

STARTING WITH REAL MADRID

Chapter 4: Declare War on the superstars

"This is a manuscript specially prepared for you by the public relations department."

Just as Gao Shen followed Raul to the administrative office of the Bernabeu Stadium, sports director Floro greeted him.

Floro once coached Real Madrid in 1993-94, but he was fired after being exposed by the media for yelling at players in the locker room. After that, he went to coach many teams, and although he had some success, he eventually got the backing of someone on the board and became Real Madrid's sporting director.

In the eyes of most fans, the high-end, star-studded Real Madrid is quite different from the reality, which is actually quite chaotic and full of various entanglements of interests.

Take the management system as an example.

There is a general manager under the club president, as well as a little-known chairman's office, which is equivalent to the chairman's private think tank, usually helmed by the chairman's most trusted confidant. For example, the director of the chairman's office under Florentino was Manuel Redondo, his secretary who had been with him for decades.

The general manager is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the club. Below are several different departments, including the sports department, which has a sports director. In theory, the sports director is responsible for all sports affairs, including the basketball department and the football department.

When Florentino took over as chairman, the sports director was former Real Madrid hero Valdano, but after poor performance, Valdano stepped down. Florentino then hired world-class coach Sacchi as the technical director, directly responsible to the chairman.

In this way, the technical director was almost at the same level as the general manager, but since he was only in charge of the football department and many competitive affairs needed handling, Florentino became the sports director.

But soon, there was another problem.

Due to the poor performance of the team, head coach Luxemburgo and technical director Sacchi stepped down, and the technical director role was concurrently held by vice chairman Butragueno. He was also the head of the public relations department and did not have the energy to manage everything, so he only took care of the first team, while the second team and the youth team were handed over to Floro, the sports director.

This situation only lasted for three months before Florentino announced his resignation, and the new chairman Martin took office.

So now, Real Madrid's internal management is a mess.

The team lost 0-1 at home to Arsenal in the first leg of the Champions League, making the second leg at Highbury crucial. Before that, the weekend derby against Atletico Madrid was also a must-win, and the league results were under great pressure.

At this time, the new chairman Martin also fired Carlo and appointed Gao Shen, making everyone even more anxious.

At this moment, everyone in the Real Madrid office was thinking about one thing: how to resolve the pressure of public opinion from the outside world.

To put it simply, it was to help the new chairman clean up his mess.

In any case, the new chairman also represents the image and interests of Real Madrid.

Therefore, no one paid any attention to Gao Shen.

After Floro handed over the manuscript prepared by the PR department to Gao Shen, he instructed, "Don't be nervous when you come to the stage later, just read it according to the manuscript. As for the question-and-answer session, we have also arranged it."

In his opinion, Gao Shen was just a fledgling rookie.

No one around paid attention to Gao Shen, and no one from the public relations department even came to tell him what could be said and what could not be said later when he went on stage.

Everyone treated him as a tool for reading the manuscript on stage!

Gao Shen knew that he was a pawn and was not taken seriously, but he didn't take it to heart. He took the manuscript to a corner where no one was paying attention and found that it was all empty talk and nothing substantial.

With a manuscript of this level, he could have ad-libbed for half an hour without repeating himself before he crossed over.

This was his first time facing the media as Real Madrid head coach. This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to speak out. Just reading the manuscript?

What a joke!

Gao Shen tore up the manuscript and threw it directly into the trash can next to him.

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The press conference attracted many media reporters, but the process was just as Gao Shen had guessed.

At the meeting, the new chairman Martin repeatedly emphasized that he chose Gao Shen as the head coach after careful consideration. He said he had observed Gao Shen for a long time and believed that Gao Shen had the ability and courage to lead Real Madrid out of the predicament.

He emphasized that Gao Shen graduated from Loughborough University, the No. 1 university in global sports. Gao Shen achieved excellent academic performance during his school days and also performed well during his internship at Real Madrid. He was promoted to the first team by exception and accumulated experience with the team.

This made Gao Shen, who sat upright next to him, feel a little ashamed. He didn't even know that he was so good and so valued by the leaders.

Thinking about it, he realized he was still too low-key.

This was still due to the national football team, which stank so much that it caused the Chinese people to seriously lack confidence in football.

All in all, Martin had collected a lot of evidence to prove to everyone that his choice of Gao Shen was serious and not a farce, and that Real Madrid needed an impulsive, drastic, and traumatic reform.

"From 2003 to the present, we haven't won even a single championship, which is unacceptable in any case. We are likely to be eliminated in the Champions League round of 16 for two consecutive seasons, which is unsatisfactory."

"We all know that our team is sick, very seriously. Our team needs surgery, a major surgery."

Afterwards, Martin praised Gao Shen again, believing that his youth and dynamism were exactly what Real Madrid needed most now.

After the chairman and technical director Butragueno, Gao Shen also spoke as Real Madrid head coach for the first time.

In fact, it was just a formality.

The whole speech expounded Gao Shen's view of Real Madrid's current status and his envisioned solutions.

After Gao Shen finished reciting, the reaction of the media reporters was very dull.

These people were well-informed and knew if there was any substance in what was being said.

After Gao Shen recited the manuscript, the free questioning session began.

Many people raised their hands, but there were obvious routines. For example, the first named was a reporter from Real Madrid TV, one of their own; the second was a reporter from AS, also one of their own; the third was a reporter from Marca, still one of their own; and the fourth was a reporter from El País, still one of their own...

The reporters asked serious questions, and the people on the stage answered seriously.

Gao Shen was not in a hurry and waited patiently for the opportunity.

He believed that with the cunning of the media reporters, they would ask him sooner or later.

Sure enough, the subsequent rounds of questions gradually became sharper, and some reporters even directly asked Martin about his comments on the board of directors that more than half of the incompetent players should be fired.

But this time, Martin was obviously evasive and gave a vague response.

The media reporters were, of course, dissatisfied and then aimed at Gao Shen next to him.

Young people are easily impulsive.

First, there were two frivolous questions in succession, such as how he felt about coaching Real Madrid. These were all expected.

But soon, trouble came.

"Gao, I'm a reporter from Catalan Daily Sports. Chairman Mr. Martin said on the board of directors that more than half of Real Madrid's players have failed and should be cleaned out of the team. As the executor of this policy, you have received great expectations from the president and management. How do you plan to implement this policy? How do you plan to lead Real Madrid out of the current predicament?"

As soon as this question was asked, there was an uproar at the scene, and the media reporters in the audience became excited as if they had been given a shot of adrenaline.

Gao Shen was not a rookie just out of school. How could he not hear the trap in his words?

He pretended to ponder, and at the same time, secretly turned his head to look at the press officer, who secretly winked and shook his head at him, indicating that he should not answer directly. Even Butragueno on the side

smelled something wrong and thought that Gao Shen could not respond to such a situation. He wanted to resolve the predicament first.

But at this moment, Gao Shen spoke up.

"Although I have only been at Real Madrid for seven months, I have already deeply felt the history of this club."

Gao Shen's opening was quite satisfactory, but soon his tone changed.

"I know that the performance of the first team is not ideal, and some players even make us doubt whether they are qualified to wear the Real Madrid shirt. In our youth team, there is a group of very good, very young and dynamic players who are also very loyal to the club. I know them, and I want to give them more opportunities."

Gao Shen's remarks surprised Martin, Butragueno, and others sitting on the podium. This was not in the speech. What was he trying to do?

Who gave him such reckless courage?

But Gao Shen continued.

"I will use facts to prove that Real Madrid is Real Madrid because of solidarity and the spirit of Juanito who gave his last breath, not because of one person or some people in the team! I always insist that in Real Madrid, all players are equal. No one is qualified to be special, no matter who they are!"

Gao Shen's remarks were so bold that the press conference hall was instantly in an uproar.

"I will use facts to prove that Real Madrid is Real Madrid because of solidarity and the spirit of Juanito, who gave his last breath. It's not about one person or some people in the team! I always insist that, at Real Madrid, all players are equal. No one is qualified to be special, no matter who they are!"

Gao Shen's remarks were so loud that the press conference hall erupted instantly.

All the media reporters could read a lot into these short sentences.

Is this a declaration of war on the superstars?

Compared to the excitement of the media reporters, the Real Madrid staff at the scene, including Raul, Butragueno, and Martin, were all stunned. They were even a little scared. Could he say such a thing? Could he speak like this in front of so many media reporters?

Six years!

The superstar policy has always been the political correctness of Real Madrid!

Now, the head coach of Real Madrid, although only acting as an interim coach, had publicly declared war on the superstars. Was he trying to overturn the established order?

If the media reporters had just wanted to get a soundbite from Gao Shen before, now Gao Shen had directly dropped a bombshell, causing everyone to be shocked.

The new chairman, Martin, was even more taken aback. He turned his head to look at Butragueno, as if to ask: How did your PR department prepare him? Didn't you coach him on what to say?

Butragueno was also stunned. Gao Shen's sudden move caught them completely off guard.

Feeling the new chairman's anger, Butragueno turned to look at Floro. What did you tell him? Didn't you instruct him to read the manuscript? Why did he say so much off-script?

Floro was also stunned. He hadn't expected Gao Shen to act so boldly and declare war on the superstars in front of so many media reporters. What was he trying to do?

Is this kid crazy?

When Martin saw the expressions of Butragueno and Floro, he understood. Then he looked at Gao Shen, and his eyes changed.

So this kid, who had seemed so quiet before, was actually a wolf in sheep's clothing, waiting for this opportunity!

Now, his remarks had blown everything wide open. Everything was laid out on the table, and Gao Shen had even forced him to support his position.

There was no way he could now say that Gao Shen's words were not his own idea. Who would believe it?

The experienced eagle had been outsmarted by the young bird.

He had miscalculated!