

Legends 871

Chapter 871: Tactics Masterclass

8th January 2022

Shalom City Hotel, Garoua, Cameroon

5:54pm

The Nigerian team had already made the trip to Cameroon where the CAF competition was being held the previous and had begun onsite training today.

After a day of training, the players were free to rest for the rest of the day.

Some chose to have a quick dinner and go to sleep, some headed out to explore the city a little.

Jason, Iwobi, Aina, Chukwueze, Iheanacho and Awoniyi were just having dinner at one of the restaurants at the hotel after having been a bit distracted talking for a while.

Now they had moved their conversation to the restaurant where they were having their dinner concurrently.

"Wetin you dey video sef?" Iheanacho asked Iwobi who had had his phone out quite a few times during the day, even during the training session.

"The brother dey do blog. Ummuna content creator," Chukwueze said and they were all burst into laughter.

As they laughed, the door of the restaurant was pushed open by a doorman and a girl walked in.

All the eyes that fell on her stayed locked on as she walked by and it wasn't without reason.

With a headful of thick braids tied up in a bun above her head and a slightly made up face that couldn't hide its enamel chocolate color, she instantly garnered attention.

Most importantly, she was thiccc.

Jason was a bit more focused on his food and only glanced up when he noticed the sudden silence at the table, catching sight of the girl.

But like they say, comparison is the thief of joy.

For Jason who had met women like Adele, Temz, and many others, not to mention the women he had trysts with in his previous reality, the woman who had just walked in was not that impressive.

Rolling his eyes at the others, Jason waited till she was out of earshot before saying,

"You guys can stop gaping now."

The others turned and glancing at each other with a smirk full of conversation, they nodded at each other with dirty smiles.

"Guy, that girl baaaa, Chukwueze was the first to break the silence.

"I'm telling you bro. Ahn ahn, see yansh," Taiwo Awoniyi said, glancing again at the girl as she walked towards a table.

"You will not put that one in your blog. Instead it's rap that doesn't have rhyme you will be doing up and down," Chukwueze said to Iwobi and everyone burst out laughing.

"This place may not be too boring after all," Aina nodded to himself, approving what he was looking at.

"You like woman too much," Chukwueze slapped the back of his head.

"Wait wait wait, there's five of us and only one girl. You guys should go find yours, this one's mine," Chukwueze immediately called dibs.

"Four of you actually, I don't want none of that," Jason quickly extricated himself from the lot's plans.

"Why will you want? When it's Temz you've been bending over, why will you want this one. Or you think we don't know your doings?" Chukwueze retorted, giving Jason a bombastic side eye.

Jason almost choked on the orange juice he was drinking.

"*Cough* *Cough* We're just friends bruh," Jason managed to reply, but none of the others at the table was intent on believing him in the slightest.

"Yes yes, friends. Friends with big big benefits," Awoniyi said, making a circular gesture with his hands, his voice not short of sarcasm either.

"She's literally someone I just talk with," Jason tried to explain but Iwobi countered before he could even finish.

"And Adele is just someone you work with, eh?"

"Gbam!" Iheanacho put his hands up as if to say, "all that needs to be said have been said".

"Bro be doing that pillow talk while hitting it from the back," Aina added causing the guys who had been holding back their laughter to burst.

Even Jason gave up and laughed, wondering how he ended up with this unhinged group of people.

As they laughed, the door of the restaurant opened again and four other women walked in, each with differing charm, but just as beautiful as the one who walked in earlier.

Surprisingly, they walked to her table and sat, conversing and relating like close friends, making it clear that they were a friend group of their own.

"I guess the number matches now, innit?" Jason smiled, happy they were enough girls to occupy these guys so they could get off his case.

"Since you're retired and have achievements that are enough to be undisputed, you're the manager, show us the way forward sir," Chukwueze turned to Jason, letting him know he was mistaken.

They were not getting off his case anytime soon.

"And please remember that we don't have your... Skillset," Aina added, gesturing to his face while the others nodded.

'Ah whatever,' Jason thought, giving up.

"So what we're playing here is the 1-2-1-1 formation," Jason immediately got in character.

"Aleix, you're my striker, you're going to be leading the attack. Walk up to them girls and drop a few lines,"

"Ola, you'll be right behind him playing the role of second striker, you're his wingman. The goal is to invite the whole group over to come eat with you guys," Jason added, turning to Ola Aina.

"After they come over," Jason continued but was interrupted by Iwobi.

"What if they don't agree to come over, what then?" Aleix asked.

"I'm right here man, just show them our table and they'll come over," Jason scoffed and went right back to explaining, ignoring the looks the other were giving him after hearing his reply.

"Like I was saying, when the girls come over, this is where you play your part Sam," Jason turned to Chukwueze.

"You have to control the game. Make jokes, do what you can do keep the conversation flowing, just do you. And as the middle men, your job is to join him in controlling the game," He added, turning to the final two.

"After that, you pick your targets, make your moves and well, it's your show,"

"Are we clear?" Jason asked the guys.

"Omo, see tactics masterclass,"

"The guy too good,"

"With all these tactics, you want to tell me you aren't tapping Temz? Even God won't believe you,"

"You go explain tire," the guys laughed among themselves.

"Get to work and leave my own matters alone, abeg," Jason rolled his eyes at them and went back to his food.

Without saying, with Jason's tactics and their status as young handsome and fit men, it wasn't too difficult to get the girls to join them at their table.

The light in the girls eyes were especially bright as they looked at Jason, especially since he looked familiar, but Jason soon left the table and let the others have their fun.

Chapter 872: Hope For The Tournament?

9th January 2022

Stade Roumde Adjia

11:24am

The Super Eagles players were at the stadium where the match against Egypt was to take place and they were there to examine the stadium and do a little training session there for the day.

The media teams had come and gone, taking the pictures and shooting videos that will be put on TV and the internet later and the players were finally now getting to the important part of the training session.

The players were in a crowd around Augustine Eguavoen as the man began explaining their tactics for the match against Egypt.

"Our main goal for the game is to lock Salah out. He is the danger man we have to watch out for and he is the opponents lifeline,"

"If we lock him out, then we have the game in our hands,"

"To do that, we cannot give him space so we will be playing the 4-4-2 formation for that game,"

"No matter which position he will be playing, I want two men on him at all times,"

"If he is in center, the two centerbacks will stay on him while one of the midfielders will stay behind to block any passes in his direction,"

"Once we can do that, then the rest of the game is in our hands. They will try to pass to him and once we intercept the ball, we go direct,"

"Don't waste time and get the ball up the field as quickly as possible,"

"It's not about how long we have the ball, it's about how quickly we make them regret losing it, do you understand?" The manager asked the players.

"Yes sir," they replied collectively and training began.

The manager split the team into two sides; Team A and Team. The players more likely to start the upcoming game were put on team A with the exception of Jason who was put on team B.

Jason was put on the second team to replace Salah in the upcoming match and the training consisted of Team A doing their best to prevent Team B from giving Jason the ball or shutting him down as quickly as possible if they couldn't stop the ball from reaching him.

The training went well... For the most part at least.

The players on Team A were able to get on a defensive rhythm and managed to restrain Team B from unleashing Jason by getting the ball to him and they also managed to somewhat stop the other players from taking advantage of Jason drawing attention.

However that only happened for the first ten minutes of the scrimmage.

After conceding a second goal, Jason called the members of Team B over and gave them new instructions.

When the scrimmage finally continued, things continued and seemed to be going in the same direction until Jason suddenly started running all over the pitch in the final third, refusing to stay in one location.

With him no longer staying on one side of the pitch, the players were at a loss on how to defend.

Should they follow him around or should they stay back and stick to a zonal defending style instead.

Unfortunately for them, against Jason neither one of those two were the correct option.

When they left Jason and allowed him to move all over and receive the ball, the other members of team B surged forward into dangerous positions, pulling apart the defenders of Team A and allowing Jason to comfortably take on only one or two players at a time, which for Jason was a gift.

Whether to take a long shot, dribble through and get closer, or find a teammate in a dangerous position with an incisive pass, the choice remained with Jason and since he could do all those things, Team A suffered for it.

Eguavoen shouted at the players on Team A from the sidelines after they conceded a second goal in under ten minutes, telling them to man mark and tight mark Jason instead of using a zonal defending style.

However, no sooner had they done that than Jason changed his style of movement. He didn't stop moving all over the pitch, but this time he started making runs in behind as well, drawing the defenders along with him, but the ball hardly ever came his way because he was simply playing the role of a dummy runner.

However, the Team A defenders couldn't exactly stop defending against him because of that because the moment they refused to stay with Jason, the ball came flying his way instead and Jason getting the ball that close to the goal only ever translated into a dangerous opportunity.

In the end, the training could be classified as something of a success as Jason's performance ensured that his teammates had enough experience on the tactics the manager had for the game, but Jason ran them completely ragged during the session.

After watching Jason in the training session, Augustine Eguavoen was very impressed and could finally stop worrying.

In the end, Jason had only been with the national team for a little while and had been injured prior to this.

The team's main man Osimhen was injured and unavailable for the tournament and while the team didn't have a shortage of good players, losing an important player like him did not bode well for their chances in the competition.

If Jason didn't hit the ground running, then their chances for the competition would be in doubt, but after watching Jason's performance at the training session, Augustine finally began to believe in his chances.

Even if they might not win, their performance in the tournament wouldn't be disappointing, though he of course wasn't going to be content with merely performing well.

The NFF already had a verbal agreement with a new manager for the national team and he was merely an interim but he wanted the job and if he wanted to cause an upset and make the NFF go back on their agreement with the new manager, then winning the tournament was the least he had to do.

Chapter 873: Group D: Game 1

11th January 2022

{And here we have it, the first match in the group D of the African Cup of Federation 2021}

{As they say, delay is not denial and the competition may have been delayed, but Nigerian football fans, Egyptian football fans, African football fans and fans all around the world have not been denied the joy of this tournament} the commentator began as the players of the two sides marched out onto the pitch.

{The Supa Eagles of Nigeria versus the Pharoahs of Egypt, ready to battle it out for three points and a winning start in this competition}

{Two of the favorite teams to go far in this competition are ready to give the fans a taste of what is to come. The fans couldn't be any luckier}

While the commentator was doing his tongue gymnastics, the two teams lined up beside the referees and faced the fans to sing the national anthems of their respective country.

A few minutes later, the players of the two sides were arranging themselves across the field.

Like they had prepared, the Supa Eagles settled into a 4-4-2 formation.

Maduka was in goal, Kenneth and Williams were centerbacks, Aina and Sanusi in fullback positions on the right and left respectively.

Ndidi and Aribo were guarding the center of the field while Moses Simon and Jason were on the right and left sides of the midfield.

At forefront was a striking partnership of Iheanacho and Awoniyi.

The Egyptians chose the more common 4-3-3 formation and seemed to want to advance with a more attacking formation.

El Shenawy was in goal with Hamdy and Ahmed guarding directly in front of him while Tawfik and Al-Fotouh guarding the flanks.

Fatih, El-Nenny, and Mostafa were center midfielders while Salah, Marmoush and Trezeguet were the forwards for this match with Salah taking a more uncommon center forward position.

It was a common case of putting your most dangerous man in the most dangerous position.

The match soon began with all preparations complete and the ball soon began moving across the field.

It was the Supa Eagles who kicked off the game and they began the game with moving the ball around, getting comfortable on the ball and did not launch themselves forward on the attack immediately.

Since they were trying to play direct football, a compact opponent wasn't something they wanted to deal with and since it was still early on in the game, they wanted to ease into the game.

The Egypt team did not have such reservations and rushed forward on the press, pushing into the Supa Eagles half of the field and pressing until they stole the ball and immediately launched it even further forward trying to find an early goal.

The ball soon found Salah who received the ball with his back to goal. Turning on the ball, he weaved past Aribo, faked Kenneth and then took a shot at goal from the edge of the box.

{And Salaaaahhhhhh!!!!} the commentator screamed, but Maduka lunged at the ball, managing to get a hand to it and just narrowly push it off target.

{Saved! Egypt is denied an early opener from their dangerman but with this happening early in the game, it could be a good sign for them!} the commentator was right as the attempt of Salah had instantly bolstered the Egypt fans and their players.

On the sidelines, Augustine wanted to rage at his players as this was exactly what they had spent their training sessions preparing for, but his players were already falling behind this early in the game, however he restrained himself and watched quietly.

It was still early in the game after all.

Also, Egypt weren't the only ones who had a dangerman.

He was proven right immediately after the corner kick.

The ball flew into the penalty box after a cross from Salah but it was headed clear by Ndidi and the ball flew outside the penalty box.

Jason who was just a few meters clear of the penalty line saw where the ball would line and took off, managing to get to it first and with a clever touch, dodged Fatih who had also ran at the ball.

{He stumbled a bit from that, but now he's up and away!}

Dashing up the field, Jason launched a counter attack and ran down the center, quickly advancing past the halfway line and into the opponent's half of the field.

His teammates as well as the Egyptians surged up the field along with Jason but there were still three players in between Jason and goal.

Hamdy who was directly in front of Jason tried to square up against slow him down, but Jason barely slowed, only adjusting his pace slightly forcing the man to commit and dodging the tackle, leaving him scrambling and falling onto the fall before picking himself up and giving chase, however he was already out of the equation.

With him out of the way a somewhat narrow path opened up between Jason and goal as the defenders were on the right and left sides.

El-Nenny who was on the left immediately changed his run to the center to block the path, but in doing so, he opened up space for Awoniyi who was surging forward from the left and Jason smoothly rolled the ball into his path.

{And its on a plate for Awoniyi!} the commentator's voice surged as Awoniyi hit the ball first time, aiming for the far right of the post.

CLANG!

The in a bid to achieve perfect accuracy into the bottom corner, Awoniyi had slightly overhit the ball and sent it onto the right post, much to the relief of the Egyptians who quickly cleared the ball after that.

{Oh no no no! How did he miss that!?!} the commentator put into words what every person watching the game was thinking. Even the Egyptians were sure that they had conceded a goal.

{He has an apologetic look on his face after missing that, but for many fans that might not slide. If results don't end up well for them, a lot of fingers would be pointed in his direction}

{On the bright side however, it is clear that this match has a lot of attacking football in store for the viewers. We look to have quite the game on our hands}

Chapter 874: Group D: Game 1 II

#14th minute...

If one was to describe the game they were watching, they would call it a back and forth as so far it was one team attacking and the other defending, then the ball would change hands and the team attacking previously would become the one defending while the one defending would attack.

It was as if they were taking turns to attack and then defend.

In Nigerian terms, "For every gbas, there is an equal and corresponding gbos".

This time, it was the Supa Eagles on the ball and the ball was given to Sanusi on the left.

Looking for a nearby teammate, Sanusi suddenly locked eyes with Jason snaking forward towards a space between two Egypt defenders on the defense line.

As a former teammate of Jason at Oporto, Sanusi was more in tune with Jason and instantly understood that Jason was trying to make a forward run especially since the Egypt defenders were currently playing a very high line.

Not hesitating, he whipped a long high ball over into Jason's path on the right.

Already on the move, Jason suddenly accelerated, breezing past the Egypt defense line and launching himself at the ball that was flying in behind, completely through on goal.

The pass was perfectly weighted and Jason caught up to it midway between the center half and Egypt's penalty area, bringing it under control with his first touch and continuing towards goal.

Racing towards goal, he made it into the penalty box, but his ears had picked up the rushed footsteps of an approaching opponent and he raised his left foot to seemingly take the shot only to fake it and dodge the outstretched leg of Ahmed who had caught up.

Instead of forcing the shot against the goalkeeper who was less than a meter ahead of him, he opted to roll the ball to the left into the path of Iheanacho, and the man hit the ball first time, but Ahmed who Jason had dodged hadn't stopped his run and running behind the goalkeeper, he had angled his run to

the left and somehow ended up in the path of the ball, blocking it with a tackle and sending it out of play.

{Again! The Pharoahs survive yet another scary moment and the score stays level} the commentator squealed, adding to the tension of the Egyptian fans whose hearts had leaped into their throats.

#20th minute...

The Supa Eagles were once again on the attack and the ball was sent to Jason who was dashing forward on the right.

Receiving the ball with his left foot, Jason slowed down and began cutting inside the penalty box, squaring off against his man and then suddenly raising his leg into a swing.

His marker thought Jason was about to hit that ball and instantly got into a position to block only for Jason to pull the ball back to the right, finding space and sending the ball across the face of the goal.

The ball flew across the goal and despite Iheanacho and Awoniyi within the reach of the ball, they somehow missed it by dashing forward too fast and the ball continued rolling.

But before the Egyptian fans could heave a sigh of relief, Sanusi appeared behind the ball and hit it hard at the bottom right corner.

{Hits it first time!}

The ball flew towards the bottom right corner, scaring the Egyptian fans before flying just wide of the goal.

{That's three clear cut chances that the Supa Eagles have failed to convert and the manager will really start to be worried now if his team continue failing to convert}

{On the bright side, at least one of his players is performing splendidly well so that's a point of encouragement for the Nigerian manager}

Jason himself couldn't believe it either.

Though it was still early in the game and he wasn't in a volatile emotional state, especially since they weren't losing the game, continuing to fail to convert wasn't exactly pleasant either, especially when he had done his part to create the goal.

#27th minute...

On the left side of the field, Moses Simon burst past his marker with a sudden burst of pace and tried to cross the ball, but his marker got back up to speed in time to get a leg just in front of the ball, deflecting it upward and back towards the edge of the center of the penalty box.

Pushing away from his man, Aribio jumped up to get his head to the ball and direct it towards Iheanacho who was nearer to him than the post.

Iheanacho did not let the ball bounce before catching it on his chest and pushing it into the path of a swinging left foot.

{Iheanacho with the shot!}

{And it's in!} The commentator shouted as the ball smashed into the right of the post despite the attempts of El-Shenawy to reach it.

The Nigerian fans in the stadium burst into loud cheers of joy as Iheanacho charged down to the corner flag and jumped up, pumping his fist in the air excitedly.

{A few chances may have gone begging, but they prove that they have a lot more in the tank and they get their first goal in this tournament}

#40th minute...

After taking the lead, the Supa Eagles had to deal with the Egyptian Pharaohs attempts to get back in the game, but after easing into the game and becoming more comfortable on the ball, the Supa Eagles were able to mostly keep the ball in possession.

And even when out of possession, they were able to shut out Salah and prevent him from bursting out any showcases of individual brilliance.

As professionals, the Pharaohs realized and had expected their opponents to try to shut Salah out, but they weren't able to do much to help the matter.

He was their best player after all and they were somewhat lacking in quality to threaten a more physically dominant Nigerian side.

That and constantly having to watch out for a counterattack or sudden breakthrough from the two Nigerian wingers kept them on the backfoot and before long.

Already having made a few more attempts to break past the Egyptian defense, Jason's movements, full of flair had struck fear in the hearts of his opponents, but he hadn't managed to convert any into a meaningful chance after the earlier missed chances.

But he wasn't going to give up and another chance came with that ball suddenly rolling towards him just about two meters away from the right corner of the box.

Not yet sure what he wanted to do with the ball as it came his way, a sudden inside run from Aina made up his mind for him.

Aina made an under lapping run and targeting the space between the left back who was getting into Jason's path and the left center back, he looked to be running directly towards the penalty box.

Since it was a somewhat awkward angle, Al-Fotouh thought Jason would have to take an extra touch before he could make a meaningful move and this caused his reaction to slow down slightly, focusing on Jason and leaving Aina to run through.

The next moment, Jason chipped the ball with his left foot, using the momentum from the still rolling ball to add a slight spin and the ball flew comfortably over Al Fotouh and dropped into the path of Aina who had run into the box, completely onside.

{Clever chipped pass and Aina's all alone!}

Chapter 875: Group D: Game 1 III

Letting the ball bounce once before volleying it, Aina thundered the ball at goal and El-Shenawy did not have it in him to stop such a powerful shot.

{Flicked over by Jason and Aina takes a shot and it's a wonderful goal!!!}

{They have two! Just before halftime, what a time to double their advantage!}

Aina ran over to the sidelines high-fiving Jason and then doing a little Afro style dance moves that some of his other teammates joined him with.

As a fullback who didn't score often, whenever he scored, he always celebrated with a lot of fan fare and this time wasn't different.

The Egyptian players and fans had to watch the display whether they liked it or not.

Luckily for them, it didn't continue for too long and the Nigerian players were soon back in position to resume the game.

After going behind another goal, the Pharaohs doubled their efforts to get a goal back but until the whistle for the first half ending went off, they couldn't make any waves and had to head to the break already two goals behind.

The Egyptian fans in the stands tried to stay optimistic and continued singing and cheering to keep the morale up, letting their players know that they stood behind them.

In the Nigerian camp however, celebrations were already aplenty among the Nigerian fans as despite the Egyptian fans optimism, the Nigerian fans knew how good their team was at defending a lead.

The quality of the Supa Eagles couldn't be called top class, but the whole team knew how to dig in behind and stay compact whenever they had to defend a lead.

That was what their previous tactics under their previous manager was all about after all.

With a two goal lead, it was all but sure for the Nigerian fans that they would be walking home with the three points unless some miracle happened and if the Bible was anything to go by, miracles usually happened against the Egyptians instead of for them.

The bones of the Egyptian soldiers at the bottom of the Red Sea could tell that story and a lot more.

Soon enough, the second half resumed and right off the bat the Egyptian Pharaohs tried to aggressively take control of the game and start building up to getting a goal back.

If they could get one goal back, perhaps they could build from there and even get an equalizer or even pull off a surprising and unexpected comeback.

But it was soon clear that the Nigerian fans confidence wasn't for naught. With the Nigerian players ready to dig in behind and hold onto their lead, the Egyptians felt like they were pushing a 500 pound boulder up a steep hill.

No matter what they tried, they could barely get into the final third, completely handcuffed in midfield and with all their attempts resulting in nothing, their tempo inevitably cooled off after 15 minutes of pushing hard.

In that moment, the Nigerian team that was seemingly content to play possession football suddenly surged forward on a direct attack, catching them off guard.

The ball flew forward quickly, making it all the way across the field in less than five seconds and finding Jason just outside the right side of the area.

Controlling the ball with his left foot, Jason cut into the penalty box from the right, pushing the ball in with his left foot while keeping his eyes locked on Al-Fotouh who squared up against him.

While Al-Fotouh was keeping his eyes on Jason, he missed Aina who had surged forward again, this time running in from the outside and once he got in behind, Jason flicked the ball into his path.

Catching the ball and pushing it closer to the goal with his first touch, Aina ignored the awkward angle and hit the ball with as much power as he could muster sending the ball powerfully at goal.

The ball flew speedily, shooting up and flying over El-Shenawy and thundering against the underside of the cross bar and against the inside of the left post before it finally bounced past the goal line and into the back of the net.

{Jason to Aina again and that's another one for the defender!}

{That was absolutely thundered in! Two for him on the day and this is shaping up to be a day he will remember for years to come}

Aina ran again to the sidelines to do his dance and this time many more Nigerian players joined in as well as the fans.

{It is also Jason's second assist of the night and I will say it is a deserved number though we do feel that it could be a lot more. At least three more actually, but that's another one of the what ifs of football}

As the Nigerian players headed back to their half of the field, the assistant referee on the sidelines held up the board for a substitution.

Surprisingly or unsurprisingly, it was Jason whose number was in red on the board and after dapping a few of his teammates, Jason headed over to the sidelines.

{He's coming off now and it seems like the manager is switching over to a more defensive style of play. We can't blame him as three goals is good enough to defend and with how good this side are defensively, they might just see out this three nil victory}

{Might as well let an important player rest his legs a bit in preparation for the upcoming games}

{It will however give the Egyptians some respite as now they don't have to constantly watch for his breaking through abilities and will be able to focus on just attacking the goal, but the manager should know what he's signing up for}

High-fiving Semi Ajayi, the centerback who was coming on for him, Jason stepped off the field and headed to the bench without a single hint or displeasure from being taken off.

He did feel like there was more that could be gotten from the game, but he wasn't exactly displeased with being taken off either, especially as since now that they were three behind, the Egyptians would only focus on attacking.

Since they were already three behind, they were already guaranteed to lose so they would definitely pile on the pressure and that meant lots of defensive football and Jason would prefer to not have to do that.

The game continued and just as he expected, the Pharaohs really dug in deep and tried to get at least one goal back and the manager's decision to bring on an extra centerback began to show results as only with that advantage in numbers were they able to keep Salah in check.

In the end, the game ended with Nigeria 3 and Egypt nil.

Aina was named the man of the match and Nigeria celebrated their first win in the CAF.

A game that many expected to be quite equally matched had ended up in a rout for the Nigerian side and that sent the message across about the Nigerian team's ambitions in the tournament.