

## Football God 81

Chapter 81 A date with Manchester City

(FIFA Club World Cup!)

(Semifinal result:)

>Fluminense 2-3 Enyimba FC<

>Date: 18th December, 2023<

In a sporting event that sent the whole footballing world reeling in shock, after an impressive display that stole headlines all over the world, a young 18-year-old midfielder called Samuel Moses sent his local club to the final of the 2023 FIFA Club World Cup.

If the footballing world across Europe didn't know of the name Samuel Moses before now, after the game against Fluminense, they definitely knew now.

And unexpectedly, Sam scooped his second successive man of the match award in the 2023 FIFA Club World Cup tournament.

And as was expected, he presided over the post-match interview.

With sweat all over his face, still breathing rapidly from how much he exerted himself in the game, Sam faced the male reporter with a big smile on his face.

The male reporter grinned. "I can see someone is in a good mood".

Sam grinned back at him. "Who wouldn't be?" He chugged down a gulp of water down his throat. "I mean, come on, not even I scripted it like this, my performance today was beyond my expectations". Sam chuckled.

"Well, to sum up my view of your display today, first of all, there is a tradition that I once learned from a movie, you should watch it at your free time, 3 Idiots".

"I learned this from the movie".

Telling his cameraman to pay attention, the male reporter removed his face cap before bowing in Sam's direction. "Your highness, thou art great oh!"

"Receive this humble offering".

"Stop it". Sam laughed loudly, including the other people available for the interview, but then he grinned. "Actually, I've watched the 3 Idiots and if my memory doesn't fail me, you're supposed to remove your pants".

"Stop!" The reporter burst out laughing.

After their light-hearted exchange, the interview finally started officially. "Honestly, words can't express the magnitude of your performance today Sam. I finally understand why they call you the African Zidane, how do you feel?"

Sam grinned. "I feel great, honestly, I feel like I'm floating".

"My teammates are literally worshipping me at this point," he chuckled. "During the game, I didn't know how cool it looked but watching the replay after the game, I finally understand how ridiculous my last goal was".

"Honestly, I don't know how I did it, I just did it".

The reporter grinned. "Well, Sam, congratulations, because that's the mark of great footballers. They simply do things on the pitch, incredible things that even they themselves can't explain".

"After your performance today, I believe that you're now on the radar of some European clubs. Some of my sources tell me you've already been approached by a European club, is that true?"

Sam shook his head. "I can't say, my father is in charge of all contract-related matters. All I care about is playing football".

"If an acceptable offer do comes my way to play in Europe though," he grinned. "I won't hesitate, I want to prove my talent to the world".

"I wish you good luck in that endeavor Sam". The reporter smiled again, looking at his paper before continuing the interview.

"After your heroics today, at the expense of Fluminense, you just bought yourself a date with Manchester City in the final of the FIFA Club World Cup. Do you think your club stands a chance against the best club in the whole world?"

"Do you think you can put out this same performance against Manchester City in the final?"

Sam smiled. "First, the last finalist of the 2023 FIFA Club World Cup final is not decided yet, Manchester City still has to play their first game tomorrow".

"Do you think Urawa Reds stand a chance against them?"

Sam shook his head. "It's not a matter of what I think, it's football and in football, anything can happen".

He rubbed his chin, contemplating his words. "If we do meet Manchester City in the FIFA Club World Cup final though, I can't promise anything, the only thing I can promise the Enyimba fans is that we will give our best like we always do".

"Last season, against all odds, we made it all the way to the final of the CAF champions league, going all the way and winning it in the end".

"Are you saying...?"

Sam shook his head again. "I'm not saying anything, I'm simply saying that I won't reject another miracle if it comes".

He grinned. "Afterall, this is football".

"What about you? Do you think you can put out the same performance today against Manchester City in the final?"

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"Who knows?" Sam shrugged. "But I'll give it my best shot, believe that".

"I do believe Sam". The male reporter smiled again, and then he looked at his wristwatch. "My time is over Sam; I wish I had more time with you".

"You'll have another time another day Mr. John".

The reporter smiled. "It was a nice time with you Sam, do have a nice day".

"You too".

With that, Sam finally returned to his teammates in the dressing room. To his surprise though, immediately after he entered the room, Austin burst a bottle of champagne, pouring it all over him as the team celebrated their victory again.

Raising Sam up, they threw him up and down excitedly in the air, acknowledging his big role in their incredible comeback today.

After returning to their hotel rooms, later in the day, Sam had a video call with his family as he spoke with his overexcited mom and sister.

Mr. Moses was just proud of his son.

That same day, his contacts from Lille finally contacted him again including delegates from 3 other European clubs, leaving this middle-aged man ecstatic but he did not bother his son with the contact talks for now.

He let Sam focus on his football, the final for now.

The next day, Manchester City finally took on Urawa Reds in the other semifinal game and just like the whole world expected, the reigning European champions blew their opponents away completely.

And finally, the semifinal results were ready.

(FIFA Club World Cup!)

(Semifinal results:)

>Fluminense 2-3 Enyimba FC<

>Date: 18th December, 2023<

...

>Urawa Reds 0-3 Man City<

>Date: 19th December, 2023<

...

(Match for 3rd place:)

>Urawa Reds – Fluminense<

>Date: 22nd December, 2023<

...

(Final fixture:)

>Man City – Enyimba FC<

>Date: 22nd December, 2023<

Enyimba FC got their date with Manchester City.

Chapter 82 Bronze medal winners

For the next 3 days, news around the football world were focused on 1 specific event, the approaching FIFA World Cup final between Manchester City, the reigning European Champions and the champions from Africa.

Before that day, not many people knew or had even heard of Enyimba FC but after the game against Fluminense, the name Enyimba FC entered the map.

Fans across the world learned the identity of Man City's final opponents.

And by learning about Enyimba FC, they also progressed, learning about their exploits last season, rising up as underdogs against all odds all the way to the CAF champions league final and winning in incredible fashion.

It was the perfect underdog story.

And by learning this incredible story, they also learned about the boy wonder who spearheaded the Enyimba heroics last season, Samuel Moses.



Learning the fact that the season prior to the 2022/2023 season, Enyimba FC literally went trophyless, lent even more credibility to the team's achievements and most importantly, Sam's brilliance.

Adding the fact that Enyimba FC crashed out of the FA cup immediately after he suffered an injury only added more substance to his legend.

The legend of the African Zidane rising from the suburbs of Abraka, Nigeria, rising to the top of African football, sweeping away all competition.

It was not an official book but articles like this started popping up and circulating around social media, and with popular football social media pages like GOAL.COM and others fanning the flames, a certain player experienced a popularity surge again.

All across Nigeria and beyond, fans wearing jerseys with the name Sam and the number 19 started circulating all over social media.

And most of these fans didn't wear his name or number on the Enyimba FC jersey and colors, rather wearing it in their own club colors.

There were fans from England doing it, fans from even Germany and France, and some from Spain too.

With all this publicity suddenly surrounding him at the age of 18, Sam would have been overwhelmed if not for the ever-present support of his family and his coach. Coach Yemi Daniel was ever ready to help and keep Sam grounded.

Despite the fact that his social media followership exploded, with tons of crazy accounts chatting him up, some even sending him nudes and asking him to be their girlfriend, Sam managed to ignore it all, training diligently alongside his teammates for their date against Man City in a few days.

For this game, Coach Yemi Daniel went gaga, coaching his players with incredible detail on a lot of tactical nuances and know-hows.

"I've never seen the coach give so much for just 1 game," Austin told Sam one day. "Damn, he really wants us to pull off a miracle, do you think we can?"

Sam looked at his captain. "I don't know, but I do hope we do".

All the players put in more than 100% in training, making sure they were in tip-top shape and finally, like the rolling pages of a book, 3 days passed swiftly and it was already D-day.

It was 22nd December.

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The match for 3rd place between Urawa Reds of Japan and Fluminense of South America was played first in the afternoon.

Just like the world expected, Fluminense came roaring from the very first minute of the game, leaving their stamp of authority on the game.

They dominated the first half, running Urawa Reds ragged, a first-half performance that culminated in a convincing 0-2 score line.

During half-time, the Urawa Reds coach did his thing, motivating his players the Jose Mourinho way as they all came out for the second half like hungry Lions.

In the first 10 minutes, their high energy tactic paid off as they caught Fluminense off-guard, scoring a goal in the 54th minute to cut down the score line by half.

Fluminense were not having it though, they were not about to have another Enyimba FC here and botch the chance to collect the bronze medal.

Reminded of scars past by that goal, the Fluminense players reacted like an angry Chicken whose eggs were stolen by a Hawk.

And when a mother Hen was angry, she would turn heaven and earth upside down until she avenges her children and finds peace.

It was not strange for mother Hen to take off flying like Eagles in pursuit of Hawks when it came to their eggs, and in this game, Fluminense truly took off like Eagles after the score line was halved by Urawa Reds.

The intensity for the next 15 minutes turned borderline crazy as both teams ran each other to the ground. After withstanding the pressure for 15 minutes, Urawa Reds finally wilted under the pressure of a superior opponent.

In the 70th minute, the Fluminense attacking midfielder thundered in another outside the box rocket shot that left the Urawa Reds goalkeeper eating grass.

The ball rushed through the field like a bullet, nestling into the bottom right corner of the net and doubling Fluminense' lead again.

Just 3 minutes later, in the 73rd minute, the same attacking midfielder made it a game to remember, finishing off an incredible team play from Fluminense as he tapped the ball into an empty net.

In the 73rd minute, Fluminense tripled their lead, making the score line 1-4 in their favor. The fans in attendance watching the game were thoroughly entertained.

After scoring the goal, the Fluminense midfielder charged towards the corner flag before doing a backflip in celebration.

The Fluminense players were flying and in a good mood.

For the remaining minutes of the game, they enjoyed themselves with the ball, dominating possession, playing neat tiki taka football, with some occasional dizzying moments of brilliance from the Fluminense wingers as they cut through their opponents with brilliant dribbles like a hot knife through butter.

By the 90th minute, Urawa Reds was already humiliated. This did not stop the Japanese team from scoring a second consolation goal though as in the last minute of the game, they scored a 2nd goal.

The 3rd place game ended 2-4 in Fluminense' favor after an incredible display.

Fluminense won the bronze medal of the 2023 FIFA Club World Cup.

And finally, all the attention turned to the final.

Chapter 83 FIFA Club World Cup final

Hours before the final commenced in the evening, Pep Guardiola, the Manchester City coach had an interview.

"Good evening coach, your team will be playing against the underdogs from Africa in just a few hours, how do you feel about the game?"

"I'd feel better if the heat was not so scorching". He flashed a smile, wiping the sweat off his face.

The reporter laughed. "It's an Eastern thing, you have to get used to it in Saudi Arabia".

"So I heard".

"It's hotter in Africa though where those boys come from".

Pep Guardiola smiled. "So I heard too".

This coach rubbed his bald head. "First of all, I'd say don't call them underdogs. They're not underdogs after going through Al-Ittihad and Fluminense in such fashion, seeing them as underdogs after all that is just foolish at this point".

"I and my team will approach this game like every other game".

"We respect them, and we shall play them with that level of respect. Hopefully, we win". He smiled again.

"That's a nice mentality to have against an inferior team," the reporter smiled, about to say more when Pep Guardiola stopped him again.

"They're playing us in the final, that's not inferior".

The reporter chuckled. "If you say so. Before you leave, I want to hear your opinion about the boy they call the African Zidane".

"Not just this season, last season which is surprisingly his debut season was also filled with surprises as he dragged his club all the way to the continental double of the CAF champions league season and the NPFL trophy".

"This season again, he's doing it, impressing in their domestic league. Besides, he's the main reason why Enyimba FC made it to this stage".

"Coach, what do you think of the boy? Do you have any special plans against him?"

"The boy is good," Pep Guardiola smiled. "I watched the Fluminense game 3 days ago so I understand all the hype around him, it doesn't mean we're scared though. My team is perfectly capable of handling him". He said confidently.

"We've played against much tougher opposition and survived, so, we'll be fine".

He looked at his wristwatch. "If that's all, I need to go now, I have a schedule to meet".

"Sir, please wait, I have another question for you..."

He didn't wait though, he left, leaving the reporter disappointed. He didn't have all the time in the world to give to an unofficial interview, he had a game to prepare his team for.

For the last few hours to the game, the atmosphere became excitable as the stadium in Riyadh became filled with tens of thousands of fans.

Most of the fans were in the sky-blue jerseys of Man City, mostly Erling Haaland and Kevin De Bruyne jerseys. Very few fans wore the biro blue of Enyimba FC to the stadium for the final.

For this game, it was almost like a home game for Man City, the Nigerian club was heavily outmatched in terms of fan attendance.

And finally, the Man City team bus arrived to much fanfare.

Once the sky blue and white bus pulled into the stadium, the fans cheered loudly, welcoming their star players. Some of the players gave a bit of their time to sign autographs before entering the stadium.

The Enyimba team bus already arrived much earlier to much smaller fanfare.

In the dressing room, the coaches of both teams did the final work on their team before releasing them as they walked out of the dressing room.

Right there in the tunnel, before the game, Sam alongside his teammates had the best moment of their football careers.

Right there in the tunnel of this stadium, Sam stood shoulder to shoulder with some of the best and most high-profile players in the world.

Badump! Badump!

He could feel his heart beating hard against his chest.

Standing in a tunnel where at one side there was Erling Haaland, the best striker in the world and at another side, Kevin De Bruyne, the best midfielder in the world, it was hard to stay calm.

And not just them, seeing stars like Phil Foden, Rodri, Bernardo Silva, Ederson, and even Ruben Dias left Sam slightly hyperventilating.



It was taking his all not to be starstruck by the scene before him.

When he eventually got over his fanaticism though, Sam settled, taking the immense moment of this game in. 'It's a final..., against Man City'.

He took a deep breath. 'It's my moment'.

'The moment that the system worked so hard and expended so much energy to create for me'. He smiled slightly. 'And I worked so hard to get to'.

'I've made it here; I can't afford to capitulate now'.

Paul closed his eyes and raised his head, taking in the incredible noise of this stadium. 'Calm down, calm down,' he chanted in his mind.

'Don't let the pressure get to you, calm, let it flow away like the tide,' he rubbed his palms together. 'Today is my day'.

'It's now or never!'

Receiving the signal, the players finally made their way out of the tunnel to a loud roar from the tens of thousands of fans surrounding this stadium.

Under this atmosphere, all the Enyimba players felt overwhelmed.

This was not their first time under this type of atmosphere, it was simply the caliber of opponents that they were in this atmosphere with that made them feel overwhelmed. They felt like dogs that were stuck in a cage with Wolves.

Sam recovered faster than his teammates though, clapping his hands. "Come on guys, stay focused!"

"We have 45 minutes ahead of us, we can do this!"

Seeing his reaction, Austin finally reacted, echoing his words and in no time, the team managed to shake off the cold feet they were feeling.

Standing in the middle of this pitch shoulder to shoulder with the likes of Rodri and Kevin De Bruyne, Sam still felt starstruck, but with a different motivation this time.

'The student shall eclipse the master!' He grinned.

At that moment, the referee took a look at his wristwatch, and then...

FWEEEEEE!

The game started.

Chapter 84 An Erling Haaland masterclass!

FWEEEEEE!

Enyimba FC started kickoff, but they didn't hold possession of the ball for too long as Manchester City asserted their authority over the game early.

Austin and Sam started the game with their bloods boiling, filled with adrenaline but even that was not enough against the best team in the world, a team filled with world-class superstars.

Playing in the same midfield alongside the likes of Kevin De Bruyne and Rodri, Austin and Sam felt like toddlers playing against their older siblings.

The thing about them though was that they didn't give up.

Manchester City dominated possession, forcing the whole Enyimba FC team to go back and defend but Enyimba FC refused to give them an inch to score still.

For the first 15 minutes of the game, Enyimba FC suffered but they managed to stay compact, defending with incredible zeal like a team, blocking off all obvious shooting lanes as Ojo saved 3 consecutive shots on target, one of them coming from the deadly striker, Erling Haaland.

The work rate of the whole team was incredible for that first 15 minutes as they ran all over the pitch, but even that was not enough against a team of Manchester City's caliber.

In the 18th minute of the game, one of the Man City big names left his imprint on the game, tearing it open with reckless abandon.

Receiving a diagonal pass from Bernardo Silva in the midfield, the Man City no. 17, Kevin De Bruyne took one touch of the ball with his right foot, controlling it with an inch-perfect touch before switching to his left foot, effortlessly turning away from a challenge.

After turning away from the challenge, leaving his opponent for dead, De Bruyne took another touch of the ball with his left foot, kicking it forward slightly and setting himself for a shot at goal.

Noting the threat, Farouk charged in, sliding but it was not enough to make De Bruyne hesitate as this midfielder's left foot hit the ball with power from outside the box.

It was a perfect technique.

POW!

Like a missile, the ball rose from the ground with speed, rising up and rushing towards the top left corner of the post.

Ojo took 2 steps before jumping on a full-stretch dive. He tried his best but it was not enough, the ball snuck past him, but then...

Bam!

It hit the top post.

"The post is definitely the goalkeeper's best friend here!"

"But what a shot from De Bruyne! Just typical of him at this point, you expect things like this from him every game, but the ball is not yet out of play, it's a rebound..."

"Oh! And here comes Erling Haaland...!"

"He's between 2 defenders! Can he...? Oh, yes, he does!"

"Goal! 1-0 to Man City!"

And just like that, Manchester City went ahead.

Immediately after the ball smashed against the post, rebounding back into the 6-yard box, even as Ojo scrambled back to his feet, Erling Haaland, the Man City no. 9 and striker reacted first, pouncing on the loose ball.

2 defenders sandwiched the imposing striker but it was not enough as outmuscling them, Haaland managed to poke the ball into the empty net.

It was recorded as an assist to Kevin De Bruyne.

Haaland whirled off in celebration.

"Come on guys!" Austin clapped. "Wake up! We can do this!"

FWEEEE!

For the next few minutes, Enyimba FC played with urgency, trying to get back into the game but unable to retain possession, they were fighting a losing battle.

This was undoubtedly the most frustrating game that Sam had ever played.

As an attacking midfielder, he loved having a lot of the ball but in this game, he didn't have the luxury. Man City simply hoarded possession, reducing him to a tacking merchant as he ran all over the pitch, fruitlessly chasing after the ball.

When the Enyimba FC players managed to win back possession, they barely strung a few passes together before their opponents won back possession.

They were heavily outmatched, and on this night, they were totally outplayed.

6 minutes after the first goal, Rodri won back possession again, this time dispossessing Austin and without hesitation, he passed to De Bruyne.

Raising his head and taking one glance, the veteran midfielder hit the ball with the inside of his boot, playing a penetrative through pass through two Enyimba defenders into the path of the running Erling Haaland.

The Enyimba FC defense was split by the inch-perfect through pass.

Haaland took only 2 touches of the ball, the first touch to slightly control the ball and the next touch to smash the ball into the bottom left corner of the net.

In the 24th minute of the game, Man City was already leading 2-0.

It was a total walloping.

After scoring the second goal, Man City seemed to reduce the game intensity a bit as they rotated the ball more, playing more through the midfield but they did manage to set up Haaland 2 more times.

Ojo pulled off a sensational save one time while the other time, one of the Enyimba center backs had to take a yellow card for the team just to stop the rampaging striker from getting his 3rd goal of the game.

Kevin De Bruyne and Phil Foden also came close to scoring a few times, but none of it was concrete until the 43rd minute of the game.

Receiving the ball from Bernardo Silva, Phil Foden went on a mazy run, dribbling down the left side of the pitch past multiple Enyimba players before floating a cross into the box.

Despite being tightly marked, Haaland managed to sneak out of trouble again, finding enough space and doing the rest with his impressive strength to volley the ball past Ojo into the net for his 3rd goal of the night.

It was a powerful shot into the top right corner, Ojo stood no chance.

Haaland scored a first half hattrick in the final of the FIFA Club World Cup. Immediately after scoring his 3rd, his teammates swarmed him, congratulating him and when they were done, Haaland did his iconic meditation celebration.

By then, the Enyimba FC camp already dissolved into chaos as the players accused each other for leaving the striker unmarked.

Austin tried his best to diffuse the situation but it was only a temporary measure, the team already lost fighting spirit and zeal.

The first half ended 3-0 in Manchester City's favor.

Enyimba FC were humbled.

Chapter 85 Just one goal!

The mood in the Enyimba FC camp was well, depressing.

In the dressing room, the players sat, resting their backs helplessly and this time, even Coach Yemi Daniel was sprawled at a corner of this dressing room, also seated. This coach threw a glance at his players, but the sight made him sigh.



He felt weak for the first time in a long time.

What was there to say?

The facts were laid out before them, Manchester City swept them aside like a hurricane and they were just not resilient enough to withstand the storm.

Thinking of the imposing blonde striker, this coach gritted his teeth, then he sighed again. 'We tried our best'.

He had no words to say to his players.

Should he motivate them? 3 goals down already courtesy of the incredible hattrick from Erling Haaland, and against a team with Manchester City's defensive record, he saw no way of his team coming back into the game.

Besides, Pep Guardiola did an incredible job, coming up with such a tight-knit tactical formation that Coach Yemi Daniel saw no loopholes to exploit.

Austin and Sam sat beside each other in the dressing room and at this moment, alongside their teammates, they were also seated, resting their backs.

The mood was truly depressing.

Austin touched Sam. "Hey," he inclined his head to look at him, smiling slightly. "Did you see that through pass from KDB?"

He looked down. "I only used to watch him do those through TV before, to watch it live, on the same pitch with him, it's an honor honestly".

"Honestly, I'm satisfied with bowing out with just that alone".

He looked at Sam again. "I mean, we tried our best, we exceeded expectations and that's enough for me".

Sam looked at his captain, he shook his head. "We really exceeded expectations, yes, but I'm not satisfied yet".

Sam took a deep breath, and then he stood up, his eyes gleaming as he stared round at his teammates.

Noticing him stand up, the others paid attention to him, including the coach.

Under all their gazes, Sam felt a bit tense but he conveniently ignored it. He raised a finger for emphasis. "All we need is one goal".

"Trust me, that's all we need to get back into this game".

"I don't care what you believe in, just believe in me one more time, tonight. Remember last season?" He grinned. "In the CAF champions league, they said we couldn't do it, but we did!"

"It's because you trusted in me, don't wilt now because it's Man City".

"For just 45 more minutes, please trust me". The look in his eyes showed just how serious he was. "Whenever you get the ball, pass to me, pass to me in good positions and let me do the rest".

"Just one goal, please".

"Come on!" He clapped.

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"COME ON!" Sam riled his teammates up till they felt their bloods churning again. "It's not over yet guys, we've still got 45 minutes!"

"It's just a 3-goal lead".

He grinned. "Even if we go down in the end, let's go down fighting!"

"Let's go out there and give the best team in the world hell!"

That was all that the Enyimba FC players needed, they felt their bloods boiling hot again like an inferno as they soon stepped out into the pitch again for the second half. The momentum was still full Man City in the stadium.

The Man City players were in a great mood, and their fans were loud but the Enyimba FC players no longer cared about all that.

If they were going down, they would go down fighting.

FWEEEE!

Manchester City kicked off the second half.

And straight from the 45th minute, led by Sam's aggressive press, Enyimba FC came out with even more intensity than the first half, running all over the pitch.

The full Enyimba FC team became reckless.

"Come on, we can do it!"

Austin was the captain but at this moment, on the pitch, Sam felt like the true captain as he got into the head of his teammates, leading them like a war General leading his troops to sure death for a kamikaze attack.

His troops didn't need to know that it was a kamikaze attack though, all they needed to know was the orders and how to execute them to perfection.

The Enyimba FC squad became incredibly reckless, pressing the ball with incredible intensity. Their tactic paid off as for 20 minutes, neither team had a clear sight at goal, the score line remaining 3-0 till the 65th minute.

Even at this stage, exhausted, the Enyimba FC players still ran themselves to the ground, pressing with incredible intensity.

Even Coach Yemi Daniel was shocked at his team's energy on the pitch.

Any other team subjected to this intense press would have likely buckled under the intense pressure from the Nigerian players but this was Manchester City.

Stealing the ball again just after Enyimba FC won it back in the midfield, Rodri passed to the press-resistant Bernardo Silva.

Receiving the ball towards the right, Bernardo Silva twisted and turned like a slippery eel, drawing the opposition in and leaving Enyimba FC players on the ground before playing a safe pass to Kevin De Bruyne.

KDB took only one touch of the ball, hitting it with the outside of his boot towards the right wing as soon as Bernardo Silva passed to him and the right wing was where Phil Foden lurked.

There, Phil Foden took one touch of the ball, rushing into the Enyimba FC 18-yard box before taking a clean shot.

The lean forward rifled the ball into the roof of the net, leaving Ojo stunned.

4-0 to Manchester City.

Phil Foden whirled off to the corner flag before sliding on his knees in celebration after putting his team 4-0 up in the 66th minute of the game.

Besides, Kevin De Bruyne just racked up an incredible tally of 3 assists in this game alone, a hattrick of assists.

"F\*ck!" A riled-up Austin reacted, slamming his fists on the pitch in frustration as he threw a look at Sam.

The look he saw in Sam's eyes though shocked this player.

'H-he hasn't given up yet?!

Sam's eyes were red, still determined, still gleaming with incredible focus. Austin was shocked. "This boy!"

And then he rose up again, clapping. "Come on! We can still do it!"

FWEEEE!

When the referee's whistle sounded, the Enyimba FC players kept on giving their best even as Man City's game intensity reduced again.

The Enyimba FC players tried to take advantage but it was hard when you were going up against a defense comprising Ruben Dias, John Stones, and Manuel Akanji, all 3 of the best defenders in the world.

But then, in the 73rd minute of the game, against the run of play, it happened.

Farouk won back the ball before passing to Sam immediately like the attacking midfielder wanted.

As soon as Sam's leg touched the ball, he felt electricity course through him, making his eyes gleam, his brain taking in all the situation on the pitch before him.

Bernardo Silva rushed in but flicking the ball up, Sam skipped past this player, and then..., while the ball still floated in the air, Sam's right leg swung with power from outside the 18-yard box, executing a knuckle ball shot.

BOOM!

The sound was like that of a missile as his right leg hit the ball, sending it towards the top left corner of the post with incredible power.

The ball rose up high above the post before dipping back down, into the net.

Ederson dived but it was not enough, the ball nestled into the net.

"GOALLLL!" Sam screamed, jumping and planting his feet down furiously while pumping his fists excitedly as more adrenaline flowed, evidence of finally venting some pent-up frustration since.

And immediately after, he did it.

~----~

[You have accessed ability card: Shoot it like Lewy!]

[Card Effects:]

>This card can only be used within a minute after scoring a goal. Once used, for the next 10 minutes, your positioning, shooting technique, and shot power are amplified, granting you an 80% chance of scoring with every shot that you take<

...

[You have made use of ability card: Shoot it like Lewy!]



~-----~

The look in Sam's eyes... changed.

Chapter 86 An iconic performance!

On the pitch, Austin was the teammate who was closest to Sam's position and he was the first to feel the change in his teammate.

He could not describe it with words, it was almost like, Sam's aura changed, becoming more menacing, chilling, and lethal, like a vampire.

The Manchester City midfielders also felt it but they didn't pay attention to it. Sam didn't celebrate his goal, eager to restart the game, and then...

FWEEEE!

From that moment on, everything changed.

To many, that goal was just a consolation for Enyimba FC but the players didn't feel that way at all. Afterall, Sam was still there, saying the words to rile them up and give their all for the final 17 minutes of this game.

As for Sam himself? Well, it was safe to say he exploded.

Immediately after that goal, Sam felt like a changed being. It was almost like there was a limit to his ability on the pitch before but with that goal, the limit was finally unlocked, pushing him into a superhuman state.

It showed on the pitch.

For the final 17 minutes of this game, with his incredible stamina pushing him on, Sam ran all over the pitch, pursuing the ball and intercepting passes.

And when he won back possession or received passes from his teammates, he became a threat, no longer held down by the Man City midfield's imperiousness as for a few minutes, he seemed to stand on the same level with the best midfielders in the world.

When the ball got to him, Sam skipped past challenges with ruthless efficiency, playing dangerous passes at a worrying frequency.

And occasionally, he went on that mazy dribble, going through multiple Man City players and the closest he came, he almost unleashed a shot until Ruben Dias shoved him aside with his imposing body.

Enyimba FC didn't create anything concrete yet for 10 minutes but in those minutes, Sam seemed to have entered God mood.

Anytime the ball touched his leg, Enyimba FC's threat increased by 100%!

He was a menace; the brilliance of the Manchester City team was the only thing that kept him at bay till now but even that was not enough.

The ability card that Sam triggered lasted only 10 minutes, but he had 3 uses of it. Just before the card usage duration could expire, he made use of another one, stacking its use with the first card, still riding on the momentum of his first goal.

And finally, his efforts paid.

After 10 minutes of going at it non-stop, not giving an inch to his fatigue or the seemingly insurmountable score line, Sam decided to switch it up.

It was already the 83rd minute of the game.

'F\*ck it!' Sam growled in his mind. 'It's now or never!'

Receiving a pass from Farouk again in the center of the pitch, from over 25 yards out, Sam took a look at goal, set himself up for a shot, and then...

"It's definitely too far for him to think about it".

"Sam has been otherworldly these past few minutes, but still, it's too much. Wait! He's doing it..., he did it!"

"He took the shot! Will it go in?"

"Will it? Will it? Ohhhhh... my God!"

"What a goalllll!"

"From over 25 yards out, what a rocket!"

"Samuel Moses has reduced the Man City lead by half! What are we seeing here? No one saw this coming, definitely no one!"

"Game on for Enyimba FC!"

Sam's incredible shot was nothing short of extraterrestrial. Ederson jumped but somehow, the ball still managed to escape his grasp.

The shot was just too fast, and too strong. Stay tuned for updates on empire

In the 83rd minute of the game, Enyimba FC against all odds managed to reduce the deficit by half and it sent alarm bells ringing through Man City.

Pep Guardiola made a few changes, putting in fresh legs and immediately, Man City asserted their authority over the game again for the final minutes.

They became the bigger threat again, testing the Enyimba FC goal time and time again, yet the score line remained 4-2.

Time passed...

84th minute..., nothing.

85th minute..., still nothing.

86th minute..., still nothing.

87th minute, and then, the miracle happened.

After impressive hold up play from Emeka, the center forward set up his attacking midfielder for a shot at goal but Sam never got the chance to take the shot because sky blue jerseys rushed to block his path.

He didn't risk the shot though, rather, Sam followed his instincts.

Still in the zone state, he moved like a hurricane into the 18-yard box, elusive like the wind and as terrible as a storm.

Nutmegging the closest player in sky blue that rushed in, Sam rushed into the 18-yard box towards the right, looking for a shooting angle even as his eyes were also on the look out to spot a perfect passing lane.

The whole Man City defense was put on its toes because of one player, him.

Displaying quick feet, shifting the ball, retaining possession in the 18-yard box, Sam skipped past a couple of challenges but the shooting angle he sought never came, nor did the perfect passing lane.

Manchester City was just too defensively disciplined.

At that moment was when Ruben Dias rushed close, colliding against him hard as the force of this player pushed him.

Sam didn't fall though, rather using the laws of simple physics to take advantage of that sudden momentum in his favor, he swirled like a roulette on top the ball. He took 2 touches.

First touch with the heel of his boot to stop the ball, and second touch to drag it and roll with it beyond Ruben Dias and all the players in sky blue blocking everywhere around him towards the right side of the box.

In that moment, under the tension of this stadium, with so many world-class players marking him and keeping him out, Sam executed the roulette skill!

And with it, space opened up, a tiny space but in the zone state, his brain picked it up immediately like a hungry machine.

**BAM!**

Sam hit the ball immediately with his right foot into the bottom right corner of the net as the ball snuck into the post.

Ederson didn't move, he never saw the ball coming.

In the 87th minute of the game, 3 minutes from time, Sam did the impossible, scoring his 3rd goal of the 2nd half to make it a hat-trick in just 15 minutes!

"ZINEDINE SAM!" The commentator roared in a shrill voice.

"Zinedine Sam!"

"Zinedine Sam!"

"What a goal! What a moment!"

"They asked questions if he could do it against the best of the best, well now here it is, against the best team in the world!"

"What a player!"

"And now, just 1 more goal to equalize the game, can they do it?!"

Immediately after the ball entered the net, Sam jumped, pumping his fists excitedly as with wide eyes, pupils dilated, he roared. "COME ON!!!"

The game was on!

Could he actually do it?

Could Enyimba FC actually do it?!

Chapter 87 An iconic goal!

It was 87 minutes into the final of the FIFA Club World Cup, and Manchester City was leading by a slim margin of 4-3.

Could he actually do it?

Could Enyimba FC actually do it?

Sam's first goal in the 73rd minute of the game definitely rattled some Man City nerves but the players only saw it as a minor threat.

His second goal in the 83rd minute rattled even more nerves mostly due to the nature of the goal. Scoring a goal from 25 yards out showed Sam's incredible confidence and form in the final moments of this game.



But to the Man City players, it still only seemed like a consolation goal.

But his 3rd goal?

That 3rd goal was what swung the momentum for the first time this game from Man City's iron grip, swinging in Enyimba FC's direction.

Manchester City was the best club in the world with world-class footballers, but even for world-class footballers like them, there were times when they are caught on a pinch on the pitch.

And in these moments, it was more on mentality than anything else.

There was only 3 minutes till the end of the game. Man City was still leading but on the pitch, it didn't feel that way at all.

Enyimba FC didn't play like they were losing, nor did they play like they were drawing the game either, rather, this team played like they were winning.

"COME ON!" Sam roared, riling his teammates on.

By the 87th minute of the game, most of them were already tired after running themselves to the ground for much of this game but with Sam still leading from the front, all of them stayed believing.

At this moment, they were like grunt soldiers on a battlefield.

Following the orders of their commander, they didn't care if they were fighting a losing battle or if winning required them to sacrifice their lives, all they cared about was accomplishing their commander's orders and winning.

For those final minutes, the noise in the stadium in Riyadh truly climbed to a crescendo, rising to record-breaking decibels.

On the pitch, the tension was palpable.

The stakes of this final had never been higher. Now, it was up to Manchester City to uphold their reputation as the best club in the world and see off the incredible challenge from their reportedly inferior opposition.

It was just 3 minutes remaining of the 90 minutes but in that short time, Samuel Moses remained the standout player.

The no. 19 jersey was like a ghost haunting the Man City players.

Sam already went rogue, disobeying his coach's instructions as he took on a free role in the final minutes of this game all due to the singular purpose of getting his 4th goal of the game, or creating it if possible.

He didn't care if he scored the goal, he just wanted his team to win.

There was only one thing ringing in his head. 'Win!'

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

'I need to win!'

Anytime the ball touched his leg, to many of the spectators, it didn't feel like it was Sam who was on the pitch at all, rather it seemed like a prime Zidane reincarnated into the body of the young Nigerian.

Sam skipped past challenges like they were not there.

Rodri, the Man City mainstay rarely went on sliding tackles but Sam's incredible form in the final minutes of this final left this midfielder chasing shadows, using every trick in his incredible repertoire just to stop him.

At exactly the 90th minute, Sam came close again, unleashing another outside the box shot that beat Ederson, again.

"Oh my God! Will he do it?!"

"Sam is in God mode this evening!"

"Will it enter? Ohhhhh..., it hits the post!"

"What a shot!"

Hearing the sound of the ball hit the post and watching it rebound back into the field, Sam felt his heart sink but that feeling lasted for only a moment.

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

He kept on chanting in his mind like it was some sutra.

After 90 minutes, the referee added 4 minutes of additional time to this incredible final and in those last 4 minutes, all hell broke loose.

This time, it was not just Sam anymore.

Just like Sam wanted to win by all means, Manchester City also wanted to win and the big names of this legendary team started rearing their head again.

Manchester City had a pride to uphold. They didn't demolish Real Madrid 4-1 at home in the champions league semifinals last season on the way to winning only to come here and lose to an African team.

By then, Erling Haaland, the deadly striker was already dead tired, barely impacting the game but 3 players remained a menace, Phil Foden, Bernardo Silva, and most importantly, the maverick midfield enforcer, Kevin De Bruyne.

In those final minutes, it was pound for pound.

It was war!

Shots were taken at a crazy frequency as both teams worked their way through the opposition, trying to find another goal to kill the game.

And finally, in the 90th plus 3 minutes, it came...

Sam's endless stamina on the pitch helped him win back possession, but he barely held onto the ball when Bernardo Silva's press came. Going one way and using a feint, Sam left this short player for dead and dashed the other way only to run into a road block, Rodri.

The defensive midfielder cleanly won back the ball, outmuscling Sam and leaving him on the ground.

While Sam scrambled to get back on his feet, he was given a VIP ticket of exclusive viewing angle to watch the moment that killed the game.

As soon as Rodri won the ball, the loose ball rolled freely into the path of the marauding Kevin De Bruyne.

With one touch of the ball with his right leg, this attacking midfielder took the ball in his strides even as he set himself up.

Farouk was already rushing in to tackle but it was too late.

Kevin De Bruyne didn't even take a look at goal, simply raising his right leg before unleashing a whipped shot towards goal.

VROOM!

Farouk heard the ball fly past him like a rocket!

It was a ground ball. Green grass tore off the field from the ball's sheer momentum, flying haphazardly as if in in worship of the ball's passage.

Ojo dived low, but it was not enough.

The ball snuck into the bottom left corner of the post, sneaking into the net!

The commentator erupted. "Ohhhhhh... my God!"

"What a GOALLLL!!!"

"Kevin De Bruynneeeee!"

"The Belgium King has done it!"

"A deadly Belgian bullet straight through Nigerian hearts all over the world!"

"What a goal! What a shot!"

"And the game is decided!"

"5-3 to Man City!"

Sam was in the process of standing up when he watched Kevin De Bruyne produce this iconic moment, adding to his long career full of iconic moments.

Once the ball entered the net, Sam felt like an arrow just pierced his heart.

He collapsed back on the pitch, eyes closed and welling with tears even as Kevin De Bruyne charged to the corner flag to celebrate with his teammates.

'It's over'. He thought, devastated.

FWEEEEEE!

The final whistle sounded soon after, bringing the game to an end.

Kevin De Bruyne won the man of the match award for the game after his 4 goal contributions of 1 goal and 3 assists.

Chapter 88 2023 FIFA Club World Cup winners- Manchester City

As soon as the final whistle reverberated, all the Enyimba FC players collapsed on the pitch, devastated and mourning their loss.

While the Manchester City players celebrated their victory, the Enyimba FC players were left devastated.

This was the reality of football, there was always the winners who celebrate at the end and the losers at the end of every football game.

This time, Sam ended up on the losing side in the most important game of his career so far and to his young heart, it was a heart wrenching experience.

Sam could not hold his emotions in, he collapsed in tears on the pitch.

As the Man City celebrations continued, the Enyimba FC players slowly picked themselves up one after the other and in tandem, they walked towards Sam, trying their best to console him.



Austin hugged him, patting him on the back. "Stop crying man," he held Sam's face, grinning. "You remember what you said in the dressing room?"

"Even if we go down in the end, let's go down fighting".

Austin smiled. "What do you think? We did go down fighting".

"We showed them hell Sam!"

Sam chuckled, wiping his tears. "Yes, we showed them hell".

It was embarrassing, crying in front of cameras that broadcasted the event to the whole world but Sam was just that overwhelmed. He was usually good at controlling his emotions but this time, he lost control completely.

What truly made him recover though was a gesture from an opposition player.

After celebrating with his teammates, Kevin De Bruyne walked up to Sam before removing his jersey and handing it over to him.

"...!"

For a few seconds, Sam was stunned, unsure of what the hell was happening till it finally clicked in his head.

His eyes widened; he was shocked. "Y-you want to swap jerseys?"

'F\*ck! I'm sooo foolish! Why would I ask?'

Kevin De Bruyne smiled and responded politely though. "Yes". He nodded.

Sam hastily removed his own jersey before handing it over to the Manchester City legend even as he took the sky-blue jersey.

Holding the sky-blue jersey in his hands, Sam felt tears welling in his eyes again but this time, he didn't let them drop, wiping them off before they could.

He looked at the Manchester City midfielder, emotion welling in his eyes. "Thank you". He said.

Kevin De Bruyne smiled at him before patting him on the back. "You played incredibly man; you almost won the game for your team". He laughed.

Sam reciprocated, laughing. "Yeah, I almost won".

As soon as Kevin De Bruyne walked off, Austin's teammates swarmed him, enviously staring at the sky-blue jersey that was on his hand and that was when it clicked in their heads.

There were other world-class players still on this pitch with them!

Immediately, Austin started it, seeking the other Man City players out to swap jerseys. Austin managed to swap jerseys with Bernardo Silva, the timeless Manchester City center midfielder.

Farouk swapped jerseys with Rodri, while Emeka managed to swap jerseys with the incredible Erling Haaland.

The Enyimba FC players were having a field day. Exchanging jerseys with their idols made the bitterness of their damning loss lessen a bit.

And then, the time to award them for their performance came.

After Kevin De Bruyne's crazy performance in the final, the most important game of the tournament, he scooped home the golden ball award of the FIFA Club World Cup 2023.

As for the golden boot award, it had an unexpected winner.

Despite with the likes of Erling Haaland and Phil Foden competing in the FIFA Club World Cup 2023, after his haul of 1 goal in the second-round game against Al-Ittihad, his hatrick against Fluminense, and his 2nd consecutive hatrick against Manchester City, Sam scooped the golden boot award with his haul of 7 goals.

Erling Haaland came up second with 5 goals after his haul of 3 goals in the final and 2 goals in the semifinals.

Sam's chances may have been boosted by the fact that he played one more game than the Norwegian striker, but still, it was an impressive feat.

In Sam's young career, scooping the golden boot award of an important tournament like the FIFA Club World Cup was a turning point to him.

It truly set him off in the radar of European clubs.

After handing over the individual awards, the players finally lined up as a team to take their medals. Enyimba FC climbed the podium first, taking their silver medals as they entered a joint team photo.

After them, the players in sky-blue finally climbed the podium while subjected to a lot of noise by their fans as they received their gold medals.

After the medals were awarded, Ikaay Gundogan, the Manchester City captain who didn't start the game but entered in the second half finally lifted the trophy as the players celebrated excitedly.

For Manchester City, it was their 5th trophy of a truly legendary year.

Manchester City were the 2023 FIFA Club World Cup champions.

After the trophy lifting, the players finally made their way to the dressing room after acknowledging their fans who traveled the distance to support them.

A few thousand Enyimba FC away fans made the trip which truly excited the Enyimba FC players as they acknowledged their support.

While the other players made it back to the tunnel, one player went to the media where he was supposed to have an interview, Kevin De Bruyne.

The Belgian midfielder gave the interviews his full attention, answering all their questions with a straight face until he was asked a specific question.

As soon as he was asked, De Bruyne smiled, a rare thing before the media.

"The boy is good, but even better than his ability with the ball is his mentality. He's a winner, and I respect him for it".

He chuckled. "If we were not careful, he would have single-handedly orchestrated a comeback and maybe win his team the game".

"So, what do you think about him?"

The Belgian midfielder weighed his words carefully before answering. "He won't last long in the Nigerian league".

"He's Europe material, he's made for the top".

"I hope to compete against him in the future".

"Thank you for having us".

"The pleasure is mine".

With that, the interview finally came to an end, capping off an incredible day in the history of football.

## Chapter 89 Rewards

Watching Kevin De Bruyne's interview in the dressing room alongside his teammates, Sam had a big smile on his face as he clutched the sky-blue jersey on his hand tighter, vowing to cherish it.

Like usual, Austin sat beside him.

Austin could not help but throw a glance at his teammate even as the interview slowly drew to an end. "Thank you, Sam". He muttered.

"Huh?" Sam looked at him. "For what?"

Austin smiled. "For everything," he sighed. "For deciding to play for Enyimba FC".

"Meeting you has truly changed my life".

Austin always appreciated Sam, but this time, Sam could feel that there was something else attached to it. "Hey, you ok?" He asked, concern in his voice.

Austin looked at him, tears welling in his eyes, then he chuckled. "I got a contract offer".

"What? Really?" Sam was genuinely surprised.

"Yes," Austin nodded, even more emotional now. "A contract offer from Europe, a club in one of the top 5 European leagues".

"Wolfsburg contacted my agent immediately after the game, and they've already offered a contract".

Austin slumped in his chair, a look of disbelief in his eyes. "Do you know how old I am Sam? I always thought that I already hit my peak and playing for Enyimba FC is the most that I can do with my football career, but this?" He sighed loudly.

"I never saw this coming, not even in my wildest dreams".

"I'm tempted to say that it's because of my talent and all, but no," he looked at Sam again. "I know it's because of you". He chuckled.

"Remember last season?" A look of nostalgia crept up this captain's face as his emotions cascaded. "Against Al Ahly in the CAF champions league semifinals after we drew 2-2 at home, going to their stadium, I genuinely felt that we were done, but you didn't feel that way".

He sighed again. "I envy your confidence Sam, that mentality to keep on believing till the very end of the game, it's what helped us to win that game".

"I can still remember the nerve-wracking penalty shootout like it was just yesterday". He looked at Sam and chuckled again. "These memories man, they've defined my career..., I can't forget them".

He took a deep breath. "God bless the day you signed the contract with Enyimba FC," he smiled. "It changed my life".

At that moment, Coach Yemi Daniel finally entered the dressing room with a big smile on his face. Enyimba FC may have lost the game, settling for 2nd position in the tournament but at this moment, it didn't feel like that at all.

After getting over the initial disappointment, the players finally understood the significance of their performance today.

They literally played against Manchester City, the best club in all of Europe.

To give them such a tough fight, it was the greatest win of this night.

Coach Yemi Daniel grinned. "Congratulations guys, that performance out there today, I will never forget it".

Saying that, he paid special attention to one of his midfielders, Samuel Moses. "Sam, thank you for everything".



"You've made Enyimba FC great again". He grinned, just in time as Sam's teammates erupted in a round of applause in acknowledgement of his performance tonight. Everything that happened for Enyimba FC on the pitch today was all Sam.

Sam was the superhero sent to save them today.

"Anyways, guys, you can smile better now, the prize money for the silver medalists of the FIFA Club World Cup has been decided," Coach Yemi Daniel smiled. "All of you are going home with 20,000 Euros each".

"Converted to naira, that is approximately 14 million naira each".

"YES!" The Enyimba FC players celebrated excitedly.

All of them were exhausted, but if nothing else, the prize money alone was enough to allay all of their exhaustion and feelings of disappointment.

While Coach Yemi Daniel still addressed the players, Sam was surprised as the familiar interface of his system suddenly lit up with new notifications.

~----~

[You have completed FIFA Club World Cup matchday System Mission: Final]

[You played all 90 minutes of the 2023 FIFA Club World Cup final!]

[You scored a hattrick in the 2023 FIFA Club World Cup final!]

[Calculating reward..., please wait...]

[Calculation complete!]

[You have been rewarded with 25 Skill Points!]

...

[You have completed FIFA Club World Cup System Mission: Silver Medalist!]

[You dragged your club, Enyimba FC to clinch second position in the 2023 FIFA Club World Cup only behind Manchester City!]

[Calculating reward..., please wait...]

[Calculation complete!]

[You have been rewarded with 40 Skill Points!]

[You have been rewarded with 2 energy elixirs!]

... Your next chapter awaits on empire

[You have completed a hidden System Mission: Golden Boot]

[You won the Golden Boot of the 2023 FIFA Club World Cup!]

[Calculating reward..., please wait...]

[Calculation complete!]

[You have been rewarded with 30 Skill Points!]

[Click to open reward card:]

...

Sam was still in the dressing room alongside his teammates when these series of notifications appeared, leaving him stunned.

This time, his curiosity could not wait though so trying his best to be as inconspicuous as possible, he secretly clicked on the card hovering before him.

Like usual, immediately after he clicked on the card, the bright light surrounding it became even brighter before it burst into countless golden specks and from the specks came out his reward.

...

[You have been rewarded with an ability card: Thread it like KDB! ×2!]

[Card Effects:]

>Once used, for 30 minutes, you gain the incredible playmaking skills of the Belgian midfielder, Kevin De Bruyne. You get the vision and the skill to play penetrative defense splitting through passes just like KDB<

...

[Due to the incredible state of mind you entered in today's game and due to your unreal performance, Real-time game experience accumulation triggered!]

[Congratulations! Your shooting attribute has improved by +2]

[Your spatial awareness skill has improved!]

[Your zonal marking skills has improved!]

[Congratulations! Your stamina attribute has improved by +1]

[Congratulations! Your passing attribute has improved by +1]

[Your overall player rating has increased to 78!]

...

Player Attributes:

\*Pace: 76

\*Shot: 77

\*Pass: 80

\*Dribbling: 74

\*Defending: 38

\*Physicality: 66

\*Stamina: 81

Overall Rating: 78

~----~

Staring at the last in the series of notifications, Sam grinned. 'Just like Coach Yemi Daniel said, playing against the best players is the best way to improve'.

He stared at his captain who jubilated at the prize rewards alongside the others. 'I think he improved too'.

And with that, their time in the stadium in Riyadh finally came to an end.

Chapter 90 Back to Nigeria

Unlike in other matches, Sam did not call his parents that day on getting back to his hotel room. In the game against Manchester City, everyone of the Enyimba FC players ran themselves to the ground.

They were all exhausted after returning to their hotel rooms.

With the aid of relaxation music decided by Austin, his roommate, Sam slept immediately after taking his bath to freshen up and as soon as he laid on the bed.

While Sam slept, he had a dream.

It was hazy, he could not pinpoint the exact jersey that he wore but, in the dream, he saw himself lifting the UEFA champions league trophy excitedly.

In another part of the dream, he entered a picture with the UEFA champions league trophy alongside his parents, his sister, and an unknown girl.

Heck, who was she?

'Sam...' He heard his name being called, but it was echoing.

'Sam, Sam...'

"Sam!"

"Ah, what?" He was jolted awake, deprived of the opportunity to explore his sweet dream even more.

Once he woke up, noting that it was a dream, he glared at his captain. "You just interrupted a very sweet dream".

Austin stared at him. "Oh, really? Was it a wet dream?"

"F\*ck off!"

They both laughed.

Sam could not help but notice though that Austin was already dressed. "Where are you going?"

Austin looked at him weirdly. "Is that even a question? Go and take your bath, our flight will be leaving in an hour".

"F\*ck! I slept that late?"

Sam jumped up from the hotel bed, rushed into the bathroom to take his bath and in 30 minutes, he was already set with his luggage bag.

Alongside his captain, they left the hotel room, met up with their teammates and coach before leaving the hotel. Outside the hotel, fans waited for them, fans who were eager to get autographs and pictures.

But since they had a tight flight schedule to meet, they could not entertain the fans this time, simply waving at them to acknowledge them before leaving.



The flight back to Nigeria was a long one but after a few hours, the plane finally touched down in the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport in Abuja, the federal capital territory of Nigeria.

After that, most of the players separated at the airport. The FIFA Club World Cup was the only active football tournament in football due to a short break.

After the tournament, Coach Yemi Daniel took advantage of the short break, giving his players a little holiday to spend with their families.

This was why after bidding farewell to his coach and his teammates, Sam took the next flight to the airport in Asaba, Delta State.

He was going home.

From Asaba, he took an uber drive to Abraka.

Finally returning back to his home, Sam was treated to a triumphant welcome that was organized by his parents and their neighbors.

Mrs. Moses was prepared for the occasion, cooking enough jollof rice to feed a whole party of people.

And as the people trooped in, asking questions about the occasion, she explained with immense pride. "My son is playing for Enyimba FC and today, he is coming back home, we're celebrating it".

"Do you want a second serving? Don't be shy, there's enough food".

The middle-aged woman was in a good mood and when Sam finally touched down, she was the first to run towards the uber drive with joy printed all over her face. "My boy is back!" She screamed.

If Sam was not taller than her, he would have been suffocated by the tight embrace as his mom lifted him off the ground. "Woah, mom!"

"Shut up and let me hug you!"

Sam was left speechless. "Mom...", he complained. Continue your journey on empire

"Sam!!!" Sophia followed behind her mom, eagerly waiting for her turn to hug her brother and immediately after his mom left him, she jumped in his embrace. With a big smile, Sam hugged her bag.

His sister added more weight compared to the last time he saw her but due to his physicality as a professional football player, he easily carried her.

And finally, Mr. Moses walked into the scene. "Welcome home son". His voice was that of a proud father.

"Hey buddy, how was Saudi Arabia?"

Hearing the familiar voice of his best friend, Sam turned to look at him, grinning widely. "Ian!" He called.

They both hugged before Ian threw him the ultimate question. "My guy, hope you didn't come without any gifts from Saudi Arabia". He gave him the 'your money or your life' eye. "Or you better start going back!"

Sam chuckled. "Rest guy, I brought gifts".

Despite being exhausted yesterday after the game, before returning to the hotel with his captain, they both strolled into the streets of Saudi Arabia, getting some non-perishable local food before also shopping in a supermarket.

Sam bought enough snacks for his sister, and enough gifts for his best friend and his parents.

These people were not the only faces that welcomed him though.

Unfamiliar faces also welcomed him. "Welcome home Sam, you're a proud son of Abraka. My son loves to play football too, I hope you show him the way".

"Welcome home superstar!"

"Did you bring goodies from abroad?"

"Hey Sam, you remember me? It's Coach James!"

Hearing that name, Sam's eyes widened as he stared at the slightly familiar face again. "Coach James?"

"Yes man, it's me, how are you doing man?"

"I'm fine!" Sam ignored all the others, walking up to his old coach with a grin on his face. "Coach, how are you doing? What of the team?"

"I'm fine Sam, I'm surviving. About the team though," he grinned. "They're doing great, we played against D'Tigres again and guess what? We thrashed them again". This coach laughed loudly.

Ignoring all the others who welcomed him, Sam walked off with his old coach, they had a lot of things to talk about and catch up on.

Talking with Coach James, Sam felt so much nostalgia.

It was almost Christmas again and last year Christmas was when Coach James gave him the opportunity to play and impress before Coach Yemi Daniel.

It was just 1 year but to Sam, it felt like a lifetime ago.

After doing catchup with his old coach, Sam finally went inside where he feasted on his mom's sweet delicacy, and then, he finally caught up with his dad.

"Dad, any update?"

Mr. Moses grinned. "Oh yes son, there are updates, lots of updates".

It was time to discuss his career.