

Football God 34

Chapter 34: Seize your moment!

The structure of Enyimba FC did not change.

They remained in a 4-3-3 formation, the only tactical difference being that Coach Yemi Daniel instructed the newly introduced right back to overlap more through the right side of the pitch.

As for Sam, his orders?

Looking at his teenage player, Coach Yemi Daniel simply nodded at him. "Do what you do in training, don't disappoint me".

Those words followed Sam as he entered the pitch, lining up alongside his teammates. In the first half after the coin toss decider earlier, Akwa United were the ones to kick off the game meaning that in this second half, Enyimba FC was to start kickoff.

Austin Oladapo, the captain of Enyimba FC and Sam stood in the middle of the pitch, about to start kickoff.

Despite the fact that more than 50 minutes already passed since this game started, the energetic Enyimba FC fans clearly didn't lose hope in winning the game yet. They kept on singing and chanting at the top of their lungs.

Together, though it was not as deafening as those big iconic European stadiums, subjected to this atmosphere for the first time since he started kicking a ball, Sam could not help it, his blood churned.

He did not let the tension get to him though. At this moment, taking a brief glance at the referee, Sam took a deep breath. 'Calm down,' he hypnotized himself. 'This time, no mistakes'.

FWEEEE!

Immediately after the referee's whistle sounded, Austin passed the ball to Sam who took one touch of the ball before passing it backward.

He did not relish making a mistake with his first touch of the ball, this was why he passed the ball back for safety.

And with that, the game restarted.

Just like the Enyimba FC players expected, even as the game restarted, the Akwa United players did not rush to win possession. Like in the first half, they were content with sitting deep in their half, defending deep.

And again, the unrelenting onslaught began.

Heralded by not just Austin but Sam this time, these 2 midfielders orchestrated play, playing passes left and right as they created a few chances for the next few minutes but none of it was a clear-cut chance.

Akwa United was incredibly disciplined defensively.

Yet, at the 60th minute of the game, the biggest chance of the game was created, orchestrated by Sam.

Taking the ball from his captain, having grown into the game already, Sam drove forward a bit with the ball towards the right where he played a swift one-two with the right back before throwing an accurate cross into the box.

His target was Emeka, and the center forward did not disappoint, finally beating the tall Akwa United defenders in the aerial battle as he rose highest.

For a few seconds, silence descended across this stadium as the fans watched with bated breaths.

Emeka hit the ball with his head powerfully, but it was not accurate enough, flashing just by the post.

"F*ck!" This center forward screamed in frustration.

For the next 2 dozen minutes, Enyimba FC kept on creating chance after chance even as their opponents defended with dogged determination.

At some point, their coach made a triple change, taking their forward players off entirely except the main striker as he brought in more defensively minded players to mount on the misery of their superior opposition.

It was 80 minutes already, but Sam was yet to score a goal.

He had been calm since, playing his best football, but now, he started feeling desperate. The fans had long given up patience too as their voices rose louder and louder despite how much it must be putting a strain on them.

These voices became the urge that pushed Sam on. 'F*ck it! I can't play it safe anymore, I need to do something'.

'I need to switch it up'.

Receiving the ball again, he drove forward before unleashing a powerful shot that the goalkeeper pushed out for a corner kick.

Austin played a good corner kick, yet the tall Akwa United players prevailed, heading the ball away to safety.

Their frustration mounted, but the more the tension and frustration increased, the more focused Sam became. 'I need to make an impact!'

'I need to seize my moment!'

'I can't let it slip!'

The more he chanted in his head, the more focused he became. Every touch of the ball, every drizzle, every feint, Sam felt himself delving deep into the essence of football then like a switch, he suddenly felt it.

The zone state..., Sam felt it.

It was an ethereal feeling. Everything seemed to disappear from his head, the stadium, the fans, even their loud voices, abstracted off by his brain as the only thing on his head became the pitch, his opponents, and his teammates.

With this level of focus, for a few minutes, Sam played at a truly elite level on the pitch, passing like a robot till it finally came.

Finally, his moment came in the 87th minute of the game. After winning back possession in their box, Akwa United was about to start a counterattack as they played swift passes, intent on getting the ball to their striker.

As soon as the center midfielder played the pass, already in the zone state, Sam slid on the ground, something he almost never does before as he intercepted the pass.

He stopped the ball!

Immediately, he sprung back to his feet as his spatial awareness enabled him to tell that there were multiple opposition players surrounding him.

"Sam, here!"

Sam didn't even look as he played an incredible back heel pass through the 4 players surrounding him to his captain.

Bam!

Immediately after he played the pass, his legs pushed off the ground, his lungs burning as he ran forward from his closest marker.

Bam!

That sound..., Austin didn't hesitate, playing a one-two back to his attacking midfielder as he could tell that the boy was already in a special state.

In the zone state, Sam literally felt the ball rolling towards him, this was how he also noticed an Akwa United defender sliding to intercept the ball.

Rushing faster to close the distance to the ball and arriving first, with a delicate touch, Sam flicked the ball above the sliding defender, jumping above him also, then he exploded with speed.

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

The Enyimba FC fans chanted.

His crazy performance for the past few minutes already got to the frustrated fans and at this moment, as he ran, they chanted his name loudly.

Those chants felt like an extra dose of adrenaline to Sam.

Another player charged in from the box. Noticing the intent of this player, Sam moved to the left but as this player stretched out his leg, he stopped before exploding off in the other direction.

It was a feint!

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

The fans kept on chanting at the top of their voices.

With that feint, Sam finally penetrated into the 18-yard box; this was when he raised his head up. There was an angle to shoot.

He raised his leg up only for an Enyimba defender to put his body on the line, sliding to block with his body.

Sam didn't hit the ball though; it was a fake shot as he pushed the ball forward more, evading 2 more players who put their body on the line.

And finally, he was free to shoot as the Akwa United goalkeeper charged out to meet him. This time, time truly seemed to stop.

Sam raised his leg to shoot as this goalkeeper made his body as big as possible.

Bam!

His leg hit the ball.

It wasn't a shot like most people who spectated thought though, rather it was a pass, to the completely unmarked Emeka.

He already caused so much havoc in the opposition box that all eyes turned to him, forgetting that Emeka lurked in the box.

It was a simple tap in for this center forward and he didn't commit a blunder, calmly poking the ball into an empty net.

The Akwa United players were rooted to the spot, including some Enyimba FC players who still couldn't process what just happened.

"GOALLL...!" Sam roared, relief, contentment, and excitement all flowing through him in waves as he charged towards Emeka to celebrate.

Turning round, this center forward let Sam jump on his back as they both celebrated the goal wildly.

The Enyimba fans celebrated even more wildly in the bench.

In this tight game where they were frustrated for almost 90 minutes, finally, in the 87th minute, the deadlock was broken, orchestrated by Sam.

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

They roared.

The score line was now 1-0.