

Legends 861

Chapter 861: Community Event: Football Tournament I

The day after Tottenham's game against West Ham, the club had a community event for orphanages in North London.

Despite their already tight schedule, considering it was almost Christmas, events like these couldn't be avoided.

A few players like Harry Kane who had been playing week in, week out could be absent if they really wanted to, but the club expected everyone to be there.

Even Harry Kane who, Son, Jason, Moura, and Bergwijn who would be within their rights to be absent due to already heavy matchtime or because they were just recovering from injury were present and the only person absent was Romero who was still injured.

It was an event organized by the club in collaboration with the city, but in the end it was still a media event and what the players really had to do was show up, go through the motions, take pictures and then leave.

However segments of the event required participation from the players.

The event was majorly a Christmas event where gifts would be given to all the children, but it was also a sport event and a small tournament had even been organized.

They picked 40 children who said they played football and split them into eight teams of five players.

Eight players from the Tottenham squad were then chosen to coach a team each and each side would battle it out for the chance to win the competition.

The final prize was PS5 console that the kids would take back to their orphanages.

As one of the coaches picked, Jason quickly got friendly with his squad of five.

He hadn't played coach before, but after playing under quite a lot of coaches, he had an idea of what he was to do.

After getting a basic idea of what his team could do, Jason began arranging their formation.

Since they were five a side, that meant one goalkeeper and four field players.

In goal was a kid named Tim, two defenders named Jim and Dim, one midfielder named Martha... Girls were also involved in the tournament.

Finally a striker named Madara.

Jason had asked again when the kid told him his name, but the kid said that was just his nickname and it was what he preferred.

'It's only the name of the coldest motherfu**er in cinematic history after all,'

"If your ball skills are as cold as your name, then we might already have this in the bag," Jason joked and the kid replied,

"Trust me coach,"

"Okayyyyy, okayyy," Jason raised an eyebrow in amusement.

A kid barely over ten was asking Jason to trust him, but despite the absurdity, Jason wasn't going to deny him that trust.

Since they were still kids, Jason couldn't get too technical with them so he only gave them a shape and told them how he wanted them to play.

Jason wanted the two defenders sitting wide and the single midfielder sitting in the front of them in the center, making a triangle.

In front of this triangle and behind it would be the striker, Madara, and the goalkeeper, Tim.

"The plan is simple, we work as a team. There is no I in team,"

"Whatever you do, you do as a team and you cover your positions," Jason said to them, choosing to watch how they played first before giving any more specific instructions.

"What if we can dribble everyone, like you?" Martha suddenly asked.

"I can't dribble everyone," Jason laughed.

"Even if I could, football is still a team sport. We all need teammates in life, not only on the pitch," Jason said, patting her head.

"Alright everyone, I am someone who likes to win and I think you guys are like me, so here's what will happen," Jason's voice dropped lower.

"If we win the tournament, I'll get each of you guys anything you want for Christmas," Jason said with a sneaky smile. There was no way to motivate kids other than with gifts.

"Anything?" The five kids eyes began shining.

"Well, not anything unreasonable, but yeah, anything," Jason grinned.

The five kids were pumped up now, their eyes shining as their minds ran wild, imagining what they could ask Jason for if they win.

'They're ready now,' Jason nodded to himself and sent them to the field.

Since the event was taking place at one of the pitches in Hotspur way, the pitch was split into two to allow two matches to go on at once.

The match format was one of three minutes per half and if no one won after the normal time, then they would go straight to penalties.

Jason's team's first opponent was Ollie Skip's team and the game began in the earnest while Son's team went against Alli's team on the other side of the pitch.

Jason and Ollie stood on the sidelines, watching as the game kicked off in earnest.

Jason's team kicked off the game first and Ollie's players moved forward to press.

The ball was passed among Jason's players until the ball was with Tim in goal.

Not stopping the press, two players rushed at Tim, but Jason's goalkeeper already picked out Madara in front and sent the ball forward, flying at the team's striker.

Madara connected the ball with his head, sending it towards Martha who stopped the ball from bouncing.

The Ollie's kids on seeing Martha with the ball, relaxed, believing they could bully her off the ball, but as the first person stretched out his leg, Martha pulled the ball back and then pushed it between his legs in return.

"Eh?" Jason stared in surprise as Martha didn't stop after dribbling the first person, going on to dribble one more before sending the ball to Madara who tapped the ball comfortably past the goalkeeper.

"Hey yo, what did you do to those kids?" Ollie stared, surprised that his team was already losing the game, less than a minute into the game.

"I guess I'm just a pretty good coach. You just never know innit?" Jason shrugged with a grin.

"Whatever," Ollie rolled his eyes at Jason and rallies his teammates from the sidelines.

The game resumed again and just before the third minute mark, Ollie's team managed to squeeze a ball past Tim, equalizing the game.

The kids stepped off the field for a little rest while the managers discussed with them.

"I've watched how you guys played and you all played well. If you keep this up, then we will win this game easy," Jason first told the kids as they sat down to rest for a bit.

"However that's not all that you have to do,"

"Madara you're doing well moving around looking for a goal scoring chance, but sometimes try to help in the midfield. Martha cannot deal with all those guys alone,"

"Martha, well done, you're killing it,"

"Jim, Dim, you can push up and support these two from the sides," Jason went into a little detail, using his hands to gesture to what he meant, doing his best to make them understand what he wanted.

He didn't know that a camera was trained on him right at that exact moment, capturing him describing tactics and looking every bit the tactician he wasn't sure he was.

After the break, Jason's team went back on the field to finish off the game with clear instructions on how to dismantle their opponents.

Martha was the first one to score this time, pouncing on a loose ball, dodging the last defender and slotting the ball past the goalkeeper to give her team the lead.

Dim then finished off the game when he pounced on a throw-in fought off his marker and hit the ball at the goal.

On the sidelines, Jason celebrated with the kids as they ran to him after winning the first game.

"Good win guys," Jason high fived everyone and told them to rest as the second group took to the field to play their own match.

They watched the second group play their games and were soon back on the field for the semi final game of the tournament.

This time it was Jason's team against Eric Dier's team and Jason wasn't left disappointed by this players performance.

A landslide victory of 3 goals to nil was already enough to keep a smile on Jason's face but with how spectacular the goals were Jason was now wondering why these kids weren't at a football academy yet.

Guessing it all chalked down to their familial situation, he began having some thoughts of his own on the side.

Tim who was playing as a goalkeeper wasn't an exceptional goalkeeper, but Jason's instructions for him to step up and act as support revealed his talent as an exceptional ball holder with a good physique and an eye for long passes, somewhat like Bonucci.

Jim and Dim weren't exceptionally good defensively either, but their ball handling skills and innate positioning skills made them a huge help and a huge threat when they moved up the field.

Clearly they had potential and while Jim was more attacking than defensive, Dim was the opposite and their abilities helped Jason's team find a balance between attacking and defending.

Martha was perhaps the most surprising player to him. She was amazingly technical and her abilities seemed very advanced for her age.

Due to being a girl, she didn't have a physical advantage against the boys, but she had surprisingly high stamina that helped her keep up and her quick, dainty, but sharp movements made her opponents unable to stop her.

On top of all that, she was unselfish and knew her role was mostly creative and she was damn good at it, her above average passing able to get the ball into the right place after she used her movements to create space.

Finally... Madara.

The kid was really as cold as his name suggested.

His obsession for goals was something Jason hadn't seen in some professional strikers.

The kid was always looking to get into dangerous areas to score and though his eye for the offside line needed training, his skills more than made up for it.

He was fast, he always threw himself at the ball, and surprisingly, he could use both feet.

He had scored all three goals in the second game, two of them assisted by Martha and the third assisted by Jim.

Chapter 862: Skill Training

24th November 2021

Thump!

A ball flew forward speedily, travelling in a straight line with remarkable precision but Jason who had hit the ball shook his head, unsatisfied with the ball's movement.

During the match against Liverpool, Jason had seen Trent Alexander-Arnold make a pass with the instep of his right foot.

The ball had flew forward speedily, but as it's speed reduced it had began curling outward almost like trivela pass, but it was faster, barely left the ground, and only curled after it's speed apex.

On seeing the pass and thinking of its various uses, Jason had instantly began trying to learn how to do it.

Determining that the outlining principle of the pass was to hit the ball with power and adding a lot of outside spin to it.

The ball would then fly straight ahead, buoyed by the power behind the kick, but once the power began wearing off, the outside spin would take effect and send the ball into a tight or loose arc depending on how much spin it had.

However knowing what to do was one thing, but actually doing it was a completely different thing. Another completely different thing was being able to do constantly without much thought.

Jason hadn't even been able to do it yet because it was just that difficult.

The inside of the foot was usually used to add inside spin to the ball while the outside of the foot was used for outside spin, yet Trent had somehow changed something that everyone considered natural and turned it into a move of his own.

Jason wasn't some passing genius who could instantly do something like that easily.

After and trying and failing so many times, Jason was beginning to tweak the kicking motion, after all what he needed were results, not artistic looking kicks.

If he could achieve the same results with an easier kicking motion, then he would take that.

Unlike using the outside of his foot, Jason was hitting the ball with the flat of his foot, almost as if he was hitting a power shot, and he had been trying to add an outside spin to it.

It was easier to hit the ball with power and spin using this motion, but now Jason had to find the right motion to get the perfect amount of power and spin on the ball.

"You're still on that?" Son asked Jason as a trainer threw another ball to Jason.

They had finished team training for the day and Jason was doing this part during individual training.

"Still on it," Jason nodded, trapping the ball and then pushing it forward a little.

"Right, what about those kids from yesterday?" Son asked before Jason ran at the ball.

"Oh, I'm already working on it," Jason nodded.

Jason's team had ended up winning the tournament, partly due to his coaching and mostly due to how talented the kids actually were.

So, in addition to his promise to get them wherever they wanted, he asked them another question, intending to give them an opportunity if they said yes.

Did they want to play professional football?

Without surprise, all the kids wanted to play professional football.

Who wouldn't want to.

Almost every kid in UK had dreams of playing professional football, but family situations, talent levels, and many other things stood in the way of their dreams.

For these kids, it was their familial situation.

Being a part of a football academy required either a lot of money or a lot of commitment from the family, depending on the level of talent the child has.

For orphans whose livelihood depended on the government or charity organizations, they didn't have a lot of spare money and since orphanages didn't contain only one child and were usually mostly understaffed, they couldn't be so committed to one child.

It was mostly that the kids wouldn't ever even get the chance to show off their talents because of this situation, but this tournament had arrived just in time for the kids.

Even better they had caught the eye of not only a patron like Jason, but also of a few other players and the manager.

With Jason now pushing to get them into Tottenham's academy, their acceptance was already a foregone conclusion and with the level of talent they had showed, Jason wouldn't even have to pay any fees for them.

The only thing to be worried about was how they would get to and from from their orphanages to the academy for training.

For Jason that was another easy thing to arrange and it would barely cost him anything.

Even better was the fact that in another three to six years when they could begin going pro, Jason had already secured an agent for them in person of Adele.

Killing three birds without even throwing a stone was a first for Jason as well, but it wasn't much to be thought about.

For now, his focus was on getting this damn ball to curl-*Thump!*

The ball flew powerfully forward, skidding across the ground and then suddenly began curling as it's speed reduced.

"Yes!" Jason jumped in joy as he had finally gotten the ball to curl after going straight.

"That's crazy!" Son was also infected by Jason's joy.

"But where are you going to use that though?" Son suddenly thought to ask.

Long passes were usually made by players who created chances from behind.

Midfielders and defenders especially.

The forwards were usually the ones chasing the ball and Jason was one of those forwards who was to be chasing the ball, especially with how they played under Conte, so he had little to no use for this skill unless in very specific situations when he was sitting deep and there was a chance to counter.

Maybe coming off corner kicks or something, but other than that, unless he was going to change his playing style and position on the pitch, then this skill wasn't really crucial for him.

"I mean, you can never learn enough things, I guess," Jason shrugged, also knowing that he wasn't going to be using this skill much either.

He just felt the need to learn it because it looked cool, was versatile and was another weapon in his arsenal.

Despite not being an American by blood, collecting weapons truly was in his blood.

Better to have a weapon and not need it than to need one and not have it.

Chapter 863: Boxing Day Hero

26th December 2021

{It's the day after Christmas and Tottenham welcome Crystal Palace here at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium for their 18th match of the season}

{It is match week 19 and after today's game, Tottenham still will have a game in hand}

{Right now they are four points behind fourth place Arsenal who have played two more games than they have}

{If they can win these two games, they will be on equal points, hence at this juncture, it can be said that Tottenham is back in contention for Champions League football next season}

{For a team that started the season at the beginning of the table, some of the fans may feel that they are far behind their rightful position and with their form, I think they really can still make a charge for league title this season}

{After all it's only halfway into the season, but they will have to pull something spectacular out of their stash if they want to catch up with the league leaders who are 16 points ahead}

The commentators words had the Tottenham fans thinking with a wry smile as they saw the premier league standings.

Man City that they had beaten in the first game of the season had now become the league leaders and were almost 20 points away from them while they had suffered slump after slump and were only now showing signs of recovery.

However, as the commentator had said, it was only halfway into the season and if Man City could make an 16 point gap between them in one half of the season, then they should be able to do something similar in the second half of the season.

...

Then the Tottenham fans burst out laughing because that was just their wishful thinking.

Even if they won their two games in hand, the deficit would only reduce to 10 points between them and Man City.

But this was Man City, a team that consistently swept through the Premier League like they were mowing grass.

A team that for the first time in a long while had given people the heart to call the Premier League a farmers League being farmed season after season by Pep Guardiola.

A team that barely dropped points a whole season and once they were in the lead consistently held on to their lead without letting go.

Up against a team that despite its recent brilliant performance, clearly still had a lot of areas that needed filling.

It was clear to see that unless the impossible happened, Tottenham was already out of the race for Premier League champions.

But, this was football and hope was the cheapest thing around so they had hope that their team could still make a massive title run.

During the commentators introductory messages, the players had already finished all the pre-match formalities.

Surprisingly, Jason wasn't starting the game and Conte was playing a more familiar front three of Kane, Son and Moura.

When the decision was made, Jason clearly wasn't happy with it, but Conte quickly told him that it was because there was another game against Southampton in just two days.

For the tougher opponents, Crystal Palace, he wanted Moura to play with a more familiar line up and then Jason could play against Southampton who were more defensive minded.

In a way, it signified Conte's trust in Jason's skills to believe that he could perform well even when players were being rested or exhausted.

With that explanation, Jason's mood that had soured lightened up quickly.

Conte wasn't a fool, he knew that the competition between Jason and Lucas for a spot was pushing the two of them to play out of their skin... Though Moura was the more affected one, but he also knew he had to manage this competition very well.

He couldn't afford to have one side thinking the manager sided with the other side more, especially since he was a new manager and the January transfer window was coming soon.

That said, it had become clearer that his team was severely lacking in depth on the flanks.

He also needed more solid midfielders who could play his style of football and were ready to play their hearts out for the team, no matter how tiring it was.

Already, quite a few players were dissatisfied with their status and playing time, while some were dissatisfied with his tactics and work ethics so it looked like quite a few players in the starting lineup would be leaving in January and he already had eyes on replacements.

He would work on getting some of them in January and further transfers could be pushed to the summer break.

The match began and went back and forth in the beginning with both sides looking to score.

A long shot attempt from Son that just narrowly missed the left side of the goal got the attacking started and half an hour into the game, Moura began proving that he deserved his starting place in this game.

A long through pass from Emerson sent the ball forward towards the right side inside Crystals Palace's penalty box and racing forward to catch it, Moura then cut it back inside for Harry Kane to score.

Kane who had always scored on boxing days immediately added another one to his tally, hitting the ball powerfully apart Butland and into the back of the net.

{Kane, the man who always scores on Boxing day, hits another one on the 26th!}

In the 34th minute, just two minutes later, Moura in the center of the final third, passed the ball to Hojberg who then released the ball to Emerson on the right flank.

While Emerson pushed to the side of the box, Moura also ran into the center of the box so when the cross from Emerson came flying over, he caught it off his head and sent it into the back of the net.

{He fought for the aerial space and he won it!}

{Tottenham are up by two and Moura has been involved in them both!}

With tensions already high after conceding 2 goals, Zaha angrily pushed down Emerson when the guy didn't want to stop fighting for the ball.

In his anger he had forgotten that he already had a yellow card.

Instantly, the referee walked over, pulled out both the yellow and red cards and showed them to Zaha one after the other.

{It gets worse for Crystal Palace! Going down by two goals in less than five minutes and now their best player has been sent off!}

Chapter 864: Four Seasons I

After going two goals down and going a man down, the fight in the Crystal Palace players diminished greatly.

Even the fans watching believed that the game was practically over now.

Their opponents were already difficult to deal with and could score two goals already even when they had eleven men on the pitch.

Now that they only had 10, it could only get worse for them unless they defended as best as they could.

With their most creative player, who was also their best player, having been sent off, they didn't even have enough attacking power to try to stage a comeback.

Of course nothing was impossible and they could pull off the impossible if they tried, but their opponents were professionals.

If Crystal Palace dared to go for broke and sent players forward, Tottenham's attack which was especially dangerous on the counter would not hesitate to punish them.

That being said, they wouldn't give up on the game either as there was still a lot of time to play for and maybe they could reduce the deficit, or even equalize, if luck was on their side.

However, try as they might, Tottenham continued to dominate the game till halftime and even after halftime, the situation didn't change.

Going a man down was really starting to hurt them now.

The Crystal Palace players had to expend more energy because there was a hole, and their stamina levels were draining quicker than ever.

And in the 74th minute, Tottenham punished them for it.

Kane received the ball on the right corner of the penalty box, pushed the ball out wide to Moura while jumping over a tackle.

Scanning the situation in the penalty box as the ball rolled into his path, Moura picked out a run from Son and sent the ball flying into his path.

Undetected by the Crystal Palace players, Son ran behind the defense line, jumped and got a foot to the ball, getting enough behind it to deflect it past Butland and past the goal line.

{Goal! Three for Tottenham, they've really been on form!}

{ A gift! That's what Crystal Palace has been today! The perfect Christmas gift!}

{They brought themselves over, boxed themselves and delivered themselves into the hands of their opponents!}

The words of the commentators only worsened the Crystal Palace players's moods.

They hadn't even played that badly. Their opponents were just too strong and today wasn't really their day... Like at all.

With the team already leading 3-0, Conte opted not to bring Jason on and instead gave Bergwijn and Bryan Gil some playtime, taking off Son and Kane.

Bergwijn and Bryan Gil took the flanks and Moura moved to the center.

All the changes made by the two managers only stabilized the game and neither side managed to trouble the scoreboard operator one more time before the final whistle.

When the final whistle finally went off, the Tottenham fans erupted in a huge wave of cheers as they applauded their players, Moura especially receiving quite the applause because of his performance today.

Two assists and one goal in a single game were impressive stats by any standard and Moura had casually pulled out such a top drawer performance just when the team needed it.

Conte was smiling on all ears.

Moura's consecutive good performance had left him spoiled for choice and the battle between him and Jason ensured that the two of them did their best every game so as not to fall behind the other.

Now Moura had made his move, it was up to Jason to respond in the match against Southampton.

28th December 2021

True to the manager's word, Jason was in the starting lineup at St Mary's Stadium against Southampton.

The game began with a kickoff from the Southampton side and they immediately began trying to find a path to victory against Tottenham's side.

Despite the management of the first team players's minutes and the rotation of the squad, players like Hojberg, Son and Kane who had been playing week in week out were not fully rested and needed more time to settle into the game's rhythm.

With a lot of the creativity dampened down, the onus fell on Jason to create chances, but the opponents had long noticed that he was the man to keep in check.

As soon as the game began, Jason barely got any space to run into and the Southampton players around him did their best to make sure the ball didn't even reach him.

They didn't even hesitate to fowl him hard, trying to keep him unsettled.

While the Tottenham players were still trying to settle into the game, the Southampton side struck first.

24 minutes into the game, Southampton got a throw-in from the left side of the penalty box.

Salisu made a long throw into Tottenham's penalty box and the ball was chested by Armstrong towards Southampton captain, James Ward Prowse.

Aiming at goal, James sent the ball flying at the goal with a powerful, aiming for the space between all the players in the penalty box.

He wasn't one of the most accurate shooters in the league for nothing and the ball flew powerfully at the goal, beyond Lloris and into the back of the net.

{Goal!}

{They are the homeowners and they will not just lie over for the stronger side! Southampton score first and what a goal it was!}

{Rocket! Absolute rocket!}

{Throw-ins are usually looked down upon but a well practiced routine like this can cause trouble for any opponent!}

{Will Southampton keep attacking, looking for another or will they get behind the ball and try to hold on to this lead!?!}

{Either choice has its risks, but the manager will try to make the appropriate choice, I'm sure}

The match resumed and right after the game resumed, the Tottenham first held onto possession, allowing the Southampton players to come into their half before trying to stun them with a lightning fast counter.

The ball was soon passes to Jason on the right flank in their own half by Hojberg and Jason turning with the ball, chose to run down the flank on the outside as there were three players blocking him from cutting in.

With a drop of his left shoulder, Jason confused James into thinking he was going to cut inside, but a sudden burst forward allowed Jason to run past him on the outside.

However while Jason has run past James, Armstrong wasn't going to let him go any further and Jason realized after getting past James that Armstrong was already tackling at the ball.

Since he had flicked the ball forward to get past, he was too far away and couldn't reach it first.

Sliding at the ball, Armstrong hit it out of play and Jason jumped over him while sighing inwardly at the wasted chance, but before he could think any further, Salisu, the third guy in his path crashed into him, knocking him down despite him not being with the ball.

Falling and rolling off the pitch into Southampton's technical area, Jason only stopped after rolling a few times.

"Get up man, stop being a baby!" Those were the words Jason heard after barely stopping.

Immediately sitting up in annoyance, Jason was about to let Salisu have a piece of his mind, when he saw the referee running over.

Holding his tongue and waiting for the referee to vindicate him, Jason waited only to see the referee give Salisu a stern warning and then begin spraying the ground to indicate the fouling point.

"No card? Ref what was that?"

"This is not even the first time today!" Unable to stay silent anymore, Jason burst out at the referee.

"I already warned him. This is English football, stop whining and let me do my job," the referee snapped back, not wanting to hear someone telling him how to do his job.

"Does English football mean bad refereeing, because that's all I've been seeing," already frustrated from being fouled so many times with the game barely being half an hour in, Jason couldn't keep himself from blowing over.

Kane saw what was happening and immediately rushed over trying to stop the situation from becoming worse and Conte even tried to shout words to Jason from the sidelines, but Anthony Taylor, the referee was already ticked off at Jason and pulled out a yellow card.

"Keep talking and you'll have an early shower," Taylor said, holding up the yellow card.

"Oh wow," a line inside Jason's head snapped instantly as he stared at the referee in shock.

{Oh, that's surprising! The player who has been fouled is the one who has been booked}

{Clearly he wasn't too happy about the referee's decision and he said something and whatever it is, the referee didn't like it}

"Hey, leave it," Kane got between Jason and Taylor before another word escaped Jason's mouth.

"No man, this is some bullsh*t," Jason wasn't going to be held back, but other teammates quickly got there to hold him back.

{Cool down man, just chill! We can't afford to be a man down right now} the voice of reason finally got through to Jason, but he despite cooling off, his face still carries defiance.

He may have stopped talking, but he wasn't backing down.

Chapter 865: Four Seasons II

After his injury, Jason had showed a tendency to dribble to embarrass his opponents, a danger inducing style of play and he had been warned about the repercussions it could cause.

Of course Jason didn't care and he did it anyway, but due to the battle going on between him and Lucas Moura, Jason had unknowingly reverted back to his usual style of play.

He had acted like he wasn't bothered by the competition, but he had gone back to his style of play that had showed results, not bothering to experiment and cutting down on non-essential dribbling because what he wanted was results.

This was no time to be trying to embarrass his opponents and then have no stats other than dribbles completed to show for it.

However after what he had just faced from the Southampton players and the referee's dismissiveness, all he wanted to do was get back at them now.

Since he wasn't a violent person, he wasn't going to get into physical battles with his opponents just so he could get his own back.

That left only one option... make highlights reels of the whole lot of them.

It was on now.

#32nd minute...

A long crossfield ball was hit Jason's way from the left side of the field and Jason jumped to catch it on his chest, catching sight of Salisu rushing off his line to come tackle him.

A smirk appearing at the corner of Jason's lips, He landed back on the ground and in one smooth motion, swept the ball with his left through the legs of a rushing Salisu while jumping over his outstretched leg.

{Between his legs and he's away!}

Instead of rushing away and trying to run through the open space Salisu had created by rushing off his line, Jason slowly pushed the ball forward, an eye still on Salisu.

Rushing back and trying to recover the ball, Salisu rushed to Jason's left side from behind and tried to get back in front of him with a tackle, but as he reached Jason's left, Jason dropped a shoulder and pushed the ball between his legs again, cutting to the left.

{Another nutmeg!}

Realizing he had kicked air, Salisu tried to recover, glancing back at Jason and trying to know which side he was going to pass so he could tackle him.

However with his back to the ball, unable to stop or risk Jason getting past him, He had entered Jason's control zone and was now nothing but an instrument for Jason to play anyhow he wanted.

Spotting Jason and trying to turn back, Jason had already pushed the ball through his legs a third time, this time moving to the right.

Once again made a fool of, Salisu turned after the ball, only to be hit with another nutmeg as Jason cut inside to the left again.

At this point, his instincts had taken over and he once again turned instinctively, but Jason just pushed the ball between his legs again.

This time Salisu had turned with a spin, swinging his leg and trying to kick the ball away, but he couldn't and was nutmegged for the fifth time in quick succession.

Falling down from swinging his leg blindly, that was the only reason he wasn't nutmegged a sixth time and Jason barely glanced at him as he moved past him, already in the final third.

After what they had just seen Jason do to their teammate, the Southampton players were too stunned to rush at him immediately, letting Jason face off against Armstrong in a one on one situation, use a few step overs to confuse the Southampton man and step past him, now only 23 yards from goal.

With a clear shot at goal, Jason whipped the ball powerfully, sending it at the bottom right corner.

Foster was a bit on the left side of the post and despite making a dive, couldn't reach the ball and it smashed against the inside of the post and went in.

{Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!}

{What have we just witnessed! What have we just seen!}

{One man! One ball! One banger of a goal!}

{Spectacular movements from this man! He played his marker like a fiddle, got past another and sent an absolute thunder bomb at the goal!}

{Tottenham are level!}

Glancing at Salisu as he ran down the sidelines, Jason held his left index finger to his lips while doing the calma with his right hand.

This was the beginning of Jason's four seasons.

Autumn.

#37th minute...

After the shock from going behind and the excitement from getting back level, Tottenham was now playing more confidently on the ball, having settled into the game.

With every minute that passed they looked more dangerous on the ball.

It was only a matter of time before Jason was once again running at goal, advancing through the center, weaving right and left through traffic before finally making an inside pass towards Son before he was taken down.

The referee blew for an advantage, but with the pass being intercepted before it reached Son, the referee blew the whistle for a free kick.

Rolling over and sitting up, Jason adjusted his socks, a smile on his face despite having just been fouled.

He was really enjoying the game now. The looks of hesitation and apprehension on the Southampton players faces were fueling him to keep running at them.

For now, the free kick needed to be taken and as luck would have it, it was within shooting range.

{Direct free kick, 23 yards or so from the post}

{The last time he was on the field, he scored a freekick. Can he do it again?}

The wall was set up and Jason, standing four paces away from the ball stared at Salisu who was also in the wall instead of at the goal.

With a mischievous smirk on his face, Jason looked like a child who had just found a new toy and wanted to do something to it.

'He's not going to hit that thing at me, right?' Salisu thought to himself, but it looked like that was exactly what Jason was going to do.

Jason didn't even glance at the post and his eyes stayed on the wall.

Other people didn't know what he was looking at, but the Southampton players in the wall wanted to give Salisu a comfortable berth as it was clear that Jason was targeting this guy.

Fweeeee!

The Southampton players didn't get any more time to think as Jason ran at the ball and hit it at the wall.

As the ball was hit, the wall jumped and on reaching the air, Salisu realized that Jason had really hit the ball straight at his head.

He had even somehow calculated the distance he would jump and had sent the ball at where Salisu would be.

In that instant, Salisu forgot he was defending the post and by instinct, tilted his head to dodge the ball.

The ball flew past his ear with a whoshing sound and continued it's path but before Salisu could land back on the ground, he heard a sound he recognized very well.

The sound of a ball hitting the net behind him was somehow clearly distinctive in his ears despite all the crowd in the stadium.

Maybe it was because the stadium was filled with Southampton fans who were stunned into silence by the goal that sounded Tottenham's comeback.

Or maybe it was because of the away Tottenham fans, or maybe it was even the sight of Jason smirking evilly at him while jogging past him towards the sidelines his hands rubbing his biceps as if he were cold.

{He really did it again!}

{His second goal of the day! His second freekick in two games! Tottenham's comeback goal!}

{Southampton really have poked a sleeping bear and the bear is awake and hungry!}

{He already had two! How many more can he get!?!}

The second season of winter had made it's appearance and Salisu was hit with instant depression, not daring to look back at his team's goal.

#47th minute...

The first half had ended with Southampton doing everything to stop Jason who was on a roll.

Yet after scoring his second goal, Jason seemed to have satisfied his thirst for running at the opponents.

Instead he had begun spraying passes instead, freeing Salisu from his torment, however as soon as the second half began, Jason began running again, letting the Southampton players know that their nightmare wasn't over yet.

Receiving the ball after the game just kicked off, Jason turned as if aiming to make a pass to the defenders while Son, Kane and the midfield players surged into Southampton's half of the field.

Feinting away James Ward Prowse, Jason took off into Southampton's half of the field, the other Tottenham players already running ahead of him.

Jason's sudden dash into their half stunned the Southampton players who were now not sure whether to deploy players to block his run or to deal with the Tottenham players who were running into dangerous positions.

Chapter 866: Four Seasons III

With a feint to the right, Jason faked his marker and made a pass to Hojberg in front of him in the final third.

Receiving the ball with only a touch to send the ball to Kane who stood at the edge of the penalty box, his back to goal, Hojberg also began running into the penalty box to draw back the Southampton defenders even more.

With his back to the post, Kane sent the ball into the path of Jason who had arrived on the right edge of the penalty box.

Receiving the ball with a light touch to slow it down, Jason faced off against the only player directly in his path.

As luck would have it, Salisu was once again the player trying to stop Jason from scoring and Jason wouldn't have it any other way.

A feint to the left with the ball still moving, Jason pulled Salisu into his movement like he were casting black magic.

With a step over and a cut back to the right, he destabilized Salisu's standing position, but the man was still following him, not yet giving up.

Another fake shot from the right drew Salisu who was still turning to the right back to the left and he almost slipped but held on, still doing his best to block Jason's path to goal.

However with all those previous feints to set the mood, Jason's next shot attempt was lunged at by Salisu who finally committed and gave up his standing position.

But a second later, he saw Jason merely fake the shot and pull it back to the left.

In that moment, Salisu had began instinctively lunging to block the right while still on his bottom, but behind him, Jason's earlier feint had already been switched back and all Salisu achieved was looking completely lost on camera.

With his marker floundering helplessly on the ground before him and no one else but the goalkeeper in his path, Jason hit the ball at goal and past a Foster who could barely react.

{Three! Three!}

{Spectacular! Magnificently spectacular!}

{He just will not be stopped today!}

{They tried time and again to knock him down, but they're the ones who fell asleep and he became their nightmare!}

{Single handedly! Time and time again! He's destroying them!}

Jason had already run to the stands where the visiting Tottenham fans were screaming for all they were worth and stopping in front of them, he held his hands out wide, displaying himself proudly to the world.

Spring had come.

#59th minute...

Southampton had been rocked, shaken, destabilized and Tottenham were enjoying the aftereffects of it.

Jason especially seemed to have entered a flow state and whenever he got the ball, he would first look to dribble past his marker before passing the ball to a teammate.

He wasn't backing down at all and even when he didn't need to dribble, he did it anyway, making sure his opponents were kept on their toes.

Even then, he didn't push them to much.

At this point, there was a very thin line between keeping them on their toes and aggravating them terribly.

Jason seemed to know exactly where this line was and he danced easily on it.

Once again, Tottenham was on the ball, moving it upfield with quick and clever passes, but they weren't quite on the counter so no one really thought of it as a dangerous attack.

However as the ball neared their penalty area, the Southampton players got more serious defensively and blocked the paths towards goal, while the defenders got closer to the men they were marking.

In the final third, just a few yards in front of the penalty box, Jason could hear Salisu arrive behind him, staying within tackling range so he could get right on Jason if the ball came his way.

And indeed the ball was soon rolling Jason's way.

{The ball goes to Jason who has his back to goal}

Salisu immediately charged in at Jason's back, ready to unbalance him even at the risk of a freekick. He was done letting Jason get past him.

However as the ball reached Jason, in one swift and smooth motion, he flicked the ball upwards and over to his back, and in a single flowing motion, he turned around, somehow avoiding Salisu and then hit the ball on the volley at the goal.

The ball thundered at goal, stunning everyone and Forster could barely react.

By the time he could react, it was clear that he couldn't even reach the ball that had smashed into the top right corner of the goal.

{Jason with the screamer and OHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!}

{FOURRRR!!!}

{INCREDIBLE! JUST INCREDIBLE!!!}

{How many more does he want!}

{Four of the best goals we have ever seen! Coming from one man!}

Jason raced down to the sidelines in front of the visiting Tottenham fans and with his right hand holding four fingers in front of his face, he jumped into a kneeslide with a huge smile on his face.

Summer Madness.

The fourth season for today had shown itself.

As the team celebrated the goal on the sidelines, Conte, still in shock from the stunning goal, was disturbed from his thoughts by the words of his assistant manager.

"That kid really has quite the temper. He's really playing out of his skin right now," the man chuckled.

"Well, it's bringing results, isn't it?" Conte grinned.

"For now. Those guys are really going to get aggressive with him now.

"It was a slighting on their part to let him do all he wanted up till now, but from now on the Southampton players looked like they were ready to kill Jason if he dared to run at them with a ball again.

"Tell Dele Alli to warm up," Conte said after a little thought.

Jason might be unhappy at being taken off now that he was in perhaps the most purple patch of his life, but Conte didn't want to risk any injuries when the game was already in their hands.

Surprisingly, Jason didn't complain when he saw his number in red on the board and with a smile on his face, he walked off the field.

He was having perhaps one of the best games of his life, but because he had been playing so hard to prove a point, he had over exerted himself a little too much too early and he was already quite tired.

So as soon as the board went up and his number was shown, he was actually quite relieved and happily accepted being subbed off the field.

For Dele Alli, it was to be his last match for Tottenham.

His contract with the club was running out in January and he and the club hadn't been able to agree on a contract.

It didn't help that his play time was nowhere where it was before and his importance in the team was at an all time low.

The added fact that Conte didn't have a place in his system where a natural 10 fit into and that Dele would have to change his whole playing style to fit in with no actual guarantee of playtime was the final nail in the coffin.

Dele chose to leave and the club didn't care to stop him.

As a fan favorite once upon a time, Dele had received more playtime as the days counted down, with Conte giving the fans the chance to see him play a few more times before he left.

It was also a sort of scouting attempt from Conte to see whether Dele Alli could display qualities that would be very useful for the team.

If Dele displayed those qualities, Conte would have gone directly to the board to help Dele renegotiate a contract with agreeable terms.

After all, Conte needed players and in today's market getting the players he would need would cost a pretty dime.

Better to pay a few more ten thousand in wages than spending tens of millions on bringing in a quality player.

However, with Dele Alli no longer willing to fight for a place at the club, he merely did his job on the pitch, display none of the fighting quality that Conte wanted to see from players on his team.

With that much, it was settled, Dele was leaving.

After Jason left the pitch, the Southampton players heaved sighs of relief.

They had been constantly rattled ever since Jason began playing with the aim of making a joke of everyone who came at him.

Forget being professionally trained, if any professional footballer played against a professional freestyler, they would be frustrated to oblivion.

The reason why professional freestylers weren't put in the same breath as professional footballers was because they couldn't keep up their performance for long periods of time and their goal scoring abilities were weaker against structured formations.

Dribbling was high octane movement and it drained stamina, that was why wingers who were particularly good at breaking past opponents usually had lesser defensive responsibilities so that they could save stamina.

But a monster like Jason had suddenly showed up.

The arsenal of skills of a professional freestyler, able to use it against actual footballers, annoyingly high stamina to keep it up for almost half the game and terribly high goal scoring ability.

It was simply a nightmare to play against.

What they didn't know was that Jason was actually already exhausted and the fifteen minutes break during halftime was what allowed him to recover enough stamina to keep up his performance after halftime.

Due to being rattled, they were easier to see through and he had kept getting past them, but because of the smile on his face as he played constantly made the Southampton players think he was doing all this with ease.

As he was finally taken off, most of the players could finally heave a sigh of relief and resettle into their game, even though there wasn't much else to play for.

Chapter 867: Four Seasons IV

After Jason left the pitch, the game tempo slowed down a fair bit.

The Tottenham side were still in control of the game and more comfortable on the ball but Southampton somehow managed to defend structurally well enough to keep the scores the same for a while.

Well not enough to actually keep the Tottenham side from scoring as the Tottenham side actually score three goals that were disallowed due to a close offside call or a foul.

However the game didn't stay completely unchanged as Salisu who had been hit hard the most had become a lot more aggressive and very on edge.

As the end of the ninety minutes edged closer, he only became more on edge as despite the scoreline only showing 4-1, Tottenham had actually scored 7 goals, three of which had been removed by extremely close offside calls and one by a foul that could hardly be called a foul.

Even worse was that apart from Jason's first goal that had been largely been because of him, two of the the disallowed goals had come from him almost playing the opponents inside.

Trying to ensure that didn't happen again, he made two hasty tackles, the first one earning him a yellow card and the second one earning him another yellow and giving Tottenham a penalty.

Annoyed and disgusted with himself, he walked off the field shaking his head, but as he walked past the technical area, he locked eyes with Jason who smirked at him.

Kane stepped up to take the penalty and with a perfect posture, buried it into the back of the net.

{5-1}

{They only want to hear the final whistle now! They've been humiliated}

The commentators words couldn't do justice to the atmosphere in the stadium.

Luckily, for Southampton, they saw out the game without conceding any more goals.

Without surprise, Jason was the man of the match and he was even given a 10.0 rating for his performance in the game.

After all, it was not everyday one saw a performance like the one he had just displayed.

After taking pictures with his MOTM award, Jason headed back to the locker room, his interview done long ago.

"Hey Jason, crazy work out there," Eric Dier said to Jason as he walked into the locker room.

Jason smiled and was about to respond with a word of thanks when Eric continued, not yet done.

"But if we ever play against each other and you start going crazy like that, I'll kill you," Eric said in a joking tone, but his eyes weren't laughing along with his lips.

"Aye aye sir," Jason said, half seriously, but he didn't mean his words either.

For Jason, as long as you were wearing a different jersey from his on a pitch, then you were fair game.

No such thing as previous camaraderie when each side wanted the win and that was all that had to do with that.

While the players were getting ready to leave, the Tottenham fans were excitedly reposting, making video cuts of the highlights of the game and posting it everywhere they possibly could.

This was one thing that all English fans had in common. An almost blind worship of any player who excited them with his plays and helped the team win.

While the Tottenham fans weren't as delusional as the Arsenal fans to the point where they could say things like "Jason is better than Messi", they could still say things like "Jason is the best winger in the league"

And in a way... They weren't wrong... Or at least he wasn't really far off from such a title.

After all, how many wingers in the Premier League could pull off such a dominant performance.

At least there was none this season.

Jason already had two hat-tricks and was nearing ten goals despite having not played that many matches in the league yet.

He was definitely a standout performer so while the internet space was plastered with replays of Jason's performance and the Tottenham fans lauding him with all sorts of praises, each one higher than the other, the other fans could only try to ignore it as they didn't have clapbacks for the Tottenham fans.

Because, annoyingly enough, Jason hadn't had a single bad match since he arrived in the Premier League.

Even in his past, he had barely had any bad matches where he ghosted all game or was completely shut out by the opposition.

So the opposition fans were short of ammunition to fire back.

They could only swallow the praise, note it and screenshot it, hoping for Jason to disappoint so that they could respond.

Jason didn't know what was going on, but he was for sure not going to give anyone a chance to banter him negatively.

In a studio at Sports Media, a football TV show that had been following the Premier League games came back online with the final whistle for the last premier league game of the day been blown at St. Mary's Stadium.

"What a way to end the Premier League for the year. Tottenham with a rout away from home, coming back from one down to utterly demolish the homeowners," James, the main host of the show opened with as soon as the intro of the show finished playing.

"Southampton seemed to have opened Pandora's box with their early goal, but unlike Kratos, they had no way to handle who jumped out of the box," Thomas, the co-commentator added.

"Maybe it would be more accurate to say he weaved into the box rather than jumped out of it," James.

"One man, the orchestra, the choir, and the director behind their collapse. We've always known he was dangerous on the ball, but this match really brought that thought into a new light, didn't it?" James continued.

"I found it hard to believe myself. Early on, he seemed to have been closely monitored and couldn't get away, but all of a sudden it felt like he had let them push enough buttons," Thomas added.

"He had had enough," James chuckled.

"All of a sudden it felt like Southampton was playing fifa against a pro. They couldn't get near to the ball despite all their efforts, and he topped it off by scoring not 1, or 2 or 3, but 4,"

"I think it's fair to say that it was less of Tottenham vs Southampton and more of Jason vs Southampton," Thomas laughed.

Chapter 868: Prelude to the AFCON

The new year brought Tottenham fans more than the usual lively New Year dining and pub packages from bars down the street.

It also brought them their team's first game of the year. Their 21st match in the Premier League, and it was against Watford.

The Tottenham side arranged themselves in a familiar shape across the Vicarage Road pitch.

The lineup was also well received by the fans and while some fans were concerned about Jason starting the match on the bench despite his performance in the previous game, they didn't have much complaints about Lucas Moura who was starting.

After all, the guy had been playing very well thus far and the start one bench one from game to game dynamic that Conte had been doing with Jason and Moura had showed pleasing results so far.

However despite the expectations, the first half of the game went by without a goal.

Both teams were at their peak defensively and neither of them could barely get into the penalty box of the other team nor could they fashion many clear chances.

And this was simply because the defensive efforts of both sides were top notch.

Watford was playing a 4-4-2 formation, so it was clear that they had given up some attacking power for more compact midfield and defense and they were making it work.

Thus Tottenham was only able to make Daniel Bachman, the Watford goalkeeper, work twice in the first half and the two shots were from beyond the 18-yard box.

At half time, Conte considered bringing Jason on to see if he could shake up the Watford side as the compact midfield and defense was where the problem lay.

With Jason pulling players out of position with his runs at defense, the other players would have more space to operate and the team would have an easier time finding a goal.

But despite that being the best option, Conte hesitated to make that decision because just the previous day, Jason had mentioned that he was still a bit tired from the previous game.

Despite alternating starting positions with Lucas Moura, the matchload had still been quite heavy for the Tottenham squad and for Jason who had just gotten back from injury, it was a lot.

Considering how hard he had played in the previous match without caring much to maintain his condition, it was expected that he'd need a bit more than three days to be at full energy.

The physios had also had a lot to say to Conte in addition to Jason's comment about his exhaustion.

Their conjection was that if the player involved mentioned being exhausted and not feeling too well, then he should be given a rest or at worst his minutes should be kept to the barest minimum.

In the end, it was up to Conte whether to take the risk or not and after a bit of thought, he chose not to bring Jason on immediately after half time.

The Premier League was a marathon and not a sprint.

Risking Jason in a match against Watford was hardly a good decision.

So what if they drew the game or even lost?

It was better than losing an important player to injury.

There was also the added part where the AFCON tournament was about to begin and by all rights, Jason shouldn't even have been added to the match squad for this game.

The 2021 AFCON tournament was scheduled to hold between the 9th of January 2022 and the 6th of February 2022 after been postponed from June the previous year because of abnormal weather conditions.

At this time, Jason was already supposed to be with the Nigerian National team, preparing for the competition as he had received a call-up letter, but hadn't left just yet because the team had a tight schedule and needed all the players at this moment.

But after putting it off till now, this was already pushing it and Jason had already spoken of his intention to leave tomorrow.

If Conte made him play and he picked up an injury that made him unfit to play in the AFCON tournament, then the relationship between Jason and the club management would definitely take a hit.

In actuality, Jason was here as a mascot more than anything and Conte didn't have any intention to actually play him unless absolutely necessary and so far, Conte didn't think it was absolutely necessary.

The second half began shortly after and the Tottenham players immediately picked off where they left off before the whistle, doing all they could to get the first goal of the game.

However, the Watford team stayed tight at the back, doing all they could to keep the Tottenham players out of the penalty box and though they couldn't completely achieve that, they did enough to keep the Tottenham players from finding the back of the net.

Time continued running down and with every minute that passed, the Tottenham fans got more uncomfortable and began to feel like this match might be slipping away from them.

Substitutions began to be made, but despite all the Tottenham fans expectations, Jason stayed firmly seated on the bench, not even bothering to warm-up.

Soon, it was the nintietth minute and the referee held up the board for an added five minutes, but the scoreline was still the same as at the beginning of the game.

A minute after, the board went up for a final substitution from Tottenham and Lucas Moura came off, but to the dismay of the Tottenham fans, it was Bryan Gil stepping on the field to take his place and Jason was still seated on the bench, watching the match with a bored look on his face.

Deep down, Jason wanted to step up to help the team as he didn't like losing for any reason, but doing so would be a selfish decision.

He knew his body and he knew he wasn't at tip-top shape at the moment.

He also knew the stakes and he knew the weight of the call-up letter he had received from his country.

He had already missed most of the World Cup Qualifiers last year due to injury and he had put off joining the national team training camp to stay with Tottenham.

Of course, he could argue that part of his reasons for staying was to gain as much match sharpness as he could before the competition began, but now that he was clearly match sharp, there was no need to push himself any further, especially now.

Football was a team sport after all and he trusted his teammates to be able to play well even if he wasn't present and if they couldn't even do that in today's match, then how would they cope during the month he would be away for the AFCON tournament.

{Son places the ball into the airspace in front of goal and Davison Sanchez rises to it!} the commentator's sudden shout instantly pulled Jason out of his thoughts and he snapped to attention just in time to see Sanchez bury the ball into the back of the Watford goal with a header from a freekick.

{OHHHHHH!!!!}

{THAT HAS TO BE IT! THAT HAS GOT TO BE IT!}

{WITH THE FINAL WHISTLE BUT SECONDS AWAY, TOTTENHAM TAKE THE LEAD!}

The stadium erupted with activity from both the Tottenham and Watford sides, but while the Watford fans were putting their hands on their heads and gnashing their teeth in agony, the Tottenham fans were screaming their lungs hoarse and jumping all over the place.

The players were even worse and were rushing towards Sanchez to celebrate the goal. Even Jason who had been on the bench a second ago was now running along with the rest of the sub players to Sanchez in excitement and celebration.

Chapter 869: Answering the Call-Up

3rd January 2022

4:02am

The screeching sounds of the rubber penetrated the shield of soundwaves that was Jason's headphones as the plane's tires touched the ground, indicating a successful landing on Nigerian soil.

For Jason however, it wasn't the end of his journey as he would still be travelling to Akwa Ibom state where the Super Eagles training camp would be holding for the next three days.

Thanks to not having played at all in the game against Watford, he didn't have any post match stress to take care off and his flight was scheduled for 11pm on the second, but it was a long flight and by the time he finally arrived in Nigeria, it was already the next day.

The domestic flight itself was only about an hour, so Jason finally arrived at Akwa Ibom state just after 5am and for Jason, that simply meant a much lower chance at been seen or recognized.

There was a car ready to take him to the Four Points by Sheraton Hotel where the other players were staying and after checking in at the desk, Jason hit the sack immediately.

Despite having slept a little on the plane, he was still tired from the flight and knew that there was no way in hell that he would be waking up in another two or three hours to join the first day of the training camp.

"Whenever I wake up is when they see me, I guess," he muttered to himself as he shut his eyes drowsily and sank into the endowed bosom of the goddess of sleep.

"... Well fu*k," Jason cursed in a sleep voice as he looked at the time on his phone after waking up.

[1:37pm]

Clearly more tired than he realized from the flight, he had slept quite a bit.

'The others are probably already out training,' Jason thought with a yawn, still a bit sleepy and feeling like he could sleep another few hours.

Groaning, he fought the urge and dragged himself off the bed and to his feet, walking to the bathroom while pulling off his clothes.

One of the cool things about being a football player like him was the fact that every hotel he stayed at always had a whole new set of bathroom essentials so he didn't have to start rummaging through his bag for a toothbrush.

With how drowsy he was, if he had to do that, he'd rather go back to sleep.

After a cool shower to wash away his sleepiness, he changed into casual wear, grabbed his boots and stepped out of his room.

The stadium was about 34km away from the hotel and since he didn't have any plans of running 34km on a sweltering afternoon, he had the hotel get him a car that took him to the stadium.

The training session had long started and was already nearing it's end, Jason figured as he was led into the stadium by one of the staff at the stadium.

To Jason's surprise, the media still hadn't left when he arrived so they captured the moment he entered the stadium, but they couldn't follow him into the stadium.

After walking for a while, Jason finally stepped out from the tunnel onto the green and stopped on the sidelines to watch the boys in green do some training on the field.

The official media houses had already been disallowed into the stadium, but the National team's own media team were recording some shots for promotional events and were thus able to capture the moment Jason arrived.

First, he headed out to the field to greet the guys already training and then took a minute to speak to the new manager... well, interim manager.

For reasons Jason hadn't been paying attention to, Gernot Rohr had been dismissed by the NFF in December and former international Augustine Eguavoen took over as interim head coach.

As far as Jason heard, the NFF were already in talks with some guy named Jose Peseiro, but nothing was confirmed yet and it was highly likely that they would be heading to the AFCON with Augustine as the manager.

For Jason, the decisions of the NFF didn't matter much, but he hoped that the manager had a reasonable capability to command his squad and create tactics that worked for them.

Anything else was secondary.

After saying a quick greeting and setting a time for further discussion, Jason headed back to the players.

"Shame about Victor, he's really down about missing this AFCON," Alex Iwobi said to Jason.

"Yeah, I saw. Spoke to him a bit ago and he's recovering well at least. He really tried to force his return as he felt like he could play if he put a mask on, but his club wouldn't let him,"

"I wouldn't advise it either," Jason said, shaking his head in pity.

"Man, that's mad. I can't even blame him, injuries are the worst," Iwobi sighed.

"Tell me about it," Jason laughed.

Both he and Iwobi had just returned from injury and barely made it to the squad for the AFCON tournament, but while Jason had returned and had begun putting out good performances, Iwobi still looked a little shaky from the injury and he wasn't sure if he would even have been called up.

Luckily, he was in the new manager's plans and had been called up for the tournament, but as for how many minutes he would actually get, he would only know after the tournament began.

Despite joining the team at the stadium, Jason couldn't get much training done since they were almost done for the day, but that was for the best because he was still not at a hundred after his flight.

The little bit of activity to get his blood flowing faster and to maintain muscle activity was the best for helping his exhaustion and he was sure he would feel better tomorrow.

The national team fully training on the field was carefully recorded by the media team who were already planning what captions they would use when posting the videos.

Chapter 870: Faith

6th January 2022

In a conference hall that had been arranged into a venue for a press conference, a lot of reporters sat in chairs waiting for the Super Eagles manager and captain to arrive.

With the AFCON tournament drawing nearer day by day and the team scheduled to travel to Cameroon, the hosting country, they had scheduled a press conference to speak to the press.

The press would get to ask the manager about the team's aspirations and other things like how the preparation for the competition was going.

Of course, it wasn't only the manager who was expected at the press conference.

The national team captain was expected to make an appearance and he might not be the only player to make an appearance.

A sudden shift in atmosphere at the entrance caused a stir among the reporters and cameras turned to face the doors immediately.

A second later, people started walking through the entrance and walking up to the chairs in front of the crowd.

Augustine Eguavoen was the first one to appear through the doors and following closely behind him was William Troost-Ekong, the current Super Eagles captain.

Ahmed Musa, the team's previous captain had finally retired from football and the band was handed over to William.

Coming behind the captain were three other players. Iwobi, Iheanacho and Jason.

Each one of them took a seat at the long table backed by a board filled with sponsor logos and the press conference began.

The first set of questions were directed to then new manager... well, interim manager.

Questions regarding the team's preparations, their aspirations in the tournament and how it felt to be the interim manager for the national team were directed to Augustine.

Some reporters didn't hesitate to ask questions about whether he had his eyes on a more permanent stay with the national team, but Augustine skillfully deflected the question as while he did have designs on the national team manager position, it was too early for him to make his ambitions known.

All he said was that after the tournament, they'd see.

After answering a few more questions to the manager, the reporters turned to the players.

Starting with the captain, they asked William what it meant to lead the Nigerian national team into a prestigious tournament like the AFCON.

With a calm but excited undertone, William smoothly replied to the questions, stating that it was an honor to have been trusted with the armband for his country for the foreseeable future and that he hoped to be able to prove that he was worthy of his teammates and the fans trust.

Starting with the upcoming AFCON tournament of course.

Other questions flew at the Super Eagles Captain and at the other players and finally, it was Jason's turn.

"You missed the first and second round so of the FIFA world cup qualification matches last year due to injury. How does it feel to get called up for the national team again?" The first question came Jason's way.

"Uh, I was disappointed to have missed the games, but with these guys holding the fort there wasn't much to worry about. Now I'm ready and I'm glad the manager called on me," Jason replied, rubbing his neck.

"This will be your first international tournament with the Super Eagles. What do you feel about been called up to such a big stage and what are your expectations for the tournament?"

"... The AFCON is a very prestigious tournament and I am very excited to be a part of the- uh, to take part in. I think it will be quite the experience," Jason replied softly into the mic.

"The super eagles has always been a strong contender for the previous AFCON tournaments so how far do you think the team can go in the competition this time?"

Jason first glanced at his other teammates and at the manager before turning back to the reporter.

"Like you said, we are strong contenders and we have a team as good as any other so uh, I believe we can go all the way. The AFCON trophy is coming home," Jason said and instantly all the reporters in the room felt their blood pressure rise. Things were getting interesting

"Not just a strong performance but winning the trophy? Don't you believe it is a little early to make such a claim? Especially since you haven't had experience in the tournament before?" The reporter shot back.

Thinking logically this was the right bout of questioning. After all, despite being strong contenders the national team had been a bit shaky in recent years, especially in international tournaments.

Jason however didn't feel pleasant that his answer was being questioned. Why would you ask him for his opinion and then question his opinion.

Sure this was a press conference, but surely you had better things to do.

He was thinking to either ignore the question or snap back when he saw a necklace of a cross hanging from the reporter's neck.

"Are you a Christian?" Jason asked with an eye raised.

"Yes. I love and serve God," the reporter was a bit surprised at the question but answering with pride all the same.

"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. That's Hebrews 11:1,"

"I have faith, do you?" Jason shot back and the reporter opened his mouth to counter but had no reply.

"Practice what you preach, the world has enough fakes. Next question," Jason said and turned to the next reporter.

The room was silent for a second before the next reporter asked Jason a question, but all the other reporters were lost in thought.

When did this turn into a religious debate?

Also, did this guy just out talk a media reporter, especially one that was known for having one of the biggest mouths.

The reporter in question was also stunned.

Enlightened by Jason's words, but stunned at how he had been shut down.

In the end he could only laugh to himself, now looking forward to the tournament even more and making a commitment to be more "Christlike" in his doings.

Saying one thing and practicing another did indeed make him look a bit of a fool and he couldn't have that continue.