

## Semi-Finals Week – Day 5

The television, which had been working perfectly one nanosecond previously.....went dead.The match.....was lost...\*\*\*\*\*Hardy, who seconds earlier had been leaning casually against the sofa,shot into action. He leaped up and shouted,‘Don’t worry, FOLLOW ME!’They were all worried that they would miss the end of the match, butthe gurgling sounds coming out of the TV suggested that it was terminallybroken.Hardy was first out of the door, grabbing hold of the door frame tosteady himself as his socks slid along the polished wooden floor. Wil wasnot so lucky. As his socks hit the floor his feet slid from under him and hecrashed into the wall opposite, taking Michael down with him. They sat onthe floor for a moment before jumping up and sprinting after the others, theirfeet making no progress, Tom and Jerry?like, as they tried to accelerate.In the kitchen, Hardy was fiddling with a small TV set in one corner.‘Come on, come ON!’ he said, as the little set slowly slowly warmed up.‘I said, COME ON!’The set did not warm up any quicker, but eventually a misty imageappeared on the screen. They all peered over each other to get a look. As thesound also came through, they heard the commentator clearly say,‘And the referee puts the whistle to his lips for the end of the game, and IT’S OVER...what a close game that was’.Wednesday 2 May 2007Semi?Finals Week188Eight footballers screamed at the television.‘NOOOOOO!’‘I can’t believe we missed it’, said Wil turning to walk away.‘Hang on’, said Freddy, ‘replays’.The image was clear now, and was focused back on Gary and the twoAlans in the studio.‘Well, Alan shall we just look at that last move again?’‘Yes Gary, if we look here at the boy Michael, he’s come running down theright wing there, faced by the Butterfield defender. You watch...just watch this...dido you see that stepover? Sent the defender completely the wrong way, but it’s left himwith the tightest of angles from which to score...you really think he’s going to do itthere...then...HERE...it takes a little bobble I think...and his shot from out wide onthe right is sailing over the goalkeeper’s head...’‘The goalkeeper’s completely beaten at this point, Alan...’‘Yes, Gary, he’s nowhere...the lob is so beautiful, so precise, it clears hishead...and I can’t believe... that it rolls along the crossbar like that, before going outfor a harmless goalkick. And of course, that was the last chance of the match. Thereferee blew for full time right after that.’\*\*\*\*\*Of course, seeing the game again on TV didn’t make the result anyeasier to take. They sat in silence on the floor of the kitchen as the final musicfrom Match of the Day faded away.‘It’s all my fault’, said Michael sadly, curling himself up almost into a ball and burying his hands deep into his armpits, ‘I should have scored that...itwas a rubbish chip, it was always going over...’‘You should’ve passed it actually...’ said Clara, ‘I was coming up throughthe middle, I could have had a tap in...’Semi?Finals Week189‘Well, I was in a better position...there was no?one marking me out on theleft’, said Jaz.‘NO WAY!’ said Clara, ‘you wouldn’t have reached it, and even if you did,you would probably have missed!’Jaz got up, and after looking menacingly at Clara for a few seconds, heleft the room.‘THAT was not fair,’ said Freddy to Clara, ‘go and apologise to him, righnow!’Clara looked at Freddy, then at Michael, then at Wil and Alex, then at JoJo, and then at Hardy. They all looked back at her. She must haverealised that she had gone too far.‘OK, you’re right’, she said, and sheepishly left the room to go to findJaz.‘Listen, we got a draw, and we had a fantastic season, we can’t complain aboutanything. It was our first season in the league. And its not over yet’, said Freddycalmly.‘What’s not over?’ said Wil.‘Well, we haven’t looked through the results properly yet, have we? We mightstill win’.‘Still win? We can still go to Athens?’‘Let’s see’.\*\*\*\*\*Freddy pulled a scrap of paper out of his pocket and tried to flatten iton the floor. On it were various numbers, in different colours. Some of thenumbers were readable, others had almost faded out over time.‘So, all we need to do, is to check these results against Butterfield’s...’‘Well, they lost a game as well, and they drew the two games against us. Didthey win all their others?’ said Hardy, getting excited.Wednesday 2 May 2007Semi?Finals Week190‘Yes, we’ve both won nine games’, said Freddy, squinting at his piece ofpaper, ‘now what was our goal difference again?’ He squinted more at the pieceof paper, then started counting on his fingers...‘Two against Hurst, five against Hags...that makes eight...then another fiveagainst Wanderers, that makes twelve...’‘No it doesn’t...five and three are seven...’‘No they’re not...’\*\*\*\*\*Two hours later....\*\*\*\*\*‘Well, thirty and four are

definitely thirty?four...' 'Well, I think we scored thirty?five goals...' said Freddy. 'OK, let's look at Butterfield's results...' said Hardy, 'Well...I've recorded most of their games here...' said Freddy, fishing around in his back pocket for something. 'Or was it here?' feeling around in his side pocket. 'Or perhaps here?' looking in his shoe. 'P'raps it's here', said Hardy, grabbing Freddy's ear, and looking into it. 'Oi, leave it out, I've got it here somewhere...' \*\*\*\*\*Three hours later....\*\*\*\*\*Michael, who had been replaying in slow motion Dirk Kuyt's final penalty for Liverpool which put them into the Champions League final, eventually said, 'Look, we're getting nowhere, but I've got an idea'. 'What?' 'Let's go and get Jaz. He'll know whether we're going'. \*\*\*\*\*