his stamina, showing that despite the fact that he had been out for a month, his stamina was not too affected.

Besides, he didn't start this game from the beginning. He had just 18 minutes to play which gave him just enough time to cause havoc while not tiring himself out in the process.

Noting his threat despite the fact that he was recovering from an injury, the in-form Bruno Guimaraes took it on himself to partially man-mark this player as soon as he got on the pitch.

The Newcastle United coach did the liberty of giving this instruction to his star player, giving Bruno Guimaraes an unenviable task but the Brazilian didn't complain, embracing his new rule with gusto.

When out of possession, Sam ran around for the ball and when he did get it, he was not allowed to do anything tangible with it as Guimaraes shadowed him.

In the few minutes that Sam spent in this game, incredulously, Bruno Guimaraes was his shadow, keeping him in check.

For 10 minutes after Sam entered this game, he could not do anything of note as the Brazilian isolated and kept him out of the bigger picture of this game.

He was completely anonymous and in no time, all the excitement from his return to the pitch faded away.

Sam felt frustrated but he did not let it show.

As he ran around the pitch and with every touch of the ball that he had, he knew his body best, he could tell that he was not in his best state physically.

His instincts were not just firing at that level that it was used to.

It frustrated the hell out of him but Sam did not let it show on his face. Showing an unnatural kind of composure and calm, he kept on chasing after the ball diligently, trying to do his best.

In the end, Newcastle United still dominated, coming close to tripling their lead a few times through a still rampant Aleksandr Isak.

By the 85th minute, the score remained unchanged and Fulham did not show any convincing signs of intending to get back into the game.

Fulham already seemed to have folded in this game, admitting defeat as they succumbed to another corner kick.

After the corner kick was taken, Bruno Guimaraes rose highest, planting a firm header towards goal as this midfielder forced another impressive save from Bernd Leno, just about keeping his team in the game.

Diop quickly cleared the ball up field as Emile Smith Rowe got to it first, taking it in his strides even as he got a player to beat.

Unwilling to take the risk of beating the defender one-on-one, Smith Rowe teased the ball up the field, evading a direct path towards goal due to being wary of Danny Burn's ability.

This way, he gave his teammates time to catch up with him to provide support.

Muniz who was already substituted into the game at some point arrived in the box, including Alex Iwobi but Smith Rowe refrained from crossing the ball in to them, it was too predictable.

Instead, he bid his time, waiting for a certain player's late run and once he arrived, he floated a pass in.

Having had a pretty bad game by his standards this evening, Smith Rowe finally managed to play a perfect pass into Sam's path.

The reason why Smile Rowe didn't pass to the others was because it was a bit more predictable, but the true reason was simply because he trusted Sam more.

The Englishman was used to Sam scoring clutch goals.

Bruno Guimaraes still somehow marked Sam as the ball floated in despite him almost just scoring at the other end of the pitch but defiant, Sam pushed ahead, outmuscling the Brazilian and throwing himself at the ball.

And then, executing a diving header, he hit the ball towards goal.

Bam!

...time seemed to freeze around St. James' Park as Martin Dubravka dived, sprawling his hands towards the ball.

...his hand did touch it, but it still snuck in.

"GOALLLL...!" The away stands in St. James' Park exploded in cheers.

In the 86th minute, Fulham reduced Newcastle's lead by 1.

The commentator was speechless as for about a second or so, he could not say a word. "Wow!" He eventually said.

"Just when you thought finally, the Nigerian beast was put on a leash".

"What a way to announce his return, but Fulham are still losing".

The commentator made that comment a bit too early because after scoring, Sam did not even care about celebrating as he charged into the net, picked the ball and ran all the way back to the half-way line.

He was eager to continue the game.

FWEEE!

When Newcastle kicked off the game again, Sam chased after the ball.

That goal..., it ignited something inside of Sam, a familiar feeling that he always chased during every game.

The zone, he was back in it.

As soon as the game restarted, Sam continued chasing after the ball but this time, there was a subtle smirk in his lips and a familiar fire burning in his eyes.

And then, 3 minutes later in the 89th minute of this game, it happened.

Bam!

After receiving a pass just outside the Newcastle 18-yard box, a loose touch made the ball escape from Sam as Bruno Guimaraes who was side by side him pounced, about to clear the ball but the Brazilian could not clear the ball perfectly.

This was because having expected that tackle from him, Sam shoved him with his shoulder in another physicality contest.

Suddenly off-balance, the Brazilian mistimed his clearance as instead of the ball flying away, it only flew up slightly above Sam.

"...!"

Sam stared at the ball levitating above his head.

Again, time seemed to freeze in St. James' Park.

Guimaraes staggered, Sam stood, multiple players, both opposition players and his teammates swarmed the Newcastle 18-yard box.

There were multiple pass options but having tried passing since to no avail, Sam decided to go for it again.

'It's now or never!'

Danny Burn was already charging out to close him down as the defender noted the threat first, but he was a bit just too late.

Before the defender could close him down, as Guimaraes staggered, falling down, Sam jumped and then in an incredible show of his acrobatic ability, he twisted his body in mid-air, his right leg rising to become level with his head as he executed an incredible scissor kick at goal.

BAM!

"...!" Martin Dubravka was rooted to the spot, stunned as the ball nestled into the top left corner of the net.

Even before the fans could react, the commentator already reacted.

"ZINEDINE SAM...!"

"ZINEDINE SAM...!"

"ZINEDINE SAM...!!!"

"My God! What a goal!"

"The King... is back!"

Chapter 236 Return of the Black Mamba

BAM!

"...!" Martin Dubravka was rooted to the spot, stunned as the ball nestled into the top left corner of the net.

St. James' Park was stunned.

Even before the fans could react, the commentator already reacted.

"ZINEDINE SAM...!"

"ZINEDINE SAM...!"

"ZINEDINE SAM...!!!"

"My God! What a goal!"

"The King... is back!"

"Reporters, you're looking for the perfect script, there you have it! The return of the Black Mamba!"

"What a way for Sam to announce his return from injury!"

"All he needed was 18 minutes!"

"18 minutes to show what Fulham have missed for a month, 18 minutes to show the talent that is packed inside this athletic body and brain!"

"Sam is the real OG! He's the protagonist and every one of us are just side characters in his story!"

"What a script! What a moment to be alive!"

While the commentator raved about his goal, Sam was already unleashed.

Since entering this game, he had not said a word as he tried to regain that feeling that made him one of the stand-out players and top performer of the 2024/2025 premier league season.

With Bruno Guimaraes man-marking him, Sam found that regaining his mojo was harder than ever but he didn't give up which was his trademark.

By not giving up, staying believing, he was able to keep his focus till the last 4 minutes of the fulltime when he did his miracle.

The first time when he scored, reducing Newcastle United's lead to just 1 goal, Sam did not celebrate because his club was still losing.

But now that he scored a brace, bringing this game level against all odds in away ground, he no longer held himself back. He became unrestrained.

As the commentator raved about his goal, with eyes dilated in ecstasy finally, Sam removed his Fulham away jersey, waving it like a mad man as he charged towards the corner flag with his teammates swarming after him.

As soon as he got to the corner flag, he flung his jersey towards the fans as showcasing his 6-packs towards the onlooking fans, he screamed in joy.

"I'm back!" His voice was shrill and filled with ecstasy.

An anonymous Newcastle United fan was the lucky one who got his jersey.

The crazy thing at this moment was the fact that despite the fact that Sam was celebrating so passionately before them, strangely, there was no boos blasting from the corners of this stadium.

At this moment, in an incredible display of respect, the Newcastle United fans kept their still, content with appreciating greatness.

St. James' Park was tamed.

The commentator laughed. "What aura!"

"Sam truly is the protagonist! Man is so good the hostile fans can't even bring themselves to boo him, pride is the only reason why Sam is not receiving a standing ovation at this moment!"

"And just like that, Fulham are back in the title race!"

"But it's a draw!" The commentator's partner commented.

"It doesn't matter that it's a draw," the commentator laughed. "That goal rescued more than just a point for Fulham, it also rescued their confidence".

"Sam's 2 goals today are a warning to the rest of the premier league".

"A warning that the Black Mamba is back!"

"Liverpool should get ready for a battle to the end!"

About a minute later of crazy celebrations, as the celebrations died down, the referee who lurked at a corner since finally performed his voodoo magic, brandishing a yellow card to Sam for removing his jersey.

"..." Sam was dumbfounded but he did not pay too much attention to it.

After the referee's whistle sounded to continue play, he added just 2 minutes of extra time to the game but by then, all the ammunition in this game was already exhausted as both teams settled for protecting the scoreline.

After 90 plus 2 additional minutes of incredible football, this thriller game finally came to an end 3-3 as both clubs shared the spoils, 1 point a piece.

After an impressive performance for 90 minutes that culminated with his 2 goals and 1 assist, despite the fact that his team didn't win the game and despite Sam's late heroics, Bruno Guimaraes still won the man of the match award.

...

In the post-match interview, after the reporter congratulated the Brazilian midfielder on his impressive display today, he finally asked a question. "What is your opinion on Samuel Moses?"

Hearing that question, the Brazilian scratched the back of his head. "Well, if I'm to describe Sam with one sentence this season, then he's the break-out star".

The Brazilian smiled. "Last season, he led Fulham to the EFL Cup title but this season is when he truly showed his level of talent to the rest of the league".

"From what I hear, he's also a great professional despite his young age. Like the others, I believe that Sam is destined for the top, it's just a matter of time".

"Well, a lot of people agree with you Bruno". The female reporter smiled.

"Thanks for having me, do have a nice day".

"You too".

With that, the Brazilian left to join his teammates in the dressing room.

...

It was right inside the Fulham team bus that the celebrations started as Marco Silva's men celebrated Sam's return to the pitch finally.

Most of them still could not believe their fortune.

They thought Sam was out for 4 months, to suddenly know that this was time slashed by 3/4th, they could not have been happier.

Having Sam was back, he brought the good vibes with him.

After the games today, the next day, more premier league games were played and then eventually on 3rd February, the last game of matchday 24 of the English premier league between Chelsea and West Ham was finally played.

The fixture results were revealed and with it, the premier league table was updated.

(Premier league:)

(Matchday 24 of 38:)

(Nottm Forest 1-0 Brighton)

(Date: 1st February, 2025)

...

(Newcastle 3-3 Fulham)

(Date: 1st February, 2025)

...

(Everton 2-1 Leicester City)

(Date: 1st February, 2025)

...

(Ipswich Town 3-1 Southampton)

(Date: 1st February, 2025)

...

(Bournemouth 2-4 Liverpool)

(Date: 1st February, 2025)

...

(Wolves 0-2 Aston Villa)

(Date: 1st February, 2025)

...

(Man United 0-2 Crystal Palace)

(Date: 2nd February, 2025)

...

(Brentford 1-1 Tottenham)

(Date: 2nd February, 2025)

...

(Arsenal 3-1 Man City)

(Date: 2nd February, 2025)

...

(Chelsea 4-0 West Ham)

(Date: 3rd February, 2025)

...

(Updated premier league table standings:)

(1. Liverpool GP: 23/ W:18/ D:2/ L:2/ Pts: 60)

(2. Chelsea GP: 24/ W:16/ D:6/ L:2/ Pts: 54)

(3. Fulham GP: 24/ W:16/ D:5/ L:3/ Pts: 54)

(4. Arsenal GP: 24/ W:15/ D:7/ L:2/ Pts: 52)

(5. Nottm Forest GP: 24/ W:11/ D:8/ L:5/ Pts: 41)

(6. Brighton GP: 24/ W:10/ D:7/ L:7/ Pts: 37)

(7. Man City GP: 24/ W:10/ D:6/ L:8/ Pts: 36)

(8. Aston Villa GP: 24/ W:11/ D:6/ L:8/ Pts: 39)

(9. Tottenham GP: 24/ W:11/ D:3/ L:10/ Pts: 36)

(10. Newcastle GP: 24/ W:9/ D:8/ L:7/ Pts: 35)

(11. Bournemouth GP: 24/ W:9/ D:5/ L:10/ Pts: 32)

(12. Brentford GP: 24/ W:9/ D:5/ L:10/ Pts: 32)

(13. Man United GP: 24/ W:9/ D:4/ L:11/ Pts: 31)

(14. West Ham GP: 24/ W:7/ D:6/ L:11/ Pts: 26)

(15. Crystal Palace GP: 24/ W:5/ D:9/ L:10/ Pts: 24)

(16. Leicester GP: 24/ W:3/ D:8/ L:13/ Pts: 17)

(17. Everton GP: 23/ W:4/ D:5/ L:14/ Pts: 17)

(18. Ipswich Town GP: 24/ W:3/ D:8/ L:13/ Pts: 17)

(19. Southampton GP: 24/ W:3/ D:2/ L:19/ Pts: 11)

(20. Wolves GP: 24/ W:1/ D:6/ L:17/ Pts: 9)

Chapter 237 FA Cup 4th round; against Portsmouth

After Fulham's crunch encounter against Newcastle United in St. James' Park, their next game in the premier league was in 14 days, a home encounter against Nottingham Forest in Craven Cottage.

But before then, Fulham had another game, an FA Cup game.

Back in 9th January, Fulham took on Watford in the 3rd round of the English FA Cup, whooping the visitors 5-1 and sending them home out of the competition.

And now, they were about to continue their FA Cup title bid.

Having lost in their EFL Cup title defense already and now trailing behind Liverpool in the title race, Fulham were determined to go all the way in the FA Cup, creating another history in their club and winning the trophy.

This was why immediately after the draw against Newcastle United in away ground, the Fulham players went hard in training again, giving their all in preparations for their next clash.

They were determined to return back to winning ways.

(FA Cup 4th round:)

(Portsmouth – Fulham)

(Date: 10th February, 2025)

On a cold evening in the Portsmouth suburb of Milton, the home supporters of Portsmouth FC welcomed players from the London side of England for a crunch FA Cup game in their stadium.

For this game, Fulham were the overwhelming favorites but Coach Marco Silva did not take any unnecessary risk as he started with a strong lineup still.

Despite Sam's incredible performance from the bench in the Newcastle United game, Coach Marco Silva was able to resist the temptation of starting his superstar player from the get-go.

Yes, Sam was fit now, but the coach still wanted to be careful with him, easing him back to full fitness.

This coach decided to lean on his experience than on his sentimentality this time. In the world of football, there are multiple examples of superstar players succumbing back to injury after being rushed back into games by their coaches.

This was the reason why Coach Marco Silva took it slow with Sam.

In Sam's absence, Fulham started in their regular 4-2-3-1 formation. Bernd Leno naturally started in between the posts and the 4-man defense covering him was the same, the only exception being Calvin Bassey who was replaced by Tete.

Coach Marco Silva decided to rest the Nigerian International for this game.

In midfield, Lukic and Berge started while up front, Harry Wilson, Andreas Pereira, Adama Traore, and Muniz started as the striker.

Prominent names like Alex Iwobi and Emile Smith Rowe were rested for this game but still, Fulham soon proved that this was enough to cause havoc.

For Portsmouth, starting in a similar 4-2-3-1 formation, Bishop started in attack while the 3-man attack behind him comprised of Silvera, Lane, and Ritchie.

Sitting in midfield was the midfield duo of Dozzel and Moxon. The 4-man defense comprised Ogilvie, Towler, Pack, and Devlin while their starting goalkeeper was Schmid, their no. 1.

It was Portsmouth's strongest starting XI but it didn't matter much before the face of a rampant Fulham side.

FWEEEE!

As soon as the referee's whistle sounded to start this game, Fulham pressed, determined to teach the championship side a footballing lesson.

During the first few minutes of this game, Portsmouth tried their best to hold their nerves, playing compactly like a team as they defended and attacked together but then, a moment of individual brilliance opened up this game.

Andreas Pereira started it from attacking midfield, spraying a neat pass to Muniz, the Fulham striker who showed his impressive strength, holding up to the ball long enough for Pereira to arrive as the striker set up the attacking midfielder.

Before any of the defenders could stop him, Pereira's right leg already launched like a missile, sending the ball on a straight collision course towards goal.

Bam!

Hitting the crossbar, the ball rattled into the net.

"GOALLLL...!" The away stands erupted in ecstasy.

Andreas Pereira celebrated, charging towards the corner flag as he kissed the Fulham jersey excitedly.

In the 21st minute, he gave Fulham the lead 0-1.

8 minutes later, in the 29th minute, it was Andreas Pereira again and this time, he threaded a defense-splitting pass to Harry Wilson in the left who quickly beat his man before curling a shot into the bottom left corner, beating the Portsmouth goalkeeper at his near post.

In 30 minutes, Portsmouth was already being torn apart.

After that, Fulham seemed to reduce their intensity, giving the Portsmouth-based club a moment of respite to string together passes and create an attack.

Portsmouth grew into the game, soon proving dangerous as they threatened but all they did was knock. The Fulham defense never gave them an opportunity to open the door, keeping it firmly locked and out of reach.

Portsmouth's inability to score soon proved costly as Andreas Pereira completed a classic first half performance with another goal.

This time, he was in the right place at the right time to tap in the ball from an Adama Traore cross across the face of goal after a crazy solo run.

In the 43rd minute of this game, Pereira got his brace.

The first half ended 0-3 to Fulham.

In the second half, Coach Marco Silva finally pulled the plug, making even more changes in his team as he gave a few fringe players opportunities to play.

Despite Fulham's fringe players being introduced, the game remained tight as Portsmouth stayed incapable of scoring.

And then in the 75th minute, Sam was introduced again to another round of applause from the away stands.

This game, since Fulham was already winning so comfortably, Sam's role as instructed by his coach was different.

With Sam entering the pitch, Fulham changed to a 4-3-3 formation in attack as Sam was tasked to play as a central midfielder.

And today, Sam showed his versatile talent, pulling the strings from midfield like a prime Xavi Hernandez as he showed another aspect of his game.

Sam failed to get a goal or an assist as the game remained 0-3 but his domination was evident with his 100% pass accuracy, 3 goal-scoring opportunities created, and having won 100% of his duels.

It was another vintage performance from Sam.

And just like that, Fulham cruised to the 5th round of the FA Cup with Andreas Pereira winning the man of the match award.

...

A few days after Fulham's FA Cup game, another premier league result came out that attracted attentions around Fulham FC.

This result was especially important to them because it was related to their biggest rivals this season, Liverpool FC.

After a long time of being suspended, Everton and Liverpool finally played their suspended premier league game.

Chapter 238 Steep competition; warming up for a title charge

(Premier league:)

(Matchday 15:)

(Everton 2-3 Liverpool)

(Date: 12th February, 2025)

Despite the secret prayers of Fulham fans around the world, Liverpool didn't fumble against Everton. The scoreline didn't do justice to the game itself as Liverpool totally outplayed Everton despite it being a Liverpool away game.

Everton's 2 goals were late goals, one being a lucky Alisson Becker own goal.

Despite the scare, Liverpool was able to clinch another win in their premier league title bid as the Egyptian King led them to glory once again.

This season, the Liverpool talisman, Mohamed Salah was simply electric as he was having a ballon d'or worthy season already.

In the end, with that result, the premier league table was updated again in the build-up to matchday 25 of the English premier league.

(Updated premier league table standings:)

(1. Liverpool GP: 24/ W:19/ D:2/ L:2/ Pts: 63)

(2. Chelsea GP: 24/ W:16/ D:6/ L:2/ Pts: 54)

(3. Fulham GP: 24/ W:16/ D:5/ L:3/ Pts: 54)

(4. Arsenal GP: 24/ W:15/ D:7/ L:2/ Pts: 52)

(5. Nottm Forest GP: 24/ W:11/ D:8/ L:5/ Pts: 41)

(6. Brighton GP: 24/ W:10/ D:7/ L:7/ Pts: 37)

(7. Man City GP: 24/ W:10/ D:6/ L:8/ Pts: 36)

(8. Aston Villa GP: 24/ W:11/ D:6/ L:8/ Pts: 39)

(9. Tottenham GP: 24/ W:11/ D:3/ L:10/ Pts: 36)

- (10. Newcastle GP: 24/ W:9/ D:8/ L:7/ Pts: 35)
- (11. Bournemouth GP: 24/ W:9/ D:5/ L:10/ Pts: 32)
- (12. Brentford GP: 24/ W:9/ D:5/ L:10/ Pts: 32)
- (13. Man United GP: 24/ W:9/ D:4/ L:11/ Pts: 31)
- (14. West Ham GP: 24/ W:7/ D:6/ L:11/ Pts: 26)
- (15. Crystal Palace GP: 24/ W:5/ D:9/ L:10/ Pts: 24)
- (16. Leicester GP: 24/ W:3/ D:8/ L:13/ Pts: 17)
- (17. Everton GP: 24/ W:4/ D:5/ L:15/ Pts: 17)
- (18. Ipswich Town GP: 24/ W:3/ D:8/ L:13/ Pts: 17)
- (19. Southampton GP: 24/ W:3/ D:2/ L:19/ Pts: 11)
- (20. Wolves GP: 24/ W:1/ D:6/ L:17/ Pts: 9)

And just like that, Liverpool led with 9 points at the top of the English premier league table!

To a lot of premier league fans, the title race was already a foregone conclusion. The 2024/2025 premier league title was Liverpool's, it would require a miracle of Luciferic proportions to topple the Merseysiders at the top.

In all honestly, the sight of the updated premier league table standings did not present a good reading to any football fan of the Fulham persuasion.

After all their hard work since the beginning of the season, to suddenly trail from the top by 9 whooping points left them a bit depressed.

Sam also felt a big depressed.

Afterall, all it took was 1 month of him being away for this to happen, the foundation he built with his teammates for months to almost be ruined completely.

But despite the current ruin, it was not over yet, there was still time, and games. This was the hope that kept Sam going.

They say that so long there is life, there is hope but, in this context, to Sam. "So long there are games remaining, there is hope".

"Besides, we're yet to play our return game against Liverpool".

Thinking of that game, Sam felt his blood boiling as adrenaline surged through him. But in the end, he calmed down, focusing on the moment.

At this moment, if it was not clear to bystanders before, now it was clear that Fulham and Liverpool were the primary protagonists of this season's title charge.

Sam did not want to get ahead of himself which made him calm down and focus on Fulham's next game. 'Let's take it one game at a time'. He thought.

'Wayum wayum bi jegedi'.

Alongside his teammates, Sam was already warming up for a premier league title charge that no one saw coming. He was charged up for it.

After the end of the FA Cup fixtures and the 4th round participants were concluded, the focus went back to matchday 25 of the English premier league.

(Premier league:)

(Matchday 25 of 38:)

(Brighton – Chelsea)

(Date: 14th February, 2025)

...

(Leicester City – Arsenal)

(Date: 15th February, 2025)

...

(West Ham – Brentford)

(Date: 15th February, 2025)

...

(Southampton – Bournemouth)

(Date: 15th February, 2025)

...

(Aston Villa – Ipswich Town)

(Date: 15th February, 2025)

...

(Man City – Newcastle)

(Date: 15th February, 2025)

...

(Fulham – Nottm Forest)

(Date: 15th February, 2025)

...

(Crystal Palace – Everton)

(Date: 15th February, 2025)

...

(Liverpool – Wolves)

(Date: 16th February, 2025)

...

(Tottenham – Man United)

(Date: 16th February, 2025)

The premier league was ready to cook another exciting matchup of games.

...

In the build-up to the game, Sam kept it simple having returned to his basics already as he kept on doing more every day in his daily system quest to make up for the 1 month that he missed due to his injury.

He already resumed his jogging date with Emile Smith Rowe.

These days, Sam put even more effort than ever in training sessions and of course, to balance it out, he spent the rest of his time with his girlfriend and family.

In recent days, he finally resumed the video calling habit that his mom once enforced when he first came to England.

That way, he finally sent the gifts that he bought for his parents from Netherlands to them in Nigeria.

Once Mrs. Moses got her gifts, this Nigerian mother got so emotional that she broke down in tears. It would have been so wholesome if Sam was not made to kneel down the next moment as his mother drowned him in heartfelt prayers.

It was not until his knees became sore that the prayers finally ended.

Sam sighed as he stood up. 'Mom never changes'.

The rest of his time, he spent it with his girlfriend even as he kept tab on Ian's school life and his relationship with his sister.

Like this, time moved swiftly like the rolling pages of a book and in no time, it was already D-day.

The games scheduled for 14th February in matchday 25 were already played and finally, it was Fulham's time.

They welcomed Nottingham Forest in Craven Cottage.

Chapter 239 Matchday 25; against Nottingham Forest

The build-up to this game was not as tense as most neutral fans expected.

As the Nottingham Forest players stepped foot into Craven Cottage, expecting a hostile reception from the home supporters, to their surprise, the atmosphere in this stadium was more light-hearted than they expected.

The atmosphere in Craven Cottage was surprisingly harmonious.

This was because of the presence of 1 specific player who was finally back to the Fulham lineup, Samuel Moses.

Most football fans become toxic and hostile when they sense that their team are the underdogs in any given match. In recent weeks, Fulham fans became extremely hostile at home but now, it lessened.

This was because with Sam's presence back in the Fulham starting XI, the home supporters were suddenly confident in their team returning to winning ways.

Their confidence was so nonchalant that it just seemed illogical.

The Fulham players didn't care about that though. They would ride on this confident wave that was already started by their fans.

Like expected, both teams started with their strongest lineups.

With both starting in their regular 4-2-3-1 formation, for Fulham, Bernd Leno naturally started in between the posts with the quadruple of Antonee Robinson, Diop, Calvin Bassey, and Castagne ahead of him.

The 2-man midfield comprised of Lukic and Adreas Pereira, while the 3-man offense further upfront comprised of Alex Iwobi, Sam, and Emile Smith Rowe.

Raul Jimenez returned to the starting XI as the striker.

For Nottingham Forest, utilizing the same formation as Fulham, Wood started as the striker while the 4-man offense behind him comprised of Sosa, Morgan Gibbs-White, and Anthony Elanga, the former Manchester United winger.

The midfield duo was Anderson and Dominguez, while the 4-man defense comprised Williams, Morato, Milenkovic, and the Nigerian international, Ola Aina.

Sels started in between the posts for the visitors.

Even before the first whistle of this game sounded by the referee, it was already clear that Fulham had a psychological advantage over their opponents this game and it became prominent after the whistle.

FWEEE!

From the first whistle, Fulham dominated this game.

Buoyed by the loud noise that was being made by their fans after the game started, the Fulham players pressed their opponents with impunity, coming close to scoring the first goal multiple times in the first few minutes.

Nottingham Forest's impressive 4-man defense was the only reason why a goal was yet to be recorded in this game, but that defensive record did not stand the test of time forever.

In the 38th minute, Fulham's relentless pressure finally tore the game apart and it came from an unexpected Fulham player.

With Nottingham Forest defending so deep, it was hard for the Fulham attackers to penetrate through them and so Lukic tried something wild.

Receiving the ball outside the box, the Nottingham Forest players refrained from pressing him simply because they didn't rate his threat from outside the box. This midfielder made them regret their decision.

BAM!

Setting himself up, Lukic launched a long-range pile driver that travelled with ferocious speed, tearing into the left side of the net.

Sels, Nottingham Forest's goalkeeper was rooted to the spot.

"GOALLLL...!!!" Craven Cottage exploded to life after that goal.

That goal definitely rattled nerves as Nottingham Forest's defending after that became a bit looser. For the next few minutes that followed, Fulham came close to doubling their lead in the first half without any tangible result till a corner kick in the 46th minute of this game.

Emile Smith Rowe floated a perfect corner kick in, paving the way as Calvin Bassey rose highest in the Nottingham Forest box, powering a header towards goal.

The ball was goal bound, but then...

Clang!

"Ohhhh! What quick reflexes by Sels!"

The Nottingham Forest pulled off a crazy reactionary save, pushing the ball as it clanged against his right post, rebounding back into the box.

Before the goalkeeper could pick himself off from the ground after such an impressive save, to his despair, and Eagle-eyed Raul Jimenez already pounced, arriving first to poke the ball into his net.

He was bundled down in the process by an overzealous Morato challenge but with the ball already inside the enemy net, Raul Jimenez stood up, ignoring his pain as he charged to the corner flag to celebrate the goal.

The atmosphere around Craven Cottage was electric as they celebrated the goal. The fans were having the best time of their life in recent weeks.

The first half came to an end with Fulham leading 2-0 at home.

During half-time though, Raul Jimenez was replaced. Apparently, Morato's challenge left him in more pain than initially expected.

Muniz represented Jimenez and this striker's threat in the Nottingham Forest 18-yard box was no less different.

In the 57th minute of this game, Sam finally joined the party as he raised a perfect lobbed pass over the Nottingham Forest defense, setting up Muniz to score from a header.

In the 60th minute, Emile Smith Rowe crossed another ball into the 18-yard box, this time setting up Alex Iwobi who scored Fulham's 4th goal of this game.

3 of Fulham's 4 goals today were scored from headers.

After the 4th goal in the 60th minute, Coach Marco Silva finally pulled the plug, resting a few of his more important players, including Sam and giving others the opportunity to shine.

In the 82nd minute, Nottingham Forest eventually scored through an Anthony Elanga solo goal, but it ended up being only a consolation goal.

The game ended 4-1 in Fulham's favor.

And just like that, they bagged 3 more points even as Emile Smith Rowe won the man of the match award for this game.

A few hours later, matchday 25 of the premier league finally came to an end.

(Premier league:)

(Matchday 25 of 38:)

(Brighton 2-0 Chelsea)

(Date: 14th February, 2025)

...

(Leicester City 1-3 Arsenal)

(Date: 15th February, 2025)

...

(West Ham 3-2 Brentford)

(Date: 15th February, 2025)

...

(Southampton 0-0 Bournemouth)

(Date: 15th February, 2025)

...

(Aston Villa 2-1 Ipswich Town)

(Date: 15th February, 2025)

...

(Man City 1-0 Newcastle)

(Date: 15th February, 2025)

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(Fulham 4-1 Nottm Forest)

(Date: 15th February, 2025)

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(Crystal Palace 2-0 Everton)

(Date: 15th February, 2025)

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(Liverpool 3-0 Wolves)

(Date: 16th February, 2025)

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(Tottenham 2-2 Man United)

(Date: 16th February, 2025)

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(Updated premier league table standings:)

(1. Liverpool GP: 25/ W:20/ D:2/ L:2/ Pts: 66)

(2. Fulham GP: 25/ W:17/ D:5/ L:3/ Pts: 57)

(3. Arsenal GP: 25/ W:16/ D:7/ L:2/ Pts: 55)

(4. Chelsea GP: 25/ W:16/ D:6/ L:3/ Pts: 54)

(5. Aston Villa GP: 25/ W:12/ D:6/ L:8/ Pts: 42)

(6. Nottm Forest GP: 25/ W:11/ D:8/ L:6/ Pts: 41)

(7. Brighton GP: 25/ W:11/ D:7/ L:7/ Pts: 40)

(8. Man City GP: 25/ W:11/ D:6/ L:8/ Pts: 39)

(9. Tottenham GP: 25/ W:11/ D:4/ L:10/ Pts: 37)

(10. Newcastle GP: 25/ W:9/ D:8/ L:8/ Pts: 35)

(11. Bournemouth GP: 25/ W:9/ D:6/ L:10/ Pts: 33)

(12. Brentford GP: 25/ W:9/ D:5/ L:11/ Pts: 32)

(13. Man United GP: 25/ W:9/ D:5/ L:11/ Pts: 32)

(14. West Ham GP: 25/ W:8/ D:6/ L:11/ Pts: 29)

(15. Crystal Palace GP: 25/ W:6/ D:9/ L:10/ Pts: 27)

(16. Leicester GP: 25/ W:3/ D:8/ L:14/ Pts: 17)

(17. Everton GP: 25/ W:4/ D:5/ L:16/ Pts: 17)

(18. Ipswich Town GP: 25/ W:3/ D:8/ L:14/ Pts: 17)

(19. Southampton GP: 25/ W:3/ D:3/ L:19/ Pts: 12)

(20. Wolves GP: 25/ W:1/ D:6/ L:18/ Pts: 9)

Chapter 240 Winning streak [1]

The highlights of Matchday 25 of the English premier league were clear.

First was Chelsea's shock defeat to Brighton. Having climbed all the way to 2nd position in the league already, eclipsing Fulham, a lot of people predicted Chelsea to push Liverpool all the way till the end of the season.

Nobody expected them to fumble and lose their 2nd position easily.

Another highlight was Fulham's dominant display against Nottingham Forest. This season, Nottingham Forest was in impressive form as even despite the defeat, they still occupied 6th position in the premier league table.

This was why the manner in which Fulham dismantled them was so unnerving to neutral onlookers. It was a statement win from Fulham.

They looked a scary proposition to any side currently.

Matchday 25 was not the end of the world though. After the matchday, time moved like usual, shortening the timeframe to future matchups.

The premier league race was already ramping up in its second half.

But thankfully for Fulham, after the Nottingham Forest game, they had a run of 3 premier league games that was favorable to them on paper.

(Premier league:)

(Fulham – Crystal Palace)

(Date: 22nd February, 2025)

...

(Wolves – Fulham)

(Date: 25th February, 2025)

...

(Brighton – Fulham)

(Date: 8th March, 2025)

In between the 3 premier league games, on 2nd March, Fulham had another game, their FA Cup fifth round game.

(FA Cup fifth round:)

(Fulham – Aston Villa)

(Date: 2nd March, 2025)

For the 4 games that Fulham had during this time; the FA Cup game was poised to be the most difficult simply because Aston Villa looked the better team on paper compared to the 3 others.

And also because it was a cup game.

Losing meant crashing out of the competition, Fulham could not afford to lose against Aston Villa.

For the next few days, locked in for the new year already, the Fulham players trained hard as they prepared for their first of the 4 fixtures.

On 22nd February, they finally welcomed Crystal Palace to Fulham.

For this game, due to the fact that he was just recovering from the niggling injury he suffered against Nottingham Forest, Muniz started as the striker ahead of Raul Jimenez.

The rest of the team was the same one that faced Nottingham Forest last time out. And of course, Crystal Palace also started with their best lineup.

Starting in their 3-4-2-1 formation, Dean Henderson started in between the posts while the defensive trio ahead of him comprised of Trevor Chalobah, Lacroix, and Richards.

The 4-man midfield comprised of Munoz, Hughes, Lerma, and Mitchell. As for the 3-man offense, Ismaila Sarr and Eberechi Eze started in the wings slightly behind Juan Mateta who started as the striker.

The atmosphere for this game was electric and after the referee's whistle sounded, the dynamo of energy gathered in this game triggered.

Despite playing in away ground, during the first few minutes of this game after kickoff, Crystal Palace dominated possession, pressuring Fulham as they were forced to defend.

And then, incredulously, the visitors got the first goal.

It came from the electric midfielder, Lerma leaping above every Fulham player as he powered a header into the net, giving his team the lead in the 23rd minute of this game to change the narrative.

That goal only riled up the Fulham fans, making them make louder noise.

Riding the energy of the home supporters, it took some time but Fulham finally started pressuring their opponents as they regained authority over the game.

Despite everything, Fulham failed to get an equalizing goal in the first half.

During half-time, Coach Marco Silva did not hold back as he attacked some of his players, criticizing their stupid moments in the first half that resulted in the Crystal Palace goal. He urged his players to play better in the second half.

FWEEEE!

Just 5 minutes into the second half, Calvin Bassey ended up being the unlikely goal scorer as he powered a header into the net.

It was an end-to-end game between both teams.

After that goal, the situation on the pitch opened up as both teams played their hearts out. The Fulham offense struggled to tick this game till the dying minutes when an electric Antonee Robinson, the Fulham fullback came to the rescue.

After a marauding run with the ball from left back, this fullback scored a rocket goal, powering his shot towards the top right corner as it beat Dean Henderson to finally give his team the lead.

"GOALLLL...!!!" The home supporters in Craven Cottage heaved a collective sigh of relief as they roared at the top of their lungs in ecstasy.

That goal won Fulham the game.

The focus of the media after the game though was not on Fulham winning, but on how much they struggled against Crystal Palace.

Cairney, Fulham's captain volunteered for the post-match interview and like expected, he faced a few difficult questions.

"Captain, a lot of people believe that your team won by a fluke today. Besides, Sam was a shadow of himself today on the pitch, what do you think is wrong?"

The Fulham captain was calm as he faced the reporters. "Football is not as easy as talking like you all think".

"Sam is just recovering from an injury, of course he needs a few games to get back to his best".

"Sam is still an amazing player still; all he need is time to get back to his best".

"As for those who think our winning was a fluke," this captain smirked. "My word to them is, if winning by a fluke is so easy, why didn't their team win?"

"Just know that we're going on a winning streak!"

With that, this captain walked out of the interview like a Chad.

Fulham won but the spotlight on them was a negative one as the media paid attention to their struggles instead. But used to this already, the Fulham players knew not to pay too much attention to it as they focused on their next game.

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By shutting the noise out, time moved fast to the Fulham players and in no time, it was D-day again.

On 25th January, Fulham traveled to Molineux Stadium in Wolverhampton.