

Champions 731

Chapter 731: Before the Start of the New Season

Nottingham Forest was quiet this summer. There were no news about them that was exciting enough for the media to spread. The China Media discovered that Tony Twain really liked closed trainings. Twain's "closed training" was not the same as China's version. It was just the media that he barred from recording the team training. In the whole world, only the official Nottingham Forest's website had pictures of the training. Even the Nottingham Evening Post who had the rights to enter the field to film was stripped of its privilege after offending Twain with its article by Brosnan.

Nobody knew how Nottingham Forest's conducted their pre-season training. They also did not know the potential of Nottingham Forest in this new season. Would these brats really be useful? Did Tony Twain still have power over this soccer team? Would the club continue to sell or buy players? There was no information at all. Twain even aggressively cancelled the routine press conference on every Wednesday afternoon because there was just nothing to talk about!

The newest information that the media could obtain about this club was from the warm-up match open to outside viewing. However, Twain mixed up the number and sequence of the players in the roster and, after the first half, brought in a massive number of reserves to play. With this, the match results were of no value to the spectators.

Everything Twain did was to reduce pressure placed on the new players on the team, creating a less tense environment for them. But the media did not view it this way, they all think that Twain was trying to go against them as per usual. If Twain wanted to treat the media like this, then he could forget about them having anything good to say!

Although Twain did not reveal any message to the media, this did not prevent the media from fabricating any messages. Hence, articles criticizing Tony Twain, and questioning the current state of Nottingham Forest's new season were piling up.

The English Media had to acknowledge this much: they could look down on Twain all they wanted, but they had no choice but to rely on talking bad about Twain for the audience to pay attention to them.

Regarding Twain's methods to have a younger soccer team, doubts originating from the Carl Spicer's press conference, had not stopped. Following the incoming new season, these voices became louder.

Some experts predict the results of the new seasons had Nottingham Forest as the "middle of the league", and this was being respectful as well. Some immediately clamoured that even avoiding relegation this season would be a miracle for the team.

Just because Twain allowed the team closed training did not mean he was ignorant to what was happening outside the stadium. He knew what the outside world was commenting about him and his team, but he did not want to argue with the media. This was the first time he did not comment any hopes on his own column regarding the new season — all of these was just to avoid creating stress on the many youths on his team.

There was a great difference between the current team as compared to the previous. Twain also understood this point, he could no longer use the same attitude he used on the previous team, some times his managing methods needed change and adjustment.

He did not want to create too much pressure for these people, but this did not mean that zero pressure would be given. He just needed a suitable time to tell his players what being in the professional league meant. He actually needed to thank the media who had been constantly thinking of adding troubles on him, because they helped Twain to complete the outside environment of Nottingham Forest.

Frankly speaking, Tony Twain was a sly, innately disgusting person who liked to go against the norm. Hence, the team he led would be contaminated by such atmosphere. If the outside world was not as optimal, then Twain would gladly grab the collars of those people, and slap them with his might. The slapping sounds would be music to his ears.

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In the final moments before the start of the new season, the team was doing its final preparations for the new season. Twain and Dunn recreate the new tactics and attacking methods. They could no longer rely on counter attacking as their only method of winning, Twain insisted on having an organizational midfield, because he viewed that the battlefield was a problem he could never avoid.

Van der Vaart's departure dealt a heavy blow to Nottingham Forest's new tactics. Şahin was still unable to replace van der Vaart's position and potential immediately so the team needed to readapt to the new playstyle after changing its core.

In the warmup match, Twain rotated Şahin and Bostock to try out this position, while occasionally allowing George Wood and Tiago to be the ones in the organizational attack. After observing for a few matches, Tiago was eliminated first. Maybe Tiago used to excel in the midfield in the attack last time, but after many years of sharpening, he became the second-rate version of George Wood. But George Wood was performing phenomenally.

Bostock was still a little young. Şahin displayed great potential to be utilized but the warm up match and actual competition had a huge difference. Twain had seen his fair share of players performing brilliantly in warm-up matches only to underperform in the actual matches.Şahin still needed to be reevaluated in the actual competition to truly determine his capabilities. With the mindset of not placing all hopes on one person, Twain decided to focus on the new role by Wood in the attack.

In the new season, George Wood, other than continuing his job as the defensive midfielder, needed to bear several offensive duties as well. Because by then, Nottingham Forest initiated almost all its attacks from this position. — Starting the attack from the back would be from him as he was in charge of passing the ball forward. Upon being pressurized by the opposing forwards, he was required to open up space by running to support his full backs via receiving the ball and controlling it, waiting for his other teammates to support. While his forwards were restricted, he was required to run forward to alleviate the pressure via receiving and passing the ball.

The defensive midfielder is the most important position in modern soccer, it is the central position in the team. If Wood were able to perform a little better, he could become Nottingham Forest's Fàbregas,

Gerald, and then Twain could loosen down a lot more. By that time, he could even try using the more offensive 4-3-3.

Aside from that, Wood did not slack during shooting practice for even a day. Now his shooting was a lot better than it used to be. At the very least, only half his shoots from 10 feet outside the penalty area would be off its mark.

A defensive midfielder who excelled in defending was very capable in his running, and also able to pass in an organizational attack, while when all else fails is able to send a screamer into the opposing goal mouth. Just the thought of such a player would scare most people.

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The newly married Shania had no reason to slack off. The whole world was facing an economic crisis so she also needed to work hard to earn money. But she was no longer a single who could feed herself easily. After getting married, there was suddenly a lot more things on her plates. Aside from making money, there was a very crucial matter, and that was the love between her and Uncle Tony.

If possible, she would rush back home to Nottingham after her work, then fall in love back on bed with Uncle Tony, relishing in the world only the two of them shared. They would make love without stopping, sometimes going two or three rounds, going at it again after changing positions. Aside from their sexual desire from their love of each other, this was also because they wanted to have a child soon.

Tony Twain was about to turn 41. For a man, having children at this time was considered late. Also, considering the dormant dangers in Twain's body, having children sooner would make them feel more secure. Since their wedding two months ago, they had been making love everyday, other than the days where Shania was out working, and yet there was no reaction from Shania's body.

"Alright..., you can't rush these things." After another time of lingering, Twain lied on the bed, holding Shania by his side, and said to himself. It seemed like he was comforting Shania and himself at the same time.

"Also, frankly speaking, Shania, I feel like getting pregnant this early won't be good for your career."

Shania crawled onto Twain's naked chest, carefully searching for the position of his cardiac pacemaker.

"Are you worried my figure would change after giving birth, Uncle Tony?"

"No, that isn't it..."

"Frankly speaking, Uncle Tony, if I really lose my figure after giving birth and become an ugly woman who is obese and dull, would you still love me?" Shania suddenly raised her head to look at Twain.

Twain flipped and looked at the ceiling. He was thinking how that woman would look like.

"Ah! You hesitated, you're wavering!" Shania sat up from the bed, raising her voice while pointing at Twain.

"Nonsense! I am seriously thinking about it! If I gave you a reply easily, then you should really worry!" Twain pulled Shania over to lean onto his chest. "Listen to the sound from here!"

Shania seriously listened to it for a while. She was worried Tony's heart disease would act up again. "It sounds normal..."

"This means I'm not guilty! You shouldn't think that being fat will turn you ugly. Some women become cuter after gaining weight!" Twain stared at Shania and sternly said. "Besides, I won't allow you to think about what I would think if something ridiculous should happen to you."

"For example?"

"Like how I don't go thinking about what would happen to you if I di—" Shania covered Twain's mouth with her own.

After a long kiss, Shania straddled Twain's waist, staring at him while saying, "If you dare to say 'dead' again, see how I would handle you, Uncle Tony! Ah..."

Shania suddenly felt something poking her butt. She did not turn because she knew what it was without looking. She squinted at Twain who was on the bed and screamed surprisingly. "Wow! Are you really 40 years old, Uncle Tony?"

Twain was not embarrassed at all, he pointed at his left chest. "I have a nuclear powered heart with a long lasting power and a stronger effect. I have five batteries to last after one goes down, then I can battle with you for another 300 rounds without panting!"

"You are lying! Are you a machine, uncle?" Shania puffed out her cheeks, pouting in disbelief at his lies, but she started gyrating.

Twain could feel his thing being grinded by Shania's soft and round butt, being a little indecent. He looked at Shania's beautiful face; she looked spellbound. Her vibrant eyes were glossed over and her wet lips were slightly parted. The dim, yellow light by the bedside cast a glow over her lips and it made them look like delicate cherries.

"Then... want to try?" Twain naughtily placed his hands onto her slim waist, they then started a new round of "human production exercise" with the guy on top of the woman.

The last moments before the season then passed by like this...

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The week before the start of the new season, on new Wembley stadium, the previous league champion Manchester United and FA cup champions Liverpool reenacted their last encounter in the previous season. However, this was a more direct challenge. In the last round the last season, Liverpool could not perform as they usually did against Tottenham due to the overwhelming pressure of needing to remain in the league. As such, it was Tottenham that performed outstandingly.

In the end, Liverpool drew against Tottenham on their home court, allowing Tottenham to avoid relegation. However, Liverpool lost their league championships. On the other field, Manchester United completely dominated Hull City with a three goal lead, snatching back the league championships and continuing the legacy of Mr Ferguson.

With this backstory, the Community Shield Cup was very exciting and intense. Liverpool was trying their hardest to find Manchester United for revenge and they finally got their chance. 克里斯蒂亚诺.罗纳尔多 wait what ?????

In their 90 minute contest, the head referee issued a total of 6 yellow cards and 1 red card, Manchester United not only lost to Liverpool, and lost the Community Shield Cup. Cristiano Ronaldo, who had just had knee surgery, suffered from another violation by his opponent, re-opening his injury on his knee and forcing him to leave the field. And the player who fouled him was Liverpool's midfielder Mascherano Zebel who was directly given a red card to leave the stadium.

The match results did not do justice to how exciting the match seemed, 1:0 with Liverpool winning.

After the match, pictures showing Ferguson raging on Benítez was on the headlines of several newspapers. When he was interviewed, he angrily called Liverpool, regardless of coaches or players, being a bunch of bandits, saying that a player like Mascherano who had no sportsmanship should be sent to the gallows. His comments blew up in the English media. He was also then fined by England for a hundred thousand pounds.

Benítez and Liverpool were not the best people either. Benítez thought that Ferguson lacked the basic respect towards others, and he felt sorry for Ronaldo but he did not think that Mascherano should be accepting such denouncement from the Manchester United media. Who allowed his innocent player to face such tremendous pressure? Those people who wanted to send Mascherano into the gallows should be sent to the gallows instead. Hence, Benítez was fined fifty thousand pounds by the England Football Association.

Mascherano was then suspended for four matches after that game. During his interviews, he had already answered that he had called Ronaldo to claim that it was an accident caused by exaggerated defending. He also claimed that Ronaldo had accepted his apology. But because of this injury, Cristiano Ronaldo missed almost two months' worth of the new season, hence whether he really accepted his apology was really questionable.

The English Premier League from 2009 till 2010 then opened with such a chaotic background. And Tony Twain, with his team, was outside of such chaos for the first time.

Chapter 732: The Juvenile Footballers

"Four rounds had been completed in the league tournament, and the next round will only resume on September 12th. Now we can summarize what Tony Twain and his Boy Scouts have achieved in these four rounds of the league tournament....." Spicer continued his promising job to "vilify Twain" on a football talk show he hosted.

It was indeed "very promising", because he had been mocking and jeering at Twain in the column. His incisive words left an indelible impression on people. As a result, Sky TV came knocking on his door to ask him to host a talk show dedicated to commentary on football celebrities on the Premier League channel. It was called <Football Matters>. One to a few guests were invited to open up discussion on the interesting matters that had recently taken place in English football every week. As long as they did not

directly burst into obscenities or make personal threats, they could say whatever they wanted. Relying on his glib talking skills, Spicer quickly made the new show soar all the way on Sky TV's ratings charts, almost trending to become a new highly rated show...

When the show first aired, some people predicted that it was actually a show directed against Tony Twain. Because whichever matter that touched on Twain would grab everyone's attention—it could not be helped since many stories always swirled around him.

But with the start of the new Premier League season and the show had been on for four episodes, this was the first time Tony Twain was brought up as a topic.

"With two losses and two draws plus two points accumulated, they ranked second to last! Awesome!" Spicer clapped his hands hard and said, "The Juvenile Footballers delivered a satisfying and unsurprising result. What do you think, Andy?"

The show's invited guests this episode were the retired former Manchester United legendary striker, Andy Cole, who was currently the second highest goalscorer in Premier League history. He was also from Nottingham, where Nottingham Forest was his hometown's team. He was a Forest fan before he became a Manchester United striker. Since it was time to talk about Nottingham Forest, it was natural to invite a celebrity guest connected to the Forest team.

"Well, you said it was unsurprising, and I also think the result was to be expected... To tell you the truth, I have great respect for Manager Tony Twain. He's very capable. But at the moment, the team is too weak in any tournament. Four rounds had already started in the league tournament and their opponents were not weak: the first round was an away draw with Middlesbrough, the second round was a home loss to Chelsea, the third round was an away loss to Everton, and the fourth was a draw at home with Everton... The lads played outstandingly on the pitch, but overall they aren't strong enough."

Spicer laughed, "Yes, that's it! What did I say before the league tournament started? Mr. Twain, it may not be a problem if you want to stay in the middle level in the league tournament with the current squad. But if you want to win back the league title or get back into the Champions League with these players? I really can't find a reason to be optimistic... Now I'm going to correct my statement. By relying on these juvenile footballers now, not to mention the middle level of the league tournament, he should be happy if they are still in the Premier League by the end of the season!"

"The only good news is that after the fourth round of the league, his team finally scored. Eastwood scored his first goal of the season against Everton. It's not easy!"

"It reinforces my conviction that I'm not optimistic about Nottingham Forest. Watching their game was like watching a bunch of headless flies bumping on the pitch. It was really hard to watch with my own eyes." Spicer made a face to show that he really could not bear to see it. "The young people lack experience. George Wood's form is as stable as ever, but he can't bring stability and experience to the team. How should I put it with regards to experience? It's not something that the veteran players in the team can bring out. They also need to go through the baptism of the competition ... At least before Christmas, we won't see the once-familiar Nottingham Forest."

"Does Tony Twain have any regrets? The devil knows!"

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Did Tony Twain have regrets?

How could it be possible!

He did not have the free time.

He obviously knew that the team had not done well lately, but it was within his expectations. A team that was almost half made up of young players with a lot of key players gone, their tactical play must change. How could they achieve good results?

Therefore, no matter how the outside press criticized him and his team, he would not have the slightest doubt about his choice because of this. Instead, he wanted more criticism—he needed to use these things to motivate the players.

Just going into September, the players on the team who had their national team assignments were drawn away. Even the young people had their own national youth teams to play for. These two weeks were valuable for Nottingham Forest. It was not good to not win in a row for whatever reason. They could use these two weeks to recalibrate, tactically or mentally...

In Twain's mind, the goal this season was not to win any title, but to return to the European arena next season, whether it was the UEFA Europa League or the UEFA Champions League... As long as they could return to Europe, the club's financial situation could improve, and the team would be able to return to the top group.

While the club's players headed off one by one to play for the national teams, Twain spent his first birthday with Shania after they got married.

They held a small party in the back garden and invited some of his colleagues from the club. They had a simple dinner and then left after. During the dinner, they chatted about the current state of the team and how to fix it. Even though it was a birthday party, it was probably more like a work dinner. A middle-aged person's party was not like those of the young players, where after they ate and drank copious amounts, they then called for female escorts to have orgies.

After he sent away his colleagues, Twain hugged Shania as he stood at the entrance of the yard and sighed.

"Having a lousy birthday? Is it because of the team's recent results?" Shania looked at him.

"How could that matter make me sigh?" Twain turned to look at Shania, who nestled against him. "I'm just lamenting that I'm a year older... You know something, Shania, when I was still your age, my daily wish was to grow up quickly, become independent, and be an 'adult.' Now I regret it... My days with you were short of twenty-two years without a reason."

Shania tightly embraced Uncle Tony and said nothing.

"Don't have to celebrate my birthdays anymore, Shania. Just take it that... I'm forever forty."

If it was possible, he really wanted to say, "take it that I am eighteen forever" or "forever twenty years old," But he could only say "forever forty years old", which was really helpless.

"Then you are not allowed to celebrate my birthdays. Just take it that I am forever eighteen!"

Twain smiled and said, “All right, we are immortal and stayed young forever.” With Shania in his arms, he walked back to the house and was about to start their new round of “making a human being.”

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After she celebrated Twain’s birthday, Shania flew to Los Angeles again. Tom Cruise was kind enough to give Shania a role in his new film. This time the role was more important than the previous minor role of a pretty face. There were a lot of lines, and even a scene with the main character.

Shania was eager to get into action and prepared to show her acting chops in the film. At this time, the “making a human being” project also naturally had to be postponed.

And the team’s players were also coming back in succession. Two days before the start of the league tournament, all of them were back in the team. Whether it was Rafinha in faraway Brazil and Sun Jihai, who was back in China to compete, both had returned on time. After a brief day of practice together, Nottingham Forest headed off to London to take on Tottenham Hotspur at White Hart Lane. They would continue their away tour in London on the 15th, this time the opponent was Fulham.

The media was generally down on Nottingham Forest’s trip to London. In addition to the level shown by the team in the first four rounds of the league tournament, they naturally took into account that after the national team games, they would play two games in a week one after another. Given the team’s stamina distribution and the players’ inconsistent form, these two games pointed to disaster for the Forest team.

On the way to London, the television in the bus showed an entertainment program to pass the time, which Twain had thoughtfully prepared for the players—the recording of the television program in which Carl Spicer mocked the Nottingham Forest’s “juvenile footballers.”

“What can a bunch of kids who are still at their mothers’ teats do? Ha ha! There’s nothing they can do! Look at how they played in the games. If I were Tony Twain, I would tell them all to go home. Some people don’t have the chops to establish a foothold at Nottingham Forest at all. Did Tony Twain receive kickbacks when he bought these players?”

“... Yes, yes but Andy, I think you’re still too kind. If I were Tony Twain, I would swear even harder, they’re basically good-for-nothings... I believe that chap, Tony Twain would agree with my view.”

“That’s the way it is—Tony Twain is counting on a group of juvenile footballers to conquer Europe. I’m going to pick this as one of the ten funniest things to laugh about this year. It can even hit the top spot. You can just imagine the scene and you’ll see how funny it is—Adolf Hitler yelled at a group of babies with their pacifiers still in their mouths: ‘You (Bleep—) will flatten France, then stand on the edge of the English Channel, pull out your things from the pants, and urinate on that bunch of Englishmen! Let the whole of Europe tremble under our iron hoofs and beg for mercy!’”

Carl Spicer could not help but laugh and slapped the table when he came to the last bit.

It was silent in the bus, except for the laughter coming from the television.

At first, everyone did not take it seriously, and were busy with their own things. Later, they found that it was not that simple. So, one by one, they opened their sleeping eyes, took off their headphones, and took their eyes off their phone screens or PSP screens.

“Who’s that idiot?” Someone eventually called out.

“Carl Spicer! He is always targeting the boss and us. Did the boss cuckold him?” Someone whispered.

“What kind of crap is he spouting?”

Even though Carl Spicer talked about the young Forest players, the others felt as if it happened to them too as they were a collective and their teammates were scolded by other people. Not to mention the Forest team was really very young ...

“Such a person can also host a TV show? I’m getting more and more confident in my life plans after I retire...” Eastwood muttered as he stroked his chin.

“It’s too early to consider retirement, Freddy.” Twain stood up and leaned against the back of his seat, to face Eastwood, sitting in the back.

“This is the latest episode of <Football Matters>. I’m afraid some of you haven’t watched it, so I specially recorded it and brought it to play for you on the road. You want to know why I’m doing this? Guys, it’s because these are the voices and talk outside. I think you all must have heard them and don’t want to pay attention to it. But...” He raised his voice and stood in the middle of the aisle to address the players. “It’s not our style to ignore it. Do you know why I did not write in my own column to fight back against those who questioned us? Because football is not shown by glib talk. If we want to fight back against those idiotic remarks, the best way is not to burst into foul language in interviews, but with victory! Use victory to give them all a slap! Slap them to the point where their own mothers cannot recognize them!”

“I’ve never told you I’m angry that we only have two points and are in the bottom two because I don’t want to put too much pressure on you. But now I have to let you know how I really feel—that is, I’m really f **king angry!” He waved his fists hard. Like what Carl Spicer said, he did look a little the madman warmonger, Adolf Hitler.

“I’m telling you that being young and inexperienced are definitely not your excuses. I don’t want anyone to use the media’s rhetoric as a reason for failure. There is only one reason for failure, and that is that you are not doing well enough! I’ll give you a month to get used to this damn new season and I think you should get used to it and be ready to win. Are you ready?”

“That’s right, boss! We’re ready!” The people in the compartment followed suit and roared.

“Yes, you must be prepared. Those who are not ready, I’ll let him out of the bus and run back to Nottingham! I need a madman who believes in Nottingham Forest’s victory at any time, and not a coward who thinks we might lose! You have to remember, the opponent for the game is definitely not Tottenham Hotspur, but those media which look down on us, mock us as juvenile footballers, say you haven’t weaned!”

“Prove to them with victory that ... who are the ones who did not wean!”

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“I don’t think Nottingham Forest is as vulnerable as the media have described. My team is ready. I believe Tony Twain must be ready too. I will shake his hand before the game and congratulate him on

his fight against the heart attack and his return to the field. But when it comes to the game, he'd better forget my well wishes. It's going to be a very intense competition..."

Redknapp spoke these words in a pre-match interview.

It was indeed a tough game.

Twain deployed two defensive midfielders for the game. George Wood and Tiago formed a wall in front of the center backs and used their tireless running and interception skills to stifle Tottenham Hotspur's offense in the midfield. Then they made use of the characteristics of their ability to pass the ball to launch the attack and immediately counterattack after they intercepted the ball. It caught Tottenham Hotspur by surprise.

Şahin sat on the substitutes' bench and watched his teammates attack from the backfield time and time again, threatening the opponent's defensive lines with long passes.

Petrov and Lennon impeded the opponent's defenders in the wings and forced Tottenham Hotspur's defensive line to stretch horizontally to expose a lot of gaps. If Tottenham Hotspur's defenders shrank the middle, then they turned the attack toward the sidelines. All the changes were entirely controlled by the two defensive midfielders.

Agbonlahor's speed allowed him to raid Tottenham Hotspur's defensive line in the middle after he received the long pass from the backfield, while Žigić, who was tall, good at headers and physically strong, was in charge of support and cover. His presence ensured that the Forest team's long-pass attacks would not be easily ended by the opponent. Once the midfielder or striker took the ball in the front field and controlled the situation, the Forest team would start to press forward. The two full backs, Gareth Bale and Rafinha gave their best side assists to put pressure on Tottenham Hotspur on the sides.

Redknapp also had a counter measure. He saw the features of Twain's attacks on the sides. Whenever Bale and Rafinha pressed up, Tottenham Hotspur would put the direction of their attack firmly on the Forest team's two sides—the striker, Darren Bent who stayed in the front, was not in the middle, but would pull to the sides to receive the ball and then break through the Forest team's defenses from the sideline to pose a threat to Akinfeev's goal. In addition, Modrić and dos Santos would follow closely and be in charge of receiving or covering Darren Bent.

Both sides had a very fast pace of switching between the offense and defense. But in general, it was Tottenham Hotspur which could not slow down due to the Forest team's fast pace. Bale, Rafinha, Petrov, Lennon and Agbonlahor were speedy players. Every time the Forest team launched an attack, they did not pass the ball back and forth in the midfield. Instead, they directly made the long passes. These players competed with the football in speed. Tottenham Hotspur could only follow suit to rush if they don't want their defensive lines to collapse.

Over time, Tottenham Hotspur's stamina dropped dramatically, not to mention they had not been able to keep pace with Nottingham Forest. The exhausted defensive line was pulled apart by the Forest team, and the cracks were getting bigger and bigger...

At the end of the first half, Žigić received a sideline pass from Agbonlahor. Marked by Ledley King, he headed the ball to the goal and smashed the ball into the goal guarded by the England national goalkeeper, Robinson.

The new season's aerial overlord made a show of strength for the first time and Ledley King was weak and thin in front of him like a bamboo pole!

In the second half, Tottenham Hotspur took advantage of a chance for a place kick with Darren Bent equalized the score with a goal.

However, the game was already completely in the rhythm of Nottingham Forest. Twain fully made use of the team's many young players with their fit and fast characteristics to drag Tottenham Hotspur into a fight using their fast-paced attack and defense. The television commentator said more than once that "it's only a matter of time before Nottingham Forest scores again."

Nottingham Forest scored their second goal in the 21st minute of the second half.

Tiago had a physical head-on confrontation with Modrić near the midfield, with both of them almost falling to the ground at the same time. Nonetheless, it was Modrić who was fouled when he tackled after his ball was intercepted, knocking down Tiago. But George Wood shot out diagonally and grabbed the out-of-control football. The referee, who initially intended to blow the whistle to suspend the game, immediately raised his hands parallel at this time and pointed forward—the offensive was valid and the game continued!

Wood did not dribbled the ball for long as he saw Agbonlahor cruising diagonally in front of him and decided to kick a straight pass.

Agbonlahor used his speed to shake off the defender in an instant and cut to insert himself behind the Tottenham Hotspur defender. He was not offside! He then dribbled the ball into the penalty area and fired at an angle into the net in front of the attacking Robinson.

"Agbonlahor's dribbling speed to break through is simply amazing ... George Wood's speed at which he rushed up from five meters out to grab the ball was also unexpected for the Tottenham Hotspur players... The goal, as well as the game, fully interpreted what Tony Twain always says about 'speed.'" The commentator exclaimed at the lightning-fast goal. From Modrić's fall after his ball was tackled to Agbonlahor's goal, the entire process only lasted fifteen seconds.

The goal scoring Agbonlahor ran back to hug his captain, George Wood who assisted him. He looked very excited because it was his first official goal scored since he joined Nottingham Forest.

Twain, who saw the scene off the field, stroked his chin as he contemplated. George Wood is showing more and more traces of Albertini in his early days... The timing, power, and accuracy of the pass as well as the pre-judgement of Agbonlahor's running direction were impeccable. If he can keep playing like this, rather than showing the occasional brilliance, then I do not have to tire and worry over the candidate of the team's playmaker...

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The game eventually ended with Nottingham Forest's 2:1 win over Tottenham Hotspur. Twain's team won for the first time in the new season. While Carl Spicer insisted on his show that the outcome of a game did not represent anything and that it was normal for young people to perform well occasionally. The league tournament was a long season with thirty-eight rounds. Who would know how long could these juvenile footballers hold on?

Hence, he continued to insist that he was not optimistic about Nottingham Forest's position and always ready to criticize.

Twain did not respond to Spicer's criticisms in any way, but he knew the Nottingham Forest team were fired up due to the man's mocking. He was well aware that as long as his team won one game after another until the end of the season, the dear Mr. Spicer would have to eat the crap he spouted in person.

He very much looked forward to that day. Then he would not mind ridiculing the dear Mr. Spicer with the most vicious and ruthless words.

Chapter 733: Newborn Calves

Nottingham Forest continued their London tour after they defeated Tottenham Hotspur. In the sixth round of the league tournament, they scored an away goal and won against Fulham to win two straight games of the new season.

The criticisms of the group of "juvenile footballers" waned in the outside press.

With the exception of a few diehard elements determined to "vilify Twain", everyone else slowly embraced the team.

"After all, they're young, and being young means there are more possibilities... Isn't it?" That was what a pundit said in the newspaper.

However, they faced another impending test next.

"... I think one of the benefits that a young team has is they are very motivated. But in the face of an experienced opponent, it will show the inexperience and tenderness of the youth. Tony Twain and the rest of the team don't have that problem, but there are others who are the team's indefinite time bombs. Up against a team like Manchester United, I'll do my best to deploy the 'veterans' and contend with Ferguson if I were Tony Twain."

Indeed, Nottingham Forest's seventh-round opponent was the defending champion, Manchester United.

Nottingham Forest faced Manchester United at home on September 20th, 2009.

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At the Wilford training ground, Dunn announced the eighteen-player squad list for tomorrow's game against Manchester United (the Premier League began to implement a "seven substitutes system" since the start of last season) and the starting list.

Having just finished the eighteen-players roster, Twain stood up before Dunn could continue to read the starting list.

"I have a question to ask you before the starting list is released. What are your views on pressure among you?"

A group of people looked at each other and could not understand why the boss asked the question out of the blue.

Twain called out by name, "Millán, let's hear your thoughts on it. What do you think of pressure? Did you feel the pressure when you played for the club's First Team when you were only fourteen?"

Nicolás Millán hesitated for a moment before he replied, "A little... But I felt fine, boss."

"Why did you only feel fine?"

"I said to myself that I was just playing against players older than me and that it was no big deal. Even if I played badly, no one would say anything to me, because I was only fourteen years old, which was very normal."

Twain nodded, and he turned his gaze to Bostock, "How about you, John?"

"Me?" Bostock smiled and shook his head, "I didn't feel much, boss. I am a professional player. Since I'm a professional player, I will certainly face all kinds of pressure. I'm used to it." He told the truth. As one of England's highly anticipated and most talented players, John Bostock was followed with interest by the clubs and media when he was not yet sixteen years old and had made international appearances to compete for the England national teams of all ages. As a result, the pressure on him from professional football was not a big deal.

Twain asked one by one, but he picked all the young players who had recently been transferred to the First Team this season.

He was satisfied with the results he received.

He certainly was unable to know if the answers were genuine or just to please him as a manager. But he had a way to verify the veracity.

He nodded to Dunn to indicate that he could continue to announce the starting list.

"The goalkeeper, Akinfeev." After the new season, van der Sar gradually withdrew from the starting lineup. Any fool could tell Twain's intention to promote Akinfeev the main position. Van der Sar was also mentally prepared for his future as he withdrew from the starting lineup. After all, he was almost thirty-nine years old. The Dutch goalkeeper's contract would expire next summer, just four months before his fortieth birthday. He had long decided not to renew his contract with Nottingham Forest. He certainly would not go anywhere else. He would announce his retirement directly after the expiry of his contract.

"The full backs are Gareth Bale, Pepe, Kompany and Rafinha." This setup of defensive line was the absolute main defensive line for the Forest team this season. Cooperated together for many years, they had long developed enough rapport. Woodgate, who only came last season, was currently limited to be a rotating player. The only problem with the defensive line was that it was somewhat heavy on offense and light on defense.

"The midfielders are George Wood, John Bostock, Chris Cohen and Lennon."

When their names were called, Bostock and Cohen looked at each other in surprise. They thought the starting lineup should be George Wood, Şahin, Petrov and Lennon. It was also the same configuration in the midfield for the Forest's away win over Fulham the last time.

“The strikers are Agbonlahor and Nicolás Millán.”

Twain looked the bewildered players and said with a laugh, “Prove to me with your actions how you play under pressure, guys.”

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“Nottingham Forest’s expected starting lineup should be the goalkeeper, Akinfeev, the left back, Gareth Bale, the center backs, Pepe and Kompany, the right back must be Rafinha. George Wood will definitely start as the midfielder. As for his partner... it should be Şahin. If the Forest team were to play defense, it could be Tiago. On the forward line...”

Ferguson was in a hotel room with his aides to determine Tony Twain’s starting lineup for tomorrow’s game. That would make it easier for them to review the countermeasures.

The door was pushed open and the assistant manager, Mike Phelan came in with a piece of paper.

“Boss, Nottingham Forest had announced their starting list for tomorrow’s game.” The expression on his face was a little odd when he spoke.

Ferguson looked up at his assistant, who only took over last season.

“This is the list.” He handed the paper to Ferguson.

Ferguson’s expression on his face was the same as Phelan when he glanced through it.

“Is Tony crazy?”

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“I’m not crazy. I’m just trying to get the young players to get into the competition as quickly as possible. Losing? I’m not afraid. Anyway, we don’t count on any championship titles this season. We can use one season to train the young players, which I think is a good deal.” Twain answered in this manner to Kerslake’s question about the starting list. This obviously took place before they announced the starting list.

Twain convinced the other coaches that he would try to use the inexperienced young players as much as possible in the heavyweight game against Manchester United. He put aside the outcome of the game. Training these young players was the goal of the game. As long as he could achieve the purpose of training the new players, he would not lose his temper even if they really lost the game.

For him, to be able to compete against those strong team was a hard to come by actual combat practice...

Whether it was Ferguson’s Manchester United, Wenger’s Arsenal, Benítez’s Liverpool or Scolari’s Chelsea, they were just NPCs for his players to gain experience, upgrade and become stronger.

He did not care how many games he would lose as long as those young players could learn something useful in the process. Failure was the mother of success. No matter how many games they would lose this season, they could win them all back one by one next season.

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The day of the match.

“Tony Twain announced their starting lineup for the game a day early. This list is really startling. In the face of a strong team like Manchester United, Twain actually sent the veritable ‘juvenile footballers.’ Agbonlahor has been doing well lately, but Nicolás Millán... has only played a total of one hundred and ten minutes so far this season and his performance has been average. And as for Bostock and Cohen, there’s nothing much to say for their performances at all. I don’t understand why Manager Tony Twain suddenly wants to put these young players in the important positions in the game against Manchester United. Petrov, Eastwood and Žigić are fine and not troubled by injuries. The team doesn’t have to store up its physical strength for competing in multiple tournaments...” The commentator, Motson remained perplexed by Twain’s lineup despite much thought.

Like him, the Manchester United manager, Alex Ferguson also did not understand what Tony Twain wanted to do.

He would not understand what was going on in the smiling man’s mind until the game began. He could only get Manchester United to play the way they were accustomed to and take control of the pace in their own hands.

The rest... was up to the players themselves.

At the beginning of the game, the situation was nothing more than what most people had expected. Manchester United dominated the game with their seasoned experience and excellent skills, as well as the tacit cooperation between the players.

Even though Nottingham Forest also had George Wood, Bale, Pepe and the other proven “battlefield veterans”, they were all defensive players. They could only guarantee that their goal would not be easily breached by Manchester United, but they could not pose any threat to Manchester United’s goal.

Agbonlahor played as well as ever, but it was hard to difficult to achieve anything alone.

He lacked effective support from his teammates and, more often than not, he had to run back to the backfield to help with the defense.

On the away side, Manchester United completely played like it was its home ground, bombarding the Forest team in its half of the field.

Motson said with concern, “If this continues, Ferguson will get the results he wants...”

Instead, Ferguson was worried—He was well-acquainted with Nottingham Forest’s stance and had studied the opponent for four years. He was so familiar with them that he knew what kind of dump they were going to take the moment they lifted their butts. This was the preparation for the defensive counterattacks.

Agbonlahor and Lennon were fast in speed. Millán was not bad either. Cohen was probably the only one who was slower.

He thought about how this team’s first win of the season came about...

Should the formation withdraw now? Slowly deal with the Forest team?

No!

Up against such a Nottingham Forest lineup, it was really embarrassing for Ferguson himself that Manchester United should only aim to equalize the game. The best method was to keep strengthening the offense and score early to put the game in its own orbit.

Ferguson did not have to wait long for Manchester United to score.

Berbatov cleverly blocked Kompany behind after he received a pass from Nani in the penalty area. He immediately swung his leg for the shot and the football passed between the legs of Pepe who had rushed over to defend. It then bypassed Akinfeev's fingers and drilled into the goal.

The visiting Manchester United fans celebrated the goal with thunderous cheers at the City Ground stadium.

Ferguson also stood up and clapped, expressing his delight.

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But Manchester United's excitement did not last long. The Forest team took advantage of the kickoff soon after. Bostock dribbled the ball and broke through to the front of the penalty area before he was tackled and fell by Hargreaves. The referee whistled to give Nottingham Forest a free kick.

When Bale stood in front of the football, the City Ground stadium rang out with a song for Bale. They sang, "Young Monkey Bale, he's our number one free-kick master! With the football at his feet, it's as precise as controlled by hand! It draws an arc, bypasses the human wall, no matter how far, it will hit the bullseye ... Tenth circle! You're already dead!"

The home ground would ring out with the song every time Bale was going to execute the free kick. Even if Beckham were the one to do it, the lyrics would not change. Bale was once asked about the song in an interview. He replied modestly, "I'm actually not that good..." when he incessantly delighted on the inside.

Ben Foster nervously directed the positions of the human wall. Bale stood in front of the ball and coolly observed everything. Only at this time, his focused look made people forget his actual age.

The human wall was set up and the referee whistled for it to start.

Bale ran up to kick!

The football streaked past the human wall, swept past the penalty area at a low altitude, and got into the top left corner of the goal!

Ben Foster was still standing in the same place, staring blankly at the football that rolled up the net behind him...

"They equalized the scores half a minute later!" Motson shouted and the City Ground stadium cheered and sang thunderously cheers in response to him.

"Tenth ring! Tenth ring! You're already dead!"

This time it was Twain's turn to rejoice. He high-fived everyone around him off the field.

“It’s the key goal!” He said with a laugh as he high-fived with Dunn.

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Indeed, it was the key goal. The Forest team’s young players were encouraged by the goal and their morale was boosted. Bale used his free kick to tell his newly recruited teammates— that there was nothing to fear even from the defending champion, Manchester United!

Manchester United’s leading goal did not bring them any benefit. Instead, it inspired the Forest players’ determination and fighting spirit to win in another way.

The benefits of being a young player were evident here—everyone was full of energy fighting against the Manchester United players. They had to use all their strength in every desperate fight. Their vigor to counter press in the front field surprised the Manchester United players.

In terms of experience, this Forest team was slightly inferior to Manchester United. But in terms of fighting spirit, Manchester United was not as good as the Forest team.

The two sides were tied at 1:1 in the first half. During the halftime interval, Twain repeatedly encouraged. He fully acknowledged the performances of several young players in the first half—even though not everyone deserved praise for his performance.

He then asked the team to continue in this mode and unleash high pressing on Manchester United in the second half. Start to grab from the other side’s goal line to force the opponent to mess up, while creating opportunities for their own offense.

After the start of the second half, the two sides continued to tangle with each other in every corner of the pitch. Nottingham Forest’s physical display surprised many Manchester United fans. But the Nottingham Forest fans knew that this was a normal condition for Nottingham Forest—Tony Twain always emphasized and valued the team’s physical development. Last season’s situation was a special case compelled by circumstances and could not be used as a reference.

Nottingham Forest’s high pressing paid off and they scored another goal in the 27th minute of the second half. Nicolás Millán dribbled and broke through with the ball. Then he helped Agbonlahor to score.

The City Ground stadium was almost in a frenzy. The defending champion was about to be beaten by them!

Some Forest fans even yelled at the Manchester United fans in the other stands, “Last season we weren’t there, so you won the championship! It’s no big deal. Now we’re back!”

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Unfortunately, they ultimately did not take the defending champion’s glory at the City Ground stadium. Ferguson deployed his team on a mission and finally equalized the score before the end of the game to retreat with pride.

While the Nottingham Forest fans might be disappointed with the outcome, the Nottingham Forest players would surely be disappointed with the score. But only Twain was happy. The first-year students fought valiantly against the defending champion team. It was a more valuable gain than three points.

It was also the first time the new Forest team did not lose a game against a strong team this season.

It was the Forest team he was familiar with—no matter what kind of opponent they faced, they would not be cowed or in awe. Newborn calves were not afraid of tigers, youth was the wealth of unbridled arrogance...

It does not matter that they did not win today. There's still a lot of time and we've got plenty of opportunities to be arrogant.

The media were more concerned about—

“The defending champion almost lost to Tony Twain's juvenile footballers!”

Chapter 734: The Final Moments of 2009

After coming away with a draw against Manchester United at their home grounds, Nottingham Forest's 'juvenile footballers' received an overwhelming ovation from the supporters. They also slapped their critics in the face through their actions and performances.

On 27th September, Matchday 8, they won 1:0 against Newcastle in an away game.

On 3rd October, Matchday 9, they won 2:0 against Hull City, who performed unexpectedly well last season.

On 17th October, Matchday 10, they won 2:1 at home against Portsmouth.

On 25th October, Matchday 11, they drew 3:3 with Manchester City in an away game.

Tony Twain's 'juvenile footballers' went undefeated for 8 matches since Matchday 4 on 30th August. Their ranking in the league shot up from the second last to seventh.

All the criticisms against them were silenced.

Carl Spicer was the only one who continued to have doubts over Nottingham Forest's performances, as he always had. Every other media outlet had gone quiet.

The young players' performances have also earned the approval of the masses.

Chris Cohen might not be a player who stood out, but his numerous crucial performances have helped the team earn at least seven points in the league this season.

He was the type of the player that others would typically overlook or not pay attention to, but he was a very useful asset to the team. He might not be blessed with outstanding talent like Moke, who has been demoted to the reserve team, and he might not be quick and is also not good at getting past his opponents. But, he was an all-rounded player. He could play as the left midfielder or the central

midfielder and was skilled at both passing and crossing from the byline. He was also a straightforward individual who did whatever Twain told him to do without a single complaint.

Kris Commons had been sold for 2 million pounds by Twain. The only two left midfielders on the team were Petrov and Cohen. With Petrov getting on with his age, Cohen will undoubtedly be playing games for Forest consistently in the coming years.

He has more luck than Commons did since Forest will most likely not be able to fork out too much money to bring in established football stars from here on out. This means he would be able to get more game time, unlike Commons who was only able to make an appearance in the EFL Cup, FA Cup, and during garbage time for some matches.

Cohen's performance attracted the attention of some other clubs as well. The season had only barely started for a few months, and there were already rumors going around that certain clubs were showing an interest in acquiring Cohen. A winger like him who was willing to track back and defend and could also put in accurate crosses definitely appealed to several other clubs.

Victor Moses' performance was noteworthy as well. He has played a total of 340 minutes throughout all the matches so far, and he has found the back of the net twice and provided three assists. Such results were considered to be passable for a player like him who was only 18 years of age.

Additionally, he managed to achieve those results when the season has yet to pass its halfway mark. Twain was certain that Moses would continue to repay the trust he has placed on him as long as he continued to give him a chance to play.

Moses displayed all the attributes that should be found in an African football player. His only problem was inconsistency. His two goals and three assists were all attained over 3 matches. However, inconsistency cannot truly be regarded as an issue for young players. It was actually normal and within expectation. What Twain has to do is to give him patience and encouragement.

On the other hand, Nicolás Millán, who also played the role as a forward in the team like Moses, was able to get a lot more game time than him because he could also play as a midfielder. He finely exhibited all the attributes that could be found in South American players. He possessed exquisite footballing technique that could not be found in the Premier League. His speed and technique ensured that he could work his way around big and burly defenders. They also allow him to help the team earn set pieces and penalties, and give Gareth Bale a stage to shine on.

Of course, by helping the team win free kicks and penalties, he also attracted negative attention onto himself, and got labelled with names such as 'The Chilean Who Is Good At Falling Down' or 'The Lad Who Dives'.

Every time an opponent or the media make such criticisms against Millán, Twain would always publish an article rebutting them in his column, or he would openly scold those critics during an interview, "If the referee says it's a foul means it's a foul. If you are upset about his decision, please question the referee's decision. Don't take your anger out on my player!"

Millán might have only scored once so far, but his techniques have definitely enriched Forest's attacking abilities in the final third.

His biggest flaw at the moment was his weak physique. He might be able to earn free kicks for the team, but there is no manager in the world who wishes for their forward to only be able to earn free kicks and penalties.

If Millán hopes to develop further, he has to enhance his physicality. It does not matter how good your techniques are. You cannot survive in the Premier League if your body is not strong enough to stand up against your opponents during physical battles.

Nonetheless, Nicolás Millán's performance so far has been worthy of his title as the 'Genius Youngster'.

His reputation in Chile continued to soar with each passing day. Many Chileans became Nottingham Forest fans because of him. Every time Nottingham Forest had a match, they all hoped that Tony Twain would send their 'gem' onto the pitch and let him play.

Amongst all the 'new blood' in the team, Joe Mattock received the least game time.

This is definitely not Twain being biased and giving preferential treatment. It is simply because the back line is very important to the team and should not be changed easily. He would only think about giving young players game time when the team lacks defenders and has no one else to choose from.

Twain was worried that his actions would upset Mattock, so he went up to speak with him on numerous occasions. He told him that he needs the back line to be sturdy and stable, and that there is little room for error for defenders, unlike the front line whereby the players get to be more free and can do as they like. Hence, as a left back, Joe Mattock would get lesser game time than the other 'new blood' in the team.

However, Twain promised Mattock that he was still a part of his plans. He also hoped that Mattock would try playing in other positions such as center back and right back as well.

In Forest, a player who is able to play multiple positions has an advantage over players who are only good at one position when it comes to game time.

Joe Mattock accepted Twain's suggestion and has been working hard to get used to playing as a right back.

The reason why he has been working hard is because everything he has seen in Nottingham Forest so far has convinced him that Tony Twain is the manager that he should entrust his future to. Pearce had not lied to him. Nottingham Forest is indeed the team that suits him the most right now.

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They might have achieved an excellent run of results of going undefeated for eight matches, but that does not mean that things will be smooth-sailing for them in the league from now on.

For Matchday 12, Nottingham Forest faced Arsenal in an away game.

In the end, Arsenal came out on top with a 3:2 win over Nottingham Forest with their home advantage, and they successfully put an end to Nottingham Forest's unbeaten run.

Jack Wilshere was named man of the match after scoring once and providing two assists. The light surrounding the 17 year old genius was so blinding that it made the entire Nottingham Forest team

disappear in its shine. The commentator could not stop roaring his name throughout the match, as though he was a fan of Wilshere, and the Emirates Stadium erupted into thunderous cheers every single time he touched the ball.

He even managed to steal the spotlight from the captain Fàbregas during the match.

Neither Şahin, John Bostock, Nicolás Millán, Cohen nor Victor Moses, who came on as a substitute later in the match, could hold a candle to him.

“He’s a true genius!”

“Jack has come out of nowhere and is really making himself known! Capello is sitting in a private room in the Emirates Stadium, and he must have taken note of his performance today! Perhaps we will see the name of this 17 year old in the player list for the next training session for the England national team...”

“He is another gem that Arsenal has unearthed for us!”

“The day we see Walcott still seated on the bench is when we can start looking forward to Wilshere becoming a leading figure in the Premier League!”

After the match, all sorts of praises were heaped on Jack Wilshere. It might not be his first season in the league, but this match against Nottingham Forest made him stand out from the crowd and become noticed, especially since he was also awarded the man of the match.

In the hearts of the Arsenal fans, the match was the best possible stage for Wilshere to shine on. Nottingham Forest was a team that was becoming too full of themselves in recent years, and a team like that became a backdrop for Wilshere in today’s match. That was a scene that all the fans wanted to see.

However, Twain had a different opinion on the matter.

During his post-match interview the day after the match, a reporter wanted him to comment on Wilshere’s remarkable performance from yesterday.

He smiled and said, “I believe that Jack Wilshere is an undisputed genius footballer. I had my eyes on him since last year. Back then I even wanted to take him on loan from Wenger. But too bad, he refused me. He is a gifted player and definitely has the skills. I don’t doubt that he would be able to achieve great things in the future. But...” Twain paused and shrugged. “It’s not surprising for me to see a player like Wilshere rise to fame after performing well in a match. Unfortunately, in my eyes, he was lucky that his opponent was us. I want all of you to remember something... George did not play in the game yesterday.”

What Twain was getting at was, ‘If George Wood had played, can Wilshere still perform as well as he did?’

His words undoubtedly upset the Arsenal fans, but what he said was the truth.

George Wood was unable to play in the Arsenal game after picking up five yellow cards in previous games. His defensive abilities were already well-known in the Premier League and did not require Twain to do any further explanations.

If so, then had George Wood not been left out of the match because he had picked up all those yellow cards, then can Wilshere, who would definitely play in a position where he would be marked by Wood, still be able to put in such a good performance?

During the match, it was as if Wilshere had wandered into an uninhabited territory. He met little to no resistance on the pitch and was free to do as he liked because Tiago could not keep up with his pace. It seemed as though the young was bullying the old throughout the match...

However, quite a number of people believe that if it had been George Wood playing instead of Tiago, then Wilshere would not have been able to act as freely as he did in the first 15 minutes of the match due to Wood's constant assaults on him.

The truth was that Wenger only started Wilshere and gave him the onus of creating chances for the team at the front of the pitch because he knew that George Wood would not be playing due to his one match ban.

Wenger won the gamble. Arsenal and Wilshere both attained success in the game.

On the other hand, Twain was a little depressed. He had to console his 'new blood' after the match and tell them that losing is part and parcel of life. Losing to Arsenal was also not an unacceptable outcome.

During training, he even took an aim at George Wood, "Look at what happened, George. You missed one match and an underage kid rose to fame just like that."

George Wood replied him in his usual, serious tone, "I hope that the next time we meet, that lad will still start in the game."

Twain laughed as he stood by the side. They might have lost, but he was not angry with the result. He has learned to loosen up and not view each loss so seriously, unlike his past self who had the mentality that they could not lose even one match.

It was true that he was leading a team whose average ages did not exceed 25, and there were several 'new blood' in the team that the others did not think favorably of. It was also true that the club was experiencing financial difficulties and they were going through rough times. However, he did not feel stressed despite being in a tough situation.

Those days from the previous season where he had to bite the bullet and pull through each and every day felt like a distant memory.

Right now, it was normal for them to be losing matches. It takes time for a team to mature. It was not possible for his 'new blood' to play like experienced players in a short period of time.

Additionally, Twain also did not want to burden his heart too much, primarily because he was worried that Shania would not be able to handle it if he did. He personally did not really care if his heart was burdened or not.

His main source of stress-relief has been going shopping with Shania ever since he quit smoking and drinking. Many shops have been giving discounts on their items due to the economically tense situation that they were in. It was a good time to be shopping.

Besides shopping with Shania, he would also visit the Forest Bar, order a glass of fruit juice and chat with his friends. If not, he would wage a war with Carl Spicer on various media outlets. It is good for the health to scold someone or something every day.

Life has been comfortable and good for him thus far.

Allan has to fly around every day to clinch new sponsors for the construction of the new stadium. Just doing this one job was enough to leave him overwrought. In contrast, Twain did not have to care about any of these annoying issues and could just leave them all in the hands of Allan and Evan.

All he had to care about was leading the team out to matches. He had also stopped pondering over what players he should buy for now as well. There was nothing he had to worry about as long as the club was still able to pay everyone's salaries.

The team continued to win and lose games under his guidance for the next few matches. Their performance was unstable and had its ups and downs, but it was slowly improving as they approached the new year.

Half the season was about to be over, and it was time for Christmas once again.

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Shania spent her first Christmas after getting married strutting down different runways across the world just like she always have. Similarly, Twain also spent his Christmas with Dunn at Wood's house where they had a Thanksgiving dinner together, just like he did in previous years.

Sophia's face would turn extremely pale every time winter comes. Twain knew how tough living through the winter was for the sick. Her body would start to feel better once Spring comes, at least that was what he believed.

He spent almost half of 2009 living in the shadows of his heart disease, but he also gained a love that will last a lifetime. His career might be down in the pits right now, but things aren't too bad for him. He could still stage a comeback.

He wondered if the sea of red before his eyes would turn even deeper in color the next time he appeared in Europe...

Chapter 735: Wolf

Tony Twain's 'juvenile footballers' made their way into the semifinals of the EFL Cup, but they missed out on progressing to the finals and were unable to top their previous performance in the competition.

Despite their loss however, Twain expressed satisfaction at the results his team had attained. He had treated the EFL Cup as nothing more than a training ground to hone the skills of his 'troop' from the start. Therefore, being able to progress into the semifinals was already a feat and his players had performed above his expectations.

The FA Cup kicked off after the start of the new year. The team successfully made their way past the first two rounds of the competition.

His 'juvenile footballers' also performed consistently in the league and were generally ranked between fifth to seventh place.

Forest was not playing the lead role in the current Premier League season. After the novelty of them being a young team went away, the media began to produce significantly fewer articles about Forest as compared to previous seasons. To the media, only the teams who were vying for the champion's spot in the league deserved a great amount of attention. The usual top four teams like Manchester United, Liverpool, Arsenal and Chelsea were all in a heated battle to become Premier League champions, and it was much better to report about those teams than Nottingham Forest's 'juvenile footballers'.

When the Champions League kicked off in February, everyone started paying attention to how those four representatives of the Premier League were performing in the Champions League. Who would care about Forest?

It was in this environment of being looked down on and being disregarded by others that Twain's football team was able to gain the atmosphere they were looking for all this while. They could finally be rid of the media's disturbance and slowly develop themselves based on their own ideas.

There might not be immense pressure from majority of the media outlets, but the 'juvenile footballers' were still aware of how well they performed after each win or loss they obtained. They were improving with each and every match they played in.

The season passed by in a flash of the eye to Twain. That was because they competed in 25 percent less matches than last season.

When the media, fans and managers of other football teams snapped back to their senses however, they came to the sudden realization that Nottingham Forest was only two points away from becoming fourth-placed in the Premier League.

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"Four consecutive wins, three consecutive wins, seven matches undefeated... Nottingham Forest has silently finished their mission of catching up with their opponents. At a time when the top four are all in terrible shape after being tormented by the games they had to play in both the EFL Cup and the Champions League, Nottingham Forest, who had lost both the EFL Cup and FA Cup, has made their way right behind those top teams and is ready to pounce."

"There are still 8 matches left in the Premier League. Everything is possible for Tony Twain."

"Let us take a look at who is ranked fourth right now... Chelsea! Haha..."

"... Scolari must be feeling the heat. He will definitely suffer a headache over whether he should play his first team in the quarter finals of the Champions League or in the Premier League, because their next opponent in the Premier League is Nottingham Forest!"

"Actually... What I want to say is that it is actually not impossible for Forest to become Premier League champions this season..."

The media got thrilled after seeing Nottingham Forest creep its way up the ranking table.

“Nottingham Forest has yet to face any of the top four sides other than Arsenal in this latter half of the season. This could lead to two possibilities. A, Nottingham Forest will lose all their games against strong opponents and slip down the ranking table once again or b, Tony Twain will lead his team of ‘juvenile footballers’ to victory over his three direct rivals and then subsequently change his goal into becoming champions of the Premier League!”

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Premier League champions?

Twain was definitely not thinking that far ahead. Having ambition and being baselessly arrogant were two completely different things.

All that was on his mind right now was how to defeat Chelsea in the Premier League. He was going to pull down Scolari and his men and take over their spot.

The good news to Twain was that there have been numerous signs that suggested that Scolari was going to play his first team in the Champions League instead.

It has been 7 years since Abramovich bought over Chelsea. In this time, the team has been crowned champions in the EFL Cup, FA Cup and Premier League. Only the Champions League trophy remain out of their reach.

Chelsea’s best performance in the Champions League came during the 2007-08 season when Grant was in charge as a caretaker manager. However, they suffered bitter defeat at the hands of Twain’s Nottingham Forest in the finals that year and failed to lay their hands on that coveted trophy yet again.

Scolari has managed Chelsea for two seasons so far and he has always prioritised Champions League over other competitions every season. Sadly, things never worked out the way he wanted them to, and he missed out on becoming champions in the Champions League every single time.

This season was no exception. Abramovich brought up how he hoped to win the Champions League numerous times before Scolari.

As for the Premier League... It was still Matchday 38 after all. It was not a big deal to lose one match in the Premier League, but the team cannot afford to lose even one match after making their way into the knockout stages of the Champions League.

Thus, Scolari did not play most of his first team players in the Premier League game before their Champions League quarter finals match against Bayern Munich, just as Twain has expected.

Scolari thought it would not be hard for his team to go away with at least a draw even if they were playing without most of their first team players, considering that they were playing at their home grounds.

Unfortunately, he was wrong.

Unlike Chelsea who had a lot to think about going into the match, Nottingham Forest only had their eyes set on winning the match the whole time. They displayed enormous energy the moment the match kicked off and managed to turn the momentum in their favor through their vigor. It was as though they

were playing on their own home grounds. They went on the attack aggressively and was also organised at the back. There was nothing that Chelsea could exploit.

During the 11th minute of the match, Eastwood sent Žigić's header into the back of the net and scored the opening goal for Nottingham Forest. The goal was also Eastwood's 19th goal of the season. He was the top scorer in the team at the moment, and had also scored the fourth most number of goals in the league.

The Romanichal has not been down with much injuries this season and was able to display his impressive skills before the goalpost. His ability to score goals consistently in games was what landed him a spot in the top scorers' list for the Premier League.

Eastwood's goal completely shattered Scolari's dream of getting at least a draw without playing his first team. It told him that it was impossible to get a point against Nottingham Forest even if they were playing on their own home grounds.

Twain made some slight tweaks to his game plan after they had taken the lead. Forest switched to the playing style they were best at, which was to defend and counter-attack.

Scolari stood up from his seat and started instructing the team to attack Nottingham Forest from all sides, but he never saw a goal up till the end of the first half.

The score remained 0:1. The away team, Nottingham Forest, was still leading by a goal.

Scolari continued to be torn at half time. Should he throw away the match at hand and prioritise the quarter finals of the Champions League, or should he play three of his first team players and get his team to give their all and battle it out with Nottingham Forest, so as to maintain a top four position in the Premier League?

In the end, he chose the former. Even if they lost this match, they still had seven more matches to play in the Premier League. He did not believe that Tony Twain's team of 'juvenile footballers' would not slip up and commit mistakes, and he also did not believe that he has no chance of reclaiming fourth place later on.

The most pressing issue at hand was the second leg of the Champions League quarter finals match next week. It was a match that directly concerned his fate.

Meanwhile, in Forest's locker room, Twain was analyzing Scolari's mentality for his players.

"Scolari will definitely choose to throw this match away, because there are still seven more matches left in the league. However, if they were to give their all in this match and then lose the Champions League match next week, then he would probably be fired by Abramovich before he even gets to see through those seven Premier League matches. His boss is not someone with a lot of patience. However, things are different for us. We don't need to worry about any life-or-death battles next week. Maybe in the future we would encounter a similar situation just like them, but right now those troubles belong solely to Chelsea, and that is the advantage that we have over them. So I want all of you to keep piling the pressure on Chelsea in the second half and fight to score one more goal. This would cause Chelsea to give up on the match entirely. If we were to only lead by one goal, the Chelsea players might suddenly have a change of heart and think it's possible to draw the game... To us, just taking one point is

unacceptable! If you guys want to play on the European stage next season, then you better win this match!”

Both teams were on completely different levels when it came to vigor and fight from the start of the second half. Chelsea players might be playing a game with Forest at the moment, but all they were thinking about was the Champions League quarter finals second leg match against Bayern Munich.

On the other hand, Nottingham Forest’s players were not thinking about anything besides winning the match before them. They were not even thinking about what would happen 10 minutes after the end of the match.

Different mindsets lead to different outcomes.

Nottingham Forest put in a performance that exceeded Twain’s expectations in the second half. They gave their all and played in a manner that suggested they definitely did not want to lose no matter what.

From the 70th to 80th minute of the match, in the span of just 10 minutes, the team managed to score two goals. The goals were scored by Žigić and Şahin, and they completely obliterated Chelsea’s fight and desire to continue playing in the match.

After seeing that there was no chance of them winning the match anymore, Chelsea’s players began playing as though they were doing warm-ups on the pitch.

Scolari remained speechless as he sat on the manager’s seat, which was a rare sight considering that he was known to have a bad temper.

Evidently, he had already shifted his attention over to the ‘finals’ that the team would play three days later against Bayern Munich. They were the away team and were up against the ‘overlord’ of the Bundesliga. It was going to be a very difficult match for them.

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Winning the match against Chelsea fulfilled Nottingham Forest’s wish of being in the top four of the Premier League.

Twain indicated amicably in the post-match interview that he was happy to be able to win Chelsea. He also wished for Chelsea to progress as far as they could in the Champions League.

Additionally, he hoped that the other two Premier League teams, namely Manchester United and Liverpool, who had also made their way into the quarter finals of the Champions League, would also be able to progress far in the Champions League as well.

“It would be for the best if they could face each other in the semifinals, and then we would have two teams from England in the finals! I am British myself, and I would love to witness such a scene.”

Some media outlets believed that Twain’s words highlighted his generosity and tolerance. He was not as narrow-minded as others said he was. He was able to show support to teams who are also playing in the same league as he was, and his words demonstrated his ‘sense of belonging to the country’.

Only Carl Spicer wrote the following in his column, “Why would he wish for the three teams to be able to make their way into the semifinals of the Champions League so sincerely? In my opinion, if Arsenal

had not faced Forest earlier in the league, then he would have made the same wish for Arsenal as well! Look at the match that he had with Chelsea... I know exactly what Tony Twain is plotting. The top three teams in the league need to be careful! There's a sly wolf that's right on your trails!"

Spicer was once again labelled by others as someone who 'just wanted to go against Twain no matter what' after his article was published.

Unfortunately for him, he got it all right this time round!

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Chelsea managed to eliminate Bayern Munich and make their way into the top four of the Champions League after a tough battle. Abramovich could not hide his big smiles after the match. Scolari could also take a short breather before he turned his attention; not back to the Premier League of course, but back onto the Champions League once again.

Since they have already made their way into the semifinals, why would they not force themselves to pull through and make their way into the finals by eliminating Juventus from the competition? Of course, it would not be easy to eliminate Juventus considering they are the team who kicked the defending champion Inter Milan out of the Champions League.

And if they make their way into the finals, then they must of course continue to endure all the hardships, defeat their opponents, and become champions of the Champions League.

One other team who also managed to make their way into the top four of the Champions League was Manchester United. Their match against Nottingham Forest in the Premier League was also imminent.

Before the match against Manchester United however, Nottingham Forest had to face Liverpool, who got eliminated from the Champions League, first.

Against Twain's wishes, Liverpool was not able to progress further in the Champions League. They still have to play in the FA Cup, but that game will only take place several days after their match against Forest, so it would not have any sort of impact on their performance when they face Forest.

Hence, this match between Forest and Liverpool was going to be very tough. It would be useless for either side to play any sort of tricks during the match. The only things that would determine the winner of such a match would be skill and... a little bit of luck.

Twain played his first team for the match, contrary to how he mostly played his 'new blood' during the match against Manchester United in the first half of the season. At that time, there was still room for errors and it was all right for them to lose, but now was definitely not the time for him to be using the fate of his team next season as a training grounds for his 'new blood'.

Most of the players he had sent on the pitch were 'veterans' who had fought in numerous battles before. They were going to defeat Liverpool at their home grounds and ensure they are able to play in the Champions League next season.

In the end, Nottingham Forest, with their home advantage, managed a narrow win of 1:0 over Liverpool through a late penalty. They were able to get three precious points from the match and continued to maintain a one point lead over Chelsea on the league points table.

There were four more matches to the end of the current Premier League season. At this point, Tony Twain's ambition for the season was very conspicuous. Premier League champions might be a far-fetched dream, but he was definitely going to qualify for the Champions League next season!

There are only four teams that would be able to qualify for the Champions League. In the years before Nottingham Forest became a force to be reckoned with, it was a 'tradition' for the four big teams in the Premier League to dominate the four spots that would get them a place in the Champions League.

However, now that Nottingham Forest is staging a comeback, there would definitely be one unlucky team who would lose that precious spot. Which team would become the sacrifice for Forest's comeback?

As of now, it would seem that Chelsea was the likeliest to become that very sacrifice. Scolari definitely had some thinking to do. Even if he is able to lift the Champions League trophy this season, but if the team is only able to play in the Europa League next season despite being the defending champion... How would that feel?

A top four finish was a must for him, but sadly, his fate was out of his hands now.

The strongest opponent that stood in Forest's way in the four remaining Premier League matches was Manchester United.

Will Ferguson become Scolari's savior?

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Matchday 36. Nottingham Forest faced Manchester United in an away game.

Chelsea faced Liverpool at home.

Two battles between top teams. Those two matches definitely attracted everyone's attention.

The bookmaker, William Hill, leaned in favor of Manchester United and Chelsea. They believed those two teams would be able to win because they would be playing at their home grounds. Nottingham Forest was the team that they thought had the lowest chance to win out of the four.

However, no one would have guessed that the four teams would draw at the same time...

Indeed, Nottingham Forest drew with Manchester United 1:1 by defending and counter-attacking. On the other hand, a lot more goals were scored in the match between Liverpool and Chelsea. The final score was 3:3!

The very last goal in that match came during added time. Liverpool managed to draw with Chelsea and also retained their third placed ranking in the league.

There was still only one point that separated Nottingham Forest from Chelsea. Nottingham Forest was ranked fourth while Chelsea was fifth.

There were two matches left in the Premier League.

Chapter 736: He's back

“There are still two rounds left in the league, but these two rounds are the most important rounds for Nottingham Forest and Chelsea. Scolari’s team has been eliminated. Aside from the Champion’s Cup, they did not enter the finals at all. Scolari would probably still do well even if they are unable to participate in the Champion’s Cup next season. Abramovich once said that Scolari would never be dismissed regardless of the results of the league, but who would believe his words?”

The television in the bar was playing Soccer’s 90 Minutes on Sky Television . Although its main host had been replaced several times, this programme still had an important position in the hearts of the British audience.

This programme was different from Match of the Day on BBC channel which aired after the matches on the weekends. It was the prospect of the matches following the programme.

In the previous season, the away team Nottingham Forest tied with Manchester United. Because the match had not ended yet, this scoreline made several Nottingham Forest fans’ hearts quicken as all of them thought this meant the end of the season. But surprisingly Chelsea, too, had a draw before the end of the season.

During that night, this Nottingham bar saw two extremes in the emotions of Nottingham Forest fans. Kenny Burns sold all his alcohol on that day.

“Nottingham Forest rose from the dead. In the remaining two league matches, both teams have weak opponents. If Nottingham Forest can maintain and win both matches, then they will be able to return to the Champion’s league in the following league season. This has to be the happiest moment to a Nottingham Forest fan...”

In the bar, a customer shouted, “To be honest even just the league cup is fine... I don’t want to stress them too much...”

Then, someone rebutted immediately, “Don’t get it wrong. It’s not the kids that are stressed. It’s that guy, Tony!”

“Let’s hope everything is fine with his heart...”

“Hey, just a small piece of news... Shania sneakily returned back to Nottingham again...”

“Wow! Tony definitely won’t be stressed!”

“Hahaha!”

The group of guys laughed raucously with their mugs in their hands. Though Tony had not been here often in his bid to quit smoking and drinking, his presence still lingered in the bar. The long-term fans who gathered in this Nottingham Bar still stayed here as “Tony Twain’s supporters”.

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On the last night before the second league, Tony Twain spent it with his wife.

As these two matches concerned the future of the team and their financial status, the news reported that Tony Twain did not have it easy. Hence, Shania flew back specially for him in her break, in hopes of helping him tide over these two weeks.

Although Twain did not feel like his heart was that weak as he had met with such stressful situations many times, it does not seem like it was stressful at all this time. But he was glad that Shania, who was staying in the States, could come back and accompany him. They were a married couple that lived separately. For someone who lived in a villa that spanned several hundred square metres, it was extremely lonely and cold.

To welcome Shania home, he personally cooked up a feast. — British food really could not be considered a “delicacy”, so he only cooked Chinese food.

“Uncle Tony, aren’t you afraid I’ll grow fat?” Shania asked with her hands on her hips as she took in the spread of food on the huge table.

Twain indecently held Shania’s waist and said, “I think there is no need to worry at the moment.”

“Hey!” Shania slapped Twain’s hand, pulled a chair and sat down. She was not rushing to start, but instead looked at Twain sitting opposite her. “It’s been three months since we last saw each other. Did you miss me, Uncle Tony?”

“You’ve asked me this question 10 times today, are you aware? There’s a Chinese saying: Absence makes the heart fonder. Our reunion after the short separation feels like our honeymoon... That is what I’m feeling now.”

“There’s such a saying, huh. Absence...” Shania looked up while deep in thought. “Then in the future when I travel everywhere, wouldn’t we always be in our honeymoon period? If you say it like this, then separation will become a very romantic matter!” She applauded as she beamed, being proud of her discovery.

“I don’t see it this way though.” Twain pouted. “If possible, I hope you’ll always be by my side.”

Shania smiled as she looked at Tony who looked slightly bummed “Did you know, Uncle Tony? While I was in Los Angeles, I went back to school.”

“Eh?” Twain, upon hearing what she said, was a little surprised. He did not know about this matter, and Shania did not mention this before. He thought Shania had only been entertaining other superstars and improving her own acting skills in preparation of the new film in Los Angeles. “You’re still going to school? What are you studying?”

“Costume design.” Shania winked.

Twain thought about it and understood why. Shania, being a model, would naturally be more sensitive to fashion trends, and naturally would have her own insights. If it is about costume design, Twain believed she would excel in this more than acting in movies. But why did Shania suddenly think of learning costume design?

“Hey, Uncle Tony. Let’s discuss something?”

“Yeah?”

“If I got pregnant, I’ll quit modelling and acting.”

Twain was so shocked he dropped his spoon. He looked at Shania who had a serious look on her face.

“You’re kidding, right?”

“Why would I be kidding? I can’t possibly act and walk down the runway with a huge belly, right?”

Shania giggled, but her tone was still firm.

“You could wait till after you gave birth...”

“Uncle Tony, the competition in this industry is cut-throat. Who knows what the world would be like after I lost my pregnancy weight?? Now you know why I want to start learning about costume design?”

“You’ve thought that far, huh...”

“Far? Pregnancy is actually a simple matter.” Shania gleamed at Twain. “Let’s start tonight, Uncle Tony!”

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Twain and Shania lingered in their home for a night, then went to the stadium with high spirits to prepare for competition.

Every time he saw the young and beautiful Shania pliant and moaning under him, he was filled with a desire to conquer, one that raged strongly in his chest. This feeling did not fade after they made love, and he rode on this high the next day during work.

Twain was kind of chauvinistic. Whether it was women or his opponents, conquering them brought him immense satisfaction.

From this perspective, it was a perfect timing for Shania to return....

Hence, in the city stadium’s changing room for the home team on an afternoon, Twain passionately made a calling for the European Champions Cup:

“...Although I’ve never won the league championships before, why should we still compete for some league cup if the league championships exist? There is only a one-point difference between Chelsea and us. They can turn the tides if we aren’t careful. I don’t want something like this to happen right before the end of the league season. All of you must know this well: I only want the Champion League Cup!”

“An opponent like Middlesbrough should not even be a concern. You guys just need to perform as per normal, and the victory of this match will belong to us... Remember, do not give chances to our opponents, whether they are our opponents in this match or in the ones in the back waiting for us to make a mistake!”

The end result was Nottingham Forest winning on home ground 2 : 0 against Middlesbrough. Chelsea also won Hull City on their home field.

While there was still a match left to the league, Nottingham Forest still led Chelsea by a point.

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“A match is what separates us and Europe!” After the match, Nottingham Evening Post ran this headline.

Pierce Brosnan voiced what the Nottingham Forest fans were thinking.

Nottingham Forest’s last match in the league was Stoke City!

Checking out this name, their luck could not have been better.

It was no wonder Nottingham’s local media was hurrying to announce that Nottingham Forest team had obtained the participation rights into the European Champions league in the next season.

There were some who were worried that Nottingham Forest, who was basking in the praises, would become complacent and then mess up in the last match. Anything could happen in this world.

But Twain turned down all of these worries. Rather, their “expectations”,

He repeatedly emphasized during team training to treat the opponents in the last match seriously. And he set the roster for this match solely based on the players’ attitude and emotional state during training.

Twain was obviously aware there was the possibility of an upset during the match, which was why he was trying his best to avoid that. Twain was definitely not the type of person who only regretted after the problem reach him. He wanted to destroy even the last bit of hope Chelsea had.

Making his opponents feel despair... That was indeed too great!

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The last match of the league season started at three on a Saturday afternoon after a week.

Nottingham Forest challenged Stoke City as the away team while Chelsea was on home ground waiting for Portsmouth’s challenge.

Everyone who was spectating these two matches knew Chelsea was definitely not losing to Portsmouth on home field, hence the focus was on Nottingham Forest who was playing on away ground.

Scolari was already adding pressure onto Nottingham Forest team on his interview before the match, waging a psychological war.

He said, “My players have never given up the tickets in entering the European Champions League next season. Although, Nottingham Forest isn’t a bad team. They’re very, very young; some on their team are even first-timers. Being able to achieve the results they have today is already quite the feat. Youths have passion, but they’re also very unstable and unable to withstand much stress.”

It was obvious what Scolari was trying to say.

And London’s local media were even more obvious with their propaganda. “If Nottingham Forest can only go as far as the League Cup, it’s not too big a loss for them in terms of competition. Their greatest loss would be their financial one. Participating in the League Cup and the Champions League are two completely different things. Participating in the Champions League would mean a lot more income.

“Everyone knows their financial situation isn’t ideal. Allan Adams hasn’t been able to find a sponsor for their new stadium, hence that lousy piece of architecture only fixed its base and left it as it is. For a team which won four European Champions league, that piece of lousy soccer field is just like the scars on their fresh appearance. Evan Doughty must be under a lot of stress, which would transfer onto the team. If they are unable to get the rights to participate in that European Champions League next season, this stadium might continue to rot...”

Look, how clever. They drew a connection between the club’s financial status and the results of the team to accurately tell the players without errors, “If you guys can’t win, you’ll feel the stress.” Who does not want to play in the Champions League? Who does not want to improve their future days?

As such, the youths in this team would constantly fret before the competition, thinking that they absolutely cannot lose. The stress would accumulate, until it popped like,, just like a balloon being pierced.

That was what the Londoners were hoping.

But it was quite a sorry sight, because the team they were rooting for only stood a chance if their opponent slipped up. No matter how they spun it, this was some form of charity.

Regarding this, Twain did not start any wars against the opponent through media. That would only intensify the situation, making it more complicated. This would not be great news to Nottingham Forest which was preparing for war. He emphasized again and again that the only rebuttal method is using their match results after the war.

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Stoke City did not want to be the caefare of another person’s celebration. Their head coach Tony Pulis was accepting the interview with some discontent, saying, “I know we have no trouble avoiding relegation, and I also know you are concerned about the four teams representing England in the European Champions League next season. But, ladies and gentlemen, what I want to say is that this is our home ground. I won’t let the away team be the main character on our field.”

Just like what Pulis said, from the start of the match, Stoke City’s players were charging with all their might. They focused on securing their defense instead of rushing to attack but instead securing their defense, using their strength in numbers to hold down Nottingham Forest’s attack. This tactic made it seem like Nottingham Forest was a wolf going up against seem like a wolf going against a porcupine — they did not know where to strike.

As for the match on Stamford Bridge, Portsmouth had already surrendered from the start. Before the first half ended, Chelsea had already scored two goals and, according to the commentators of the match on television, “Looking at Chelsea’s stance, they might still score in the second half...”

The match between Nottingham Forest and Stoke City was still at 0:0 when the first half ended. When the whistle blew mid-match, Sky Television was airing the scores of both matches real-time.

According to the current results, Chelsea is ahead of Nottingham Forest, with a two point difference to be placed at fourth, while Nottingham Forest has fallen to fifth,

During the mid-match break, Twain did not arrange any changes to the tactics. He felt that the tactics had no issues, the problem of the match not playing well was no

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During the mid-match break, Twain did not arrange any changes to the tactics. He thought that there were no issues with the strategy. They were not playing a good game, but it was not because of the team. On the other hand, if he did not say anything, the players might feel like the problem was them.

Hence, he said, "My friends, this is the last match of the current league season. Think back to the summer a year ago and then today. What did we work hard for a full season for? Maybe some of you would think playing for the league cup would be good, maybe some would feel that all of these efforts was just for competing rights for the Champions League to reduce the financial burden of the club, but now I want to rightfully tell you guys that all of the talk above are bullsh*t! My Nottingham Forest is a team with a tradition to win championships, even though we faced some issues last year which pulled us away from Europe for a year! But now, we are coming back.

"In our absence, those of Europe's greats have had a very comfortable life. They ate well since no one could threaten to take their spot. Every year, the favourites for the titles are always the same few teams. I'm sick of that! Things are different now, because we're coming back. Robin Hood is back! Their honor and their wealth, it won't be theirs for long, which is why they're panicking. What are we going to do next? "

Twain laughed. "Use this match to remind them: That's right, we're back! "

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In the second half, Chelsea's momentum did not slow and they continued to score. Two goals in ten minutes locked their score at 4:0. Portsmouth had no will to fight; they were just waiting for the game to end. Chelsea fans at Stamford Bridge had long been unconcerned about the game under their noses; they were all wearing headphones and listening to the latest news from another stadium on the radio.

Even in Scolari's chair, someone was listening to the latest developments on the radio. Just as the media had predicted before the match, the deciding factor in the last Champions League spot was not Chelsea's match, but the match between Nottingham Forest and Stoke City. At the very least, and to the relief of Chelsea fans, the score line was 0:0 right up till the end of the eighty minutes.

After a brief exhilaration, everyone began to wait anxiously for the last ten minutes to end. Nobody thought ten minutes could last that long, as if it would take up all the time they had in their life.

At the eighty-seventh minute, a voice came on the radio:

"... Žigic's header! It's been pounced on! Shoot again! This time it was the goalposts that helped Stoke City! Ah...And it's there! Nottingham Forest still has a chance...Freddy Eastwood- GOAL! GOOOAL! GOOOOOAL! They finally broke the deadlock! Nottingham Forest lead on away 1:0!"

Stamford Bridge was dead silent. Scolari and his aides looked at each other, as if refusing to believe what they just heard.

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Meanwhile, Nottingham Forest's coaching and bench are already in a frenzy at Stoke City's home stadium, Britannia. Everyone hugged and cheered and roared. For this late goal.

Twain was not as crazy. He just patted his chest, to the side of Dunn smiled, "I almost thought the goal is going to be cool..."

Twain shook his head and said, "Shania can rest assured. "

The TV narrator was shouting, "Freddy Eastwood! The Key of Nottingham Forest! He saved the team's effort scored a season three minutes before the end and Tony Twain's heart! Tony Twain really should have a hard kiss on his shoes! It was the Gypsies' 23rd league goal of the season! He ranks third in the league! This season, he's been in great form and that had a lot to do with not having frequent injuries..."

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Stamford Bridge spent the final days of the game in a strange silence. There was no love on the pitch on either side. When the referee blew the final whistle, the Chelsea players on the pitch ran to the bench to ask for information about the game at Nottingham Forest.

They were greeted by a dejected face from their teammates.

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As soon as the game was over, Twain did not even have time to run to celebrate the victory with the players before he was surrounded at the coach's chair by reporters .

"Ninth place last season and fourth place this time. Coach Tony Twain, as someone with a heart condition, you have achieved something very brilliant. Congratulations! What do you have to say?"

"Tell the guys in Europe that your old friends are back!" He said, laughing, pointing at the camera lens. Mourinho, we'll repay the debt from when you kicked my team out last season!"

Gary Lineker turned around to see Tony being interviewed on the big screen. On the screen, the English footballer said to the camera, "Tony Twain challenges the whole of Europe. Yes, he's back. "

Chapter 737: Plans for the New League Season

Following the previous match where they defeated Stoke City, successfully held down Chelsea and became the final team participating in the Champions League, Tony Twain became person the media was most concerned with. His delightful smile appeared on several media platforms, his line "tell the buddies in Europe that your old friend is coming back" had even become a quotation that several Nottingham Forest fans loved to mimic.

Some were happy, but others were disappointed.

On the second day after the league, Chelsea had officially announced that Scolari had lost his job as the head coach. On paper they had thanked Scolari for his contributions to the team and acknowledged his results, not that there was much to acknowledged. During the two league seasons that Scolari led the

team, they did not win any championships at all. Despite that, Chelsea had to maintain a courteous facade. On paper, they did not state their reason for dismissing Scolari, and Scolari, did not accept any interviews after he left the club, turning down any means of him expressing his opinion.

But everyone knew. They were stuck at fourth place in the current league season, and they even lost the right to qualify for the Champions League. Losing their rights to the Champions League next season was the main reason why Scolari was dismissed. The focus should not be on Abramovich, who was wealthy enough to purchase several players for Chelsea, but on Chelsea's head coach who was arguably under more stress than their Manchester United and Arsenal counterparts.

Man City's previous general Mark Hughes faced the same plight as Scolari. Hughes definitely understood what Scolari was feeling at the moment. He had been dismissed by the boss of Man City who could not tolerate any more because Man City did not achieve any glorious results despite the heavy investments; participating in Europa League had been the height of their achievements. Mark Hughes' final words before his dismissal garnered much pity. He said, "I can finally get a good sleep."

As for his successor Kevin Keegan, he was still tormented in that position, and Keegan's main reason for not resigning because he hoped they would terminate their contract with him so he could receive a hefty compensation fee. Today, the position of the Man City's head coach has become a hot potato.

In comparison, Chelsea's situation was slightly better. After Hoddle's start, they moved on to Gullit, Viali, Ranieri, and then up till the current Mourinho., Chelsea had already become a strong team in the Premier League, so they became more attractive to elite players and coaches.

Hence, after dismissing Scolari, Chelsea then announced his successor.

"... We have already agreed with Mr Frank Rijkaard. He is very willing to take on the head coach position for Chelsea. Mr Abramovich looks forward to Mr Rijkaard bringing delightful soccer for the Chelsea's fans..."

People who knew Abramovich would not be surprised at this. Rijkaard, who had been idling at home, was indeed the most suitable candidate to suit Abramovich's wants. Bearing in mind the beauty of the soccer he played back in Barcelona, Rijkaard would be the best candidate at the moment if you wanted to watch a beautiful soccer.

And Rijkaard responded quickly. He accepted Chelsea's invite Chelsea and made it a whole new challenge for himself.

The rumours stating Rijkaard replacing Ancelotti as AC Milan's head coach collapsed by itself.

On the second day of the news announcement, Rijkaard then appeared in London to take on the role officially. The media, while interviewing Twain, had mentioned this matter, hoping to hear his thoughts on Chelsea's new head coach.

Twain thought it was strange. "Why would you all ask for my thoughts for Chelsea's switches in manpower? I'm not their head of human resource..."

The reporter chuckled, "But didn't you incite this change in their manpower, Mr Twain?"

Twain was stunned by this question. He thought carefully — that was true. Had he not pushed Chelsea down a slot to the fifth position, maybe Scolari might not have been dismissed. A premature termination of a contract like this required a huge withdrawal for the dismissed head coach, which meant it was a loss for Chelsea as well. Had the results not been too much for Abramovich to bear, would he have dismissed Scolari so easily?

“Alright...” Twain sighed. “I really admire Rijkaard for his achievements back in Barcelona. However...” He thought of his personal grudges with that head coach back in Barcelona. “You must know such things for it to be another hot topic for you all to talk about in the Premier League season. For me, there isn’t much change. My aim is championships and victory. I am only concerned with both of these things so I don’t really care about other matters.”

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Although he gave such a magnificent response to the reporter, but Twain’s haters thought he was talking too big. For the current conditions of Nottingham Forest, to be able to guarantee the top four positions in the league every league was impressive enough. Twain actually had the audacity to think about winning the championships altogether...

To fulfil the lofty ambitions in the new league seasons, it was definitely not sufficient to rely on these people. Nottingham Forest definitely needed to search for players on the transfer market to enhance the capabilities of the team.

But this required money.

Twain knew the team would not be able to fork out enough money for him to spend. Even then, he still stubbornly went to find Evan, hoping that he could give Twain a little more money.

He initially thought this matter would be difficult, but the results made him gasp.

“I have decided that before the financial situation takes a turn for the better, we would postpone the repairing of the new stadium indefinitely.” Evan Doughty smiled upon facing the shocked Twain in the club main office. “Thus there are funds for you to buy players now.”

“Does Allan... know about this?” Twain’s first reaction was not to happy but to ask what Allan would think about this.

“This was his suggestion.” Evan beamed. “Also, our plans for that humongous stadium also needs some tweaking. Anyway, we’ll leave that matter to him. Tony, you just need to lead the team to achieve results. I watched the interviews that included you; I hope you aren’t just making empty talk.” He walked forward to pat Twain’s shoulders.

“Yes, championships... I don’t make empty promises, they do nothing to help me win championships. How much are you setting aside for me to spend in the new league season, Evan?” He asked the most crucial question.

“How much do you need, Tony?”

Tony thought for a while.

Every summer, other teams would be interested in his players, but it had always been the same people that he would never consider selling, such as George Wood, Gareth Bale and Pepe.

If Tony wanted to replenish his capabilities, then he should not sell the main columns in the team. But Twain knew that the players he was willing to sell would not fetch much money, so relying on selling players to get transfer fees was not realistic. Currently the team's weakest points were the forwards and midfielders. Van Nistelrooy had returned to the team with a new 2-year contract and a salary much lower than was stipulated in his previous contract. This was some kind of price to pay, huh.

His body was recovering adequately well, allowing him to represent the team in the new league season. But his condition was still unpredictable.

Nicolás Millán and Victor Moses were still young and needed more training. The team required a two-line operation in the new league season hence requiring a practical rotation. Their chances in competing were not worrying. The only worry was whether their abilities could meet what the European matches would demand from them. Currently, there were not many issues with Millán but Moses still needed more polishing.

Žigić playing as a center forward would allow Nottingham Forest to secure a place. Though his performance was not outstanding, he was very practical.

Agbonlahor's speed was Twain's new weapon; his presence allowed the team more unique and ever-changing tactics.

There is nothing much to say about Eastwood. The previous season was his best season thus far. If he did not get injured, he would definitely be the prime shooter in the team. Also, Nistelrooy and him had the most experience playing for the Champion League on the front line.

But this type of front line potential was not sufficient. They still needed strikers to raise their standards.

For the midfielders... George Wood and Lennon were dependable players, but Lennon only had himself in the right lane. In the previous league they only had to focus on the league games within the country, so this was not an issue. But now that they required a two-line operation, a player going solo was definitely not sustainable through the season.

Şahin's performance was actually decent, having improved after a league's worth of breaking in and training. Perhaps being recalled to Turkey's national team was proof of that. Tiago Mendes was another player on rotation. As for John Bostock, Twain wanted to loan him out for a year because he still needed more training. Likewise Adriano Moke also needed to be loaned out.

Chris Cohen's performance was average, a great supplement to the midfielder. He definitely should stay since he would have plenty of opportunities to play in the two-line operation.

Twain decided to sell Petrov. One reason was that the Bulgarian was getting older. He was not as fast as he used to be, and his condition had been on the decline as well. Another factor was to take advantage of people who still wanted to get him. It was said that the black horse two leagues ago, Hoffenheim, had been interested in him, wanting him to go to France to showcase his skills. Petrov was considering this as well as he did get famous back in Brigade, hence it was not foreign for him to return.

Counting these people, the two lanes in the midfield required strong players to supplement.

There were not many worries on the final defensive line. Leighton Baines and Gareth Bale performed steadily. In the past league season Baines had few chances to appear, but his chances would only increase following the new season.

The right full back Rafinha had already fully grown. He had efficient attacks and persistent fell back to defend, securing his right full back position in the team. There were several teams which are interested in him outside, but Twain would not consider selling him at all.

Chimbonda was a special case. He had already turned 31 so Twain wanted to find someone suitable to replace him easily, but up till now he still stayed on the team with a steady performance. Whenever he entered the field, he would go all out. He did not even complain when he was benched. His contributions were relevant to them being able to obtain the rights to Champions League last season. He might be a lot more outstanding than Rafinha in the right full back position. When Twain needed the team to defend, Chimbonda was a lot more reliable than the Brazilian. Twain also rediscovered the value of this French — he was not a soccer superstar but he was undeniable a key player essential in any team. All of them had their own role and responsibilities, the base of a team. Twain needed such players. This summer, the club was discussing a new contract with his manager which would last four years. Signing this would almost mean a life-long contract. Chimbonda would turn 35 in four years, after which he could basically consider retirement.

And for the plans for repairing the new stadium and the activity to go China to search for sponsor, both were unsuccessful. As such, Twain decided to place Sun Jihai on the transfer market. Whether it was a Chinese club or one in the English league, he would sell Sun Jihai for a suitable price. Although selling him now would not fetch a high price and there would be a huge difference between the transfer fee obtaining him and selling him, waiting another year would cost them the profit since Sun Jihai would transfer out on his own.

For the center backs, Pepe was the unmovable main force. Unless he gets injured, he would definitely play well. Kompany and Woodgate would then belong to the rotational center backs in the new season. Woodgate's body would not be as strong as Kompany's, where he would be filled with minor injuries and diseases. Wes Morgan would be a great replacement. But for the contest in Europe, Morgan was not reliable.

Five center backs would be sufficient. Any more would be a waste.

The young left full back Joe Mattock has been working hard to adapt to his new position as a center full back since last season. In the new season he would be loaned out to accept the test of the practical grinding.

"I'm thinking... around fifty million pounds." Twain quickly did a mental calculation, then reported an estimate.

Evan frowned, "This isn't a small amount, but I'll think of something" Evan frowned, but it was quickly replaced by a smile. "Go and have a happy vacation with Shania and don't think of anything else. Once the money issue is settled, I'll notify you, Tony. Where are you two thinking of going to play?"

"China." Twain shrugged. "To visit Dunn's parents, who are also my parents." Besides, I have an endorsement contract to discuss there as well."

Twain mentioning China made Evan recall his trip to China in the summer of 2008. During that time, Nottingham Forest won the Champions League, getting the dual championships in that season. It was delightful and wonderful in that moment. There were celebrations everywhere. Seeing the East Asian fans and companies pay homage to himself was a pleasant feeling, but it was a pity that all of that was gone now. Allan Adams ran around China for almost half a year. Those enterprises, upon hearing that they need to invest money in the stadium, would shake their heads and complain about the economical crisis, limited time and funds. Those wealthy overlords were state-owned enterprises, so even if there were people wanting to invest in the British's property market, it would hinder their identities to not dare to act rashly.

But then for United Arab Emirates people suggested it was possible to invest in them, not into the construction of the stadium but into the club, which was tantamount to a disguised acquisition. Evan rejected them consistently — even if they were to sell Nottingham Forest, now was not the time. The other party would unscrupulously lower the price; only a fool would sell.

Evan Doughty zoned out for a while, then discovered Twain was still in front of him. He chuckled, “Hope you enjoy yourself, Tony. If possible, bring back some Chinese souvenirs for Allan and I...”

Twain nodded. “Then I should really spend some effort to think of what presents to bring back to satisfy you two.”

“Haha, don't think much of it! Anything is fine. We are not kids who still wait till Christmas to find presents in our stockings.”

Chapter 738: What Is Chinese Football?

What was the difference between China in the summer of 2010 and the summer of 2007 in Twain's memory? In Twain's view, it was no different. The impact of the economic crisis on China was not as great and obvious as the European, American and Japanese world. From the looks of it, the country was full of vitality and contained countless opportunities. Despite the global economic crisis of the past two years, the country had maintained an eight percent economic growth rate.

Although he was a British citizen, Twain did not forget that he was in fact white on the outside and yellow on the inside salted egg yolk custard steamed bun. Therefore, no matter how many times he went to China, he would always have the warm feeling in his heart.

Despite claiming to be of one-eighth Chinese origin, Shania clearly had less feelings for this country than a thoroughly Englishman like Twain. For her, China was a tourist country with many fun spots and a lot of delicious food. Of course, it was a place to make money too—A Chinese company had already approached her to be a brand ambassador because her profile said she had one-eighth of Chinese ancestry. Putting in this inconsequential detail did not rule out the possibility that Fasal wanted to use it to pull in Shania's relationship with the Chinese market. Even more so, being an internationally famous model and a slightly famous actress in Hollywood excited the fans in China.

As a result when Twain and Shania married in Brazil last summer, the Chinese media smugly stated that Tony Twain and family had an inexplicable relationship with China—Twain's good friend and assistant was the Chinese man, Dunn; Twain himself claimed to be extremely fond of the Chinese culture,

proficient in Mandarin, and appeared to know China better than a Chinese; there is a Chinese player in Nottingham Forest; he was said that he had acknowledged Dunn's parents as his godfather and godmother... Now he had a wife of one-eighth Chinese descent.

This summer, Tony Twain, who was closely linked with China, was on holiday in China again.

When he and Shania, as well as Dunn, appeared at Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport, he was startled by a group of interviewers that blocked outside the terminal.

About twenty reporters from various media outlets gathered outside the pick-up point, a marked difference between the ordinary people around them who came to pick up their relatives and friends. Before Twain's arrival, they attracted a lot of people's attention, all of whom were guessing which star was coming to Chengdu today.

They also caught the attention of the airport security, and soon a team of security guards, responsible for maintaining the order, appeared around them. They did not know who was coming but knew that it must be a star. They had seen a lot of such instances as the airport employees.

When Twain led Shania by hand and pushed the luggage cart around accompanied by Dunn to appear at the pick-up point, the group of people pressed the camera shutters in their hands as if they had received the signal. For a time, the flashes went off endlessly and the waiting hall was bright white.

"I thought we were secretive enough..." He glanced at Dunn next to him, because he immediately spied Tang Jing in the crowd when the flashlights momentarily stopped.

"You two are public figures. How can it be kept a secret?" Dunn did not deny that he told Tang Jing the news, but he did not admit it either. He just obliquely expressed that the combination of Twain and Shania was like a firefly in the night sky, so eye-grabbing and striking. No matter where they hid, they would be found ...

Shania did not bicker with them. She displayed the true qualities of a star— she immediately put on her best pose with the most appropriate smile on her face and waved to the reporters.

Consequently, Twain could only plaster a smile on his face and waved to greet these people, "Hello everyone." He said in fluent Mandarin.

Dunn obviously did not have to pretend. He pushed the cart behind the two big stars and turned a blind eye to the Chinese reporters.

Tang Jing moved up closer and reached out to Twain across the temporary human wall lined up by the airport security, wanting to shake hands. "Mr. Twain, Mr. Twain! How long are you going to stay in China? Can you accept an exclusive interview with me before you leave? You and your wife, Miss Jordana..."

Twain turned to look at Dunn, who pretended not to see anything, and glanced at Shania, who smiled at him. So, he extended his hand and shook it with Tang Jing before he said, "I'd love to. You make an appointment, Miss Tang Jing."

"Let's make it tonight... Are you going back to Dunn's hometown?"

Twain nodded, "Okay. You know Dunn's contact details, so you must know where we are staying. Give Dunn a call early before you come." He used words to mock the current relationship between Dunn and Tang Jing.

Dunn did not say a word whereas Tang Jing did not mind. Having settled the interview with Twain and Shania, she looked excited, "I have a car. Would you like to take my car?"

Twain shook his head and refused, "Thank you for your kindness, but we also have a car."

Twain and the others pushed their luggage and walked outside. The reporters followed behind with incessant questions, hoping to get answers from the three people. In fact, these reporters were not here for Twain. Some of the media wanted to interview Shania, while some of the media were more interested in Dunn ...

They walked out of the hall, being surrounded in this manner.

"All right, all right, my friends." Twain thought it was too much trouble to bring along a large group of people, so he stopped and turned around to speak loudly to the reporters, "I'm here for a holiday in China, and I hope I can enjoy a quiet holiday. Thank you for coming specially to welcome me. Please go back now!"

Having said that, they walked straight to the outside car lane to queue up for a taxi, waiting for passengers.

Tang Jing asked in surprise at the back, "This is your car?"

Twain turned to her and smiled, "A taxi is a car too, Miss Tang Jing."

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"A quiet holiday is extravagant hope for me." In the car, Twain complained in English about everything that happened at the airport.

Shania sat next to him and held his hand. She smiled and said, "I'm used to it for a long time. I never thought I could go visit somewhere in peace and quiet."

Dunn sat in the front passenger seat in silence.

Twain saw him like this and remembered the matter he was very concerned about. He then asked, "I say, mate... at what stage have your relationship with Tang Jing developed to?"

"Huh?" Dunn did not hear it clearly.

"Are you and Tang Jing dating?" Twain changed his tack.

"How ... How can it be?" Dunn flatly denied.

"Okay. Look, I'm bringing Shania back to see our parents. If they ask about your plans for marriage, what are you going to say?"

"I'm still young..."

“Is twenty-nine years old still young?” In fact, Dunn’s actual age should be forty-one years old, which was Twain’s current age.

Dunn did not speak because he did not know how to answer the question.

“You know... regardless, they’d rather see you settled down and get married so that they can carry your kids early...” Twain muttered, a little lost in his thoughts.

In any case, he was not the biological son of his parents. There was always a difference between close and distant relatives, which was human nature. Although he felt a little uncomfortable, he could only accept the reality. He got the fame, fortune and love he had yearned for, so he had to pay for them in return. Hence, he lost his biological parents.

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In the evening, Tang Jing suggested that she would play host and invited the three people to dinner. Twain thought Tang Jing’s excuse was very interesting. She was not Sichuanese. How would that make her the “host?”

But they still gladly made the appointment—surely they would have to give face to Dunn, wouldn’t they?

After dinner, they returned to the hotel. In the room, Twain and Shania accepted an interview with Tang Jing together. In fact, it was mainly an interview with Twain. After all, Tang Jing was a sports journalist, and not a freelance writer for a fashion magazine.

Tang Jing was concerned about Nottingham Forest’s prospects for next season and wanted to hear about Twain’s plans. So, Twain selectively revealed some details. Following which, they looked back at last season. Twain was generally satisfied with the team’s performance last season. To be able to successfully squeeze Chelsea out and advance to next season’s UEFA Champions League were in line with his expectations.

The next step was to talk about his married life with Shania, which was naturally very loving and happy. On the football field, Twain’s goal was to pursue victory and championship titles whereas in the couple’s life, it was to have a child.

Then Tang Jing took a look at Twain’s physical condition and asked him to talk about his experiences of more than five months of resting at home due to his heart disease. Twain did not think there was much to talk about. An illness was not a good thing, let alone a heart attack. So, he directly stated his attitude to the question—He was not going to answer it.

The atmosphere was considered harmonious enough that Tang Jing momentarily forgot that she was interviewing Tony Twain, who was said to be “the most difficult interviewee by the reporters.” But on the issue of Twain’s health, she finally experienced the man’s unreasonable side again.

She could only move on to the last part—as the manager of Nottingham Forest, the most successful young manager in Europe in recent years, and a public figure who understood the Chinese football world well, what were Tony Twain’s views on Chinese football?

As opposed to his previous succinct answers, Twain seemed to have a lot to say when it came to Chinese football.

“I heard you’re going to change football back into the national system? I don’t know how to evaluate. If it was to only let the national football team produce results, it was understandable. Just like your country’s table tennis, diving, gymnastics, it is very effective. The whole world knows that China is the strongest in table tennis and the best in diving. Gymnastics is also traditionally China’s dominant event.”

“But I don’t think the significance in football is just about getting the national team to get the top spots in the international competitions. Football is a competition of skills, and also a game, where anyone can get involved and play the game. At the same time, it’s even a lifestyle. I’m a manager of a club. For my club fans, going to the stadium once a week to watch the hometown team play is a lifestyle. This way of life has been passed down from the fathers to the sons and then to the grandchildren. It has been going on for hundreds of years. Do you understand the difference between this and yours now?”

“It seems to me that although China was the original birthplace of football, there is still a long way to go in China based on what I called ‘a lifestyle.’ How many years has it been since professional football was introduced to China? And how many years has Britain been doing it? I believe that professional football is promising in China, because the Chinese people are very smart, know how to do a thing well and will definitely do it well. The key is whether you want to do it well or not. Having done professional football for more than ten years, the thing in China is still like water without a source and a tree without roots. I think it’s an abysmal failure! It’s a shame to the clever Chinese people!”

Twain suddenly got a little worked up as if he were the Chinese man who was ashamed of it.

“Because of the failures in the Olympic Games and World Cup qualifiers, your General Administration of Sport of China has decided to let football revert to its former national system. I do not deny that doing so will help your country develop a team that has a corresponding place in the football world. At that time, playing in the World Cup or the Olympics will lead to results that your fans will feel acceptable. But if I were a regular football fan, I would be sad to live in such an environment. You want to know why?”

“I’d like to hear the details.” Tang Jing was unknowingly captivated by Twain’s loud arrogant talk. She even forgot that this part was just a routine “add-on” and that it would not take up too much space when writing the article. But now, she had a strong idea deep down—to make this part the highest priority for the interview to promote to all readers.

“How many games can a strong national team play, counting all kinds of invitation tournaments and commercial competitions? And how many high-level games does a mature club team play in a year? As an ordinary fan, he will certainly support his country’s team and wave the flag to cheer for his country on the national team game day. It’s all very good. So, how about the other times other than the national team match days? How does he find an outlet for his love and desire for football? Where can he find a target to entrust such an ardent conviction? Foreign teams?”

Twain snorted with a laugh, “AC Milan? Inter Milan? Real Madrid? Barcelona? Juventus? Manchester United? Arsenal? Liverpool? Chelsea? Bayern Munich? Or Nottingham Forest? Or the German national team, the Italian national team, the England team, the Spanish national team, the French national team, the Portuguese national team, the Czech Republic national team, the Brazilian national team, the

Argentine national team, the Japanese national team, the Korean national team ... Anyway, it will not be the Chinese national team.”

“Of course, they can like the above-mentioned teams, which is not a problem. No one has the right to interfere with other people’s interests and choices. But they are Chinese people and Chinese football fans. The above-mentioned teams will not play every weekend at their doorsteps. They cannot cheer in the stadium for their favorite teams. They can only argue with the opposing fans online. They also can’t get up close and personal with these stars outside the training grounds, ask for autographs, or even buy genuine team memorabilia...To be honest, this kind of love makes me feel very sad.” He shrugged and said, “I think the Chinese people pay particular attention to a sense of belonging, but this kind of love has no sense of belonging. You love those teams, but those teams don’t necessarily love you. Ah, I’m not denigrating the European teams. I just think you’re too far away from them that they basically don’t care about your love. What is the position of the Chinese fans who carry posters to the airport to greet their idolized teams in the eyes of the European clubs?” Twain thought of the gold rush trip to China he did with his team.

What did the Chinese fans who were so enthusiastic to the point that they almost bow down look like to Allan Adams and Evan Doughty? They only represented “the China market”, the exchange rate between the Chinese Yuan, the British pound, and the euro.

What was the case for the Forest players? They were just ordinary supporters who were far away. They were at a different level from the Nottingham fans in the minds of these people. They had a duty to use victory and their own skills to please the Nottingham fans who would go to the City Ground stadium every week to support them, but they would not please those fans who were far away in China, even though they were as enthusiastic as the former.

The Nottingham Forest club received letters from fans all over the world every day. Due to the presence of Assistant Manager Dunn and Sun Jihai, there had been many letters from the Chinese fans. Most of those letters were of several templates, of which the vast majority were postcards and souvenirs. Some of them were just professional “autograph collectors” in the country, and some of them really liked the Forest team. However, in either case, the date of the postmark of the letters and the date on which the letter was received were almost one month apart.

Was the cost of this kind of love a little too high?

“I’ve said so much. Can you understand my meaning, Miss Tang Jing?”

Tang Jing nodded mechanically—in fact, she had not digested Twain’s words.

“The purpose of football for the General Administration of Sport of China and Chinese Football Association is absolutely not to give your country’s fans a way of life in football culture—it does not fall within their concern and consideration. To put it nicely, their aim is in hope that the national team’s performance will improve. To put it bluntly, it is only for the achievements of these leaders currently in office. What kind of position does the Chinese fans hold in their hearts? That’s an interesting question...”

Perhaps it was “the mob of people” that had gathered outside the stadium chanting “The Football Association is a stupid c**t”, “Disband the China national team”, “Xie X Long, f**k your mother”, and such slogans. Or it could be the figures in the statistics of each Chinese Super League match...Anyway, it

was an indistinct community with a repulsive image and not living, breathing, flesh and blood “people” with feelings. Therefore, they naturally did not need to care about their feelings, listen to their voices, and what “football” meant to these ordinary people.

“... The focus of their work is only the national team. As long as the national team does well, they will be good officials with achievements. As for the football culture and way of life... What is that? Can it guarantee that they will be promoted and make a fortune? Can it guarantee that they will have a political track record? To have football imperceptibly influence people’s lives, what is needed is not merely the efforts of several leadership teams. How many leaders are willing to let the fruits of their labor be taken advantage of by future generations? I have worked hard for four years and not achieve any political accomplishments just so that the next generation can salvage the political achievements? On what basis! Why should I suffer just to let others profit from it!”

Twain suddenly got up from his chair, and paced around the room in an emotional state, completely forgetting that he was being interviewed now. He just had a lot of things on his mind that he wanted to say, not caring who the audience was, and where he was at.

Once he started talking about Chinese football, Twain began to use Mandarin to communicate with Tang Jing because he might not be able to convey certain context in English. Therefore, Shania could not understand what her Uncle Tony said. When she saw Twain suddenly got agitated and stood up to pace around the room muttering nonstop, she was a little worried and said, “Uncle Tony...”

Tang Jing also did not expect that Twain would have such a fierce reaction. She initially asked the question because she wanted to listen to what Tony Twain, an outsider, thought of Chinese football, which now had a bad reputation. She wanted to let the readers know what a foreigner thought of Chinese football. She did not expect that although Twain did discuss the matter from an outside perspective, his emotional state ... did not appear to be that of an outsider.

She also followed suit to stand up, with her heart full of contradictions. Should she exhort Twain to calm down, or hope that he continued to speak and let her hear more hot news items...

“Yes, that’s what they think!” Twain turned around and stood while he waved his fists and said, “You really did encounter some detours and diversions in the process of developing the professional football path, but that doesn’t mean you have to deny everything about professional football and go back to the national professional system. Is your football problem a professional problem? Is it a matter of the star players making too much money and the club throwing away too much money? Which of the European teams and star players make too little money? Which club doesn’t invest money? Are the players of countries with high-level football, fine examples of high moral standing and drink milk that is squeezed from grass? Are all European clubs so squeaky clean and transparent like air? People in the system certainly don’t admit that the institutional problems are the causes of it all, because acknowledging it will be to break their livelihood, smash their rice bowls, and destroy their own interests. So, the push to professionalism, to those professional players with low-quality skills but can still make a lot of money and in fact have no right to speak of, make use of society’s ‘hate the rich’ mentality, shift everyone’s anger of the Chinese Football Association to the professional league. They are saying ‘with the professionalization over the years, the players are making more and more money, but the level of football is getting worse’, so the fault lies with ‘the professionalization of football.’ But if it were not for

professionalization, how would you know how incompetent and inflexible the organization that had managed Chinese football for fifty-five years was!!”

“Once many years, many years have passed, maybe your national team will be great in international football, like the Soviet Union before its collapse. But your football level won’t improve for a hundred years... No, there will never be progress. What does football mean to your masses? It is an Olympic event that strives for the nation’s glory but locked away from the world in a high-walled compound. It is definitely not a game for young children to play and have fun together in the school playground. Nor is it something that the fans gather once a week for in the stadium stands and in front of the television. It is not the kind of belief, entertainment, way of life that they will be happy about, cry for it, be proud of it, be angry about, be deeply concerned about. It is not a living life that exists among the people and originates from the people that will continue to germinate, blossom, bear fruit and continuously grow and strengthen uninterrupted for a hundred years and not decline. It is definitely not a culture that is full of vitality and has a reasonable cycle mechanism which can regenerate and radiate far-reaching influence that will make the politicians down to the civilians to...love it!”

“Do you know what that feels like, Miss Tang Jing?” After saying this in one breath, Twain looked back at the reporter, Tang Jing, who was stupefied.

“When Nottingham Forest was unfortunately relegated, half the people of Nottingham city cried. When Notts County was once on the brink of bankruptcy, the other half of Nottingham city’s people generously contributed money and did not expect anything in return. They donated pound by pound, hoping to save the team. Because that’s their team, it’s their hometown team! Even if it’s just a nobody team in Football League Third Division North which almost never has the hope to win the Champions League.”

“But in China today, ninety percent of people half surprised and half sneered at you and say, ‘Yo, you still watch Chinese Super League? You still watch Chinese football! You shouldn’t self-abuse in this way, you stupid c**t!’” After he uttered the obscenity, Twain spread his hands and his tone finally eased. “You see, that’s the difference between the two situations. Miss Tang Jing. What’s wrong with Chinese football? It’s okay, because it’s a big problem in itself, a big problem that breeds a large host of mid-sized problems, and the mid-sized problems involved countless of small problems... Ah, it’s wonderful, it’s a family reunion for a group photo.”

Twain laughed and said, “But what’s the solution to the problem? To be honest, I don’t think you can hope to solve it in the current situation of the sports system in China. I sympathize with you, really, I’m not kidding. I do indeed have a lot of sympathy for you all... Also, don’t fantasize about one or two talented players who can help you get to the path of glory. In the future, try not to pay attention to Chen Jian. I know you are trying to introduce him to the Chinese fans and shape him into a new hopeful overseas Chinese player. But I want to warn you, Miss Tang Jing.”

Twain extended his index finger and wagged it in front of Tang Jing. “He’s absolutely not the savior of Chinese football. He’s just an ordinary young man who wants to make a living from football and is a bit silly but has pretty good luck. If my player is ruined by your meaningless delusions, today will be the last time I’ll accept your interview.”

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When Tang Jing was about to leave, it was clear from her appearance that she was still in a daze from Twain's speech. Apparently the interview impacted her far more than any of Twain's previous conversations in front of the media. She really needed to get back and digest it. Fortunately, although she was still in a daze, the interview machine in her hands still worked faithfully and completely recorded Twain's every word.

But one thing was very clear when she left—if this story was published, the impact that it would give rise to could be by no means merely compared to “the most successful young manager—into Tony Twain's world” interview.

To publish this piece in the papers, she might even have to take some risks...

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Shania did not care about the impact Twain's words would have on the country's football community. She wondered about Twain's vehemence at the last moments.

What would agitate Uncle Tony so much that he could not even help himself?

Twain hugged her, shook his head and smiled to explain, “She asked a question that I could not explain clearly in one or two sentences and the question was easy for people to lose their cool and calm... I'm really sorry to have scared you, Shania. But it's all right now, at least I don't have to continue to worry about that problem. Let's have some fun!” He suddenly grabbed Shania and threw her onto the bed.

Shania's screams soon turned into gentle moans...

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Tang Jing came out of the elevator, and found Dunn sitting in the couch facing the direction of the elevator in the lobby.

“The interview took longer than expected.” He said as he saw Tang Jing come straight over.

“Sorry, the last question caused the interview plan to spin out of control.” Tang Jing shook her head and said, “He got very worked up and said a lot.”

Dunn was somewhat interested and said, “What was the question?”

“I asked him what he thought of Chinese football. I originally wanted to hear what a foreigner thought of something that we ourselves thought of as rotten... The result came as a surprise to me.” Tang Jing said in a low voice as she frowned and recalled the scene. “He said a lot, some stuff we did not know, some stuff we never thought about and some we knew and thought about but did not dare say...”

“I've decided! I'll take out his answer on its own and published the full text without a single change in his words!”

“I can imagine what Tony said. Aren't you afraid that publishing it will bring trouble?” Dunn asked.

Tang Jing smiled sweetly and ran her fingers through the hair dangled in front of her. “What could be the trouble? If there's blame from the top, I'll shoulder it. At the most, I'll quit. Losing a job is not a big deal.”

Dunn looked at the determined woman in front of him, opened his mouth, and said nothing in the end.

Tang Jing lifted her wrist to look at the watch. It was already ten o'clock at night.

"Ah, it's so late! I have to get back." She waved to Dunn and said, "Goodbye, Dunn!"

"Goodbye." Dunn stood at the entrance and waved goodbye to Tang Jing.

When Tang Jing got into the taxi and left, he muttered, "I wish you good luck..."

Chapter 739: A *Lame Joke*

Tang Jing sat upright in front of her father, who sat behind a large office desk and wore reading glasses to carefully read through the new draft that his daughter just handed in.

He had been reading the three-thousand-word manuscript for a full fifteen minutes and did not plan to put it down yet. It was very quiet in the editor-in-chief's office.

It was a long time before the editor-in-chief, Tang Yuanan took off his reading glasses and massaged the inner corners of his eyes.

"Xiao Jing, I'm going to retire in a few years..."

"I know, Papa. You can put the blame on me if there's any problem."

Tang Yuanan put down his hands and glared at his daughter, sitting on the opposite. "Nonsense! How can your own father be such a person?"

Tang Jing did not speak, but continued to look at her father, the president and editor-in-chief of the sports newspaper with the widest circulation in China.

"I almost built the newspaper up with my bare hands. It has been twenty-two years ... I'm just worried that once you publish the article, there's going to be a lot of pressure on the papers..."

Tang Jing pulled her lips and said, "Then I will resign now and transfer to another sports newspaper. Let them take the blame."

"Hey, you..." Tang Yuanan really could not do anything about his own daughter. He stared at Tang Jing for a moment and then slightly softened his tone, "Actually, Tony Twain's words are not new. The General Administration of Sport of China intends to put the national system into effect and return football to the professional sports school era. Many people have privately discussed this issue. But no one dares to speak out publicly. Even if they said it in front of the media, the press will not print such comments ... Do you know why, Xiao Jing?"

"The pressure from the Chinese Football Association."

"No." Tang Yuanan shook his head and said, "The Football Association has long been a target of scorn. After the Olympics, Xinhua News Agency and People's Daily continuously published articles critical of the Chinese Football Association. Someone must take the blame for the failures in the Olympics and World Cup qualifiers, and the Chinese Football Association is a good candidate. The real pressure comes from..."

General Administration of Sport of China. The FA is a subordinate body of the General Administration of Sport of China. The one calling the shots is in fact the General Administration of Sport of China and the FA only follows in accordance with the path given by the General Administration of Sport. So, which exactly was Twain rebuking? It's not the Football Association, it's the General Administration of Sport."

Tang Jing's face slightly changed color. She was well aware of the difference between the Chinese Football Association and the General Administration of Sport of China, and she knew which organization had more power.

After thinking for a moment in her seat, she got up and walked toward her father's desk. She reached for the manuscript and said, "No, Papa. I won't make things difficult for you."

Tang Yuanan wanted to reach out to take it back. But he had just lifted his hand when he put it back again, allowing his daughter to pick up the manuscript, which was filled with Twain's furious words, and walked out of the office.

Back in the press room, Tang Jing began to pack up her desk—her favorite Garfield hanging pendant, her own water glasses, folders, books...

Her colleagues looked strangely at her as she packed up the things in silence. There were fewer and fewer things on the table as everything was swept into the box.

"Tang Jing, what are you doing?" Finally, a colleague who had a better relationship with her rushed over and asked in surprise.

"I quit my job." Tang Jing took a folded piece of paper out of her pocket, opened it and pressed it on the table. Then she picked up the box and smiled at her concerned colleague.

"Quit..." The colleagues were too stunned to respond and stared dumbfounded at her as she left the office.

The paper that was pressed on the table was a "resignation letter" written earlier.

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When Tang Jing drove her car on the way back to her house, she received a call from her father.

"Tang Jing!!" Tang Yuanan roared angrily on the phone, "What do you think you're doing!"

"I quit, Papa." Tang Jing looked calm and said, "You don't have to care about what I want to do now."

"I don't agree to your resignation!"

"Then we'll go to the court for labor arbitration, Papa."

"..." Tang Jing could even hear the creaking sound of her father's teeth gnashing.

"Fine!" He spat out in frustration, "Even if you quit, you're still my daughter. I won't allow it!"

"Your daughter is already an adult. I have also moved out a long time ago to live on my own. Even if you are my Papa, you have no right to interfere in your daughter's life."

"You....."

What else could Tang Yuanan say? Tang Jing had heartlessly refused to talk with him. “Okay, Papa. Your daughter now has the steering wheel in her left hand and the cell phone in her right hand. I’m driving on the beltway now. If you don’t want to get a bereavement call from the traffic police later, I’m going to hang up now, Papa.”

“Hey, Tang Jing you... Hello? Hello!”

He could only hear the busy signal.

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That evening, Tang Jing updated her blog post in Sina blog and announced that she had officially resigned from <Titan Sports>. She was now independent and unemployed. Then she recalled some of her life working in the newspaper and thanked some people.

Tang Jing’s blog had always been popular because she was a well-known “beautiful reporter” who followed and covered Nottingham Forest in Nottingham and was rumored to be linked with Dunn. Consequently, her article was quickly reprinted. All the people who knew her were surprised by her resignation because there was no indication that she was unhappy with the newspaper. She even received orders to fly to Chengdu two days before she resigned to interview Twain. Many journalists in China had hoped to do an exclusive interview with Twain but only Tang Jing had the opportunity. Nor did they hear of any contradiction between her and the management—everyone knew she was the daughter of the president and editor-in-chief. No matter how big the contradiction was, it should not result in her resignation...

The advantages and disadvantages of the Internet age were that information spread quickly. So, within one night, the piece of news on “a well-known sports newspaper in China’s well-known beautiful reporter mysteriously resigned out of the blue” appeared on several portals’ landing pages. Many netizens expressed their views on the matter and made all kinds of statements.

The most sensational was someone said that because the woman and Coach Dunn were caught together and exposed, she was forced to resign due to the pressure from all sides. She had said that she was in Chengdu to interview Twain but in actual fact, she was on a date with Dunn. Twain unexpectedly caught the couple in the act and there was no way to dispute it. Nottingham Forest Football Club made a strong protest to the newspaper and she had to resign to quell the error of judgment, even though she was the daughter of the president. Otherwise it would be bad for everyone if the matter was leaked...

Although this version was sensational, not many people bought it. Because how could a foreign football club be angry because one of its assistant coaches had sex with a woman in his native country while on vacation? It was too trifling.

Therefore, the real reason for Tang Jing’s resignation was still widely debated.

There were also reporters who called Tang Jing, wanting to hear what she had to say. As a result, Tang Jing’s cell phone was turned off and could not be contacted at all.

Her window of contact with the outside world only left with the Sina blog.

The next night, just as everyone was still speculating about why the beautiful reporter, Tang Jing who had a smooth career and whose fame was on the rise in the recent years, suddenly resigned, she updated an article in her blog.

“This was the last question I asked when I went to Chengdu to interview Manager Tony Twain two days ago. I had asked a routine question, but I did not expect to receive a surprising response. It is well known that Manager Twain is fluent in Mandarin. We communicated directly in Mandarin from start to finish with regards to the question. Therefore, you do not have to suspect that I’ll use the translator machine to tamper with his answer. This is the original text, and tomorrow I will consider releasing a recording of the conversation.” This was the introduction that Tang Jing wrote, which was naturally followed by the article she had showed her father.

<Chinese Football in the Eyes of a Successful English Football Manager>

In the three thousand-word article, Twain’s style of statements could be found everywhere. The unruly English manager berated Chinese football, and hit the nail on the head, which made most people who read it, nodded their heads in approval.

At the end of the article, Tang Jing wrote the following words: Everyone is welcome to reprint the work, but please do not change a single word.

Tang Jing succeeded. She made use of the resignation incident to rouse everyone’s interest, and then threw out the long-planned article after the attention was focused on her blog. She caused an earthquake on the Internet in the shortest possible time.

Sina, Sohu, NetEase, Tencent, Tianya Club...and all the large and small, well-known and little known, professional and amateur, football-related and unrelated websites as well as forums all reprinted the article immediately. As the original source, the number of clicks on her blog surged overnight with the comments refreshing every minute.

Some people agreed, some people scolded, some people contemplated, and some people questioned.

The people who agreed naturally said that the article hit the nail on the head, so that it suddenly dawned on some people.

Those people who scolded were more interesting—they certainly did not scold Twain and Tang Jing because they supported such lousy Chinese football. The reason they scolded was: No matter how bad Chinese football is and how terrible the Chinese Football Association is, that’s our own affairs as Chinese people. Since when do we allow our own affairs to be dictated by an English barbarian? Your words were so harsh. Who do you think you are? No matter how successful you are and how many championship titles you have taken, what gives you the right to be so cocky in China? Not to mention that you appeared to be down and out in the last two years...

Those people who questioned it queried if Tang Jing used a fake article to create sensationalism, which was basically self-hyped. Anyway, now was the era of hype and speculation of others was not unusual. To create self-hype, one just had to take a look at those star bloggers and online celebrities which were the product of self-hype. Therefore, nowadays belonged to the era of “even one is ugly, one must also dare to show and tell.” Their reasons were well founded—an Englishman, no matter how much he claimed to know and love China, could not say such a thing that drew blood on the first prick about the

current state of Chinese football. These words could only be written by people who had been immersed in Chinese football for years, or only if they were Chinese who really understood and cared about Chinese football. What was an Englishman doing by joining in on the action? Did he know who the current full-time vice-president of the Chinese Football Association was before he bawled the system out here? Moreover, looking at the pervasive “resentment and impatience towards the system for failing to meet expectations” and “pity your misfortune; condemn your submission” emotional state, how could a British who has nothing to do with our country, have such a sentiment? Therefore, to summarize the above-mentioned points, one could only draw the conclusion that Tang Jing’s level of fraud was too low, or she was simply hawking such a big gap in the story to complete the self-promotion.

“The questioning theory” was very popular in the mainstream media because they represented the voice of “calm thinking.” Although these people were indeed very calm, seriously considered, and did not blindly follow the words of other people, it was a shame...that their proper analysis was really wrong this time.

Some people had called on Tang Jing to upload the recording that she had stated, online as the proof.

But the next day, Tang Jing’s blog was quiet and there was no “emergence of Tony Twain’s original recording.”

All of a sudden, the tide of those who questioned that she made up the news for her self-promotion became even more intense. It also gave rise to another faction—those who agreed with the article and also affirmed Tang Jing’s original intention to do so. But they still thought that the article was made up by Tang Jing herself.

There were also rumors that the Chinese Football Association was also paying a lot of attention to the article. Even if it was made up by Tang Jing, they did not rule out that she would be brought to court.

Tang Jing later wrote in a blog post, “I have given it some thought. Nowadays technology is so developed, even if I release the recording, I’m sure the disbelieving people will think that it is a fake using some kind of sound-change software. It’s like the fans of the stars whose nude photographs were exposed, they all thought that the photos were created from Photoshop. Just like photographs can be PS, videos can also be faked. In that case, how difficult can it be to doctor a mere audio file? The people who don’t believe, will not believe with whatever evidence you come up with. Sometimes I feel that it’s quite sad to be suspicious of everything, to doubt everything and to refute everything... So, I decided not to release it for the time being. If you have any questions, you can ask Tony Twain yourselves. He is in Sichuan, China, isn’t he?”

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Twain suddenly found his and Shania’s vacation plans in this small town, south of Sichuan with his parents and Dunn completely destroyed.

Because a lot of reporters with the different Mandarin accents from all over the country suddenly came to the surrounding home area of Dunn’s parents...

Every day, someone would come knocking on the door and asked politely and humbly, “Can I please ask if Mr. Tony Twain stays here?”

Since Tang Jing's blog called for the people who were in doubt to ask Tony Twain themselves, those reporters really all rushed over. Anyway, they knew Dunn's home address when they interviewed Dunn before. One by one came looking in hope to hear Twain confirm that the words really came out of his mouth.

In order not to disturb the two elders, Twain and Shania had to move to stay in a hotel in the city and finally lured the swarm of reporters away from Dunn's home.

But they did not come here for a scenic tour. They just wanted to stay with the two old people. What was the point of going back to Sichuan after all these torments?

"What's going on?" Twain was so surprised as he could not figure out why he would suddenly turn into a cream cake that attracted flies.

"The words you said to Tang Jing were put on her blog." Only Dunn and Tang Jing still had a connection, so he was aware of the whole story. "But I didn't expect them to come to you so soon. It looks like ..." He did not finish the rest. It looked like Tang Jing could not hold up any longer.

"F**k, are you serious?" Twain swore, "I only scolded the current state of Chinese football and these people come looking for me like mad men. Conservatively, it is estimated that ten thousand of people are scolding Chinese football every day in China, right? Why don't they go find them?"

"The head is not concerned with ordinary people's admonishments. You're different, you're a public figure, a famous coach. Even if you fart, there are people watching."

Twain covered his nose and said, "You'd find a better metaphor in the future. I have a mouth in my head, not an asshole. No, why should I bear the sin for your secret lover? I can't even have a good time... I'll just lay my cards on the table, let them know the answer, and then tell them to go f**k off!"

"Aren't you worried?"

"What am I supposed to worry about?" Twain looked strangely at Dunn and said, "Since I have already said those words, why would I not dare to admit. It is not a disgrace. Then again... I'm an Englishman, what can I not say? Even if I scold them, what can the FA boss do to me? Shut me out? Not let me attend the CCTV New Year's Gala? Cancel the ads for my endorsement products? Completely cut off my chances of coaching the China national team? Oh, thank heavens... If I were to gain knowledge of the correct path in the morning, I would be able to die at sunset.."

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Therefore, in the next day, through the hotel he stayed at, Twain informed the reporters who had followed him to the small town in the south of Sichuan that he would hold a last-minute press conference tomorrow. They could ask their questions at the press conference.

The hotel where Twain stayed at was the best in the city, but rarely ushered in such a lively scene. They made an all-out effort to hold the grandest event. They handled the publicity well. All the reporters who heard the news was aware of Twain's press conference, so more people flocked here.

On the day of the last-minute press conference, the conference room which the hotel specially allocated simply did not have enough room for people to stand. The head of the hotel was so anxious that he

sweated profusely. Finally, it was Twain who stepped forward and let everyone simply move to the lobby, which solved the problem.

Because it was a last-minute press conference, there was no time to prepare any advertising sponsorship boards in the background. The curtain behind Twain had the hotel's huge logo and name printed on it, which gave them a one-time free advertisement.

"I know what you want to ask. I went online yesterday to have a look at it." As soon as Twain sat down, he did not wait for the reporters to raise their hands and ask questions. He immediately spoke in Mandarin, "The matter is funny. I'm not saying that the article was funny. I'm saying that everything that came out of it was funny."

"I'm not going to deny what I've done. I've carefully read Miss Tang Jing's blog post. I am now here to officially announce—that article had sections of what I said and not a word has been changed. It was indeed what I personally said to Miss Tang Jing." Twain looked at the stunned reporters with a straight face.

"Well, that's all I have to say, good day." He got up and left when he was done.

That was when the reporters roused themselves and did not care about the order to raise their hands to ask the questions. One by one crowded forward, blocked Twain, and threw their questions at him.

"Mr. Twain! I don't understand why you said all those things!"

"Tang Jing asked, of course I had to answer. What's not easy to understand?"

"No, no, I mean... Your answer is somewhat out of proportion to your identity..."

"What's so disproportionate? Because I am the manager of Nottingham Forest, so I can't comment on Chinese football? Don't you reporters particularly like to ask the foreigners when you interview them—what do you think of the Chinese players, Chinese football teams... and so on?"

"Mr. Twain, your knowledge of Chinese football can't be that in-depth. Could it be Miss Tang Jing made some suggestions and then you said it? Or did she write the answer in advance for you to read it?"

"Sir, you're joking. Not only you insult my IQ, you have also insulted my character. Those words came out of my own comprehension. No one gave me any suggestions, and I was not fed any lines in advance."

"But you're British..."

"So what? I remember saying I know China very well... Understand everything about this country, and of course football. Does it not make sense that I understand your football? Everyone in the world knows how bad your football is. Is it wrong for an Englishman who love China like myself to understand it well? Your football had already made you a disgrace in the world during the Beijing Olympics. What's so inconceivable about this matter? have already made your football a disgrace to the world? You think you can't see the fact just because you put your head in the ass? Furthermore, how many of the full-time vice-presidents of the Chinese Football Association are engaged in football understand football? For them to be able to occupy the top positions, how is it that no one loudly ask them if it was

reasonable or not, eh? You are not qualified to question whether it is reasonable for me to say such a thing!”

As Twain squeezed his way toward outside, he hit back at the reporters’ questions with his razor-sharp wit. The hotel security also wanted to come up to help, but they lost the decisive opportunity to do so and had been squeezed to the outermost edge. They could only look on and worry helplessly at the thick layers of heavy siege.

“But Mr. Twain, don’t you think that as a foreigner, it’s excessive of you to judge Chinese football in this way?”

“What’s too much? It’s rotten to the core, that’s what it is. It’s rotten and you still don’t allow to speak. No wonder your football has not improved for decades. What’s this about don’t wash your dirty linen in public? I think you should take the initiative to air it in public. The more people know, the better. You don’t want to clean up the pus in the wound and yet you want to cover it up... Are you trying to get rich by breeding maggots?”

“What do you as a foreigner get out of criticizing Chinese football like this?”

“I don’t get anything. You ask, I answer, that’s the point. If you have other stories to cover, then don’t come here from thousands of miles away and ask me questions.” Speaking of this, Twain became furious—damn it, my vacation was spoilt by this swarm of flies and face in front you still dare to ask this idiotic question to my face!”

The scene was becoming explosive and more intense.

After the press conference, the media said that Tony Twain had a fierce dispute with a group of reporters at the press conference, but he did not speak off the cuff...

“Mr. Twain, is it appropriate that you criticize a country’s official body that governs football?”

“What’s inappropriate about it? The British prime minister would be criticized if he did wrong. What cannot be said if a football association has a problem? Perhaps you all think that the Chinese Football Association has no problem at all. That they are hardworking, serious, have the correct attitude and are responsible?” Twain could not hold back his laughter, “I have nothing to say if you really think so. I have already berated and criticized it. Is the Chinese Football Association not happy? Angry? What does it have to do with me?! I’ll tell you this, if they were standing in front of me today, I would say the same thing! But for a dog that is kept by the General Administration, they really think of themselves as influential? That’s the funniest thing in the world... Ridiculous! Sad! Pathetic! Shameful!”

With that, Twain pulled the crowd apart with force and squeezed out.

Halfway through, he turned around to the group of reporters and said, “I suddenly thought of a joke. Ah, I say it’s a joke, but it’s actually a true story that happened around me...the atmosphere was too tense just now. Do you want me to tell it to ease everyone’s mood a little?”

With that, he went right ahead and recounted without waiting for the reporters to say yes, “My team’s right back, Rafinha, is a member of the Brazilian Olympic team. As one of the few players on my team who had the honor to participate in the Beijing Olympic Games, he came bragging to me that he had learnt Mandarin while he was in China when he returned to Nottingham. One day, during training, he

smugly said to me, 'Boss! I know how to shout the Chinese word to cheer on the Brazilian team!' So, I let him shout to see what it's all about, and then I heard him shout, 'Fire Xie X Long!'"

All the reporters present looked at each other, rendered speechless.

Twain looked at them and laughed, "Is it lame? But I think it's very funny! I laughed till I almost died, ah ha ha-ha ha-ha——"

He left the last-minute press conference hall with chortles of "ha-ha ha-ha", leaving behind a group of stunned people.

Chapter 740: World Cup in South Africa

Twain's fight with the reporters in the hotel did not cause his holidays to return to him. Instead, it only caused his holidays to leave him further behind.

News about how he berated the Chinese Football Association and got into a 'duel of words' with the reporters during the press conference surfaced on numerous media platforms. No matter where he walked, he would always run into reporters or football fans. Some of them were friendly towards him while others longed for him to die.

It is said that the Chinese Football Association was so enraged by Tony Twain's comments that they specially phoned Nottingham Forest Football Club to protest. However, Nottingham Forest Football Club's reply to them was, "Mr. Tony Twain does not represent our football club when he is out on holiday. The comments he makes during his personal time have nothing to do with our football club."

And that was how they dismissed the Chinese Football Association's fury.

However, the Chinese Football Association still had other ways to express their discontent. They made it clear that they would not allow Nottingham Forest to play any matches in China in the future. Essentially, they blacklisted the entire Nottingham Forest team.

What a display of might!

If they could, they also wanted to ban Tony Twain from entry into China.

Of course, their actions only caused the netizens and the media to bombard them with admonitions.

In Chinese, there is a term that is used to express humility in which the speaker downgrades himself or herself by claiming that he or she is 'presenting something unpleasant' to the other person. However, what the Chinese Football Association is doing at the moment was not to 'present' something unpleasant, but rather, they are 'showing off' their unpleasanties. They are making all their imperfections known to the public, as though they are bragging about it. It is as if they think the world is as stupid as them.

The Chinese media in China has been unusually busy during this period of time. Some were busy scolding the Chinese Football Association, some were applauding Twain for his words, some just wanted

to be at loggerheads with both parties involved, and some were just trying to hype up the whole incident. There were all kinds of people making an appearance.

All the reports left the Chinese football fans stimulated, as though they had taken stimulants. It was one adrenaline rush after another.

As for Twain, he left after stirring up numerous disturbances and dumping a massive grenade into an originally calm lake.

He definitely could not continue to enjoy his holidays in China any longer. All he could do was to make his way over to Hong Kong and attend a press conference about a business endorsement there. Similarly, Shania had to shoot an advertisement for a makeup brand that she had signed a contract with earlier, and she also needed to attend a press conference for a product launch in Hong Kong.

The organisers of the event had also prepared a small dinner party to entertain both Twain and Shania.

There were less of those annoying and trivial issues that would bother Twain in Hong Kong. Things might be getting out of control in China, but all those things had nothing to do with Twain while he was in Hong Kong.

He stayed in Hong Kong for a couple of days, before flying back to England with Shania.

He certainly did not forget to bring back a present for Evan and Allan from China. However, the present was not something tangible. It was a request for a business collaboration.

During his short stay in Hong Kong, Twain met Li Ka-shing's elder son, Victor Li, who was the CEO of Cheung Kong Holdings Limited.

It was just supposed to be a simple dinner party, but Victor Li clearly came prepared.

He mentioned how he was very interested in the real estate development plan that had been put aside by Nottingham Forest during his chat with Twain.

He did not say much, but the intelligent Twain already knew what the man was getting at.

The British real estate market has taken a huge blow as a result of the economic crisis that has been going on for two years. Property and land prices have gone on a steep decline and have almost hit rock bottom.

However, to a successful businessman, it is precisely during times like this that an opportunity to make a fortune arises. Since the British real estate market is currently experiencing winter, doesn't that mean that spring is not too far away?

If not for the arrival of the economic crisis, Nottingham Forest would have been able to complete their development plans in Clifton without a hitch. And, given how the British real estate market has prospered over the past few years, the football club would have been able to generate a profit and suffer no losses.

However, if that were to happen, then it would be very difficult for the Li family, who mainly did business in Hong Kong, to participate in the British real estate development market.

To Victor Li's Cheung Kong Holdings Limited, the economic crisis has provided them with a golden opportunity to expand their business overseas.

Clifton was just a part of a brick wall that Victor Li had to tear down in order to bring his business into England.

However, Twain did not care about what these businessmen had on their minds. He was just going to relay the news to Allan Adams and Evan Doughty. Everything else was up to Allan.

If this business collaboration was possible however, it would be good news for him as well, because he would no longer have to worry about not having the funds to buy players. He could also stop selling star players in his team to generate the funds needed to fill the bottomless pit caused by the club's constant financial troubles...

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Evan was very interested in the 'gift' that Twain had brought back from China. It would certainly greatly reduce the club's financial burdens if they are able to convince the Hong Kong firm to invest in their development plans.

He did not think about having all of the profits to himself at a time like this when the economy was not doing well. The cake was too big for him to finish alone.

Allan was optimistic towards the news that Twain had brought back, but also exercised caution. He had approached Victor Li in the past for a business collaboration as well. Back then, Victor Li had considered his proposition for a while, but still ended up refusing his proposal. Why did he change his mind in just a year?

In contrast, Evan did not find it odd that Victor Li had a change of heart. A year ago the property and land prices had not reached rock bottom. It is only natural for him to wait until the prices hit rock bottom before making a move since it would lower the overall costs for him. He is a businessman after all. He needs to be a little crafty.

As Twain was having a headache over which players he should buy and sell for the new season, Allan Adams flew over to Hong Kong personally to discuss the details about their potential business collaboration.

None of them would have known that this business deal would take a year before an agreement would finally be reached. Both parties only signed a contract in September of 2011.

The new football stadium finally welcomed the arrival of the 'God of Wealth' from the East. The construction works that had been stalled for three years could finally resume once again.

Of course, these information are just 'postscripts' right now, and will be discussed at a later time.

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Half of June had already passed by when Dunn returned to Nottingham by himself. To both Twain and Dunn however, the summer for 2010 had only just started.

Travelling to China and helping the club earn a chance to work with the Li family this summer were trifles to Twain.

The main event for this summer was definitely not his squabble with the Chinese media. It was going to take place in South Africa.

The World Cup had commenced.

Numerous highly sought-after football stars have all emerged from the previous World Cup competitions. The World Cup was the perfect chance for all managers to scrutinize the conditions and performances of their own players as well as potential players.

After hearing that Cheung Kong Holdings Limited was interested in working with the club in the development of Clifton, Evan Doughty set aside 50 million pounds as Twain's summer transfer budget from the company's finances.

With that money in hand, Twain dragged Dunn along with him and they boarded the plane to the capital of South Africa: Johannesburg.

The treasure hunt starts again!

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"I was still worried that we would see nothing but sceneries of falling snow when we alight from the plane. It seems like I know too little about the world."

The host South Africa was situated in the Southern Hemisphere. It was currently winter in South Africa, unlike other countries in the Northern Hemisphere that were already experiencing midsummer.

It might be winter here in South Africa, but the weather was not 'wintry'. The average temperature at Johannesburg, which was one of the several venues for the World Cup, was 18 degree Celsius. Such a temperature was very suitable for outdoor sports.

The main reason behind Twain's trip to South Africa was none other than to take on the role as a guest commentator for the World Cup on BBC5. He has already established his own unique style of commenting on the matches following his commentaries during the World Cup in Germany and the Euro 2008 held in Austria and Switzerland. There are numerous people who like listening to his commentaries.

He also has his own fan site online. His fans would collect and post the various comments he made on air in the past on the net. They would also post his writings, videos and recordings; basically anything they can find, for others to browse and download, so as to spread his influence.

In China, he also has his own fan base, and those fans of his call all these materials that have been posted on the net as 'Tony Twain's Quotations'.

There were even Chinese netizens who suggested that the China Central Television should hire Twain as a commentator after he chastised the Chinese Football Association. He was very fluent in Chinese after all.

Of course, those were nothing more than the netizens' wishful thinking. They never came true.

However, what it all demonstrated was that even if there came a day where Twain does not want to be a football manager anymore, he would still be able to find a job as a pundit with the reputation that he has right now.

On the other hand, Dunn was going to join Kerslake and the other scouts who have all arrived in Johannesburg much earlier than them in their work of observing the players who were participating in the World Cup, so as to provide Twain with the first-hand information with regards to what sort of players he should go for during the transfer window. They would also scrutinize the players who are already on Twain's transfer wish list and make sure that those players are truly eligible to be a player for Forest.

Additionally, as the assistant manager, Dunn also has to constantly meet up with the football agents who have turned up at the World Cup. Some of those agents approached him to recommend their players to Nottingham Forest since they are a team who has made their return to the European stage, while others required Dunn to take the initiative and approach them himself instead.

After parting ways at the airport, Twain followed the BBC staff over to the hotel which he would be staying at, while Dunn got in contact with the scouts who were scattered all over the city and began doing his work as well.

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The World Cup in South Africa was not spared from the impact of the global economic crisis, but the South African government hope to use the World Cup as an opportunity to boost their country's economy. Hence, much effort was put into making the World Cup a lively one.

Twain did not care about that, however. Besides providing live commentaries and writing articles for the four British and one Chinese media outlets that had signed a contract with him, he was going to allocate all his remaining time and energy into his search for a few interesting players amongst all the players who were participating in the World Cup.

The commentators who were in charge of providing commentary for the England match were able to provide a more in-depth analysis due to their familiarity with the players.

Twain has also started focusing on the homegrown British players a lot more since two seasons ago, due to the imminent implementation of a rule that will enforce a fixed ratio of homegrown players to foreign players in all football clubs.

This rule proposed by Sepp Blatter that will restrict the number of foreign players in all football clubs across the world will be enforced in the 2010-11 season. The rule was to be carried out slowly over three stages.

Firstly, all clubs have to comply with a '4+7' rule. Every club is allowed to have four homegrown players and seven foreign players in their starting line-up of 11 players.

Secondly, during the 2011-12 season, all clubs have to comply with a '5+6' rule. The number of foreign players allowed in the starting line-up would be reduced to six, while the number of homegrown players would be increased to five. The number of homegrown players would still be slightly lesser than the number of foreign players.

Thirdly, during the 2012-13 season, all clubs have to comply with the '6+5' rule. The number of homegrown players in the starting line-up will be higher than that of the foreign players'.

This rule is meant to combat how numerous football clubs are becoming increasingly 'international teams'. It is a rule that hopes to provide more opportunities for the homegrown players and thereby boost the standards of football in the various countries.

However, the moment this rule was proposed, it was met with fierce protests from the European Union. The European Union believed that this rule by FIFA was an impediment to the free movement of talent from one country to another, and saw it as a rule that contravened human rights.

Up till now, both parties have yet to see eye to eye, and neither side has relented. The European Union might not have agreed to the implementation of the rule, but the '6+5' rule looks set to be implemented in the new season.

The Premier League will be the league that is the most deeply affected by the implementation of the rule. The Premier League's unique system of giving out work permits to foreign players has led to several Premier League teams possessing a relatively high number of foreign players in their teams.

A foreign player playing in the Premier League only needs to pass the Home Office's audit to obtain a work permit. It did not matter what the player's nationality was. All foreign players are allowed to play in the Premier League without restrictions. This system is very different from La Liga, whereby every football team is only allowed to have three non-European Union players, and it allows the Premier League to gather top players from many countries.

To obtain a work permit, a foreign player is required to appear in at least 75 per cent of his national team's competitive 'A-ranked' matches in a year, and his national team also needs to be ranked within the top 68 teams on the FIFA World Rankings.

The implementation of such a system has ensured the quantity and quality of the foreign players who play in the Premier League. This is how the Premier League became one of the most successful leagues in the world. It also explains how the Premier League is able to replace Serie A, which was once reputed as a 'mini World Cup' in the early 90s, as the top league in Europe.

However, there was also a dire consequence that arose as a result of the implementation of such a system. The standard of football was high in the Premier League, but conversely, the standard of football of the England national team was beyond terrible...

One contributing factor to the terrible standard of football was how the British media would only brag about how talented their youths were. Another contributing factor was how the various big football clubs were unwilling to give their homegrown youth players more playing time. They would rather spend money bringing in established foreign talents. Doing so deprives the youth players of the opportunities to gain experience, and ultimately leads to their downfall. The youth players all become 'Fang Zhong-Yong' in the story of 'The Pity of Zhong-Yong' [1].

The FIFA's regulations left Wenger feeling extremely annoyed and helpless, but all he could do was to accept the rules. Unlike Wenger, Twain was not as worried about the implementation of the new rules. He had already started gathering talented homegrown players and youths two years ago, and has been waiting for the day where the rule would be implemented all along.

It was not hard for him to comply with the '4+7' rule based on how his team is set up currently. However, considering how the rule mainly restricts the 11 players who are going to play on the pitch, he still needs to continue scouting homegrown British players.

For this season, Twain was definitely going to go after Tottenham Hotspur's right winger David Bentley. Ever since Beckham's departure from the team, Forest has lacked attacking options going down the right, and relying on Lennon alone was not viable. Thus, he has his eyes set on the player who shares the same name as the world-renowned luxury car brand 'Bentley'.

Beckham's departure from the England's national team has also led to a fierce competition for the right-winger position. Aaron Lennon and Theo Walcott are both players who have been called the 'successors' of David Beckham, but it was David Bentley from Tottenham Hotspur who came out on top and became the starting right winger for Capello's England national team.

Like Capello, Twain also thought highly of this midfielder who could play on the flanks. He was a player who could pass, shoot and break through the defense. Twain decided to pay the most attention to Bentley's performance during this World Cup.

There was also another player who Twain wanted to focus on as well. However, he was paying attention to that player not because he wants to bring him into the team, because he is already a member of the Nottingham Forest team.

George Wood is a player that Twain personally picked up from the slum. The attention that Twain has placed on George Wood all this while has already surpassed the kind of attention that a manager is expected to place on his players.

George Wood was not able to receive a single minute of game time during the World Cup in Germany. From 2006 to 2010 however, George Wood underwent a drastic transformation. He was the captain during both seasons when his team won the Champions League. He would also be present in the midfield positions for the Professional Footballers' Association Premier League Team of the Year every season. His performance has garnered attention from teams all over the world. Twain would find heaps of faxes hoping to buy George Wood on his desk every summer. Players of the Football Manager game also splash the cash in the game to buy the solid midfielder for their teams.

Will George Wood, who has had a fantastic footballing career in his club so far, be able to gain his first experience playing for his national team at such a big tournament during the summer of 2010?

Twain intends to wait and see how everything transpires.