

Godfather Of Champions

Chapter 30: Crazy Gang Wimbledon Part 2

“The crazy gang of Wimbledon is a very dangerous team, but this will be a nice test for the past week of new training.” Tang En was trying to get in a few last words in the changing room after the players had done their warm-up. “A few things to take note of. Be fast, simple, direct, and be productive! This is all I want to see from you! Go ahead guys!”

Tang En had replaced Walker as the main manager in the locker room. After making his new tactics clear and more well known to the Forest team, Tang En could finally stop hiding behind the scenes.

After a two-match suspension, Tang En was finally back in his manager role, and he was looking forward to the future. He enjoyed the feeling of commanding from the side during matches.

When the Forest players ran out of the tunnel, there was loud cheering from the fans in the home stadium. Tang En turned to Walker. “If we could go forward with a record of winning, the cheering would last forever and get even louder!”

“Always winning is not that easy, Tony.” Walker shook his head.

“Wrong. It is super difficult. But why don’t we give it a try?” Tang En applauded with the fans.

That’s right, if we can win this match, then we must always win. If we can win every match, then let us just win all the way!

Ian Macdonald turned on the radio just in time at the main gate of Wilford training ground and listened to the 30th league match. Each morning of a home ground match day, Tang En would come to the training ground and talk to Macdonald at the gate. They talked about everything under the sun, from weather to international relations. What came up the most in their conversation was still football, and especially their favorite team.

Tang En promised to bring a victory to the supporters at the last home ground match. Sadly, it was a draw at the end. Tang En promised it again, and he asked Macdonald to wait for the good news beside the radio.

Hope everything goes well this time.

The match had already been going about 20 minutes, and Team Forest was doing what Tang En had asked them to do, executing what they had practiced in training during the match. They were now so different from what they used to be when they were focused on possession and coordination. The fans who were watching them and even the commentator, John Motson, noticed the difference.

“Today, our Forest team is a bit strange. If you asked me to use one word to describe them...I would say ‘unfamiliar’. Same players, yet the way they’re playing is unrecognizable.”

Since the generation of Brian Howard Clough, Nottingham Forest was one of the representatives for the technique football in England, much earlier than Arsenal. Clough had a saying at that time to show his disdain against England’s long ball. “If God wants us to play football in the clouds, then he should make them out of grass.”

The current Forest, though not playing long ball, was so different from the traditional Forest that stressed on possession. After 25 minutes of the match, the screen of the TV showed the possession rate of the two teams. Wimbledon had exceeded Forest with a percentage of 54 percent versus 46 percent for Nottingham Forest.

“This is so weird. From my perspective, Forest has always had a high possession rate even when they lose. For instance, at the last match, they had a 64 percent possession rate, though they did not win.” Motson had commentated football matches for 31 years, and he had witnessed Forest go from a League Two team to the champion of the UEFA, and thus he was very familiar with their tactics.

Tang En had taught Forest to pass through the midfield fast, but this caused them to lose the ball more easily. Most of the time, only after a few passes, there would be a problem when the midfielder was about to pass the ball to the strikers. The coordination between the striker and midfielder was not smooth. After that, they would lose the football to their opponents and had to defend. Luckily, Michael Dawson did a good job of always solving the crisis. He had just become the captain of the team, and his performance had proven his capability to the others, as he seemed to have matured overnight.

The score did not change for the entire 25 minutes. However, Tang En observed many things, and just as he was about to discuss them with Walker, there was a loud voice from the back.

“Tony Twain! What are you doing? Is this your promised victory to us?”

Tang En turned back and saw Michael’s angry face and his middle finger pointing toward him.

“What did you change here? It’s still draw.”

“Look at the f*cking football your team is playing right now? This is not what Forest should be playing! Forest’s strength and tradition is possession! Possession!”

Tradition again... Tang En was annoyed. Since he had come here, many had talked to him about “tradition”, but he did not think following the so-called tradition could bring any benefit to the team. Can following tradition bring about winning? So he shouted back, “Shut up, Michael! I do not f*cking care how we win as long as we can win! The match only started 25 minutes ago, and why are you here shouting at me? If you continue, I will ask the security guards to chase you out!”

Michael stopped talking, but he was worried. What fan wouldn’t be worried when his team didn’t score?

Tang En sat back and realized Walker was laughing at him. “Tony, I remember when you were sitting here the second time. You did not respond to anything when Michael was heckling you.”

Tang En shook his head and forced a smile. “Do you really want to tease me when the team has not won?”

“I don’t think it’s that bad yet.” Tang En had not expected Walker to say that. “We were quite messed up in the first 10 minutes. But since then, team has played almost exactly what we covered in training. Their mistakes have gradually reduced, and their chances have increased. Tony, maybe your tactic works.”

“Des, I’m going to think better of you now. I did not expect that you would be able to see it. Our situation is turning better now, and the reason for us not scoring yet is because we did not train the strikers and midfielders together. The strikes are not used to how the midfielders play now, and thus their coordination is not smooth.”

Walker nodded his head. “I think it is better for us not to have such high hopes for this match. Maybe we still need some time before we can succeed.”

Tang En stood up. “No, Des! I cannot wait for any more matches! I need that victory! This match must be won!” After he finished what he wanted to say, he took a deep breath and shouted onto the field.

“Mar—lon!!”

That shouting was loud and piercing enough to rise above all the other noise from the viewing platform.

Marlon Harewood heard the manager shouting his name and immediately turned and searched the sideline. Then he saw the manager was shouting at him with his whole body shaking.

“What are you doing? Didn't you sleep the night before? Did you have your lunch today?”

Harewood shrugged his shoulders, pointed to himself, and wondered why the manager was saying those things to him.

“Run! Keep running!” Tang En waved his arms as if he were a turning windmill. “Try to get Andy's pass and shoot it! If you don't, I will take you out!”

Tang En went back to the managers' seats after shouting. Harewood was stunned and tried to process what Tang En said. Then he realized that the manager was not happy with his performance.

Despite working together for a while, Walker was shocked at what Tang En had just done. Never had any manager coached a match in this way.

“Tony, calm down... this is just a match, not war.”

Tang En gnashed his teeth and said, “No, this is war!”

I might lose my job if this team can't win! Isn't that serious enough to affect one's survival?

“Furthermore, I am very calm. I am as calm as an ice mountain.” Tang En was back in his seat and, obviously, Walker could not believe what he said.

Tang En's way was rude, yet direct. The lack of cooperation between the striker and midfielder was due to the new training. In order to tackle this completely, more training and matches were required, and yet there was not sufficient time for that. Special ways have to be used to deal with special circumstances. Since both of them were struggling to get each other's passes, they must keep running until they get the ball. Each success will mean a chance.

Although Forest had many problems and their performance was not very good after all, the manager of Wimbledon was the one complaining and scolding the most. He had done so much research and investigation on Forest's tactics, allocation, and formation before the match, hoping that they could beat them on their home ground. He had never expected that they would face a totally new Nottingham Forest from the start of the match. This meant that the entire week of special training in order to compete with Forest was wasted, which really annoyed him.

Seeing the manager of Forest shouting something at the side, he decided to do something as well. He walked up to the side and ordered his team to attack more. Since Forest's performance was so poor with all the mistakes being made, his team had many chances to counter break. As a result, there was no need for him to follow the defending and counter-break plan that he had made before the match. By making some changes

to his formation and moving them forward, he might increase the pressure on Nottingham Forest, and perhaps get some better results.

Indeed, some unexpected results were yet to come.