

## Frozen! - Day 1

‘Right my feathered friends!’, called Mr Andrews, the bright sunlight beaming off his ageing head and reflecting off his tattered spectacles. ‘Feathered?’ whispered Wil with a smile to his brother. ‘Flap your wings! It’s cold!’ yelled the coach, who started flapping his own arms around and encouraging them to do the same. ‘Now jump up and down on your spindly little birdy legs!’ he added, continuing the ridiculous bird metaphor. They jumped up and down on the rock-solid ground beneath them, which felt unyielding and unfriendly. ‘And now, your beaks, keep them tight shut, you need to concentrate!’ ‘Tweet, tweet’, said Hardy morosely, through pursed lips. \*\*\*\*\* Mr Andrews was fiddling about in his bag as they continued to warm up. ‘Now, I know it is here somewhere...’ he muttered, as a shower of mysterious objects tumbled out of the cavernous bag. It was mostly the paraphernalia of an atypical sports coach – spare studs, old footballs, a towel, a few bibs, and other smaller equipment. ‘No...don’t need that!’, he exclaimed, tossing out a half-chewed sandwich in the direction of Freddy, who picked it up gingerly and examined it. ‘Definitely don’t need that one!’ he yelled, laughing, flinging a pair of soggy grey underpants randomly out. They caught the wind and flew towards the corner flagpost, where they attached themselves and almost immediately froze, suspended in the icy breeze, stuck out like they were challenging someone to touch them. Or even go near. ‘Definitely won’t be needing that!’ said the coach, hurling a bottle half containing some bright green liquid in the direction of Hardy, who caught it, and made to throw it right back at him. ‘Don’t do that!’, said Freddy hastily, ‘let him look for whatever he is looking for, it seems important’.

‘I saw that, lad’, said Mr Andrews, his head still stuck in the bag. Hardy looked shocked at how the little man had noticed. He looked around in consternation. ‘Don’t even think about it! I run a tight ship here. Oh yes! And this season you will see, we’re on a roll, we’re gonna fly, you wait, I’ve told the other coaches there’ll be no stopping us!’ ‘Do you think that is wise, Mr Andrews?’ said Freddy politely. ‘Or even true?’ Hardy snarled. ‘Ah, we’ve got some doubting Thomases have we?’ Hardy again looked around to see if a Thomas had unexpectedly turned up. ‘Some moaning minnies, eh? (No minnies, anywhere). ‘Some whingers and whiners have we? Right! You, whoever you are, you’ll be out! You will!’ Hardy looked around for a third time and saw that there was no-one else the coach could have been speaking to. ‘Out? Whoever I am?’ He stared incredulously as Mr Andrews inserted most of the top half of his body into the bag. ‘I know who you are, Lardy lad, but yes, you’ll be out!’ came the triumphant if muffled cry, ‘O-U-T, out!’ Mr Andrews emerged with caked mud and dust pouring off him, a tatty notebook in his hand. He pointed threateningly at Hardy, for no apparent reason. He opened the book about half way through. A slice of mouldy bread peeled itself and its butter off the opened page and dropped forlornly to the ground. \*\*\*\*\* ‘He went on a coaching course’, whispered Freddy to his brother and to Hardy, ‘some special thing for best, experienced coaches’. ‘More like ‘worst’, past-it, coaches’, muttered Hardy unhappily as Mr Andrews strode past, his attention consumed by the notebook. ‘That’s more like it, lad, ‘World Class Coaches’, thank you very much. Now where was I?’ Hardy grimaced as the cold bit through several layers of clothing. ‘I haven’t done anything for this team’, he moaned. ‘I just stand there, looking mean, and occasionally save the ball. There’s no point to it all, at all. At all. At all.’ He looked like he was going to cry.

‘Come on!’ said Michael quietly. Michael had been trying to practice some skills, but the ball was so heavy with moisture that all he could succeed in doing was balancing the immovable object on his foot, where it promptly iced itself to his laces. Yes...it was very...very...cold. ‘Now, here we are’, said Mr Andrews studying the book, ‘if you go there, you there, and you over there, then we have this formation...here’. He looked again at the little book in front of him. ‘And that...my friends...is how we are going to beat Derby Road at the weekend! Simple!’ He stood triumphantly, book held high, his puny arms unshielded against the winter weather, but apparently impervious to the freezing conditions. ‘Mr Andrews?’ asked Freddy. ‘Yes, lad, no question about the tactics I hope?’ ‘No, but...the book seems to

be...upside down, isn't it?' Mr Andrews peered at the book, and gradually turned it round before staring once more at the diagram in front of him. 'Ah...now...eerrm...we can definitely win...if you go there...you go there....you go there....'\*\*\*\*\*