

LEGENDS 164

Chapter 164: Moving Targets of Flesh and Blood

Jason's exceptional acceleration allowed him to burst past Wilson Manafa who was playing as the right back for the second team.

After easily escaping Wilson Manafa's attempt at trying to hold him away from running the ball, Jason caught up with the ball and flicked it forward with his first touch on the ball, seemingly intent on charging into the penalty area but Wilson Manafa didn't plan to let him do so easily.

Wilson Manafa immediately gave chase and soon drew closer to Jason, but when he was about to catch up to Jason and clear the ball, Jason suddenly made as if to cross the ball into the box with his left foot.

Seeing this move from Jason, Wilson Manafa immediately jumped into a tackle, hoping to stop the cross, but as soon as he dived into the tackle, Jason caught the ball with his left foot, but instead of crossing the ball into the penalty area, Jason flicked the ball back instead, faking the cross.

Wilson Manafa could only watch in surprise as he flew out of Jason's way, but instead of allowing himself to completely fly out of the way, he stretched out his hand, grabbed Jason's right ankle, and pulled Jason along with him.

Wilson Manafa's momentum was enough to pull Jason off his feet, especially when Jason was already a bit off balance from faking a shot just a split second earlier, thus Jason was sent tumbling onto the ground, much to his surprise and dismay.

"Hey, what the hell, man?" Jason blurted out as he pushed himself off the ground, doing his best to hold in his annoyance.

"You didn't think I'd let you just get past me that easily, did you?" Wilson Manafa said with a grin, but his teeth being all out in the open after pulling Jason off his feet only made Jason want to punch all his teeth out.

"... Man, fuck you," Jason muttered quietly after staying silent for a few seconds and being unable to think up an appropriate reply that wouldn't be a cuss word.

While Jason pushed himself off the ground and got back to his feet, Assistant coach Siramana Dembele ran up to the site of the accident and warned Wilson Manafa to keep his tackles from being too rough and also not to repeat the stunt he just performed as they could not afford to have injuries occur during training.

“Hey coach, are we taking a free kick, or continuing with the training?” Jason asked Coach Siramana after he was done warning.

Jason wanted to know whether they would directly continue with the training or if he would have to take a free kick.

The manager hadn’t mentioned anything regarding this before the training began, but seeing as the free-kick was within shooting distance, Jason wanted to try taking it since it had been quite a while since he had taken a free-kick, either in training or in a match.

“Hmmm... Since we are trying to simulate a real match, then maybe you should take the free-kick,” Coach Siramana concluded after thinking for a bit.

Fweeee

Blowing for a free kick, Coach Siramana told the players of the yellow bib team to arrange a wall while Jason set the ball down and backed away from the ball.

Alex Telles who was the main free-kick taker of the team was on Jason’s team, but since it was a training match, he didn’t step up to take the ball from Jason to take the free-kick, thus Jason was free to take the kick.

When the players of the yellow bib team finished arranging the ball, Coach Siramana blew the whistle that gave Jason the go-ahead to take the free-kick.

Slowly approaching the wall, Jason watched the players shift against each other and prepare to block the ball, but midway to the ball, he noticed the calf muscles of two of the players tense up and they squatted slightly.

Immediately realizing that they were about to jump, Jason immediately changed his target and unleashed a powerful carpet shot under the legs of the players who leaped up.

Augustin Marchesin did not even see the ball coming and the ball smashed into the back of the net before he could react.

“Nice!” Jason pumped a fist with a smile on his face.

High-fiving Fabio Viera who stood nearby, Jason jogged back to the other half of the field with his red bib teammates while thinking back to the free kick earlier.

He had been able to score the free kick because he noticed the players in the wall’s subtle actions, predicted an outcome, and changed his target midway through his run-up to the ball.

What was impressive about this action was the fact that he had been able to notice and accurately predict the opponent’s next course of action as it was not something that could be done easily.

Jason had only been able to do it because of his time spent practicing martial arts and now that he was practicing again... even though he wasn’t serious with it, his previous life’s hard-trained instincts were awakening.

A major part of martial arts was in the observation of the opponent so that one could perfectly counter the opponent’s attacks, and as a master in two forms of martial arts, especially ones with two distinct styles, Jason used to be an expert in reading people, but his instincts had long since deteriorated.

The reason for this was that he had not bothered practicing martial arts in this life even though he was quite good at it.

One might wonder why he hadn’t bothered practicing something that he was good at, because knowing Jason, most of the decisions he made were well-calculated decisions with the most favorable outcome for himself being the driving force behind his decisions.

Jason hadn't stopped practicing martial arts because it was useless, or that he was bored of it, but rather because of the damage that he had caused using martial arts in the football world.

It had to be known that while football was a physical sport, all physical encounters that happened in football were because players were fighting for possession of the ball...

However martial arts were very straightforward and Muay Thai was especially straightforward.

It aimed to get rid of an opponent in any way possible and Jason happened to be a martial master in Muay Thai.

Back in his previous life, Jason was a winger, but he wasn't a very good player thus he had resorted to trying to help his team in other ways than trying to score goals, so he tried defending and pressing the other team for the ball, thus becoming a pressing forward of sorts.

The problem arose when Jason came close enough to the opponents and they tried to escape him... Jason who initially started out trying to just steal the ball from the opponents would end up having his martial instinct take over and he would target the player instead of the ball when the player was proving to be slippery... though he usually made sure to hold back.

Unfortunately, as a martial master, Jason's blows were naturally very dangerous as he would instinctively target weak points of the body and in one unfortunate match he hadn't been holding back as much as he thought and he had harmed an opposing player in a hard tackle.

The damage Jason had caused to that player was unrecoverable and the player had to hang his boots after realizing that he would never completely recover.

Somehow Jason was lucky enough to only end with a ten-match ban, but ever since then, he had avoided anything defending-related apart from trying to intercept passes and pushing players off the ball.

He had also stopped practicing martial arts after that as it was making him too dangerous to be on a field full of moving targets.

Moving targets with flesh and blood, but moving targets to Jason nonetheless.

Jason had carried that commitment into this new reality, which was why his defensive skills were seemingly bad, but during the lockdown period of the last few months when he had had a bit too much time on his hands, he had thought back to the matter.

It was only then that he realized that he was no longer in his past reality where he had hurt someone with his skills and that he could start on a new slate and only use martial arts as a means of releasing stress... and self-defense... but now he was realizing another use of his martial arts skills and experiences.

His reflexes, judgment, observation skills, and instinctive adjustments were all attributes that would potentially help him to become a better football player... as long as they were used right.

Now that he thought about it, it was probably these attributes that had helped him to become a much better dribbler than he could ever hope to be in his past life.

He had long been wondering why he seemed a lot better at things than he was in his past life, especially when his experiences were not exactly top tier, and he had even once wondered if his body was a bit different from his past reality, but this was also a plausible reason, right?