

## Champions 721

### Chapter 721: The Purge List

In fact, Chen Jian's matter did not cause any sensation, not even the slightest ripple. A week later, after someone from the Nottingham Forest Football Club came in to help Chen Jian take care of all the procedures, he left the Tianjin Justice Jingtuan School under the envious gazes of his classmates and embarked on the journey to his dream in Nottingham.

There was no domestic media coverage of the matter, as the Nottingham Forest Football Club was very low-key in the handling and did not inform any media outlet. Allan Adams had wanted to hype it up in China, so that the club could open up the Chinese market further. But Twain discouraged him and said it would not be too late to publicize when Chen Jian really made something of himself. It would not produce any effects even if it was publicized now. China's market was vast, but it would not be opened to a young player whose future was unknown at the moment.

In actual fact, Twain did not want to put any heavy weight on Chen Jian's shoulders. The pressure on him was already big and heavy enough.

Once he arrived in Nottingham, there was no special treatment other than a small family welcome dinner prepared for him by his landlord, Fat John. He still lived at John's house and would take time out every week to attend a cultural class at the University of Nottingham. He was the same as the other young players in the youth team. Twain only met him once when he arrived in Nottingham and went to busy himself with the work for the First Team after he reiterated the reality that he had no way back. Twain did not say much and just wanted him to persevere. There was no press conference, welcoming crowd, and reporters in pursuit... Everything indicated that he was just an apprentice.

Greenwood made a small joke, "Chen, did you dribble the ball back from China?!"

"Yes, Manager Greenwood." Chen Jian replied proudly.

Everything was business as usual.

At present, Chen Jian was no longer the youth who arrived here more than a year ago, filled with endless expectations and visions for the future. He understood the cruel reality and was also well aware of the gap between him and his dream. Instead of fantasizing and dreaming of achieving the day when he would be impressive all the time, it was better for him to be down-to-earth and diligently train. He did not think about whether he would realize the dream. He firmly believed that as long as he worked hard every day and stuck to it, one day he would dig through the mountain and open the path between the reality and the dream. No matter how long it took, no matter how high the price he had to pay, even if it was in blood, he would continue to dig forward!

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The matter of recruiting Chen Jian as an apprentice was settled. But for Chen Jian, his story had only just begun. It might take a long time before Twain could see the third and fourth volumes, as well as the ending of the dream journal. However, he was not in a hurry. He had patience and would slowly wait to accompany the strong and tenacious kid to the end.

Now he had to shift his focus to the First Team.

During the interlude of Chen Jian's pursuit of his dream, Nottingham Forest had already played another league game.

Nottingham Forest faced West Bromwich Albion on May 9th in the thirty-sixth round of the league tournament. Although Twain had officially begun to join the team's day-to-day management work, the game was still directed by Dunn on the sidelines. Twain sat in the box and watched the game.

Perhaps knowing that the real boss was watching them high in the stands, the Nottingham Forest players did their utmost. They beat West Bromwich Albion by 3:0 in the away game to kick the opponent back to the EFL Championship two rounds ahead.

During the match, the television footage repeatedly swept to Tony Twain, who sat upright and still in the box. The commentator mentioned more than once that today's Forest team was completely different from the last round of the league tournament for the simple reason that their king was coming back.

Nottingham Forest, which won the game, rose two spots to rank at the tenth spot in the league table with fifty-two points. With two rounds remaining before the season ended, they were seven points away from the sixth-placed Aston Villa and were inevitably unable to qualify for next season's UEFA Europa League.

Could the season be declared as over in advance for them at this point?

Twain did not see it that way.

When they were back in Nottingham's tactical session, Twain told his players, "... This is a great opportunity. You have the opportunity to prove that you are still men with balls with your own actions! Even if we came up empty-handed this season, we still have to end the season with three consecutive wins. It will be the most insignificant compensation we can make for our previous poor results! Let those home fans be comforted in the final round! Tell them that even if we don't get anything this season, we're not broken! Tell the opponents who are waiting to see us fail that Nottingham Forest will be back in the new season and no one will be able to stop us! Let the new season officially begin from this game!"

On May 16th, the thirty-seventh round of the league tournament, Nottingham Forest took on Stoke City.

Before the game, Nottingham Forest's official website officially announced their "king" Tony Twain had returned to the team. Dunn handed over the command and Twain would personally sit in the technical area to direct the game. The team once again decisively won against Stoke City by 3:0 under his command in the away game.

After the game, this was what the BBC's sports news said about the game---

"The other managers in the Premier League need to be careful. That guy is back!"

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Before the final round of the league tournament, the battle for the league title became clearer. Arsenal had to pay the price for trying to gain supremacy with a young squad. They were firmly positioned in the

fourth place, with no danger of losing. However, they could not go any higher. Chelsea also slowly fell behind after their boundless prospects in the first half of the league tournament to finish third.

Instead, the two teams vying for the league title were Liverpool, which was previously thought to be unable to play in the league and the shrewd and ruthless Manchester United.

Both teams had the same points, but Manchester United was temporarily behind in the second place due to the goal difference. If they wanted to win the title, they must score at least three goals in their last game against Hull City and pray that Liverpool cannot win by a wide margin. In terms of the opponents, Manchester United's was slightly more favorable. Hull City was ranked in the middle level and had no desire for more. Whereas Liverpool's opponent, Tottenham Hotspur had to fight to stay in the league.

Such a form inevitably reminded people of last season's final round of the battle for the title, when Manchester United was one of the main players for two seasons in a row. But their opponent was replaced. Nottingham Forest, which wiped out Manchester United to take the crown at Old Trafford last season, was ranked in the middle and bound to get nothing which was a shame.

Twain did not have the time to care about how people lamented for his team. He was just as busy even though Nottingham Forest did not have any specific goals at the moment.

The team's training was all handed over to the coaching staff led by Dunn and Kerslake. He was busy talking to individual players to find out their inclination to determine the candidates on the purge list.

The first person he looked for was the team captain, George Wood.

Because when he had not yet returned to the team, the transfer rumors about this person had been flying around. Many clubs were interested in the midfielder who was rare in the world of football. He was willing to do the grunt work, did not ask for high wages, and was not emotional. AC Milan, Inter Milan, Juventus, Bayern Munich, Werder Bremen, FC Schalke 04, Real Madrid, Manchester United, Arsenal to name a few...

They were all the big boys club. Any one of them was a fatal temptation.

But Wood's agent, Billy Woot remained unmoved.

After Nottingham Forest announced the official return of Twain, Billy Woot immediately announced that his player had never thought of leaving Nottingham Forest, that it was Nottingham Forest who had nurtured him and gave him his current achievements. He was willing to stay at Nottingham Forest unless the club chased him away.

Twain was unable to make sense of the old man's intention, so he simply looked for George Wood to hear his own player's thoughts.

"What Woot said is the truth." Wood answered him, "I've never thought of leaving. Even if he wanted me to leave, I wouldn't. Don't I have to sign the contract myself in the end?"

Wood's words reassured Twain. He was well-prepared to face the transfer crisis that would follow the summer. But George Wood absolutely could not leave because he was the real core of the team. If he wanted the Forest team to regain its glory, he could not be short of this person.

Not only that, George Wood also said something that greatly moved Twain, "I know the state of the team's economic situation. If it really can't manage, I'm willing to re-sign a contract with the club to reduce my current salary and some bonuses. Anyway, I think no matter how much more money I have, I'm fine as long as I have enough to use. Mr. Wox had made me a lot of money in other areas. I don't even know how to use it..."

Twain almost laughed out. This silly boy actually grumbles about more money?

"Ah, your words are going to infuriate Wox. Your revenue also directly affects his income."

Wood's expression remained unchanged, and spoke with a straight face, "He has so much 'money that he simply does not need me to help him make money. I'd fired him if he does not agree."

Twain finally did not hold back this time, and guffawed. This boy's heart is still with him ah... He was happy.

"You don't need to take a pay cut, George. You just focus on playing with a peace of mind and hold the team together for me. Just set an example on the pitch and it will do. You don't have to consider the financial side of things."

After he sent George Wood away, Twain was calmer by half. Without taking a break, he began to talk to each player one by one. Under the pretense of "being gone for five months, everyone should deepen our connections and communicate with each other", he observed and deliberated the players he could give up and need to let go with the right prices, and the ones he simply could not discard, and whom he was not willing to drop but the other parties might be determined to leave...

Van Nistelrooy was still recovering from his injury after he underwent the surgery. If he returned to play after he recovered from his injury, Twain would give him a contract of one year minimum no matter what. He did not want the veteran who had helped him rise to be bitterly disappointed. If he did not have a heart attack, he could have urged the club to offer a new contract in the first half of the year to the Dutchman, when van Nistelrooy was still undergoing his surgery.

Despite his body would not be as before, van Nistelrooy's experience and role in the locker room were evident.

It went without saying that Eastwood must stay. The Romani himself also did not want to leave here.

As for Arshavin... he might leave or might not leave. He himself did not have a particularly strong desire. If Twain wanted him to stay, then he would most likely stay. Because Barcelona, where he wanted to go the most, clearly did not need him now.

Žigić's performance at the Forest team had been average this season, with the occasional flashes of brilliance. But these brilliant flashes were too few as a player who was taken as Bendtner's successor and number one center forward during van Nistelrooy's injury. He was even once rated by the British media as the most "subpar foreign import" of the season. But Twain did not intend to give him up, because Twain knew that Žigić's poor performance was not his problem, but the team as a whole. He still wanted to give Žigić a chance to prove himself again. In addition, he had the selfish motive of not wanting to readily admit that he had failed. Twain would not sell Nikola. Not to mention selling Žigić at this time could only be a loss-making deal. Only a fool would do it.

Van der Vaart's situation was somewhat special. Real Madrid midfielder's emergency was more than just the flanks. The middle was also short of players. Van der Vaart had long proven his talent and ability at Nottingham Forest. Real Madrid was interested in attracting him. Van der Vaart himself also wanted to play football in Spain. He did not care whether it was for Real Madrid or Barça. The Forest team might have to pay a high price if they wanted to keep him. Allan Adams was inclined to sell him quickly while he could still fetch a high price, but Twain was hesitant. Şahin's performance was getting better, but he could take charge of the area alone. He needed van der Vaart to oversee and organize the offense.

Twain struck a question mark next to van der Vaart's name,. He himself did not know if the Dutchman would still be on his squad list when the next season came.

He naturally wanted Şahin to stay in the team, and the man himself did not want to leave too.

Beckham would definitely leave the team. After the expiration of the two-year contract, it would be according to the original agreement and Twain would not urge him to stay. He was going to the United States with his wife to join the Major League Soccer's LA Galaxy. Twain and he both knew, so they did not say anything to each other.

Aaron Lennon would not go as well. Twain would not relinquish, and he himself did not wish to leave. When Beckham was gone, he would be the main player on the right side of the field as expected—the Forest team certainly did not have the money to buy a lot of players to rotate this season, and they did not need to rotate because there were not too many games.

Martin Petrov was also like him. Ribéry had pressed on top of his head for the past few years, With Ribéry gone now, he could make it too. But Twain had not ruled out the possibility of selling Petrov to cash out. For in his view, Petrov's position was not high, at the very least he was not comparable to Lennon, who was a promising young player. If a club were to offer the right price, he might consider letting him go and buying younger wingers from the transfer market without spending too much money.

Twain would also not drop Tiago Mendes. On the one hand, he was an all-rounder in the midfield and was able to play as a defensive midfielder. He could also play as a playmaker in the midfield. He was better at defense than van der Vaart and a little better at offense than George Wood. While he was not top-notch in any aspect, the team now needed a player with well-balanced abilities.

He would not give up Kris Commons either. Although he was very popular in the lower leagues, Twain wanted to be better prepared for the future "4+7", "5+6" and "6+5" combinations. Such a local player was especially important since it was the player they had trained in their youth training system. There were opportunities to play in the EFL Cup and FA Cup. He could even receive appearances in some inconsequential league games and also help the team smoothly qualify for the Champions League.

Wes Morgan was like him. As the team's third captain, Twain would not drop Morgan.

Roberto Ayala would not renew the contract with the club once his contract expired. He wanted to return to Argentina and Twain did not intend to keep him. Ayala was no longer in his plan anyway, and he would have to spend for one more player's salary if he continue to stay.

Rafinha had attracted a few club's interest for his outstanding performances at the Forest team and could be presented with offers from a number of clubs in the summer. At that time, Twain would carefully consider as to whether he would rebuff every one of the clubs or choose to accept some of the

offers. However, if he was exchanged for money, there would be another vacancy for the right back position, and he would have to continue to have a headache in search of a right back.

With regards to Chimbonda... as he got older, fewer and fewer teams were interested in him, and it could be predicted that there would be few offers which could satisfy Twain this summer. Twain would have to keep Chimbonda for at least another season.

Surprisingly, when he had the fight with Bendtner, Twain wanted to drive out Chimbonda and keep Bendtner. In the end, Bendtner, whom Twain was reluctant to give up, was actually the one to leave, leaving behind Chimbonda, whom he did not want to keep. It was really a case of the people who should have come did not come, but the people who should go did not leave...

Sun Jihai wanted to continue to stay in Nottingham Forest until he retired. It was not hard to understand his thinking—he had entered the twilight of his career and there was nothing else he could ask for. What more could he ask for other than to be able to play in a team that had won the UEFA Champions League title for two seasons in a row until he retired? He had been glorious before and made enough money too. Anyway, if the Forest team did not want him, he would never go back to China. Twain was now hesitating whether to purge Sun Jihai. Because his contribution to the team was lessening. But Sun Jihai had not been popular in the Premier League. If a team wanted to buy him, it could only be the EFL Championship level team. How much could they pay?

Like him, there were mid-to-lower level teams interested in Leighton Baines. But Twain would not sell. The player was one of the safeguards to stabilize the team's rear defensive line. He was not as good on offense as Bale but had done very well defensively. Where would Twain go and find a second one if he gave up such a stable player?

The three players, Gareth Bale, Vincent Kompany and Pepe had all received a number of transfer offers. But Twain was not going to let go of any one of them. There was no room for discussion. These three men, George Wood plus Eastwood were treated like the same—not for sale.

Woodgate had only been with the team for a year. He did not want to leave, and Twain was happy to oblige.

Van der Sar intended to retire at the Forest team, but he would give up his place as the main goalkeeper next season. Starting with the friendly matches, Twain planned to promote Akinfeev. After two seasons with the Forest team, he was finally going to become the team's main goalkeeper.

Dale Roberts would also be the team's third goalkeeper. But if he wanted to leave and there was a team which wanted him, Twain would release him, and then draw up a goalkeeper from the youth team or reserve to team.

Going through the names, Twain discovered that the so-called purge actually did not have many people ... He hated to part with these guys who had fought with him for years...

Everyone had prospered all together and partook in the successes as one. They competed across the world without limits. Why did they have to go on their separate ways in the face of the imminent catastrophe?

If there was a team to pay Bale, Pepe, Kompany tens of millions of dollars in price, would he be able to ward them off and keep them from leaving? Would those loyal players who simply did not want to leave the team in the first place be forced to leave because they had to pay for the club's poor financial management?

He did not want his team to turn out like Lazio. He also did not want his players to be the second, third, fourth... "Nesta."

They were the seedlings of Nottingham Forest's resurgence. He would safeguard them no matter what!

## **Chapter 722: His Majesty Has Returned**

24th May 2009 was a special day to the Nottingham Forest fans. They started getting excited in the days leading up to it, and the tickets to watch the final home game of the season were completely sold out. There were countless fans who were waiting for others to sell their extra tickets despite the fact that the team was destined to finish the season empty-handed.

The reason for the overwhelming response was not because the team was going to go top of the table after the match, and neither was it because they were going to get relegated.

The reason behind their excitement was simple: that man was coming back.

Even though it has been three weeks since Tony Twain returned to his managerial position at the team, this was his first time directing a home game after his comeback.

Additionally, there was also someone who was going to bid farewell to Nottingham and Nottingham Forest.

That person was David Beckham, whose contract with the club has expired.

The past few days have seen numerous Forest fans swarm up to Wilford to watch the team train, and they would surround Beckham asking for his signature and a photo. His popularity had become even higher than before.

A faint sense of sorrow over Beckham's imminent departure pervaded the team. These feelings were actually no stranger to the team. However, due to the fact that they had performed exceptionally well during the past few seasons, every one focused their attention on celebrating the team's successes instead, and these feelings of sorrow became diluted amidst the joyous atmosphere.

Since the team had performed poorly this season however, there was nothing for them to celebrate about, and these feelings only became even more accentuated than before.

Beckham's departure from the club was inevitable. There were also players who continued to ponder over whether they should stay at or leave the club...

The pleasant surprise that came with their boss's return did not last for long.

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Beckham was a player who was good at maintaining friendly relationships with his team mates. He was on good terms with everyone in the team despite how he enjoyed far greater popularity than them. The light around him could cast the entire team into his shadow, but the reason why he still managed to get along with his team mates was because he knew how to treat others well.

Before the last Premier League match of the season, everyone in the Forest team received a gift from Beckham, much to their astonishment.

Twain was no exception. His gift was specially delivered to him by Beckham.

“After tomorrow’s match, this season will be officially over. This is a gift that I specially prepared to thank you, Tony.” Beckham did not address Twain as ‘boss’ in private. Instead, he would call him by his name, which showed how close the two were.

“Thank me?” Twain felt ashamed to receive a gift from him. “I gave Albertini the best possible parting gift when he left. But now that you are leaving, I don’t have anything to give you.” He opened his hands and patted his pockets. “There’s nothing that you should thank me for.”

“Ha.” Beckham laughed. “When I decided to join Nottingham Forest, all I wanted was to prove that I wasn’t a just a pretty ‘vase’ in a place that was closest to the British football fans. I never thought that I would be able to win trophies in the Champions League and the Premier League. Is that not something I should thank you for, Tony?”

Twain smiled and said nothing.

“Two years’ not a long time, but everything that I have experienced here has left a lasting impression on me. Nottingham Forest is a good club. It’s a shame I can only stay for two years.” Beckham suddenly sighed.

“It’s enough for me to hear you say that, David.” Twain felt that Beckham’s words were the highest form of recognition for all the work that he has done at Nottingham Forest.

“You are going to America?”

Beckham nodded his head. “I have lifted trophies for the UEFA Super Cup, FA Community Shield, Fifa Club World Cup, Champions League and Premier League under you...There’s nothing more that I ask for in my footballing career. I have already signed a contract with LA Galaxy, and I will play for two more years with them. But going over there means I’m not going to play football, I’m just going to put on a show.” He shrugged.

The media were all bragging about how his trip to America would have a profound impact on American football, how it would bring life to America’s ‘barren’ state of football, how he would be a pivotal character in bringing about change in America’s footballing scene and how he would let more Americans fall in love with football... Everything was just a bunch of nonsense.

Beckham knew in his heart that he did not have that much influence as a person to bring about all those changes that they said he would. Even a legend like Pelé was not able to change the footballing scene in America by much. How could he change a country’s interest in something all by himself? The truth is he is merely going over to America to accompany his wife...



Speaking of Beckham's wife, Twain has to thank Victoria for not giving him any trouble during these past two seasons that Beckham played for Nottingham Forest. She was well-known to be a woman who would get into disputes with managers in the past, but it looks like Beckham must have spent a considerable amount of effort to convince her before he signed for them. Beckham leaving to play in America for two years is also likely to be something that the couple agreed upon back then as well.

Another possible reason as to why she did not get in his face could be because of her relationship with Shania. She does help Shania with her work quite often, and probably did not want to make things awkward for everyone.

At that moment, a thought suddenly crossed Twain's mind. He asked, "Are you going to sell your villa in Nottingham?"

Beckham nodded. "I won't be coming back to England much after this. I already have houses in Manchester and London as well. Victoria doesn't think we should keep our house in Nottingham."

Twain clapped his hands. "Just nice, sell it to me!"

Beckham smiled. "Have you come to dislike your current house, Tony?"

Twain touched his nose. "Heh. Actually, if I was just living by myself, then anywhere is fine. But from now on, there'd be someone else living with me, so I need a better house to live in. Now's not the time to say goodbye yet, David. During the holidays after the season has ended, make a trip to Brazil!"

Beckham was taken aback. "Brazil?"

"Huh? You don't know about it?" Twain found it odd.

"Know about what?"

"I'm getting married to Shania. Our wedding will be held during the summer holidays..."

Beckham widened his eyes, almost as if he could not believe what he just heard.

"Hey, you don't need to look that surprised." Twain pouted.

"This is really the first time I've heard anything about you getting married this summer..." Beckham felt a little crestfallen. His good friend was getting married soon, but this was the very first time he heard about it. Can he still prepare a gift in time?

"Huh? Shania didn't tell Victoria?"

Beckham shook his head.

"The paparazzi didn't publish anything about it?"

Beckham continued to shake his head.

Twain laughed happily. "That little girl's pretty good at keeping it a secret!"

He reckons that the reason why Shania is being so secretive about their marriage is so that she can give the media a big surprise. She wants to see their reactions when they learn of this shocking news, because, as she once said before, 'it would be very fun' to do that.

“All right, David. You should be feeling happy right now. You are the only person in this world, besides Shania and I and her parents to know about this news. I was thinking of handing out invitations to all the players after we finished playing tomorrow’s match.”

Beckham smiled. “I have to congratulate you, Tony. You and Shania are a great match for each other. Victoria and I have discussed about the relationship between the two of you numerous times before. It must have been very tough for you to get to where you are now... What was it that propelled you to reach this decision?”

Twain recalled the image of someone mixing a bowl of black sesame soup for him in the hospital ward. “David, if there came a day when you thought you were going to die, and then after a struggle, you opened your eyes to see a person taking care of you attentively... How would you feel?”

Beckham did not answer the question. He knew that Twain was not even asking him a question.

“I have to thank my heart disease for that. It caused the team’s results to slip, but we can still start over next season. I have to thank my heart disease simply because it helped me find the person that I truly love.” Twain shrugged. He has no qualms about saying such mushy words now.

He also has to thank a female reporter named Lisa Aria for her words. It was just like she said, it was not embarrassing to admit that they were in love.

Beckham saw the happiness written all over his manager’s face. He felt his chin and said, “Oh no, what should I get you for your wedding, Tony?”

“You can stop thinking about it. Just lower the price for your house a little and sell it to me.”

“No problem, Tony. It’s a deal!”

The two shook hands.

Before he left, Twain told Beckham about his arrangement for tomorrow’s match. “David, you are in the starting team. This is your farewell match in the Forest team... You have nothing else you need to prove. Just enjoy the cheers from the fans as we play on our home grounds.”

Beckham nodded his head, then turned and left.

Twain’s eyes trailed behind Beckham as he made his way out of the office. He then let out a soft sigh.

There are more and more people close to him who were leaving his side.

There would come a day when he is standing before the manager’s seat in the City Ground stadium, and every single person in his line of sight would be people who could only give him 30 years’ worth of memories.

Can he still be friends with those players like he did with Beckham?

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All the news in Nottingham for the past few days had revolved around two people and two things.

Tony Twain’s return and David Beckham’s departure.

Nottingham Evening Post did a feature on David Beckham, and it recounted Beckham's two seasons in Forest, such as that glorious moment when he stopped Manchester United from becoming champions in the Premier League. It also mentioned his disappointment as the team went into a slump due to numerous injuries to their players.

However, none of those things mattered anymore. He was about to leave. The 'heartthrob' would never belong to Nottingham Forest again from now on.

It is said that Manchester United has been making plans to get Beckham to take over the role as global ambassador from Bobby Charlton after he has retired. In the end, he will always be a part of Manchester United.

There have also been numerous outstanding football stars who played for Nottingham Forest in the past. However, the club itself has failed to leave behind a legacy over the years, and this makes it difficult to foster a sense of lasting loyalty towards the club in the players. They are not able to get any of those star players to become their 'global ambassadors' after they have retired, and this is something regretful for the club.

Alessandro Del Piero might have been a player for Forest before, but he only feels attached to Real Madrid. Similarly, Albertini used to be the captain of the team, but after he retired, he had insisted on returning to Italy and to Milan. Now, it was David Beckham's turn to leave. Twain could foresee several other players who would do the same in the near future, such as van Nistelrooy and van der Sar.

When will we be able to have legendary players that belong only to our club? Many of the players who used to play under the previous boss Brian Clough have all gone on to become reputable managers, but they are all scattered across the world, and do not come into contact with Nottingham Forest much.

Will Nottingham Forest still be able to produce their own Albertini, Del Piero or Beckham in a world where commercialization and money have made footballers increasingly fickle?

This problem could be associated with Tony Twain. The Forest fans firmly believe that as long as Tony Twain is around, Forest will not go down.

But now that there are problems with Tony Twain's heart, who can guarantee how much longer he can stay as the manager of the team?

One year? Two years? Three years? Or five? Can he emulate the team's previous boss Brian Clough, and stay in the position for 18 years?

If praying was all that was needed to ensure that a person can stay healthy, then every single Nottingham Forest fan would have prayed before their every meal for Tony Twain to be healthy, for his heart to be rid of problems, and for him to live for a 100 years.

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On the day of the match, the weather was good and there were clear skies.

Hordes of fans began swarming into the stadium since the early afternoon, and all of them were seated before the match kicked off. The City Ground stadium that had a seating capacity of 30,000 was fully occupied, and there were no empty seats in the stadium.

This match was especially significant to the Forest fans because they had to welcome the return of their King, Tony Twain, and also send off Beckham.

Twain gave his players his last team talk for the season in the locker room.

“Our first match for this season was played against Portsmouth in the FA Community Shield. Our last opponent for this Premier League season is also Portsmouth. What a coincidence, isn’t it? This is great. This terrible season needs a good finish. We beat Portsmouth in the FA Community Shield game, and I hope all of you can beat Portsmouth again as our way of bidding farewell to this season and to send David off. All of you should have received a small gift from him. He did not give you all gifts for nothing!”

All the players burst out laughing.

The team’s final position in the Premier League table might not be good, but ever since their boss has returned, the team has regained its life, and all the problems did not feel like problems anymore, because their boss is able to handle even the biggest of problems.

“Right now, we are in a situation whereby we have nothing to gain or lose. However, Portsmouth is fighting to get a Europa League spot for next season. What a good chance this is...” Twain grinned.

“Ruining other people’s chances have almost become our team’s tradition. We are not doing it deliberately, but the chance to do it is right before us... Last time it was Liverpool, and this time it’s Portsmouth. Nottingham Forest has never been a team that would sacrifice itself to help another team! Those people who think they can step over our dead bodies and climb to the top have to pay a steep price for looking down on us! Liverpool’s not the first, and Portsmouth will not be the last either! Let’s use action to tell Portsmouth how stupid it is for them to think that they can gain anything off of us! They think that we are tigers who are on the brink of dying from starvation, but we have to let them know that tigers are the most dangerous when they are in that state! Who do those Portsmouth bastards think we are? We are Nottingham Forest! We are the Nottingham Forest that is big enough to blot out the sun!” [1]

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Ear-splitting cheers went off in the stadium when Tony Twain walked out onto the pitch towards the tactical area with his colleagues and substitutes, and they gave him a shock.

It took him a while to realize that everyone was yelling his name.

“Tony! Tony! Tony!”

“Let us welcome His Majesty!” The commentator roared at the top of his voice amidst the thundering cheers that was present in the stadium.

“Welcome back, Tony!” Fat John and his companions hollered.

“His Majesty! His Majesty! His Majesty!”

“Tony! Take care of your health!”

“We love you! Tony!” This was from a group of beautiful female fans who had gone crazy. They were wearing bikini-like clothing, and they each had one word ‘We’, ‘Love’ and ‘Tony’ painted over their chests.

All the voices in the stadium blended into one, and it was so deafening that the Gods above might be able to pick up on the sound.

Dunn and Kerlake walked past him as though they did not notice what was going on. The substitutes had their hands over their mouths to hide their smiles as they walked towards their seats.

Twain was the only one standing by the pitch. He raised his head and looked at the packed stands before him.

Everyone at the stands stood to their feet. They raised both their hands and began to act as though they were worshipping him. He was receiving the same treatment as the one that was given to him after the conclusion of the previous season.

This is an honor that belonged only to him.

This is the life that he wanted.

He raised his arm and punched the air.

The roars got even louder.

Shania pouted as she watched the scenes before her in her private room. "I'm going to get jealous..."

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As players from both teams waited in the tunnel for the referee to lead them out onto the pitch, they suddenly heard deafening roars. Everyone was startled initially, but when the Nottingham Forest players finally made out what the roars were about, they started to laugh. On the other hand, the Portsmouth players' faces were ashen.

The Portsmouth manager, Alain Perrin, who had taken his seat in the technical area, was also shocked by the crazy atmosphere in the City Ground stadium.

Last season, when Twain won the Double, there was an extravagant celebration party held here in this stadium. Twain was crowned as the King that night. He dressed in a robe and held a crown high up into the air. Those scenes were ridiculed by numerous media outlets and other football managers, who thought that his ego had become so big that it had reached a level of perversion.

But now, he was seeing and hearing how the fans are reacting to Tony Twain before him. Right here, in this City Ground stadium, in every Nottingham Forest fans' hearts, Tony Twain was truly their king...

Perrin, who had initially hoped to win all 3 points from this game and secure a spot in the Europa League, suddenly felt a chill down his spine.

The atmosphere in the stadium also influenced John Motson, the commentator for the match. "Look at this scene before us! It's not hard to understand why Nottingham Forest plays with shocking power every time Tony Twain is in charge. He truly is the King over here! I think Portsmouth's in for a hard time!"

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Portsmouth was indeed in for a hard time.

Just like Twain, Beckham received a thundering ovation from the spectators when he made his way onto the pitch. However, the cheers for him did feel a little softer when compared to what Twain received earlier.

Every single time Twain stepped out of the technical area and stood by the side of the pitch to give directions to his players during the match, the stands would erupt into cheers, regardless of how the team was playing at that point in the match.

Twain had suppressed his feelings for football for five months. Similarly, the fans have also held back their enthusiasm for five months.

When the team had hit a brick wall and were losing to almost every single team they faced, how the fans wished that the person standing by the side of the pitch was the animated Tony Twain. Even if he ended doing nothing other than to stand there, his presence alone was enough to give everyone the belief that everything will be fine, and that he will find a way.

If he scolds someone by the side of the pitch, we will scold with him!

If he is overjoyed, we will dance in glee!

If he faints once again... We will support him from behind!

Tony, as long as you are around, we have nothing to fear! Not winning anything in a season is nothing! We will start all over again next season, and seize everything that we lost back!

We do not need to be nice to our opponents! Nottingham is the home of Robin Hood, which makes us all descendants of a thief. Seizing things from others is what we are good at!

Seize them all! Seize them all! Seize the fortunes and the women of the rich and drive them out from their castles!

Seize them all! Seize them all! Let us seize the whole world!

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“This match was supposed to be David Beckham’s last match in Britain, but somehow the main character became Tony Twain.” John Motson said with a smile. “But I don’t think David will feel jealous at that.”

On the 88th minute, Twain finally took Beckham off the pitch, and that was also when Beckham finally reclaimed the role as the main character from Twain. He hugged the team mates who stood nearest to him, and slowly made his way to the side. He held up both his hands into the air and applauded the fans as he walked.

There were no Portsmouth players who were complaining about how he was deliberately dragging the game on. That was because it did not matter either way to them. They were not just trailing by a goal or two...

The Nottingham Forest fans all stood to their feet to send Beckham off. Unlike the wild feelings that they felt for Twain earlier, the feelings that they had for the ex-Manchester United player were very different and were more of gratitude.

Beckham's heart might not be with Nottingham Forest, but the Forest fans are not ingrates. They are thankful for every assist and every goal that Beckham had contributed to the team over the past two seasons. Without this 'heartthrob', the game that decided the Premier League champions last season could very well have been anybody's game.

Motson was a little moved by what he saw as well. "When David Beckham was still a kid, I was there at the scene to witness his goal from the halfway line. When he became a 'heartthrob', I was commentating the games he played in as a Manchester United player. Now, he's already 34 years old, and he has decided to leave Britain and head to the opposite end of the Atlantic Ocean. I am still commentating Premier League matches. All I can do is to wish him all the best, and I hope he would have the best of luck in that country."

"He has two assists in this game and it is the perfect way to end off his time here in Nottingham Forest. Forest's slump in this season has nothing to do with him. He can leave without any regrets and he can accept all the applause that has been given to him without shame. Goodbye, David!"

Beckham finally made his way off the pitch. He then hugged Twain, who had been waiting by the side.

"Goodbye, David. I wish you all the best in America."

"Goodbye, Tony. I also wish you all the best."

Twain suddenly felt tears well up in his eyes. He quickly snapped himself out of it. "That's not right! Now's not the time to say goodbye. Don't forget to fly over to Brazil during your holidays. I'd be waiting for you at my wedding. You have to come!"

Beckham smiled. "Of course. I'd be there, Tony. Both you and Shania are my good friends. How can I not go?"

The two separated themselves from each other. Beckham walked over to the other managers and substitutes behind Twain and gave each of them a farewell hug.

The match ended a while later.

The final score was 4:1. Nottingham Forest was able to end their chaotic season with a victory at home. It was also the perfect way to send Beckham off and welcome the King, Tony Twain's return.

Portsmouth lost the match and also lost their chances of clinching a spot in the Europa League next season.

But, they were in the City Ground stadium and in Nottingham Forest's territory. Who would care about what their opponents would feel?

The 2008-09 season went by just like that.

How many people would still reminisce it many years later?

**Chapter 723: Wedding Invitation**

Twain had his arm around Shania's slim waist as they stood before their new house. Neither of them said a word as they quietly admired the three storey mansion that they will call their home henceforth.

The house had white walls and a red roof. The exterior of it looked asymmetrical, but there was something charming about its asymmetry. It looked vibrant under the sunlight, as though the house had a life of its own.

Shania fell in love with the color of the house at first sight. It looked pure and clean.

The place they were currently at is known as Mapperley Park, which is located in north-eastern Nottingham. It sits on a small hill, and there was a road that gently led up to their neighbourhood and stretches all the way to the northern part of Nottingham.

Mapperley Park is a well-known luxury neighborhood in Nottingham, and it is also the place that many rich middle-class choose to live in.

The end of May is a time where the color green becomes the most prominent in Mapperley Park. Greeneries will encompass the neighbourhood, and the residents will also get to wake up each morning to the twittering of birds and the fragrance of flowers. The mansions, each with its own distinctive appearances and colors, look like villas surrounded by a vast garden.

Their house faced the street, and behind them was a garden that connected them to the Mapperley Golf Club.

All they could see around the house was a sea of green. The view was pleasant and made them feel invigorated.

Not too far away from the front of the house was a sports club. It had a standard-sized football pitch that people could use to play football matches.

Twain could not help but be amazed. The Beckhams really know how to enjoy their lives.

Their new living environment could not get any better. The only downside of the house was how it was located a considerable distance away from the club's training grounds.

However, the long distance does not put Twain off. He has a car after all.

The Beckhams bought this three storey mansion for 2,700,000 pounds, but Beckham sold it to Twain and Shania for only 1,000,000 pounds after living in it for a year. The economic crisis had certainly influenced the price of the house, but offering the house at a low price was intended as Beckham's wedding gift to the couple as well.

Beckham generously indicated that they were free to keep the furnishing of the house if they liked it. If not, they could change it as they pleased.

There was nothing that needed to be changed about the furnishing, however. Beckham's taste suited Twain perfectly. The house had everything they needed and there were only a few minor arrangements that they needed to tweak for the furniture. Nothing major had to be done to the house. It was a house that Twain and Shania could start living in straight away.



Twain accepted Beckham's magnanimity without feeling ashamed. After all, he was the one who gifted Beckham his final glorious moments at the end of his footballing career.

Beckham's commercial value has gone on the rise due to his good performance in Nottingham Forest and the fact that he won the Double with the team. He has nothing to worry about financially even if he has to face the economic crisis.

"Do you like it?" Twain lowered his head to ask Shania who was cradled in his arms.

Shania nodded her head. "Yes!"

Twain raised his head again to look at the mansion before him and then lost himself in his thoughts. He started to think about the dream that he made when he was unconscious, and also thought about the kind of person he was in the past.

He could not afford a decent house in the past, much less a mansion like this.

What do the Chinese pursue throughout their lives? To settle down, to start a family, and to have a successful career. But, the irony is, how can you start a family without a house to live in?

It is very difficult to purchase a house that you can call your own in China. His biggest desire back then was just to have enough money to buy a one-room apartment in Chengdu. He never would have dreamed that there would come a day where he could live in a mansion with a 100 square meter garden, with a golf club to the back and a football pitch to the front.

My destiny... Has changed.

I have gained a lot of things that I could never gain in that world, but I also lost some things as a result. Do I regret?

No.

This is my road. This is my life. This is my story.

"Uncle Tony?" Shania shook Twain's arm after seeing that he was in a daze.

"Hmm?"

"Aren't you supposed to go to Wilford? Why aren't you leaving?"

"Oh... Ah! I almost forgot! I got carried away after seeing the house... Haha!" Twain laughed as he scratched the back of his head.

Shania had just reminded him of something important. He was indeed supposed to make a trip down to Wilford. Today is the last training session for this season. The players would be enjoying their holidays all over the world so as to rest up for the next season after the training ends.

He has an important thing to announce today before they depart.

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"Lads, have you all thought about how you are going to spend your holidays?"

All the players, including Beckham who was on his way out of the team, were seated on the pitch in their training grounds at Wilford. They looked at Twain who stood in the center.

“Regardless if you have or not, I hope you can cancel or delay your plans.”

Beckham smiled after hearing what Twain said.

“I’m inviting all of you over to Brazil for a holiday!” Twain waved his hands. “I’m paying for all your plane tickets, accommodation and food!”

An uproar ensued.

“Brazil’s a good destination but... Why, boss?” Eastwood asked loudly. “Sabina and I had made plans to go to Spain for a holiday! We even bought our plane tickets...”

“Cancel your flight. I will reimburse the money that you spent for them, Freddy. You have to come over to Brazil!”

His comments made everyone even more curious. They had to ask Twain what was going on.

Twain waited till the clamor died down before he flashed a mischievous grin, “I’m inviting every single one of you to my wedding!”

A rowdy commotion broke out on the pitch.

“Wedding?!”

“Boss... You mean you and Miss Shania? That’s way too fast!”

“What’s with this surprise attack, Boss? How do you expect me to prepare a gift for you now?”

“Wedding? Wedding? Ah... Boss, so you weren’t gay... Er, no, so you were just single all along...”

“Quiet down! Quiet down! Just tell me if you are going or not! I’m telling all of you, it’s very common for a player to invite his team mates to his wedding, but it’s not every day that your manager will invite you to his wedding. This might be the only chance in your life to attend one!” Twain cocked his head upwards and said proudly.

What he said made sense. Football managers who have not gotten married in the world are probably even rarer than the Tibetan Antelopes. 99.99% of football managers are married and have their own families. After all, it takes time for them to make their way up to the managerial position and lead a team.

There might be a few of these managers who only get married after they have taken up the role as a manager, but even then, they would definitely not invite their own players to their wedding, due to reasons such as wanting to maintain his authoritative and mystique.

Twain did not care about those things. He felt that this was the biggest and happiest occasion that will happen in his life, and he definitely had to share his joy with the people around him, which is why he has invited almost every single person that he could think of.

Besides these players of his, Twain had also invited renowned actor and film producer Tom Cruise, as well as well-known fashion designer Giorgio Armani to his wedding. Twain's tuxedo and Shania's wedding dress would both be designed by Armani himself.

How great it is to have such celebrities as my friends. I don't need to pay for the tuxedo and wedding dress...

"I'm going! The Boss is getting married, of course we are going!" Eastwood's voice was the loudest amongst the players. He began gesturing about animatedly and had completely forgotten about how he said he wanted to accompany his wife to Spain for a holiday earlier.

The other players followed suit and began shouting that they will attend his wedding as well.

Twain smiled at the sight of his players getting so excited.

Initially, he did not wish for his wedding to be too complex. He wanted to be like other celebrities and just hold a simple wedding at a secluded and quiet location. However, after seeing how well he got along with Shania, he changed his mind.

This is the biggest occasion of my life, why should I hold it secretly? Am I scared of the media taking photos of us? You must be kidding, I'm just getting married, there's nothing I should feel ashamed of! It's not like I'm having an affair!

I have to publicise my wedding with Shania and let the whole world know that we are getting married.

Twain was not scared of getting criticised for 'robbing the cradle' once news of their marriage begins to spread. His relationship with Shania has already met with much censure ever since they publicly confirmed it. He was not concerned about breaking the hearts of Shania's numerous male fans either.

Who cares about whether or not they are upset at the fact that we are getting married?

I am the one who should be upset over how they constantly have sexual fantasies about Shania...

Twain shared his sentiments with Shania, and told her, "I want to openly let the whole world know that I, Tony Twain, love you, Shania, and that I want you to be my wife."

Shania was so touched that she almost cried, and that was how they came to the decision to hold a high-profile wedding ceremony instead.

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After the team dispersed, Dunn flew back to China to help Twain invite his parents over to the wedding.

Before he left, Twain repeatedly exhorted Dunn to get both his parents over to the wedding either by hook or by crook.

Twain knew his parents well. When he was working at Chengdu in the past, he had hoped to bring his parents over to live in Chengdu as well, but his parents were unwilling to leave their little town in the South Sichuan countryside. They told him that there was no place better than home, and also complained about the traffic congestion and high cost of living in the big city. They said that it was more comfortable to continue staying in their little town in comparison.

Dunn just smiled and reassured Twain, "Their son is getting married. It doesn't matter how far it is, they'd definitely be there."

Twain patted him on the shoulder and said nothing.

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Lisa Aria was still working for a small news agency that primarily published gossip news in Nottingham. She was the one who first found out and took photos regarding the love relationship between Twain and Shania, and was also the reason behind why Twain decided to publicly acknowledge his relationship with Shania.

Twain suffered a heart disease but gained a lover as a result. There was a positive change in his life. Unlike him however, nothing about Lisa's life has changed.

She was still working as the chief editor for the entertainment news section. Her future looked bleak with no prospects in sight.

Revealing Twain's love relationship with Shania did not lead to any significant financial gains for her.

She had hoped to be able to obtain more sensational stories about Tony and Shania's relationship that would help draw readers in to read their newspapers. However, Twain has been evading reporters ever since he has been diagnosed with a heart disease. They managed to locate Shania's house that was situated near the Lace Market, but the windows there were shut 24/7.

The only news and photos they were able to take were of the couple leaving and entering their house. But, there are no readers who would be interested in news and photos of Twain and Shania going in and out of their house.

And so, everything about her life is still the same. Nothing has changed.

That is, until today.

She suddenly received a call from Twain.

"Hello, Miss Aria. Can you guess who I am?"

"Mr. Twain, please do not use such dumb questions to irritate me when I'm working, okay?" Lisa Aria was not in the mood to entertain Twain given how she was going through a rough time at work and had a bleak future ahead of her.

Twain coughed twice on the other end of the phone. "I have good news for you, but if you don't want to hear it then forget it. I, Tony Twain, never begs anyone to do anything for me."

"If you have something to say then get on with it. If it's an exclusive scoop I am interested." Aria's fingers never stopped typing away even though she was on the phone with Twain.

"This is indeed an exclusive scoop, and a big one to boot. Hmm... Where should I start though? There might have been some misunderstandings between us, Miss Aria, but I intend to give you this scoop for free as a form of sincere apology to you, and also to thank you for what you did."

Aria scoffed, "Looks like your relationship with Shania has been going very well! Who was it who said that I knew nothing in the first place?"

"... Let's let bygones be bygones... The reason why I called you today is to give you the exclusive rights to publish stories about my wedding. I'm getting married to Shania. Note, I'm giving it just to you..."

Aria's fingers stopped moving. She thought she had misheard him, and quickly interrupted Twain, "I'm sorry, Mr. Twain... I just heard that you want to give me the exclusive rights to publish stories about your wedding?"

"Yes, that's what I said. And I'm not providing the rights to the news agency that you work for, just you. As for how you want to report on the wedding, or which media outlet you get to report on it, that's entirely up to you and is none of my business." Twain laughed after saying those words.

"I hope you understood everything that I told you, Miss Aria?"

Aria did not display her excitement straight away, even though the joints on her fingers had already gone white from her clenching her hands too tightly.

She asked in a steady voice, "Why are you giving it to me?"

"Huh? Didn't I tell you earlier? It's a gift to thank you and to apologise for the misunderstanding between us from before. I have to thank you because if it weren't for the constant news stories that you published about us, then I wouldn't have been able to get close to Shania as quickly as I did... Also, I have really benefitted from the words that you said to me previously. You said 'It's not a shameful thing to admit that you are in love', and so I have not only admitted my love for Shania, I want the whole world to witness our wedding. That's all I want, and it is also why I am handing the job of generating publicity to you, Miss Aria. After all, you are the one who brought us together. How can you not be there to witness the moment when I put the ring on Shania?"

Aria went into a daze. She did not know what to say. She already knew, based on rumors and her personal experience dealing with Tony Twain, that the man is an unreasonable monster. How is he capable of saying such words?

She might have a lot of doubts about what was going on, but there was one thing she was certain of.

She could quit this meaningless job right after she gets off from work.

No... Perhaps she could do so right away.

Before she did that however, she asked him one other thing that was on her mind. "Should I thank you, Mr. Twain? I do hope that this isn't the last time I'm working with you however..."

"As long as you don't barge into my house and take photos of us before our bed, everything else is up to you."

Aria smiled. "That does sound like something you would say, Mr. Twain. I gladly accept this gift of yours."

Twain and Shania's lives both changed when they became an item. It is only natural for change to happen for Lisa Aria as well, given how her fate is intertwined with theirs.

When Aria first published stories exposing Twain and Shania's relationship, neither she nor Twain would have foreseen what was in store for them in the future.

A blissful marriage for one, and a successful career for the other.

A win-win situation for both.

### **Chapter 724: Call Me Uncle**

Since Twain told many people about his marriage to Shania, he certainly did not think about hiding it from the news media. He did not specifically inform the press about it because he knew that the reporters had their own means and channels to learn about it.

As expected, the next day, the news of Twain sending invitation cards everywhere appeared in a number of British newspapers and media.

The press was somewhat caught off guard by the sudden announcement of their marriage, just as Shania had hoped.

The media knew that Twain and Shania were in love, but they did not expect the two people to make known their relationship at the beginning of the year, and announced their marriage in the middle of the year...

"It looks like Tony Twain plans to walk hand in hand with Shania into the church. It is said that they have invited a lot of famous people to the wedding. For a manager's wedding to be set like a star player's wedding, I guess Tony Twain is probably the only one, right?" The BBC television said in the news.

"... I was surprised at the news. I can't believe it..." An actress, who was eager to have a one-night stand with Twain, covered her mouth and said on the show.

The gay magazines announced that even Tony Twain's marriage would not hinder his status in the eyes of the homosexuals.

Shania's official website was deliberately attacked by unidentified hackers after the news broke. The home page of the website was modified with the color changed to black, and a line of words ran repeatedly across: "You have become the bride, but the groom is not me."

After the site was restored, heartbroken and inconsolable fans around the world confessed their love for Shania and their own grief on the message board. Some fans even lambasted Tony Twain, the old bastard, for snatching their sweetheart. Among them, there was no shortage of malicious speculation and slander. There were also people who indulged in histrionics and lamented that for them to still be able to become a pair of husband and wife despite the twenty-two years of age difference, public morals were degenerating with each passing day and people's hearts were not what is used to be...

The fashion magazines also expressed concern about Shania's wedding. Most people were puzzled by Shania's decision—for models, eighteen years old was the rising period and maturity of the career. Choosing to get married at this time would affect her work. These magazine editors could not understand why Shania would rather lose her career to care about love.

Only her friend, Mr. Armani, came forward to support Shania's move. He said, "She's not like the average model, so she considers things differently. Perhaps in Shania's view, the glamor of being model is far less important than enjoying her time with Tony..."

...

In short, no matter what the outside world thought of these two people's May-December love and marriage, Twain and Shania were simply immersed in their sweet twosome world.

They openly walked down the street hand in hand, kissing in the streets, and acted as if they were alone. They did not pay any mind to the reporters who followed them around. As Nottingham was a small city, people were extremely tolerant of Tony Twain who brought numerous honors to the city and wished him well. So, Twain and Shania did not have to worry about being harassed on the streets by anyone but the reporters.

When they were back at their villa in Mapperley Park with the curtains pulled, no one would know what they did inside.

What was even more heartbreaking and sad for Shania's fans was the thought of their idol and sweetheart being crushed under an old man's body, gasping and moaning?

Therefore, there was a new rumor—Although Tony Twain was already forty years old and had a heart attack, he was still a man with a strong libido. They would make love many times a day and never use protection. Some media began to speculate about when Shania would become pregnant. Once she became pregnant, no matter how thriving her career was, she would be set aside for the time being. Some of the press even thought the reason Shania and Twain were getting married so soon was because Shania was already pregnant...

"For a forty-year-old man to still have such a vigor, the nuclear-powered pacemaker is really brilliant. With a healthy sex life, the beautiful young girl, Shania will have no other desires, even at the expense of her own modeling career. It really makes one think of what is love and how it grips one in the throes of passion ... .. Of course, disregard Shania's cool expressions on the runways. In fact, deep down, she's a young lady with a longing for a man's caresses and emerging stirrings of love... It can even be said: a forty-year-old man is like a tiger, and a young girl who yearns for love, seduces; spring in its full bloom cannot be inhibited, with a spray of blossom bursting forth..."

A certain unknown gossip editor wrote in the sports section of a well-known web portal in China.

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After a day's rest in Nottingham, Twain flew with Shania to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Shania's parents had prepared everything to do with the wedding. Their big day was set for May 31st. The league tournament only ended on May 24th, so time was a bit tight, but there was no other way. According to Brazilian tradition, May was the season for marriages and to hold weddings. It was known as "Bride's Month." Hence, the wedding was set on the last day of the month, which meant they could catch the tail end of the "Bride's Month."

After meeting Shania's parents again in Brazil, Twain had lost the discomfiture and restraint of their last meeting. This time he was here to openly and honorably marry Shania and did not have to be self-conscious.

The wedding had not yet begun, and Twain's invited guests and friends had arrived in succession. The crowd from Nottingham Forest naturally needed no introduction. Giorgio Armani came personally and attracted a lot of media attention. In addition, there were Tom Cruise and some of the celebrity friends Shania met during her time in Hollywood. The couple, Beckham and Victoria, also came. The other people who did not come also sent their gifts. For example, Ferguson, Wenger, Keane and Twain's other friends in the coaching world, as well as John Motson, Martin Tayler, Gary Lineker... and other famous people of the television world.

The eyes of the reporters who gathered in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, were momentarily dazzled.

Just as Twain hoped, his wedding to Shania caught the world's attention. Before the wedding, everyone knew that Twain was going to marry Shania. The age difference of twenty-two years was no longer an issue. There were many cases of older husbands with much younger wives in the modeling world, not to mention the love story of Shania and Twain had already been exposed by the media to the point of being a household story. Everyone knew that when Shania was not yet a model, when Tony Twain was still just an unknown small-time manager, the two people already knew each other. It was gratifying to people that they were able to get to this stage.

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George Wood came to Brazil with his mother. He said that they were here to attend Twain's wedding but in fact, there was another reason. He wanted to take his mother on trips everywhere in the world and have a good time while her health was still well enough to do so. Brazil was a good place.

Despite Twain's promise to cover for the return air tickets and arrange accommodations for the players who came to Brazil, the players had money and did not want to trouble Twain. They wanted the excuse to travel to Brazil, so they all came one by one.

Wood was the same too.

When Twain saw Sophia again, the frail and sickly woman looked worse than she had been. He could even see through the body and the faint fire of life teetering in the wind. A thought suddenly came to his mind—this admirable mother was running out of time...

Was George mentally prepared? Twain glanced at Wood, who was holding his mother.

"Mr. Twain, you're so busy. You don't really have to come pick us up." Sophia smiled and whispered, "It's fine with George around."

Twain shook his head and said as he opened the door for her, "That won't do. You are the guests I invited; I can't leave you at the airport." He motioned to Wood to let go of his hand, and he came up to help Sophia get into the car.

The two people's skin touched, and their movements were natural, as if they had a kind of tacit understanding with each other's heart.



Twain always knew Sophia was interested in him, but he could not accept her affection. It was not due to George Wood. He might be confused about the feelings between him and Shania. But he was clear on his feelings between him and Sophia—he did not love this woman.

He did not love her, not because Sophia was once a prostitute, and thus it gave rise to disdain or even contempt. On the contrary, the result was he developed a kind of respect from the heart, an indelible admiration and tenderness. Twain was certain he also had a deep affection for Sophia. If time were to be turned back and the circumstances were right, he would be even delighted to have a physical relationship with Sophia.

But that would not be love.

Although he knew that the woman was pitiful, sympathy could not make up for love.

While he held Sophia, Twain could touch the woman's petite and thin body through the thin clothing. Her condition had never really improved...Had this poor woman ever gotten a love of her own during her lifetime?

George got into the car from the other side, and Sophia reached out to sweep his hair out of his forehead, revealing his bright eyes. When Twain saw this scene from the rearview mirror, he thought that this mother might have already poured all her love into her child.

Suddenly he felt that the atmosphere inside the car was a little depressed, so Twain decided to find some topics to chat about to distract everyone. He said, "George, you'd better find a girlfriend... Look, I'm getting married."

"I'm not interested." Wood made a face.

"Don't be so headstrong. Your mother must also want to see you have your own love. Don't you think so, ma'am?"

Sophia smiled and looked at her son, "I've urged him many times, he just won't agree..."

Wood did not speak. He just looked out the window at the Brazilian street view.

The atmosphere became cold again. Twain felt that with George next to him, there would be no need for air conditioning even in the hot summer. This kid... I don't know what's on his mind!

Sophia also seemed to find the atmosphere a little depressing, so she took the initiative to ask, "Mr. Twain. Where's Miss Shania?"

"Ah, she's staying at her parents' house. She said that she will only see me at the wedding."

"So, during this period, you..."

"I have been staying in a hotel, ha!"

Sophia lightly chuckled, "You poor groom..."

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After sending Wood and Sophia to the hotel they booked, Twain received a call from Dunn. He was delighted to hear the message that his parents had also arrived.

When he rushed over to Dunn's hotel, he found his parents in the lobby at a glance.

He strode over and held the two elders' hands. He called out to them intimately with the hometown accent, "Papa, Mama, you're here!" Although a foreigner calling the old Chinese people "Papa and Mama" would make people feel preposterous, it was a lot more natural than making him called Shania's parents "mom and dad" in Twain's mind.

Because the two old people in front of him were his authentic birth parents.

"I was still worried that you wouldn't come." He smiled till his eyes became narrow slits because he was really happy. The wish he did not complete in his previous life was completed in this life.

"He he, my own child is getting married, of course we must come." His father said in Sichuanese as he held and patted Twain's hand. Twain and Dunn had always been together and had a good relationship like they were brothers all these years. His parents also naturally regarded Twain as their own child.

Dunn stood at the side and said to Twain, "I did say. When their own child gets married, they will come no matter how far it is."

Twain looked around and did not find any luggage. He asked, "Did you just arrive? Was the journey tiring? Are you finding everything okay here?"

"Ah, he's never seen so many foreigners... So delighted and excited, how can he be tired?" His mother rebuked her husband beside her. "You ain't seen the world before?"

It seemed like they had adjusted pretty well. With a digital camera in hand and dressed trendily, they even specially dyed their original white hair to black for this time abroad. Overall, they looked much younger than their actual ages. In the recent years, his parents had also changed and were no longer "old-fashioned" as what he remembered. This was very good. His parents had worked hard for decades. Now that their son had grown up and could earn money to support his family, they should also put their minds at ease, travel around, and enjoy life in comfort. There should be nothing in the world that required them to worry about...

Well, maybe there was one more matter. Twain glanced at Dunn.

That would Dunn's marriage. He did not know how he was going along in his relationship with Tang Jing, the beautiful reporter. Had their relationship improve during these five months?

He must grill him well when he had the chance to grab hold of him.

After he enquired solicitously about his parents' well-being, Twain brought the two elders and Dunn for a Brazilian dinner. He had wanted to accompany the elders on a sightseeing tour, but the old people's energy was not up to it. On top of the tiring journey, the day had just turned to dusk, so they were exhausted. He could only send them back to the hotel to rest. Twain and Dunn chatted for a while in Dunn's room before he left for day and went back.

In the days that followed, Twain's time was spent in hosting various guests who came to attend the wedding and sightseeing with his parents, as well as taking time out to have long chats with Shania on the phone.

Until the wedding day.

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Although a lot of people were invited, the wedding process was very simple and did not cost much. It was also impossible for the expenses to look as scary as the list of guests invited for the wedding. After all, Shania was just a model, not considered the world's most popular model. And not to mention, Tony Twain had little status in the upper society. The people who could come to the wedding were really good friends. Nor were they owners with huge amount of assets to splurge. Every pound was earned by their own hard work. Twain was the first to refuse wasting money on a large scale. In today's depressed global economic environment, they had no right to be extravagant and ostentatious to put up a front. Although according to traditional Brazilian customs, all the expenses and preparations of the wedding were taken care of by the bride's family. The groom's side was the most relaxed and only needed to bring the wedding rings and attend the wedding. Wealthy bride's families would often give new houses as gifts. But for Twain, Shania's family was his own. He would still feel the pinch for the money spent.

The wedding ceremony was held in a one-hundred-year-old church near Shania's home.

A hundred guests gathered to celebrate and were tightly packed in the small church. Many media waited outside could only capture the arrival of the guests in the limousines. But they could not shoot inside. The right to shoot report inside had been given Lisa Aria.

When Miss Aria pushed her way through with her BBC television crew carrying the film equipment, she was enormously proud of her success as she feasted her eyes on the scene. Incidentally, she took the opportunity given by Twain as "proof of allegiance" and officially joined BBC.

As the groom, Twain had to receive the guests. The hardest for Twain was his cheeks and lips—the Brazilians were used to greeting each other close on the cheeks, with one kiss each the left and right cheeks. After he greeted all the bride's relatives and friends, he felt his cheeks were swollen ...

After the guests were seated, the main event began.

Twain wore a dark blue suit designed by Mr. Giorgio Armani himself, a snow-white shirt and a dark red tie as he stood erect in front of the priest. Behind him seated the many guests who came. It was quiet in the cavernous church. Even the live band, which had been playing music before, had stopped.

He suddenly felt a little nervous.

Dunn, who stood next to him, smiled and observed with interest the change in Twain's expression.

Twain looked back sideways at the church door as he anxiously anticipated the familiar figure to appear at the door, come in from the light, and gradually enter his field of vision.

When Shania finally appeared at the door wearing her white wedding gown, accompanied by her bridesmaid Clarice Gloria and holding onto her father, there was the sound of a small commotion from that starting point. Thereupon, the live band also played <The Wedding March>. Everyone gasped in

admiration at the bride's youth and beauty. The wedding dress, also from Armani, was worn by Shania, who had a model figure, and was the object of envy and admiration in the eyes of the female guests present.

Shania held a bouquet of flowers. Against the light, Twain was finally able to see her face clearly. The little fairy gazed at her husband with a smile on her face as she slowly made her way over.

This is my wife... Twain sighed in his heart. But he did not think he was dreaming anymore.

He stepped forward and held out his hand. Shania also reached her hand out and tightly intertwined with Twain.

Mr. Bruce Tenório looked at the happy couple and said to Twain with a smile, "Tony. I'm giving your daughter to you. Please make her happy."

Twain gazed fondly at the bashful Shania and softly said, "I'll make her happy for the rest of my life."

Hearing the answer, Tenório felt reassured enough to let go of his daughter's hand and retreat.

After they vowed and promised to love each other for the rest of their lives in front of the priest, it was time to exchange the rings.

Dunn handed over the ring box, and Twain took the wedding ring out of it to carefully put it on for Shania. Holding Shania's soft little hand for her to wear the ring, he only felt full of joy: from this moment on, the little fairy belongs to me! No one can take her away!

Although there might be things to spoil the joy ahead, he really thought so at this moment...

After exchanging the rings, it was time for the bride and groom to exchange a deep kiss.

They were both accustomed to kissing. But kissing at a wedding held another layer of meaning.

Shania slightly looked up and gazed at the face that she was infatuated and in love with for six years. Her cheeks flushed and her lips slight parted as she breathed, "Tony..."

Twain lowered his head and said, "Call me Uncle!"

Shania rolled her eyes, but she still listened and called out in a low voice, "Uncle Tony..."

Tony Twain looked at the dainty and still young face. When he heard her called out in a low moan, he suddenly felt aroused ... .. Eh, no, he felt an enormous swelling of love. Reaching over Shania's slender waist, he held her to his front, closely snuggled up, leaned down, and kissed down hard.

They kissed as if no one else was around and only the two of them were left in the world, ignoring the applause and cheers of the guests, and ignoring the band's performance. They continued to kiss. For how long? Who knew? Nobody cared! They only felt that they were the happiest people in the world.

It was a kiss, full of deep love.

**Chapter 725: The New Season After the Honeymoon**

The photograph of the forty-year-old groom holding his eighteen-year-old bride in his arms and deeply kissing her, made the news on the BBC television the next day. The news soon spread all over the world. No matter how sad Shania's male fans were, it did not change the fait accompli—their idol, coolly elegant and haughty on the runway, but lively and lovely in life, Judy Shania Jordana only belonged to Tony Twain, the old man alone henceforth.

The BBC's newscaster concluded, "Yesterday Tony Twain became the happiest man on the planet. Although the season that had just ended was a failure for both him and Nottingham Forest, he personally won on another competition arena. We wish them all the best."

But it was not known how many fanboys cried on the inside as they cursed him...

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The morning sun came through the window and shone on two naked bodies lying in bed.

Twain and Shania had just finished their "morning workout." Shania laid beside him and curled up like a sleepy kitten. The perspiration had not yet dried on the two of them, but no one got up to go shower in the bathroom.

Twain had not stopped "procreation" since he became one with Shania that night. He knew he was not getting younger and afraid that if he did not procreate, he might be willing in mind, but his body would not be able to in the future. Shania also did not show any antipathy in this aspect. After all, being pregnant would impact a model's career. But she also wanted a baby.

On the wedding night, the two people made frenzied love the entire night and started another sweat-dripping session when they woke up early in the morning. This somewhat surprised Shania.

"Uncle Tony..." She was still snuggled up in Twain's arms, softly calling.

"Hmmm?" Although he had moved uninhibited on top of Shania's body just now, Twain's hand still misbehaved and gently caressed across her smooth skin, bit by bit as if to titillate his loveable wife.

"You're simply not like a forty-year-old... Hee hee!" Twain tickled her sensitive area, and she laughed and twisted her body.

Twain did not know why he was like this. But every time he saw Shania's young and full of vitality body, her slightly young and tender beautiful face, bright and lively eyes, he felt that his body had an irrepressible fervor flow surging forth. He would not be able to sleep if he did not vent it out.

The young girl has an irresistible force temptation on me. Why did I not realize it in the first five years? Lisa Aria was right. I don't know the people around me, I don't know myself too.

Twain patted Shania's smooth and pert buttocks and said, "Go take a shower. With such good weather, don't tell we're going to lie in bed for all day?"

Shania sat up and turned her head toward Twain to make a very tempting request to Twain, "Want to shower together, Uncle Tony?"

Twain gave her a look and said, "I don't want to."

Shania shrugged and jumped out of bed. She sashayed past the bed with the model's strut as she twisted her buttocks to walk toward the bathroom. After entering, she did not forget to poke her head out to ask, "You really don't want to?"

"No." Twain looked at the television ahead and said without turning his glance.

"I left the door unlock, Uncle Tony."

"Are you inviting me in a sense?"

"No, maybe I just forget to lock the door." Shania giggled as she went in. Then there was the sound of flowing water.

The sound seemed to flow into Twain's heart, scratching at his heart and making it hard for him to resist.

He looked left and right and muttered, "Take a shower together? Well, that does sound like a good idea..." And he jumped out of bed.

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This morning's story was just one of many little stories about Twain and Shania's honeymoon.

The day after the wedding, the reporters captured shots of Shania in a bikini, frolicking by the sea with Twain at Copacabana Beach. The following week, the happy figures of the two of them could be found in practically every corner of Rio de Janeiro.

Twain had never experienced such days the past twenty-six years of his life. He felt infinitely happy. In the streets, when the mood struck him, he would embrace Shania and French kissed her as if they were alone. He did not care even if he knew that there were reporters hiding in secrets places to secretly shoot.

"It looks like their relationship is really good..." In the beginning, the media could promote the two people kissing in the streets. Later, they discovered that Twain treated this kind of thing as a common thing, so they could only say so.

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Good times were always brief. As an English Premier League manager, he did not have a whole month to be intimate with his new wife, make love every day, sometimes three times, sometimes twice.

To say it was a honeymoon, it was really just "a honey week."

During this week, Twain reintroduced Shania to his parents. He had hoped that Shania would regard the pair of elders as her parents. Shania's behavior made Twain very satisfied. She used her recently learnt Mandarin to address them as "Papa" and "Mama" when they met, which made the two old people laughed in delight and as happy as can be—they just gained a beautiful Brazilian daughter.

Having the time of his life, he did not think about anything else and just spent a wonderful week alone with Shania, which soon passed very quickly.

Although there was still time, Twain did not stay on in Brazil to play. He took Shania on a "tour of Latin America." Even though they were on a holiday, Twain was in fact inspecting the excellent young

successors around, to see if there was any chance of spending very little money to unearth a talented teenager who could become a big star player. But the biggest problem with selecting talents in South America was that these young players might not be able to obtain work permits from the English Football Association and the Department of Labor.

They traveled through Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay... and all the way up to Mexico which was Twain's last stop.

He wanted to go take a look at the development of Martín Galván, who was bought by the Forest team two seasons ago.

He was overjoyed with the result.

Although he was not yet seventeen years old, Martín had made several appearances in the Mexican league tournament on behalf of Cruz Azul. Furthermore, he scored five goals and had seven assists. He was also the midfield core of the Mexican under-17 team, wearing the number 10 jersey.

Over time, the kid would surely grow up to be the talent Tony Twain needed. The worry now was not to let him suffer injuries during the most crucial stage of his development. Therefore, Twain did not want the Cruz Azul to let Martín compete too much.

He was afraid that to spoil him through excessive enthusiasm and cause Martín to become like the fable of <Decline of Zhongyong>. Out of concern, Twain and Martín talked alone once. Twain had a amiability and affinity with the young players—of course, it was before the youngster became his First Team player—even though this was Martín Galván's first face-to-face chat with Twain, he did not feel the force from the manager, who had won the UEFA Champions League title for two years in a row. They talked about everything, and Twain asked Martín what was fun to do in Mexico City so that he could bring his model wife to go sightseeing.

From the conversation, Twain knew what Martín's attitude to the Forest team was—the boy was keen to leave his home country and play in the higher level of football league in England. He also had a sense of belonging to Nottingham Forest.

Twain told Martín not to worry, and that he would have a chance when he was at the age of eighteen—provided he maintained a high level and continued his progress over time. He would not give a mediocre eighteen-year-old a chance to play. He was extremely tough on this point.

Twain did not make an empty promise to Martín. Considering the increasingly severe economic environment, and the stadium's botched project, Twain anticipated that in the next two to three years, he would not have much transfer market funds to chase the world-class and already famous star players. Giving a lot of opportunities to young people was not a new idea. Leeds United and Arsenal had been setting off a rage of invincible youths in England and European football. So why could Nottingham Forest not do the same?

Before the start of the new season, he had already heard a lot of doubts about him and Nottingham Forest. He did not want to argue with the other party in the media because he believed that facts spoke louder than words. After he really set off the rage, then he could settle the scores.

In addition, there was another purpose in his trip to Cruz Azul. That was to promise Cruz Azul on behalf of the Nottingham Forest Football Club that, even though the current financial situation for the Forest Club was not good, the money to be given to Cruz Azul would still be fully transferred into their accounts.

It must be said that selling Ribéry solved a big problem for Twain and the Forest team. Fifty-five million euros could be used in a lot of areas with meticulous planning. When Wenger used half of the thirty million euros he got for the sale of Anelka to build the modernized London Colney training base, it benefited Arsenal's countless of players.

Nottingham Forest did not need to build a new training base for the time being. The fifty-five million euros in revenue was divided into two parts. One portion was to maintain the day-to-day operations of the club, including the expenses for various purposes. The balance was to be used as Twain's funds for the new season's transfer market to buy the players he wanted.

As for the new stadium, the construction plan would continue to be put on hold until Allan could pull in the money again for the stadium. He heard that he had gone to the Arabian Peninsula this time to raise enough money for the new stadium for the price of selling the stadium's naming rights, copying what Arsenal did for the construction of the Emirates Stadium at that time.

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After ending the visit to Mexico, Twain made a brief stop in Los Angeles with his young wife and met up with Clarice Gloria and Tom Cruise—the two people “hooked up” due to their connections with Twain and Shania—Not to get the wrong idea, it was a work relationship. Now they had a partnership. Introduced by these two people, Twain also met some of the big stars he had heard and knew of in Hollywood. They spent three happy days and nights there.

Then he flew back to England with Shania.

The honeymoon had officially ended. They did not come from a wealthy family clan, and Shania's parents were just considered an up-and-coming middle class in Brazil. Therefore, both husband and wife must work hard to earn money to support their families. If they had a baby, they would need more money.

When Shania returned to Nottingham, she started to get busy with the runway shows, film production for commercials and promotional activities for the brands she endorsed.

While Twain met with Evan Doughty and resumed work for the new season.

After more than five months of rest, Twain was starting to get restless and could not wait to start his career again.

But to put it bluntly, what was in front of him now was a big mess. If comparisons were to be made, it was probably better than the team Twain faced after he was knocked to the ground on the back of his head.

Real Madrid really seemed to treat Nottingham Forest as a newly opened supermarket for new players that was still offering discounts. After they poached Ribéry, they set their sights again on Lennon, the right back. They hoped to spend fifteen million euros to buy Aaron Lennon and take him to Bernabéu.



In addition, they had their eyes on van der Vaart for two seasons. This summer, Mijatović thought it was time to make a move. They offered eighteen million euros to buy van der Vaart.

AC Milan hoped to get Arshavin who could play as the forward, winger and midfielder. For this reason, they were willing to offer twenty million euros.

Whereas Juventus had its eye on Nottingham Forest captain, George Wood. The Old Lady was ready to come up with thirty million euros to bring in the steely midfielder whose form was constant even as the team declined. Ranieri wanted George Wood to come and take over from Nedvěd.

But Juventus was up against aggressive rivals.

Inter Milan, Barcelona and Bayern Munich were all interested in George Wood's defensive ability and the level of attacking capability he was gradually showing. Several years of offensive training had brought Wood's offense skills to another level every year. One of the simplest, most specific and easy-to-understand examples to illustrate:

When George Wood made his debut at Nottingham Forest during which the famous Football Manager game created by Sports Interactive had the real player data that they were proud of, listed his passes, crosses, shots and dribble, skills, and long shots as 9, 5, 4, 8, 10, 6.

In the latest FM 2009 which still referred to the 07-08 and first half of the 08-09 seasons, the points of these various technical attributes became—passing 14, crosses 9, shots 11, dribble 12, skills 14 and long shots 13.

He was only twenty-one years old and had the potential to continue to develop. And FM had also set his potential at 9, which was a very high number. But Twain believed that after a period of time, Wood's potential would be set at 200. He had that confidence.

Although Wood's quality was excellent, it was almost impossible to get him. The more pragmatic approach was to find someone else in the Forest team.

Pepe had been lured by Chelsea and Scolari hoped that the player whom he was proud of in the national team could partner with Terry to become the Premier League's best center back, pushing Vidic and Rio Ferdinand. As a result, the media speculated that Abramovich might make a bid of thirty million euros for Pepe. Scolari's rivals were certainly still Real Madrid. After a failed season, Real Madrid had decided to come up with more transfer money to fill in their flawed positions on all fronts.

Eastwood had also been favored by a number of teams. Tottenham Hotspur hope to bring in the "lucky striker" who had always brought victory and championship titles to the club at crucial moments.

Gareth Bale was also lured by Tottenham Hotspur. They promised Bale a higher salary for and more signing fees for Bale's father and agent. They hoped that the youngster with his outstanding attacking abilities, who could play as a left back and left midfielder, could be taken away from the City Ground stadium at a price of fifteen million euros.

Kompany was favored by AC Milan. With Nesta constantly injured and did not play all season, they were in desperate need of a good center back. The Italian media expected Galliani to bid nineteen million euros for Kompany.

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Twain suddenly found that his players were so popular... If he sold all these players, let alone the economic crisis, the new stadium could start construction right away.

But could he do that?

If he really did this, he would be the biggest idiot in the world. Similarly, Evan and Allan would not really accept all of these offers.

Nevertheless, the departure of some players were already inevitable...

### **Chapter 726: Self-reliance**

The first thing Twain did when he started his work was turn down the other clubs' bids for George Wood, Gareth Bale, Pepe, Kompany and the others. Real Madrid's offer for van der Vaart had also been rejected. But unlike the rejections for the few other players, the reason for this time was not that Rafael was not for sale, but that Real Madrid's offer was not high enough.

Twain decided to sell van der Vaart after considering it over and over again, based on the following points: Firstly, van der Vaart himself did not necessarily have the desire to stay at Nottingham Forest; Secondly, he could fetch a good price; Thirdly, Twain had already prepared an alternative course of action.

There was still Şahin with van der Vaart gone. Even if Şahin was too young, there was still Tiago. Moreover, George Wood was no longer the midfielder who only knew how to defend.

Although the global economic crisis had affected the financial situation of the football clubs, the Spanish teams were different from the English Premier League teams. They were membership clubs and never had to worry about how to make money—they could not make money as they were non-profit organizations—they only needed to think about how to spend money. For the rich and imposing Real Madrid, that was hardly a problem.

Since Real Madrid saw Nottingham Forest as a supermarket for players, Twain did not mind jacking up the price.

His reply was that they need not bother to talk to him with less than thirty million euros.

He was not afraid to scare off Real Madrid. Anyway, he would not lose out if van der Vaart did not leave. He might be glad to see it happen in his mind.

Real Madrid had yet to react to the new quoted price for a short time. They just knew that Twain would not block van der Vaart's departure. Then in that case, the next thing was about the money, which was easy to handle.

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The seventeen-year-old John Bostock and seventeen-year-old Nicolás Millán separately received a call from the First Team assistant manager, David Kerslake. He informed them that they did not have to

return to the youth team once the team started training in the new season and, but to report directly to the First Team.

The news made the two young guys wild with joy. They had trained in the youth team for a year and finally got the chance to play for the First Team. It might not be good news for the club during the current crisis of not having the money for the team to buy new players, but for the young players, it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. As long as they grabbed hold of the opportunity, they could rise rapidly all the way. Success and recognition would be a cinch.

Although Millán was Chilean, he did not have the problem of not being able to play because he could not obtain a work permit. In the past year, Nicolás Millán acquired Italian citizenship and now had dual citizenship for Chile and Italy. He did not need a work permit to be able to play.

In Twain's new plan, Bostock would team up with Şahin to take on the heavy responsibility of establishing the links in the midfield, while Millán would become the team's striker to attack and score for the Forest team.

Bostock was already selected for England's under-18 squad. He had represented the Forest team to play in the FA Youth Cup on several occasions last year. He performed outstandingly and was named one of England's top ten most promising and hopeful under-eighteen star players by the English media. Arsenal's Jack Wilshere was number one and John Bostock was in the seventh spot. Arsenal, Chelsea and Manchester United once battered each other in the contest for him, but in the end it was Tony Twain who profited from the fight. After Twain put him in the youth team for a season, the future member of the England national team finally had the opportunity to prove himself in a higher level of competition.

With Nuri Şahin, who was about to turn twenty-one, the twenty-two-year-old George Wood, the nineteen-year-old Aaron Lennon, as well as the seventeen-year-old John Bostock, the Forest team's midfield lineup for the new season was arguably the youngest in England.

This could somehow demonstrate Twain's determination to set off a storm of youthfulness.

Nicolás Millán had already made a splash in Chilean football in Chile. He set the record for being the youngest player to make an appearance for Chile's Colo-Colo when he played for the Colo-Colo's First Team at fourteen years and nine months old. His subsequent performance attracted the attention of many teams in Europe. But in the end, Tony Twain struck first and brought Millán to England.

Millán's technical features had a lot of similarities with Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo. He liked to use the wing to attack the opponent's defensive line and made use of speed and skill to bypass the defenders. Then he directly threatened the goal. At the same time, he liked to scissor like Robinho.

For more than a year at the Forest youth team, Greenwood successfully made Millán aware of one thing—that being on the wings did not imply that he should limit himself to the sides. He needed to be more comprehensive or he would not survive in the brutal European professional leagues.

Now he was beginning to consciously move to the middle. After all, Twain needed a striker, not a mere winger. But it would take time for this change to happen slowly. It also took five seasons for Cristiano Ronaldo to go from being a winger who could only delight the spectators with fancy techniques in the wing to a killer who scored more than forty goals in a single season.

Twain also did not expect Millán to burst into a dazzling brilliance this season and make a name for himself immediately. Since he had determined to mainly use more young people, he had to be ready to bear the side effects brought on by the young people. Rebuilding the team required time.

In addition, the right midfielder Adriano Moke, who had been on loan for two seasons, was also included in the plan for the First Team this time as Lennon's substitute. Greenwood was not bothered by it. Originally in the group of players, Moke's standard was outstanding. Greenwood believed that if he was utilized properly, Moke would surprise Twain. The only problem was Moke's injury-prone form. He was injured for two months after being loaned out last season.

Along with Moke, the left midfielder, Chris Cohen was also called to the First Team during the pre-season warm-up training camp. Cohen was already twenty-two years old. He did not have any outstanding performance since he moved from the youth team to the reserves. He was loaned out to Sheffield Wednesday last season and suddenly broke out instead. He often played well with thirty-one appearances in the EFL Championship. So much so that when he returned to Nottingham Forest after his loan expired at the end of the season, Sheffield Wednesday's fax came hot on the heels of Cohen's ass, asking if Nottingham Forest could sell him. Such a move attracted Twain's interest. He intended to put Cohen by his side to observe carefully what had happened to the previously unobtrusive player and what were his advantages that he could use.

Compared to the more talented Moke who was more prominent in terms of speed, Cohen was even across the board for the skills indicators and was less prone to injury.

In previous seasons, Twain had rarely drawn so many players from the youth team to the First Team in one go. He was still more confident in those players who had proven their abilities. Even Lennon and Bale were chosen because they had proven themselves in the world before Twain's transmigration.

This time, Twain completely put aside the so-called super-consciousness—in fact, he did not have foresight. Ignorance of the future actually made him excited. How many of these people would eventually succeed to become the future star players of the football world? Twain looked forward to it when he thought about the possibilities of the future. He felt a greater sense of accomplishment about it than signing Lennon and Bale through cheating.

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The transfer of four players from the youth team to the First Team at a time did not mean that Twain would not make any moves in the transfer market.

Real Madrid's second bid to purchase van der Vaart was thirty million euros. This time Twain gave a big wave—agreed! Real Madrid's people then went to discuss individual terms with van der Vaart's agent. As for whether it could be successfully negotiated, Twain did not care. He only cared about how many players he could buy with the twenty-five million euros.

Arshavin was also tempted by Italy. Juventus hoped to bring in the new Russian tsar for eighteen million euros. In an interview with the Italian media, Arshavin also revealed his desire to leave and seek success in a new league tournament. Even though Nottingham Forest had won two UEFA Champions League titles, it was still considered a small player for him. A traditional powerhouse club such as Juventus was more attractive.

After Twain learnt of Arshavin's stance, he turned down Juventus's offer—it was not that he was not for sale, but he thought that the money was too little—and quoted a price which he could accept: twenty-six million euros. It was up to them to accept or not.

Juventus backed down...

Although Juventus refused to engage at the key moment, Bayern Munich stepped up. They made an offer of twenty-five million euros to the Forest team and hoped to bring in Arshavin. Twain stuck to his guns and insisted on a minimum of twenty-six million. Either we seal the deal, or the deal is off.

Bayern Munich hesitated for a while and finally agreed to the price.

Although he did not manage to go the long-established Serie A powerhouse team, Juventus, to be able to go to the Bundesliga traditional powerhouse, Bayern Munich, was also good for Arshavin.

On the same day that van der Vaart signed a personal contract with Real Madrid, Arshavin also struck a deal with Bayern Munich.

The three clubs made the announcements at the same time. Van der Vaart had joined the La Liga powerhouse, Real Madrid for a fee of thirty million euros and signed for four years. He would wear the number 23 jersey. Arshavin had signed a four-year deal with the Bundesliga giant, Bayern Munich for a transfer fee of twenty-six million euros.

The media had mixed reviews about the two transfers. Arshavin's departure was understandable and acceptable. After all, he was not the core of Nottingham Forest's offense. But van der Vaart's departure was thought to be Tony Twain's muddled move. How would Nottingham Forest play next season now that it had lost the playmaker in the midfield? Was he going to use Žigić and play long balls? Or would he completely just attack from the sides?

Nuri Şahin was not a player on the same level as van der Vaart at all in the eyes of the people. It was a pipe dream if he wanted to replace van der Vaart and play the role of the Dutchman. As for Bostock? He was too young...

In that case, what did Twain had in mind for selling van der Vaart so easily for thirty million?

In fact, Twain did not think much. He did intend to put Şahin in place, with Bostock to assist. But if it turned out that Şahin was too young to take on such an important role, Twain had a back-up. The back-up plan would require him to take a greater risk, and certainly invite the media's harsh rebuke. But for Twain, the sense of accomplishment would also be the greatest.

The back-up plan was simple and nothing new. It was also not necessarily clever—he would let George Wood be in charge of organizing the attacks.

It was exciting, wasn't it? To let a blue-collar worker become a white-collar worker and a gold collar worker. This was Albertini's highest expectation of George Wood when he was still in the team. Twain believed that after so many years of training, it was time to give Wood a chance.

If Wood succeeded, then he would have a defensive midfielder who was an all-rounder in the midfielder, good in defense and offense, could run endlessly and be able to counter-press in the front

field to launch an attack. If he practice his goal scoring well ... he felt like this was fantastical just thinking about it.

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Arshavin's departure compelled Twain to continue adding players to the forward line.

Nicolás Millán had talent, but he was too young and lacked experience to play in the European football arena. Therefore, he must not expect too much from him. Van Nistelrooy was still in recovery and was not expected to return to the pitch until the end of the year. It was not clear how much of a role he would play even when he returned. He naturally had to focus on training Žigić. But having only Žigić alone was clearly not enough. Eastwood was the most stable force in the team's forward line at the moment. Although he suffered from minor injuries, it did not affect his goalscoring rate. He was the type of striker who always saved the team with goals at key moments.

He was Twain's most reassuring striker.

In addition, he needed a fast and impactful striker.

Twain set his sights on Aston Villa. He was interested in Gabriel Agbonlahor who performed outstandingly last season and made thirty appearances for Aston Villa. He scored ten goals and made six assists.

Agbonlahor was very fast in speed, especially with his lauching speed. He could easily shake off the defenders marking him in parallel positions, and play both center forward and winger, which was very much in line with Twain's desire for the players to be versatile.

For such a player, Aston Villa certainly would not let go easily. Twain decided to throw money at them.

Anyway, Evan said that since the stadium's new construction was temporarily suspended, the club would naturally fully support Twain's moves in the transfer market.

No matter how much money, as long as the club could afford, they would try their best to support.

Twain was grateful to Evan for this. He knew that Evan was counting on the club to make money, and he was thankful that Evan was a smart businessman with a long-term vision. Otherwise he might have sold the club during the economic crisis—although no one could know for certain if there would be still many people who were interested in buying a football club at this time.

Nottingham Forest and Aston Villa were at an impasse over Agbonlahor.

Aston Villa was determined not to sell. Their attitude was as tough as when they turned down Liverpool's bid to buy the team captain, Barry last summer. However, Tony Twain tirelessly praised Agbonlahor's outstanding performance during last season in the media and was generous in expressing his appreciation for the player. He was actually waiting for his own men to settle Agbonlahor's agent. As long as Agbonlahor came forward to state his desire to leave, then Aston Villa would have to seriously consider whether to let go of the speedy player.

Just as the Forest team was engaged in a covert battle with Aston Villa, the future of Sun Jihai was also place on the desk for Twain.

The player's fate was not as easy as what Twain had previously thought.

Imperceptibly, there was a line linking him to the future and fortunes of the club.

### **Chapter 727: The Setting China Sun**

With regards to Sun Jihai, Twain's attitude towards him was very complicated. He personally persuaded him to come to Nottingham Forest in the first place. There was no denying that Sun Jihai was originally here because he was Richards' replacement. It might not be fair to Sun Jihai himself to put it this way, but it was the case. But Twain was well aware of Sun Jihai's performance after he came to the Forest team. He was a dedicated professional player. His attitude made up for the lack in his level. Overall, Twain was relatively satisfied. There was no incident other than some Chinese media which complained that Twain had not given Sun the main position.

But as his age increased and the frequent occurrence of injuries, it was indisputable that he gradually lost his place in the team. Now Sun Jihai could not even play as the substitute defender. More often than not, he could only be with the reserve team to participate in the games. Even if the Forest team was extremely short of people, Twain did not give him any chance.

During the period, the Chinese media attacked Tony Twain for being unkind to the Chinese player.

But Nottingham Forest was not a charitable organization. The players who did not have the ability and could not keep up with the team's needs would naturally be eliminated. Sun Jihai was not a direct line of descent of the team and was not an indispensable player. Even if he highly motivated... he was not the only one with a high drive in Nottingham Forest.

Sun Jihai's contract with the team officially expired next summer. Twain had no plans to give Sun Jihai a new contract. Not only that, he decided to sell Sun Jihai this summer. Now there were two EFL Championship teams which had expressed interest in Sun Jihai. They would not lose too much if the deal was managed well.

Both Sheffield United and Crystal Palace wanted to get the Chinese all-rounded defender.

But they had only expressed their intention to buy and had not yet made an official offer.

Just as Twain decided to wait and see for a period of time, Evan approached him in the hope that he would reconsider the contract renewal with Sun Jihai.

Twain was surprised when he heard the request.

"What's the matter, Evan? I remember that we previously had a common view of Sun Jihai's future."

Evan smiled and did not immediately answer Twain's question. Instead, he brought up Allan's matter. "Didn't you always tell me that plans can't keep up with changes? You know Allan's been out there looking for sponsorship for the new stadium project. He first found the Arabs. Arsenal's Emirates Stadium was built with the backing of the Emirati people, at the cost of a decade's naming rights. I think this is a very suitable price. But..." He spread his hands.

“The Arabs have agreed to fund the project, but they asked for a spokesman for the clubs to nominally monitor whether their funds are used appropriately. As a matter of fact, ... I don't have to spell it out and you understand, don't you?”

Twain nodded.

“I don't want to add a senior manager in the club that I'm not familiar with, no matter how much money he represents behind him.” Evan Doughty said with a laugh. But it let Twain understand that the man actually had a big appetite for power.

“Furthermore, China has done quite well in the worldwide financial crisis. So, Allan set his sights there...”

At this point, Twain finally interjected, “Have you found the moneybags from China?”

“Not yet.” Evan shook his head.

It was odd but Twain was somewhat sorry.

“In other words, rethinking the contract with Sun Jihai . . . Is it because we want to send out some hints to potential investors in China?” Twain was not stupid. He quickly straightened out the relationship between the two.

“Dunn told me that people in China are very disappointed with their own football. Under such circumstances, the only thing that can make the Chinese fans feel a little proud, besides Dunn himself, is the Chinese player, Sun Jihai still playing for the Forest team. He is now the only player from China who still plays in Europe's top leagues.”

Shao Jiayi, who originally played for Cottbus, had been put up for sale by the team and sold to 2. Bundesliga. Zheng Zhi was also struggling in the English Football League Championship. Every time there were rumors that a certain Premier League team interested in him, it was ultimately just wishful thinking on the Chinese people's part.

As for those young players whom high hopes had been placed.... they were currently not doing well.

Against such a backdrop, Sun Jihai and Dunn were the only solace for those Chinese fans.

Dunn was the hope of the Chinese coaches, while Sun Jihai... was obviously not the players' hope, but he could long been considered the most successful out of all the Chinese players abroad. And it was estimated that for a very long time, there would not be a successor who could surpass his current position—the first Chinese player to go abroad, the first Chinese player to make his appearance in the European arena, the first Chinese player to score in the European arena, the first Chinese player in the UEFA Champions League, the first Chinese player in the English Premier League, the first Chinese player to win The Double... the countless “firsts” that were tagged on him by the enthusiastic Chinese media and fans.

Looking at these achievements, he really deserved the title of “The first successful Chinese player.”

Even if he was old, his form had declined and he made few appearances, as long as he was still on the Forest' First Team squad list every year at the start of the new season, it was the biggest consolation for the Chinese fans who had no other demands.



Twain felt very sad. The greatest consolation in for the country's football could only play as the second team substitute and was already on the verge of being abandoned by the team.

"I see." Twain nodded and said, "I will reconsider giving Sun Jihai a new contract. But he must accept a pay cut. You know, he's not in my plans for the new season."

Sadly, the greatest consolation was already of little competitive value for the Forest team. The only reason he could stay was simply because the club wanted to use him as a cover to drum up funds from China. He went from a professional player to a flag hanging in front of the door to attract the bankrollers.

Evan left with a satisfied smile, and Twain looked at the two clubs' faxed requests for quotes on the table in a daze.

If he wanted the two clubs to make their offers, how much would Sun be worth?

A million? Or a million and a half? Maybe... not even a million?

Sun Jihai's presence in the team was minimal, perhaps because he was Chinese and relatively low-key. His lifestyle habits were not the same as the other European teammates. He never attended those parties with a lot of sexy girls to set the mood. He also did not go to nightclubs to relax. After each day's training, he drove home alone to spend time with his wife and children. He would play with their children in their grassy backyard. Twain had once accompanied Dunn to Sun Jihai's house for a small Spring Festival celebration in the previous year's Spring Festival. While Dunn and Sun Jihai chatted in Mandarin, Sun Jihai mentioned his desires—"in fact, I don't have many desires for life. I'm here alone to make money, to feed my wife and children. How can I not work hard? My wish is to work hard and make money. Make more money while I still can. I can live a better life after retirement. I don't think about anything else... My teammates are really good to me, but I can't hang out with them. After all, we are not from the same world."

His life was so simple that it was boring, but he was long used to it. Playing in Nottingham was a job for him. His children had gone to school in Nottingham and were educated in England. But when he retired, Twain believed the family would return to China immediately. With the savings from the years he had worked hard in the United Kingdom, he could live like any ordinary Chinese.

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Sun Jihai did not know the connection between the club and China that surrounded him. He also did not know if his fate and future had changed somewhat due to these things.

His agent had previously informed him that two English Football League Championship teams wanted him to join. Sun Jihai wanted to see what the Forest team had to say first. Anyway, there was still one year left in the contract. He was not in a hurry to sell himself. If he were to join those teams in a year's time on a free transfer basis, he could perhaps attract more buyers.

On top of that, after the team's vacation ended, he only came to the training ground on time every day to train, and then drove home after the training. He would occasionally receive several media reporters from China, sign autographs for the Chinese students outside the training ground or somewhere else and take photos with them. He spent his days the same way as any previous season.

Until one day, Tony Twain called his agent, wanting to discuss the contract renewal negotiations with him.

The news surprised Sun Jihai—he was not an idiot, nor a hot-blooded teenager who liked to let his imagination run wild. He was aware of his place in the team. If the Nottingham Forest club was smart enough, the best option would be to sell him this summer. In that way, they could still receive a little money. Otherwise, after a year, they would get nothing. He thought so because he was certain that the team would not renew his contract.

He did not expect Twain to want to talk to his agent about renewing his contract.

His agent was not surprised by it. He vaguely heard that the club's marketing manager, Allan Adams was campaigning in China.

He felt he could secure a good contract extension for both Sun Jihai and himself.

Twain gave Sun Jihai a new contract for a two-year extension starting from the summer, but Sun Jihai must accept a fifty percent pay cut.

Sun Jihai's Chinese agent rejected Twain's contract. He thought it was totally unacceptable to reduce the pay by fifty per cent. Because this contract was not based on the original contract to renew two years. Originally in the new season, Sun Jihai could still take one hundred percent of his salary. Once the contract was signed, he would lose half of his income. This was the main reason why he disagreed.

They could completely turned down the contract and had no qualms taking one hundred percent salary for a year until the contract expired next year before they moved to another team on a free transfer.

However, Twain would never agree to the other party's proposed condition that the salary level remained the same. The team was now racking its brains to cut costs and control spending. If Sun Jihai left this summer, it would benefit everyone. As it happened, Allan wanted to seek provincial moneybags in China who were willing to foot the bill for his new plan, so Sun Jihai had become an important player. Even so, Twain would not have allowed a contract for a second team substitute to be offered the same salary as before.

He laid his card on the table to the other party that Sun Jihai's level was no longer worth his original salary—he certainly did not put it in those exact terms as it would be too hurtful to say so. He spoke tactfully. He only gave the Chinese agent an example that no club in the world would offer such a contract for a player who was soon retiring. Even if AC Milan's Maldini had to accept a pay cut, what more a Chinese player?

The agent also made it clear—since the club thinks that Sun Jihai still has his uses, then you should meet our requirements.

Twain said it was not possible. He could meet reasonable requirements, not the sky-high asking price. So, in order to show good faith, they should simply meet each other halfway—a twenty-five percent pay cut.

The proposal was approved by the other party. Then it was simple. Everyone would meet together, sign the papers, and have a glass of champagne to celebrate.

Sun Jihai would continue to belong to Nottingham Forest for the next two years. He would be thirty-four years old when his contract expired. At that time, whether he intended to continue to make a living in England or return to China to play for Dalian Shide, it was not something Twain had to worry about. Moreover, maybe next summer there could be a few inquiries and faxes on how much Sun Jihai could be sold, would appear in his desk again.

If Allan could really attract money from China, then who would worry about whether Sun Jihai would still be able to stay in the team?

Twain was not a philanthropist for Chinese football. He had no time to cultivate a savior for Chinese football, or to establish a flag-bearer.

After Sun Jihai's affair had been settled, there was good news on the other side.

Agbonlahor laid the cards on the table with the Aston Villa club. In a private discussion with Martin O'Neill, he told the manager that he wanted to play for Nottingham Forest. The reason was simple: he had confidence for Tony Twain. He believed that going to Nottingham Forest could satisfy his desire to win honors. Tony Twain was a manager who could lead him to victory and glory, even if he had just recovered from a heart attack.

Martin O'Neill could not convince Agbonlahor. The boy was apparently captivated by Tony Twain's charisma.

Aston Villa began to seriously consider how much of a price tag would be enough for Agbonlahor...

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Three days later, Nottingham Forest announced that they were signing the nimble striker, Gabriel Agbonlahor from Aston Villa for a transfer fee of sixteen million pounds.

In the new season, Agbonlahor would wear the number 18 jersey left by Arshavin. He would run unhindered through the Forest team's front field and crush each of their opponents with speed.

After Anelka, Twain finally had a fast striker of true significance.

If it was previously said that van Nistelrooy and Žigić were more like a heavy hammer, Agbonlahor was like a sharp dagger. With hammers and daggers, Twain could easily face all styles of enemies ...

## **Chapter 728: The Young Guard**

The transfer fee of 16 million pounds had used up almost half of Nottingham Forest's budget for the season. Twain had to come to a decision over whether he should spend the remaining money on a top-class player or on several cheaper, average players who could each play at different positions in the team next.

However, it was not a hard decision for Twain to make.

In his heart, he knows that Nottingham Forest is a team that will rise from the ashes and emerge as a force to be reckoned with once again. Therefore, there is no need to spend money acquiring average

players. He decided that he should assemble the 'best army' and bring in everything that is needed for the team's rebuild in one fell swoop.

He had his eyes set on Valencia CF's David Silva.

Unfortunately, he faced a huge obstacle in his pursuit of David Silva's signature, because Nottingham Forest was not the only club who had their eyes on Silva. Big clubs such as Real Madrid, Barcelona, Liverpool and AC Milan were also looking at him. Nottingham Forest was not a club that stood out when compared against these other clubs.

Twain decided to use 30 million pounds of his transfer budget to purchase Silva, but he was only going to pay in instalments. This payment method was not accepted by Valencia CF, however.

Valencia CF had performed well for the first-half of last season. However, the team gradually slipped down the table as the season progressed. The club's financial problems had not been solved, and was only made worse with the arrival of the economic crisis, which forced them to consider selling David Villa and David Silva for money despite being adamant initially that neither player was up for sale.

When news that both Villa and Silva were available broke out, the big clubs pounced on the opportunity like a pack of wolves who had rushed in at the scent of blood.

Real Madrid led the race for David Villa's signature, whereas competition was fierce for David Silva.

In the end, Nottingham Forest proved to be no match against the other big, wealthy and successful football clubs.

After his plan to acquire Silva ended in a failure, Twain came to realize that he needed to change his mindset. Rather than pin his hopes on being able to buy established and famous players like Silva, he should look at getting younger players into the team instead.

Hence, he decided to shift his attention onto acquiring Britain's gifted young players.

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Right as Twain was wondering over how he should build up his team, his friend, 'Crazy' Stuart Pearce, gave him a call and recommended a player to him.

"I'm not recommending him to you because I have anything to gain from this transfer, Tony." Pearce said. "I just don't want his future to become bleak. His contract with his club expires in summer, but he doesn't want to continue staying in that League One side. He is looking for a bigger stage to perform on. I also think that he would not be able to improve as a player if he were to keep playing in League One. There are a few clubs after him right now, but I believe in you, Tony, which is why I recommended you to him when he approached me for suggestions."

Twain had been listening to Pearce go on and on without mentioning the player's name. Therefore, he had to ask, "Who is he and who does he play for?"

"Joe Mattock. Leicester City's left back."

Twain realized after hearing the name that it was a name that he has heard numerous times before. The British media had hailed him as one of the top 10 youth players in Britain. He is only 18 years of age and

has already been given a place in Britain's national U21 team by Pearce. He has amassed a lot of experience as a first team player in League One. He is physically strong and good at defending and going forward to attack.

There are several clubs who are interested in getting his signature. Twain could not believe that Pearce had actually recommended him to a player of this caliber.

"No problem, no problem at all, Stuart. I promise you I will help you groom him into a much better player than he is now." Twain naturally agreed to take the player into his team. How could he possibly say no to such a good deal?

They might have Leighton Baines and Gareth Bale in the team right now, but considering how Bale has to play as the left midfielder from time to time, it was a good idea to get another left back to fill in the gap during those occasions.

Additionally, Joe Mattock is very young and will be a good investment for the future.

All in all, it was a good deal for the club.

Pearce had not lied to Twain. Just two days after he gave Twain a phone call, Mattock's agent turned up at the club to negotiate a deal.

What both parties had to do next was simple. They agreed on personal terms for Mattock and put pen to paper straight away. Nottingham Forest acquired one of Britain's most promising left backs without spending a single penny.

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The Forest team made progress on trying to bolster their strength on other positions as well.

Even though Nottingham Forest was a team that did not appeal to foreign football stars and was also a team that did not have the finances to compete with bigger clubs like Real Madrid, Chelsea and Manchester City for those players, but in the eyes of the local British youth players, they are a team who is known for their abilities to groom young players, and they also have a charismatic and unique manager in charge. Nottingham Forest was an appealing team for those youth players to consider joining.

At the end of June, Charlton officially announced that their up and coming youth player, Jonjo Shelvey, was sold to Nottingham Forest for 2 million pounds.

The fee paid by Forest was quite high given that Shelvey was still a player who had yet to reach 18 years of age. However, Shelvey was worth 6 million pounds last summer. If it was not for the ongoing economic crisis that forced many other clubs to become even more careful with their expenditures, it would have been impossible for Twain to obtain the captain for Britain's national U16 team for only 2 million pounds.

Shelvey might only be 17 years of age, but he was already quite famous in Britain. He made his debut for Charlton when he was only 16 years and 55 days old. He came on a substitute for the captain of the Chinese national team Zheng Zhi in that game.

However, Shelvey had already attracted the attention of numerous football clubs prior to that as well. In 2007, he captained Britain's U16 national team that was crowned champions in the Victory Shield. He played as a midfielder in that game and scored 3 goals. He was already a goal scoring machine when he was playing games for Charlton's youth and reserve team.

However, Twain does not expect Shelvey to be able to make an instant impact in the team and score lots of goals for them. The reason why he bought Shelvey is because he saw potential in him to become a great player in the future. This is in line with what everything that Twain has been doing during this summer so far, which is to lay the foundation needed for the future of the club.

Other teams such as Sunderland and West Ham United were also in the race to sign Shelvey, but what allowed Twain to triumph over them in the end was because he was Tony Twain.

Twain has made a name for himself these few years, and there are many people who like him as there are many who dislike him. He is called the 'Arsene Wenger of Britain' because of how he shows a preference to playing youth players in his team, and this makes him an attractive destination in the eyes of numerous youth players.

This advantage that he has over other rival teams is not only shown through his acquisitions of Joe Mattock and Jonjo Shelvey.

Victor Moses was also another player that became a part of Nottingham Forest this summer. He was an 18 year old forward who played for Crystal Palace. He was born in Nigeria, but his family emigrated to Britain when he was five. He signed a four year contract with Crystal Palace when he turned 16.

Just like any other football player from Africa, he was physically strong and possessed exceptional pace. His football techniques were remarkable as well. His only flaw was that his heading ability was average at best despite being 185 cm tall and having a strong body.

Twain wished to use Moses primarily during squad rotations. Moses would play for the first team, reserve team or youth team when needed.

Besides those three players, Twain also had his eyes on Sunderland's all-rounded midfielder Jordan Henderson. Henderson could play in numerous positions such as the right midfielder, central defensive midfielder and striker. He once led the Sunderland youth team into the finals of the FA Youth Cup.

Twain wanted to buy Henderson and groom him further, but Roy Keane did not budge even though they were friends. He was adamant that Henderson was not for sale.

Despite his failure to purchase Henderson, Twain was content with his summer signings. He had focused more on getting British players this season due to the upcoming implementation of the 6+5 rule in 2012.

Twain believes that the youth players would all become great players in the future as long as they can groom them properly and the players put in effort on their side. Of course, injuries also need to not pay them a visit that often.

The potential that those youth players have is right there waiting to be properly utilized.

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Contrary to their aggressive style of buying loads of players in the past years, Nottingham Forest announced during the start of July that the club would not be buying any other players for the rest of transfer window, and that the player list for next season has been confirmed.

This piece of news shocked the British media.

Who exactly did Forest bring in during the summer?

They have promoted John Bostock, Nicolás Millán, Adriano Moke and Chris Cohen from the youth team to the first team, but this does not count as bringing in new players into the team. All they have done is look inwards for new players.

They got ex-Leicester City left back Joe Mattock on a free transfer, paid 2 million pounds to get the current captain of Britain's U16 national team Jonjo Shelvey from Charlton, and paid 3 million pounds to bring in Crystal Palace's gifted forward Victor Moses.

Gabriel Agbonlahor was Nottingham Forest's biggest expenditure for the summer at 16 million pounds. He was also the only established player that Nottingham Forest bought this summer that the media thought would perform well in the Premier League.

Agbonlahor has already proven himself after his stint at Aston Villa, and there was nothing else that he needed to prove at Nottingham Forest. He was a player who could be used in games straight away.

The resolute 'anti-Twain' Carl Spicer sarcastically mocked Tony Twain for his joke of a transfer window in his column:

"When he got married to his supermodel girlfriend, he was all gung-ho and went to great lengths to make sure the whole world could witness the scene as he kissed Shania. But, when it comes to bringing in new players for the Forest team, he acts as though he has his hands and feet bound and has done little but save money for the club. Look at the players he bought... The only player that I approve of is Agbonlahor. As for the rest of them... If Mr. Tony Twain's main intention for buying those players is so that he can sell them for a higher price in the future, then I must applaud Mr. Tony Twain for having an excellent business sense. Everyone knows that Nottingham Forest Football Club is going through a hard time. Their new stadium got discarded in Clifton right after the workers finished laying out the foundation needed for its construction, as though it is mocking its American owners for being overly ambitious. The club is in dire need for money currently, and what should they do to solve this issue? The only thing they can do is to sell players, obviously. So, they find numerous young players from all over the country who have the potential to go on to become football stars, and they groom them for a few seasons before selling them for a high price... That is a good business strategy.

However, if Mr. Twain intends to rely on those players to bring Nottingham Forest back to the top, or if he thinks buying those players is all he needs to have decent results in the league, then I'm sorry, allow me to laugh for three minutes. Is Nottingham Forest really in such dire straits that they are choosing to rely on a bunch of kids who are probably still feeding on their mother's milk? Or is it that all Mr. Tony Twain is aiming for is to avoid relegation next season? And then get the team to make occasional appearances in the Europa League... Oh, that reminds me, he has yet to clinch a Europa League trophy! This lends credence to my earlier speculation. But, allow me to be blunt, Mr. Twain. With your current squad, it would be a challenge to even get into the Europa League..."

The article was full of sarcasm, mockery and distrust towards Twain, and some of the words used were of a derogatory nature. The article led to a buzz after it was published in The Daily Telegraph.

Everyone knows that Carl Spicer has a long-standing agenda against Twain. However, if you take away the strong words that he used in the article, everything he said has actually hit the nail on the head.

The current Nottingham Forest without Piqué, Bendtner, Ribéry, van der Vaart and Arshavin was a team that consisted mainly of young, inexperienced players and it lacked competitiveness.

George Wood was definitely still a player that everyone could trust, and other players such as Gareth Bale and Pepe have both proven themselves to be good players as well.

As for Tiago, it remains to be seen if he is truly suitable for Nottingham Forest.

Twain's insistence on giving Žigić a chance to prove himself next season was also worrying. After all, it was not as though Twain has not misjudged players in the past.

Eastwood's ankle and knee are both quite fragile. No one knows when is the next time he has to lie on the operating table.

Şahin? That kid has yet to prove whether he is able to regain that form that he showed before he got injured. His performance so far has been largely inconsistent. Of course, from a neutral standpoint, his inconsistent performance has been influenced by the team's poor performance as a whole.

Petrov? He is getting on with his age and has lost a lot of pace. His attacks are also a little too one-dimensional.

Kris Commons? All right, let's be frank. We have nearly forgotten about him...

Tony Twain might be called 'Britain's Arsene Wenger', but he is still immensely different from Wenger, and Nottingham Forest is not Arsenal either.

Even Arsenal did not manage to attain any notable results with their exceedingly talented youth team. They failed to become champions in the Premier League, did not win the Champions League, was eliminated in the quarter finals of the EFL Cup and did not progress beyond the semifinals for the FA Cup...

It goes to show that it is not beneficial to have a team that is made up of very young players if the team wants to become champions of a particular competition. It is impossible even if you have a team like Arsenal's with 23 young players who are overflowing with talent.

What you need to become champions is not talent or an exceptional gift that excites people. Rather, what you need is an abundance of experience and the ability to perform consistently. Of course, you need luck on your side as well.

If Tony Twain truly intends to rely on a bunch of kids to stage a comeback, he must certainly be building castles in the air!

We would not mind mocking him when he fails. After all, he has a nuclear-powered heart right now. Even if his heart stops all of a sudden, he would be revived on the spot.



He will not die.

Tony Twain is a scourge. Scourges typically have long lives...

Of course, we would be more than happy to watch him ridicule himself if he uses his heart problem as an excuse for his failures.

### **Chapter 729: The Future Belongs to the Young**

Carl Spicer criticised Twain's recruitment strategy for the summer in his column. He believes that Twain is living in a fantasy if he intends to employ a team made up of young players next season.

His views were met with approval from numerous media outlets and led to the successive arrival of various other criticisms.

Some of those criticisms were against Twain, some were against the club, and some pointed their fingers at the players.

"I don't believe Tony Twain will be able to achieve any notable results this season."

"The club spent money buying all these young players, and it will be quickly proven that they have invested wrongly."

"Nicolás Millán? I'm sorry, I haven't even heard of the name before..."

"Tony Twain must be dreaming if he thinks he can make the team powerful just by bringing in all these young players with potential. Is he trying to replicate Manchester United's Class of '92? This is nothing more than a complete farce in my eyes!"

Even Pierce Brosnan, a journalist for Nottingham Evening Post who has always supported Twain, published an article expressing his concern at how Twain had mostly bought young players over the summer.

He opined that it was worrying that Twain has pinned his hopes on a team of young players between the ages of 17 and 18. He did not doubt that Twain had brought in talented youths, but he felt that grooming these youths is a process that takes time. They might turn out to be great players in a few years' time, but is Forest going to rely solely on them right now?

He tried his best to be as tactful as he could, and tried to phrase his words nicely as much as possible in the article.

However, his article still angered the King.

He received a call from Twain, and a flood of admonishments came his way the moment he picked up.

"What the hell are you writing about in your article, Mr. Reporter? Are you trying to denounce me? Thank goodness I didn't plan on publishing an article in a column in your newspaper! If not I'd have become a big f\*cking joke! An article written by me scolding the media and the article from you casting doubt over me would have been published at the same time in the newspaper... Mm hmm?"

“But... But, Mr. Twain, I only wrote what I wrote out of concern as a Forest fan...”

“Forest fan? Have you gone onto the streets to interview people? Are those fans worried? Can you represent their opinion?”

“Based on what I understand so far... Yes, they are worried, Mr. Twain. They are all worried about the overly young team that you have right now...”

“They have their reasons to be worried! But you don’t have the right to publish them! Do you know what I’ve been doing every single day besides training the players? I’ve been inculcating the footballing spirit of Nottingham Forest in these youngsters! I’ve been telling them that whatever the media says is bullsh\*t, and that they are actually much better than what the media makes them out to be! I’ve been trying to instill confidence in them all this while... And here you are trying to wreck my plans? You have to understand where you are coming from, Mr. Reporter! You are the local newspaper for Nottingham, you represent the voice of Nottingham! You can’t get in my way like this! If we start fighting amongst ourselves, then aren’t we just going to end up becoming the laughingstock of others?”

“But what I’m saying is the truth...”

“Screw your f\*cking truth! I’m the only one who needs to know about the truth! What you need to do is to give the youngsters confidence, confidence and more confidence! The reason why I gave you access to the club’s exclusive information is not for you to be loggerheads with me! Are you a Nottingham Forest fan or not? Do you wish for Nottingham Forest to become better, Mr. Reporter?”

“Of... Of course I wish for that...”

“Then you go out there and write a story about how these youngsters are the best in the world! The best! It doesn’t matter if you praise them to the skies. Don’t worry about them letting your words go to their heads. It’s my job to make sure that doesn’t happen, Mr. Reporter.”

Pierce felt wronged and was reluctant to do as Twain said, but he could not continue squabbling with Twain over the phone. He was worried that he would send Twain back into the hospital after remembering that he was someone with a heart disease.

“All right... I will accept this suggestion of yours, Mr. Twain.”

Twain’s voice softened a little after hearing his words. “Remember this, Mr. Reporter. You represent Nottingham and you are the voice of Nottingham Forest. No matter what happens, you have to always stand on our side. I need voices of support from you. When the other media outlets out there are questioning my team, you have to step out and defend us. Do you know what it means by the ‘atmosphere at our home grounds’? Don’t think that you only get that kind of atmosphere when you are at the stands of the City Ground stadium. What the youngsters need is not the media’s disapproval towards them. It’s praise! Don’t care about anything else. You are only getting in my way if you do.”

Two days later, an article was published on Nottingham Evening Post by Pierce Brosnan. In it, he interviewed the young players playing for Nottingham Forest. The article wrote about how the young players had a lot of fight and resolve going into the next season, and displayed a tightly-knit and optimistic team to the public.

Of course, the article had been published at Twain's behest. Twain could not care less about Pierce Brosnan and his 'position as a journalist'. All he cared about are the things that benefit him, and those that do not.

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Twain's anger towards Brosnan's earlier article was well grounded.

The truth was that Twain was actually happy that the other media outlets out there were chastising his players. He had only been feigning fury at their words. This was because he could make use of the opportunity to unite the youngsters as one.

It was also the chance for him to bring out the fight in the young players and build up their confidence by telling them 'Look, the media does not think highly of you lot'. The youngsters are all at the age whereby they can get rebellious, so it is a good way to direct those fiery emotions of theirs towards the media instead. Then, he can tell them that he, Tony Twain, will always stand with them. He will believe in them forever and that they are the best!

Those words would get the young players fired up and itching to prove their abilities on the pitch.

Afterwards, it was up to Twain's ability to train and discipline the players.

He did not worry about the youths breaking free of his control over them, regardless if the team lost or won.

It was also then that Brosnan came out and showed the world that he was more aware of the situation at Nottingham Forest than others.

All along, the Nottingham Evening Post has been Twain's spokesperson. It has been admonished by others as a newspaper that was devoid of the principles of good journalism when it comes to issues surrounding Nottingham Forest. However, the Nottingham Forest fans did not share their sentiments. They enjoyed reading articles that praised the Forest team. They would pay attention to the articles published in the Nottingham Evening Post. Nobody likes to read about criticisms against the team they support.

A media outlet that has always supported him suddenly questioned him. That definitely made him feel uncomfortable.

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Nottingham Forest did not make a trip to Asia for money during their pre-season days. Neither did they go to North America. The team did not even step out of Nottingham and visit other areas in Britain. They simply stayed in their training grounds and had practice matches with a few other British football teams.

Twain had arranged for more practice matches this year because he hoped to bring the team together by playing more matches. This would help the young players get used to the way the team plays quicker.

It was also a good chance for him to observe and pick out the players who would be a part of his plans for the coming season. There are things that one cannot discern during training. The best way to judge a player's abilities is always through actual matches.

Twain found Adriano Moke, the player who Greenwood rated very highly, to be very disappointing after observing his performances over a few practice matches.

His physique, which was prone to injuries, constantly gave him the disadvantage when he was engaged in physical battles with his opponents. He might be good at dribbling and getting past his opponents, but those things mean naught if he cannot get into physical battles with other players. There is no soccer match in this world that does not involve physical contact between players.

If a player is not good with physical battles, then it does not matter how good his techniques might be. He was not a player that Twain wanted.

On the other hand, the player who had not stood out for a few years in the reserve team, Chris Cohen, impressed Twain. His performance on the left flank was noteworthy. His pace and technique did not rival Moke's, but he performed better on the whole than Moke.

Additionally, what really set Cohen apart from Moke was how he preferred working with the team, unlike Moke who preferred working on his own. Perhaps this has something to do with how he lacks pace and power and is unable to create much chances for the team on his own.

During the practice matches, he managed to make several good passes and was a threat going down the middle from the left flank as well.

Twain decided to focus his efforts on grooming Cohen for the coming season.

As for Moke... He would either get him out on a loan or sell him.

Bostock and Millán's performances lived up to Twain's expectations. Neither of them lacked experience after having already played in plenty of youth team matches. Millán has even played in a first team match before when he was just 14 years of age. Therefore, playing first team matches was not something new for both of them.

Similarly, Şahin's performance was worthy of praise as well. At the very least, he had displayed a higher level of abilities than other players during the practice matches. His techniques are regarded to be outstanding by the British players, and Twain's decision to bring him back to the first team also seemed to have strengthened his confidence.

Meanwhile, the left back Joe Mattock's performance was average at best. He had moments of brilliance, but did not perform better than Leighton Baines and Gareth Bale most of the time. Twain believes that the Premier League might still be a little challenging for a player like him who has only played in the League One so far. Mattock might have a lot of potential in him, but he has to be groomed over a period of time first.

Victor Moses performed well thus far. His physicality and speed allowed him to gain the upper hand during the matches. He was good at breaking through the defense with his speed and also managed to shoot for goal while holding back the defenders. He was a player who could be used during squad rotations.

If everything goes to plan, then as of now, Nottingham Forest's list of strikers for next season includes Žigić, Eastwood, Agbonlahor, Nicolás Millán and Victor Moses. The first three are players that Twain intends to rely upon heavily throughout the season. The other two players would play games for both

the reserve and first teams so as to gain experience and improve themselves through game time. As for what kind of position those two will end up playing in the first team, that will be dependent on the kind of performances they make from now on.

Twain's most expensive signing of this summer, Agbonlahor, has not let him down so far. The kid's pace and power turn him into a razor-edged dagger on the pitch. He started in all four practice matches and played till the end for each match. He scored a total of six goals across the matches.

Twain also tried to play him as a winger, and he put in a performance that was to Twain's satisfaction. Regardless if it was breaking through into the penalty box, or crossing from the byline or shooting, he was good at each and every of them.

The best part of Agbonlahor was how he had publicly declared time and time again about his trust in Tony Twain's abilities. He expressed that he has never regretted making the switch from Aston Villa to Nottingham Forest, because he believed that he would stand at the top with Twain one day.

His words made Twain overjoyed.

The players who choose to stick with the team through their toughest times are the players who deserve his respect and attention, and a player who specially transferred to the club when it is going through its toughest times is a player he must value.

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This summer feels like a summer that belongs to the young in Wilford.

North Wilford welcomed a new batch of U18 players around the time when Twain was preparing for the new season with the first team.

Every summer, a group of players who has been specially hand-picked throughout the globe would be sent to North Wilford. These players are here to receive the most formal training, and they are all here with the goal of either becoming a professional footballer, or a first team member of Nottingham Forest.

Some of the players are average, but there are also a few talented ones amongst them. Those with talent might get a few more glances their ways by the coaches, but their talent would have little to no impact on their futures. What determines if a player can succeed in the future is not the player's talent or gift, but rather how much hard work he puts into training and improving himself.

Every year, the head of the youth team would provide the first team manager with a new list of youth players. Talented players who the manager should focus on would also get marked out on that list.

However, how many players on that list can make their way into the first team?

Fewer than few.

There are very few players who went through training at Nottingham Forest's youth team who eventually ended up playing for the team. This is also why Twain's promotion of 4 young players into the first team became a topic of debate everywhere in North Wilford.

The young players who were training at North Wilford saw hope through Twain's actions.

Greenwood looked at the group of fresh faces on the training grounds. Some of the players standing before him have grown up in Nottingham and have managed to rise above the rest after going through numerous trainings that were tailored for different age groups. Others are players with potential who have been brought over by their scouts from other countries. They have all agreed to join Nottingham Forest's youth team and receive training in Nottingham.

For the young players who grew up in Nottingham, George Wood was their exemplar and someone they should aspire to become.

For the players who came to Nottingham Forest from other parts of the world, Gareth Bale would be the role model for them.

The last batch of youth team players have mostly left the team. Some joined the reserve team while some lucky ones managed to make their way into the first team. As for the rest... They have either been sold to other football clubs in a different tier to theirs, or they have had their contracts terminated with the club and are left to figure out what to do next on their own.

"Firstly, I'd like to welcome all of you to North Wilford." Greenwood stood before the bunch of kids with his other youth team coaches.

"Next, I'd like all of you to know that your goal is not to stay here forever. Your goal lies in the south..." He pointed in the southern direction. "That's the training grounds of Nottingham Forest's first team. A team that has won the Champions League four times is waiting for all of you there! Still, I hope all of you can understand, that the door over there is not open to everyone. Every year we will eliminate many players, and even if you make it into the reserve team, it doesn't mean you will have a chance to play for the first team. Besides training your hardest here, I also want all of you to put in your best performance before us and the first team manager. Don't think about doing anything else other than those!"

"I've looked at your résumés, and I understand a lot about where you lads have come from and what you have done so far. I truly believe that you are cream of the crop. But you need to prove that you are indeed more outstanding than those who are of the same age as you through your actions and performances! You are not here because you want to play amateur football, right? I don't want to tell you the success story of George Wood. That is a story that has been reported endless times by the media. All I hope you can understand is that he put in a lot of hard work to become as successful as he is now! From today onwards, each and every of you will be lucky enough to experience what he had to go through! It's not an experience that will make any of you happy, but I can guarantee you that when the day comes and you are able to shine on the pitch, you will realise that everything you have gone through here is not for nothing!" Greenwood flailed his arms about forcefully.

Chen Jian stood amongst this group of newcomers. He might have trained as a part of the youth team from last season, but he was still allowed to join as a newcomer for this year's youth team.

Henceforth, he would be an official member of this youth team. This time round, he has come from China and not from a talent show anymore. He was no longer just a 'guest' who could only participate in the training and could not represent the team in any competitions. He has a concrete goal that he could work towards. His every good performance would mean something now, unlike in the past when it did not matter whether he performed well or badly.

He wants to become a professional footballer!

It did not matter how much sweat he has to put in for it, or how tough the journey would be for him. It did not matter how the road beneath him would twist and turn.

His goal would never change.

He was willing to gamble everything that he has and give his all for it. He wants to become a professional footballer no matter what.

He was like a soldier who had wandered into the opponent's territory. There was no way back now. He cannot even turn around. All he can do is to keep walking forward.

And finally, at the end of the road... Checkmate!

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Twain received the new list of youth players from Greenwood. There were 30 names on the list, and some were circled in red.

The ones circled in red are the players that Greenwood thought highly of. They have the potential to make it into the first team and are the ones that they should keep their eyes on and see how he develops from here on out.

Those players were Lee Alexander from Nottingham, Darren Williams from Bishop's Cleeve, Andrew McLeod from Glasgow, Scotland, and Chen Jian from the distant, far-away country of China.

### **Chapter 730: The Death of an Idealist**

As July was about to end, they wrapped up a month's worth of training and warm-up matches, and Twain had basically confirmed the roster for the first team in the new season.

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Thank you for reading on [myboxnovel.com](http://myboxnovel.com)

Adriano Moke had been suffering recently. When he received a call from the first team, he was very excited as he thought his efforts for the past 10 years has finally been recognised, until the cruel reality still struck him.

The head who always liked to wear shades and rarely smiled did not really give him any approving looks. He could feel that, compared to the players who were drawn from the youth team, his was very clearly treated differently from the rest. Of course, his performance was not exactly stellar...

He realised that the head preferred those who were not afraid of physical confrontation in the competition, who would actively initiate body contacts. Players like him who preferred to avoid body contact were not popular.

Since his promotion to team U16, he suffered a total of three major injuries, the worst one while he had been on loan to Sunderland in the previous season. He admitted that he was afraid of having physical confrontation with stronger opponents, but he also thought that he was not wrong if he could

reasonably use his tactics to avoid physical confrontation. Why was there a need for physical confrontation? If he could train to be so technically competent that the defenders were unable to touch him, then there was no need to directly confront them.

Ever since that first injury, he had already been trying to turn these plans into a reality. As such, his techniques improved a lot and he became the best technical player in the team. When he went up against his peers, he excelled in feinting and deceiving, or using his incredible speed to dribble past the defenders. Such methods allowed him to be outstanding in the youth team and impressed the audience easily. Hence, he was determined by Greenwood to be the most promising youth in this season's youth team.

However, none of this worked all his advantages did not work in South Wilford.

During his debut for Nottingham's first team in the warm-up match, he faced fierce defenders in the League One team. As much as he wanted to use his techniques to break through the defense, he looked more like he was evading the opponents instead.

He could still remember it clearly. He had hoarded the ball so excessively that, when he lost it to a pair of full backs, he caught a glimpse of the captains shaking their heads from off the field.

During that match, he was substituted out in the middle of the match and sat quietly on the reserves bench. He knew he blew it with his performance, but it was only his first match. Besides, everyone would screw up one match anyways. He continued to comfort himself with this mindset.

However, in the matches that followed, he continued to be substituted out halfway through the match, or swapped in right before the match ended.

On the other hand, there was this 22-year-old who was still mixing around in the reserve team. He was someone Moke had always been making fun of, the person everyone said had no future because his skills were average. And yet, Chris Cohen performed so well on the first team that he shocked Moke. He was obedient and brave. His performance on the field was outstanding; it was as if he had already played for the first team for several seasons.

Cohen constantly attacked the left lane and actively participated in defending. Whenever he ran back from the offensive half and forced his opponent to run near the corner flag, Moke, who was on the reserves, would sneakily squint to find the head nodding with approval. Why?!

Up till now, he still did not think that he was inferior to Cohen. Whether in terms of talent or technique, he was way better than Cohen. Cohen's techniques was limited to stopping the ball before passing it, was he even able to lob the ball from the back over his defenders? Could he continuously do step-overs without tripping over the ball? Could he constantly protect the ball while speeding past defenders? Could he lob the ball sufficiently to dodge the opponent's slide tackles at top dribbling speed? Was he able to spin past his defenders with the ball?

Watching him kick the ball only made Moke frown. Cohen was basically a miner kicking the ball; there was not elegance at all! But seeing Cohen play, Moke thought Cohen had a bigger chance of staying in first team than he did. Moke felt unjust.

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“There are 15 days to the start of the new season. The big roster will be confirmed by then,” Twain told Dunn and Kerslake in the office. “You guys can settle these matters which would heavily offend people,” He laughed slyly.

“Let me do it.” Kerslake took the initiative to take over this task.

Actually the main aim was to notify the players drawn from the youth team and the second-rate team, and also those youths who recently joined the league teams this summer. Just like how they drew the previous first-team, Kerslake called the players one by one, informing them if they were to stay on the first team to train or temporarily return back to either their youth team or the second-rate team. This was definitely a tough job. Of course, if the players were smart enough, they would understand that these choices were made by their head, Tony Twain.

“Besides, there are three English Football League teams and one League One team who are interested in Kris Commons. If the price is suitable, just sell him.” Twain waved his hands.

Twain was only selling him now, but Commons’ level had been very far off the team’s for a very long time. Twain only decided to sell him now. On one hand it was because of the team’s financial situation, as selling those who could not bring much contribution to the team, would clear up the pay that the club gives to them. On the other hand, it was to prevent Commons from being a bench-warmer forever on the team. Even playing as a starter in the English Football League was far better than wasting his golden years in the Premier League. Although Commons was extremely loyal and did not complain when he was appointed to play as a reserve, Twain still had to make the harsh decision to sell him.

The third reason was because he found a replacement for Commons — Chris Cohen.

In this month, Cohen’s performance was all observed and remembered by Twain. He thought that Cohen’s performance and capabilities was all superior compared to Commons. The fact that he had no complaints about playing for the reserve team for several years was testament that he was the type of player who was willing to accept the fate of being a reserve. Twain loved these types of players the most, those who had potential but no opinions. They would not become the unstable element in the changing room.

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After a day’s training, Kerslake announced in front of the players that some young people would receive his call tonight to know if they would be registered for the Premier League in the next season. For these youths, their most critical moment has come.

Moke returned home, uneasy, then continued to wait for the assistant coach’s call. His heart was filled with lucky fantasies that he still had hope in entering the first team. His basis of thinking came from the previous two warm-up matches. His time on the field was a lot longer as compared to the past. He believed that his outstanding techniques and his fast breakthroughs in the right lane would move the captain.

After a month, he was not as ambitious. He no longer wished to be the most promising young superstar in his team but only to be able to play for the first team in the contest, even if he was only a reserve player. The youth who was initially filled with hopes and dreams had no choice but to throw his unrealistic dreams aside today.

At 9.30pm at night, he received the call which determined his fate.

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David Kerslake held up the contact list of the players and found the name of “Adriano Moke.” This was his last call for today, and the only one that was different.

The previous calls he made had been filled with laughter, but he had to be sterner when he dialed this number. This was no laughing matter.

Kerslake did many things which offended people. Dunn and him were Twain’s closest assistants. Most of the time, when he interacted with the players, Twain had to be likeable to establish rapport with them. As such, these smaller matters that would upset the players would be left for Dunn and him to handle. Of course, Twain also did things to upset the players on a larger scale, like scolding people in the changing room.

“Hi, is this Adriano Moke?” The call went through.

“Yes, sir, it’s me!” One could not tell if the voice on the other side was excited or nervous, just that it was different from usual. Kerslake almost thought he called the wrong number.

“Yes...” Kerslake paused. “You really worked hard in the trainings in the team. Frankly speaking, your techniques really impressed me, and your breakthroughs in the right lane were extremely clean as well.” He was not saying any congratulations nor comforting words, it was purely stating Moke’s strengths without beating around the bush. “There was nothing I could do but clap and cheer.”

After the praises...

“However.” Kerslake took the phone away to cough softly. “I’m sorry to inform you that you are not in the plans of the first team. Yes, I’m talking about the current league’s plans. You still have a lot of flaws but we hope you will continue to accumulate experience in the reserve team’s competitions to overcome those flaws. At the same time, you could choose to be loaned out to train as well...”

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Everything that the assistant coach said after was nothing to Moke. He only heard the part where he said “Sorry to inform you that you aren’t in the plans of the first team in the current season.” Everything else was just noise ringing in his ears.

Was it over? That was the only thought in his mind.

He did not even know when he thanked the assistant coach and hung up. He felt unjust.

In the youth team, he had been the most outstanding one. Before he even turned 17, he had already received several invitations from other soccer teams. Those scouts all begged him to sign on to their teams but he rejected all of them. He was a Nottingham citizen, his family had been Nottingham Forest fans for many generations, so he only wanted to play for Nottingham Forest.

Whether it was David Kerslake, Dunn or Greenwood, the successive youth training director back then, were all expecting him to do well. They promised he would have a bright future in Nottingham Forest.

He would become a player as outstanding as George Eastwood, wearing the Nottingham Forest uniform every week to showcase his breakthroughs and dribbling techniques to his supportive fans and also score continuously.

His room had been filled with the greatest soccer superstars in the history of Nottingham Forest team. When he first joined the youth team of Nottingham Forest, he had the same dream over and over again. There would be a day he would retire from Nottingham Forest team and the whole city stadium would be filled with standing soccer fans who would chant his name.

But now, all of these were gone. He could not even get into the first team!

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On the second day of training, Twain and his coaches were all shocked to see Adriano Moke doing his warm-up in the team. Twain gave a glance towards Kerslake

Kerslake quickly explained. "I called him and explicitly told him he was cut."

"Maybe he just felt unjust," Dunn commented from the side.

"I..." Just when Twain was about to speak, Kerslake ran out. "Let me talk to him again."

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"Moke!" Kerslake's face was blank as he strode to Adriano Moke, gripping his arm with a hand. "What are you doing here?"

"To participate in the training, sir." Moke's arm was restricted so he started working on his legs.

"Was I not clear enough on the phone yesterday? I told you that you should join the reserve team for training and competitions."

"You were clear enough, sir. But I don't think I'll improve much on the reserve team." Moke stopped and stared at the assistant coach of the first team.

Their scuffle attracted the attention of everyone else on the training grounds. The other players who were also doing their warm-ups also stopped doing what they were doing and turned to look at Kerslake and Moke who were huddled together.

"Then you can opt to be on loan to gain experience from competitions. Just like the previous two seasons!"

"Is it for a Premier League team?" Moke responded with a question.

"Then you would need to see if there are any Premier League teams who are interested in you," Tony Twain's voice echoed from beside the pair. He glanced at Moke, then turned to Kerslake and said, "Looks like you're in trouble, David."

"Very sorry, Tony, ut I—"

Twain interrupted him and interrogated Moke directly, "Did Coach Kerslake not tell you on the phone yesterday? Your capabilities are not up to the team's standard, But you could use the reserve team competitions or the experience you would accumulate upon loaning out to correct your flaws."

"But I don't think I'm that bad. The reserve team and the English League are of no use in improving my standards, captain." Even when it was Twain he was confronting, Moke did not shy away from his stare. "My techniques are the best in the youth team in the same league and my speed is also very good. You've seen me play. Did my breakthroughs by the side lanes not leave any deep impressions on you?"

Twain stared at him for a while, thinking where Moke got his courage from. Then he turned to look at Kerslake.

"He was indeed outstanding in the youth team..." Kerslake awkwardly shrugged. "No one could defend him one-on-one without fouling."

"I wouldn't let my players play an official match without fouling," Twain commented.

"Do you know what your issue is, Moke?" He turned again to ask.

"Physical confrontation. But I have my ways in avoiding these confrontations. I have good techniques and I'm fast. Even if I'm surrounded by three people, I can immediately get out of the situation. I am smart, I know how to leverage my strengths to compensate for my flaws," Moke spoke like a promoter frantically trying to explain his strengths of his product in his hands. He did not care how, he just wanted to stay on the first team of Nottingham Forest.

Twain then stared at him again, almost seemingly wanting to see through him.

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When Twain intervened in the scuffle between Moke and Kerslake, the players present no longer cared about the commands of the coach and gathered together to watch what was actually going on. Now they all understood that Moke was excluded from the plans of the new season and felt unjust, which was why he was here to ask for an explanation. This kid was so daring! You all should know this had never happened in the Nottingham Forest under Twain's coaching.

"Want to bet?" Eastwood asked the bunch of players. "On whether the kid will get to stay? I'll be the banker. 1 to 20 odds for him staying, 7 to 1 for him leaving"

"Two hundred pounds on him leaving. I don't like that kid." Pepe also joined. It was no surprise Pepe disliked Moke. Every time there was training within the team, Moke always picked on defenders like Pepe, who were recognised by the Premier League and European Football, to have a one-to-one confrontation. If Moke could successfully dribble pass them, he would obviously be very excited. This really humiliated Pepe. If their head coach allowed this sort of internal conflict, Pepe could not guarantee he would not sock Moke.

After Pepe placed his bet, more and more players participated. The bets increased by the fifties and hundreds, but not a single person thought Moke would be able to stay on the team.

"Hey! Hey!" The Gypsy suddenly screamed. "At times like these you should be betting on the unpopular option." If everyone bet on Moke leaving, then after this betting session he would not be able to earn

anything... According to the odds, if Moke really stayed, then betting 100 pounds would earn him 2000 pounds. If the bet did not land, then all the money would be given to Eastwood. If he bet on Moke leaving Moke did end up leaving then, aside from his 100 pounds Eastwood would still have to pay him another 14 pounds. As such, unless everyone bet on Moke leaving and Moke left, he would just be setting himself up for failure.

"We'll definitely lose if we bet on the unpopular option. We're not idiots, Freddy. With these odds, who would bet on him winning?" Everyone laughed. It was not because everyone hated this bubbly kid like Pepe did, but because they knew what would become of people who opposed their captain.

"A thousand on him staying," George Wood said from outside the group. Everyone turned to look at him, stunned.

"Reason being?" Pepe questioned.

"Someone has to let him earn," He pointed at Eastwood and said.

"Hey!" Eastwood suddenly frowned, and gave an ungrateful look. Although George Wood shoving his leg was a thing in the past, his opinion towards Wood had not changed. "Don't worry. If you somehow win, I won't go back on my word."

If Wood really won, Eastwood would have to pay him twenty times of a thousand — 20,000 pounds. Even though he was a professional soccer player, this was no small sum.

Someone finally placed a bet on Moke staying, even if it was George Wood, but the others were still betting on Moke leaving. The youths who had just joined this team hesitated for a while but they also joined eventually.

"Don't you want to go and play as well, Colin?" Bostock, upon placing his bet, was squeezed out of the crowd, and found Colin Cogen rooted at the same spot. "This small bet wouldn't. The coaches don't care anyway."

Colin shook his head. "I don't gamble." He looked at Moke who was still confronting the two coaches.

"Moke... this will turn out very unfortunate for him." Bostock commented as he sat beside Colin. Actually everyone knew Moke looked down on Colin. Perhaps it was because both of them took up positions that were on opposite sides and were therefore often compared to each other. Also, coach was obviously more biased towards Colin, something Moke's ego could not tolerate.

"He's a stubborn and pitiful brat."

Bostock looked at Colin with shock. This was the first time Colin expressed negative views on Moke. Before this, whenever Moke picked on Colin during training, Colin always stayed silent.

"He's always thought that he was the best in his age group and that he'd have a bright future after leaving the youth team. Hallucinating that he could be the hero who saved a critical match from from the brink of defeat and rise to fame from that. Thinking that, just because he could dribble past five players, he could become a global superstar and represent England to clinch the Europe Cup and World Cup. Thinking that his teammates should work hard to not hold him back, and should strive to make space for him to perform.

“He should be the face of the team, the star player, and the media should flock to him like flies. There would be different girls visiting him everyday and fans would paint him out to be the greatest talent this team has ever seen. Every major soccer club would be at his door waving big cheques and begging him to join their club. Head coaches would threaten the club with suicide if they even thought of selling him.

“When he retired, millions would send him off. A bronze statue would be built outside even before he passed. The most popular fan base will be named after him, the best player award from England will be named after him as well...”

After Colin finish saying all of these in one breath, he turned to look at the surprised Bostock and grinned. “These daydreams, I’ve had them too.”

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Twain took back what he said. “Very well, kid. I’m giving you this last chance to prove your capabilities. Prove to me with your capabilities that I made the wrong call. If you do this, I’ll let you stay. Otherwise, go to where you’re supposed to be.”

“Yes, sir!” Moke nodded excitedly.

Twain turned to walk away, signalling the workers to move a mini-goal into the penalty area. “Place it here.” He pointed at the penalty line on the right side. After that, he stepped on the football and signalled Moke over.

“Two-on-two in the penalty area. I don’t care what method you use to escape the defender and how you shoot or pass to your teammate. If you’re shooting, you need to score. If you’re passing, you need to make sure your partner scores with your pass. This is how you’ll win. Any questions?”

“Is there a goalkeeper?”

“What is the use of the goalkeeper with a goalmouth this small?”

“Can I pick my partner myself?”

“Of course, you can pick who you think is the best shooter.”

Moke looked at the small goalmouth, then pointed at Eastwood who was still busy with calculating the bettings. “Freddy Eastwood. I want Eastwood as my partner.”

Twain nodded. “Very well.” Kerslake then turned to shout. “Freddy! Come over here!”

Eastwood ran over with a face of confusion. “What’s the matter, captain?”

“2 versus 2, you are partners with him.” Twain pointed at Moke. “Both of you from there.” He pointed at the penalty line opposite the goalmouth. “Start attacking from there and up till there. He will lead the attack and you will support him to open up the space. He could also choose not to pass you the ball and score on his own. Just like an actual match.”

Eastwood was stunned for a moment, then chuckled. “No problem, captain.”

“Alright, your team is complete. Let me find opponents for you.” Twain turned to scan the group who gathered to watch the show. Then, he told Kerslake, “Call George and Pepe over.”

Kerslake was confused and did not move at all. "You're joking, Tony."

"I'm definitely not."

"But the both of them..."

Twain looked at Moke who was beaming with confidence. "If he wants to stand firm in Nottingham Forest's first team, naturally he would need to challenge the best opponents. We are not a team who fights to stay in the league. If he can't win George and Pepe, he can forget about winning the strongest opponents in the world. Am I right, Moke?"

Moke nodded. "Yes, captain. Competing with weak opponents, I may as well participate in the reserve team matches or choose to be loaned to the English League."

Twain raised his thumb. "I like this character. Call them over."

Eastwood, upon hearing this exchange, looked uneasy.

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Kerslake marched over to the players' front and waved. "George, Pepe, come out!"

After this, everyone knew what the head wanted to do. The crowd was in an uproar.

"Hey, George! You wouldn't purposely go easy just to win money right?"

"Pepe! Teach that kid some lessons! Stick closely to Freddy and not give him any chances to shoot at all!"

Kerslake did not know whether to cry or laugh after looking at this crowd. Did they start betting on this matter on their own?

Pepe and George stepped out. Pepe looked at the team captain by his side, "I'm going all out, captain."

"Do you think I'm the type to go easy?" George questioned back.

Both of them followed Kerslake towards the few who were waiting on the other side.

Twain repeated the rules for Pepe and George. At the end, he emphasized, "This is not like training or a show. This is an official competition which determines if we are able to enter the champions cup in the next season! I hope both of you will bring out your fullest potential and attitude. If I were to see someone not putting in effort, you will know what will happen to you."

Then, he exited the penalty area, making Kerslake the referee for this match.

"Come on, guys. Five rounds, three to win."

The group surrounded the match to watch this special contest.

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Just like in an actual match, Eastwood started the ball from the "middle circle", then passed it to Moke. He advanced on his own to assist Moke in distracting Pepe.

However, Moke met George Wood upon advancing with the ball. When both of them were still three meters apart, Moke's torso suddenly jerked. = The ball then appeared behind his head and flew behind George Wood. It was a heel pick to dribble pass his opponent!

"Wow!" Some were whistling off field. This move was indeed elegant. But for the practical effects...

Wood turned on the spot and stretched both his arms, blocking Moke who was trying to run past him, then he calmly passed the ball to Pepe who received it from behind.

Kerslake's whistle rang out. "End of round one. George's team wins."

There was an uproar by the side of the field. They were definitely not celebrating over Moke's defeat but actually for their small winnings.

Moke bit his teeth while staring at the calm team captain. Eastwood was crossing his arms by the side.

In the second round, Eastwood passed the ball to Moke as expected, then Moke did his thing. This time, he decided to use his sudden start to change his direction to shake off George Wood who was standing firmly on his spot. He was confident of his speed, even if the team captain was as fast, turning would be a lot slower than breaking through on a straight line right?

After he shook off a tackle, he successfully dribbled past Wood, the defender who needed to turn would definitely lose out. However, just when he was excitedly thinking to continue to dribble past Pepe, he was knocked by someone from behind, staggering the ball.

He was trying his best to hold his balance while protecting the ball. But taking a hit from such fierce body proved his efforts to be futile. He stumbled with the ball as he brought it out of the area. Pepe did not move at all from his initial spot.

"Foul!" He shouted with unjust.

"A reasonable tackle." Kerslake told him. "This is the end of round two. George and Pepe win this round."

"Your body is too weak, little kid!" Pepe mocked him. Eastwood gently shook his head.

In the third round, the Romani passed to Moke yet again, and ran forward. But he wasn't looking forward to this player to pass the ball to him. Pepe clearly thought the same way, he left Eastwood alone and stayed behind George, waiting to attack with George from both front and back.

This time, one could tell Moke was furious from his eyes, he glared at Wood. There was no change in his dribbling speed.

Stepping onto the right, and over the ball.

Wood did not react.

Stepping onto the left, and over the ball.

Wood did not react.

Feigning with his right leg.



Wood did not react.

Right leg back.

Wood still did not react. He was only following Moke's speed whilst retreating.

Moke then lifted his right leg and continued feigning with the ball. Just as his foot landed, his heel hit the ball. The ball did not roll left, just straight between George's legs!

The crowd by the side screamed. "This kid did a nutmeg on Wood!"

Wood was stunned for a moment — he did not expect himself to be nutmeg-ed by his opponent — and then he saw his opponent speeding past him.

Pepe was panicking. He had to go forward to defend, but then he saw Wood fiercely turned and chased with giant steps, and just when he was about to be able to hold Moke, he used a hand to hold the kid's shoulder, and sank his body while pulling his hand, both legs sliding towards the ball under Moke. It was a sliding tackle from behind!

Moke had no time to celebrate. He fell immediately and rolled a couple of rounds with the ball before stopping.

The crowd immediately turned silent. Everyone was thinking, "The captain really did it huh..."

Moke was on fours, and turned to see how George Wood was still in his slide tackle stance. He could not believe what had just happened. Kerslake's whistle rang as he ran towards both of them, showing a yellow card towards Wood. "It is a foul! This is the end of the third round, George and Pepe won!"

Moke reacted furiously, he jumped from the ground and pointed at Wood while shouting. "Why! He fouled! It was him who fouled! But why did he still win!"

"Because your attack ended." Kerslake explained.

"But he had to foul to stop me! Aren't fouls actions which aren't allowed by the rules?" Moke didn't want to accept this result, because he knew it was a best of five, losing this round meant he was about to be eliminated.

Looking at Moke's angry face, Kerslake couldn't link between him and the person who was delighted most of the time.

"Have you seen a soccer match with 0 fouls throughout its 90 minutes?" The coach who used to coach Moke back in the youth team asked coldly.

"This is unfair!" Moke hesitated for a moment and continued shouting, "Using fouls to stop attacks is unfair! If he didn't foul, I would have broken through for sure!"

"Nonsense!" Kerslake started shouting as well. "After Wood, there was still Pepe in front. If you had used your time to dribble past Wood to dribble past Pepe, Wood would have rushed back! You continue to dribble pass! Are you able to dribble past 11 people on the field!"

"I only needed to enter the penalty area..."

“Don’t worry, they would have tackled you down before you enter the penalty area, just like what Wood did to you before!”

“That was a foul!”

“Have you seen a soccer match without fouls? What did Tony say just now? Regard this as an official match! In an official match, your opponents would not be unmovable sticks for you to pass through! They are not robots without self-reflections!”

Moke was utterly stunned.

“The rule was to win three out five, Moke, and you lost. Return to the reserve team now!” Kerslake coldly commanded while pointing to the western side of the field.

The players who were watching felt bad. It was undeniable that the stunt he pulled on George was beautiful and awe-inspiring.

“David.” Twain walked over and stopped his assistant. “Let him finish the last two rounds.” Then he turned to tell Moke. “I’ll give you another chance, seeing how you almost succeeded in dribbling past George. I can give you another chance. You can stay if you win just one round. Right now, you are left with two rounds.” He raised two fingers.

Kerslake turned to look at Twain. He did not, in the least, think this was Twain giving Moke a second chance. Rather, it seemed to him that Twain wanted to utterly destroy Moke’s faith because, based on Moke’s performance, there was almost no chance of him winning the next round.

Moke quietly picked up the soccer ball and walked back to the starting point. Eastwood, who was essentially a spectator, sighed and shook his head as he followed.

In the fourth run, Moke decided to charge forward past Wood. But this time, Wood did not even have to turn to determine the position of Moke to hold him in place. Moke then fell over as the ball was intercepted.

There were no discussion or whispers. All the players were stunned. Honestly, everyone knew that Moke was average and he had no chance of winning against Wood, but what stunned them was that Moke was still charging forward to face Wood who did not give any chances even against a weaker opponent. A lot of them thought that, if they were in Moke’s shoes, all they would feel was despair...

Pepe, upon looking at Wood competing with Moke, shrugged by the back and turned to make a wry face to his teammates who were spectating. What kind of a 2 versus 2 match was this? This was just George Wood challenging Adriano Moke on his own. Eastwood and him were just unlucky spectators...

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The fifth round.

Moke continued to challenge Wood on his own. Pepe came over to prepare for the opportunity for him to charge forward once Wood had his back turned on him. Although he knew the odds were small, but he could not let Wood always be the main lead. As for Eastwood? Just let him have his way.

This time, Moke did not charge from the front, but instead dribbled the ball on the side lane, keeping Wood within the inner line and the ball running on the outside, using his body as a wall to block Wood's tackles and the possibility of a slide tackle. Hence, even if Wood slid, he could preemptively dodge it with a flick of the ball.

After running for a while, he made a feign for a sudden cut. Wood bought it and lost his footing as Moke dribbled forward.

However, how could it be so easy to shake off Wood? Moke was not as naive as before. He dribbled a distance from Wood and adjusted his footing, then he lifted his foot to pass!

Seeing how the ball was going to cross over, he instead lifted a foot from behind and tapped the ball with his heel, causing the ball to change direction and fly out of the area. The group of spectators finally let out the breath they had been holding.

George Wood rushed back at the most critical moment. In the five encounters, he did not allow his opponent to escape his defending area once. Regardless of his measures, he still won.

Upon seeing how the soccer suddenly changed direction and flew out, Moke's legs became wobbly as he knelt onto the ground. His partner, Eastwood, ran over and told him, "Want to hear my thoughts, kid? The last ball was unfortunate." He shrugged while walking away.

Wood stood up, wiped the grass on his butt and walked away as well, without exchanging words with Moke at all. Two silhouettes then appeared in front of him, Moke raised his head to see Kerslake and Twain.

"Moke, you lost." Kerslake commented without any expression.

"Yes, I know, coach..." Moke softly spoke while holding his head low.

"You know you lost, or do you know how you lost?" Twain questioned.

"I shouldn't have done this alone..."

"What kind of reason is that?" Twain snorted.

"Sorry, boss. I'm not sure..."

Twain lifted his leg and stomped onto the firm ground. "Be realistic, kid. This way, you'll be able to walk walk further." Afterwards, he raised his arm to pat Moke. "Your skills are not bad, maintain them. Now, report to the reserve team. If you want to be loaned out for competitions, then go and apply."

After saying his piece, he also turned to walk away.

"Go back and carefully reflect, Moke. Hopefully, these five rounds today will help you in your road in the future." Kerslake finally smiled. "You have talent, but soccer is not a sport you can play with just talent."

Moke opened his mouth, as if he wanted to say something, but he was interrupted by Twain's voice. Both parties were distracted by what happened on the other side.

"Why are you all in a daze? Go and start training! The show has ended, all of you go back! We have wasted too much time... Freddy! What are you doing!"

“Oh— Boss!”

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By the time Moke looked away, Kerlake had already left. He was standing on the field alone, looking at that bunch of first team players starting their training.

Chris Cohen, who he had always looked down on, was running slowly among the team with his head down. Before this summer, he was only a small shrimp in the reserve team who seemed to have no future. From today onwards, he was a player in the first team, and Moke would have to take his place in the reserve team...