

Football God 461

Chapter 461 461: UEFA Champions League Final; PSG vs Barcelona [5]

70 minutes, 3-2...

FC Barcelona was losing.

This was despite playing at their best.

Yes, FC Barcelona was playing at their best and yet they were losing. That was how fearsome PSG was this season under Luis Enrique.

Today, Sam was at his electric best, buzzing in the forward line like a dangerous bee that could not be tamed.

Lamine Yamal? The youngster was a menace to Nuno Mendes, turning him inside out repeatedly as another PSG player was tasked to help him double-team the Spanish prodigy. Despite everything, somehow, PSG was holding on.

Pedri? Pedri was at his enigmatic best today, and yet, he was stifled up against the fearsome PSG midfield trio of Fabian Ruiz, Vitinha and Joao Neves.

Today, literally all the FC Barcelona players turned up to the game. After all, they've been preparing for it like their life depended on it.

Well, their happiness depended on it.

And to them, their happiness meant everything. It's been more than a decade since FC Barcelona last won a UEFA champions league title. And to these players, winning the UEFA champions league again and bringing the trophy back to Barcelona meant more than the whole world.

This was why even as they were being outplayed, outfought, outscored by the Parisians, they didn't give up.

Sam and Raphinha kept on leading the press from up field with relentless energy. At times, the PSG defenders and midfielders toyed with them, passing around them in triangular patterns.

And yet, despite the humiliation, Sam nor Raphinha didn't give up.

They kept on pressing. They kept on running.

They kept on pushing.

And then, in the 77th minute, when the feeling among the FC Barcelona fans was already becoming one of gloom, fragmented memories of Rome and Anfield flashing back in their mind, reminding of past heartbreak, that was when it happened, silencing the Allianz Arena.

77th minute, GOAL! Samuel Moses!

Pedri floated a diagonal pass to the far post where Raphinha got to it before knocking it back first-time across the face of goal. There, Sam, unmarked, a mistake he enforced, like a ghost dashed into space and buried it in.

BAM!

That sound... it sank the heart of PSG fans worldwide. Their team just had to hold on for 13 more minutes till the end of the game.

As for FC Barcelona fans? Euphoria. Ecstasy.

BOOM!

The Allianz Arena exploded, FC Barcelona fans roaring at the top of their lungs, jumping for joy, hugging strangers with endless ecstasy, pulling their shirts and waving it in the euphoria of the moment.

As for Sam? That was his hattrick of contributions in the UEFA Champions League final, in his first ever UEFA Champions league campaign.

And with that goal, his second goal of the game, he went 2 ahead of the legendary Portuguese, Cristiano Ronaldo as the player with the most goals in a single UEFA Champions League campaign with an incredible tally of 19 goals.

3-3.

FC Barcelona was not winning yet, the game was still very much on.

Sam didn't think about the little details though. For now, all that mattered was that he just scored the equalizing goal for his team when his goal needed it the most. Filled with euphoria, Sam whirled off away in celebration.

With eyes dilated in passion, Sam pumped his fists excitedly, charging down edge of the pitch before sliding in celebration even as his teammates swarmed him. And then...

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

The Sam chants started in the UEFA Champions League final.

The commentators screamed with shrill voices.

"He's struck again!"

"ZINEDINE SAM! THE KING OF CATALAN! LORD OF THE SPOTIFY CAMP NOU!"

"Cristiano Ronaldo was Mr. Champions League, King of the UEFA champions league but in just one season, his first in the UEFA champions league, Sam has done what even the Portuguese G.O.A.T could not do".

"That is his 19th champions league goal this season!"

"Eat that!"

"And FC Barcelona are level again this game!"

"What a game!"

It was 3-3 now, but the game was not over yet.

Sam's goal only set off more sparks on the pitch, turning the tension in the Allianz Arena even more palpable.

And then, without giving up, the war continued on the pitch.

Both teams went for it. No fear. No brakes.

Just all-out offense.

It was exciting. It was intense. It was filled with tension, pride, bragging rights, and glory all on the line. It was not for the faint-hearted.

In the 80th minute, Luis Enrique made a change, taking off Desire Doue and introducing Bradley Barcola even as he took Dembele to a false nine role, mimicking Sam's work for FC Barcelona.

Just a minute later, in the 81st minute, Dembele set up Kvaratskhelia whose shot kissed the outside of the post before flying outside.

Groans filled the stadium from the fans even as Kvaratskhelia grabbed his head in disbelief, knowing just how much it would have impacted the game and PSG's season if that ball entered the goal.

In the 84th minute, Dembele hit the side netting.

Just a minute late in the 85th minute, Donnarumma pulled off a massive instinctive save from Sam's header from a Lamine Yamal cross.

Raphinha drew another miracle save from Donnarumma in the 87th minute.

And then...

In the dying minutes of this game, a legend was born.

Lamine Yamal, just 18, received the ball near the edge of the box from a Dani Olmo pass.

Tap!

It was a delicate touch, like a babe's caress.

He cut inside.

Paused.

And then...

Bam!

He curled it gently, with soul, into the far corner.

"...!"

For a brief moment across the Allianz Arena, time seemed to freeze as tens of thousands of fans rose up to their feet.

And then...

The net rippled.

The stadium went silent.

Then it exploded.

BOOM!

3-4. FC Barcelona lead.

Lamine Yamal raced to the corner, arms raised, tears in his eyes even as he fell to his knees in celebration. He was so emotional.

His teammates swarmed him, embracing him in joy.

A goal worthy of a final. A crowning moment.

And then, PSG became a Bull.

A fearless, rampaging Bull.

Chapter 462: When legends are born

89 minutes, 3-4...

FC Barcelona was leading.

Lamine Yamal scored a crazy goal in the 89th minute of this epic game, a goal that pierced the heart of millions of PSG fans worldwide, sending them into a crazy whirlwind of self-reflection and sorrow.

But it was not over yet.

It was already 90 minutes of this game. But it was not over, simply because the referee gave 5 minutes of additional time to this epic game.

And Luis Enrique's reaction?

He pushed his team forward, urging them to abandon defense in favor of all-out offense. It was now a desperate gamble, either score or score. Nothing in between. That was the only way for PSG to survive.

And so, all hell broke loose.

BOOM!

PSG threw everything. Nuno Mendes and Achraf Hakimi, the fullbacks went up field, turning into makeshift wingers as they bombarded the FC Barcelona defense with an endless tide of rampaging attacks.

Dribbles, direct shots, outside the box shots, PSG did everything. Not just that, they also tried crossing tactics as even the center backs pushed forward.

Marquinhos pushed forward, become a makeshift striker as crosses rained into the FC Barcelona box.

And yet, somehow, FC Barcelona remained alive, holding on desperately.

In the 90th plus 2 minute, Vitinha had one final chance. Kvaratshkhelia cut in after another silky dribble, faking a shot before pushing the ball to the free midfielder who already built a reputation for his outside the box shots.

POW!

Vitinha hit his shot with power and accuracy and yet, it was blocked.

During the final minutes of the game, already reading his opposition coach's intentions like a book and knowing how dangerous it would become, Hansi Flick made defensive changes, something he rarely did.

He introduced Ronald Araujo to the game, morphing his team's backline into a 5-man defensive unit that now weathered the PSG onslaught.

Ronald Araujo was the one who blocked the shot.

The Allianz Arena exploded in cheers, the FC Barcelona faithful celebrating the block like it was a goal.

Heroic.

Iconic.

And then, to the agony of PSG and Real Madrid fans around the world, the final whistle finally sounded.

FWEEE!

The Allianz Arena literally shook.

Tears, screams, collapsing bodies.

Sam dropped to his knees right where he was, too emotional to move as he broke down in tears. Gavi punched the air, charging into the pitch and towards him. Pedri raised his arms to the heavens in celebration; Lamine Yamal wept.

Barca were kings of Europe.

In the greatest final of the modern era.

"What a game!" The commentators raved.

"A night entrenched in footballing folklore already!"

"A night of fire! A night of passion! A night of pure footballing brilliance from 2 of the best UEFA Champions League finalists in years!"

"My God, what a game!"

"PSG played the game of their life, they led, and yet the Catalan giants refused to give an edge. The Catalan King led his team to victory!"

"And Lamine Yamal, what a boy!"

"What a goal! He's been creating legend after legend since his debut at the young age of 15 for the senior team, and tonight, he's cemented that legend".

"This is a night when legends are born!"

"Pedri, Raphinha, Sam, Lamine Yamal, Inigo Martinez, Cubarsi, Balde, Kounde, all names that would be sang by Barcelona fans for years to come!"

"What a night to witness a new King rise to the top of Europe!"

"FC Barcelona are Kings of Europe!"

...

Post-match, Allianz Arena, Munich...

FC Barcelona Locker Room; 11:09pm.

Bam!

The door slammed shut behind them.

For a few precious seconds, the room was silent. No speeches. No cameras. No staged celebrations. Just the sound of grown men breathing like they'd run from war, and maybe they had.

Then it began.

Gavi, the heartbeat, screamed. He jumped on a bench and howled like a beast. "Vamos, carajo!"

Outside, the celebrations continued for a long time at the Allianz Arena. Not just in Munich, across the world, from Europe to Africa, to Asia, to America, millions of FC Barcelona fans had a blast as they celebrated all night.

And now, the celebrations progressed to the FC Barcelona dressing room.

What else did you expect?

Barcelona were Kings of Europe again.

Somewhere in Miami, Lionel Messi and his pals, Sergio Busquets, Jordi Alba, and Luis Suarez were definitely having a blast too as they celebrated the first FC Barcelona champions league win in over a decade.

In the FC Barcelona dressing room?

Shirts were flung. Bottles sprayed. Ter Stegen doused Araujo in water, hugging him tightly once more for that decisive block against Vintinha.

Lewandowski already joined his teammates in the dressing room, buzzing around Sam like a fly as he celebrated his successor, the new striker of Football Club Barcelona, the best striker in the world.

Ter Stegen pulled off his captain's armband and stared at it like it had weight. He wasn't crying. He never cried, but his chest was rising fast.

Hansi Flick? Still dressed in black, arms folded, leaned on the wall. He looked at every player. Every warrior. Yes, he had won the UEFA Champions League before now.

Yes, he won a legendary sextuple with FC Bayern Munchen.

And yet, nothing could beat this moment.

Nothing could beat lifting another UEFA Champions League trophy. Nothing could beat this legendary moment, the perfect end to a perfect club season.

When he finally spoke, his voice was low and cracked.

"You didn't just win a final".

"You made history".

The room erupted.

Lamine Yamal, soaked and shaking, sat with a towel over his shoulders. His face glowed with disbelief. Raphinha wrapped an arm around him, whispering in his ear repeated. "You did it, nino. You did it".

Having done it with Sam already, Lewandowski walked over, crouched in front of the kid and handed him the match ball which Sam rightfully won.

"From one legend to the next," he said as he handed the ball to Yamal.

Yamal just stared at it. Then smiled. Wide, unfiltered, pure.

Pedri and De Jong clashed their foreheads together, grinning like lunatics. Ferran was already posting on Instagram, half-dressed, yelling at everyone to smile. Even Kounde, who never sang was belting out Barca chants in his thick French accent.

The Champions League trophy sat on the central table now, untouched. Not yet lifted. Just waiting. Gleaming. Holy.

Then Hansi Flick nodded. Ter Stegen turned, and together, they approached it.

Hansi Flick lifted the trophy.

The room detonated.

Blue and red.

Tears and sweat.

Victory and vindication.

FC Barcelona weren't rebuilding anymore. They were reborn.

Chapter 463: Post-match interview

(UEFA Champions League:)

(Final:)

(PSG 3-4 Barcelona)

(Date: 31st May, 2026)

The UEFA Champions League final was concluded.

The penultimate game of the season was played, and there was a winner, FC Barcelona clinching the 6th UEFA champions league trophy of the club's history.

And once again, PSG were denied the chance of lifting the first UEFA champions league trophy of the French club's history.

And now, after the game, after the trophy lift, after the crazy celebrations, the players gave time for the post-match interview.

>Post-Match Interview Zone: Allianz Arena, Mixed Zone Tunnel.

>11:37pm: Cameras rolling. Microphones everywhere.

The white backdrop behind the players shimmered with Champions League and UEFA logos. Reporters from every major outlet crowded in behind barriers, jostling for position.

The tunnel buzzed like a hive; from snapping camera shutters, to frenzied questions in Spanish, English, French, and Catalan.

First to step up was Marc Andre Ter Stegen, FC Barcelona's captain in the night, still in partial kit, hair damp, eyes sharp with adrenaline.

A CBS Sports Reporter faced the team captain. "Marc, congratulations! You've just won the Champions League in one of the most thrilling finals ever, your first as the captain. How do you even begin to describe what happened out there tonight?"

Ter Stegen smiled faintly, ruffling his hair. "I've played football for over a decade. I've seen finals, goals, heartbreaks... but this? This was something else. They kept on scoring, and yet we refused to break. And that... that's Barca".

A Sky Sports reporter got her turn and with a smile, asked. "They call Sam the best player in this FC Barcelona squad. And tonight, he definitely provided the goods. What do you think about his performance?"

Hearing the reporter ask about Sam, Ter Stegen's face bloomed into a big smile. "Sam?" He shook his head, smiling. "The boy's a menace. He's an FC Barcelona legend already though this is just his debut season".

"It excites me to think about what he'll go on to achieve with the club in the future. My advise to the club President is to give him a 100 billion dollars release clause as soon as possible". He chuckled.

"As for his performance, I have nothing to say but magnificent. Like usual, he showed up in the crucial moment. He was clutch. Just magnificent. He deserves his man of the match award".

"And of course, he definitely deserved the MVP award for the UEFA Champions League season".

"19 goals in a single UEFA Champions League campaign? In your debut season?" He shook his head, shivering animatedly. "It's scary man. Even Ronaldo and Messi never got numbers like this in a single season".

Thinking of something, he added with a bashful smile. "Surely, he's the front runner and guaranteed leader in the ballon d'Or race this season".

An ESPN reporter approached next. "And that final goal from Lamine Yamal... what does it mean to you?"

Ter Stegen smiled again. "Like we expected, PSG were dangerous. They have a truly deadly attack. I saved shots today, yes. But what Lamine did... that was magic. That is what this club's future looks like. He deserves the world".

He moved on, greeted by applause from some of the press.

Next up, Lamine Yamal stepped before the media.

Draped in a Barca flag, the match ball which Lewandowski snatched from Sam still tucked under his arm, he faced the media, his face still flushed with disbelief.

La Liga TV approached first.

"Lamine, 18 years old, scoring the winning goal in a Champions League final. How are you feeling?"

Yamal rubbed a hand through his face and replied, voice trembling. "I don't know if this is real. Yes, I've scored goals in the Euros semifinal, but this? This was honestly different".

He hesitated. "I used to watch these nights on TV with my brothers. Now I'm here. I scored... in a champions league final. For Barca. It's like I'm dreaming".

A Marca Reporter approached next. "We saw the video when Lewandowski handed the match ball won by Sam to you. What did Lewandowski say when he gave you the ball?"

Smiling, Yamal answered. "He said, 'From one legend to the next'. I almost cried right there".

After Lamine Yamal, the man of the moment finally stepped up, Sam.

This time, the reporters literally scrambled between themselves for his attention. In the end, another Sky Sports reporter got to question him first.

"Sam, you're 20 this year, and your trophy cabinet and personal achievements are already enough to leave legends wallowing in envy".

"Tonight, you not only broke Cristiano Ronaldo's champions league goal record, you also won the man of the match award of the game, and the MVP award of the UEFA Champions League campaign. You also lifted the story; so many positives in one night".

"Most are already calling you a Football God, the G.O.A.T of the new generation, at just 20". The reporter smiled. "How do you feel?"

Sam smiled, hesitated, tears welling in his eyes. "To be honest, 4 years ago, I would have never imagined myself in this position".

"My mother hated football because I always struggled with injury".

"At some point in my life, I was banished from playing football entirely. To see myself in this moment now, fulfilling a dream I once thought impossible," he sighed. "Honestly, all I feel is gratitude, endless gratitude to God".

"I feel blessed".

Then came Hansi Flick. Calm. Resolute. Legendary.

The Catalunya Radio approached him. "Coach, there were moments when it seemed like PSG had it. What gave you faith?"

Hansi Flick stared at the reporter with a slight smile on his face. "This club has always been about belief. In the system. In the talent. In the Barca way".

"We suffered, yes. But suffering is part of greatness".

ESPN approached next. "Does this vindicate your project? Your style? Your trust in the youth?"

Hansi Flick nodded firmly. "Tonight, the world saw what we're building. This wasn't just a win, it was a warning".

"Barca is back".

The press room fell into silence as the UEFA official announced.

"Player of the Match: Samuel Moses".

A thunder of applause followed. The youngest MOTM recipient in Champions League final history.

Chapter 464: Catalan legends

Next day, late afternoon.

Spotify Camp Nou, Barcelona...

[Benvinguts, Champions!]

The sun hung low over Catalonia, casting long golden rays across a sea of humanity. Over 90,000 fans filled the Spotify Camp Nou; not for a match, but for a homecoming. An historic one.

Flags waved like wildfire. Red and blue everywhere. Scarves, banners, tears. From the old socios to the children on their fathers' shoulders, the cules had gathered in full voice.

The stadium trembled. Not from footsteps, but from emotion.

Drums. Chants. Flares lit the sky. A deafening roar thundered the moment the giant LED screen lit up:

[Campeones d'Europa – 2026]

And then, the team bus rolled in; wrapped in glory, covered in confetti, gold-lettered across the side:

[Visca Barca. Champions.]

The players emerged one by one onto the makeshift stage build at midfield.

Marc Andre Ter Stegen, the team captain held the trophy aloft once more, and the noise that followed in the stadium was earth-shattering. Gavi, arms wide, led the chant.

"Una Champions mes! Una Champions mes!"

Pedri and Lamine Yamal raced to the mic and started singing Catalan victory songs, dragging a blushing Sam to the front.

The fans erupted into chants of his name:

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

Not just Sam today though. After all, when the game was tightest, the youngest player in the squad scored the winning goal.

Today, Yamal chants were also bellowed across the Spotify Camp Nou.

"Ya-mal!" "Ya-mal!" "Ya-mal!"

He looked stunned; recently turned eighteen. He still clutched that same match ball like a lifeline, the belief that he'll one day win one of his own fueling his joy at this moment. He raised the mic to his mouth and whispered.

"Aquesta es per a vosaltres. Per a tota Barcelona".

"This is for you. For all of Barcelona".

The stadium melted.

Then, the lights dimmed. A montage played on the screens; every goal, every save, every dribble, every scream. The journey from the league phase to the final in Munich. And finally, the trophy lift.

Fireworks detonated above the Spotify Camp Nou sky.

The city roared for miles.

It wasn't just a welcome. It was a coronation.

Barcelona was home. And the kings had returned.

...

Later that night.

1:03am.

In an empty pitch at the Spotify Camp Nou...

The crowd was gone, the lights dimmed. Confetti still clung to the grass like whispers of the war just won.

Hansi Flick stood alone near the center circle, hands in his coat pockets. No cameras. No journalists. Just the echo of ghosts; of Cruyff, of Guardiola, of Luis Enrique himself, his rival yester night, of the illustrious history of this club silently cheering him on.

He looked up at the stands, now still, once deafening.

"You'd be proud," he murmured. "We did it right".

His eyes darted to the sky. He wasn't crying, but the weight in his chest wasn't just pride, it was release. The scrutiny, the doubt, the endless headlines that called him a relic, his tactics a risk. All of it washed away in that 4-3 war in Munich.

Behind him, the Champions League trophy sat alone on a pedestal. Hansi Flick walked to it; rested his fingers on the cool silver.

"You came back," he said softly. "Home".

Maybe he was referring to the fact that it took more than a decade for the club to win the trophy again, or maybe he was referring to his own drought since his 2018 win with FC Bayern Munchen.

Then he turned and walked away, his silhouette fading into the tunnel like a shadow from a dream.

...

Meanwhile, Lewandowski's home.

1:47am.

Suburbs of Barcelona.

The villa was quiet. Dim lights. The city's celebration a low hum in the distance.

Robert Lewandowski sat alone on his balcony, a glass of wine in hand, the medal around his neck. He wasn't partying. He never needed the noise.

The match replayed in silence on the TV inside; muted commentary, slow-motion shots of his successor's first goal, that assist, and then Yamal's winner.

He watched it all with stillness. Not pride exactly. Something deeper... fulfillment. The fulfillment of having given his best despite the fact that he didn't get to kick a ball in the final.

Sam's teacher? He dared not claim that title for himself.

The boy was a prodigy, too talented for him to claim to be his teacher.

But his mentor? Someone who guided him to become a better footballer? A better striker? Lewandowski could shamelessly insert himself into that enviable role in the young striker's life and career.

He still vividly remembered the day that the young Nigerian was announced to have been signed by his club, as an attacking midfielder.

He still remembered his presentation like it was yesterday.

He remembered his first training session, how effortlessly playing with a football was for him. How gracefully he carried himself in training with the ball, how tirelessly he pursued the ball when out of possession.

Then, he thought. 'This boy has something'.

He saw potential. And yet, even he, as experienced as he was never guessed how good Sam would grow up to become within just his debut season for the club.

He never guessed that he would get to taste the UEFA champions league trophy again in the twilight years of his footballing career.

He never guessed how versatile the young Nigerian would grow up to become, to become the most lethal striker in the planet.

He sighed, sipping from a cup of warm tea.

He felt like his work in FC Barcelona was over, done. This was the perfect time to say goodbye to the Catalan club.

In the corner of the room, his daughter slept curled up on the couch, wearing a tiny Barca jersey with "Papa" printed on the back.

Lewandowski smiled, leaned back in his chair and exhaled.

"One last dance," he whispered to the stars. "And what a finish".

He already made his decision.

The camera would pull away here.

From the man.

From the city.

From the season.

Because some victories don't need parades. Some just need quiet...

...And a view of the sky.

He grinned. "And yet, this one necessitates a parade".

Chapter 465: The parade of legends

Two days later...

Spain, Barcelona.

The day of the parade of legends.

Early in the morning, Barcelona woke up to an iconic moment; a helicopter flew across the city, dragging a gigantic banner in its wake.

It read:

[Temporada de Somni – The Dream Season]

The streets of La Rambla, Passeig de Gracia, and Placa Catalunya overflowed with humanity. Hundreds of thousands, maybe more turned the heart of Barcelona into a roaring sea of red and blue.

From balconies, windows, rooftops, fans waved flags and sang songs that hadn't echoed this proudly in over a decade.

The banners strung between buildings read:

[Champions de Tot!]

[The Dream Season – 2026]

[Triplet! Champions of La Liga, Copa del Rey, and UEFA Champions League!]

Technically, it was a quadruple since they also won the Supercopa de Espana, but since they managed to win the UEFA Champions League this season after so many years, officially, it was a European treble season.

At the center of it all, an open-top double-decker bus crawled through the streets like a triumphant galleon returning from war. On its sides, the glittering haul were flaunted in their full glory.

The La Liga trophy, gleaming under the Mediterranean sun like a testament to perseverance and excellence.

The Copa del Rey, wrapped in ribbons.

And towering at the center, the UEFA Champions League, a trophy reclaimed from the gods of Europe.

Music blasted from the speakers; Catalan anthems, club chants, drums that thudded like hearts.

And at the front of the bus stood the giants, the heroes.

Hansi Flick, in sunglasses and club gear laughed with his staff. Lewandowski and Sam stood at the front, the Polishman with his arms stretched wide, tossing a signed ball into the crowd.

Gavi and Pedri were dancing, taking selfies, leading call and response chants.

And Lamine Yamal, atop the bus's roof like a king born in fire, holding the Champions League trophy aloft with both hands. The roar that followed the bus nearly cracked the air itself.

As for the captain?

He wore a crown someone had thrown up to him. At first, he laughed it off. But when Ter Stgen put it on his head and bowed mockingly, the crowd lost their minds.

From Placa d'Espanya to Arc de Triomf, fans chanted.

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

"Yamal!" "Yamal!" "Yamal!"

"Barca!" "Barca!" "Baaaaaarca!"

At one point, fireworks exploded above Montjuic as the procession reached its final destination.

A temporary stage had been built. Giant screens displayed every glorious moment from the season; Gavi's rocket against Atletico, Sam's legendary goals in El Clasico, the Copa del Rey final goal, and of course... Yamal's winner in Munich.

Hansi Flick stepped forward, mic in hand. The crowd fell silent.

"This team...", he started. "This family... gave everything. For this badge. For this city".

"We weren't just playing football. We were writing a new chapter in Barca history, a new chapter in the history of the biggest club in the world!"

The fans cheered louder.

Hansi Flick grinned. "A legendary chapter".

Then, he turned to his players. "And I promise you, it's just the beginning. We'll go on to achieve even more together".

"We'll leave our mark in history".

He handed the mic to Sam, who looked out at the endless crowd. Hansi Flick didn't tell him about this ahead of time and so for a moment, Sam was stumped, but he quickly killed his anxiety and smiled.

"I came here to win, to achieve my goals. But I stayed because of you".

"This is the best club in the world. And now, we've reminded Europe of that truth".

A few other players spoke, and then Yamal spoke last. He was not nervous, taking the mic and speaking with confidence.

He may be younger than Sam by 2 years, but he's stayed under the Barca scrutiny for far longer. It was funny but he had more experience playing in the top 5 European leagues than Sam.

Yamal spoke. "I grew up dreaming of Camp Nou. Now, I dream of filling its future".

"This isn't just a treble. This is a promise".

"We've achieved a lot together already, but we'll achieve even more".

The crowd cheered.

The music hit again. Confetti cannons fired. The night became a festival, a memory carved into stone.

Barcelona had their legends.

And now, their era had begun again.

...

FC Barcelona's open-bus parade was an iconic one, and it elicited reaction from the global footballing community.

It was Barca's Renaissance under Hansi Flick, and whether they liked it or not, the wider footballing community had to bow to the tyranny of the new king.

(L'Equipe- France:)

("PSG Falls, Europe Kneels: Barcelona's Empire Reborn.")

("Paris dreamed of immortality. But Barcelona reminded them what legacy truly means. Hansi Flick has forged a team not of superstars, but of warriors, artisans, and believers. France applauds... and aches.")

...

(Marca- Spain:)

("Temporada de Oro! – Barca's Treble Lights Up the World!")

("From Munich to Montjuic, this Barca team captured not just trophies, but hearts. Hansi Flick silenced all doubters. Yamal is no longer a wonder kid, he is a generational terror. Sam is the new G.O.A.T. This is no fluke. This is the rebirth.")

...

(The Guardian- UK:)

("Barcelona's Beautiful Storm.")

("Not since the Guardiola era have we seen such cohesion, such joy in movement, such terrifying elegance. Ter Stegen's leadership, Pedri's rhythm, Yamal's fire, Sam's genius; Barcelona danced through Europe and lit a torch for future greatness.")

...

(Gazzetta dello Sport- Italy:)

("Arte, Furia, Gloria – Barca's Masterpiece.")

("Italy knows art when it sees it. What Barca painted this season wasn't football, it was opera. Each goal was a note, each match a crescendo. If there is a new dynasty forming, it begins in Catalonia.")

...

(New York Times- USA:)

("Barcelona's Return: A Global Powerhouse Reawakens.")

("From Wall Street to Wynwood, Barcelona jerseys are selling out. The world has a new obsession: the new King named Sam, the teenage star named Yamal, and a squad that refused to die. Football's global heartbeat shifted again, to Spain.")

Not just on global media, social media also exploded with reactions.

Barcelona didn't just win the treble.

They won the world's attention.

And the world now waits... for what comes next.

Chapter 466: The gentle days after glory

Two days after the open-top parade, when the crowds had quieted and the chants faded into memory, Sam escaped.

Sam escaped; not from the love, but from the noise.

This was the busiest season of his career by a sizeable margin. The UEFA Champions League final made it his 56th game this season.

He didn't just play the games though, he exerted himself, shattering records left and right. After the UEFA Champions League final, Sam's statistics stood at 77 goals and 40 assists in just 56 games!

It was a truly staggering figure, 117 goal contributions in 56 games!

He truly went all out and did the impossible this season.

This is why with Kayla's hand in his, after the open-top parade, Sam boarded a private speedboat from the port of Saint Antoni de Portmany, slipping away to a secluded cove only known to locals and legends.

The sky was painted in soft hues of coral and lavender. The sun, heavy and golden, sank slowly into the Mediterranean, throwing firelight across the waves.

They docked at a Cliffside villa, carved into the rock like a hidden treasure; whitewashed stone, wraparound terraces, infinity pool bleeding into the sea.

Their phones were off. No cameras, no fans, no football.

Just peace.

...

Day 1.

That morning, Sam woke up to the gentle rustle of linen curtains, Kayla curled beside him, her head on his bare shoulder, their legs tangled beneath crisp white sheets.

Once again, he applauded himself for the brilliant decision to go on a vacation and escape from all the noise.

"You're snoring less now that you've won the Champions League," she whispered with a smirk.

They laughed, then he kissed her forehead.

No crowds. No schedules. Just the slow rhythm of two hearts finally resting.

Later, they explored the coastline by kayak, paddling through sapphire caves and sun-drenched inlets. Kayla wore a straw hat and a black bikini that made Sam forget every defense he'd ever broken.

She laughed freely, splashing him with her oar, and he feigned surrender with dramatic groans.

'Gosh... I wish it can stay like this forever'.

They dined barefoot on the terrace, a private chef serving fresh langoustines, chilled albarino, and figs drizzled with honey. Sunset bled across the sky as soft Spanish guitar echoed in the background.

After dinner, they sank into the infinity pool, stars winking above them, the sea below whispering secrets to the rocks.

They spoke of nothing and everything; of their future wedding, of childhood dreams, of where to hang his Champions League medal.

She said. "Wherever it doesn't outshine you".

Sam laughed.

...

Day 2.

Kayla surprised him with a massage appointment at a Cliffside cabana surrounded by lavender bushes and sea breeze. For the first time in months, his muscles weren't screaming. His mind wasn't racing. He let go.

In the afternoon, they wandered the streets of Ibiza Old Town, Dalt Vila hand in hand, sipping café bombon in a quiet courtyard.

Locals barely glanced at them; to this little town, they were just two lovers wrapped in sun.

They had a great time.

Hours later, the sky above Ibiza had turned a shade of deep violet, the stars crisp and close enough to pluck. From the rooftop of their private villa, the world felt distant; just sea, wind, and love.

Sam had been quiet through dinner. Not brooding, just... thoughtful.

Kayla noticed the way he kept looking at her, like he was memorizing something. Like her smile was something he'd need to carry in his pocket.

As the last of the dessert wine was poured, he took her hand and guided her to the terrace. Lanterns flickered around them, their glow soft and golden, and waves murmured far below.

A light breeze lifted her curls as she stepped barefoot onto the cool stone.

"I've got something for you," he said, pulling a slip of parchment from his shirt pocket.

Kayla looked at his hand with curiosity, trying to guess what it was.

It wasn't a ring. She already wore that, had worn it for months now. It was a folded, cream-colored paper, delicately pressed, the kind you'd find in an old bookstore. Her brows rose as he placed it in her hands, his eyes unreadable but full of warmth.

Kayla chuckled. "You're being all mysterious, what is it?"

Sam smiled warmly at her. "Look at it".

She obeyed and looked.

Just seven words, written in his clean, elegant handwriting.

[Our Wedding Day – June 3rd, 3PM.]

Kayla stared. Her lips parted.

Then...

"Wait... what?" Her voice was a whisper caught between laughter and shock.

Seeing her reaction, Sam was satisfied, feeling a warm feeling rise in his chest. He smiled, rubbing the back of his neck.

"Mom wore me down, always nagging about when the big day would be," he said with a grin. "And... I realized I didn't want to wait anymore".

"We've already done the hard parts. You were there through every injury, every slump, every press circus. Hell, all the way from Fulham". He laughed.

Kayla also laughed, tears already welling in her eyes.

Sam looked at her, smiling. "You were there before the trophies. So now...", he stepped closer, placing a kiss on her forehead. "Let's just do it!" He said with enthusiasm.

"Let's make it real. Three days from now. In Barcelona. Everything's already in motion".

She blinked, once, twice, then the paper fluttered from her hand as she lunged at him, wrapping her arms around his neck, burying her face in his chest.

"You idiot," she whispered, laughing into his shirt, voice shaking. "You beautiful, sneaky idiot. I would've married you in a parking lot".

He held her, grinning as the stars spun slowly above them.

"Good. Because I'm not giving you time to run".

"As if I ever would". She laughed.

And as the sea sighed and the lanterns swayed, Sam held his future in his arms, and she held hers in his.

...

That night, as they lay wrapped in linen again, waves murmuring in the distance, Kayla traced the hair on his arm and said. "It's not just the trophies that make you legendary".

"What is it then?" He asked, brushing her cheek.

"The way you come back to yourself. To us".

And in that quiet, private paradise, Barca's star striker became something more than a champion...

He became whole.

Chapter 467 467: June 3rd in Barcelona

June 3rd, 2026.

Barcelona, Spain.

The city still hummed with echoes of glory. Banners fluttered from balconies, fans wore Barca jerseys like second skin, and the air smelled faintly of summer and celebration.

But high above the noise, on the lush terraced gardens of Torre Bellesguard, a neo-Gothic masterpiece by Gaudi, a different kind of magic was brewing.

Here, in this hidden gem nestled in the hills overlooking Barcelona, Sam and Kayla would begin something far more eternal than any trophy...

Their wedding ceremony.

It was the most pivotal event of Sam's life, and he didn't hold anything back, going all out to make it one of the biggest and most memorable events of his life.

The garden was transformed into a dreamscape.

Ivory silk drapes billowed gently in the breeze, strung between ancient cypress trees. Rows of white wooden chairs faced a floral arch woven with wild roses, olive branches, and sun-touched lavender, each bloom a quiet hymn to Spanish romance.

Sam and Kayla thought for a long time and where the venue of their wedding would be. At first, Sam proposed Nigeria while Kayla proposed Netherlands.

As the gentle man he was, Sam initially agreed with his girlfriend's wish for the wedding ceremony to take place in the Netherlands and already started preparations when Kayla changed her mind at the last moment.

"Let's do it in Barcelona". She said.

"Why?" He asked.

She smiled. "Because Barcelona has always been and is still your dream".

"Huh?"

"Remember the first football game you ever watched, the 2011 UEFA Champions League final between FC Barcelona and Manchester United?"

"Yeah, what about it?"

Kayla smiled. "That was when it all started, your passion and dream as an avid football fan. Your journey as an FC Barcelona fan".

"Your life, your ambitions, your dream, it has all been tied to the city of Barcelona, so why not commemorate our matrimony there too?"

Listening to that argument, Sam was speechless. He had nothing to say, and so he simply dragged his fiancée closer and kissed her passionately on the lips.

A wedding in Barcelona... it truly was a dream of his.

And now, here they were.

It was D-day.

Soft Catalan guitar floated through the air, played live by an elderly musician with fingers full of soul. A narrow stone path lined with pale rose petals stretched down the center like a quiet invitation to forever.

The guest list was small. No media. No flashes. Just intimate warmth; close family, childhood friends, and a few teammates who had seen Sam bleed and rise again.

Of course, the likes of Emile Smith Rowe and Sam's first captain back in his Enyimba days, Austin all received special invitations.

Sam stood at the alter in a deep navy tailored suit, no tie, collaropen, sun catching on the Barca cufflinks tucked into his sleeves.

He looked calm, impossibly so, his famous calma passive radiating even here. Comparing a wedding ceremony to an opposition 18-yard box was wild, but heck, it was Sam, so the comparison was apt. He was calm.

But when he turned to see her, the mask cracked just slightly.

A few chuckles reverberated from among the audience, eliciting a glare from Sam as he glared at his friends; Lamine Yamal, Pedri, Balde, even Smith Rowe, where they stood reacting to every subtle reaction that he made.

And yet, that was only the prelude.

Because, soon enough, Kayla stepped into view and simply stole the breath from every chest.

She wore a simple, stunning silk gown, off-the-shoulder, the fabric hugging her frame like it had been sewn from moonlight. Her hair was swept into a soft updo, scattered with tiny pearls.

In her hands, a bouquet of white gardenias and dusty blue thistle, tied with a ribbon embroidered with the initials S & K.

Her eyes found his, and he forgot every match he'd every played

Badump! Badump!

Sam could feel his heart beating rapidly in his chest; a heartbeat of liberation, of freedom, of Joyboy.

And then, the vows.

The officiant was Sam's father, the proud middle-aged man who once taught him how to juggle a ball in the backyard and now teared up trying to pronounce 'eternity' without choking.

It was an emotional moment.

Sam took her hands, and then with the most sincere smile in the whole world, he said:

"You were never just beside me. You were part of me".

"In the noise, in the silence, in the chaos of stadiums and the peace of home. Wherever I go, I want your hand. Not behind me. Not in front. But with me, always".

Kayla's voice wavered, but she held firm.

"I loved you before the world knew your name. And I'll love you when the lights go out, and the shirts are folded away. I don't need the roar of fans. I just need your voice whispering goodnight".

Cheers erupted from the spectators, then...

"They definitely googled that". A voice whispered among the audience.

It was from the direction of Sam's close friends again.

Sam registered an urge to glare at the bastards one more time. Rather, he focused on the important thing that left his heart racing again.

Drawing closer, he kissed her before the officiant could finish the line.

The crowd laughed. Lamine Yamal whistled. Mrs. Moses teared up and tried to hide it by glaring at the sun. Even Hansi Flick, seated quietly in the back with his wife smiled like a proud father.

Petals rained from above. Music swelled.

Then, they walked down the aisle as husband and wife, hearts racing faster than a final whistle.

Celebration followed.

The reception was candlelight under the stars. Long wooden tables lined with tapas, cava, laughter, and golden lamplight.

Austin made a toast referencing the good old days, the Enyimba days playing with the young prodigy of then, Sam who already blossomed to become a King now, eliciting cheers from the listeners.

And then Ian, Sam's best friend told a story about how he once patched up Sam's busted ankle with duct tape and pure attitude, eliciting laughter.

And Lewandowski, healed and grinning, raised a glass.

"You've won the hardest competition now. And there's no second leg. Only forever".

More cheers erupted.

They danced barefoot in the grass, lights hanging overhead like fireflies. Just before midnight, as Kayla rested her head on his shoulder, Sam whispered.

"Champions League? Amazing".

"But this?"

"This is the real trophy".

Chapter 468: A royal spectacle in Abuja

What follows after a romantic wedding in Barcelona?

A honeymoon, right? That's what the normal European guy would think, but not a Nigerian, not a Nigerian with living Nigerian parents.

The decision to have the wedding in Barcelona never sat well with Mrs. Moses, but she had enough tact to not intrude too much in her son's love life.

But even at that, she knew what she wanted for her son.

Just as her son and his wife envisioned a romantic wedding and implemented it, she also had ideas about how her son's marriage ceremony should be like; Nigerian style, grandiose, and filled with Asoebis.

Aso ebi is a famous Nigerian term, Yoruba language specifically.

It translates to family cloth in English. It's a tradition in some West African cultures, particularly in Nigeria where a group of people wear matching or similar outfits, typically made from a specific fabric at an event to show solidarity and unity.

Mrs. Moses wanted to wear Asoebi for her son's marriage.

Well, Sam also bought into the idea. He wanted to make his marriage and unforgettable one and so he let his mother plan.

It happened the next day after the wedding in Barcelona.

That night, they all traveled back to Nigeria.

...

4th June, 2026.

The location was a luxury event hall in Abuja, Nigeria, and the theme of the day is 'Unity in Heritage', a grand Igbo-Yoruba, and most especially Isoko celebration with southern elegance.

There were over 500 guest in attendance, ranging from Sam's family to Kayla's relatives, Barcelona teammates, Nollywood and Afrobeats royalty to African footballing legends, and dignitaries.

If Sam still doubted how famous he was in the world, with this event, all his doubt evaporated. Celebrities responded to his invitation in droves.

The venue was an A-Class Park and Event Center, nestled in the heart of Abuja. But for this night, it became a palace of tradition and triumph.

At the gates, horses adorned in royal fabrics stood in attention, part of a northern calvary-style welcome.

Guests walked in on a long red carpet flanked by dancers in traditional attire; Fulani, igbo, Yoruba, and Isoko, all performing different cultural steps to the rhythmic beat of bata, gangan, and ogene drums.

Inside, the hall was transformed.

The décor fused gold, emerald green, and rich maroon, symbolizing royalty, prosperity, and love.

Gigantic chandeliers hung above, surrounded by palm fronds and intricate bead-laced centerpieces.

LED screens played highlights of Sam's season, the legendary UEFA champions league run, and moments with Kayla.

The stage prepared for the couple was shaped like a traditional throne, backed with floral arches and bead-crafted initials; S & K.

And then, the grand entrance...

Sam and Kayla arrived not in a car, but in a traditional palanquin, carried in by men dressed as royal guards to the sound of ululations, shouts of "Ovie!", and drums shaking the ground.

Sam was dressed like an Isoko prince; wine-red George wrapper, luxurious white laced shirt, red cap, and a golden staff. Around his neck, the heaviest coral beads gleamed like war medals.

Lamine Yamal beamed with endless fascination seeing the attire of his friend as he kept on taking pictures with a big smile on his face.

As for Kayla? She wore a dazzling golden blouse, two wrappers; one draped and one wrapped, a head tie, and coral beads.

Her smile? Pure pride and love. She was regal, queen of the continent for a day; it was her day.

At first, it was uncomfortable but her endless fascination beat it.

She was glad to be Sam's queen of the world for tonight.

They descended to the floor as Flavour performed 'Ada Ada', followed by KCee's 'Limpopo', and the crowd went wild.

Even Barcelona players in attendance; Lewandowski, Pedri, Hansi Flick, and a few others were dressed in custom agbadas and tried their best dancing as naira, dollars, and euros rained from above.

It was crazy, and endlessly grandiose.

And most importantly, it was a feast.

The menu was a five-star buffet that celebrated Nigeria's diverse cuisine.

From the South, there was Oha soup, banga, jollof rice, goat meat, and ukwa. From the West, there was Amala with gbegiri and ewedu, asun, puff puff. From the North, there was Tuwo shinkafa with miyan kuka, kilishi, and masa.

Desserts featured plantain mosa, zobo cocktails, tiger nut smoothies, and palm wine in carved wooden cups.

It was beyond luxurious.

And then, the special guests took the show.

Burna Boy lit up the night with some of his hit songs, 'Last Last', 'Sittin' on Top of the World', and 'For My Hand', dominating the list.

Davido and Tiwa Savage performed a duet remix of 'Jowo'.

Victor Osimhen, Jay Jay Okocha, and Kanu Nwankwo were also spotted spraying cash on Sam and doing legwork to an explosion of cheers.

Nollywood stars like Genevieve Nnaji, Richard Mofe-Damijo, and Funke Akindele also graced the occasion, seated in front row seats.

The highlight of the night was the traditional wine carrying ceremony, where Kayla knelt before Sam with a cup of palm wine and found her husband among the crowd. She offered him the cup; he drank, then lifted her up in joy to the cheer of the entire hall.

Sam's mother gave an emotional speech in Isoko, thanking God, the ancestors, and the land for blessing her son and for bringing Kayla into their lives.

Of course, she spoke of Kayla glowingly.

She always loved her from day one.

Kayla's family responded in English, mixing in some awkward Isoko to laughs and applause from the audience, invoking joy and eternal peace upon the couple.

And then, the finale.

As the night reached its climax, fireworks burst into the Abuja sky, painting it in gold and green. From the heart of Nigeria, Sam and Kayla's love story echoed across the continent.

And a certain YouTube had new content for his YouTube channel.

It was a celebration of roots, unity, and the beauty of coming home.

And deep in Sam's heart, as he looked around at his people, his heritage, his wife... it all felt right.

It was more than a wedding.

It was a coronation.

Chapter 469: A final embrace in Abuja

The sun rose slow and golden over Jabi Lake, painting the surface of the water in soft amber hues. Mist rolled gently along the quiet shoreline, and birds called lazily from distant palms.

The villa, a private luxury escape nestled in the hills of Maitama, felt far from the noise and fanfare of the night before.

Inside the villa, everything whispered serenity. The air was still, heavy with the scent of fresh hibiscus, while light jazz played softly from a speaker tucked into the corner of the airy living room.

White curtains billowed lazily in the morning breeze.

Sam and Kayla had spent the entire night wrapped in a cocoon of laughter, whispering memories, and playful kisses.

And now, barefoot, dressed in just a simple robe, Sam stood at the balcony, gazing into the sprawling horizon; Abuja's skyline rising like a memory in motion.

Kayla emerged behind him, wearing one of his oversized shirts, her hair still tousled from sleep. She slid her arms around his waist, resting her cheek against his back.

"I never want this to end," she murmured.

Sam turned, pulling her gently into his arms.

"Neither do I," he whispered, kissing her forehead. "But duty calls".

They spent the morning in blissful silence. Breakfast was served on the terrace; akamu and akara, with chilled zobo in carved calabashes. Kayla was getting increasingly better at Nigerian dishes, she directed the chefs on what to cook.

At this moment though, the staff knew to give them space, slipping in and out like ghosts.

After breakfast, they lay in the villa's infinity pool, floating side by side, watching the clouds drift lazily overhead. Kayla reached out and held his hand under the water, her fingers tracing circles on his palm.

"This place feels like a dream," she said softly.

He looked at her, memorizing the light in her eyes. "You're the dream".

She chuckled, blushing.

They returned inside, changed, and curled up together on the massive cream-colored couch. Kayla's head rested on Sam's chest, listening to the steady rhythm of his heartbeat.

Then, a knock.

Their manager entered gently, holding the travel case and the green and white Nigeria jersey with Sam's name boldly across the back and the No. 10.

The moment shattered like glass.

Kayla sat up slowly. Sam took the jersey in silence.

"It's time?" She asked, though she already knew the answer.

He nodded. "The World Cup won't wait".

Today was 5th June already, and the 2026 FIFA World Cup was scheduled to start just a few days from now on June 11th.

Players were released by their clubs as soon as the season came to an end. The only reason why Sam didn't join the Nigerian national football team yet was because of his wedding and marriage commitments.

And now, it was time.

It was time to go and represent his country once again in the biggest stage of all, a stage even bigger than the AFCON, the FIFA World Cup stage.

The 2026 FIFA World Cup, this edition of the tournament will be the first to include 48 teams, expanded from the previous 32.

The United 2026 bid beat a rival bid by Morocco during a final vote at the 68th FIFA Congress in Moscow. It will be the first World Cup since 2002 to be hosted by more than one nation.

With its past hosting of the 1970 and 1986 tournaments, Mexico will become the first country to host or co-host the men's World Cup three times.

The United States last hosted the men's World Cup in 1994, whereas it will be Canada's first time hosting or co-hosting the men's tournament.

The event will also return to its traditional northern summer schedule after the 2022 World Cup in Qatar was held in November and December.

Kayla wanted her husband to stay with her and not leave, she wanted to enjoy her honeymoon, and yet she understood.

She understood just how ambitious of a man she married.

She knew just how driven he could be, almost making him seem like a mad man at times.

She managed a smile, though he eyes shimmered. "Go win it for us".

Sam cupped her cheek in turn. "For Nigeria. For you. For everything we are".

Their final kiss wasn't rushed. It was slow, intentional. A promise forged between lips. A seal that even time couldn't dissolve.

Then he turned, suitcase in one hand, jersey slung over his shoulder, and walked toward the waiting car. Kayla stood at the villa steps, watching him go, arms folded over her chest, the wind tugging at her curls.

The car pulled away.

She didn't cry, not yet. Because she knew the world would be watching him now. And soon, the name Sam wouldn't just echo in Barcelona or Fulham or Lagos or Abuja.

Rather, it would thunder across the world.

But for now, in the stillness of that Abuja morning, she whispered to herself.

"My champion".

...

Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja...

The departures terminal buzzed with a quiet but unmistakable electricity. Cameras clicked, media crews loitered behind security barricades, and a modest crowd of fans clad in green, waving miniature flags, gathered to catch one last glimpse of their heroes before they soared toward destiny.

Sam arrived in a dark-green tracksuit, his travel duffel slung casually over one shoulder. The familiar glint of the Nigerian Football Federation emblem gleamed on his chest.

The moment he stepped out of the black SUV, cheers rippled through the waiting fans.

"SAMMMMM!"

"Naija starboy!" Someone shouted.

He smiled and waved, offering a few autographs as security gently ushered him toward the VIP section of the terminal.

Already waiting inside were several of his Super Eagles teammates; some lounging in branded tracksuits, others thumbing through phones, earbuds in, laughter echoing between jokes in Yoruba, Hausa, and pidgin English.

He bumped fists with Victor Osimhen, exchanged a side-hug with Wilfred Ndidi, and clapped Ademola Lookman on the back.

"Starboy don land," Osimhen grinned, adjusting his cap as he said in pidgin. "You don kiss wife finish?"

Sam chuckled. "Make una no jealous abeg".

The camaraderie was infectious; gritty, brotherly, a bond forged through years of international football, setbacks, and rising hopes.

If anything, Sam was the new face among them but nobody dared underestimate him. Nobody dared underestimate Sam the Great, King of FC Barcelona, Lord of the Spotify Camp Nou.

He already led this team to win the AFCON already. If that alone was not enough to garner their respect, what he did with Barca this season was enough.

The flight attendants from Air Peace, their chartered carrier lined up respectfully. The boarding call came over the PA system, and a murmur went through the room.

They walked out onto the tarmac like kings heading to war, step by step under the hot Abuja sun, their green and white travel jackets catching the light, national pride stitched into every thread.

The plane was decorated with a bold –[Naija to the World]- emblem, flanked by soaring eagles. As the players boarded, the engines hummed to life.

Through the small terminal window, fans pressed their hands against the glass, singing.

"All we are saying... Give us the cup!"

Inside the plane, the mood shifted to focus. Beats played low from a Bluetooth speaker. Some players closed their eyes, some tapped tactics on their tablets, others stared out the windows, watching Abuja shrink beneath them as the plane ascended into the clouds.

Sam looked out too.

One last glance at the homeland.

Next stop, the United States of America.

Next mission impossible, bring the World Cup home.

Chapter 470: FIFA World Cup 2026 [1]

'It feels like a fever dream'. Sam thought.

He could still remember vividly when he started like it was just yesterday.

December, 2022, the Christmas game. That was where it all started.

Then, even with the system, he never expected to make it this far. All he had then was hope, and passion, raw passion for the sport.

And yet, here he was, in a plane traveling alongside the Nigerian National Football Team to represent his country in the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

'Crazy,' he thought. 'Crazy man'.

This was just his 4th season as a professional football player, but Sam felt like he was already close to winning everything, especially this season.

The ballon d'Or 2026 was literally his already. The UEFA Champions league trophy was his, the la liga title was his, so many things were his now.

Heck, they called him the King of the Spotify Camp Nou.

Let's leave football. Thinking about his life in general, Sam realized how lucky he had been. He was rich now, with so much money in his bank account that he could not even use it all if he wanted.

He had a beautiful wife who loved him.

'What more can I want from life?' He thought, but he knew, he had an answer in his mind already.

'The FIFA World Cup'.

Sam had achieved it all, all that he dreamt and yearned for when he started the journey of football all the way back in 2011, in that fateful final when he was just 6 years old, running after his dad like a shadow.

And now, the only other thing he truly yearned for was the FIFA World Cup trophy.

He grinned. 'If I get that, I've completed football right?'

He put his headphones on, listening to an NF plus Eminem mixed playlist. As the songs reverberated in his head, one last thought reverberated in his head.

'Getting it won't be easy though'.

He relaxed on his seat. 'Winning the FIFA World Cup with Nigeria would be the most difficult task of my career, of my existence'.

'Can I?'

Then, he grinned. 'When did I start thinking of what if, if I can or not?'

'It doesn't matter'.

'If it is my will... who dares to stop me?'

...

The moment Sam and the Nigerian squad stepped off their flight at John F. Kennedy International Airport, they were hit by a wave of noise, color, and kinetic energy that could only mean one thing; World Cup fever had devoured the United States whole.

The terminal was bursting with life.

Flags from every corner of the world fluttered in the air; from Brazilian samba colors to German black, red, and gold, to Nigeria's bold green and white, carried proudly by a sea of fans who had made the journey across continents.

Everywhere, billboards, subway ads, skyscraper wraps, football reigned.

The World Cup fever is real, and now, it was on.

"Welcome to the 2026 FIFA World Cup!" Blared from holographic screens outside the Times Square, looping video reels of past glories and present-day superstars.

Every nation had a figure-head that dominated their billboards and posters. For Spain, it was Lamine Yamal, Pedri, and Rodri.

For Argentina? It was Lionel Messi.

Yes, Lionel Messi made it to the 2026 FIFA World Cup despite the fact that he was now playing in a retirement league in MLS.

The most shocking fact?

It was that at the prime old age of 41, the ageless legend, Cristiano Ronaldo also made the Portuguese squad for the 2026 FIFA World Cup. It was crazy, but it was undoubtedly the last world cup of the legendary forward.

And as for Nigeria? Of course, it was Sam.

'The King', he was dubbed in the banners and posters, his iconic Black Panther celebration frozen in midair, his name now one of global recognition.

The host cities, from New York to Los Angeles, Atlanta to Houston, Kansas City to Miami were transformed into football citadels.

Fan zones filled public parks where giant screens awaited kickoff, surrounded by food trucks, live bands, street performers, and fans from dozens of nations chanting their country's names.

Hotels were overbooked.

Jerseys were sold out in minutes.

Children dribbled balls on sidewalks. Street corners became impromptu pitch battle zones; Ghanians facing Mexicans, Nigerians just being chill, Argentinians taunting Brazilians, laughter and rivalry in every chant.

In the Nigerian camp's hotel in Atlanta, their base city, a throng of supporters gathered outside.

They wore agbadas printed with Sam's face. Some had painted eagles across their cheeks, and they all sang a unified song, the song of victory. All the while, vuvuzelas echoed down Peachtree Street like war horns.

CNN, Sky Sports, ESPN, and SuperSport Nigeria all broadcast live around the clock. From team training sessions, to personal sessions with players, everything.

Sam's interviews ran in highlight loops.

"We're not just here to play. We're here to win. This is Africa's time".

And yet, at some point after determining that the interviews began to turn into a distraction, he spurned all interviews. He refused to take them, now fully zoned in on football with narrowed focus, will, and determination.

He was already locked in and in the zone state.

All the while, across social media, the world roared. Hashtags like #NaijaRising, #WorldCup2026, #SamTheSavior, and #BringItHome trended worldwide.

For the first time in decades in a world cup, Nigerians found their voice.

Even American networks leaned into the frenzy.

Fox Sports ran an exclusive called "The Super Eagles' Silent Storm," featuring Sam as the face of African ambition.

And yet, he didn't even show up for the show. Sam was focused on football.

While that happened, Nike also released a stirring promo. "From Lagos to Atlanta. From boy to King. This summer, we rise".

The night before the opening match, Sam stood on the hotel rooftop, overlooking Atlanta's skyline lit up in green and gold. Behind him, music pulsed from a celebratory event. Fireworks erupted in the distance.

He closed his eyes for a moment, taking it all in.

This was no longer just football.

This was war painted in joy. This was legacy in motion.

The world was watching.

And Sam?

He was ready.