

A Bad Week for Jimi – Day 4

The next day they had ventured out onto the field for practice. Mr Andrews had joined them and was trying to persuade Jimi to take part.

'OK, I can do this!' said Jimi, seemingly more confident than he had been the previous day.

'Right lad, that's the attitude I like. Not sure about the kit though'.

Jimi was wearing exactly what he had been wearing the day before. And the day before that. And the previous day. And the day prior to this one. And earlier.

And he would probably be wearing exactly the same tomorrow. And later. And afterwards. And even the following day.

'Now, first, let's try a simple pass. I'll side-foot the ball to you, like...this,' (Mr Andrews's body creaked as he manoeuvred into position for the pass), 'and you side-foot it back to me, like...'

Jimi toe-poked the ball fifty metres over Mr Andrews's head.

'Hey, Man! I love this game!' he smiled for the first time in a week.

'No...no! You need to use the side of your foot, lad, like this'. Again Mr Andrews gently side-footed it to Jimi.

This time Jimi ran towards the ball, but slipped on the damp turf, and ended up sitting a few centimetres from the ball, looking at it. But not kicking it. He was still smiling.

'Try again, just a little slip, that's all!' said Mr Andrews.

Jimi tried again. This time, the soaked material of his jeans became caught under his shoe as he ran up. This time he slipped over forwards and went shooting along the wet ground. This time he did make contact with the ball. With his head.

'Aw, no, see? I can't play this! Not at all!' He looked miserable again.

'Try this, then', shouted Clara from the goal-line, 'maybe you're a goalie, just catch it'. Clara lashed the ball from twenty metres, straight at Jimi. He managed to get his fingers to it just before it caught him in the face. The ball flew away towards Michael, who brought it down from waist height and trapped it instantly under his right foot.

'Be careful! Those are the only fingers I've got!' moaned Jimi.

'Alright', said Michael quietly. 'Try this, it's not so hard'. Jimi, already collapsed in a heap on the floor, looked up as Michael balanced the ball on his right foot, and kept it stationary there for a few seconds.

'I could do that!' said Jimi, struggling up. Taking a ball, he placed it on his right foot. He kept it stationary there for a few micro-milliseconds.

‘Then you just flip it up, onto your knee, two bounces here, then up onto your left shoulder, flick your shoulder up, ball over your head onto the other shoulder, flick it up, back of the neck, roll it down your back, chip it with your right heel straight over to Clara’.

‘You’re killing me, man!’ said Jimi, half laughing.

Michael flipped the ball up, bounced it twice on his knee, up onto his left shoulder, flicked his shoulder up, watched carefully as the ball went over his head, flicked it with the other shoulder, balanced it on the back of his neck, let it run down his back, then chipped it with his right heel ten metres to where a grateful Clara caught it chest high.

His team-mates applauded wildly. Two men, dressed in tracksuits and standing far away at the other end of the ground, but looking on intently, wrote something down in a notebook.

Jimi put the ball back on his foot. As he did so, his left foot slipped on the soft ground and he fell backwards. The ball spooned up in the air. As it fell he put his knee up to protect himself, the ball hit it, and ballooned back up in the air, falling down onto his left shoulder, bouncing high over his head, and then hit the other shoulder. As it hit the right shoulder, Jimi grabbed his left one in pain, and the ball slapped him wetly on the back, and rolled down his neck. He tried to get up, slipped again, and kicked the ball ten metres to his left, where it hit Clara squarely in the face.

His team-mates shook their heads sadly. Except Clara, who yelled at him, through a mouthful of muddy football.

‘OK, you were right. Maybe football isn’t your thing’, said Freddy sympathetically, ‘but there must be something you could do to support the team...’

‘Look, man, you’re a football team, what can I do to help you?’ Jimi sounded so dejected. Jimi looked so wet. Jimi smelled kind of funny.

‘Pick yourself up, lad!’ said Mr Andrews briskly, ‘I don’t like to hear that defeatism. Now everyone is good at something! What’re you good at lad?’

‘Nothing’, said Jimi predictably.

‘You can play the guitar!’ said Wil.

‘Well, I don’t think that’s going to help the team...’ said Mr Andrews, laughing, ‘...what else can you do?’

‘Actually, maybe he could sing a song for us at matches,’ said Freddy, aware that really that was all Jimi could do.

‘Yeh, that would be great. He could write a song for us. We could sing it as we go on the pitch!’ said Clara excitedly.

‘Actually, I’ve been working on a few tunes’, Jimi muttered, ‘although I can’t decide which is best’.

‘That’s settled’, said Freddy.

‘Tomorrow, we’ll listen to Jimi’s songs!’

‘Yes’, said Clara, ‘ and we can vote on the songs! We can call it the ‘Lancaster Road-Vision Song Contest!’
