

Champions 781

Chapter 781: An Ibrahimović Good at Headers

According to Tony Twain's habit of doing things, he must determine an alternative course of action before he made up his mind on a matter.

The sale of Žigić had really been bothering him for two days. The reason he wanted to keep him was really as he thought when he spoke to Allan before. The reason for selling him was that the Forest team might not need as many players in the forward line from next season... It was not impossible to sell a player and make some transfer money available for the team.

Twain was not stubborn about this matter.

In fact, starting in the second half of the season, the Forest team would be using more new tactical formations in order to seek breakthroughs. For all these years that Twain had led the team, it was the first time that he had made all these subverted changes. After all, the Forest team previously always gave the impression that they defended and then counterattacked. No matter how they changed, they could not break out of this cycle.

New formations and tactics required more proactive measures. Twain no longer insisted on his 4-4-2 formation. Instead, he changed the play to 4-5-1, and a stricter differentiation would be 4-2-3-1, the Christmas tree shaped formation.

In this way, the demand for strikers was greatly reduced. Each game only required one striker. If too many players were on the bench and the rotation could not be arranged accordingly, there would be people who felt dissatisfied—why can he be rotated on the field while I can only continue to sit on the bench?

He could only consider in this way if he really were to sell Žigić.

But if Žigić was gone, the team would be missing a center forward. In some special circumstances, a center forward like Žigić could play a role that the other strikers could not. Twain was unwilling to throw away a still very useful card in vain.

Ibišević was a striker, but he was not purely a center forward, let alone a firm center forward.

Van Nistelrooy was retiring at the end of the season. Eastwood's knee had always been like a landmine which could be stepped on at any time after three major operations. Ibišević was the only striker with no trouble. In the new tactics, Agbonlahor would be a more comprehensive player. He could be a striker, but Twain planned to let him play as an attacking right midfielder because his speed advantage could play a bigger role in the flank.

Millán, who was out on loan, could also play as a forward, attacking midfielder slot and other positions. A utility player always did not have to worry about having opportunities to play.

If he sold Žigić, where would he go find a suitable replacement?

Twain's target he had in mind for the substitute was to have a certain strength, but not too strong, because anyone too strong would certainly require the main position, which Twain absolutely could not satisfy this requirement. If Eastwood was fit and uninjured, he and Ibišević would be the team's main forwards and in rotation for appearances.

As a result, the role of a new striker would be less. If possible, Twain was reluctant to pay for a third striker... It would be a waste.

After mulling over it for two days, Twain thought of a man.

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"Are you free now?" During a break in the training, Twain pulled in Kerslake and Dunn.

"Isn't the training in progress?" Kerslake was surprised.

"Let the coaches handle it first. I want you to accompany me to the reserves training ground."

"Why do you suddenly want to go to the reserves team?" Dunn asked.

"I suddenly thought of a person. I almost forgot about him..." Twain scratched his head and said slightly embarrassed.

He did forget that person...

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"You did forget him." Standing by the training ground at Wilford, Dunn glanced at Twain.

The reserves team did not belong to the youth team, so they trained with the First Team in South Wilford. The two places were not far apart and did not take long to reach there.

The reserve team was playing a seven-on-seven game on the training ground in front of them. There was one person in the yellow team who was very eye-catching because he was the tallest on the field now.

Twain and Dunn, as well as Kerslake came to see him—Aaron Mitchell. Two and a half years ago, Twain had gone to the reserve team to inspect Şahin's state of recovery but did not expect that day's protagonist to be another person.

At the time, Mitchell's performance as a center back was lacking. If he continued to play like this, the best chance he would have would be to play in the second-tier league, which he would never have been able to establish himself in the Premier League at his level anyway, let alone play in the Nottingham Forest First Team.

After watching him train and play, Twain called him in and suggested that he played as a center forward from now on. Although both positions were played in the middle, the position was moved from the back to the forefront, which could be described as a dramatic change.

It was only out of Twain's professional habits to let Mitchell change position. Then half a year later, when he was crushed by a heart attack, he was busy battling the heart disease for another six months and completely forgot about Mitchell. Later in the process of rebuilding the team, because the Forest

team was not short of players in the forward line, so he also never recalled that poor player whom he changed his position, threw in the youth team and never asked about again.....

It was not until the possibility of Žigić's transfer was on the agenda that he recalled the young man who had felt similar to Žigić.

Aaron Mitchell was currently twenty years old and had played in the reserves for two years but had yet to get a chance to play in the First Team.

While arguably playing in the reserves was a way into the First Team, it did not mean that playing here would necessarily allow him to get into the First Team. There were a number of players who spent most of their time in the reserves and could only be drawn to the First Team occasionally to relieve any immediate need. This portion of players were considered lucky. Most players faded into obscurity in the reserve team, perhaps seek opportunities in the lower leagues, or declined henceforth. If a player who had graduated from the youth team and always played in the reserves after, it at least meant that he did not have any outstanding talent or ability. Such a player's future was bleak.

From this point of view, Aaron Mitchell's talent was clearly not outstanding.

Mitchell was on the pitch as a center forward, and his header was still outstanding, thanks, of course, to his fearsome height. Twain felt that Mitchell was currently taller than when he first saw him. So, he pointed to Mitchell as he turned his face to the reserve team coach Colin Calderwood and said, "How tall is he now?"

"Two point two meters." Calderwood replied.

Twain whistled, "He's as tall as Žigić."

"But he is thinner than Žigić." Dunn said next to him.

Indeed, the thinness of the two-point-two meter tall Mitchell was clear. He was a bit like Peter Crouch who used to play for the Forest team.

"How's he with physical confrontation?" Twain asked.

"Average." Calderwood replied.

The answer made Twain frown. The center forward he needed had to be strong and able to compete with the opposing tall and strong defenders in the penalty area so that he did not lose his position and the ball easily.

Calderwood certainly knew what Twain was worried about, so he laughed and continued, "But Tony, he's not quite like the traditional center forwards..."

"Eh? How is he different?"

"Have you ever seen a center forward who is more than two meters tall and can scissor?"

Twain and the two assistant managers next to him stared at Calderwood in surprise.

"His technique is excellent." Calderwood laughed, "and even. There's no obvious weakness technically. He can pass the ball to create opportunities for his teammates, and also to pull to the side to cross pass."

His dribbling in terms of his height, is also good. Maybe it's because he knows he's not capable of physical confrontation, so he works hard in technical training, and so... it becomes what you see now."

During their conversation, Mitchell got the ball. He stopped the ball during running with his heel outside of the foot. While he stopped the football at the same time, he also completed the action to do an emergency stop and turn to change direction...

"Wow—," Kerslake could not help exclaim.

After stopping the ball in the flank and bypassed an opposing defender, Mitchell swung his leg for a pass on the spot. Unfortunately, the teammate who received in the middle did not expect Mitchell's decisive pass and missed the ball by a margin.

The men did not speak and began to observe Mitchell's performance on the field.

Perhaps because he had been a center back, Mitchell retained the habit of seeing opposing players go up and grab the ball, rather than playing like a pure attacking player who walked around in the front field and watched as the other side take the ball past him. This helped Mitchell get a lot of chances to counter press in the front field.

Because he was two point two meters tall, he dribbled the ball at a very wide pace, so his speed did not feel slow, and did not give a heavysset feeling like Žigić. Coupled with his excellent footwork, watching him play always gave the illusion—was this really a big man more than two meters tall?

He was also not the kind of center forward who liked to wait in front of the goal for his teammates to pass the ball to him. He preferred to pull out, back up to receive and overly connect for the attack.

His header was indeed a very sharp weapon. As long as the football flew into his aerial space, he would get it nine out of ten times. His amazing height coupled with his outstanding jump, in addition to the level of his header and awareness from his training and playing as the center back, he could said to dominate the aerial space in front of the goal.

Unfortunately, his shot was a little poorer compared to his excellent header...

Twain watched his game for fifteen minutes and had a rough idea. His header success rate was as high as eighty per cent, but only one out of five shots from his feet hit within the goalpost range—which was too direct and intercepted by the goalkeeper.

"Well... His shooting skill improvement rate is slow..." Calderwood was a little embarrassed when it came to that.

In the reserves, the tactic for Mitchell was during the offensive, he would retreat to receive the pass from the midfield. Then he would use his footwork skills to dribble the ball to break through and after which, he would divert it to the sides for his teammates who had already plugged in while he continued to dash to the penalty area. His teammates would send the ball after they got rid of the opposing flank defense. Mitchell who was already in place by then, would fight to head the ball. This time he had two options: A, he would use his header shot to score a goal; B, he would send it to the other teammates and create a chance for them to shoot.

The tactic was very simple and Mitchell did quite well. He was really impeccable with the header shots.

Unfortunately, his body was really too thin and almost did not have the ability for direct confrontation. That was one of the main reasons why he could not play well as a center back in the first place...

This reason was also essential to why he had not been recommended for promotion to the First Team.

The Premier League was the most confrontational league tournament in the world. A “reasonable collision” in the Premier League could be a malicious foul in other league tournaments. The physically inferior striker would lose out when he competed against the others. Apart from Wenger’s oddity, few managers would take an interest in a striker who looked like he could be blown away by the wind.

But Twain did not care that much. He saw hope in Mitchell and a completely different center forward. He might bring something different to the Forest team’s offense.

“Tell him to report to the First Team tomorrow.” Twain snapped his fingers and said, “I’m going to sign him up for the next stage of the Champions League tournament.”

This sentence meant that he could let Žigić go with confidence ...

Neither of the two assistant managers made any suggestions with regards to Twain’s decision. They saw something brilliant in Mitchell, whose shortcomings could be made up by training and high level competition.

After he finished briefing on these matters, Twain left with two assistant managers. They still had to go back to the First Team training ground and was not able to waste too much time here.

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Aaron Mitchell only heard the news from Coach Colin Calderwood that he had been transferred to the First Team from the reserve team after training. After being stunned for a short moment, he was joyous. Since switching to play as the center forward, he had thought about his future at the Forest team. He felt that since the boss had to change him to play as a striker, he might need a striker.

But then he felt a little hopeless when he saw the Forest team’s swelling to somewhat bloated ranks in the forward line. He thought he was not an exceptionally talented player, and the only things he was proud of were his height and headers.

He kept practicing his skills in the hope that he had some different qualities that could stand out from the other players of the same kind.

After determining on how to train him as a striker, Colin Calderwood, also noticed Mitchell’s efforts and characteristics in the area, so he recommended a training example for Mitchell to follow.

This example was not Žigić in the Forest team, nor was it van Nistelrooy. It was Ibrahimović in the far away Inter Millán.

In addition to training, he would study the tall Swedish center forward’s playing characteristics and style, to try his best to imitate and learn, in hopes that he could also become a striker who was more than one point nine meter tall but with outstanding footwork skills.

Now the opportunity had come!

The next day he went straight to the First Team's training ground and saw the star teammates he rarely saw on the sidelines, which made him a little excited. While those teammates also looked a little curiously at the foolishly happy Mitchell, standing on the sidelines.

Mitchell was not a rising star player like Moke who was in the reserves, but whose name had long been spread throughout the club. He remained in obscurity before he came here. Although everyone was in the same club, it was normal to be unfamiliar with each other.

When the First Team players warmed up together, Aaron Mitchell still stood outside, at a loss over what to do.

That was when his savior came.

Tony Twain and the two assistant managers walked onto the training ground. He saw Mitchell at a glance, who was wandering outside the crowd, and waved to him, "Kid, come here!"

"This is your new teammate." Pulling Mitchell over, Twain introduced him to the other players, "Aaron Mitchell, a professional striker, who used to play as a center back."

Hearing his strange position change, the players broke out in a moment of wonder.

After a brief introduction, Twain asked the players to warm up, but he made Mitchell stay behind.

"There are some things I have to make clear to you in advance so that I don't have any trouble in the future." Twain said to Mitchell who stood in front of him extremely deferential, "First of all, to be able to be transferred to the First Team proves that you are capable, so don't doubt that you are not strong enough; Secondly, you can't think that you will be able to get the main position and be in the starting lineup once you are in the First Team...I won't promise you all these. You have to fight and compete with the attitude and form you've trained if you want all these. You know, you're currently last out of all the strikers in the First Team."

Mitchell nodded repeatedly.

"You'd better use your learning mentality to prepare for your days in the First Team. I think that will help you more."

While saying all these, Twain's face with the sunglasses on was always serious-looking. He did not mind being harsh on these young people, because he knew how cruel professional football was. It was best not to have any illusions and be down-to-earth in order to achieve something. On the path of these young people's development, he was willing to be the number one villain in these people's hearts all the time.

Seeing that Mitchell had a good attitude and was humble enough made Twain very satisfied. He ended his sermon and began to assign specific training tasks, "Starting from today, we will increase your shooting and strength training. The coaching team will give you a special training program for you to follow. I heard when you were in the reserves, Coach Calderwood asked you to learn from Ibrahimović?"

Mitchell nodded in reply, "Yes, boss. I hope to be a striker like him."

"Make no mistake, boy. Ibrahimović is not physically weak, and his shooting ability is ten light years better than yours."

Mitchell's expression darkened. Although Twain spoke the truth, the truth was not nice to hear...

Twain remembered that Mitchell was already twenty years old, but he was still a young player after all. Sometimes encouragement was needed.

So, he grinned and said, "But don't worry. At least you have one thing that is better than Ibrahimović—your header." He pointed to Mitchell's head and said, "An Ibrahimović, who is good at headers and much better than Ibrahimović himself!"

Chapter 782: Twain's Christmas Tree

Aaron Mitchell's promotion into the first team marked the official commencement of Žigić's transfer work.

Allan picked a few clubs that had put in the highest bids for Žigić and accepted their offers.

As for Žigić, he had no special thoughts regarding his transfer. He was not one of those loyal subjects who would pledge his undying allegiance to Forest. If the other club is able to offer him an even better contract than the one he has at Forest currently, then he would certainly not reject their offer.

Additionally, he is well aware that the boss has no intentions of keeping him at the club, given Mitchell's sudden promotion into the first team. It is meaningless for him to stay.

The three clubs whose bids had been accepted by Allan Adams were Premier League's Newcastle, Bundesliga's Hamburger SV, and La Liga's Villarreal CF. All three clubs had put in a bid of 10 million pounds.

A bid of 10 million pounds is very attractive given the current circumstances. It is no wonder that Allan wanted to speak to Twain about it.

Negotiations for Žigić's transfer proceeded smoothly. Eventually, Žigić chose to go to La Liga's Villarreal CF, because the club offered him the best personal terms. In addition, they were also a team with the capability of fighting for Champions League spots in the league every season.

Three days later, both Nottingham Forest and Villarreal CF officially announced the completion of the transfer. Žigić has transferred over to the 'Yellow Submarine' for a transfer fee of 10 million pounds.

Twain had initially bought Žigić for 10 million euros. Now that Žigić was sold for 10 million pounds, it means that he was sold for 10.8 million euros. Given the current economic situation, being able to make a little bit of profit off a player was considered to be a good deal for the club.

At the very least, it was proof that Twain was spot on with his judgement of players, because the club did not suffer a loss on the players that he had bought.

Žigić's number 9 shirt was left behind after his departure. Twain gave the shirt to Mitchell.

When he passed the shirt to Mitchell, he kept a long face and told him sternly, "The number doesn't represent anything. The number 9 does not symbolize that you are a starting player in the team."

Mitchell has gotten used to the way that his boss speaks and acts. He nodded his head and replied, "I know that, boss. I will do my best."

Twain's mouth parted slightly at his response, and he passed it off as a smile.

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Žigić did not perform badly during his time at Nottingham Forest. In the two and half seasons that he played for Forest, he scored a total of 21 goals and provided 25 assists.

Sadly, the team went through its 'darkest times' during the two seasons where he was a player for Forest. They did not become the champions for any competition, and they also did not attain a single accolade. Žigić came and left empty-handed.

The Nottingham Forest fans do not regard Žigić to be on the same level as other center forwards in their team, such as van Nistelrooy or Eastwood. Žigić left the team without leaving behind any sort of memorable moment that others would still think about in years to come.

Not too long after Žigić's transfer had been finalized, John Bostock also accepted Fulham's loan offer.

Twain specially added a clause in Bostock's contract which states that, 'Bostock is not allowed to play in any games between Fulham and Nottingham Forest'.

It is not rare for such a clause to appear in the contracts of players playing for La Liga. In contrast, such a clause is rarely included by Premier League clubs. It was quite 'shameless' of Twain to include the clause, but he did not want Forest to be defeated at the hands of a player that they have groomed. The 'tragedy' that happened at Real Madrid when they faced RCD Mallorca and Samuel Eto'o should never befall Nottingham Forest.

Ex-Real Madrid player Pablo Garcia once talked about the clause, and he called it a 'sh*t clause'. One can tell how much he despised the clause.

Twain did not care about the reputation surrounding the clause. Everything of use to him was good!

Fulham did not care about the inclusion of the clause either. They were already halfway through the season, and they would only face Forest once in the remaining games. It was not anything big to not play Bostock for just one game.

However, Bostock was slightly upset about the inclusion of the clause, because he had hoped to get the chance to show off his skills before Twain during the match against Forest, which would then attract Twain's attention and help him earn a spot in the starting team in the following season.

That was the situation that Twain feared the most. He was afraid that the players he had loaned out to other clubs would play with a desire of proving their worth to their parent club, and they would then perform exceptionally well during the games against Forest and become the star player who defeated his team. This is why he needed to completely eliminate the possibility of such a situation happening before it is too late.

In the end, Bostock accepted the inclusion of the clause. What could he do even if he did not agree to its inclusion? The only two choices for him were to either accept the inclusion of the clause, or to spend the remaining season on the bench.

There are certain times where Twain is your closest friend, but most of the time, he is a despicable demon.

Two players left Nottingham Forest during the winter transfer window, but the club did not bring in any new players. Twain believed that his current line-up was enough to deal with the remaining matches of the season.

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On 16th January, Nottingham Forest faced Everton in an away game. It was the game where Twain was going to unveil his new formation for the very first time.

Moyes had studied Forest's recent performances in their past few games. He figured that Twain would still insist on playing an attacking style football, but he never expected Twain to change his formation.

Twain might have changed the way his team played football from time to time, but all this while, there were certain things that Twain insisted on and never changed. One, he always placed a strong emphasis on defense. Two, he always made use of the flanks to attack. Three, he always employed two center forwards. Four, he always made use of a defensive midfielder.

4-2-3-1.

That was the formation that Forest was going to use during the match against Everton.

Joe Mattock, Pepe, Jonathan Woodgate and Nicolas Nkoulou make up the back four. Such an arrangement was not surprising. What was surprising was the fact that Twain did not put a defensive midfielder in place!

It was not that George Wood would not be playing in the game. How could he possibly not play in a game when he is in good form, is not sick or injured and has not been banned from playing?

It was just that there were some slight modifications to the position that he would be playing at.

He was not going to play as a defensive midfielder for the match. Both his and his partner Tiago's positions have been moved forward. They were no longer defensive midfielders but rather central midfielders.

Don't underestimate this shift. The responsibilities of a defensive midfielder differs from that of a central midfielder's. A defensive midfielder primarily focuses on defense, whereas a central midfielder typically acts as the bridge between the team's offense and defense. They are required to play a larger role during the team's offense.

Forest's coaching staff have actually been working on developing George Wood's offensive abilities since a few seasons ago. However, due to the fact that he has always played as a defensive midfielder, only his defensive abilities have been tested thus far.

With this change in position, Wood would be able to unshackle himself and focus more on attacking. It signified a rare breakthrough for both Wood and Forest.

Wood and Tiago were in charge of organizing the team's offense in the midfield. In addition, they also have to take on the important task of defending. They were the busiest players in their entire team.

The '3' players playing in front of them were Chris Cohen, Matías Fernández and Gabriel Agbonlahor. Cohen and Agbonlahor were positioned at the left and right flanks, while Fernández was positioned in the middle. His central position would allow him to make good use of his long shots to either provide the final pass needed for his team's attacks, or to score a goal.

Fernández was playing as a playmaker, but he was not playing as playmaker who would organize the team's attacks. He was playing as a playmaker who would score goals.

Fernández's ability to score is one of the reasons why Twain chose to use him over Şahin. Şahin's ability to score goals paled in comparison to Fernández.

It was not surprising that Agbonlahor was playing on the right flank, because he had played at that position numerous times during his time at Aston Villa. It was also not his first time playing as a right winger for Forest.

The center-forward positioned at the very front was Ibišević.

Additionally, Twain has also requested his two full backs to actively participate in the team's offense, which is a complete change to how he rarely allowed his full backs to go forward and join the offense in the past. It was evident that Twain had really set his heart on playing an attacking style football at Everton's home ground.

The coaching staff might have gotten Wood to play as the central midfielder during training numerous times before, but it was his first time playing in that position in an actual match, which is why the Nottingham Forest's coaching staff were all nervously watching how the match played out. They wanted to see if Wood would be able to perform as he did during their training sessions.

Wood did not get used to his new position initially. He kept wanting to run back and play as the defensive midfielder. This forced Twain to chastise him loudly from the side of the pitch, and he made Wood return to his position as a central midfielder.

Retreating backwards was permissible for central midfielders, since their role also involves defense. However, it was not permissible to retreat backwards and not move back up afterwards.

Tiago took on the responsibility of organizing the team's offense while Wood struggled to get used to his new role. He used to play in this position in the past, so he did not need to get used to it, and was able to get into the role straight away.

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It was obvious from the start of the match that it was the very first time that Forest had employed such a formation and tactic in an actual match, because all the players were trying to get used to the new playing style...

Moyes could not comprehend why Twain would suddenly employ a set of tactics and formation that his players have clearly not gotten used to. However, he did not dwell on things he could not understand.

Since Forest has yet to find their momentum for the match, I'm going to go ahead and take full advantage of this situation!

He instructed his team to start attacking Forest's goalpost ferociously.

Eventually, on the 17th minute of the match, their genius forward, James Vaughan, displayed his gift right outside Forest's penalty box.

He initially wanted to make his way into the penalty box after receiving a pass from his team mate, but he faced Tiago's interception outside the penalty box. Tiago's tackle did not stop Vaughan completely. He wobbled a little, but was able to regain his composure quickly. He then raised his feet and shot for goal before Wood came over to tackle him. The ball flew over the tip of Akinfeev's fingers like an artillery shell and flew into the back of the net!

"A worldie!" The commentator roared excitedly. "When Wayne Rooney was still at Everton, he too scored a nearly identical goal in the match against Arsenal! Everton's fans have all forgotten about Wayne Rooney with how Vaughan has been performing lately! He has already scored 11 goals for the team as Everton's first choice forward this season! The future ahead of him is very promising!"

The goal set the audience at Goodison Park on fire. Everton's fans began doing waves at the stands to celebrate. They were like a sea that had just been hit by a storm.

Twain felt a little crestfallen.

This was the difference between a genius player and an ordinary player... An ordinary player would choose to give up when he has to deal with interceptions from both Tiago and Wood, whereas a genius player would grasp at the fleeting chance and send the ball into the net through a small gap between players...

The blame is definitely not on him as the manager...

Now that his team is trailing behind, should he revert back to the 4-4-2 formation that they are used to?

It was not impossible to make the changes based on their current line-up. Agbonlahor could be moved into the center-forward position, and Cohen could take over on the right flank.

However, Twain adamantly said, 'No!' to the idea.

He has to stick with the 4-2-3-1 formation. He firmly believes that it would be Everton's turn to be down in luck once his team gets used to the new playing style!

The might of the 4-2-3-1 formation has already been shown during training. The problem right now was how to successfully display that same might during an actual match.

The key to solving the problem lies with George Wood. If he is not able to get into his new role, then it will affect the team's performance as a whole.

Twain believes that Wood's sense for football is not that terrible. After all, he is a player that Demetrio Albertini thinks highly of. Albertini is a man whom people call the 'commander of the midfield'. He is known for having a keen sense for football!

George Wood finally started getting used to playing in his new position after struggling for 20 minutes on the pitch. However, he had his own insights on how to play in his new position. He did not only anchor himself at the position of the central midfielder. He was more flexible, and the way he played was akin to how the traditional box-to box midfielders used to play in England. His playing style allows him to actively put in good performances in both the team's offense and defense.

Players who adopt such a playing style have to cover a large area on the pitch, and it is very physically demanding. However, stamina is Wood's forte, so he did not need to worry about being drained out in the later stages of the match due to him running back and forth constantly throughout the match. It was a playing style that suited Wood nicely.

Twain smiled after seeing how Wood was playing his new role as the central midfielder. It was not what Twain had put in place for him, but Wood's way of doing things was actually much better.

Let him find a way to play that suits him the most. Maybe he would play in a way that exceeds all our expectations.

Wood began his performance of sprinting back and forth from one penalty box to the other.

He stopped Everton's attacks. He organized Forest's offense. He kept appearing at every single place where he was needed. He was so full of energy that it made him seem like a superman.

"George Wood tackles away Vaughan's ball! Did he foul him? No, it was a clean tackle!"

"George Wood's through ball! Brilliant! It went past all the Everton defenders! But sadly there's no one who could receive it... He kicked it too hard..."

"He tries to do a long shot! But the ball goes over the bar!"

"Ohhhhh! George Wood! He has stopped Everton's counterattack once again!"

Nottingham Forest's two central midfielders make up the core of their new tactic. George Wood is the key player between the two central midfielders, and his performance is pivotal to the team's success. If Wood performs well, then the whole team performs well.

On the 40th minute of the first half, Wood intercepted Tim Cahill's ball and then passed it over to Tiago. Tiago subsequently passed the ball over to Cohen, who was positioned at the right flank.

Cohen passed the ball into the middle. Everton's goalkeeper, Tim Howard, made an error in his judgement when he came out to try and keep the ball away. He failed to touch the ball and allowed it to fly over his head!

How could Ibišević possibly miss out on such a good chance? He broke free from Joseph Yobo who was marking him and jumped up. He then headed the ball into the net!

This is the advantage of playing two central midfielders. The team is able to snatch the ball from their opponents and go on the counterattack instantly. There is no delay when they make the switch, and it also doesn't give their opponents a chance to snatch the ball back in the midfield.

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During half time, Twain acknowledged his players' performance in the latter part of the first half. He told them to keep playing in the same way in the second half. Everton is incapable of stopping Forest when they go all out in their offense.

It was just like Twain said.

In the second half, Everton put up a resistance for a short period of time, but Nottingham Forest was able to seize complete control of the game thereafter.

Playing five midfielders was not just for show. It was a tactic that will allow Forest to control the midfield and stop the opponents' attacks in the midfield. In addition, it will also allow the team to pressure the opponent's defense and gain the upper hand in the game. Once the team gains the upper hand, they can then turn this advantage into a victory.

Twain had deliberately chosen Everton to be the club that he tried his new tactic and formation on. He was afraid that something would go wrong if he tried them against a strong opponent, and there was also no point in trying them out on weak teams.

Therefore, Everton, being a mid-table team who has been performing consistently, and who also has the ability to fight for the qualifying spots to get into the Champions League, was the best candidate for Twain to try his new tactic and formation on.

Poor Moyes...

On the 80th minute of the match, Nottingham Forest's domination in the game finally paid off.

What happened this time round was that Matías Fernández first created space by running off the ball. Tiago then passed the ball directly into the empty space and Ibišević was onside to score his 14th goal of the season in the Premier League. He has now scored a total of 16 goals in all competitions.

Ibišević only has to score four more goals in order for Twain to win his bet with Carl Spicer. To the current Ibišević, scoring four goals was not a problem at all.

Ultimately, Nottingham Forest defeated Everton with the two goals from Ibišević. However, in actuality, the true reason behind why the team was able to win Everton was because of Twain's 'Christmas Tree'.

As everyone knows, AC Milan's 4-3-2-1 formation is known as the 'Christmas Tree Formation'. Similarly, Twain's 4-2-3-1 formation also looks like a Christmas Tree, which is why Twain addresses his formation as his own 'Christmas Tree'. It is 'unique' and 'the one and only tree in the whole world'. To Twain, 'Other 4-2-3-1 formations cannot be called as a Christmas Tree formation. Only my 4-2-3-1 is a Christmas Tree.'

The statistics for the match highlighted the reason why Everton lost. Nottingham Forest had 59% possession. Their pass accuracy was 79%, and their rate of successful interceptions was 89%. They made a total of 14 shots in the game and 10 of them were on target. In comparison, Everton only made six shots in the game, and only three were on target. They were clearly inferior throughout the game.

During the post-match press conference, Moyes grudgingly admitted to the fact that his team was inferior, "They completely controlled the flow of the match. They deserved to win..."

On the other hand, Twain was very proud of the result. "I am very happy to see such a scene. We won convincingly."

A reporter asked him for the reason behind why he chose to give up on using the 4-4-2 formation that he had always been using for the past few seasons.

Twain threw out his hands. "Why? Does the 2:1 score and 3 points not answer your question?"

“But hasn’t your style of football always been to defend and counterattack, as well as to employ a 4-4-2 formation?”

“That’s what you think. My style of football has always been the same. It comes in the form of victory and becoming champions. Everything else is nothing more than the means that I use to achieve them. As long as I can win and become the champions, I don’t care if it’s to defend and counterattack, or to go all out in either attack or defense. I also don’t care if it’s a 4-4-2 or a 4-2-3-1 formation.”

Twain smiled as he threw out his well-known phrase,

“I will do anything to win and to become champions.”

Chapter 783: An Out and Out Conspiracy

They beat Everton with the Christmas tree formation, but in the following league game they drew 1-1 with Manchester City at home with the same formation.

This did not affect Twain’s thinking and confidence, as it allowed Nottingham Forest’s coaching staff to find out what the problem is, after all, this was a new tactic that still needs to be honed.

A draw was not a bad result, after all, he did not lose. And he did not let those watching the show get what they wanted. Bendtner was as combative as ever in the game, like an angry bull. But there was no longer media hype about this matter, Twain had no reason to argue with a transition coach. There were more important things waiting for him.

In Paris, the European Champions Cup knockout stage draw ceremony was commencing.

The 16 teams that qualify for the knockout stage would be put together by fate’s hands to fight each other.

The Premier League, which had been strong in recent years, had four, the most of any league who participated. It was Nottingham Forest, Manchester United, Arsenal and Liverpool.

The former Little World Cup Serie A and La Liga were close behind, with three teams each. Representing Italy are Juventus, AC Milan and Inter Milan, while Barcelona, Real Madrid and Valencia represent Spain.

The Bundesliga, one of the four major leagues, is the poorest, with only Bayern Munich being in the top 16. It’s a thing that all German fans feel helpless – the Bundesliga can only be supported by Bayern Munich, but in fact it has long been an indisputable fact that the Bundesliga has been less competitive because of Bayern Munich’s domination. Bayern Munich are both the saviours of the Bundesliga and the main culprits of the Bundesliga’s decline...

This time, even the French and Dutch teams have two teams into the top 16, after comparing, one can tell how the Bundesliga is so embarrassing.

The two teams representing France are Paris Saint-Germain and Lyon, while the Netherlands are Ajax and Eindhoven.

The Portuguese Super League had a representative and it was currently second-placed Porto in the domestic league.

Defending champions Barcelona are, of course, the most high-profile team, having won all six of their group games, scoring 18 goals and conceding only four. They had already been considered the number one favourite in the Champions League this season.

Another high-profile team is Nottingham Forest. As a team that has missed a season and returned to the Champions League, their performance in the group stage has been impressive. Two wins over Juventus cannot be done by luck, also, Nottingham Forest also got out of the group stage, but they scored fewer goals than Barcelona.

Everyone remembers that at the beginning of the season, Twain said, during the draw of the allocation of group stage, "Come and use your unspoken rules on me!", an incident which made him get fined. Whether under Johansson or Platini's presidency, UEFA has always declared that they are transparent and fair, which was absolutely not allowed to be questioned by outsiders, but Twain, with unknown reasons, was disturbing UEFA's backscales at this point, so fines were flying over like snow, one after one. The two sides seemed to have stopped since the 2006 finals.

In fact, regardless of Twain was picking a fight with UEFA, it is because UEFA sometimes do things that are far too suspicious. For example, this time...

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The stage is set in the style of the Champions League, with five-star symbols all over the place, on the big screen, on the background wall, on the drawing box and even on the back of the seat. The silver-studded European Champions Cup is back in sight, and it is placed in the center of the stage, attracting the attention of everyone here. That's the common goal, and there was always the power to dream, no matter how much one's strengths was.

Corina, a former famous Italian skinhead referee who was invited to the draw as a draw guest, stood in front of the glass box, and with his right hand, he pulled out of the box with a colored ping-pong ball. He opened it, glanced, showed the note to the stage, and read, "Barcelona."

Barcelona's name appeared on the big screen behind it, this was the first team to be drawn out.

Next, drawing the other ball team.

Zinedine Zidane went ahead as another special guest.

He fumbled in the box for a while and pulled out a small ball. After unfolding, he read expressionlessly: "Nottingham Forest."

He was expressionless on the stage, and the others on the stage laughed.

Everyone knew what this draw meant.

With Barcelona and Nottingham Forest both top of their respective teams, it was absolutely impossible to hope that Barcelona and Nottingham Forest will hit the ground in the first round under the Rules of the Champions League draw. But UEFA did not say that Nottingham Forest and Barcelona would not meet under any circumstances.

So ...

Barcelona's first game, Nottingham Forest's second, can meet in the quarter-finals if they can beat their respective opponents.

This was really out to eliminate all difficulties and to overcome the rule limit to draw two teams together!

The coaches sitting around Twain were turning around to laugh with Twain – that was what he wants to see. Playing for the likes of Eindhoven, Ajax, Porto and Paris Saint-Germain, he was afraid he could not put in effort.

The Chinese narrator, who broadcast the draw to a Chinese audience, laughed, "There is a Chinese saying in China – You are not enemies if you don't come together. Nottingham Forest and Barcelona looks like they're on the hook."

The British commentator said: "The first two teams drawing the same results is likened to Mars hitting the earth. There will be a lot of great games in the Champions League."

Spain's explanation, "Is this the first time they have met?"

Everyone seemed to think that the two teams reaching the quarter-finals was not a problem at all. They were talking about the situation in which these two teams play each other even before knowing their respective opponents were.

In case of an upset, it would be wonderful to see how their faces would change.

The telecast gave Twain and Guardiola a close-up each. Guardiola was expressionless, or even serious, while Twain was not any different from flowers.

One must make people lament that Twain was really a "slut". People want their opponents to be weaker as possible, but he liked to take the initiative to provoke those big bosses.

But the sensational scenes did not end there.

After the first round of the draw, the eight teams begin to draw opponents.

Barcelona drew Eindhoven, which was the best draw. It could even be said that the draw could not be better. There was even an envious voice at the venue..

At last there was a subtle smile on Guardiola's face. In any case, the first round against Eindhoven is better than the first round against any of those big teams.

The next person to draw Nottingham Forest's opponent was still Zinedine Zidane. What he pulled out this time was

Inter Milan.

Excitement cheers and booing echoed.

Tonight's draw was filled with the smell of intrigue! The English narrator shouted; he was a little disgruntled. It was like trying to kill Nottingham Forest, where a lock was not enough and two locks being double insurance.

If it was Nottingham Forest two seasons ago, there was no fear of such a battle. Others did not have to worry about anything. But Nottingham Forest are now in a poor position, clearly not as good as they were when they won the Champions League. Barcelona and Inter Milan were as strong as day by day. Even if he was lucky enough to pass Inter Milan, can Tony Twain guarantee his team would get away unscathed? Where no one has accumulated yellow cards and no one has been injured or anything?

Then they will face the defending champion with that mindset.

It was a dark future.

The telecast gave Twain a ten-second close-up. He was still laughing! Last time being similar to flowers but now he was basically like a flower.

What did he say at the end of last season?

“Mourinho, you got my team out of the books, we will pay back next season!”

It was truly fate!

Mourinho, did you think you can escape my invincible fate by escaping England? It is of no use! A man like you who is so impressive, even if you escape to the ends of the earth, you cannot escape from my palm. This time, you are dead!

Mourinho was sitting opposite of Twain, with ten men between the two. Mourinho did not turn back to look at Twain when the result came out, and there was no eye contact between the two men. He bowed his head and said something to his partner and did not care what the people around him thought of the draw.

Twain did not look at Mourinho either, he was staring up at the draw on the big screen. It looks like he was one of onlookers who was just watching the show and not one of the parties involved...

Even Platini found the scene so interesting that he smiled and explained, “I guarantee that this result had never been manipulated...”

There was another burst of laughter under the stage.

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After the draw ceremony, the final results were announced.

Barcelona and Eindhoven will play first, with Nottingham Forest taking on Inter Milan on the same day.

Then Paris Saint-Germain will then host AC Milan.

Bayern Munich against Juventus.

Arsenal taking on the away team Valencia.

Real Madrid hosting Liverpool.

Manchester United play Lyon on away.

The match with Porto against Ajax is probably the least watched.

Important matches in the quarter-finals are Nottingham Forest v Inter Milan, Bayern Munich v Juventus and Real Madrid v Liverpool.

After the draw, Twain was surrounded by a large crowd of reporters, all of whom wanted to hear how he rated the results of the draw. For example, whether UEFA would be scolded for their black curtain, many people were looking forward to hearing him say that classic line, "Come on, bring out your unspoken rules!"

But this time Twain let them down. In the face of many reporters' excited looks, he said with a smile, "I am very satisfied with the results of this draw. Thanks to the UEFA's drawing, I drew the opponents I mostly want to meet."

The answer was really a disappointment for journalists who feared that the world would not be in a mess.

So there was a reporter very blatantly asked, "Are you worried about being fined by UEFA?"

Twain glared at him, "Don't make jokes, Mr. Reporter. I'm not short of that money. I think you guys are too bastard, you guys don't believe me when I speak the truth, and gossip around when I'm telling a lie. I'm really happy with the result. Before the season I said Barcelona's value in the league was not enough, and some people attacked me for having red eye disease. Now I can prove to those people whose eyes are actually wrong. As for Inter Milan, I've been thinking about revenge since he knocked out Nottingham Forest more than a season ago. I'm even worried that i didn't have a chance...You all know that the lottery is a small probability event...."At this point, Twain laughed, "So of course I'm very grateful to UEFA for solving both of my problems at once. It's a matter of efficiency, I don't have to wait until next season, next season, next next season..."

But, Mr Twain. Inter Milan are very strong, do you have the confidence to beat them?"

"Nonsense. If I don't have the confidence, then why am I here to play in the European Champions Cup? I don't believe that Nottingham Forest and I are still taking the elevator between the Premier League and 2nd League. I wouldn't have won the Champions League without confidence. My Nottingham Forest have won two European Champions Cups, one Premier League title, and none of them have been picked up cheaply. My championship value is real and full of color. Do you think every team that made it to the last 16 of the Champions League has the good fortune of Barcelona and could draw the weaker team in the first round?" He also did not forget to laugh at Barcelona, several rounds ahead on the start of psychological warfare.

"Mr Twain, I heard you have a bad relationship with Mourinho..."

"You're right!", Twain did not deny this time, as he very simply and cheerfully agreed with the reporter's statement, completely not trying to cover up on the surface. "He and I are enemies. Ask him, and you'll get the same answer. I'm actually very much looking forward to and confident about the game against Inter Milan. Against them, Nottingham Forest have a psychological advantage."

Twain also did not forget to bring Inter Milan into the psychological warfare of the battle. If he were to play he would play big, it was always better to play with the whole crowd. It was a pity they were lacking a fourth member...

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The next day's newspapers and television, as well as the Internet, reported the results of the draw in the knockout stages of the European Champions Cup. Pictures of Tony Twain and Mourinho, as well as Guardiola's three young managers at the draw, were all prominent, with three different expressions and meaning .

As the vast majority of fans saw this result, their natural first thought was

" Conspiracy! An out and out conspiracy !"

Chapter 784: Coming from A Thousand Miles Away for Revenge

Being drawn with Inter Milan was a good thing to Twain. The better news had nothing to do with football—Shania was finally back.

When Twain was still a bachelor, he thought he only had football in his life, and he did not care anything else but football. He was crazy about football, no less than one of the most hardcore fans. So, after he became the Nottingham Forest manager, he was really no different from Dunn other than he went to the pub and have a drink. When he did not drink at the pub, he could lock himself up at home for a whole day, draw the curtains to watch the game videos, and study the various notes left by Dunn. He would be unaware of the passing of time and not even aware when he got hungry.

But after he got married, his love of football was divided into half and given to his family and wife. Now he felt that there was one more thing that was as important as football in his life.

He was happy that Shania was back. He would no longer find an empty and lifeless cement building when he came home after a day's work.

Twain worked hard before he got married because he liked football and the job. After marriage, he also worked hard because he had a responsibility on his shoulders—a man needed to support his family...Although Shania earned as much money as Twain, Twain still had some traditional Chinese men's thinking as the most authentic Chinese man in his bones. He thought that men should support their families and that was the purpose of the work.

With his parents, a lovely wife and future children, it was worth it even if he had to work hard.

With Shania's return this time, she would not leave until May. They had four months to enjoy their time together. Twain wanted to make up all the time he was previously owed.

One of the important agenda was, of course, to make a baby.

Twain and Shania had been married for almost two years, and both had worked hard. But Shania had no response till now. The revolution had not yet succeeded, so the comrade still needed to work hard...

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The first game since the return from the draw ceremony was the FA Cup. The media asked about the result of the draw before the game, wondering if such a terrible draw would affect the Forest team's performance. Twain denied that it was a "terrible" result. Following which, he led his team to win against West Bromwich Albion with a 2:0 home win in the fourth round of the FA Cup. It proved that the media's unfounded speculation was not justified.

Next in February's league tournament, Nottingham Forest remain unbeaten with two wins and two draws to remain in third place in the league tournament. The point gaps between the top five teams in the league were not big. It looked like it would not be a surprise if any of the five teams would win the title by the end of the season.

The reason for the two wins and two draws was that Twain's new tactics still needed time to adjust and adapt, so the team's performance fluctuated with the ups and downs.

But Twain did not take the league tournament particularly seriously. He even voluntarily gave up in the fifth round the FA Cup. As the Champions League drew near, he began to hold back in the league tournament.

After all, he had already talked big in front of the media. So, if he lost to Inter Milan, it would be a big loss of face...

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March 1st was the day of the away game against Inter Milan. It was a "big day" to Tony Twain.

The team left Nottingham three days early and arrived in Milan by plane. Twain was no stranger to the city. But it was still unfamiliar to many of the current Forest players.

When Twain first brought the team here to play against Inter Milan, he went to great lengths to explain to Shania that there was nothing between him and Gloria. Now that he thought about it, could it be it was since that time he realized he cared about Shania?

Among the Forest players, the changes in the midfield were the greatest. Tiago, Şahin, Cohen, Bentley and Fernández had not experienced the last big game against Inter Milan.

The media were not optimistic about Nottingham Forest's Champions League prospects this season because Nottingham Forest's strength had dropped too much in the midfield area...

In the past, the Forest team's midfield could definitely be described as world-class, with George Wood, van der Vaart, Ribéry and other famous star players. The current Forest midfield lacked the star power and was more ordinary. Looking at Tony Twain's implementation of the double defensive midfielders and 4-2-3-1 formation, even if they increased the number of midfielders, they still could not get rid of the "blue-collar worker midfield" appraisal.

By contrast, Inter Milan's midfield was grander. The fame of Cambiasso, Vieira, Muntari, Stanković, Montolivo, Mancini, Quaresma, Mario Balotelli and the others was much bigger than that of the Forest team's.

The comparison on the forward line was even more pathetic...

Nottingham Forest did not even have a publicly recognized world-class striker. Van Nistelrooy was considered world class, but he was not on the Forest team's Champions League squad list and could not be available for comparison. Eastwood's reputation was limited to the United Kingdom. Even if he had ever won the Premier League's golden boot, it did not mean anything.

Ibišević was just a slightly brighter meteor. Agbonlahor was a typical coarse player who had no footwork skills but speed, while Eastwood's frequent injuries had affected his progress towards being world-class.

Then looking at Inter Milan's side—Ibrahimović, Adriano and Giuseppe Rossi, who had transferred from Villarreal for a fee of 15.25 million pounds this season. In addition, a substitute player, Cruz who could be brought on to score.

Even in Twain's proudest defensive lineup, Inter Milan was stronger than them.

The Argentine "The Wall" Samuel, Nicolás Burdisso, Iván Córdoba, Cristian Chivu, Maicon, Maxwell, as well as Javier Zanetti, Inter Milan team captain who was already thirty-eight years old but still in good form.

Which of these players were not famous figures in international football?

In comparison, Nottingham Forest only had Pepe and Kompany to show for. Woodgate and Baines were only well-known in the country. Rafinha had always been a fringe figure in the Brazilian national team, having been selected and then ruled out several times. Ultimately, in the right back positions up against the better options like Dunga and Maicon, Chimbonda was not worth a mention. Joe Mattock and Nkoulou were currently the most promising stars and would need to continuously prove their abilities at a high-level competition before they could be recognized.

No wonder everyone was not optimistic about Nottingham Forest.

If it had to be said the advantage Nottingham Forest had over Inter Milan, maybe their players were younger...

The foreign media were generally not optimistic about Nottingham Forest, but the local media in Nottingham was confident of Tony Twain's team. Their confidence came from the "history" of just a few seasons.

In fact, when Nottingham Forest's most brilliant two seasons, their lineup was basically like this. They were not in the same league as any big teams. But why was it them, which won the Champions League title in the end and not AC Milan and Chelsea? They had beaten Real Madrid, Barcelona, Inter Milan, Arsenal... and other strong teams. How could it be that the other teams deliberately threw the games?

The Nottingham Forest fans, like fanatical religious believers, had faith in that nothing could hold Tony down. The person who could make him surrender in the world had not yet been born. As long as the man sitting on the Nottingham Forest technical area was Tony Twain, Nottingham Forest would not lose no matter how powerful an opponent they faced.

With two days to go before the game began, the media in Nottingham had started to hype the concept of "revenge" in big way.

No Nottingham Forest fan would forget the game two seasons ago when Tony Twain was forced to leave his coaching post due to a heart attack and Nottingham Forest were suddenly left without a head. As the acting manager, Dunn had already exhausted all his energy just to secure the team's place in the league tournament and utterly had no energy at all to consider the team's future in the Champions League.

Nottingham Forest completely lost those two games to Mourinho's Inter Milan in both the results and scenes.

Mourinho was like an infatuated man who had waited long and hard to marry this bride, only to find that the bride sitting by the bed was not the beauty in his heart, but someone else when he took off the red veil. As a result, his surprise turned into humiliation, humiliation into anger, and then took out this anger on the poor Dunn ...

Most Forest fans were still unwilling to mention those two games until now because they lost terribly, and it was too shameful ... Their spirit was completely lost, and the players' performance on the pitch led to the belief that they must have been waiting for the final whistle to ring right from the first second.

If Twain had been there, he would have lambasted his team in the locker room that they were acting like a woman who had been stripped of all her clothes by, pinned under and be raped by an evildoer but still took the initiative to pander to his pleasure. Then maybe he would have another heart attack and be finished off straight away...

Fortunately, he was carefully cared for by Shania, and had no time to pay attention to the team's mess.

But afterwards, in order to test the extent of his heart recovery, Twain specifically locate the videos of the two games to watch. After watching them, even though his body was all right, he was truly furious. Mourinho really did not give him face. With one match score of 2:0 and another match score of 3:0, he utterly wiped out the defending champion with a total score of 5:0. Twain suffered his biggest defeat in scores ever since he started coaching at Mourinho's hands.

How could he take it that this kind of humiliated had never happened? Obliterate the feud with a smile when they met? That was not Tony Twain's style. His style was—even if you turn to ash, I'll still recognize you!

So, this time Twain did not mind the media hype of the "revenge" concept. He was not afraid to bring psychological pressure on the players. He was eager for the players to have pressure.. They could not play the game without pressure...

At the first press conference in Milan, Twain explicitly agreed with the local media in Nottingham about "revenge" and said, "Yes, we are here to seek revenge. The Italian media, please tell Mourinho about this—The Tony Twain he couldn't win is here again!"

He had a smile full of confidence, and his attitude was very arrogant. He wanted to let the Italians, who had been tormented and hard pressed by Mourinho, to know that the English boss was not easily served!

At the press conference, Twain waged a war of words against the reporters. He dismissed every single comment that was down on him, trying to prove that his team was the best team of the week and none other.

If the media did not believe it, he spread his hands and said, “You’ll find out after the game if I’m talking big or telling the truth.”

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After the “big truth” was released, Twain was naturally prepared.

This time, Twain planned to continue using the 4-2-3-1 formation, but different from before. The “2” was not two midfielders but became two defensive midfielders. The “3” was not a parallel line on the thirty meters line. Other than the “1” in the middle continued to be the attacking midfielder’s position, the two attacking wingers on the sides retreated to become the side midfielders, so that the formation was more layered with a few lines not too far apart that it would cause things to come apart.

Although the offense was not as strong as before with such an adjustment, the defense was certainly a lot more stable. There was a problem with the previous 4-2-3-1 formation—the gap behind George Wood and Tiago was too big and the opportunity would always be seized upon by the opponent to directly face the rear defensive line, resulting in a loss of the ball. Inter Milan’s midfield strength was not to be underestimated. The fewer such gaps, the better it was.

Now that Wood and Tiago were back in the defensive midfielder line, closer to their own rear defensive line, it was in fact still unified with two wingers in the middle even though they were far from the attacking midfielder. They could truly press for the attack and retreat for the defense.

As Wood and Tiago focused more on defense, the task of organizing the offense fell to the attacking midfielder. This time, Twain chose not to let Fernández, who was more capable of scoring, play as the attacking midfielder, but decided to let Şahin play. Fernández was moved to the left as a winger, but compared to Bentley on the right, he had slightly more freedom. He was a little like Ribéry, who was the FIFA World Player of the Year previously at Nottingham Forest. After all, Fernández and Ribéry were a little similar in characteristics. It was a waste to fix him on the sides. Having played brilliantly in recent rounds of competition, Fernández had been called “Ribéry the second” by the British media.

Unlike Fernández, who could break through, pass and shoot on the left, Bentley on the right was more of a player who passed the ball. He was tasked to retreat and support as well as pass the ball forward to send it to the front of the opponent’s goal.

At the tip of the formation as the arrowhead figure was Ibišević who was recently in good form and had no physical problem. He was a striker with very wide range of activity and could be seen in almost the entire front field. He was most suitable to be the arrowhead, because he would not be easily blocked by the opposing defenders.

The team was in a good shape without any major injuries and the morale of the players was high too. Although they were up against Inter Milan, which had thrashed them by 5:0, they had the boss there this time. There was nothing to worry about!

This time, we’re standing with the media—That’s right! We’re here to smash the place and seek revenge!

Chapter 785: José And Tony

Milan, Italy, this city was famous worldwide for its fashion. But in the hearts of the football fans, the city had nothing to do with fashion. There was only one reason why the city's name could be known around the world—football.

The word “derby” in the sports world was first used in horse racing, but it was football that carried it forward all over the world. There were many wonderful classic “derbies” in the football world, but no derby was more attention grabbing than a same city derby.

In Spain, the El Clásico between Real Madrid and Barcelona might shine brightly, but in the minds of the players and fans, the real derbies were The Madrid Derby between Real Madrid and Atlético Madrid and the Derbi barceloní between Barcelona and RCD Espanyol. The same city derby was always the most eye-catching match, such as the most intense city derby in the world—the “Old Firm” of Glasgow, Scotland.

It was no exaggeration to say that “the derby created football.” For football without a competition like a derby and dominated by antagonistic and hateful sentiment, perhaps it would not have developed as far as it had today—that state of mind would have been like a catalyst.

Milan in Italy also had the same kind of city derby, which was one of the few cities where these two world-class powerhouse clubs existed. The powerhouse clubs, AC Milan and Inter Milan had long been spread around the world with their respective brilliant achievements.

AC Milan had an era of three musketeers and Inter Milan had its own dominated era. Both teams were not weaker than which. Sometimes the east wind toppled the west wind, and sometimes the west wind overpowered the east wind. Twain was tired of reading about the war of words between the fans on both sides when he was still a Chinese man.

In fact, there was a possibility that no matter how hostile the fans of the city's two teams might be to each other, they might at least have joined forces when they were up against Nottingham Forest.

Because both teams had suffered the painful lesson of being beaten by Nottingham Forest in important games. By contrast, the AC Milan fans had been hurt even more, with Twain not only speaking rudely often to their red and black legion, he also had a terrible personal relationship with Ancelotti. Furthermore, on the night of the 2007 UEFA Champions League final in Athens, they beat AC Milan which had reached the finals for two seasons in a row but returned home empty-handed.

Inter Milan's feud with Nottingham Forest was limited to the quarterfinals of the Champions League in 05-06 season, when Nottingham Forest eliminated Inter Milan to eventually reach the final, only to lose to Barcelona. It was just a normal game, which would not implicate too much of a vendetta. Later, Inter Milan eliminated Nottingham Forest. From the point of view of the Inter Milan fans, it was just an equally ordinary game. The team that played better won. It was as simple as that.

Unfortunately, they all thought wrong. Who knew that Nottingham Forest has a mad dog? A media outlet in England once evaluated Tony Twain's character as such—“He's the kind of guy who will crouch down like a dog and bite back once he is bitten by a dog.”

Tony Twain and Mourinho had a long-standing feud in the Premier League, and now that Mourinho had arrived at Inter Milan, the old feud between both sides would naturally be passed on to Inter Milan. Moreover, Inter Milan had thrashed Nottingham Forest before. The personal grievance and the

impediment from the team were all stirred up... With Tony Twain around, it would certainly be stirred up. He was the best in stirring things up.

To this day, Inter Milan had the mind to continue their feud with Nottingham Forest until... one day Tony Twain stepped down from his position as that manager of Nottingham Forest.

"I think this matter is incredible, I don't understand it." The trainee reporter who came with Pierce Brosnan frowned and disagreed, "If Nottingham Forest accidentally lose again, there is reason enough for their two teams to continue to entangle. But what if Nottingham Forest wins? Isn't Inter Milan going to be unforgiving? Even if Mourinho is such a man, Moratti is not a president who likes to provoke his opponents. He will surely keep a tight grip on Mourinho's mouth. In fact, Mourinho has settled a lot more since he came to Italy than in England..."

Brosnan smiled and shook his head while he said, "You really don't understand, because you really don't know what kind of person Tony Twain is. If he loses, he's going to fly into a rage. But if he wins..." He chuckled, "He's going to insult Inter Milan at the press conference and show off. He will act as the kind of person who will cause the other people to want to pounce on and beat him up."

His partner really could not figure this out. "But why will he do that? Is it good for him to offend so many people?"

"You can take it that this is his personality. You can also recognize that he is playing a psychological warfare with his opponent."

When Pierce Brosnan uttered the words with a serious face, the trainee reporter suddenly had a whole new level of respect for Brosnan, "You're really a reporter who has followed Twain for so many years. Mr. Brosnan, you truly understand Tony Twain!"

Brosnan shrugged and gave a self-deprecating laugh, "When you think you know Tony Twain very well, you will be wrong again. I'm afraid he doesn't even know himself..."

The two men stopped the pointless topic which also could not improve the mood and watched the Inter Milan manager, José Mourinho, walked to the front of the interview stage.

After the interview with Twain, the reporters flocked to hear what Mourinho would say about his opponent. This group of people were so efficient.

"Ask any questions you have, gentlemen." Mourinho, who had just arrived from the training ground, was still wearing an Inter Milan jersey. It made his figure look slightly bloated. Maybe he lived well in Italy. He crossed his legs in his seat and chose a posture that made him the most comfortable while he faced the reporters.

"Tony Twain had just commented that Nottingham Forest came to Milan to seek revenge. What do you think of this, Mr. Mourinho?" The first reporter to ask the question was from < La Gazzetta dello Sport >.

"Only a loser will think about revenge. I don't care about this because I'm not a loser." Mourinho grinned. He seemed to sketch out in his head how flustered and exasperated Tony Twain should be... it made a deep impression.

A hint of confrontation emerged in just the first question, which made the reporters secretly gleeful. Whenever Mourinho and Tony Twain met, they would never waste valuable time at a press conference asking such questions about the tactical arrangement of the players. It would only lead to the exciting scenes slip away in vain.

Mourinho was clearly relished being able to lead his team to a 5-0 win over Nottingham Forest in the past. He smiled at the reporters as he waited for the second question.

The man who stood up next spoiled his good mood.

Pierce Brosnan raised his hand and asked, "Mr. Mourinho, Tony Twain asked me to relay a message to you."

Mourinho gave a snort but did not stop the reporter from speaking.

"He said—the Tony Twain whom you can't defeat, is here again. Do you have any opinion on this?"

Some people laughed among the reporters. Mourinho's face became slightly ugly.

"I never care about that boring record. As compared to who can't win whom, I care more about winning the championship."

If Twain were around, he would definitely speak up to ridicule right away, "I win just as many titles as you, Mr. Mourinho."

Unfortunately, he was not here, so Mourinho could continue undisturbed, "I never take the initiative to talk about who had not defeated me. It is a very disrespectful behavior..."

If Twain were next to him, he would say "That's because you don't have such a result."

"Some people only see the past, but what I care about is the future and the game in two days' time..."

If Twain were next to him, he would say, "I'm still going to win you in two days' time and let this 'thing of the past' continue."

If Twain were next to him... It was estimated that the two men would engage in a real-life PK.

Mourinho did not want to answer Brosnan's question because he finally recognized who the man in front of him was. He was the reporter for the <Nottingham Evening Post> and was known as "Tony Twain's mouthpiece." He was always on the same side as Twain and spoke for Tony Twain because he became famous for his coverage of Twain. It was said that Twain had instructed this person and not allowed him to write a bad word about him. The extent that Twain had dictatorship could be seen. He even interfered with the freedom of press... The crimes he committed were simply innumerable!

"Can you talk about your relationship with Mr. Twain? When you were fired by Chelsea FC, Twain had verbally abused Mr. Abramovich during a television interview..." An ESPN reporter asked.

"I have to correct your mistake. I wasn't dismissed by Chelsea. I resigned on my own. It was an amicable breakup." Mourinho put his index finger up and stressed, "As for my relationship with Twain..."

Mourinho paused here, as if he was really thinking about his relationship with Twain. "We are definitely not friends anyway."

He actually did not say, “We are enemies.” It was mind-blowing.

Mourinho did not give the reporters a chance to keep asking. He was tired of being asked idiotic questions on “how Tony Twain was.” It made it look like he had something to do with that guy. You should ask him how he was himself. Why are you running to ask me about him!

“If you don’t care how Inter Milan has prepared for the game, then I think that’s the end of the press conference.” Mourinho got up and left, not giving any of the reporters present time to react. He just disappeared in the eyes of the dismayed crowd.

Despite Mourinho’s departure, the reporters present showed no surprise and anger, but excitedly discussed the press conference, which had just ended in a hurry.

It was obviously the first time the trainee reporter had encountered such a situation. He was a little stunned. Pierce Brosnan calmly said to him, “Who would ask him how Inter Milan had prepared? This is the way to create news. Come on, let’s go back and write the article.”

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When Twain brought the team to the Giuseppe Meazza Stadium to adapt to the pitch, he met an old friend. This time it was a real old friend with no quotation marks.

The man who came to see him was the former Nottingham Forest team captain and retired Italian player, Demetrio Albertini.

In addition to reminisce with an old friend like Twain, he also came to cheer the Forest team.

“Of course, I’m going to cheer you on. I’m an AC Milan fan.” Not having seen him for a long time, Albertini had put on some weight. He laughed heartily.

Now he was the vice-president of the Italian Football Association and considered a high-ranking official. Impeccably attired, he looked very different from when he was a player.

Albertini came to the pitch midway through the training. Twain called down George Wood from the training ground.

Seeing once again his junior whom he had once pinned high hopes on, Albertini did not warmly embrace him but stared at Wood with a smile on his face for a while.

“You’ve already got seven assists so far this season, George?”

Wood nodded. Seeing his mentor, he did not really know what to say—he was not the kind of person who could express his inner feelings very well. It would simply kill him to take the initiative to do a mushy thing like a hug.

“Well done, George. But you have to keep working hard.” It was Albertini who insisted that Wood had offensive talent in the first place that allowed Twain to focus on training him in that area. Now Twain and the Forest team benefited from this together.

It was somewhat predestined to talk about this matter now—it was at an away game against Inter Milan that Wood suddenly sent a beautiful straight ball out and Albertini appeared on the direction of the ball

like an apparition. He scored after he received the ball, helping the team to force a draw on the home team and secure two precious away goals.

It was the first appearance of Wood's offensive talent, and it was caught by Albertini's eye.

"You're not a natural leader, George. But you did a good job as the Nottingham Forest captain. Tell me, do you usually talk more in the locker room?"

"Not too much." Wood shook his head.

"Then how do you lead your teammates?"

Twain helped him to answer, "Action. He led the team with action. He never talks nonsense, and his actions are more powerful than words."

On the training ground, he was the one who trained the hardest, the earliest to arrive, the latest to leave, ran the hardest on the field, never gave up, always full of fighting spirit and passion. He seemed to view football as life. It was hard for such a person to not convince the masses.

Albertini nodded approvingly, "That's your style, George."

Wood disagreed, "But I don't help the new players as much as you." When Aaron Mitchell came into the First Team, Wood's face was a little too serious when he welcomed him as the team captain. For this reason, he was deeply concerned till now.

Albertini glanced at Twain and turned his face to smile at Wood, "Nottingham Forest is a team with a very good environment. Some things do not require you to manage. Someone else will do it. Freddy and Bale are both warm-hearted people. You don't want to take everything on yourself. Just like how you are on the pitch, trust your teammates and you will gain more."

Wood nodded and listened to his instruction respectfully. Albertini's every word was a valuable experience to him.

Twain did not let the two talk for long. After all, the team was still training. As the captain, Wood was even less qualified to act privileged.

Looking at Wood running back, Albertini sighed, "What a good player. It's a pity that he did not come to Milan last summer."

"As long as I'm at Nottingham Forest for a day, he won't leave the City Ground stadium." Twain chuckled.

When Twain's work came up as a topic, Albertini had to ask about his health.

"There's nothing wrong with me. Everything is working normally." Twain gently patted his left chest, where a pacemaker was installed, so he could not use too much force. "I was very lucky not to have died the first time. I won't die in the future." Twain was now very relaxing when it came to talks about life and death. Once a person had died once, his ideological awareness was not the same anymore.

Albertini laughed, "I had wanted to ask you to drink together after the game at first. Later, I remembered you had given up drinking. So, I can just save the money."

Twain gave a sly wink and said, "You can always exchange it for cash for me, Deme."

The two men laughed together. It was like they had gone back to the good old days when they worked together.

As he said goodbye, Albertini held Twain's hand and said, "When we were together, we did not lose to Mourinho, right, boss?"

He suddenly addressed him this way, but it did not surprise Twain. He smiled, "That's right, we never lost."

The two men did not say anything more. They only felt that there was an added strength to their hands held.

Chapter 786: Dry Wood and Fierce Fire

Two days passed quickly, and the day of the game was approaching. Both sides already made preparations to deal with the battle.

Mourinho would never allow himself to have any mishaps at home. The hardest way to play for the knockout stage was to have the home match first and then the away match. But it could not be helped because they lost the first place in the group stage competition at the last minute.

Mourinho's plan was to not lose any points in his own home ground. He demanded that the team's rear defensive line must keep their opponent out, so he would stick to the defensive counterattack at home.

Whereas Twain's idea was also simple, which was to score goals. The advantage of playing the away match first was that there was still a home game as a cushion, so that there were a few more opportunities to adjust. Away goals were the number one priority. They had to score, and they must score. That was the reason Twain arranged to play the 4-2-3-1 formation instead of the 4-4-2 formation. Other teams might choose to play defense in an away match, but Twain chose the opposite and emphasized on the offense.

To be able to defeat Inter Milan was obviously the best result. A draw was a must if they could not win. But to lose... that was definitely not allowed.

Twain did not see Mourinho again until before the start of the game. Both managers' interviews were staggered for the press conference. They would only appear together in a press conference after the game.

But the media did not feel sorry about it. Because there would be more exciting stories when they met after the game. As for now, there was really no good to hype about... The war of words between the two parties was almost over.

Although Twain and Mourinho did not meet before that, they had long been at odds with each other through the media. People really admired these two men just by looking at their explosive remarks. The Italian media exclaimed that Mourinho had been a little lonely since he came to Italy. Now he had finally found his opponent...

Mourinho was an unusual breed in Serie A. His way of shooting his mouth off broke Serie A's seemingly harmonious atmosphere. When had those academic type of managers seen such men before? They argued with each other about some tactical stuff at the most and fought poorly even if they did quarrel. They were totally defeated when up against Mourinho's clever and eloquent tongue. Some people also wanted to learn from Mourinho and wage a war of words with other people. The result was they set out to be tigers but ended up with the likeness of a dog. It made themselves look more like a superficial clown.

So, Mourinho gradually did not bother to bicker with those guys—it was really beneath him to do.

Now that Tony Twain was here with his Forest team in Italy, people finally saw the Mourinho, who was once successful in the Premier League.

Waging a psychological warfare and war of words really required an evenly matched opponent for them to be fun.

Twain and Mourinho were really perfect for each other like dry wood and fierce fire.

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On the evening of March 1st, the Giuseppe Meazza Stadium was lit up and the crowd was buzzing. The first round of the UEFA Champions League quarterfinals kicked off here.

The Nottingham Forest fans who had specially travelled from England entered the stadium under the police escort. Next to them were some extreme Inter Milan fans who harbored malicious intentions to provoke them. The Nottingham Forest fans were not willing to show weakness and glowered at them.

The police in charge of the security at the stadium were at the highest alert. Neither the Italian fans nor the English media had a good reputation, not to mention the atmosphere that had been heated up by the war of words between the two managers before the game. If there was any group of people who did not want to see the two teams' managers have a spat with each other, it must be the police officers responsible for the order. The managers had stirred up the atmosphere and the mood of the fans would follow suit and heated up, which could be dangerous. If it was not tightly controlled, a single spark could lead to volcanic eruptions.

The players from both sides had already come out to warm up as the fans of both sides were at daggers drawn outside.

Twain finished what he was supposed to do in the locker room and slipped out. He encountered Mourinho whom he had not seen for a few years, on the sidelines.

"Ha, what a coincidence. Mr. Mourinho." Twain smiled as he greeted the other man.

Mourinho, on the other hand, looked at him with a straight face and did not want to acknowledge him.

"Don't put on such an expression, Mr. Mourinho. I won't ask you to have drinks anymore. I've quit drinking. You are the host here. You can't look so indifferent."

"Do you want me to say, 'I'm happy to see you?' But I'm not happy at all."

"Because you're afraid of losing?" Twain smiled and leaned in front of Mourinho.

The remark clearly touched on Mourinho's sore point. He snorted and said, "Think whatever you like, Mr. Twain. A football match is not won by cheap talk."

"Ha, great minds think alike."

Twain did not waste any more time with Mourinho because both men had things to do. The war of words had been fought. It was no use to provoke now.

He walked to the sidelines to observe the team's warm-up and get first-hand information on who was in a good shape and who was not in the right state of mind... This was the last chance to make adjustments. Once the game started, he would have to use up the three-substitution spot if he wanted to adjust.

The players did well. He did not see anyone overly self-confident and impetuous. These boys were quite good. He had been lecturing them these days and wanting them to take the game seriously. Because this was the "war of revenge." They could not be sloppy, careless and do as they pleased.

Twain also took a look at the fans' situation in the stands. The Inter Milan fans accounted for about four-fifths. It was a sea of blue when he looked up, while the red color gathered in a corner, surrounded by the sea of blue, looking isolated.

A circle of police surrounded these fans, separating them from the Italian fans. Under the heavy protection of the police, the Nottingham Forest fans were not afraid of the home fans' unkind boos and hostile looks. They sang Nottingham Forest's war songs in their own stands.

Twain saw the scene and smiled. Those lovely fans. He seemed to be able to see John and Bill in the square area on the far side from here.

After spending a moment on the sidelines, Twain was able to hear the boos coming from the grandstand behind him. This was, of course, aimed at him as the manager who had provoked a war of words with Mourinho. He did not care. He even turned to smile at the hostile-looking fans before walking back down the tunnel and toward the locker room.

He was determined to make the Inter Milan fans unhappy for this game...

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The team's warm-up was over shortly after he returned to the locker room. The players filed into the locker room and started to change into the jerseys needed for the game. Twain paced back and forth in the locker room as he thought about what to say to further mobilize the players' mood.

The tactic was already laid out a day ago. There was not much time now, so he would not cover that again.

The players finished changing their clothes and sat down to catch their breath while they waited for their spiritual leader to say something.

Twain finally stopped pacing and stood still in front of the team.

"Who among you had played in those two games before?" He looked at the players.

George Wood raised his hand, followed by the goalkeeper, Akinfeev. The full backs, Baines, Rafinha, Pepe, Kompany, Tiago, Lennon, Şahin and Eastwood all raised their hands. They all knew the “two games” the boss asked about.

It accounted for almost two-thirds of the squad list.

“I know some of you must be still be unhappy about that... Ah no, everyone is not happy. After all, the other team scored a total of five goals in two games, but we did not score a goal. If anyone can still accept this, then he’s not normal. It’s fantastic now that you have a chance to correct that mistake and show Inter Milan that 0:5 was an accident.” Twain snapped his fingers and added, “I really wonder if UEFA did this out of full respect for our opinion at the time of the draw.”

There was a burst of laughter among the players.

“Anyway, guys. Now we have a great chance! Are you going to let this opportunity slip away in front of your eyes? Are you really going to do that?”

“No one thinks so, boss!”

“Very good! Then buck up! We’re going to thrash them in their home ground! We’ll settle all the scores today!”

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Mourinho did not stir up emotions in the locker room. Inter Milan was not Nottingham Forest. It was not a group of blood-thirsty creatures with simple minds. And he did have much to fire them up with. Inter Milan and Nottingham Forest did not have many grievances. For many players, it was just an ordinary Champions League quarterfinal game. The star players such as Ibrahimović had no interest in the hyped up “Forest team’s war of revenge” by the media. Some people simply did not understand why Tony Twain would behave like a mad dog and jumped around to bite people. Was it better for him to do so? Could it be the more people he bit, the more dividends he received?

Although their manager occasionally bit people, he did it with purpose and substance. It was unlike Tony Twain’s random attacks.

If he were to be our manager, would he just bite his own people in the locker room? That’s terrible! I don’t know how the Nottingham Forest players can tolerate such a bad-tempered man to lead them.

In fact, ... Even more incredibly, how can this man’s team win the Champions League title for two years in a row? There must be something we don’t know about...

Mourinho calmly set out the tactics before talking about what happened in the media.

“No matter what’s said outside, it’s their freedom. You don’t think about anything else. This is just a normal game. If you have any emotional ups and downs because of this, you will have fallen for Tony Twain’s ploy. In terms of strength, Nottingham Forest is certainly not as good as us. They are in a hurry to score away goals and will be aggressive from the start of the game. We just need to be more patient than them and we can get the result we want. That’s it. Get ready to play.”

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The Inter Milan players came out and received loud cheers. The blue and black legion was the hero in the hearts of the Inter Milan fans. Many fans were quite confident of a victory over Nottingham Forest. Those two games of the 08-09 season were still vivid in their minds. Only a few teams in the football world could beat a defending champion so efficiently.

Of course, the Nottingham Forest fans would retort that the loss was due to Tony Twain's absence. But the Italian fans did not understand this. They thought that even with Tony Twain around, their loss would only be less terrible at the most. But the end result would still be the same—they would still lose. How much power could a manager have, no matter how good he was? The star players, not the star managers, were the ones to dominate the team and determine the strength of the team.

Ibrahimović suddenly felt a deep animosity as he shook hands with the Forest players according to what was customary. This hostility peaked when he shook hands with the Forest captain.

Wood's hand shook Ibrahimović's hand to carry out the necessary understanding, but his eyes stared coldly at the other man. It was not a very polite attitude, which also made the Swede feel uncomfortable. The other party's eyes were piercing, almost poking holes at Ibrahimović inside out, turning him into a sieve.

He did not like the impolite look, so he just touched Wood's hand and separated.

But even when he turned and left, he could still feel the pair of cold eyes staring at him behind his back.

Ibrahimović was a typical representative of Inter Milan' players. Almost all of the Inter Milan players felt the unfriendly air from the Nottingham Forest players.

They simply could not understand why these people would view this game as if it were a vendetta. Even if we had defeated you with a wide score, that was a very normal thing which happened often in the football world. Isn't it very petty to keep hanging onto it? If you seek revenge against every team that defeats you, can you handle it?

The Nottingham Forest players did not care what the Inter Milan players thought. They just knitted their brows with serious faces and looked murderously at their opponents who came over to shake their hands to show goodwill.

It was hard to imagine a situation like this happening in real football. Maybe only the perverted Tony Twain could bring out such an abnormal team ...

After the handshake ceremony ended in a strange atmosphere, the players from both sides returned to their respective positions and waited for the game to begin.

All the major media outlets seized the last moments and crazily snapped away in front of the two managers.

Mourinho was expressionless, while Twain smiled. He even repeatedly glanced at Mourinho next door in front of the press, trying to see his manner.

It was a pity that he saw nothing. Mourinho hid himself in the middle of the technical area and was not in the front. He had no idea what he was doing. Twain was not in a hurry. He knew that when the game started, it would not be long before Mourinho would come out on his own.

Why?

Because he would not be able to sit still!

Chapter 787: Outer Instep

Nottingham Forest occupied the initiative from the start of the game.

Inter Milan did not get to do the kickoff, so they withdrew and carried out the defense as soon as they came on. They first solidify the defense, and then conspired to attack. Meanwhile, Nottingham Forest did not hold back and made the most of their kickoff advantage, keeping the football firmly under their feet and not rush to the goal. They patiently circled.

George Wood and Tiago were indeed further back in their positions than ever before. It looked like the distance between them and Şahin was wider than ever, but in fact the players were not wooden blocks. They would keep running and interweaving on the pitch. The formation of the team could only be used as a reference—if they were too far away, Şahin would know he could withdraw to receive. As for Wood and Tiago, they would also know to run up there.

The tactics might be set, but the players were absolutely alive.

To be able to use fixed tactics flexibly, that was the players' level. Some players only knew to cling obstinately to the manager's arrangements. One was one, two was two, and they would dare not go one step beyond the prescribed limit and had no ideas of their own. Such a player's life was that of an ordinary professional player. But some players were able to develop their own ideas and make their own judgments based on their understanding of the manager's tactical intent. Such players were often the master players who could see the situation clearly on the pitch and turn things around.

While Inter Milan retreated to defend, Wood and Tiago did not cling to their defensive midfielders' positions and foolishly waited for the opponent to attack. Out of the necessary caution, they did not rush up at the same time, but took turns to plug in and take part in the offense. When Tiago was up, George Wood would stay in the back to defend. When Wood went up, Tiago would be in charge of the defense.

Nottingham Forest controlled the football under its feet and was in no hurry to send it directly to the Inter Milan goal. In the tactical meeting the day before the game, Twain arranged Şahin to start, but also specifically warned him that if he was not particularly certain in the game, he must not pass the ball directly. He was not to give Inter Milan the opportunity to intercept the ball to immediately fight back. He would rather he passed the ball back and forth on the periphery to jerk the Inter Milan's defense around first.

Şahin habitually tried to send a threatening pass every time he got the ball. But when he looked up at the seemingly impervious wall of Inter Milan defense, he remembered the boss's admonition. So, he turned around and sent a cross pass instead.

Şahin passed it to Bentley, who saw that Inter Milan's rear defensive line remained calm when he was about to cross the ball, so he sent the football out with a long pass straight to the other side of the pitch. Matías Fernández received the ball and passed it to Leighton Baines, who plugged in from behind.

Baines saw that it was not a good time, so he continued to pass the ball, which fell to George Wood's feet.

The Inter Milan players certainly would not cower in their own thirty-meters zone like shrinking violets and let Nottingham Forest pass the ball back and forth outside. Ibrahimović at the fore front saw the ball fall at Wood's feet and rushed up to try tackle the ball. Under his lead, Inter Milan's overall formation began to slightly press out. There were finally some gaps in the originally impenetrable formation.

Wood ceded the ball to Rafinha when Ibrahimović pounced up.

Rafinha then passed the ball diagonally to Şahin and continued to run forward, as if he wanted to do a wall pass with Şahin.

The Inter Milan players were not fools. How could they tolerate such a conventional and simple coordinated move being made in front of themselves?

Chivu kept a close eye on Rafinha, and Cambiasso came up to pounce on Şahin.

Şahin did not receive the ball. He just made a move like he was going to receive the ball and then turned around to block Cambiasso so as to give the ball to Ibišević behind him.

"Ibišević takes the ball and he's now on the edge of the penalty area. He faces the goal sideways. It looks like he's got a chance to shoot!"

Ibišević did not shoot because the moment he tried to lift his leg, he realized that Samuel was close to him. It was not suitable to shoot. So, he changed his mind at the last minute and gave a shake with his ankle to pass the ball back to George Wood.

The pass was too familiar to Mourinho—the striker's back was to goal, Wood faced the goal directly and the ball was passed to him from the striker's position. He could shoot straight while running and without stopping the ball at all.

While some people always said how bad Wood's shot was, it had been proven time and again that this player with a bad shot could always kick a world-class shot in this spot...

He raised his fist in the hope that the Inter Milan players on the pitch would remember what he had said to them before the game.

—George Wood is the most dangerous killer at the top of the penalty arc! It's not alarmist talk. You have to keep that in mind and stop all possibilities of him from shooting in this spot!

Fortunately, his players had not forgotten that. Samuel was defending against Ibišević and they still had people who could step forward and defend against Wood. Burdisso stepped forward bravely and planned to use his body to block Wood's startling long shot!

Wood gave a jab with his ankle. After he tricked Burdisso fell out of balance, he pushed the football to Şahin on the other side!

Şahin had turned and completely bypassed Cambiasso when he gave the ball to Ibišević. Now he faced the goal and there was no one in front of him.

Wood just passed the ball to Şahin's front. All he had to do was to speed up and charge into the penalty area. Then he could directly face the Inter Milan Milan's Brazilian goalkeeper, César.....

"A one-on-one face-off with the goalkeeper!!"

The commentator roared with excitement. The game had only began three minutes and Nottingham Forest already had such a good chance.

Şahin's breakout was not so strong that he could dash to the front of the football with one step of his leg and then throw everyone off to kick the ball. Wood used too much strength to pass the ball in order to try to penetrate the opponent's defensive line.

Şahin tried his best to charge up but did not manage to shake off the defenders.

The three players, Samuel, Burdisso as well as Cambiasso rushed at him from three different directions, intending to smother his shot in its infancy. Of course, since the football was already in the penalty area, they had to be careful not to foul...

But these three Argentines' purpose had been achieved. They crowded Şahin and surrounded him. In this way, the angle with which Şahin could shoot was very small. Under the heavy siege, even if he just raised his leg to prepare to shoot, the football on the ground might immediately be removed—they could not do nothing just because of the possibility of a foul. To foul while tackling the ball might be the work of a rough defender, but it would be an unqualified defender if they let the other side score a goal for fear of a foul.

If Şahin wanted to shoot, even if it's a penalty-kick, these three people will be shoveling down!

Şahin did not shoot. He and the three men fell to the ground at the same time, but he just swept the ball across to the other side...

"Ibišević!! He's completely unguarded—"

None of the Inter Milan defenders, including César, noticed Ibišević. They only had eyes for Şahin when the ball reached Şahin's feet. But Şahin passed the football to Ibišević.

Now that most of the goal area in front of Ibišević was empty. It was very simple what he needed to do—

"He shoots! GOOOAL!! It's too easy!"

The Nottingham Forest fans erupted in thunderous cheers at the Giuseppe Meazza Stadium.

Ibišević ran with wide open arms to the corner flag and continued to do his slap in the face celebratory gesture.

The Inter Milan players, on the other hand, stood in a daze where they were and could not believe what they saw—the game had only started more than three minutes ago. How did they concede the goal? And lost so easily, so simply, so... inexplicably!

They were the people on the spot and baffled, but the onlookers saw it clearly.

“A beautiful coordination! It’s really a treat to watch Nottingham Forest’s coordination! It’s rare to see such a smooth coordination played so strongly in the middle in modern football. The offensive that started from George Wood had fooled all the three Inter Milan defenders.”

Şahin’s pass was crucial. If he was completely unaware that Ibišević would plug in from the side, he would have chosen to force a shot. No one would know the result if that happened. It was the moment when he pretended to shoot but passed the ball when he fell on the ground that completely tore up Inter Milan’s tight defense. Ibišević easily pushed the football into the goal as if he was facing an empty goal on the training ground.

The Nottingham Forest players rushed up to embrace him one by one after Ibišević had done a slap in the face move. And the Forest team’s technical area and substitutes’ bench off the field had long been in embrace together. Tony Twain also did not forget to brandish his fists to demonstrate in front of more than seventy thousand Inter Milan fans. His actions naturally once again won a lot of boos and abuse for himself. But he did not care. He was the winner at this moment, and those who insulted him were losers!

As Twain expected, Mourinho soon rose from the technical area. He walked back and forth on the sidelines, displeased. Just three minutes into the start of the game and Nottingham Forest had opened the gap from the middle to score a valuable away goal. Such a thing was humiliating for a Serie A giant like Inter Milan.

He knew Twain’s mind, so he instructed the team to must pay attention to the defense at the beginning of the game. . . But he did not expect the middle, which was the most difficult to break through, had become Nottingham Forest’s exclusive corridor. Looking at the coordination between the three players in the middle, they completely treated Inter Milan’s three defenders as monkeys to play with. They were dragged around by their running and passes and neglected the real focus in the end.

Which area did I miss and not cover?

He began to reflect on it much to his discontent.

Unfortunately, he did not come up with a reason why when the game resumed again.

He could only attribute it to an accident which could regularly happened on the field and no one would know when and why it occurred—at one point, a gap happened in Inter Milan’s initially tight defense due to some factors and was keenly seized upon by Nottingham Forest. It could not be said that Inter Milan played terribly, only that the enemy was too cunning.

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The game resumed. Inter Milan suddenly gave up their defense, and actively pressed out by several lines, which disturbed Nottingham Forest for a while.

The Nottingham Forest players clearly did not expect Inter Milan to counterattack so crazily so soon—they thought Inter Milan would not be able to recover from the shock of conceding the goal so quickly in the opening of the game.

Nottingham’s red colored players made a mistake. Inter Milan was not as easy to deal with as they thought.

Amidst wave after wave of sounds from the home fans, Inter Milan launched a steady stream of attacks from the midfield, putting constant pressure on Nottingham Forest's defense. Inter Milan seemed to be testing the limits of Nottingham Forest's rebound.

In the eighth minute, after Cambiasso intercepted Şahin's ball, he quickly dribbled the ball in the middle forward but encountered Tiago's tight defense and the ball was intercepted. Fortunately, Montolivo did not rush too fast and Tiago's intercepted ball rolled right under his feet. Inter Milan's attack continued.

Montolivo did not intend to attack from the middle, as Cambiasso did. He sent the ball directly to Quaresma on the side.

Speaking of Quaresma, he was also a young man who became famous for a long time, but unfortunately did not seem to be a big name. Whether it was at Barcelona or currently at Inter Milan, his status had not been stable. His gorgeous footwork seemed out of step with the team's overall tactics. Mourinho had high expectations with him at first, but it was a pity that he simply could not adapt to Inter Milan's tactics and Italian style of football when he came to Italy. His footwork skills and divine outer instep skills, which could win international acclaim in Portugal, could only be a focus of defensive attention in Italy and the main culprit for dragging the team's offensive tactics.

Having adapted for several seasons, Quaresma remained a fringe figure in Inter Milan's lineup. He was in this game because Mancini was injured and could not play the game ...

But the Portuguese was not to be underestimated. Although he sometimes seemed out of step with the team's tactics, his individual combat ability was still very good. Mourinho might also want to use Quaresma's individual ability to restrain the Forest team's offense on the left flank.

Quaresma seemed to be in good shape for today's match. After he received the ball, he showed a good body flexibility when he simply followed the ball movement, and then accelerated on the side to break through!

Matías Fernández rushed up from the back and tried to overtake to tackle the ball.

Quaresma noticed Fernández accelerating and approaching. He calculated precisely when Fernández made a move to intercept the ball to suddenly make a stop. He hooked the football back with his right foot and then pushed forward with the arch of his left foot to bypass Fernández!

Next, he started the acceleration again, shook off Fernández, caught up with the football and directly confronted Leighton Baines. Not far from Baines was George Wood, lying in wait for him to bypass Baines so that he could rush up to tackle the ball.

Fernández saw Wood on the side and gave up the chase. He believed the captain and Baines would be able to hold off Quaresma.

Baines did not manage to defend Quaresma alone. He was bypassed by Quaresma with a back heel and a quick stop. Following which, just as Quaresma was about to enter the penalty area, George Wood pounced toward him.

The football was on the left side of Quaresma's body at this time. He was a right-footed player and needed to adjust. That would be Wood's chance!

Wood's entire person was as if he were being pulled with a tight bow string and his eyes were fixed squarely on Quaresma's movements.

He saw Quaresma made an emergency stop and bypassed Baines. After which, he started to turn around. It was expected that he would use his left foot to snap the ball back and then simply cut into the penalty area. Wood planned to cut cross to meet him on the way and hit him head-on.

But then he saw a scene that widened his eyes—

Quaresma did not continue to dribble the ball. His left foot stepped on the ground with force and he turned around to lift his right leg toward the football... and volleyed!

In that moment, George Wood's eyes widened, and he was unresponsive. Because he saw... Quaresma used his outer instep!

The football flew in front of Wood's face, drawing a strange arc. Looking the movement of his lifted leg, it did not look like a shot but to say it was a cross pass...

Had anyone ever seen a cross pass into the goal?

The football leaped high to bypass everyone in the penalty area and then fell straight into the far corner of the goal. The goalkeeper, Akinfeev was unable to defend in time. When he jumped up and tried his best to reach out, his extended hands could not touch the ball.

Everyone witnessed Quaresma's signature goal at the Giuseppe Meazza Stadium.

"What a great GOOOOOAL——"

The football fell into the net from the junction of the goalpost and the crossbar.

George Wood's heart sank as his eyes followed the football. What did he see? The right outer instep volleyed the ball in an arc and bypassed all the defenders to drill into the goal from the most unlikely angle...

It was a complete surprise!

"A beautiful goal from Quaresma! Just five minutes later, he single-handedly equalized the scores for Inter Milan! The once-rumored to-be-purged player pulled his team back with such a brilliant goal! I'm willing to bet this goal will be among the top ten goals in the Champions League this season! It's so beautiful! The Nottingham Forest players did not react to the shot!"

Quaresma was a little excited after the goal. He pulled his jersey and said words that no one understood. But his teammates did not care what he said. They rushed forward and pushed him to the ground.

Mourinho also rose from the technical area and waved his fists hard. It was lucky to have equalized the score so soon... He was previously worried about how the game would turn out if Nottingham Forest had continued to be in the lead.

It was all good now... He turned his head to look at the thunderous Tony Twain on the side and a proud smile emerged on his face.

Your lead was fleeting. You're still at my home ground. I want to see how you're going to play next, Tony Twain!

Chapter 788: Missed out on a Golden Opportunity

"Ricardo Quaresma! What a wonderful goal!"

The Giuseppe Meazza Stadium was like a volcano that had just erupted. The lava and flames of the volcano were personified by the fans dressed in blue who were cheering fervently at the stands.

"Quaresma's outside of the foot pass has made a name for itself, and Quaresma has just demonstrated that very stunt to us in this Champions League game! The goal leaves all the Nottingham Forest players stunned!"

All the Nottingham Forest players were indeed stunned.

Quaresma's goal shows how imaginative he was as a player...

There were certain Forest players who knew beforehand how Quaresma liked to use the outside of his right foot to make such shots down the right flank, but no one expected him to succeed on his very first try!

Tiago was Quaresma's team mate on the Portugese national team. He had reminded his Forest's team mates not to underestimate Quaresma's individual skills and abilities prior to the start of the match.

He had said those words out of good intentions, but he did not expect Quaresma to perform as he did, and neither did he expect his passing remark to come true.

George Wood stood rooted at the spot. Quaresma had already run away from him to celebrate his goal with a dance.

Wood suddenly felt humiliated, and so he clenched his fists tightly. It was not because he saw Quaresma to be a terrific player who made him feel helpless all over, but rather, it was because he had overly relied on his experience, which resulted in him not stopping Quaresma's shot.

If only he had not waited in front of him and had just pounced at him earlier, perhaps he would have had a way to stick close to Quaresma and not give him a chance to shoot for goal.

Everyone else was heaping praises on Quaresma for his brilliant techniques. George Wood was the only one who saw Quaresma's goal as nothing more than a result of his own personal mistakes.

He is the one to be blamed for the goal. He has to come up with a way to amend.

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Mourinho celebrated the goal without restraint by the side of the pitch, whereas Tony Twain swore profusely, "F*ck! F*ck this! F*ck it all!"

He did not know who he should blame and scold for Quaresma's goal, because his goal was impeccable.

He was not abnormal like Wood. He does not set high standards on himself, and thus, he would not pin the blame for the goal on Wood's hesitation. He would definitely not pin the blame on his tactics either. Quaresma's goal had nothing to do with his tactics.

He just felt really upset because the score had been levelled when his team had barely gone into the lead for five minutes. It was a blow to the team.

The players' morale and confidence would both be affected. They might also lose their concentration in the game temporarily here and there. All these effects could lead to dire consequences in the match.

Twain sat on the chair and vented his unhappiness through the use of swear words. Thereafter, he got to his feet and walked to the side of the pitch.

He might be upset right now, but he needed to cheer his team on. He can't let the goal undermine his army's morale.

The Nottingham Forest players looked preoccupied, as though their souls had left their bodies. They were only able to lead their opponents for five minutes before the score was levelled...

It was quite the blow to their morale.

Wood was not the kind of captain who could encourage and boost his team mates' morale by giving them a loud and impassioned speech. However, someone definitely needs to come out and say a few words to calm everyone down with the situation that they are currently in.

Where could he find such a person?

That person is right by the side of the pitch.

"Bastard! You bunch of wusses! It's just a draw! Don't forget that we have an away goal! What are you guys so depressed about?" Tony Twain stood by the side of the pitch and yelled at the players while gesticulating about. "Score another f*cking goal now that the score is tied! If one away goal is not enough then for f*ck's sake score two away goals! Three away goals! Four away goals!"

Twain did Wood's job for him. The only thing he did not do was to point his middle finger at the dejected players who had their heads drooped.

Frankly, given the cacophonous environment within the Giuseppe Meazza Stadium, several of the players who were situated a distance away from Twain could not hear what he was yelling about at all. However, the moment they saw their boss standing by the pitch and making a few gestures at them, their unsettled hearts were able to settle down.

How is he not the emotional pillar of the team?

How is he not a natural born leader?

It was such a pity that Twain could not get on the pitch and play in the game.

Mourinho noticed Twain jumping up and down by the side of the pitch, and he snorted at the sight.

He also heard everything that Twain said earlier. He was a multilingual Portuguese who could speak many other languages, and his familiarity with English was perhaps second only to his mother tongue, Portuguese.

I didn't think this guy's temper would still be as fiery as before. I thought he would act with more restraint after suffering from a heart attack. That string of swear words that he just spewed really tested the masses' tolerance towards him. Isn't he afraid that his heart attack might relapse someday due to him being overly agitated?

But...

A feeling of nostalgia surged up from within.

You rarely get to hear such fiery swear words being used this profusely by the side of the pitch during an Italian game, and it is also very rare that you get to see such a great pitchside performance. In England however, such scenes are not uncommon. Things were worse at the games between Chelsea and Nottingham Forest.

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Inter Milan had originally intended to attack Forest's half ferociously after the match restarted. They wanted to take advantage of the momentum of the game that had swung in their favor after they scored the goal. However, Nottingham Forest shifted their entire formation backwards and made themselves more compact defense-wise, and they started employing the tactic of defending and going on the counterattack. It made it difficult for Inter Milan to gain any sort of progress.

This time, it was Mourinho's turn to stand up from his seat and make adjustments to his tactics.

Mourinho gestured for his players to move backwards as well. He wanted them to pay attention to the empty space behind them. His team must never charge ahead mindlessly during matches against Nottingham Forest. The more his team gains an upper hand in the match, the more dangerous it gets for his team.

As a manager who has faced off with Twain numerous times, Mourinho knows Twain's tactical ideologies and habits like the back of his hand. It might seem as though Forest is intent on playing an attacking style football with their 4-2-3-1 formation that Twain even called as 'his own Christmas tree', but in actuality, Twain was a utilitarian at heart. If going on the offense doesn't bring success to his team, then he has no qualms about throwing that tactic out the window and reverting back to his previous tactic of defending and going on the counterattack.

Inter Milan's fans were singing and dancing at the stands to celebrate the fact that their team has the upper hand in the game right now.

Even the players started to get ahead of themselves. Maicon Sisenando rushed up the pitch and never returned. Do those players have a death wish?

Mourinho could now allow his players to behave like that any longer. He needed to eliminate any possible risks before they became a threat to his team.

Perhaps Mourinho was not persuasive enough.

Nottingham Forest went on the offense once and all the Inter Milan fans at the stands went silent.

Zlatan Ibrahimović displayed his ball handling techniques before Forest's penalty box. He made several feints, but he was not able to cause George Wood to lose his balance. Left with no other choice, he then passed the ball over to Quaresma who was on the right flank.

Quaresma's goal at the start of the match has allowed everyone to recognize that he was in a brilliant form today. His team mates started passing the ball over to him more often, especially after Forest started to make its defense more compact, because they hoped that he would be able to make use of his personal skills and abilities to break through Nottingham Forest's airtight defense.

The ball from Ibrahimović was snatched away by Tiago before it reached Quaresma's feet.

Almost all of Inter Milan's players had moved up the pitch when they attacked Nottingham Forest's goalpost earlier. Even their two center backs had moved towards the center circle to try and see if they could contribute to their team's offense.

What a good chance this is!

Nottingham Forest fans habitually cheered at the top of their voices after seeing Tiago snatch the ball from Quaresma. They were cheering as though their team had just scored a goal.

Inter Milan fans were puzzled by their cheers. They thought that Nottingham Forest fans were all unambitious people who would get excited over a simple thing such as snatching the ball away.

The Inter Milan fans began cheering their players on even louder, hoping to drown out Nottingham Forest fans' cheers with their voices.

Tiago passed the ball over to George Wood without hesitation. Wood was positioned closest to him and was also the easiest to pass to.

Ibrahimović was situated right before Wood. He stuck out a leg to try and snatch the ball away, but unlike his offensive abilities, his defensive abilities were amateurish. All he was doing was to 'put on a show' that he was trying to defend.

Wood was able to get past the Swedish effortlessly.

Thereafter, Wood brought the ball forward. He had already passed the ball over to Şahin while Esteban Cambiasso tried to chase after him.

Şahin turned around and began darting towards the flank. Ibišević was also running towards the same place as him. The two of them attracted both of Inter Milan's center backs, Walter Samuel and Nicolás Burdisso, over to them. However, when the center backs were closing in on them, Şahin suddenly turned around and passed the ball in the opposite direction to the one that he was running in!

The one who received his pass was Matías Fernández, who had also run to the front of the pitch.

The runs from both Şahin and Ibišević had caused the Inter Milan's defense to be scattered, which is why when Fernández picked up the ball, there was no one before him...

Inter Milan fans finally understood why the Nottingham Forest fans were so pumped up earlier...

Because those fans have gotten even more stoked now.

“Fernández has received the ball! There’s no one ahead of him, he can make his way straight into the penalty box!”

“F*ck!” Mourinho could not help but swear in exasperation. He did not need to turn his head to look at Tony Twain. He could already imagine the smile that would be on his face.

Nottingham Forest have been acting as though they are on the losing end all this while, but this was the moment they have been waiting for!

Mourinho’s heart was in his mouth the moment he saw Fernández make his way into Inter Milan’s penalty box. He felt that Forest would definitely score, because there was no way that Forest’s players, who were well known for their abilities to defend and counterattack, would miss on such a chance.

“Charge! Chilean!” Twain urged his player on excitedly by the other side of the pitch.

Inter Milan’s Brazilian goalkeeper Júlio César chose to rush out of his goalpost after seeing that Fernández had made his way into the penalty box. However, he did not pounce for the ball at the Chilean’s feet straight away, because that would only allow Fernández to go past him easily.

He had chosen to rush out of his goalpost so as to try and minimize the angle in which Fernández could shoot. At the same time, he was also able to maintain a considerable distance from both Fernández and the goalpost, which enabled him to stop the other party from shooting. He could also avoid getting too close to his target and being left aside.

Júlio César made the correct decision at the most critical time.

Fernández had initially intended to get past César when the latter pounced at him, but when he looked up, he realized that César did not get close to him and had instead laid down horizontally on the ground. Fernández was at a loss since things did not go according to his plan.

He could not just leave the ball there while he thought about how to deal with the unexpected situation. Both Walter Samuel and Nicolás Burdisso had turned around and were rushing for him after realizing that they had walked into a trap. There were also other Inter Milan players who were charging for him as well. The chance that he had to score was beginning to slip away from him.

Fernández was in a state of panic, and he chose to raise his leg and shoot for goal straight away.

The ball rolled towards the goalpost.

César pounced towards the ball, but he made an error in his judgement!

Unfortunately, Fernández’s shot was too straight and did not have an angle to it. César was not able to get the ball with his hands, but his legs were able to get the ball away!

All the Inter Milan fans held their breaths when Fernández shot at the goalpost.

When César kept the ball away however, the ones who could not breathe were the Nottingham Forest fans.

The fans of both teams experienced an emotional rollercoaster at the same time.

They should really give each other a hug for going through the same experience...

“Fernández shoots! Ah! Júlio César! He has saved the hearts of all the Inter Milan fans!”

In truth, the ball had not gone out of play after being blocked by César. However, Fernández’s heart had been dealt a heavy blow by then, and all he could do was stand rooted at the spot. Instead of rushing forward to attempt another shot at goal, Fernández hugged his head with both hands and watched in disbelief as the ball rolled towards the edge of the end line. Nicolás Burdisso was the player who eventually sent the ball away from their goalpost.

Ibišević, who had also rushed into the penalty box, was very upset with Fernández’s performance. He yelled at the Chilean who had his hands around his head, “What were you doing just now? You should have gone and retrieved the ball and tried a second time, not stand there and stare into space!”

Fortunately, Şahin was able to pull him away from Fernández before things escalated.

Fernández did not appear to have heard Ibišević’s words. All he did was to continue to stand at the spot and hug his head like a fool.

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Mourinho felt as though he had just experienced a heart attack, and there was a lingering feeling of fear within him after going through the calamity. He wanted to sit down and rest for a little, so he turned around and looked for his seat.

Tony Twain, on the other hand, was gritting his teeth tightly as he stared at the pitch. He was unable to say a single word.

Both Kerslake and Dunn who were behind him were thinking about how Fernández would not be able to escape a dressing-down from Twain during half-time later.

Even though Forest was not able to score a goal, but their attack was enough to scare the Inter Milan fans speechless.

The commentator was worried for Inter Milan after witnessing the prowess of Nottingham Forest’s tactic of defending and going on the counterattack.

“If Inter Milan is very desperate to get a goal, then they have to be mentally prepared that there is a chance that Nottingham Forest might go on the counterattack and score when they move forward to attack. I bet this is definitely not the situation that Mourinho wishes to see. Thus, changes need to be made to the team right now. It’s suicidal to keep playing the way they are now!”

Fortunately, Inter Milan did not continue playing the way they were.

Just like Tony Twain, Mourinho also made use of his rich body language and yells to remind his players to pay attention to their defense and not move forward too much. His players were also clearly frightened after Forest’s previous counterattack, and they have all retreated backwards.

The two sides then engaged in a battle in the midfield.

Twain wants to obtain away goals, but one goal was far from enough. Nottingham Forest has to keep going on the offense.

For the remainder of the first half, Nottingham Forest became the team on the offense, and Inter Milan became the team who seemed to be playing defend and counterattack.

The 4-2-3-1 formation was truly a formation that allowed the team to be much more powerful in their attacks. Having five players in the midfield allowed Forest's defense in the midfield to be very solid.

On the other hand, Inter Milan did not dare to commit too many players to its offense, and so they were not able to find many ways to attack.

The match continued to be in a stalemate. Both sides were able to get a few good chances, but neither side grasped at those chances. Just like this, the first half ended with the score being 1:1. Nottingham Forest has an away goal and also has the upper hand in the match so far. However, no one knew what would happen in the second half, because both managers were capable of making tweaks to their teams that could completely change the situation on the pitch.

Moreover, this was a match between those two very managers. There was no way they would not make changes to their teams.

The commentator was content with how both teams had each scored a goal in the first half. "The match has not been boring so far, and both teams have scored brilliant goals. Both teams also had good chances in the first half. I believe that the match will never be boring with these two managers in charge. The first half has proven my point..."

There was a reason why he said those words. The faces on both managers were not very pleasant when they walked towards their respective locker rooms, and it meant that they were not happy with how things had progressed in the first half. Since they are not happy, they would definitely make some adjustments to their teams, and that would make the second half even more exciting than the first...

How great would it be if all football matches were like this one, and only involved a battle between strong teams!

That was the thought on the minds of all the football fans watching the match who were not fans of either team.

Chapter 789: Be Crazy Together!

There was a little bit of noise in the dressing room. Everyone was talking about the first half and forming their own opinions, or advising other team-mates on how to do better. Only Fernández sat in his seat with his head bowed, playing with the towel in his hand. It was as if he was back to his unsociable form at the start when he first joined the team. He was still regretting that he had missed the shot in the first half.

All the players came in, and Twain was the last to enter the dressing room, the door closed behind him, and the noise outside was gone almost instantly. Hearing the sudden silence in the dressing room, Fernández knew who was coming, so he kept his head bowed. After more than half a season of

interaction, he had figured out the head's temper. The team had a chance to take the lead to end the first half, but they had to accept the draw because of his own mistakes. The King of Nottingham Forest must be very, very unhappy, so there was no way he could escape the scolding. As a player, Fernández was not a man who liked to talk back to the manager, so he chose to suffer such a rebuke in silence.

The expression on Twain's face after he entered the house signaled to the others that he was going to curse. His eyes swept around the dressing room and ended up on the boy, who was holding his head and fiddling with the towel in his hand.

Honestly, the only thing he felt when Fernández missed the ball was pity, but seeing Fernández stand stock-still in place instead of choosing to continue running and go for another shot angered him. Twain could tolerate bad luck or bad shooting, but he would never tolerate a player just giving up.

As a result, he appreciated the actions of Ibišević after that — rushing up to the Fernández to snarl and express his displeasure. Twain did not think that this kind of behavior would affect the harmony of the team. On the contrary, he felt that if everyone in the team were like Ibišević, the atmosphere in the dressing room would be harmonious to the maximum. What he needed was a team eager to win, not a team that sacrificed some of its most valuable things for harmony.

Twain went straight to Fernández, stopped in front of him, and cast him in his shadow. "Matías What are you looking so annoyed about?" He knew Fernández could understand him. The latter had been in England for half a year, so even though he was not fluent, he could still understand well enough.

Fernández could not ignore Twain. In simple English, he stuttered out, "That ball....did not go in..."

"Was it just that?"

Fernández didn't know what Twain was talking about. Other than that mistake in the first half, his performance was average and he made no mistakes.

"Actually, I don't care if the ball gets in." Twain shook his head. "I really don't care. After all, we already have an away goal." As his voice rang out in the locker room, the attention of the rest of the public was directed at him and Fernández.

"I'm disappointed with your performance, Matías." Twain stood, while Fernández sat, and instead of bending down and saying this to Fernández, he leaned over and looked down at him. "I don't care if you score a goal, what I care about is your attitude. Look at what you did after you lost your first kick. You just stood where you were and held your head in your hands. What, were you under attack?"

Twain's voice rose sharply, and everyone flinched even though they knew what was coming. It was like being in a car on a bumpy mountain road and hitting your head on the ceiling of the car with a bang.

Twain gritted his teeth and stared at Fernández. There were basically sparks coming out of his eyes. "As long as the ball is not out of bounds, you will rush up to the ball to assist the shot! Even if you kick the ball into outer space, I won't have any complaints. If the other side gets the ball first, you kick the ball and him into outer space!"

With his bad-tempered boss scolding him, Fernández's head was buried lower.

Twain hated this attitude. He reached out and dragged Fernández from his seat. “Keep your head up! It’s just a goal which didn’t go in, what’s so great about it? No matter when it is, you have to be full of fighting spirit! Fight! What is fighting spirit? Fighting spirit is to not admit defeat till death! It’s when someone calls you trash and you rush up to fight them. Don’t just keep your head down and and not say a word! ”

Don was a little worried about Twain’s heart, and he coughed next to him, but he didn’t expect Twain to look back and stare at him, “You’re sick or something, Don?”

“Well, uh...no, I’m not.” Don knew it was better if he kept quiet.

“Yes, I’m sorry, Chief.” Fernández hurriedly apologized..

“Don’t pull this with me! What are you sorry for? Fighting spirit is not when someone else scolds you and you kneel down to beg for mercy! What should you do? What should you do? ”

Although Fernández had not been at Nottingham Forest long, he knew more or less what he had to do. So he looked up and said, “I’ll try to make up for it in the second half, Chief.”

Twain loosened his grip on Fernández’s shoulder and patted him. His face immediately brightened. “That’s good. It seems you understand.”

Although Twain was known to scold people without mercy, it would be better to look at this from another angle. If you did not treat this as a “scolding”, perhaps it would not be so uncomfortable-. Twain was actually teaching you how to see reason, just more intensely and vigorously, with more emotion and extreme methods.

After helping Fernández see reason, Twain turned to look at the rest of the locker room. “In the first half you guys did a good job. We scored an away goal, that lost goal...” He glanced at George Wood. “It was not the fault of any of you.” He noticed that Wood’s facial muscles moved a little and he was happy.

“But we need to make some adjustments. It looks like Quaresma is in great form today and if Mourinho is smart, he would make big use of it in the second half. We need to pay attention to his watch. George, I remember you’re on the right? ”

Wood nodded, “Yes.”

In the back, Wood tends to the right and Thiago, to his left.

“In the second half, you and Thiago will change positions to come to the left. On defense, help Barnes and Fernández limit Quaresma to the sideline. ”

That was what Wood wanted to hear the most. His answer was even louder, “OK! ”

Of course, Twain knew what Wood was thinking, so he added, “Try not to foul, and definitely don’t get any cards. ”

Although Wood had stopped getting cards unnecessarily these days, Twain thought it was necessary to remind him again. Allowing Wood to guard Quaresma when he was so keyed up was a double-edged sword that might cut his own fingers and result in a huge loss.

“Guys, Inter Milan wants to play our defensive counter-attack, so in the second half you need to pay more attention to the defence than in the first half. We will start with defending, and slowly toughen up with Milan at the midfield. Once the situation is good for us, they will become more on edge as the game goes on and throw aside Mourinho’s tactics, as long as they cannot score in the later part of the game. That will be our chance.”

Pepe stood up and asked, “Chief, are you saying we defend against counter-attacks in the second half?”

Twain made a thumbs up, “Yes! ”

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While Twain was “reasoning” with Fernández in the dressing room, Mourinho was busy telling his players about the second-half tactical adjustments.

The score of 1-1 in the first half, while containing some occasional elements, was also telling. Mourinho discovered one thing: Inter Milan would undoubtedly lose out if he assumed Tony Twain had not changed.

What did he mean by ‘change’? It was saying how Tony Twain himself and his team were not very good at positional warfare. When their opponents secured their defense and counter-attacked Nottingham Forest, Tony Twain and his players would run out of plays and could only rely on some free kicks and luck to win the contest. At least that habit did not improve until Mourinho left England.

But judging by the first half, Nottingham Forest was now completely out of the question of not being good at the position. Twain’s special “Christmas tree” formation was the best choice for battle. The first attack in the battle of the position was often not important, the important thing was the following attacks. In this aspect, it was easier to accomplish that with Nottingham Forest’s current midfield. The midfield has thickness, the attack had different layers, the defense also had depth, so it would not be as easy for the opponent to counter attack after a failed attack. Their opponents would also not be able to break through a whole area after breaking in at a point. At the time they were surrounding the midfield while playing around Inter Milan at half-time, they looked like a stronger team.

Mourinho could not guarantee that Inter Milan would survive if Nottingham Forest continued to play like this in the second half, so changes had to be made. He guessed that Twain would not stick to the tactics of pressing Inter Milan in the second half. On second thought, he realised that he would give up on pressing Inter Milan if he were Twain as it left too much space behind him, which made it easier for the opponent to counter-attack.

“... Nottingham Forest’s attack in the second half should not have been as aggressive as it was in the first half, so it was our turn to attack. Also pay attention to our own behind, you can see how sharp their counter-attack is, right? You’ll see it a lot in the second half.”

“Watch out for their two sides and their quick counter-attack. We also need to strengthen our side attacks, with our attacks to suppress their attack. At this point, he glanced at Quaresma.

The Portuguese was listening to the manager’s arrangement with a satisfied smile. Could a game change a player’s fate? Mourinho did not think this situation was ideal, but he did need to use Quaresma’s

strength in this game. He said he should pay more attention on the side attacks. Quaresma was also one of the two side roads, so the implication was obvious.

Quaresma was clearly excited about what the manager had shown. He had been a fringe figure at Inter Milan for several seasons and had been disappointed that he could not impress the manager with his brilliant footwork. Now the Champions League quarter-final against Nottingham Forest might be a good opportunity, and the absence of Mancini's due to his injury might be God's arrangement. As long as they maintained this state and momentum, it was estimated that he could only be the Brazilian's reserve even if the latter recovered from his injury.

Such a future was exciting for Quaresma who could not wait to get started in the second half, but Mourinho also made his own demands for Quaresma. "Riccardo, don't limit your position to the side. I know you like the feeling of taking the ball on the sideline, but you have to be more flexible in this game. Both sides and middle roads are available."

Quaresma nodded to show that he understood; only a fool would shake his head.

After speaking to Quaresma, Mourinho looked to everyone. "The focus of this game is to score goals without losing the ball. You have to remember, 1:1 score is absolutely not good, 2:2 and 3:3 are not okay! You have to win and you can't let them score again. Otherwise our home-field advantage is meaningless! Tony Twain and Nottingham Forest want revenge. No matter what he thinks, no matter what others say, the situation is against us, we have reached the edge of the cliff, and we will fall if we're careless. Every one of you better be careful!"

Mourinho's last words amounted to a euphemistic admission of his previous mistakes. He once said he did not care if it was a revenge game for Nottingham Forest and that they should just regard it as a normal game to play. But now he found that this was simply not possible. If it were a normal game, then his team was definitely losing. Because the game began with a pre-match war, he had already been pulled into Tony Twain's orbit.

Tony Twain seemed to have some sort of magical power that could drive the people he had interacted with crazy.

Mourinho could do nothing but go crazy with him now and let the players realise that this game was different from the ordinary games of the past. Why was it different? Not because they blew their heads two seasons ago — that was just an excuse for Twain to play psychological warfare. The reason was simple:

It was because their opponent was Tony Twain.

Chapter 790: Swift Counterattack

At the start of the second half, Nottingham Forest did shrink their defense. Inter Milan, on the other hand, took advantage of their kickoff to launch a fierce attack on the Forest team's heartland.

Ibrahimović had a shot from inside the penalty area which struck the goalpost and bounced, that startled all the Forest players to break into a cold sweat.

Following which, there was a moment of chaos in front of the goal, with Rossi falling to the ground amid the chaos and the football being taken by the goalkeeper, Akinfeev. The Inter Milan players immediately raised their hands to signal a foul on the Nottingham Forest players, which should result in a penalty kick. The Nottingham Forest players also raised their hands to show their innocence.

The referee made his own judgment and he gestured for Rossi to get up.

Deafening boos broke out at the Giuseppe Meazza Stadium for his gesture.

The Inter Milan players did not protest much because it was indeed not a foul... They did that before in hope to give the referee a wrong message amid the chaos and put pressure on him to award a penalty kick in their favor. They did not expect the referee to be able to distinguish right and wrong with acuity. In that case, there was no need to continue the entanglement.

After five or six minutes of chaos in the opening, the situation was back in balance.

Inter Milan attacked, but they were afraid to put in all their strength and thus not be able to put the most amount of pressure on the Forest team's defensive line. Nottingham Forest was naturally be able to hold on.

Nottingham Forest had shrunk their defense and was not strong on the offense, giving Inter Milan a chance to attack.

One team wanted to attack, and the other side must defend. So, the game was back in balance.

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Quaresma was more active than in the first half. At the halftime interval, he saw hope in Mourinho's words, and it was an opportunity to seize. He had a year and a half left on his contract with Inter Milan. If he still did not have a convincing performance, then his departure from Meazza at that time would only be the inevitable result.

He raised his hand frequently on the field to ask for the ball.

Montolivo passed the ball to him and Leighton Baines immediately leaned closer. Quaresma was not afraid of one-on-one confrontation, even two over one—behind Baines was Wood, the defensive midfielder they revered.

He intended to get rid of Baines first, and then face Wood in a one-on-one duel. He wanted to play with the hotly anticipated defensive midfielder in the football world to prove his ability to stay in Meazza.

Unfortunately, Quaresma did not eventually encounter BOSS George Wood this time. He hit a wall with Baines. He was too eager to break through but forced himself to a dead end instead. Not only did he miss the opportunity for the tactic, he could not dribble the football out. It was finally jabbed out by Baines.

Anyway, Quaresma used his consummate skill to win an out-of-bounds ball for Inter Milan...

For a while after, Quaresma was obsessed with a duel against Baines in the flank, much to Mourinho's displeasure. In the end, he could no longer tolerate it and stood on the sidelines to shout Quaresma's name, reminding him not to always wander around the side.

Quaresma also found out about this problem—if he was always on the side, he would not be able to run into George Wood, because Wood was also in charge of the defense in the middle and could not run to the side to stay.

While the Portuguese winger preferred and was more accustomed to the side, he had decided to move to the middle the game in order to prove to the manager that he was a good player who was battle ready and could win the game.

The first time he came face-to-face with Wood, he used a beautiful step over move to bypass a defensive line and send the ball out—it was a clever move, even though Quaresma did not realize it at the time.

The Portuguese was encouraged by his first successful attempt to trick Wood into losing his center of gravity and decided to directly challenge with a breakthrough next.

The second time, he changed into a feint, dribbling the ball at a high speed from the side and cutting inside. Then he changed direction with his ankle and subtle control of speed to get rid of the defenders. He managed to get rid of Baines, but not Wood.

When Wood's powerful body leaned close, Quaresma suddenly felt that the football under his feet had become unmanageable.

A powerful force pressed against him, preventing him from controlling the ball under his feet. The football bounced on the ground and he extended his leg to hook the ball while he leaned his body against Wood. Did he want to fight Wood with his body? He failed.

Wood struck Quaresma who was dribbling the ball and caused him to tumble but it was not even a foul. It was just a reasonable collision.

Quaresma was so angry at the referee's decision that he knelt on the ground and waved his fists. But no one paid attention to him.

However, the Portuguese winger was in fine form for the game. The third time he took advantage of a sudden change of direction to coordinate with his teammate's running position to bypass Wood.

Wood lost his balance from the swaying and Quaresma easily broke through before passing the ball to Ibrahimović. The Swedish striker swung his leg again for the shot. Akinfeev firmly caught it this time.

The goalkeeper, Akinfeev was clearly unhappy that Wood let the opponent broke through. He held onto the football and did not rush to send it out. He shouted instead, "George, what's wrong with you?"

Wood waved his hands and looked at Quaresma, saying nothing.

This nimble kid was more difficult to deal with than he thought...

Quaresma lost in the next two one-on-one face-offs that followed.

Mourinho watched for a while on the sidelines and decided not to be silent.

He wanted the team's offensive focus to shift to Quaresma, but it was not so as to create the condition for this kid to face off against George Wood and play out individual heroism. If he continued to singlehandedly challenge, the team's offensive would sooner or later be destroyed by him.

Taking advantage of a dead ball, he called over Quaresma who was near the sidelines. He said, "Ricardo, I instructed you to take charge of the offensive, it's not so that you can face off the opponent individually. Have you not played professional football before?"

Quaresma also felt that he was being excessive for that period. He bowed his head and said, "I know, coach..."

"When you have a face-off with George Wood, you have already fallen for Tony Twain's ploy! Wood's one-on-one defense is very good. If you continue to play like this, I can only consider bringing you off, no matter how good your form is!" Mourinho said seriously with a straight face. He and Quaresma were both Portuguese, so there was no language barrier. He could be certain that Quaresma would not have a situation where he did not understand what he said and continued in his own way.

"If you get it, get back on the field!"

Mourinho shoved Quaresma back.

Following which, some interesting developments happened in the game. Quaresma remained as Inter Milan's playmaker, but he was no longer obsessed with challenging Wood or Baines. He would only choose to break through if the timing was right. More often than not, he would lure Wood over and then pass the football out.

This time, Inter Milan's offensive became alive.

Quaresma was no longer the end point of the offensive, but more like a relay station—the ball was passed to his feet and he could make his own breakthrough or pass to his other teammates based on his own observation of the situation. Such an offensive approach was obviously better than letting Quaresma try his best to break through Wood.

Nottingham Forest also found it more difficult to defend. Before, they only needed to defend against Quaresma. Now they needed to defend all the Inter Milan players and not miss any positions. Otherwise it was possible to...

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"Quaresma gets the ball again, and he'll choose whether to break through or pass..."

As soon as the voice trailed off, Quaresma chose to force a breakthrough. Baines planned to come up to shovel the football out, but he was easily bypassed. This time he did not choose to go to the middle and clash with George Wood, but he picked a better soft touch.

Breaking through Baines, he could pass, and he could also go straight into the penalty area. Once he entered the penalty area, the Nottingham Forest goal would be in danger.

George Wood certainly would not let that happen. He rushed over to stop Quaresma from breaking through, but also to guard against his outer instep shot.

When he saw Wood coming, Quaresma picked up his right foot. This time he did not want to shoot straight at the goal—he sent the ball to the front of the penalty area.

Cambiasso received the ball and Tiago rushed up to cover the position. Wood also turned around to dash back. Quaresma did not pose a threat without the ball, and Baines returned to be in charge of defending against him.

Tiago blocked Cambiasso's direct shot angle, but Cambiasso did not want to shoot for the goal. After he did a feint to look like he was going to charge into the penalty area, he passed the ball to the flank where Nottingham Forest's defense was the weakest.

Maicon suddenly slotted in from the side like a bullet train and received Cambiasso's pass.

None of the Nottingham Forest players noticed his plug-in, including George Wood. Their defensive attention was all attracted by Quaresma, Cambiasso and Ibrahimović.

Maicon kicked the incoming ball straight on and volleyed hard!

The football whistled through the heavily guarded penalty area like a cannonball and flew toward the far corner of the goal!

“Maicon's long shot—”

The commentator lengthened the end of his voice, which was accompanied by cheers from the Inter Milan fans.

Everyone was convinced that the ball was in!

But there was one man who did not believe it.

Akinfeev took a step to the right and then jumped. He stretched his body in the air, extended his arms and flew toward the football.

The football was cut off in the air by a pair of big hands like a scud encountered a MIM-104 Patriot surface-to-air missile.

The commentator's tail end of his voice and the cheers of the Inter Milan fans came to an abrupt end.

Maicon gave a long sigh out of frustration after he saw what happened.

Just as he looked up at the sky, Akinfeev, who had fallen to the ground, had already climbed up and threw the football out with his hands without hesitation—it was a chance for Nottingham Forest to fight back!

The football was thrown at Bentley's feet and he did not turn to take the ball forward. Because he knew that he did not have a speed advantage in the counterattack. If he were to break forward and could not find a point to pass, the ball could only be intercepted by the other side. Even if he managed to protect the ball, he would also lose a quick counterattack opportunity.

The best way was not to dribble the ball himself, but to pass the ball.

Who should he pass the ball to?

Most of his teammates were still defending in the backfield. There was no one who could show up in the front. He looked up to take a glimpse and saw his captain.

Wood had originally wanted to defend against Cambiasso, but Cambiasso passed the ball to Maicon, leaving him empty. However, it was a help to him—when Akinfeev caught the ball, only George Wood was heading in the direction of the offensive and cutting out to sprint. . .

He looked back at Akinfeev and made the choice to continue running forward immediately.

As he had anticipated, Akinfeev thought the same as him—this was a great opportunity for Nottingham Forest to fight back quickly!

Bentley passed the ball to the only Nottingham Forest player who was running forward in his line of sight.

By the time George Wood received the ball in the middle, he had left behind a number of Inter Milan and Nottingham Forest players. Now he had adjusted his forward direction well, which directly faced Inter Milan's goal!

Cambiasso rushed up diagonally from the back. He wanted to intercept the ball while Wood had not yet accelerated. The worst that could happen would be a tactical foul.

Wood poked the ball forward. Instead of shoveling the football, he shoveled Wood's feet.

The man who was shoveled at his feet did not seem to be George Wood. He only stumbled once and continued to maintain his balance to accelerate!

"George Wood dribbles the ball and avoids Cambiasso's tackle from behind! He's sprinting forward! This is Nottingham Forest's counterattack at its best!"

The Nottingham Forest fans' cheers grew louder.

"Stop him! He's only one person!" Cambiasso, who had failed in the tackle, shouted as he laid on the ground. He certainly knew what it meant to let Wood get away with it. But maybe the situation was not that bad, because Nottingham Forest just wanted to fight back quickly, so there were not too many people there to support at the moment. George Wood could not do much if he broke through to the forefront alone.

In the blink of an eye, Wood had already dribbled the ball through the center line.

Burdisso stormed up aggressively and just as he hit Wood, Wood sent the ball out. But Burdisso did not care about the small matter. His target was Wood, not the football.

Wood was knocked out of his original track by Burdisso's full impact collision and deflected to the right. Did Burdisso succeed?

No!

Wood had also directed the ball to the right side when he sent it out... Burdisso's collision helped Wood instead and brought him closer to the football. And what about Burdisso? He used his full strength and

center of gravity for the collision just now. After he collided with George Wood with a reckless mentality, he also fell to the ground, but George Wood did not fall to the ground with him.

Chivu, the left back in the game, completely could not keep up in speed with Wood running at full speed. Although the football was kicked toward his side, he could only watch Wood's back soar through his zone, fast as lightning and turned into the penalty area.

Inter Milan's last line of defense was made up of two men: Samuel and the goalkeeper, César.

Samuel was smarter than Burdisso. He was not stupid enough to hit him straight on. He just blocked the inner line and forced Wood to the side. He would succeed as long as he forced him to the side.

Wood waded into the penalty area and Samuel came up. He did not make a move and just ran with Wood. He was not afraid that he did not have an advantage in speed, because Wood had slowed down a while ago. He could not rush inside the penalty area.

Wood made to look like he was going to shoot, so Samuel leaned his body closer, but did not throw his entire weight into it. If Wood did not shoot again, he would not have a chance.

George Wood decided to force a shot. How about Samuel and César? He would just blow them apart!

This time Wood swung his leg again, and Samuel continued to lean his body closer to interfere. Wood shot directly at the goal!

The football whistled and flew past Samuel to charge into the near corner of the goal.

Even César had already sealed the angle, the football still found a crack and hit on the nearest goalpost...

A crackling sound and the football seemed to hit the hearts of all Inter Milan fans, collectively caused their hearts to stop.

The scene they were most afraid to see did not happen in the next second. The football hit the goalpost but did not bounce into the goal. Instead, it rebounded out!

"Ss—" The gasps from the Inter Milan fans could be clearly heard at the raucous Meazza Stadium.

César laid on the ground, Samuel was on the ground, and George Wood was also on the ground. Was this the end of the attack?

No way!

"Matías Fernández!"

The Chilean appeared in the penalty area. Only Burdisso was around him. But now he did not care too much. He only had eyes for the rebounded football.

The boss seemed to be growling in his ear at this time, "See that football? It's bouncing in front of you, laughing at you that you can't shoot it in, can't shoot it in, can't shoot it in! Even if it's an empty goal, you can't—shoot—it—in—!! You're a coward who only knows to hold your head and cry when your first shot is blocked!"

Burdisso tried to get the ball out first to lift the siege, only to find himself unable to move after Fernández leaned in—his position was completely blocked by the Chilean.

The next thing was simple.

Fernández picked up his right foot and faced Júlio César, who had gotten up from the ground. He knocked the football hard toward the goal!

“GOOOOOOAL—!!”

The Chilean finally completed his self-redemption...