

Football God 48

Chapter 48: CAF champions league semi-finalists

That incredible performance away from home truly put Enyimba FC in the sights of the spectators of the CAF Champions League.

Despite the fact that the Nigerian team made it all the way to the quarter finals, nobody really paid attention to them more than necessary.

To them, they were a team riding their luck who made it to the quarter finals only through a stroke of luck but in that quarter final game where most of the spectators of the CAF champions league spectated, they finally understood.

This Enyimba FC team was not a team that just came for a bus ride through the CAF Champions League, they were a team that came to stay, and win.

For the first time, after that performance, Enyimba FC this season were seen as genuine contenders for the CAF Champions League trophy.

But it was still a long way to the final, and eventually the trophy itself, or so they thought. In reality, time moves so fast, almost like a mirage at times.

While still maintaining impressive domestic form in the NPFL, a week later, on Friday 28th April, Enyimba Fc welcomed JS Kabylie to their home in the Enyimba International Stadium for the return leg of their quarter final draw.

(CAF Champions League!)

(Quarter-final fixtures:)

>Wydad AC – Simba<

>Aggregate: 0-1<

>Date: 28 April, 2023<

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>Mamelodi Sundowns - CR Belouizdad<

>Aggregate: 4-1<

>Date: 29 April, 2023<

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>Raja CA – Al Ahly<

>Aggregate: 0-2<

>Date: 29 April, 2023<

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>Enyimba FC – JS Kabylie<

>Aggregate: 1-0<

>Date: 29 April, 2023<

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After an intense first leg of the quarter finals, only Mamelodi Sundowns and Enyimba FC entered the second leg of the quarter finals with a first leg advantage despite playing away from home the first time.

They already had one leg in the semifinals of the CAF champions league.

For the first time since Sam became an Enyimba FC professional football player, he saw the Enyimba International Stadium filled to the brim with just fans.

There were tens of thousands of fans present to spectate this game.

Sam never expected to see a spectacle like this in Nigerian football. 'Damn! The CAF champions league really means a lot to them!'

The sight of so many home supporters made his blood boil, he could feel goose pimples under his skin. Sam was even more determined to perform today.

FWEEEE!

And when the referee's whistle finally sounded, the Enyimba FC players came out playing with absolute confidence buoyed by the roars of their fans.

For the first 10 minutes, they dominated.

Unlike what they expected though, JS Kabylie didn't come with the intentions to lie down with their belly facing up in defeat, the Algerian giants came out with the wounds of their home defeat still fresh in their minds.

These players played with incredible intensity despite the noise being made by the Enyimba FC fans, but the Enyimba FC players also met them pound for pound.

In the 37th minute, the game finally opened as from a corner kick, an Enyimba FC defender rose highest, heading the ball home to give his team the lead at home.

Just 5 minutes later though, in the 42nd minute of this football game, the Algerian giants stung back like a bee as after an incredible 16 pass sequence, they scored a well-worked team goal.

Enyimba FC didn't take that lying down though. In front of their home fans, they dug in even more and eventually, the goal they searched for came in the last minute of additional time in the first half.

Austin Oladapo powered home another header after a cross from Victor Mbaoma, restoring his team's lead.

Enyimba FC went to half-time leading 2-1.

Coach Yemi Daniel's half-time speech was simple. "We're already winning, don't take any risks in the second half. You know how packed our schedule is, we can't afford an injury to an important player".

"Play safe, play cool-headed, and enjoy yourselves out there".

When the second half eventually started, Enyimba FC switched to tiki-taka football as they heavily dominated possession even more in the second half.

Their midfield 3 passed the ball in triangular patterns, toying with their opponents for majority of the half as JS Kabylie worked their socks off.

Again, Sam was a dominant presence in the middle of the park.

Despite JS Kabylie trying so hard though, they couldn't break down their opponents in front of their home fans a second time and since they didn't try too hard, Enyimba FC also failed to score a third goal.

The second leg of the quarter final fixture ended 2-1 in Enyimba FC's favor, 3-1 on aggregate.

And with that, the quarter final fixtures were done and dusted.

The results looked like this.

(CAF Champions League!)

(Quarter-final results:)

>Wydad AC 1-0 Simba<

>Aggregate: 1-1, Wydad AC wins 4-3 on penalties<

>Date: 28 April, 2023<

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>Mamelodi Sundowns 2-1 CR Belouizdad<

>Aggregate: 6-2<

>Date: 29 April, 2023<

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>Raja CA 0-0 Al Ahly<

>Aggregate: 0-2<

>Date: 29 April, 2023<

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>Enyimba FC 2-1 JS Kabylie<

>Aggregate: 3-1<

>Date: 29 April, 2023<

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(Semifinal fixtures:)

>Enyimba FC – Al Ahly<

>Date: 12 May, 2023<

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>Wydad Ac – Mamelodi Sundowns<

>Date: 13 May, 2023<

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"Austin, you're the captain of Enyimba FC. What are your thoughts about your team's performance today?"

Austin wiped the sweat off his face, breathing heavily. "Well, the result speaks for itself. With a packed stadium, we have no choice but to play our best football to reward the fans". He chuckled.

"It's seriously impressive that your team managed to beat JS Kabylie, they were once touted as favorites to win the CAF tournament this year. And in contrast, Enyimba FC was never one of the favorites".

"Your club didn't even qualify, the national association helped, what do you think about this peculiar situation?"

"Well, if I have to say anything, I'd say fortune favors the bold". Austin grinned. "Our critics talked, our haters talked, but it doesn't matter, what matters is what we play on the pitch and we did the talking with our football today".

"Austin, you scooped another man of the match award again," this female reporter smiled for the first time. "How do you feel?"

Austin smiled back at her. "I feel great. It helps a lot when you have such a talented and understanding teammate helping you contest for the midfield battle".

"Honestly, with Sam, I feel that this team can do anything".

"Since you mentioned it, Samuel Moses, your team's newest signing and star, what do you have to say about the teenager?"

Hearing that question, Austin grinned cheekily, and then he leaned closer to the microphone. "Remember the name, Samuel Moses, the boy's destined for the top!"

The reporter chuckled. "Well, congratulations once again on your victory captain fantastic, do have a nice day".

"Thank you too, Ms. Reporter". Austin smiled.

And with that, a great champions league match day came to an end.

Enyimba FC were CAF Champions League semi-finalists.