

## Football God 45

Chapter 45: A busy schedule [3]

Zamalek SC was a veteran of the CAF Champions League, renowned for regularly making deep runs in the tournament but unexpectedly, the underdogs, Enyimba FC managed to knock them out in just the first stage of the tournament.

And it was the first in a series of impressive run for Enyimba FC.

(Matchday 7:)

>Gombe United – Enyimba FC<

>Date: 11 Feb, 2023<

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(Matchday 8:)

>Enyimba FC – Shooting Stars<

>Date: 15 Feb, 2023<

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(Matchday 9:)

>Bendel Insurance – Enyimba FC<

>Date: 19 Feb, 2023<

...

(CAF Champions League!)

(Second preliminary round. Leg 1 of 2)

>Flambeau du Centre - Enyimba FC<

>Date: 21 Feb, 2023<

Another few days of intense training after the victorious Zamalek game in Egypt, Sam lined up on the pitch with his teammates again, this time in away ground as they faced a tough test against Gombe United.

Gombe United played their game, bringing it to their opponents at home but in the end, the superior Enyimba FC team managed to come out on top with a narrow 1-2 win in Enyimba's favor.

For the 2nd consecutive game, Sam could not chip in with a goal contribution but his performances in the middle of the park remained eye-catching.

4 days later, they welcomed Shooting Stars at home, another opportunity for Sam to impress and he did not disappoint, chipping in with another assist to help his team win the game 2-0 in front of their home fans.

This took his season tally to 5 goals and 5 assists in all competitions.

The busy schedule continued for Enyimba FC as again, in 4 days, they traveled to Bendel Insurance's home ground for another away game.

This time though, Coach Yemi Daniel was forced to make sacrifices with the upcoming CAF Champions League game in sight as he gave certain key players like Emeka and Sam rest.

Despite Austin starting this game and playing 70 minutes, he was unable to be the difference maker as Enyimba fell to their second defeat of the season, losing 1-0 against Bendel Insurance at home.

Despite the result, they still sat comfortably at the top of the NPFL league table heading into leg 1 of the second preliminary round of the CAF Champions league. This time, they were to play in away ground first.

And for the second time this year, Sam traveled to another country, this time to Flambeau du Centre's home in Burundi.

Despite playing against their opponents at home, Enyimba FC put out an incredible display as they managed to fight for domination over the game.

In the 72nd minute, Emeka scored the only goal of the game from an unexpected Farouk assist.

The game ended 0-1 in Enyimba FC's favor and Emeka won the man of the match award.

Despite the fact that Sam still didn't get his first goal contribution of the CAF champions league, he still managed to put out an eye-catching display in the middle of the park in away ground.

After that game, the schedule didn't lighten at all, only ramping up even more as Enyimba FC played week in week out.

To Sam, it was a grueling task but having expected it, he coped in the best way he could of course with the help of his system.

Enyimba FC continued putting out eye-catching displays in the league as they dominated their opponents, maintaining their lead at the top of the league table while also showing that the national association didn't make a mistake by giving them the slot in the CAF Champions League despite the backlash that came with it at first.

A week later, on the 28th when they welcomed Flambeau du Centre to the Enyimba International Stadium, they absolutely demolished the Burundi team in front of their home fans.

And in this game, Sam finally set his name on fire in the CAF Champions League, announcing to the rest of Africa that Enyimba FC had a new star player.

In a 5-1 demolition, Sam won the man of the match award after scoring 2 goals and chipping in with an assist, 3 goal contributions in one match.

With that, he took his tally for the season in all competitions to 7 goals and 6 assists. He was not playing like a player who just made his debut in professional football at all, in a sense, he was the best player of Enyimba FC already.

Coached by the astute Yemi Daniel, every training session, every game, Sam was soaking in the experience of game time despite how grueling it was as he improved by leaps and bounds as a football player.

He improved with the busy schedule, keeping Enyimba FC on top.

Game after game, he kept on validating Coach Yemi Daniel's decision to sign him and put him under such a paycheck despite his inexperience.

Game after game, week after week, he showed his talent to the NPFL, and even in games that he didn't get goal contributions, he played well.

And even in those rare situations when he had an off day on the pitch, Sam still managed to catch the eye due to his incredible work rate.

He was a tireless horse on the field of play.

A certain Mr. Moses was proud. "That's my son!" He kept on saying after every single matchday of the NPFL.

A certain Mrs. Moses was also proud. "Hehe, do you know my son is a professional football player? He plays for Enima FC. Last month, he traveled to Burundi to play a game of football in one thing called champions league".

"You mean Enyimba FC right?"

"Ah! Yes".

"Wow! Sam is really making waves already at such a young age. You're lucky to have such a talented son".

From don't play football, Mrs. Moses was now the biggest fan and supporter of her son, silently pushing him through the grueling schedule. It was not easy for a 17-year-old to maintain such a demanding schedule.

After the second preliminary round of the CAF Champions league, alongside the teams that already played their preliminary rounds last year, Enyimba FC finally made it into the group stage and the draw was made.

For their first group stage game, they played against CR Belouizdad at home.

Despite the fact that they played the Algerian team at home, Enyimba FC had their first stumble in the CAF Champions league as they lost 1-0 to a resilient CR Belouizdad team that played with energy and passion.

In their second game of the group stage, they played against Al-Merrikh, this time in away ground as they traveled to Sudan.

For the second straight CAF Champions league game, Enyimba FC stumbled as they drew 0-0 in away ground against the Sudanese team.

After these 2 results, like expected, the critics came hitting with force as they accused the team of being weak, young, and inexperienced, foolish for relying on a teenager to carry them through the season.

To Sam, it was harsh at first but he had support in form of his family, most especially his ever defiant mom.

"The nerve of those bastards!" His mom was incensed. "When they were 17, what were they doing with their lives?"

"I bet they were still begging for food in their dad's wretched homes!"

"Sam, my son, don't listen to them, you've done more than enough already at your age and trust me, you'll only grow to do more".

From the biggest hater of football, over time, Mrs. Moses already underwent a big change. Sam felt at peace with this knowledge.

He focused on his football, ignoring all the critics.

At peace with himself, Sam continued living his busy life and in their next CAF Champions League game against ES Tunis, the Tunisian club still away from home, it finally showed though it was also a tough game.

Enyimba FC drew the game 2-2 which was supposed to be disappointing if not for the fact that Enyimba was losing 2-0 for 80 minutes.

In the final 10 minutes of the game, Sam went berserk, tearing the ES Tunis defense apart as he scored a goal in the 81st minute and assisted another in the 88th minute, dragging his team from the depths of defeat.

The critics still talked but this time, Sam ignored it all.

Their next CAF champions league group stage game was against ES Tunis again, but this time, it was finally a home game after 2-straight away games.

To the Enyimba FC players, playing another CAF home game was the best news that the goddess of luck could give to them.

They could finally play at home in front of their fans again.