

Champions 641

Chapter 641: Ronaldo In Full Swing

The game was deadlocked for fifteen minutes. Manchester United dominated with an absolute advantage on the field but did not score any goals due to their luck being a little down.

Twain did not think that his team would be in such a sorry predicament in Old Trafford, and he was a little annoyed.

It was no use clinging to defense when they were up against Manchester United's offensive. If the Forest team could not counterattack, it would slowly be eaten by Manchester United one bite at a time.

But how would he defend against Ronaldo in such good form...

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Cristiano Ronaldo almost withdrew to the midfield to get the ball. The Nottingham Forest players forced him to move outside, so he took advantage of the situation for his own benefit and came back to receive the pass. After he took the ball, he used his superb footwork to break through the Forest team's defensive line.

George Wood found Ronaldo harder to defend against than in previous seasons. It was not how fancy Ronaldo's footwork was. On the contrary, the Portuguese's footwork became more practical. He not only immersed himself in his dribbling, he also knew when to pass the ball and when to shoot. The diversity of his offense made it harder to guard against him.

When George Wood saw him rush up with the ball, he looked left and right to check the positions of his own team and opposing players before he went up to face him. Although Twain did not instruct him to specifically mark Ronaldo, he was now in their defensive zone, so how could he shy away from defending against him?

He went up to intercept Ronaldo head-on, but Ronaldo passed the ball, not wanting to entangle with George Wood.

Ronaldo ran and skirted around Wood without the football. Once he received the ball from his teammate, he had managed to wedge Wood behind him. Now that he was now in the dangerous zone, he did not think that Wood would dare to foul lightly.

Wood indeed did not dare to foul. He wanted to stab the ball from behind, but Ronaldo did a good job of protecting the ball in the course of dribbling it, so he could not find the right time to make his move. After a slight hesitation, Ronaldo found a gap to slip into the penalty.

This time, he did not dare foul even if he wanted to.

Pepe intended to cut Ronaldo's ball when he broke into the box and had not established himself on firm ground. He did not think that Ronaldo could still control the football in such a confined area. No matter how many people wanted to intercept his ball, they just could not tackle it! And because they were in

the box, the defensive players had to be careful. The force of the interception was not strong enough, so it was not that easy to tackle the ball successfully.

Ronaldo zoomed in on a gap and suddenly lifted his leg to shoot. Although the power was not strong, the angle was artful enough.

Edwin van der Sar's line of sight was blocked by the crowd. He had to dive to get the football out using his fingertips!

"Wooooow! Cristiano Ronaldo's form looks very good today! He, alone in the box, has attracted all of Nottingham Forest's defensive strength, but he can still kick the shot, and a quality shot at that. If not for Edwin van der Sar's valiant performance, Manchester United would be leading with 1:0!"

Ronaldo raised his head as he squeezed among the crowd, ready to grab the corner kick for another shot. With his height of 1.89 meters, he was not inferior to the center-backs. In addition with his outstanding leap, he was a real threat to the Forest team in front of the goal.

Pepe grabbed hold of George Wood and pointed to Ronaldo to motion for him to go defend against Manchester United's number 7.

Wood did not refuse, and stood in front of Ronaldo.

The Portuguese looked at Wood, but did not use his hands to jostle him. The two just looked at each other. A "friendly" defense of a corner kick was incomprehensible to others.

Once the ball was kicked, Wood and Ronaldo made their moves almost at the same time. Wood tried to stall Ronaldo, while Ronaldo tried to push Wood away.

The two players entangled and jumped up to find that they had done it for nothing. Manchester United's corner kick was not done well enough and went straight out of the end line in the air...

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Ronaldo in full swing caused the entire Forest team to be quite nervous. Whenever he took the ball, there would be at least three people around him to prevent him from easily breaking through. The Forest team's middle was already crowded. Having three players besiege him was normal. As one of the strong attacking players, he deserved this handling.

The Forest players guarded against Ronaldo more, but gradually forgot another person.

When Ronaldo was again hit by the Forest team's blockade, he did not choose to break through individually or raise his leg for a shot, but diverted the football to the left.

Wayne Rooney received the pass from him.

Only Rafinha was in front of Rooney.

As a result of Ronaldo's active performance, Nottingham Forest unwittingly shifted the defensive focus from the wing to the middle and then to him alone. There were even times when Beckham needed to step back into the middle to help with the defense.

After Rooney took the ball, no one was there to defend against him.

In the face of the offensively strong and defensively weak Rafinha, Rooney did not go easy. After a feint shook his center of gravity, he accelerated to break through. Rafinha also reacted fast. When he saw Rooney bypass him, he immediately turned around to shovel. Even a foul was better than letting him easily break through.

The English boy seemed to have eyes on his back. Once Rafinha came close, he soared. Rafinha did not shovel the ball, but slightly hooked Rooney.

Rooney stumbled, but soon adjusted, thanks to his outstanding physical fitness, and staggered toward the football. Pepe had already rushed over from the box. Meanwhile, Beckham had also rushed over from the middle to support the defense.

He was about to push Rooney to the brink, but instead he suddenly swept the football into the middle.

Ronaldo, Scholes, and Hargreaves were all inside the box. Piqué, Bale, Wood, and Rafinha had just run back on that side of Nottingham Forest.

Rooney's pass became a mess in front of the goal.

Ronaldo was going to rush up and grab the ball when he suddenly felt someone's hand grip his shoulder and push him forward. He suddenly had an idea and fell headfirst.

Ronaldo, who fell down, knocked over Piqué in front of him.

It instantly became a mess in the box. The football flew past the goal amidst the chaos, and no one touched it!

The Manchester United fans got excited as they saw Ronaldo fall to the ground and heard the referee's whistle.

The referee on duty ran into the box and pointed to... a spot for a penalty shot!

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"Damn it!" Twain saw the scene and was furious. "It's clearly a dive! That referee is doggone blind!"

In next technical area, Ferguson stood on the sidelines, smiling and clapping. He did not care if it was a dive, as long as the referee awarded Nottingham Forest with a penalty, then it was Nottingham Forest who fouled.

Loud cheers rang out in the stands at the Old Trafford Stadium, drowning out the boos from the Nottingham Forest fans. The home field advantage was unmistakable.

On the field, the Nottingham Forest players were arguing with the referee amid the overwhelming cheers from the Manchester United fans. Incessantly clapping his hands together, Bale kept explaining to the referee that he had not pushed anyone, and that it was just a normal physical contact. His strength was not enough to push Ronaldo down.

But the referee just shook his head and stood on the penalty spot. He would not change his decision.

Tony Twain, who was enraged, pointed to the group of Manchester United players hugging each other in celebration on the sidelines and roared, "Liar! Ronaldo, you're a brazen liar!"

Ronaldo had a bad reputation due to his many dive. Twain did not really care as he openly abused him on the opponent's turf.

Ferguson frowned slightly when heard. The fourth official was drawn to his shouts.

"Mr. Tony Twain, please calm down. I'm warning you, don't be banished to the stands because of this."

Twain knew what the other person said was not a joke. He grimaced and stopped yelling. He just turned around in the technical area with his back toward the field. He did not want to watch the Manchester United players' celebration.

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Cristiano Ronaldo was surrounded by his teammates. There was a roar of excitement all around him, and he had no idea what Twain shouted on the sidelines, but it did not matter. Once the game was over, someone would tell him what happened on the sidelines. Then the media could watch in safety and reap the rewards again whilst both sides fought.

The Nottingham Forest players' protest was ineffective, and the decided penalty was unlikely to change. They could only accept the result powerlessly, but when several people pulled out of the box, they threw resentful looks at Ronaldo, who took the football as he prepared for the penalty shot.

Among them, Gareth Bale, the "offender," almost nailed his stare at the other party.

Ronaldo did not have time to care whether other people's glances were friendly or not. He carried the football to the penalty spot, and placed the football firmly on it.

"Ronaldo has scored thirty goals in the league tournament and is currently at the top of the strikers' ranking. But apparently he doesn't want to end his goalscoring spree yet. There is no doubt that he will be the best player of the season if he can help Manchester United beat Nottingham Forest to eventually pick up the league title trophy. As a midfielder, he has reached a total of forty goals in a single season. This is a remarkable result! Does Ferguson think that he poses a greater threat to his opponent by putting him on the front line as a striker in this game?"

The raucous Old Trafford stadium gradually quieted down. Ronaldo got up and moved backwards, ready to take the penalty shot. He stood with his legs apart and put his hands on his hips as he stared at the goal. He continuously inhaled and exhaled. It was one of his usual poses before executing a penalty set-piece.

Edwin van der Sar stared at the football as he stood in the middle of the goal with open arms. His height and arm length allowed him to cover almost half the goal.

His ability to pounce on the penalty shots had improved significantly since he beat Arsenal on the penalty shot in the Champions League semifinal game of the 05-06 season which helped the team break into the Champions League finals.

And...

"It looks like Ronaldo is going to execute the penalty shot he created. He missed a penalty shot in the Champions League semifinal penalty shootout against Chelsea. I wonder if he has a chance to wash away the shame this time?"

Cristiano Ronaldo had just missed a penalty shot in an important game and the team was tragically eliminated. His emotions had to still be fluctuating. He was taking on the penalty shot in hopes to get rid of the shadow of the missed penalty shot. But with more haste and less speed, the more he wanted it, the less he could succeed.

So although the Forest team was sentenced with a supreme penalty in the game, the situation might not be that dire.

When Edwin van der Sar opened his arms in front of the goal, Twain's raging heart settled a little.

With the exception of Edwin van der Sar and Ronaldo, everyone else pulled out of the box.

The referee whistled to signal that Ronaldo could kick.

He took a deep breath and then began to run, while Edwin van der Sar quickly judged the direction.

The running Ronaldo stopped and raised his leg to shoot! Edwin van der Sar leapt sideways!

The football hit van der Sar on the arm and bounced back, but the commentator and Nottingham Forest fans had yet to cheer, because the danger was not eliminated.

Edwin van der Sar's thrown ball happened to bounce back in front of Ronaldo, who was still upset...

Can it be that I miss a penalty shot again?

Ronaldo was put out when he saw that the football had bounced back.

He froze for less than a second, looked up and saw Edwin van der Sar still in the air, looking at him with a desperate expression on his face.

He smiled.

He lifted his leg for a shot...

"Gooooo!!! Manchester United is in the lead! Manchester United takes the lead on their home ground in the opening twenty-one minutes! Ah, ah, ah... But we're not surprised by this score at all. It's a matter of course for Manchester United to take the lead based on the first twenty-minutes of this game! Nottingham Forest doesn't even have a chance. They can only be beaten passively! Maybe Tony Twain still have something to say about this penalty shot, but he can't deny the score!"

Thunderous cheers rang out in the stands at the Old Trafford stadium. The commentator's words infuriated Twain again, but when he calmed down, he had to admit that the man was right. Nottingham Forest had not had any advantage at all in the first twenty minutes, not to mention that they could not play with the style they were good at. How could they expect to beat Manchester United in the away game?

He turned his back toward the field and heard the cheers coming from all directions, knowing that Manchester United was ahead. Instead of turning around, he continued to face the technical area. Dunn and Kerslake could see that the expression on his face was getting darker.

He pressed his hands on the railing of the technical area, clenched his fists, his knuckles turning white. His expression was ugly as he gnashed his teeth and emitted a low growl, rumbling like waves of thunder from a distance.

Chapter 642: Decisive Battle in The Second Half

Tony Twain stomped with fury on the sidelines. He did not fly into a rage for Ronaldo's penalty shot. It was the second time.

After Ronaldo scored, Manchester United scored again in just four minutes.

After Nottingham Forest kicked off, the defensive line made a mistake and passed the ball with too much force at a very close distance. When van der Vaart stopped the ball, the football bounced high. He wanted to control the ball again, but it was seized by Scholes, who came from behind. Van der Vaart wanted to foul and was a step too late.

Scholes passed the ball behind him. Rooney plugged in from behind and broke into the box. He passed the ball and Ronaldo, following close behind, easily hit the ball into the goal.

Old Trafford was like a pot of boiling water in the few minutes. No sound other than the cheers and shouts of the Manchester United fans could be heard.

How could Twain not fly into a rage?

Conceding two goals so quickly was a huge blow to the team's morale. Furthermore, the second goal was their mistake. He could blame the first goal on the referee for being blind. However, the second goal? He had nothing to say and could only choke down his anger, which caused him to breathe heavily.

He was not mentally prepared for the game to be played like that at all. He was aware that the game would be tough to play, and he knew it was not easy to deal with Ferguson. He was even more aware of how good Ronaldo's form was this season, but he did not expect his team to play so terribly!

He was extremely angry, and the consequences were serious.

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Nottingham Forest was dumbfounded by the two goal concedes within four minutes. After the kick-off, the players were a bit listless and seemed erratic in both defensive and the occasional counterattack.

Perhaps the pressure of the league title distracted them. Twain, who watched the game off the field, sometimes could not fathom what his players were doing.

When Gareth Bale received George Wood's pass, the most appropriate thing to do as a full-back was to get the ball out from his feet as quickly as possible under Manchester United's forward pressing. However, Bale did not. He took the ball and raised his head to look for someone. When he found that there was no suitable passing route, he feinted to bypass Hargreaves, who came up to tackle him. It would be time to pass it on now, wouldn't it? No, he knocked the ball again, then turned around and tried to protect the ball. His teammates were not far away, waiting to receive. He lifted his leg up and pretended like he was going to pass but did not. After a few repetitions, his ball was intercepted.

Twain took his anger out on a water bottle.

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George Wood was also anxious. He was the captain. When the team was on a roll, it might not reflect the importance of a captain, but now the team was faced with difficulties, he had to step up as the captain.

How would he step up? George Wood did not know what to do.

As he continued to play, he searched his mind for how Demetrio would deal with a similar situation. As a result, he was distracted.

Ronaldo successfully broke through him twice in a row. George Wood appeared to be completely vulnerable.

The cheers of the Manchester United fans became even louder. George Wood was a well-known defensive midfielder in the English Premier League. It was amazing to be able to bypass him so easily, but their Cristiano Ronaldo managed to do it.

Even with such a performance from Wood, Twain did not take it out on the water bottle. He sat in his chair and sulked.

Looking at him like this, Ferguson had a smile on his face on the other side. His already glowing face “flushed red with success.”

It made people suspect if he had ever secretly drank in the technical area.

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The first half came to an end while Manchester United mobbed Nottingham Forest, while Nottingham Forest, powerless to fight back, looked extremely pathetic.

When the referee blew the whistle at the end of the first half, the Nottingham Forest players thought it was a good sound for the first time, but when they saw the hasty departure of the back view on the sidelines, they felt that a greater ordeal probably awaited them back in the locker room.

The first person to walk into the locker room was Ribéry. He saw Twain sitting in a chair with a grim expression and did not dare to speak. He walked to his own locker with his head down and sat down to rest.

The players, who followed behind, were mostly the same. No one spoke, listened to music, or laughed. The 0:2 score and the manager’s gloomy face caused everyone’s heart to be crushed by a boulder.

Dunn was the last one to enter. He closed the door, and the noise outside faded.

Twain got up from his chair. He had choked back the words in his heart for the whole first half.

“I’m so glad we did not concede two more goals after losing two goals in a row,” Twain said with a grim face, so that no one would believe that he was actually glad — perhaps it should be sorry.

“Some people may think I’m saying this in anger.” Twain spread his hands. “Don’t joke, looking at your performance in the second part of the first half... Not only I’m thankful, all of you should be thankful too! To only concede two goals under those circumstances, how lucky are we! How lucky!”

He suddenly raised his voice, causing a few of the timid players to almost jump out of their seats, like Gareth Bale.

“Gareth Bale!” Twain looked at the frightened young man. “Do you know the basic duty of a defender? Look at how you perform after taking the ball in the backfield... If you really could not find a person to pass the ball to, you could have driven the ball out with a long pass. Why were you showing off your footwork?”

“I...” Bale wanted to explain himself, but he could not find a proper reason because his mind was a complete blank when he made that mistake. He did not know what he was doing. After Hargreaves intercepted the ball, he was so afraid that he wanted to end the opponent’s offense with a shovel from behind. Fortunately, he did not do it. Otherwise, the anger he had to face now would have been several times greater.

After he rebuked the poor little monkey, Twain turned his eyes on the team’s captain, George Wood.

“Wood!” He did not use “George” which meant that he was in a rage. “At first you did well, and I always thought your mental quality was top notch! But your performance was completely different after the two goal concede. Were you also frightened by the two goal concede in just four minutes? You let that Portuguese lad easily break through in front of you without any resistance. A scarecrow is stronger than you!”

Wood did not intend to defend himself, but he did not want to admit he was scared, so he stood up. “I wasn’t scared, I was just thinking... Trying to figure out how to get the team out of trouble.”

When he heard him, Twain smiled, “At least you still tried to be the captain. But you thought for too long — you did not come up with anything until the end of the first half, did you?”

This time Wood could only silently agree.

Twain faced the entire team. “We were crushed by Manchester United in our own half of field throughout the first half and couldn’t get out. Our occasional counterattacks ended quickly and achieved nothing. That situation is still considered normal. The part that was abnormal was we conceded two goals, and within four minutes... We conceded two goals in a row! How do we fix it? We must lead with a few threatening attacks to let Manchester United know that Nottingham Forest is not a coward who can only be beaten and not fight back!”

Twain took a deep breath and paused. The action looked like he was trying to control his anger.

“I don’t want to dwell too much about what happened in the first half. It’s no use talking any more about the first half of the game. I can reprimand you many times and the score won’t change!” He pointed to outside. “So we have to talk about what to do in the second half. We will attack in the second half. We must attack. Pay attention to what I said. It’s not defensive counterattack, it’s offense! Full attack!”

“We thought Manchester United would be a bit more cautious at home and did not expect them to attack with all their strength in the first half, which caught us off guard. After this half of the game, Manchester United will think that we have been beaten down by them and the pace of the game has fallen into their control. If they still play like this in the second half, then we’ll show them what we’ve got!”

Twain clenched his fists and motivated the players who had been stunned by the two goal concede.

He was now keen for Manchester United to continue the full attack in the second half, fearing that Ferguson would not do as he wished. After all, Manchester United had a two-goal lead. Generally, everyone would choose to be more conservative. A two-goal lead on their home ground was enough to obtain a desired outcome.

If Manchester United were to withdraw and play with a conservative mindset in the second half, it would be hard for Twain to say that his team could beat Manchester United. After all, it was an away game, and the opponent was not weak. No one dared to predict which team would be able to win the game.

If Manchester United still pressed on the Forest team in their half of the field, then things would be different. If Nottingham Forest went all out to fight Manchester United, it might be able to catch the other team off guard and cause them to lose the advantage of leading with two balls. The game would be pulled back to the pace that the Forest team was most accustomed to.

In that case, what would Ferguson think?

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Compared with the atmosphere in the Forest team locker room, it was a lot lighter inside the Manchester United locker room. Most people are doing things they were interested in. Some listened to music, some chatted to each other, and some closed their eyes for a rest. Even Ferguson was chatting with his aides.

Manchester United were well prepared before the game, and Ferguson managed to convince the players that the game against Nottingham Forest was the most important final of their lives. Therefore, everyone thought the game would not be easy. After all, they had known what kind of team Nottingham Forest was.

They were heavily armed and focused in the game, only to find that the opponent was vulnerable, and they could easily lead by two goals. It was truly unexpected for them.

There was also talk about Nottingham Forest’s poor first-half performance during halftime, which erupted into bursts of laughter.

It was extremely gratifying to be able to easily break through George Wood, who had always been annoying, like he was a block of wood.

The main factor that put the group in a good mood was that after a busy season, it was finally possible to reap one championship title. Although it was a shame to be knocked out of the Champions League, professional players always had to face one failure or another. If they were to brood over a failure, they would never win a championship title.

When Ferguson saw that everyone had rested enough and halftime was ending, he decided to say something.

“Everyone did well in the first half. Such a result... honestly speaking, even I did not expect it. We efficiently lead by two goals, which is very good! Very good indeed! We’ll continue to play like that in the second half and maintain the pressure on Nottingham Forest’s goal! Don’t give them the slightest chance to counter. We’ll just press on them to play!”

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“Remember, if they continue to press us like they did in the first half, that’s the best result! If they dare to press up, we will dare to attack! Don’t worry about the defense behind you. If we don’t do something to change the situation, even if you withdraw, the defense will concede the goal!” Twain seized the final moments to instruct the players on how to play in the second half.

The Nottingham Forest players were not as relaxed as the Manchester United players. As the trailing team, they had no right to listen to music or joke around in the locker room. Other than reprimanding the team, Twain laid out the strategies for the second half during the entire halftime. His mouth was going non-stop, like a machine gun. He did not even stop for a drink of water.

Glancing at his watch, it was close to the time to make their appearance at the field. He decided to end the tactical meeting and dropped his pen. He said seriously, “remember, there are forty-five minutes left. After forty-five minutes, it will be clear whether we are heroes or losers. Does anyone think we have too many championship titles? Does anyone not want to win the Double? Anybody want to be a loser? I don’t care how difficult it is, grit your teeth and fight for these forty-five minutes! If anyone can’t stand this kind of pressure and signal to me to substitute a player, I will not hesitate to bring you off!”

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“You know how angry I was to be eliminated from the Champions League and how disappointed the Manchester United fans were, but you’re lucky that there’s another chance to save this terrible season. We have no reason to throw away the league trophy at our doorstep, not to mention that we are two goals ahead! Don’t let your guard down in the second half and score another goal so that Nottingham Forest is screwed! The league title is ours, and this is your only chance to redeem yourselves!” Ferguson was also doing a final bid to motivate his players.

The two managers were well aware of the final harvest of a season. Whether they would become kings or losers, it all depended on the last forty-five minutes.

No one wanted to be a loser; everyone wanted to be a king. Therefore, the second half was destined to be very, very intense. Perhaps it might be bitter?

Chapter 643: Before the Storm

“Welcome back to Old Trafford for the second half of the game. This is the final round of the 07-08 English Premier League season and the winner will emerge on this field. For now, the home team, Manchester United dominates and lead by two goals. Tony Twain’s team didn’t get any decent chances

in the first half. Provided that Manchester United plays normally, this two-goal lead will be unshakeable...”

Manchester United could also be counted as “playing normally.” They continued their first-half performance and used an all-out attack to maintain constant pressure in front of the Forest team’s goal.

Nottingham Forest tried to fight back at first. They planned to use offense to suppress the opponent’s offensive and put the initiative back in their hands, as Twain said at halftime.

Instead, Manchester United nearly breached the goal again with two attacks, and the Forest team immediately became ineffectual once again. Due to the pressure of two goal concedes over their heads, the Forest team worried that the difference between the scores was going to be widened further. They could counter a two goal gap, but what about three goals or four goals? That would be a real loss of their fighting spirit.

That was what they thought, and it was not wrong, but due to the fear of conceding a goal again, they acted timidly and dared not move forward, which was no different from a loss of fighting spirit.

When Twain saw that his players were forced to retreat onto their half of the field to defend as they did in the first half, he jerked up from his seat, which startled Kerslake.

“These bastards!” When Kerslake heard Twain stand up, he even swore hard.

Every technical area had a square outlined in white in front, which was the command area where the manager directed the game. Neither manager could not step out of this area, or he would be warned by the referee. The incorrigible repeat offender would be sent to the stands.

Twain stepped on the white line and looked toward the field. Since the two teams switched sides for the second half, the Forest team was in front of his technical area. He could easily roar to direct the game.

Gareth Bale took the ball again and passed it to Ribéry. Ribéry wanted to dribble forward but was disrupted by the opponent and went out of the sidelines. To the annoyance of Twain, the ball was not out of bounds due to contact with the Manchester United player. Instead, he was the one who took it out.

Twain frowned, not angry yet. He was going to keep observing.

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Ronaldo received a throw-in from his teammate and did a one-two combination with Scholes. Then he dribbled the ball to charge forward. Bale tried to stop him, but he swung past his position with dazzling footwork, and Ronaldo once again rushed into the box. This time, George Wood unceremoniously came up to shovel Ronaldo’s ball and knocked over Ronaldo as well.

Loud boos exploded in the stands, accusing George Wood of having a free hand in the “rough foul.”

The referee did not meet the wishes of the people and whistle for another penalty shot. He just signaled for a corner kick.

Both the referee and assistant referee were judicious. Even though it looked fierce, George just shoveled the ball. He could not retract the force of his rush in time and hit Ronaldo, who also could not stop in time — or Ronaldo did not want to.

Although only a corner kick was awarded, Twain was unhappy. Because the Manchester United offensive exposed the Forest team's rear defensive line problems. If Manchester United continued to attack, even an impenetrable defense could collapse.

The corner kick was sent out and Vidic's header grabbed the ball but was misdirected under Pepe's disruption.

While van der Sar lowered his head to place the ball, Twain opened fire off the field.

He ripped off his tie and took a deep breath before he yelled at the field, "Gareth Bale! If you're not in form, I can bring you off right now!"

As the Forest team got ready to send the ball out in front of the goal, the Old Trafford stadium was a little quieter. Twain's roar was heard by the players on the field. All the Forest players, including Bale, turned their heads and looked at Twain brandishing his arms and growling on the sidelines.

"Have you forgotten what I said during halftime so quickly? Why are you shrinking in the backfield like tortoises?! Don't you want to be a champion? You want a season with regrets? Press the hell up! I don't care what methods you use. I don't want to see us be pushed back and play in front of our goal again! Aren't you ashamed!?"

The only thing that Twain did not do was rush onto the field to pull at the players' collars and shake them. He wanted to roar in their ears with his mouth wide open to spit out obscene words and spittle.

"The two flanks better think up of a way to plug forward; don't shrink in the backfield! George! Be more ferocious in the midfield, harden up, don't let Manchester United control the midfield so easily. What's your task? Whose territory does the midfield belong to?! What are you doing? You're George Wood! Not a damn soft Wood! You'd better harden up, harden the f**k up! You're the midfield core! A man's core is the most important!"

Amid the bellows and abuse, Twain frantically waved his arm on the sidelines, urging the players to move forward and not care about Manchester United's scary offensive. If they were afraid that the offensive would score goals, then they would shrink in the back until the game was over. Manchester United was delighted to see the situation. They were two goals ahead, but Nottingham Forest could not accept it and had to find a way to change the situation. Risks had to be taken. They could not always worry about conceding the goal and be afraid to act. It was impossible to expect to reap the results they wanted without paying any price.

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Twain's rant on the sidelines caught everyone's eye. His "radiant image" spread across England and around the world instantly through live television.

Ferguson's attention was also attracted by Twain's sudden outburst. He looked over, and Twain was still growling relentlessly. It looked like he was pushed to the brink.

If he lost his composure, it would be Manchester United's chance. When Manchester United seized hold of another gap in the Forest team and entered another goal, the game could be declared completely over. No matter how much Twain raged, there would be no other way.

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Tony Twain's outburst had some effect. Nottingham Forest was back on the offensive and was no longer afraid of Manchester United's full-on attack. They also seemed to have thrown away the fear of conceding a goal again.

The counterattack started in the midfield. George Wood intercepted the ball from Scholes' feet. Carrick wanted to come up and tackle but hit an impenetrable wall. George Wood leaned behind him to prevent him from touching the ball and then passed the football on to van der Vaart.

While van der Vaart dribbled the ball, O'Shea wanted to come up and snatch it. Manchester United's idea was to not let the Forest team pass through the midfield easily. If the Forest team was forced to organize an attack with long passes, Manchester United's defensive pressure would be much lighter.

Van der Vaart did not want to be entangled with O'Shea. He turned around and passed the ball to Beckham. After Beckham took the ball, he immediately launched a long crosswise pass to send the football to Ribéry on the left side of the field.

Whether it was van der Vaart, George Wood, Rafinha, or Gareth Bale, they were all very determined to plug in into Manchester United's half of the field.

Compared to the Nottingham Forest team that was fearful of continuing to concede the goal, this was a different team.

Facing multiple attack points at once, Manchester United suddenly did not know how to deal with it. Nottingham Forest had been crushed by them for most of the game, so much so that they had forgotten how fierce Nottingham Forest could be.

Ribéry dribbled the ball on the flank and suddenly cut inside. He passed the ball to van der Vaart, who had been following, after the Manchester United defenders rushed up.

Van Nistelrooy and Arshavin lay in wait in the opponent's penalty area, ready to receive van der Vaart's straight pass.

However, van der Vaart chose to do a long shot. He flashed into a gap and suddenly swung his leg for a long shot. The football rolled along the turf toward the Manchester United goal. Ben Foster tried his best to pounce over but did not manage to touch the football. Unfortunately, the football did not roll within the goal range. It brushed past the goal post to roll out of the end line.

The attack caused the hearts of the Manchester United fans to leap to their throats.

Fortunately for them, Nottingham Forest did not score the goal, which gave them a chance to push the Forest team back, but if they really thought that, it would be a big mistake.

Manchester United attacked and was cut off in the midfield. The Forest team's midfield suddenly hardened, leaving Manchester United bewildered.

It was not that the Forest team was not tough before, but when they were pushed back by Manchester United to the front of the box, there was no way to send the ball out even if the ball was intercepted. They were up against wave after wave of offense from Manchester United.

It was different now. The Forest team's midfield launched a fierce raid near the center circle. Pushing the scope of the raid by twenty meters should not be underestimated. The small change suddenly let the Forest team's situation change dramatically. The spot where the ball was intercepted was closer to Manchester United's thirty-meter zone and the success rate of the offensive improved. Manchester United immediately felt the pressure that the change put on them.

After van der Vaart's long shot, Ribéry followed up with a long shot. This time it struck within the range of the goal post and created a corner kick.

As Twain watched the team's offense pick up, he did not turn around with peace of mind to sit in the technical area. He continued to gesture from the sidelines to direct the game. That period of time was the most critical. The Forest team took advantage of a spurt in energy to attack. If Manchester United held on and slowly clawed back from the disadvantageous situation, then the two-goal gap would become a moat in front of the Nottingham Forest team. If Tony Twain wanted to defy the natural order of things, he could only hope to be possessed by a higher spirit.

Therefore, they had to score no matter what. He did not care what the players did on the field, whether they dove to get a penalty shot or scored a goal without tricks, the result he wanted was to score!

He roared on the sidelines like crazy, "score! I want a goal!" He completely disregarded his status. He was even more on edge than the most loyal Nottingham Forest fans in the stands.

He had long thrown his necktie to the ground. His collar was wide open, and the sweat on his chest gleamed in the afternoon sunshine. His black hair was messy from him scratching on his head. With his extremely exaggerated body language, how was it befitting a manager? He looked more like a gambler, eager to make a comeback.

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Ronaldo tried to take the ball using his own personal strength so that Manchester United had possession of the ball again. He raised his hand to ask for the ball. When Hargreaves passed the ball to him, it was intercepted by George Wood, who came around from behind. He did not expect George Wood to be so fast!

The more Wood used the move to deny the ball, the simpler it got. There was no secret. He relied on his extremely-strong-until-it-was-perverted physical quality and brought out the characteristics of the move to its limit — fast speed!

Wood was not in a hurry to pass the ball after he intercepted it. Although van der Vaart was the team's current playmaker, he had the obligation to share van der Vaart's work.

He decided to do it on his own.

Ronaldo constantly harassed him behind his back in an attempt to countersnatch. As a defensive player, Wood's ball protection level was world-class. If Ronaldo wanted to tackle the ball from behind without fouling, he would be out of commission, especially when Wood was bent on protecting the ball.

Wood quickly observed the situation as he protected the ball and suddenly sped forward.

His dribble came out of the blue. He saw the gap between two Manchester United players who had not coordinated yet and threaded his way through. He was only stopped by O'Shea with a foul 28 meters from the goal. George Wood won a free kick for the Forest team.

Gareth Bale wanted to go up and execute the kick because he was the team's number one free kick player for most cases.

Bale looked at the surrounding red stands in Old Trafford. How would David face the opponent? So far, Beckham had been silent, with no smile on his face.

He thought it was better not to bother Beckham with such an awkward thing.

He picked up the football and walked to the spot where O'Shea had fouled. He had just put the ball down when there was a hand on the ball.

"I'll do it." Beckham said with a slight smile to a surprised Bale. "I know you're the first choice, but... I thought for today, can you let me take all the free kicks in the front field? Is that okay?"

He spoke so sincerely and without any airs at all. How could Bale refuse?

He handed the football to Beckham and backed away.

When the television commentator saw the scene from above, he got excited. "This is an exciting scene! We waited for most of the game and finally Nottingham Forest's first free kick in the front field is here. It looks like the player who is going to execute this kick is... David Beckham!"

For the first time at Old Trafford, the stands were split into two factions. One frantically attacked this Judas, while the other group hesitated whether to be silent or applaud Beckham, who had returned to Old Trafford.

"I did not arrange for him to take this kick." Twain finally got rid of his manic form as he explained to the people around him.

Ferguson sat in his chair, looking grimly at the man on the field, who was once a proud disciple of his.

Beckham set up the football. The Manchester United's human wall was lined up and dared not let their guard down. There were five people across of him, ready to deal with his shot.

The referee whistled. Without any extra action, Beckham ran and lifted his leg to shoot.

The football hit the human wall, with cheers and sighs simultaneously ringing out in the stands at the stadium.

The referee's whistle rang.

"The human wall moved early and the free kick has to be taken again!"

Beckham set up the football again and ran to kick.

This time, the football bypassed the human wall. However, when it flew past the human wall, Ronaldo jumped up and headed the football, which ended up above the goal and did not fly into the goal guarded by Ben Foster as expected.

The boos from the stands became louder. They were probably gloating over Beckham's two consecutive missed corner kicks.

"It looks like David can't let go in the face of his old team's goal."

Van Nistelrooy ran up and pressed his hand against Beckham's head. "David, are you all right?"

"Is there something the matter with me?" Beckham asked in reply.

"Then your two kicks..."

Beckham smiled. "Who can guarantee that they will be able to shoot inside the goal every time they get a free kick?"

Van Nistelrooy thought what Beckham said was right, and that was the truth. "Uh... I thought facing... Manchester United, you have some..." He could not go on.

"This is a really wonderful feeling..." Beckham continued. "I did not get a chance to play against Manchester United when I played at Real Madrid. I did not expect that when I transferred here, I would get to encounter Manchester United and Real Madrid. Are you worried that I can't let go?"

Van Nistelrooy did not nod or shake his head, but he silently concurred.

"I love Manchester United. I love it very much. Maybe some will not believe it when I say it, but I really love Manchester United. They developed me and made me a star player," Beckham said earnestly. "But that has nothing to do with today's game. When there's a free kick the next time, I think... I'll try my best to seize the chance."

He patted van Nistelrooy on the head and turned to run back.

Van Nistelrooy looked at his back thoughtfully.

Chapter 644: Sudden Change of Situation

While the attack did not result in a goal, it allowed the Nottingham Forest players to regain their confidence. Manchester United's fierce offensive was broken, and it would be difficult to trap them again.

Nottingham Forest was a ferocious tiger. It could be held down for a while, but not for a lifetime. Ferguson was aware of that. So when he saw Nottingham Forest fiercely attack, he was a little worried and wondered if it was an occasional counterattack or a sustained attack... He decided to continue observing.

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Van Nistelrooy took the ball with his back against Rio Ferdinand, who stuck close. He was not confident that he would keep the ball if he turned around, but it was probably not easy for Ferdinand to effortlessly tackle the ball under his feet.

Van Nistelrooy controlled the football under his feet for a while and decided to forcibly turn around to break through. As a result, he was unsurprisingly knocked down by Ferdinand outside the box.

It was the best outcome. After van Nistelrooy got the ball, it was not easy to tackle the ball under his feet. The center forward had a superb ability to control the ball. Even though he was 1.88 meters tall, his footwork skills were delicate and practical.

Ferdinand fouled, and Nottingham Forest was awarded another free kick in the front field.

It was only 22 meters from the goal this time, which was very close. A free kick was not better as it got closer to the goal. For most players who took the free kicks, a range of 25 to 30 meters was the best. If it was too close, the football might not be able to bypass the human wall. If a player wanted the ball to bypass the human wall, it might fly straight out of the end line.

Beckham walked up again with the football in his hands. He still wanted to take it on himself. Bale also stepped forward, but he was not going to take the kick. He wanted to cover Beckham.

“David Beckham took the initiative to take on the ball again. He didn’t score with either of his previous free kicks. Manchester United’s human wall knows his free kick very well — five of the players block the goal.”

When Beckham bent over to place the football, he became the focus of everyone’s attention. There were still boos and applause in the stands. The Manchester United fans loved and hated the man. Their emotions were complicated.

He left in the summer of 2003 to go to Madrid and was far away thereafter. Every time he was unhappy at Real Madrid, there would be a rumor that he would return to Manchester United, but both he and Ferguson would always deny it. It was not that Beckham did not want to go back to Manchester United. He knew very well that as long as his wife, Victoria, was still with him, and as long as Ferguson coached at Manchester United, it was impossible for him to go back. Ferguson would not be interested in a player over 30 years old. Unfortunately, he was 33 years old.

He felt he would not have another chance to wear Manchester United’s red jersey in his career. After his contract with Nottingham Forest ended, if he could still play football, he was likely to go to the United States and play for another two years before he finally announced his retirement. Ferguson had said that Beckham might have achieved more if he was not with Victoria, but Beckham did not know what a higher achievement would be. Other than the national team honors, he had obtained all the honors a club player could get.

But he had never been recognized and respected by more people. When everyone mentioned David Beckham’s name, they always thought of the flashy star player who only knew how to be on a commercial catwalk. That was why he chose to join Nottingham Forest.

In a blink of an eye, the season was about to finish. He had a good time at Nottingham Forest, where he had plenty of appearances except for when he was injured. What people talked about the most was not the business events he had attended, but his performance at Nottingham Forest.

It was nice to conclude the season with the game against Manchester United.

I love Manchester United, but now I play for Nottingham Forest.

Setting up the football, Beckham got up and moved back.

The Manchester United team in front of him was unfamiliar. There was only one old friend, Scholes, among the five players in the human wall. Giggs was on the substitutes' bench, and Gary Neville was on the bench.

It might have eased a little bit of Beckham's psychological burden.

He stood in front of the football and waited for the referee to blow the whistle.

The referee felt that the human wall was too forward and asked it to retreat to the position he designated. Manchester United's human wall dilly-dallied in moving back, and Ronaldo moved the slowest. He acted in a slippery way, and when the referee turned around, he moved half a step forward. He scooted forward in small, quick steps, moving forward a lot. The Nottingham Forest players reported their displeasure to the referee. The referee turned to signal Ronaldo to retreat, or else he would give a yellow card as a warning.

Ronaldo once again dawdled in returning to the human wall.

It was a kind of psychological warfare. The use of the repeated behavior put pressure on player who was going to take the free kick, leading them to play abnormally, but his ploy seemed to be ineffective on Beckham.

Beckham used to be Manchester United's number 7, and Ronaldo took over Beckham's mantle. Ronaldo quickly conquered the Manchester United fans with his skill after he came to Old Trafford. They printed the "one and only Ronaldo" slogan, which could still be found in the stands at Old Trafford.

It was a matchup between Manchester United's new and old number 7s.

The referee withdrew backwards this time, and Ronaldo made no unusual moves under his watch.

After the whistle, Gareth Bale started running. He did not kick the football. He just crossed over the football. Everyone knew he was a cover and Manchester United's human wall did not move at all.

Immediately thereafter, Beckham started running and lifted his leg!

The recognizable posture reappeared at the Old Trafford stadium once again: his left-leaning body parallel to the ground and both his arms stretched out, his supporting left foot twisted in a way that it could nearly break. His right foot quickly whipped out and struck the mid-lower part of the football.

The football soared through the air and brought up grass fragments. The human wall leaped upward at the same time. Ronaldo was tall but did not brush the football. The football bypassed the human wall!

The football did not fly high. After it bypassed the human wall, it drilled toward the top left corner of the goal at a very fast speed. Ben Foster struggled to pounce. Although the palm of his hand hit the football, the strength of Beckham's ball was stronger than he imagined. He did not manage to whack the football out. The football just slightly changed direction and slammed into the net.

The Old Trafford stadium was quiet for about a second before it suddenly sounded with the clamor of mingled cheers and boos.

"The ball went in!! David Beckham! We haven't watched his performance at Old Trafford for five years. Now he's back, but as an opponent of Manchester United. He shot a bullet of revenge into the heart of Manchester United! By driving him out of Manchester United that year, Ferguson should have guessed that one day... one day, he will see this scene!"

The commentator roared wildly, and the Nottingham Forest players excitedly jumped on Beckham.

However, Beckham did not have a smile on his face. He did not celebrate the goal and did not even raise his hands. After he saw the football enter the goal, he turned around and walked back. Although he was a Nottingham Forest player and had to give his all for this goal for the sake of Nottingham Forest's ambition to win the league title, it did not mean he would be ecstatic in front of tens of thousands of Manchester United fans. He scored the goal because he was a Nottingham Forest player. He chose not to celebrate after the goal because he loved Manchester United and did not want to let the people have any misunderstanding.

His Nottingham Forest teammates did not care what Beckham thought. They bounced over to surround him and celebrate loudly.

Even Twain waved his fists, cheering this key goal from Beckham.

Surrounded by the crowd, Beckham still did not celebrate. His face remained calm. After the celebrating crowd dispersed, van Nistelrooy hooked his arm around his neck and whispered in his ear.

No one knew what they talked about, but Beckham's face showed a slight smile.

The two men ran back together, and the Manchester United players put the football in the center circle, ready to kick off.

"It was exciting to see David Beckham come back to Old Trafford for the first time and penetrate his former club's goal with an iconic free kick! Manchester United's new number 7 scored two goals and his predecessor did not lose either! Nottingham Forest trails Manchester United by 1:2 because of this goal, which gives them hope of equalizing the score. Judging by the overall trend of the game, the significance of Beckham's goal is by no means just to help the team reverse a goal..."

The extreme Manchester United fans were still hissing at Beckham, while the less extreme Manchester United fans were in a very complicated mood. Should they clap for him? He scored a goal against Manchester United, and the goal helped the Forest team get out of its predicament. The importance was self-evident. Should they hiss at him? They could not open their mouths to do it. After all, he had given them plenty of delightful time when he was at Manchester United. Just like Keane had put in his open letter when he left Manchester United: he made the world fall in love with Manchester United.

It was poignant to watch the back view of him run alongside van Nistelrooy — they were once part of the Manchester United team and currently the number one enemy of Manchester United in its bid for the title.

Van Nistelrooy raised his hands to wave to the grandstand where the Forest fans gathered. Beckham hesitated and put his hands up to wave.

Ferguson sat in the technical area. When Beckham scored, he did not even lift his butt. Perhaps he was already mentally prepared for it. Or was it indifference? No one knew what the stubborn old man thought. He would not admit that it was wrong to let Beckham and van Nistelrooy go. When he coached Manchester United, he had personally driven away countless players. Some of those people managed to do well and some did not do well. Manchester United was still Manchester United. Its eighteen trophies were quietly displayed in the trophy room, representing this club's unshakeable status.

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The game continued, and Beckham saved the team's future with a goal when the team needed it the most. Now the morale of the Nottingham Forest players had been boosted, it was impossible for Manchester United to use full offense to crush the Forest team again.

Ferguson was well aware of that, so he instructed the team to withdraw and no longer give the Forest team access to the easy gaps. Both sides were entangled in the midfield and engaged in attack and defense. It appeared Nottingham Forest had regained the pace of the game. In fact, the control still laid with Manchester United. To Nottingham Forest, no matter how many advantages they regained in the game, the lag in the score remained an undeniable reality. As soon as Manchester United withdrew, the attacking opportunities available to the Forest team plummeted. As long as they contended with Nottingham Forest like that and drag the game to the end, a 2:1 win would guarantee Manchester United the league title this season.

Twain observed closely for a moment, and he realized Ferguson's intentions.

Manchester United's withdrawal was not due to fear of attack or how much the Nottingham Forest offense had picked up, but because Ferguson was trying to cut off the Forest team's offensive route. He wanted to force Nottingham Forest and Manchester United to confront each other head-on and compete with positional play to wear them down. When the two teams pushed and pulled against each other, time would go by quietly.

It was not going to work. If the game was dragged to that point, Nottingham Forest would be in a dangerous position. There were nearly twenty minutes until the end of the game. If the score was still the same in ten minutes, the Nottingham Forest players would become agitated. The game would be out of the manager's control and progress toward an unpredictable abyss.

What should he do? He could only continue to urge the players to step up their attacks while he prepared for backup at the same time. He summoned Lennon and Bendtner from the substitutes' bench to warm up.

If it could not work, he had to force the attack and stake it all.

To win the title, Nottingham Forest had to not concede its goal in the final moments and then score two goals. It was an impossible task.

The atmosphere on Manchester United's bench was a little more relaxed than the tense Nottingham Forest substitutes' bench. After all, even if the game was tied, the title would belong to Manchester United. The conditions that Nottingham Forest had to meet to win the title were too harsh. The Manchester United players themselves had confidence in their team. For a team like Manchester United, an absurd thing like conceding two consecutive goals was definitely not going to happen to them!

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Beckham bumped into Carrick as he defended against him. It looked like a slight collision, but Carrick immediately fell to the ground as he held his ankle with a pained expression. Manchester United's team doctor ran up to diagnose Carrick after he received the referee's signal.

Beckham patted Carrick as a sign of goodwill and explained to the referee that he had not meant it.

Everyone knew that the Manchester United players often fell to the ground and used all factors available to waste game time. The visiting team, Nottingham Forest, players had nothing to do but remind the referee of that. Manchester United would not get overwhelmingly booed for doing so because it was their home ground. 50,000 out of 60,000 people supported Manchester United's bid for the title.

Taking advantage of the incident, George Wood gathered the guys.

"We have to find a way to score a goal." He cut straight to the point. "How about more straight passes?"

Van der Vaart glanced at him. "The number of errors will increase."

"It won't work if we keep passing the ball back and forth outside." Gareth Bale was on Wood's side.

"Frequent mistakes can also affect our morale." Ribéry agreed with van der Vaart.

They were quickly divided into two factions, which was not what Wood wanted to see. Just as he was about to speak up, Beckham spoke. "You guys can plug in more straight passes to draw their defensive attention to guard against the straight balls. Then you can create more gaps in the right wing for me and pass the ball to me. I'll find a way to send the ball into the box."

"A cross pass?"

"Yes, a cross pass."

"But their two center-backs are very..."

"So we need them to focus on the straight balls."

Wood thought about it and figured they could give it a try. He nodded. "I think we can try it."

The simple tactical meeting ended quickly, as Carrick had left the field with the team doctor and the game was back on.

Manchester United's free kick eventually landed at the foot of a Forest player.

Pepe took advantage of the gap when Manchester United put the defensive focus on van der Vaart, Ribéry, George Wood, and the others to suddenly dribble the ball to plug ahead. He was tripped by Scholes after he forced a breakthrough. He managed to move forward fifteen meters and was awarded a free kick.

In the impasse between the two sides, Nottingham Forest increased the straight balls, which any fool could see. They single-mindedly sought out gaps behind the Manchester United rear defensive line. Even if it was intercepted midway, the Forest players persisted on trying with straight passes.

It was not completely ineffective.

Arshavin received a straight ball from van der Vaart and nearly breached the goal. Fortunately, Ben Foster was focused and blocked it in time. It startled a group of Manchester United fans to jump out of their seats.

Manchester United quickly pinpointed and responded to the Forest team's tactical tweaks. They stepped up their defense against van der Vaart and Ribéry, as well as George Wood's passes in front of their own box.

Beckham was free on the right wing.

Whenever van der Vaart took the ball, O'Shea would recklessly rush up and stick to him. He would interfere with him and not give him a chance to observe any gaps in the Manchester United defensive line to then send a threatening straight ball.

But this time, van der Vaart did not do a straight pass. He feinted and suddenly diverted the ball to the side.

Beckham received the ball. Rafinha quickly plugged in and passed by Beckham, attracting the attention of the Manchester United defender, who thought he was going to pass the ball onto Rafinha for him to shoot or cut inside. As Evra followed in retreat, Beckham made a cross pass.

Without giving the Manchester United rear defensive line any chance to adjust, Beckham's cross pass flew over the defenders like a precision guided missile and appeared above van Nistelrooy's head!

Van Nistelrooy knew what his old friend wanted to do before he passed the ball. When he saw that he had received the ball, he paid attention to keeping parallel with the defenders around him, ready to rush out to grab the ball at the critical juncture.

That was the moment that he was waiting for.

Rio Ferdinand was outside helping with the obstruction of van der Vaart and Ribéry on the penalty area line. Only Vidic was defending against him.

Moreover, Beckham's pass was too good. Whether Vidic alone or Vidic and Ferdinand were around him, the ball was precisely delivered. Its timing was exactly at the moment van Nistelrooy jumped!

Van Nistelrooy jumped in the air and was able to feel Vidic hindering him behind, but the ball was in front of him. Even if he were to obstruct him, it was useless!

Shaking off Vidic's tugging, van Nistelrooy suddenly lobbed a header shot!

Swish!

It was so easy...

"What a goooool!! Van Nistelrooy — David Beckham's precise pass allowed him to just jump up and move his head! A while ago, Nottingham Forest's offense seemed to be forcing an attack from the middle, which looked stupid! But this time, Beckham's pass and van Nistelrooy's cooperation changed everything! Nottingham Forest forced a 2:2 tie with Manchester United in this away game! The second half is so dramatic!"

Van Nistelrooy did not keep a straight face and not celebrate his goal like Beckham did. He ran to Beckham with open arms. Beckham also had a happy smile on his face. The two friends hugged each other and were quickly inundated by the other teammates.

Twain was so excited that he did a somersault. Who would have thought that Nottingham Forest could catch up with Manchester United while they had a two-goal lead? Were the Manchester United fans going to start celebrating early? I'm not going to let you do that now!

"Nottingham Forest tied the score. With thirteen minutes left in the game, it's still full of suspense! It looks like Tony Twain's team doesn't want to easily cede the league trophy to anyone else. It's not that easy for Manchester United to defend the title!"

Chapter 645: Create History

Manchester United established their two-goal lead within five minutes in the first half, while Nottingham Forest smashed Manchester United's advantage with two goals in ten minutes in the second half. Now the two sides were tied.

The result of the draw was also good for Manchester United, because even if they both tied, each team would still take one point and Manchester United would still win by one-point difference. But a football game was not a simple mathematics problem. To have an equalizer during this time, any fool would know that Nottingham Forest's morale was running high and could score again if they were not careful.

Ferguson had to make some adjustments.

To attack? Of course not, he was going to defend. He had to play it safe at the last minute.

He replaced Rooney with Park Ji-sung who was more physically energetic and balanced between offense and defense to strengthen the midfield defense.

After Park Ji-sung came on, he relied on his abundant physical strength and the style of relentless running to launch a fierce interception against Beckham. Having run out of energy, Beckham was battered in the face of this defense. When the football was on his side, he basically could not organize any offense.

Twain also decided to change players. He replaced Beckham with Lennon.

When Beckham left the field, most of the people in the stands got up from their seats and stood up as they applauded the hero they once had. Beckham waved to the stands, not only to greet the Forest fans, but also to thank the Manchester United fans.

“David Beckham is replaced by Lennon. He received cheers from most of the fans in the stadium. No matter which team he had played for before, he deserves this reception now.” The commentator spoke affectionately, “This was the first time he has returned to Old Trafford as an opponent. No matter what the outcome of the game, his goal and assist will make people remember him forever ...”

After he high-fived Lennon as he came off, Beckham stood on the sidelines and continued to wave to the fans before he turned around to walk toward the Forest team’s substitutes’ bench.

Standing on the sidelines, Twain reached out to him and said, “I can only describe your performance as perfection, David.”

Beckham smiled, but did not speak. After he shook hands with Twain, he went around to the substitutes’ bench and sat down.

Twain understood that he was here in a complicated mood because he scored a goal and helped with an assist against his former club. He did not take it to heart that he did not know what to say. So, he turned around and continued to watch the game.

This was the league tournament, not the Champions League. If the game was tied, then it would be a draw. There would be no overtime or penalty shootout to determine a winner and loser. Once this game was tied, the Forest team would still lose the league title. This was not what Tony Twain wanted to see in the end. He carefully prepared for so long and spared no efforts to inspire their fighting spirit. For the team to equalize the score at the most difficult time, it was not to get a draw.

He turned his head to look at the big screen with the game time on it at the Old Trafford stadium. It was less than ten minutes away from the ninety minutes.

How could they get another goal when Manchester United were carrying out measures?

To lure a snake out of its hole was certainly not going to work. Ferguson’s team was not stupid enough to be so gullible. It was better to show clearly that they were clinging onto defense. If they were to attack strongly... Manchester United’s rear defensive line had stepped up its defense against van Nistelrooy and the other attacking players. As the center forward of the Forest team, van Nistelrooy currently struggled to even turn around, not to mention making a shot. Arshavin was forced to the side which squeezed Ribéry’s position to the middle and the two players imperceptibly changed positions.

In that case... could they strengthen their long shots?

This was a method, but its effect was unknown. Moreover, to place their hope of a goal on this when every attack ended up abruptly, it would inevitably affect the morale of the team.

With one hand pinching his chin and frowning, Twain stood on the sidelines as he pondered.

On the field, the Nottingham Forest team was carrying out indiscriminate bombardment around Manchester United’s half of the field: A cross pass from the flank, a grab in the middle, a sudden long

shot for the goal, a personal breakthrough, a straight pass the middle to attack ... any methods were used.

For a moment, the situation on the field reversed. That scene from the first half reappeared on Manchester United at the last minute.

But for the sake of the championship title, Manchester United also accepted this bit of humiliation. Ferguson stood on the sidelines, looking grim as he worried that his team would not be able to withstand Nottingham Forest's fierce offensive on and a loophole would emerge.

O'Shea had already returned to the rear defensive line and became a third center back. As the midfield line was so close to the rear defensive line, there was no need to set up a separate defensive midfielder.

But Ferguson was still a little uneasy. By all accounts, the Manchester United players on the field currently had strong abilities whether individually or cooperatively,. He did not know what he was worried about ...

Perhaps part of Nottingham Forest's reputation interfered with his mood?

Tony Twain's team was one that did not concede even in the face of death. As an opponent, he did not dare to let his guard down even for a second, especially when they started to go crazy.

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Time passed and the score was still 2:2. Manchester United was less than five minutes away from their tenth Premier League title trophy.

Even an attacking player like Cristiano Ronaldo had withdrew to the backfield to participate in the defense. Manchester United were almost completely without a counterattack. On the other hand, Nottingham Forest fully pressed on and turned out in full force. It could be said that except for Edwin van der Sar, almost everyone had pushed past the midfield and these players were well aware of what the draw would mean for them.

As Manchester United kept it tight defensively, Nottingham Forest's offense was somewhat "all bark and no bite." Although the scene looked menacing, nothing had been achieved.

Until later, George Wood could not stand it any longer and did a long shot from outside which missed straight away.

"It looks like Nottingham Forest is getting anxious. Such a hasty offensive blunder is unnecessary. It will only give Manchester United more confidence in holding the draw and agitate the rest of the Forest team more. George Wood is the captain and he shouldn't show any agitation." The commentator criticized George Wood harshly.

Off the field, Twain had the opposite view from the commentator. He rushed to the sidelines and shouted loudly, "Try to shoot more!"

Maybe a shot would be a waste of opportunity, but they would not have a chance if they did not shoot. Now that Manchester United was fully on the defensive, there was no way to threaten Nottingham Forest's back. Their ball could even get past the midfield under the Forest team's high press.

In that case, they just needed to shoot more and have a chance to break the goal as long as they hit within the goalpost range. As to whether they could score a goal or not, it was up to fate ...

After Wood missed his shot, van der Vaart also tried to kick. His shot was within the goalpost range, but it was too straight on and Ben Foster easily confiscated it. The Forest team then stepped up the long shots, which looked a little like a desperate deathbed struggle.

The fourth official reappeared on the sidelines. He held up the electronic signboard in his hands. This time it was one of the teams that was going to change a player, but a reminder of the injury stoppage time which was four minutes!

“The time left for Nottingham Forest is only four minutes, and Manchester United is only four minutes away from their tenth Premier League title. Now every attack by Nottingham Forest will put the Manchester United fans on edge and hopefully Ferguson’s heart will still be able to withstand ...”

Twain decided to change a player. He replaced the center back, Piqué with Bendtner. This substitution was a gamble with fate. He had to succeed or die trying. Bendtner could increase the strength of the Forest team in the box and cause some trouble for Manchester United’s rear defensive line. At the same time, his power and physical strength might also decide where the scales would tip in favor of the team to win or lose at the most critical juncture.

Bendtner ran onto the field, at which point the game had just entered the injury stoppage time, with four minutes to go.

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Cristiano Ronaldo suddenly had an idea in his mind when he saw the Forest team replaced the center back. He pulled Scholes aside and said, “Paul, I think we can try to fight back.”

Scholes glanced at the Forest players and then nodded, “They’re almost undefended now ...”

“Give me the ball.” Ronaldo felt like he’s in the right shape today. If the entire Manchester United team could not press out, then let him take the ball alone to charge ahead. “One more goal and this game is over. Even if there’s no goal, we can warn the Forest team to prevent them from attacking too hard.”

Scholes agreed with his idea. After the Forest team had finished another attack, Scholes asked Foster not to kicking a long ball, but to pass it to him. He got the football and passed it on to Ronaldo.

Following which, it was up Ronaldo’s individual performance.

Ronaldo caught the ball and used outstanding footwork skills to bypass Bale who rushed up. Then he suddenly sped up and started to dribble the ball to charge to the Forest team’s backfield.

At this moment, the Forest team’s latter half only strictly had Pepe and Edwin van der Sar. With large swathes of emptiness, the Portuguese could fully play to his fast speed, characteristics of his excellent skills and dribbled the football to stride toward the goal of the Forest team!

Seeing him like this, the Forest team rushed back to defend. Bale, Rafinha, Lennon and the others rushed back to catch up with Ronaldo. But the man who took the lead was George Wood. He began to pull back and prepare for defense after Ronaldo got the football. After he saw Ronaldo shook off Bale, he slashed across from the central area and plugged toward Ronaldo’s dribbling route.

Pepe also rushed over at the same time. At the final juncture, everyone was driven by a bloodlust. Who would take care to slowly retreat and procrastinate at this time? Pepe just wanted to intercept the ball from his Portugal national teammate and then took the opportunity to fight back. As a result,....

“Ah! Ronaldo easily bypassed Pepe. He’s really fast!”

After he skirted around Pepe, only van der Sar was left in front of Ronaldo. He had a lot of options, but whichever he chose, he would be very, very close to the goal.

The fans in the Old Trafford stands began to cheer loudly as if they could see the glittering golden trophy in front of their eyes. Everyone stretched out their hands as if they were stroking the cool trophy ...

Ronaldo looked up at Edwin van der Sar, and the other man seemed hesitant to strike. He smiled. Whether he struck or not, the result was the same, and that was ...

“Pop!”

He suddenly lost his balance. Ronaldo saw the turf rushing toward his eyes. When he landed on the ground, he felt a sharp pain in his knee, and then a violent shock, which caused him to tumble continuously on the ground and almost rolled out of bounds before he stopped.

He could not even take a look at who the culprit was, for he was rolling back and forth on the ground, holding his knee in pain. The stands which were filled out cheers just now were replaced with deafening boos at this moment. The clamor was so loud that it could suffocate people!

George Wood sat on the ground, and not far ahead of him was Ronaldo in pain. Amid the sprawling hissing, he heard a piercing whistle.

Indeed, he did not hesitate to come up with a shovel behind Ronaldo who was about to cut inside. He did not think too much before he shoveled first and brought him down. He just wanted to shovel the player along with the ball. He was already aware of the consequences. He did not have to wait for the referee to come up and drive him away. He rose from the ground and walked slowly out of the field amid the boos,. The referee ran over and presented a red card behind him!

“This was an appalling foul and it was not too much to show the red card directly! Nottingham Forest had finally paid the price for their reckless offensive!”

Seeing that his treasured player was shoveled and made to fall, Ferguson was furious off the field, urging the team doctor to quickly get on the field to check the injury.

Twain looked at George Wood expressionlessly as he walked toward him.

The score was a draw with one-point difference. There were only a few minutes from the end of the game. And now George Wood was sent off with a red card. Was this the end of it?

Wood came off and said in a low voice as he passed Twain’s side, “I’m sorry.”

Twain gazed fixedly at the pitch but said to him, “Don’t go yet. Just stand at the mouth of the tunnel to wait for the game to end.”

Wood obeyed and moved back to stand at the mouth of the tunnel. He leaned against the wall, looking up at the game inside the pitch.

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Ronaldo was carried down on a stretcher, and it looked as if he was badly hurt. Fortunately, Ferguson still had a replacement spot. He called Tevez from the substitutes' bench behind him, intending to use this switch of player to waste the game time again.

The rest of Manchester United players prepared to execute this free kick in the front field. Thirty-four meters away from the goal toward the right, it would equally pose a big threat to the Forest team's goal if handled well.

Vidic stayed in the backfield and Ferdinand ran up. As long as this attack succeeded, the game would be over. Nottingham Forest was absolutely incapable of consecutively scoring two goals in the last one and a half minute.

Edwin van der Sar nervously directed his teammates to defend against their opponents in the box. The human wall only had Bale alone.

"Don't give them any chance!!" He cried aloud, "Push them out, push them out!"

Ferguson stood on the sidelines. Next to him was Tevez. Instead of changing a player now, he decided to wait for this free kick to start. It was certainly a good thing if they scored. If there was no goal but the ball went out of bounds, then he would decisively change the player and make use of this replacement to consume a little more time.

The free kick was carried out by Hargreaves. None of the Manchester United players grabbed it. Instead, Pepe snatched first and headed the ball.

The football did not go out of bounds. It landed at the foot of van der Vaart, who directly passed the football to Lennon on the side

Seeing Lennon take the ball, O'Shea wanted to come up and tackle it, but Lennon who was faster with his feet, stabbed the football between O'Shea his legs to bypass him and speed up to give chase to the ball. He got the football back just when it was about to go out of bounds!

"Fight back, fight back!" Twain waved his arms and chanted off the field.

This was the only chance ...

Thanks to George Wood's foul, Nottingham Forest had this last chance to fight back quickly!

Lennon dribbled the ball at high speed in the wing. He saw that Evra wanted to rush close and did not give him the chance. He suddenly kicked the football out ten meters away, and then sped up to chase the ball again. He easily got rid of Evra in this way!

His breakthrough was not hurried, and he mobilized his whole body. Manchester United's entire line of defense followed suit to move to this side, so as to prevent him from cutting inside. Vidic cut across in front of him, Brown pounced to the middle, Ferdinand and O'Shea desperately gave chase.

“This is Nottingham Forest’s chance, but if they can’t grasp it, this game is over!”

Lennon glanced at the situation in front and he found that it was more difficult if he wanted to break through on his own. So, ... he took a look at the front. Van Nistelrooy was preparing to run across in the front...

An opportunity!

Lennon pushed the football straight out from his feet and behind Vidic who rolled on the ground, van Nistelrooy had just diagonally plugged in and received the ball!

Vidic raised his hands to signal that van Nistelrooy was offside. But the assistant referee ignored it and ran forward along with van Nistelrooy.

“A beautiful set piece and it was not offside!”

After van Nistelrooy received the ball and cut into the box, Wes Brown rushed over to stop him from shooting.

“Don’t wait, just shoot!!” Twain anxiously roared off the field and wished he could go up himself to shoot for the goal.

Van Nistelrooy felt the threat from the oblique rear. Ben Foster blocked in front of him, trying to seal off the angle of his shot. At this moment, there was only van Nistelrooy alone in Manchester United’s box. He could not fool the opposing defensive players by passing the ball. The acumen of a natural striker played an important role here.

After van Nistelrooy saw Ben Foster’s position, he firmly lifted his leg to shoot the football out and gave a decisive kick before Brown could shovel and intercept the ball!

The football jumped on the ground and went past Ben Foster’s hands to then fly straight toward the back corner of the goal.

At the moment, whether the Nottingham Forest fans, Manchester United fans, the people at the Old Trafford stadium or watching the game live in front of the televisions, all held their breath with their hearts leapt to their throats.

The next second determined all their fate.

As soon as the football was kicked, Brown’s leg arrived. Van Nistelrooy also did not bother to maintain balance and fell to the ground. But his eyes stared at the football he shot out.

The heart of the “King of the Six-Yard Box” beat wildly in an irrepressible frenzy at this moment. If it passed over the goal, then the team’s hard work for a season would be in vain.

He did not close his eyes like some people who did not dare to look. He kept his eyes on the football.

He saw the football hit the inside of the goalpost and then bounced through the goal line to fall into the net.

“Ah ah ah ah—this is just incredible! The ball’s in! The ball really went in! Van Nistelrooy’s absolutely killed it in the last minute! His shot kicked his former club to hell! Nottingham Forest reversed the score

at the last minute and this one counterattack determined the owner of the title!" The commentator was almost deranged, but he was not really a Nottingham Forest fan ...

Tony Twain did not rise up in one bound after he saw the football enter the goal. Instead, he went soft in his knees and knelt on the ground. It was too exciting. He almost thought it was over. It was not just the team would lose the title. He would also lose face big time in front of the entire English media. For someone like him who valued face, it was no different from killing him.

Thank God... for van Nistelrooy ...

Kerslake suddenly embraced Twain who was kneeling on the ground and looking up at the sky from behind, and roared in his ear, "Tony! Tony! We're the f**king champions, aren't we? Manchester United doesn't have a hope, right?!"

Twain let him hug himself. He had no strength at all. He could not stand up if he wanted to.

George Wood watched the game at the mouth of the tunnel and was the first to see the commotion coming from the Forest team's substitutes' bench. His teammates held their arms up in celebration at this moment and he knew that van Nistelrooy's shot went in.

He leaned against the door with a sigh of relief in his heart. If the ball did not go in, he would have been a sinner who lost the title for the team ...

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After van Nistelrooy saw the ball enter, he staggered up from the ground and ran toward the technical area with his arms held high in celebration. He had just run to the sidelines when he was crushed to the ground by a group of players clad in Nottingham Forest jerseys.

The jubilant players on the bench also ran up to join in the fun. A group of people celebrated wildly on the sidelines.

Rio Ferdinand who ran back to give chase, saw the ball enter the goal and immediately knelt on the ground. He held his head in his hands as he laid on the ground.

Ferguson looked up at the sky. He could not even utter a curse word.

This ending was really something... They could even reverse a two-goal lead. What else could they not do in the world? How on earth could they completely crush this team to death?

He could only seek the answers the next season.

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"The referee blew the whistle for the end of the entire game! The Nottingham Forest players are still celebrating. There's no need for the game to continue ... Congratulations to Nottingham Forest! They have won the title for the 07-08 season English Premier League! This is the second top-flight trophy in their club's history! Thirty years ago, Brian Clough and his men picked up the first top-flight trophy in the club's history! Exactly thirty years later, Tony Twain has once again created history for the club!"

Twain finally had the strength to break free from Kerslake's embrace. Instead of running onto the field to celebrate with the rest of the players, he went to the tunnel and pulled George Wood out to ask him to go up and enjoy this championship moment with his other teammates.

Then he reached his hand out as he walked toward Ferguson.

Despite losing the title, Ferguson still showed plenty of grace in front of his opponent. He took Twain's hand and said, "Congratulations, you guys are ... the champion."

Twain smiled politely, "Thank you."

Without any more words, Ferguson turned and headed for the tunnel. The dejected members of the Manchester United coaching unit followed behind him.

After he watched Ferguson leave, Twain had just turned his head around when he saw a large group of players running towards him. He thought that the players were going to have fun with the "horrible game" of human pyramid. He planned to run away but was blocked by a group of reporters.

"Mr. Tony Twain, let's talk about some of your thoughts with regards to the victory!"

"This was a really thrilling game. Were you confident that your team would win at the last minute?"

"Manager Twain, you won the Champions League title last season and won the league title this season. Nottingham Forest has risen so quickly. Do you have any secrets you can share with us?"

Before Twain could answer these people's questions, he was lifted up and thrown into the air by a group of excited players.

"Oh, oh, oh! We're the champions!"

The reporters followed the players' movements and pointed both the cameras and the microphones in the air.

"Manager Twain, how do you feel at this moment? Let our readers and audience share your joy!" The reporters cried aloud below.

"How do I feel?" Twain turned his head and said as he was going up and down, "Right now I'm ... right now... I feel, I feel like I'm ... flying! In the clouds! In the clouds! Ah hahaha—we're the champions!" He raised his arms and shouted.

Chapter 646: Start Dating?

By the time Tony Twain and his team rushed back to Nottingham overnight with the league title trophy, this ancient city was once again revitalized with all the Nottingham Forest fans partying all night on the streets, in bars and even in their own homes. The whole city was drunk.

Twain naturally drank till he was as drunk as a lord and did not keep track of how much alcohol. There was no need and intention to. Anyway, it was one glass after another, one bottle after another bottle. What was considered to fully enjoy drinking without restraint? It was to drink to one's heart's content!

Twain was finally carried home by Dunn. He had no idea what happened after he was drunk. When he got up the next day, he found that he had blanks in his memory. He could not remember what happened last night for the life of him.

The headache from the hangover made him lie in bed for a long time before he could sit up.

This was the day after the league tournament had ended and sixteen hours had passed since that thrilling game yesterday. At the thought of the game, Twain felt as if he was still dreaming and that this was not real. Although he talked tough and said, "Our goal this season is to win The Double", he was not prepared for what to do after he really won the championship title.

The team was on holiday today and did not have to train. When he thought of it, Twain laid down again on the bed. A hangover was really unbearable ... Clattering sounds came from outside. He jumped out of bed and pulled back the curtains. The sky was gray with the pitter patter of rain coming down. It turned out that it was raining. It was cloudy yesterday ...

When he saw the rain, he felt his mouth go dry. Twain went downstairs to find water to drink.

He had just filled a large glass with water and drenched his parched throat and lips when the phone rang.

"Uncle Tony!!" Shania's excited voice came from the phone and startled Twain.

"You're too loud!" Twain moved the phone away and said to the receiver.

"I'm happy! Congratulations on another championship win!"

"Yo, the news travels pretty fast." Twain filled up another glass of water and sat on the sofa to chat with Shania.

"There's the internet, hee hee." Shania was in a really good mood from her voice.

"Is there anything you're so happy about, Shania?" Twain asked.

"Isn't it a happy thing for you to win the title?"

"Well, I meant to say if there's anything that made you so happy?"

"Isn't Uncle Tony's happy occasion my pleasure too?"

Twain also smiled and said, "Little girl, how are you doing in America?"

"It's all right. I've met some new friends. That movie will begin shooting in July. I don't have many scenes, so I'm not particularly busy. It's just that I still have to go other places for runway shows ..."

Shania gushed to Twain about her life and work these days. Twain also did not interrupt. He held his water glass and leaned back on the couch to quietly listen.

When she spoke to the end, Shania was suddenly quiet and then said in a low voice, "Uncle Tony?"

"Ah, you can continue to speak, I'm listening." Twain thought that because he had not answered for a long time, Shania misunderstood that he was not listening to her, so he hurriedly explained.

"I miss you so much ..."

Twain froze for a moment and thought he misheard.

“Do you miss me, Uncle Tony?”

“Of course, I miss you. How can I not miss you?”

“You’re lying!” Shania suddenly raised her voice again, “Aren’t you concerned that I’m alone here in a teeming world like Hollywood? Aren’t you worried that I might have a sex scandal? Does it not bother you that I might be bullied by some playboy?”

Twain was dumbfounded by the series of questions asked. It was not that he had not thought about them. He actually thought it was normal for Shania to find a boyfriend. It was not normal for Shania to remain single in the entertainment world like this. He used to wonder if it was Shania’s agency that asked her to do it ... But Twain found it embarrassing to ask questions that invaded the privacy of others.

So, he never knew why Shania did not develop a relationship or anything like that. By all accounts, she was not young. She was seventeen years old. In today’s China, it was no longer considered puppy love to be dating at this age, not to mention the more open-minded foreign countries.

But how would he talk to Shania about that? Could he say, “I want you to start dating?” Twain wanted to open his mouth and say so, only to find that he could not voice it. Was he hoping that she would or not?

The thought of such a beautiful and lovely clever girl getting cozy in the arms of a strange man, who could even be a grey-haired old man, Twain’s heart felt uncomfortable. This feeling was just like ... as if someone had taken away his beloved toy.

Twain shivered as he was taken aback by his own thought.

That’s terrible ... Why would I have such a thought? How could Shania be my toy? I’m just her temporary guardian in England, that’s all ...

“Uncle Tony?” Shania thought it was a little strange when she did not hear Twain speak for a long while.

“Ah, uh, um ... In fact, Shania ... Well, you’re already seventeen years old. There’s nothing wrong with dating and falling in love ...”

It was Shania’s turn to be silent this time. She opened her mouth and asked after a long beat, “Is that what you think, Uncle Tony?”

“Ah, I’m worried about you being lonely in the United States. It’s nice to have a relationship, providing that the other person is sincere toward you ...”

“Fine.” Shania interrupted Twain’s words and said, “I’ll listen to Uncle Tony.”

After a simple farewell, she hung up the phone.

Twain sat alone stunned on the couch, holding his mobile phone and water glass. From the sound of it, Shania seems to be angry. That’s odd. Why would she be angry? Does she not want to have a relationship at this time? Then she could have simply said it. We are such close friends and can directly say anything to each other. If she’s afraid that it will affect her career or objections from her fans, she

can speak up directly. I'm a flexible person. When she said fine, it felt like she was peeved ... Did I say the wrong thing? Ahem, trying to figure out a woman's heart is like looking for a needle in the haystack.

Twain remain perplexed despite much thought. He shook his head and drained the water from the glass before he stood up to go upstairs and get dressed.

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Shania hung up the phone and sat angrily on the couch. Uncle Tony had cotton in his head instead of brains. She punched the Totoro soft toy in front of her with force.

Her agent, Fasal, happened to see this scene when he pushed the door open. But he did not ask anything and just said, "Mr. Colin Farrell has invited you to a party tonight ..."

"I'll go." Shania raised her eyebrows.

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Hollywood was brightly lit at night and monstrous and multicolored world under the glittering neon lights. This was home to the vast majority of the world's stars. A paradise dreamt of and yearned by countless young men and women. Many relishing "stories" had been played out here.

Today, Shania would be the leading character in this story.

Sunset Boulevard was busy with traffic. With many high-end hotels congregated on this street, it was a good place for many stars to party and have fun once the night came. But it was also the preferred tourist destination for foreign visitors, because many tourists would always specially come here to encounter the stars they could only see on the television and movies.

Fasal parked the car in front of the hotel and the surrounding reporters suddenly swarmed up. The car door had not opened yet and the flashes were already popping endlessly. The doorman opened the door for Shania, as the long-haired Colin Farrell strode up to welcome.

"Oh, darling, I thought you weren't coming!" Seeing Shania step out of the car in an evening dress, this sexy Irishman smiled and gave his hand.

Shania also smiled as she took his hand. Then she turned around and waved to the reporters' cameras. The flashes became a swathe of blinding light, imprinting her and Farrell's intimate pose in the cameras.

The evening breeze caress the people's leaping hearts. This was bound to be a pleasant night.

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Twain sat in the café in the training base and had a coffee break. After a day off, the team resumed training. Carrying out the overlapping method of two practices a day and one practice a day, the players who had just experienced the fierce game and then quickly relaxed, to gradually become tense again. After all, there was an important game waiting for them. This was not the time to be completely relaxed.

This cafe was actually a restaurant within the club. Some of the players and staff would choose to dine here rather than go home for meals. If Shania was not staying in Nottingham and when there were two practices a day, Twain and Dunn would have lunch here before heading to the office for a nap.

Kerslake had the dining plate in one hand, and a gossip tabloid in the other hand.

Twain smirked to Dunn next to him, "His son is already ten and he still likes to keep up with the stars all day long."

Dunn did not say anything. He just laughed.

Kerslake heard Twain's words and stopped at the table where they sat.

"I only have this little hobby, so don't laugh at me. Besides, Tony, I saw the news of Shania here. She and ..."

When he heard "Shania", Twain's ears pricked up. He grabbed the newspaper in Kerslake's hand and flipped.

Sure enough, he saw a photograph in page five.

In the photograph, Shania hugged a long-haired man and smiled sweetly as she faced the camera.

"Who's this man?" He asked.

"Isn't that written on it? 'The Hollywood playboy, Colin Farrell.'" Kerslake pointed to the papers and said, "They stayed out till late and then Farrell drove Shania home."

"That's a detailed introduction. He's quite good-looking ... he does have the makings of a playboy." Twain looked at the picture.

"He used to have a bad reputation but he's better now. He used to drink, use drugs, chase after women and was foul-mouthed... Now that he has a son, he quit drinking and taking drugs. But as for picking up women..." He noticed that Twain did not look very good. "Are you worried about Shania?"

Almost everyone in the club knew that Shania and Twain had a good relationship. But as to what extent, not everyone knew ...

"No, she's not a three-year-old kid who doesn't know anything. I have nothing to be worried about." Twain gave the newspaper back to Kerslake and went on to drink his coffee.

Sitting across from him, Dunn did not say anything. He just briefly looked up at Twain.

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The players suddenly found that the boss who was supervising the afternoon training to be much harsher than in the morning. A little distraction and they would be shouted at and criticized by him outside the field.

"It's really strange. We have just won the league title, but the boss looks like someone in his family had just died ..."

"Guess he doesn't want us to be too smug. After all, there's still the Champions League final."

"It's not the first time we've played a Champions League final. Surely he doesn't have to treat us all like kids, does he?"

“Then he must have been in a sudden bad mood!”

“Is he having his period?”

“Ah hahaha—!”

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Shania was studying the acting materials at home with glasses on when she received a call. When she heard her cell phone rang, she was so excited that she jumped out of the couch and pounced on her cell phone. When she saw clearly who called, she was turned her mouth down in annoyance. But when she picked up the phone, no irritation could be detected in her voice.

“Ah, Mr. Farrell, hello. What’s the matter? Dinner? Hmm ...” Shania thought for a moment and nodded. “Great, you can pick me up at my place at six o’clock in the evening!”

Fasal walked in when he heard Shania’s voice on the phone and asked, “Are you not having dinner at home?”

Shania nodded and said, “That guy, Farrell has invited me to dinner.”

“He’s trying to woo you, Shania.” Fasal said with a smile.

“I know. Isn’t that good? Uncle Tony wants me to start dating.” Shania pursed her lips.

“He’s not your father. You don’t have to listen to anything he says.” Fasal said tactfully.

Shania rolled her eyes and said, “He’s just being nice. Anyway, Mr. Fasal, don’t you think I’m a little lonely by myself?”

Seeing the strange look of her pulling faces, Fasal just smiled and did not answer this question. In fact, she was certainly lonely. If she did not have invitations from friends and celebrities, Shania would coop up in the house to watch DVDs, read or go online. Not to mention that she was a celebrity, even if she were to be an ordinary person, the entertainment activities were too few.

Besides, it was odd for a seventeen-year-old girl not to go on dates ...

Fasal just asked her what time she would leave the house and then he left.

Following which, Shania was not in the mood to read. She kept staring at her cell phone from time to time, but until Farrell rang the doorbell of her house, her cell phone did not ring again.

As she scolded Uncle Tony in her mind, Shania dressed up to go out.

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“Ah, Shania has been so active lately. She went out to dinner with Farrell again ...” During a break in the training, the players gathered in twos and threes to chat. The coaches would also gather to talk about topics of mutual interest. Because there had been news of Shania in the newspapers lately, Kerslake would always mentioned everyone’s acquaintance, Shania, at such times.

But Twain was not in a good mood. He wanted to tell off this star-chaser, but as soon as his mouth opened, he swallowed the words back. He had no reason to chide Kerslake, and he had no reason to be in a bad mood. He did not even know why he was like this.

Gee, the big game is coming. How can you be distracted by something like this at this time?

Twain shook his head and tossed aside these messy thoughts for the time being.

Chapter 647: Preparation for Battle

“Just forget about the league title. Don’t think it’s going to be enough to get that.” On the training ground, Twain lectured the team.

After winning the league title, he sensed that there had been some laxity on the team. It had to do with the league title, which had made people feel that their mission had been completed and that however they played from then on, they had one championship title in hand and could have a good holiday.

Twain did not think so. Even though winning the league title was worthy of celebration, it was no reason to relax in preparing for the Champions League.

“The league title was delightful, but there are more lovely treats waiting for us: the Champions League title. Don’t you want to have a taste of defending the title?” Twain waved his arms as he painted a wonderful picture of the future for everyone. “Don’t relax! It’s hard to stir yourselves up after you relax. Now there are people out there who say that since Nottingham Forest has the league title, the best result is for Chelsea to win the Champions League title. It’s all bullshit! Why is it the best result to cede a championship title to another team? Are we here to fulfill another team’s wishes after we made it to the finals after much difficulty? Since we have advanced into the final, we must win the championship. Getting the first runner-up title would be a failure!”

At the end of the lecture, Twain handed over the command of training to Dunn and Kerslake, and went back to his office. Allan Adams was already waiting. They were going to discuss plans to go to the Far East to make money in the summer.

Twain was aware of the impact on the team of using valuable training time to fly halfway around the world to play commercial competitions. He had seen a number of precedents, but he had to obey the club’s arrangements.

In the first few seasons when he needed to buy players, the club’s finances always tried to satisfy him as much as possible. Now the team had achieved results, he naturally had to repay the club’s finances. Furthermore, the club was financially tight after the construction of the new stadium and needed to obtain money from somewhere to temporarily ease the situation. Going to Asia to play commercial competitions was the quickest way to see results.

Consequently, he could not refuse.

“We have been in touch with them and launched the campaign in four countries: China, Japan, Thailand, and Malaysia.” Allan did not even say hello when he saw Twain. He got straight to the point.

“Four countries?”

Allan nodded. "Five regions in four countries, including Hong Kong. Just treat the five games as the pre-season friendlies. He smiled at Twain, knowing that he and Twain were at odds.

Twain thought about it. There were five games before the season. The players would perhaps be physically unable to play more games after the long flight.

"What other activities are there besides the games?" Twain knew that for the team to travel all the way to Asia, it was impossible to return with just five games. Allan would not be that considerate.

"Well, there are three commercial events and a charity dinner, which requires everyone to attend. Beckham also has a number of specific activities arranged... You know, he's the most popular person."

"Sounds like a hectic summer." Twain shrugged.

After they finished discussing Allan's work, Allan casually asked Twain, "Tony, the Champions League game on the twenty-first..."

"You want to ask how confident the team is of winning?" Twain guessed.

Allan nodded.

"It's more effective to promote with the Double title, isn't it?"

Allan smiled. "You're a smart man, Tony."

"Ha, even if it's not for publicity, I must get this championship title in my hands!" Twain clenched his fists. "So you can rest assured that when I said I want the Double, it means the Double."

Allan glanced at the team training outside. He got up and held out his hand out to Twain. "Then Evan and I wait for your good news, Tony."

After they shook hands, Allan said goodbye, and Twain went out to the training ground to continue supervising.

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After the league tournament ended, the English media could focus hype on the Champions League final. Unlike the year before, this year was an English "civil war" which gave the English press a lot more to speculate on.

For the two managers, the media were determined to start a pre-match battle.

The Sun posted large photographs of the two men with a caption between the two photographs:

Grant? Who's that?

When Grant had just taken over as the Chelsea manager, Tony Twain had said that to show his contempt. His remark held some sway because everyone thought that Grant was incapable of leading Chelsea, especially since his predecessor was so idiosyncratic that it left a lasting mark on the team.

Even Twain did not expect Grant to manage to lead Chelsea and stagger all the way into the Champions League final. It was the first time in Chelsea's history that they had reached the Champions League final,

knowing that even a powerful manager like Mourinho did not finish the initiative. The final had not been played yet, but Grant had already made history for the club.

With that contrast in performance, the Sun's intention in bringing the remark to the surface again was clear — to provoke a new round of war of words between the managers and to mock and anger Twain, so that he would come out and publish another shocking article.

A headline was not enough. The Sun also listed the feuds and game record between the two teams in recent years. Tony Twain's team had the upper hand, but it further stirred the Chelsea fans' hatred of Nottingham Forest. After the media's exaggeration of Tony Twain's smugness and arrogant manner of despising everyone, it became more deeply rooted. The media were keen for the Chelsea fans to think that Twain felt that they did not need to play in the final because his team would win.

Supporters of both teams had not been idle, showing up one by one to give their views on the game.

John Motson wrote in his column on the BBC, claiming to be bullish on Nottingham Forest defending its title. Although it was difficult to defend the title, Tony Twain and his team were used to creating miracles. Furthermore, the match between Nottingham Forest and Manchester United had shown the team's resilience, so he believed the final victory belonged to Tony Twain and Nottingham Forest.

Far away in Portugal, Mourinho remained concerned about the team he once coached. He was still dismissive of Grant, but, emotionally, he supported Chelsea's bid to win. His reasons were quite his style — this is the team I left behind, I laid the foundation for the team for three years, and now Grant doesn't have to do anything. He just needed to follow my routine and reap the rewards. But I'm still proud of the performance of the Chelsea lads. What? Ever since Tony Twain came to power, Chelsea had not been able to win against Nottingham Forest? That's not a problem. This embarrassing record will officially be gone in Moscow on the night of May 21st...

In such intense battle atmosphere, Grant also eventually did not hold back. In an interview with Sky TV, he spoke about his personal feud with Twain. In fact, it could be considered an outpouring of grievances plus a counter-offensive. First he complained that he had never been acknowledged. Even if he had led the team to the Champions League final, the media still talked about whether he would leave again after the end of the season.

"Mr. Abramovich has just signed a new three-year contract with me. We are now hopeful of winning the Champions League title, which Mourinho's Chelsea had never even made it to the Champions League final. I do not admit that the failure of the league tournament was due to me. There were too many liabilities from the first half of the season. I have been compensating for this ever since I took over this team. I think it is very good to be able to get to this point. I don't understand why you're still talking about my successor..."

Then he talked about that famous "who is that" incident. "Tony Twain is an extremely peculiar manager. He's always so casual in judging others. I think we are long used to it. But I'm glad I now have the opportunity to prove 'who I am' in front of him." These words held a great grievance. Apparently, the anger provoked by Twain had been increasingly accumulated in Grant's heart, waiting for the right moment to explode.

This right timing was the Champions League final. What better revenge was there for Grant to feel great than to defeat the insufferably arrogant Tony Twain and his team in the Champions League final and then to pick up the trophy?

After Grant spoke, Tony Twain also jumped out to take on the challenge. He wrote in his column:

“I am glad that Mr. Grant finally understood his situation. He said he was happy to have the opportunity now to prove ‘who he is’ in front of me, stating that he himself understood that he needed to prove to me and that he did not know who he was until he had received my acknowledgement.”

These remarks caused the supporters of Nottingham Forest to burst into laughter, but almost made Grant fly into a rage. Obviously, he just thought about how to beat Twain, but unwittingly fell into Twain’s trap with words.

So, he fought back in the media again, but Twain did not take up a challenge this time. He said, “I loathe this behavior of attracting attention using one’s words before the game, so I’m not going to quarrel with Mr. Grant in the press. The title trophy does not belong to who can spit more saliva. I will not be involved in this kind of meaningless hype. I am sorry.”

These words choked Grant until he was dumbfounded. He had never seen such a shameless person... He had been happy to engage in a war of words with him before and now that he had gotten what he wanted, he immediately did an about-turn and back-pedaled. This excuse he used was high-sounding, but it was incongruent with his image!

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Although Twain was full of contempt and disdain for Grant in the war of words, he was not stupid enough to believe that Grant was such a vulnerable opponent. Mourinho’s words were not reliable enough. To be able to bring a team that had undergone major personnel changes in the middle of the season into the Champions League final, they had to not have just relied on the team left behind by the predecessor to do so.

Twain fully inherited the glorious tradition of the older generation of revolutionaries. The way he would treat the enemy first was to strategically despise him, and then do not underestimate him tactically. He had said disdainfully, “Who is Grant?” In fact, since discovering that Grant’s team improving in the Champions League, he had been paying attention to this opponent. He did not know if Grant’s team would be able to reach the Champions League final, so he just treated him as an opponent they might encounter in the future. It had come in handy now.

Nottingham Forest’s coaching unit had been gathering all the latest information about Chelsea, such as Ashley Cole was hurt in training, Lampard’s mother had passed away and so on. As long as there was information that could affect the game, it would be sorted out and put on Twain’s desk.

Although he had dealt with Chelsea many times and both teams were no stranger to each other, Twain believed the game on the evening of 21st had to not be the same as any previous game. Chelsea, which broke into the Champions League final for the first time, was bound to be hungry like a pack of wolves. Without their Manager Grant’s motivation, they would also be full of fighting spirit.

This time it was a tough opponent and it was not going to be an easy game. The psychological warfare had been played. Ultimately, it depended on how the two teams performed on the field to see which team the title belonged to.

Trading insults with each other really would not determine which team would take the title.

During training, Nottingham Forest focused on stepping up the tactical drills for penetration in the middle. Nottingham Forest established itself from the two flanks. While the wings were still strong, this had been thoroughly studied by their rivals and Chelsea would be on guard. Therefore, when they focused on defending against the two flanks, the Forest team would unexpectedly strike in the middle. He believed that it would produce a wonderful effect.

In addition, a set piece was always a wonderful move to break a deadlock and had to be practiced. At the same time, Twain decided to let the team practice the penalty shots, taking into account the various situations that might arise. Although he did not want the game to develop to that far, it was always good to be well prepared. In case the game was really dragged into a penalty shootout, it was better to be prepared than to be caught off guard.

As the day of the game approached, the various wars of words outside became increasingly fierce. The surroundings of the two teams' training bases were filled with reporters from all over the world. But the two managers had ceased fire... The two men stopped all direct war of words and also avoided discussing this personal feud during the interviews with the reporters. They just talked about the team's current training situation, players' conditions, the prospects for the final... and these conventional subjects of no real value.

Compared to the previous fiery matchup between the managers, the players were much calmer when they talked about this game. It was just a final match.

In an interview with the reporters, Beckham admitted that he did not expect his first season with the Forest team to be so wonderful. Not to mention that they had won the league title, now there was a hope to win the Champions League title. He thought it was fantastic as he had never thought he would have a chance to stand on top of Europe again when he decided to transfer to Nottingham Forest. This also showed that his decision was correct and wise.

The media naturally lauded his accomplishments again.

In preparation for the Champions League final, Twain found that he suddenly developed a habit in a short period of time — he began to pay attention to the celebrity tabloids like Kerslake. From those papers, he could always find news about Shania. Compared to Shania when she first went to live in Los Angeles, Shania was currently much more active and frequently attended parties as well as commercial events.

Most of the time, that Hollywood playboy, Colin Farrell would definitely follow her around. They seemed to have a close relationship.

Whenever he saw news about Shania, Twain sensed that there was something was brewing deep in his heart that worried him. He was afraid that one day it would suddenly break out of his control and he could not tell what the consequences would be when that happened.

This sentiment had a growing impact on Twain as the Champions League final approached, so much so that when things were quiet for him, he would inevitably think about it. Twain felt that something was wrong with him, something extremely wrong. Going on like this was detrimental for while he prepared the team for battle and even for the final match. He had to think of a way to fix it...

He looked at the phone in his hand.

Chapter 648: A Thing Like Love

Twain still decided to give Shania a call to have a good talk with her. He should not have been responsible for this sort of matter as her parents were still alive and well. But looking at the current development, her parents were clearly not in charge. In that case... Twain felt that since he was really like one of Shania's elders most of the time, so it was a matter of course that he stepped forward to say a few words.

Listening to the ringing tone coming from inside the cell phone while he waited for his call to be answered, Twain let his imagination run wild. While he was busy preparing for the Champions League final against Chelsea during this time, he had not made another call to Shania. But was it really because he was preparing for the Champions League final?

Maybe he did not want to make that call.

This was good. She had made a new friend over there, and it was a man. He did not have to worry about whether she was lonely over there. Shania had to grow up sooner or later. He could not always take his first memory of when he first met her as the permanent impression. She was only thirteen years old at that time, and now fast forward five years later, she was almost eighteen years old. In China, one would be considered an adult at the age of eighteen ... So, she should live her own life and have her own social circles. These things had nothing to do with him.

"Sorry, the number you have dialed is temporarily not in service. Please try again later ..."

"Strange." Twain mumbled to himself as he looked at the phone screen.

He had wanted to put the phone down like this and get busy with other things. But looking at the name behind that string of numbers on the screen—"Little Girl", he stubbornly pressed the call button again.

In fact, ... I'm aware of all the reasons above, but why do I just feel awful? Is it due to that Colin Farrell? Ah, yes! It must be because of that guy with the bad reputation. Ah, I'm still so worried about this little girl in the United States. Why she can find young handsome guy with a nice character? Hollywood is full of young handsome people. Why does she take a fancy to an old guy who is about to be thirty-two years old! With a kid in tow! Oh my God... This world is too crazy!

Alcoholism, drug use, playboy ... My little girl cannot be companion to that kind of man. I feel scared just thinking about it!

I absolutely forbid this kind of thing! Right! This is a major life decision; she cannot be hasty! She's only a young girl with no experience and that shameful old man is an old hand at the affairs of the heart. He

must have used charming words to deceive Shania. I have to make it clear to her that love is not like this ... Definitely not!

Love should be ... Love should be ... Love should be ...

“Sorry, the number you have dialed is temporarily not in service. Please try again later ...”

“Bastard!” Twain cursed and pressed the green button on his cell phone again.

How should love be like ... Ah, this is really a profound philosophical question. Anyway, it will not be a young girl who’s not even eighteen in embrace with an old man who already had a child and appeared intimately in front of everyone! It’s not in line with ... common sense!

Twain gnashed his teeth at the thought.

What if she gets mad at me? But she’s never been an obedient girl who listens to me... Then I can only be a little fiercer. I must act angry and not back down! Yes, I can’t let her do whatever she pleases! Can’t let her have her way according to her temper. I hate spoiling kids this sort of thing the most hate! You’re going to get it from me this time, Shania ...

“Sorry, the number you have dialed is temporarily not in service. Please ...”

“FUCK!”

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Shania sat cross-legged on the couch, looking very seriously at the cell phone on the coffee table. The tiny pink cell phone rang out with melodious music and vibrated on several times as it slowly moved to the edge.

She wanted to see if the cell phone would jolt itself off the edge.

Half the body of the phone was suspended in the air. One more jolt and it would lose its balance. It was at this time that the sound of the music and vibration stopped at once.

Shania pursed her lips.

Just as she was about to pick up her cell phone, the music came on again! This startled her as her fingers touched the cell phone. The small phone did a somersault in the air and then fell straight to the floor.

“Ah!” Shania exclaimed.

Fortunately, the floor was carpeted, and the cell phone avoided the fate of smashing into smithereens. Shania hurriedly picked it up from the floor and accidentally touched the answer call button.

“Sha-ni-a-!!” Full of anger, Uncle Tony’s voice, crossed the Atlantic and American continents, ignoring the barriers of time and space and broke out.

He was furious.

“Why didn’t you answer my call!!”

Shania took her cell phone in front of her and did not put it to her ear. Even so, it did not prevent her from hearing Tony Twain's clear voice.

"Uh ... Uh ..."

Shania was a little frightened when she heard Uncle Tony's angry voice. She thought she had to find an excuse for herself this time, or she would have been scolded by Uncle Tony ...

Shania anxiously scrambled on the couch and unwittingly hit the power switch on the television remote control.

A "beep" sound came on and the television in front of her was turned on. It was the Fox Sports channel, which was just showing the F1 race. Shania's eyes lit up and turned the volume up.

"Ah! I'm sorry, Uncle Tony! I'm out shopping. It's so noisy here, so I did not hear the phone ringing ..."

The television speakers transmitted the "buzz buzz buzz buzz—" noise of the F1 race cars zooming past the cameras at a high speed. It totally corroborated ...

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Twain did hear the roar of the engine, but he was a little puzzled because the noise sounded so strange. There were no cars with such horsepower on an ordinary street ...

Just as he was wondering, a faint voice loomed in his ear, "... Alonso overtook Button and now he's in the pole position ..."

"Click—" Twain's hand gave a hard press, and the cell phone in his hand gave a whine.

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Shania covered her mouth and stared wide-eyed as she was betrayed by her television so quickly.

"Shania ..." He did not yell, but this low voice made Shania even more frightened. "You even dare to fool me ..."

"Er, hehe—" Shania could only giggle.

"Turn off the TV and don't think I don't know what you're doing." Twain said coolly.

Shania had to obediently turn off the television, and the room was restored to peace again. Now the voice on the phone was clearer.

"How ... have you been lately?"

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Twain wanted to properly criticize Shania, but when he spoke, his words turned into "How ... have you been lately?" type of greeting. It was a disgrace, and the momentum he had gathered deflated as soon as he made this remark.

He could only sigh with frustration.

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She originally wanted to keep a cold face to deal with Uncle Tony's rant, but did not expect to be faced with a greeting and sigh.

That sigh crumbled Shania's psychological defenses instantly—she was supposed to be angry with Uncle Tony, but now she could not even work up her anger.

"I'm good. I've got a boyfriend." Although she was no longer angry inside, she did not intend to let go of the nasty Uncle Tony in words.

"Ah ..." Twain froze. He's really her boyfriend ... Son of a bitch!

"That won't do." He startled Shania with a sudden roar.

"Why not?"

"I said that boyfriend of yours won't do!"

"Why not? He is good to me, a very gentle man and very romantic too ... He's so nice! Why ever not?" Shania asked with pursed lips.

"Tut! Is that kind of playboy considered good too? Gentle? Romantic? That are just moves an old hand at love uses to pick up girls!"

Shania covered her mouth and giggled, "It looks like Uncle Tony is also an old hand at love. Where's your girlfriend, Uncle Tony?"

"Don't divert from the subject!" Twain cried, "I'm now educating you and not you giving me a lesson! I'm telling you, Shania, Hollywood is one big corrupted place. If you're not careful, you can just ..." He could not continue as the words that followed were not very nice sounding to a girl.

"What's the matter, Uncle Tony?" Shania was unwilling to let go.

"Ahem, ahem." Twain coughed a couple of times before he changed the subject, "Anyway, Shania. I think, you've just arrived there, so you'd better seriously learn first and focus on your career first. As for dating and relationship, you can take it slowly ... And to be honest, I don't feel at ease about that Colin Farrell. I don't think he has the best of intentions..." Twain was justifying his actions. After all, interfering in the private lives of others was a bad thing in the Westerners' views. Instead, he heard laughter which sounded like silver bells coming from the other end of the line.

"I still remember what I said to you at Armani's dinner party—if I was going to find a boyfriend in the future, I would definitely come to you first and ask for your advice. If you're not satisfied with him, I'll let him go. What did you say at that time, Uncle Tony?"

"What did I say at the time?" He did not recall clearly what happened a year ago. Twain was confused and did not know what Shania meant by suddenly mentioning the past.

"You yelled at me and said, 'I'm not your father!'" Shania rather accurately captured Twain's flustered and exasperated tone and said, "You see, now that I have not asked for your advice, you came calling on your own, Uncle Tony."

“Are you blaming me?” Twain asked with a frown.

“No.” The corners of her lips curled up as she spoke into the phone, “You don’t like Colin Farrell?”

This time Twain replied without hesitation, “I dislike him very much!”

Shania leaned against the couch while a soundless laugh played on her pair of slightly parted and alluring soft red lips.

“I tell you, Shania ... You must be inexperienced in this area. Your Uncle Tony is an old hand! You have to listen to me this time. Just from the looks of that Colin Farrell, you know he’s not a good guy!” Twain did not know whether Colin Farrell was really a good person or not. Anyway, this was for the sake of Shania’s “lifelong happiness.” What did it matter if he had to discredit a person who had nothing to do with him? He was best at blurting things out without thinking.

“Ah, for a thing like love, you have to find a man... who has a sense of security which is the most important thing. He must be able to make you feel safe! Do you know that? Ah, Shania, the so-called sense of security is when you are with him, you will not be nervous and afraid. You won’t worry about getting hurt and be inexplicably upset ... In short, you will feel safe and at ease as if you’re leaning against a wall ... No, a mountain!” Twain clenched his fist and raised his voice as if he made an impromptu speech to his players in the locker room. “He can accommodate your everything. No matter what difficulties, setbacks and grievances you encounter outside, you can at least rely on him and sleep in peace! It cannot be replaced by some pretty words and sending nine hundred and ninety-nine bouquets of roses! He may not speak beautifully, do very romantic things, but he loves you, is willing to take care of you, dependable, willing to help you weather the ups and downs in life ...”

Shania listened in a daze.

Twain was totally unaware that he had gushed out bits and pieces from his mind of how a man should be, observed from various places in his past. As he spoke, he even felt he should work towards the goal, because ...

“This kind of man is too perfect ...” Shania exclaimed.

“Listen, Shania. Love is for a lifetime. You can’t rush it, so you naturally have to have high standards and strict requirements.” Twain deliberately ignored the difference between “love” and “marriage.” In fact, marriage was probably a major lifetime decision...

“In a nutshell, I hope you will be happy all your life, Shania.” Twain meant these words from the bottom of his heart. He added, “But Colin Farrell cannot give you a lifetime of happiness. I do not approve of you with him, absolutely ... absolutely not in favor!”

After she listened to Twain’s remarks, Shania was silent for a moment.

Just as Twain thought Shania was still unwilling to accept his opinions, he heard her gentle voice said, “Thank you, Uncle Tony.”

“Huh?”

“What do you mean ‘huh’?”

“There’s no ‘but’?”

“Why should there be a ‘but’?”

“General, isn’t ‘thank you’ followed by a ‘but’? Such as:

—Thank you, Twain. You’re a good man. But we can’t be together. I only think of you as my brother (uncle)!

“There’s not a ‘but’!” Shania did not know whether to laugh or dry, “Thank you, Uncle Tony, thank you!”

Twain finally breathed a sigh of relief. It appeared as if Shania was going to accept his advice. He had just sighed when he thought of another question: am I being too thoughtless when I so roughly interfere in Shania’s private life? I should still apologize to her, right? Is it right for me to do this? Is it my place to do this? Do I have the right to say these things?

“Are you angry, Shania?”

“Angry? Why?”

“Because ... Well, I interfered with your ... private life ...”

“Why would I be angry?” Shania happily said with a laugh, “You are my Uncle Tony. I can be angry with everyone, but I will not be angry with Uncle Tony! Besides ...”

I’m actually very happy.

Shania did not say this. Instead, she replaced it with another reason.

“... Besides, you’re showing me concern. You’re being kind, Uncle Tony.”

Twain was really relieved now. He said, “If you feel lonely and alone, just call me and don’t mind the time difference. Even if it is in the middle of the night in London, you can still call me. Or... when you’re not busy, come back once in a while for a break.”

Shania did not respond to this invitation. She just asked, “Do you miss Me, Uncle Tony?”

This time, Twain did not repeatedly stress how much he missed her. He just uttered once, “Yes.”

“That’s good. Whenever I’m lonely, I will think that Uncle Tony misses me, so I won’t be lonely!” Shania said happily.

“Silly girl ...” Twain smiled.

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It was lunchtime on another training with two sessions of practice.

Dunn sat across from Twain and lowered his head to eat his seafood risotto, while Twain only drank coffee and ate sandwiches.

Kerslake came up to Twain with the papers and said, “It’s really strange that Shania dumped that Irish playboy overnight. It’s too soon for the rumored couple to break up, isn’t it? The papers stated that guy,

Fasal, couldn't figure out why Shania rejected him. I couldn't figure it out too. Didn't they seem to be getting on quite well before, did they?"

Twain did not grab the newspapers this time. He just drank his coffee and said leisurely, "Who knows? Who can tell with a thing like love? Maybe Shania thinks Farrell's hair is too long?"

"What kind of reason is that?" Kerslake did not know whether to laugh or cry at Twain's response.

Dunn, who was busy eating, glanced at Twain. The demon tail behind this man seemed to be swinging complacently.

Chapter 649: Modesty Is Not A Virtue

Twain's mood suddenly turned for the better. Using "everything becomes clear at once" to describe might not be appropriate, but it more or less meant that. He was no longer bothered by things outside the competition and dedicated himself in the research of the opponent and training. The people around him could feel the change. The Tony Twain of the two days again made them feel insecure because if the team's leading general himself was distraught, the hearts of the troops would naturally be affected. Now all was well. His unknowing restless heart had settled down, and so the people around him settled their hearts as well.

As the final match was held in faraway Russia, the team had to travel there two days in advance to adapt to the venue.

Before he left, Twain took the tickets to Gavin's grave. This was his routine as long as his team made it to the finals, he would do so. As with this habit, previously he would mail Michael Bernard a ticket. But this time, he clipped a piece of paper with it in the envelope. These words were written on it: "You don't have to come, Michael. Just keep this as a memento."

In front of Gavin's tomb, Twain ran into George Wood, which surprised him a little. He said, "Is this a coincidence? We never ran into each other here."

Wood looked back at his manager who held a bunch of flowers and said, "I don't know. I don't know when you'll be here too."

"Then why do we always pick the same day?"

"Because this is the only day the team ends training early." The day they were referring to was today which was the day before the team traveled to the finals' venue.

"What you said makes a lot of sense." Twain crouched in front of Gavin's tomb and put the flowers next to George Wood's bouquet. He then pulled out a lighter and lit the ticket in his hand.

"Is that how you send him the tickets?" Wood saw this for the first time.

"Yes. I don't know Gavin's address in heaven, so I can only burn it for him." Twain patted his hands after he burnt the ticket. He got up and looked at Wood.

"Gavin Will his father come back to watch the game this year?" Wood asked.

Twain shook his head and said, "No. He has his own life and football games are just a pick-me-up in life."

"A pick-me-up?"

"They're not professional players or career coaches. They're just regular fans. Maybe football is life for us but it's not like this for them." Twain looked at Wood and explained. Then he asked, "How's your mother?"

"Her health ... has always been that way."

Twain nodded to show his understanding. Sophia's illness was the after-effects from a lot of hard work and running around over many years, the mental and physical stress of not taking good care of herself, not resting well and not eating well. Such an illness basically had no hope of recovery. It could only be controlled gradually. Until now, she still often needed to go to the hospital for treatment.

"George."

"Yes?"

"Take good care of your mother."

"I know."

"So ... will she go to watch the final on the 21st?"

"She wants to go but I won't let her."

"Oh?" Twain was a little puzzled when he heard George Wood said so.

"She's not well enough to be able to be in a flight for a long time. I asked her to watch the live broadcast on TV at home."

"Then you'd better play well!" Twain patted Wood on the shoulder with a smile.

"I've always play well..." Wood suddenly thought of the red card in that last game of the league tournament when he wondered how Ronaldo whom he shoveled to the ground and ended up having to be carried off on a stretcher was. He paid little attention to the reports in the media. "What happened to the Portuguese?"

"Portuguese?" Twain froze for a moment, and soon reacted, "Oh, you mean Cristiano Ronaldo? He... Well, he's okay. He was well after he just took a few days off. Now he's alive and full of vigor in the Portuguese national team's training camp. You don't have to worry."

Twain exaggerated a little. Ronaldo did appear in the training camp of the Portuguese national team in preparation for the UEFA European Championship, but he was not vigorous and lively at all. Until now Scolari had not allowed Ronaldo to train with the ball. His mission was to regain his physical health and rest fully. Out of caution, the team doctors of the Portuguese national team advised Scolari to only bring Ronaldo on in the second game of the group stage.

As there would be UEFA European Championship and the Olympic Games this year, all the European leagues came to an end in succession. The players of the various club teams had gone to report at their respective national teams. Only Nottingham Forest and Chelsea had delayed their dismissal of the teams

because they had to prepare for the Champions League final. Between the Champions League, European Championship, commercial games and Olympics ... this summer would be very busy for the Nottingham Forest players.

Wood had no expression on his face, but he was slightly relieved in his heart.

This was not the same as the last time when he broke Rochemback's leg with a kick. He tried to avenge Eastwood the last time. Whereas it was about their tactical needs this time. The needs of a game was completely different from "I just felt like doing it."

"Oh right. About that foul, you did a beautiful job." He had been busy with the celebration and the preparations for the Champions League final after the game. He was also busy worrying about Shania's "major life event" and did not talk to Wood about that game. He was afraid Wood would worry that his red card had gotten the team into trouble. It was actually not like that ...

"Without that decisive foul from you, we might have conceded the goal and wouldn't have gotten that valuable chance to fight back. It was you who changed the course and outcome of the game." Twain gave high praise to Wood. "You had been instrumental in us being able to win this league title."

Wood did not smile with delight because Twain had praised him. He was always like this, and nothing seemed to betray his happiness or anger across his face

Twain was used to it and did not find it strange either.

"Let's head back?" He said.

"Okay." Wood nodded.

Before they left, Twain turned to look at Gavin's tombstone and said, "We're heading off to Moscow to play in the final, Gavin. If we can defend the title, I promise I will come back to see you with the trophy. Also, remember to go watch the game live."

With these words, Twain and Wood walked out of the quiet cemetery side by side. The flowers swayed gently in the breeze, as if they were nodding.

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For Twain, the city of Moscow was no longer an unfamiliar place that could only be appreciated sporadically in a variety of films and television works. Nottingham Forest spent last summer here in the friendly matches before this season. This trip was down the memory lane.

"Luckily, Chelsea didn't take the same flight as us." On the way from the Moscow airport to the hotel, Kerslake said of their flight from the London airport. London Heathrow Airport was filled with the press, which at one point made one thought it had become the second "Fleet Street." (note: It was once the street that was most concentrated with the British press and a symbol of the advancement in the British media. Now the various media outlets had moved out in succession and "Fleet Street" had become a symbolic label used to refer to the British media headquarters). Because Chelsea and Nottingham Forest coincidentally left the United Kingdom and headed for Moscow on the same day, so everything was thrown together.

“The media don’t think so. They must be very disappointed not to see the buzz.” Twain was always merciless in mocking the British media. “It’s like you dangle the bone in front of them but they are not allowed to take a bite.”

These two teams did not encounter each other before the game as the media had wanted. The airport made meticulous arrangements that prevented them from running into each other. Both teams also cared a lot about this matter and requested for the players not to wander around before boarding their flights. The current hostility between the two teams was so high that no one wanted any chaos to happen ...

The bus stopped at the entrance of the hotel where the team was staying. A number of reporters had gathered there. After the players alighted the bus, they accepted a short interview before they entered the hotel. They went to their rooms according to the long-allocated room combinations to rest.

Twain took a little longer and was delayed at the hotel entrance. As the team’s leader and famous big mouth, he was more “favored” by the press.

“There’s nothing to say. There’s been a lot of news about us lately, and it’s talking about the same old things. You don’t want me to put you off with something that’s out of date, do you?” Twain said aloud in the crowd.

“You can talk about the outlook for the final. What kind of results do you want to get?”

“No one wants his own team to lose, mate. Your question lacks standard.” Twain amused the other reporters.

Tang Jing was naturally in there. While everyone was laughing, she squeezed in and asked, “Since the restructuring of the Champions League, no team has ever successfully defended its title. Now that Nottingham Forest has a high chance, excuse me ... Mr. Twain, have you fully assessed the difficulty of defending the title?”

If she had asked “Do you have faith in defending your title?”, Twain was bound to retort, “You’re talking nonsense.” She also learned to be smart in the process of constantly bickering with Twain.

Hearing this question, Twain nodded, “Any final game has a certain degree of difficulty. I actually think the Champions League final is the same as the final round of the just-concluded league tournament. But my and my players’ job is to face one difficulty or another, and then we’ll ... kick them off! Are you satisfied with my answer, Miss Tang?” Twain winked at Tang Jing.

“Thank you.” Tang Jing did not pay him any mind and continued to ask, “Can you talk about your trip to China this summer...”

“Sorry, that has nothing to do with the game the day after tomorrow. I don’t want to talk about that now.” Twain put on a matter-of-fact expression.

Tang Jing nodded to show her understanding and stopped any mention of other issues.

After responding to some of the other reporters’ questions, Twain squeezed out of the crowd and walked into the hotel. He was not hurrying to rest, but to hold a meeting attended by the entire coaching unit.

The preparation were in its final stages, so they could not be sloppy. He must take control of the team's current form at all times. After all, it was not as if they did not have any problems on their side.

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Just when Tony Twain returned to his room to hold the meeting with the coaches, Chelsea, which had arrived in Moscow a little later than they did, also reached the hotel where they were staying. The two teams were respectively in the north and south of Luzhniki Stadium, not far from the finals' venue. If the weather was fine and the visibility in the air was good, Twain could also see the spire of the hotel building where Chelsea was staying through the windows of his room.

The Blues' star player, Lampard, had just experienced the pain of the passing of his mother. After he alighted the bus, he expressed his wish to pay tribute to his mother's spirit with the first Champions League trophy in the Chelsea club history when he spoke to the reporters. Terry and Drogba also said they hoped Lampard would score the winning goal in the game.

Although there was always leaked news of discord within the Chelsea locker room during the tournament, those who supported or did not support Mourinho, and those who supported Grant or questioned Grant, this team was more united than ever at this moment. All differences did not matter. They just wanted one thing in Moscow and that was to help the team win the final game, beat Nottingham Forest and win the Champions League title!

The players' conduct made Grant, who then got out of the bus, very happy. A united Chelsea team increased his confidence of winning against Tony Twain.

Although Nottingham Forest had just won the league title and their morale was high, the final round of the league tournament drained a lot of their energy and it was said that Beckham's old injury had relapsed. It was not known whether he could play in the final and news also broke about van Nistelrooy's seemingly minor injuries during training.

Compared to them, Ashley Cole, who was previously injured in training, had returned from the firing line and had no problem playing in the final. Moreover, Chelsea had an easy game in its final round of the league tournament and their strength was assured.

And there was the most important point.

"Some press mention that Chelsea lacks the experience of playing in a Champions League final, but I think that happens to be our advantage. Compared to Nottingham Forest, which has already won the Champions League title, our players are hungrier for the honor, and their fighting spirit is more exuberant. This is something that Nottingham Forest cannot compare." Grant spoke frankly with assurance to the reporters who surrounded him. After he came to Moscow, he was bursting with confidence, believing that this was the stage prepared for him, and that the protagonist must be himself.

"I believe in my players. At this point, I don't want to talk about myself or my predecessor because it's disrespectful to my players. To be able to reach the final, that credit belongs to the entire team."

"... Of course, this is going to be a difficult game. Nottingham Forest is not a weak team. But we have the confidence to win. I know Chelsea has never won this honor in its history and I look forward to the

prospect of returning to Stamford Bridge with the championship trophy.” Grant diminished his confrontation with Twain and repeatedly emphasized the team while at the same time, the confidence in his words had made the reporters sit up and take notice of this manager, who had been subjected to their doubts.

His performance was like that of a veteran manager who was neither nervous nor excited. He calmly knew what he should do.

After seeing the conduct of the entire Chelsea team, the BBC television pundits exclaimed, “This is really going to be a tough game because both sides must have the title. No one will concede in advance. In this instance, modesty is not a virtue.”

Chapter 650: The Tactical Meeting

“Mr. Fasal.” Shania found her agent who was reading alone in the living room.

“Ah, Shania, what’s the matter?” Fasal took off his glasses and looked back at her.

“Can I take two days off?”

“It will soon be the filming of your scenes, Shania ...” Fasal had somewhat of a headache when he heard this request. He stood up and explained to Shania.

“When exactly?”

“The crew’s plan is to film your scenes on the 22nd.”

When she heard Fasal say so, Shania wrinkled her eyebrows and the tip of her nose turned up. She looked lovely even when she fretted.

Fasal guessed her intention to take a leave of absence, but he did not reveal, “Where are you thinking of visiting?”

“Moscow, Russia.”

Fasal smiled, “If it’s just to watch a game, one day is enough.”

Shania wanted to look for Twain after the game. Now it looked like time did not permit her to do so. She sighed, “Yeah, if it’s just to watch a game, there’s plenty of time. Help me book two tickets to Moscow, Mr. Fasal.”

“Two? I’m not going ...” Fasal thought Shania was going to drag him to the game, but he actually had a lot of work to do himself. With Shania away, someone must be in charge of contacting the various parties here, must he not?

He did not expect Shania to roll her eyes and said, “They are for Clarice and myself.”

“Did she received a ticket too?” Fasal suddenly realized that it was Clarice Gloria, Twain’s friend. It was due to this relationship that Shania was also familiar with her.

“Yes.” Shania nodded.

“Sure, not a problem. As for Tony...”

Shania waved her hands and said, “You mustn’t tell him.”

“You want to give him a surprise?”

“No.” Shania smiled, “I just don’t want him to be distracted.”

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A day before the game, Nottingham Forest held its last tactical meeting in the meeting room at the hotel where they were staying.

They would analyze the tactics and player combinations Chelsea might use in the final during this meeting, and what Nottingham Forest’s countermeasures would be. In addition to the manager’s on-field command, whether they could win in the game, would depend on the outcomes of this meeting. This was the concentrated embodiment of the entire coaching unit’s wisdom.

At this time, Dunn usually took centerstage, and Twain was only responsible for sitting on one side to listen.

Dunn spoke fluently in English with a Nottingham accent. He was very familiar with the English football and extremely proficient in the technical jargon. As for his performance in the usual work, there was simply no need for much nonsense. The English guys at the Nottingham Forest Football Club could not figure out how Tony Twain could encounter such a talent while he learnt conversational Mandarin through MSN online. Could it be that China was filled with such football geniuses in the country? It obviously did not make sense. Otherwise why was the level of Chinese football declining every year?

It could only be said that Tony Twain’s luck was surprisingly good!

“... Based on the intelligence gathered over the past few days, we speculate that Chelsea will send such a starting lineup in the final—” Dunn pointed to the tactical board as he said and drew Chelsea’s possible squad list to the players, “It’s Čech as the goalkeeper. The center backs are Terry and Carvalho, and the left-back is Ashley Cole, who returns from his injury. The right back is ...”

The right back had always been a weak spot for Chelsea. Even though Mourinho had worked considerably on it during his time, the players whom he bought had always been less than satisfactory.

“We think it’s going to be Essien.” This was the result of a discussion by the coaching staff. The players would not know how this result came about and it was useless to tell them. They just needed to know an answer. At the time of the discussion, there was disagreement within the coaching unit about the pick for the right back.

Kerslake believed what Grant lacked was experience in the team, so he should send the former Barcelona player Belletti, who had experience in the UEFA Champions League final, as the starting right back. His view had been endorsed by half of the coaches. After all, what Chelsea lacked the most now was really experience.

But Dunn had a different opinion. He believed that Belletti’s state was unstable and he was too old. In such a fierce final, his presence would become a weak spot for Chelsea instead. On the contrary, Essien, who was used by Mourinho as a utility player, was more likely to appear in this position, not to mention

that he had played as the left and right as well center backs when he first started playing. There was no question about his unsuitability.

Twain eventually came forward to make a decisive opinion. He said, "If Chelsea send Belletti, then their right wing will be the area we focus on attacking. Grant must have known how sharp Nottingham Forest's flank offense is. While Belletti's defense is completely of a different level as compared to Essien, forget about how big that guy talked before the game. When the final is being played, he is bound to be steady, at least in defense. So Essien, who is good at defense and has outstanding stamina, is more likely to be in the position of the starting right back."

"Lampard, Makelele, Ballack, and Joe Cole will be starting in the midfield. The forwards are Malouda and Drogba. It looks like the 4-4-2 formation, but it can turn into 4-3-3 once the game starts. Joe Cole's position moved forward into a winger and Drogba is in the middle. He and Malouda are each on the left and right. Three players stand parallel in the midfield."

Having finished with Chelsea, it was the time to release Nottingham Forest's starting lineup. That was what the Forest players were most concerned about. It was an honor to play in the Champions League final.

The Champions League final was not the same as the league tournament. The rotation system could not be easily utilized. The strongest squad must naturally be deployed.

"The goalkeeper is Edwin van der Sar." This was without a doubt. As long as the experienced Edwin van der Sar had no injuries and in a stable form, he must be the main force. No matter how talented Akinfeev was, he could only be a substitute.

"Pepe and Piqué, you're the center backs and both of your main tasks are to clamp down on Drogba. Don't let him get active and use your physical advantage to squeeze him out of the box. Don't give him a chance to shoot. Tony does not want to see him on the field in the final."

The two people nodded to show that they understood their mission.

"The full backs are Gareth Bale on the left and Rafinha on the right." This was a lineup of full backs full of attacking force. It should be completely clear from this area what Twain had in mind—he wanted to suppress Chelsea's two flanks in the final with his offense on the sides.

"In the midfield, we have George Wood, van der Vaart, Ribéry and ..." Speaking up to here, Dunn paused a little. He looked up at Twain sat next to him, and then continued, "Lennon."

This decision was a little surprising. Beckham was hurt, but after all, it was only a minor injury. It had not reached the point of him not being to go on the field. However, under the long-standing strict disciplinary requirements, there was no hubbub in the meeting room over this. Other than Lennon himself was somewhat startled, the others looked as per normal.

Dunn was still reading the starting list while Twain secretly observed everyone's expression, hoping to learn about their inner thoughts through the subtle changes in their expressions. In the moment the name "Lennon" came out, a look of disappointment instantly flashed across David Beckham's face. This tiny change did not escape Twain's eyes.

"The forwards are van Nistelrooy and Eastwood."

The Danish kid Bendtner waited patiently until the end but did not hear his name. Unlike Beckham, his disappointment was displayed in his speech.

It was an admirable achievement that Nottingham Forest had advanced into the Champions League final for three consecutive seasons since the 05-06 season when he joined the Forest team four seasons ago. But for Bendtner himself, it was not worth mentioning, because not once was he in the starting lineup ... As a star of tomorrow with high hopes pinned onto him, this treatment was a little humiliating ... He was the main striker in the Denmark national team and yet he had no chance of being in the starting lineup at Nottingham Forest.

When Viduka left, he once thought his future at Nottingham Forest was bright. He did not think that Tony Twain would change hands and bought van Nistelrooy whom Manchester United did not want! In this way, as a powerful center forward too, he was again forced to accept the reality that he could only be a substitute for van Nistelrooy. At first he thought with the increasing age of van Nistelrooy, his state would certainly decline. Then it would be his chance to rise. He did not expect ...this old gun, van Nistelrooy progressively played better in Nottingham Forest, and only injuries could beat him down. For nearly two years, he only had minor injuries that were not enough to affect his form and playing time.

At this thought, Bendtner suddenly felt that his future at Nottingham Forest was gloomy ...

Twain was still observing when Dunn had begun to explain the Forest team's specific tactics in the game.

"... We will hold fast to defense in the starting fifteen minutes of the game. Then the two full backs will actively plugged in. George Wood will move back in the midfield while van der Vaart will move up to the attacking midfielder position. Ribéry's and Lennon's position will slightly shift inward. Dunn drew the team's formation on the tactical board as he spoke. The shape of a rhombus was in the midfield. But unlike the general classic 4-4-2 diamond formation, this diamond layout was not too elongated in that the distance between the attacking and defensive midfielders were widened. In fact, it appeared to erect the elongated diamond formation.

With Ribéry and Lennon retreated inward, they became the relay stations connecting the defensive and attacking midfielders on the midline while also giving way to the forward plug of the two full backs. In the actual game, if they plugged in straight ahead, it would directed in front of Chelsea's flanks. If they moved obliquely, they could go to the sides and also go to the middle. In short, they could decide according to the situation on the field and become very flexible. And van der Vaart would be very close to the frontline position, so his task was not to be a playmaker, but only be responsible for the final pass, or direct long shot. In that case, who was responsible to be the playmaker?

"George." Twain stood up and took over from Dunn to say, "The positions in the game have to be much more flexible than what they are now on the tactical board. You are the starting point for defense to turn into offense, so you're the playmaker."

George Wood was a little surprised. To let him organize the offense in such an important game, was Tony Twain all right in his mind?

But Twain did not explain further. After this, he just sat down again and gave the lead back to Dunn.

The tactical meeting went on, but some people had become distracted ...

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After the meeting, the players left the meeting room in succession. Twain stopped David Beckham to speak to him in private.

Everyone knew why Twain has asked Beckham to stay behind. It must be due to that starting list. He might have to explain. Bendtner turned his head and looked at Twain and Beckham, who remained in the meeting room. He was somewhat jealous. Why was it that he too was not on the starting list, but Beckham alone was asked to stay behind to listen to the manager's explanation and not himself? This really a reality that was unacceptable to him ...

Everyone left, and Bendtner stood at the door of the meeting room to watch it being closed. At which point, he reluctantly turned and walked away.

In the empty meeting room, Beckham sat across from Tony Twain each other. He looked at Twain opposite and said, "You asked to see him because of the starting list, boss?"

"You don't have to call me 'boss' when it's just the two of us here. Just call me 'Tony.'" Twain scratched his head and wondered in his mind how to better broach the subject. "Well, I know you may be a little disappointed with that."

"To be honest, I am a little. Although I'm old, I'm still eager to play in the Champions League final again. But I know you must have your reasons for this arrangement. You're the manager. Although we are good friends, I and you have the same attitude when it comes to the games."

What kind of attitude? It was to put the team's requirements as the priority. Beckham was a world-class star player, but there had never been a scandal in his career that had him contradicted the team's manager because he wanted to get a chance to play. On the one hand, he always had a steady stream of appearances, and on the other hand, it had to do with his work ethics.

Twain was grateful to Beckham for understanding him in this way. Everyone knew he had a good personal relationship with Beckham. If Beckham used this relationship to coerce Twain to give him a steady starting position, then Twain would not be able to manage the team, because the team would be divided into two factions like "the manager's cronies" and "general relationship with the manager." At that time, a division would be inevitable.

Fortunately, Beckham had never done anything like this to make the manager lose every scrap of his reputation.

"Yes, the only reason is a tactical need. Lennon has the ability to plug forward. He and Ribéry can fully disrupt Chelsea's defense on both sides ..."

Beckham did not speak. He did not plan to make a case for himself to play. Anyway, he had to abide by what the manager decided. In his final season at Real Madrid, Capello did not like him, so he put him on the bench. He could only silently accepted it. He only chose to leave at the end.

Twain was also aware how cruel it was to do this to a veteran eager prove himself again. This could probably be the last chance of his career to stand on the field of the Champions League finals, but he could only be a spectator.

“But you’re on the substitutes’ list.” This might be a comfort as he said, “It’s also a tactical need, so I may bring you on. After all, your long shots and passes can still cause Chelsea a lot of trouble.”

Beckham smiled.

Twain felt something was wrong, and he asked Beckham, “Is there a problem?”

“Don’t you think it’s not good for you to do this, Tony?” Beckham said.

“Not good? Which area do you mean that is not so good?”

“You specifically ask me to stay behind to tell me not to worry about not being on the field, that I’m on the list of substitutes and that I have a chance.”

“Er ...” Twain still did not quite understand what Beckham meant.

“Tony, what would those players who did not get on the starting list think?”

“Oh!” Twain finally realized.

“Don’t do this next time. I’m not a kid who doesn’t know anything. Although you always say to treat everyone equally, sometimes I think you don’t treat me like an ordinary player.”

Twain looked at Beckham and laughed foolishly. Ah of course, as a fan watching you grow up, you have been with me for more than ten years of my youth. Although I try my best not to, I also can’t completely think of you as a regular player ...

Like Albertini, some people have long left an indelible mark on my short twenty-six years of life. I watched them appear for the first time in professional football as a tender teenager, and watched them victorious, win championships and gorgeous women in their arms. Then I watched their experiences of failure and frustration and eventually slowly fade out of people’s minds in the face of the pain and injuries...

You say, David, how can I think of you as an ordinary player? I express that in words because I do not want to let my feelings completely overwhelm my rationale.

Your signed contract with me is only for two years. You said that if you can still play two years later, you have to go to the United States to accompany your wife. Because Victoria gave up her two years to satisfy your selfishness and you have to give back to her in double. Now, there’s only one year left. I sent off Albertini a year ago. What gift should I give you as a send-off a year later?

I can’t say what will happen in the future. So, just for this year, it will be the game tomorrow.

“If there’s nothing else, can I go back?” Beckham asked.

Twain snapped back to reality and nodded, “Get a good night’s sleep, David so that you have energy tomorrow.”

“You think of me as a rookie again.” Beckham helplessly gave a wry smile.

“Ah ... I’m sorry.” Twain tapped his forehead. “Bye, David.”

“Bye ... boss.” That was what Beckham said when he went out and closed the door.

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Only when Twain was alone in the meeting room, did he sit down and lean on the back of the chair, breathing a long breath.

Another final showdown was impending. How many such showdowns had he experienced since he somehow transmigrated here and became the manager of this team? He could not keep count for a long time. At first he would think of them as his first, second, third match. Later, it became—which number is this? Who cares about that! All I have to do is win!

Yes, quantity is meaningless. Only the results are valuable. In the next ten, twenty years, I will also experience more such showdowns. It's really stupid to rue over such a thing.

This is just a small step in my coaching career.

Twain got up from his chair, turned off the lights and walked out the door.