

Chapter 3 - Sunday 14/4/19

Sarah

'I'm afraid it's a very nasty bruise and will need at least a week of ice and rest before it's fully healed.'

That's what the doctor had told Sarah at the hospital after the narrow win against AFC Farnham. Sarah felt her heart drop.

'But, I've got a match on Sunday!'

'I'd give it a miss this week – if you rest you should be back and able to play the week after.'

Sarah didn't bother saying anymore. What was the point? The moment she'd heard the doctor say to take a rest, she knew that's what her parents, and most like Owen, would make her do it. On Sunday they had Ripley United – the team at the very bottom of the table – and Sarah wouldn't be playing. It could've been a chance to make up for her lacklustre and goal-shy performance from last week. It wasn't going to be though.

She had tears in her eyes which she tried to hide from her parents on the way home. It was silly she knew. Her injury wasn't bad at all and could've been much worse. But she just loved the game so much and couldn't stand the idea of missing a match with her teammates.

When she was home she phoned Tara who told her not to worry, 'Sunday will be a breeze I'm sure. Abdul can fill in for you – it's only Ripley United.'

'Yeah, but we thought that about Farnham last week and we nearly dropped two points.'

'Sarah, we'll be fine, don't worry. You just concentrate on resting. Hey, on the plus side, at least you won't miss the beginning of the City game. It's a twelve pm kick off against Ripley, so you would've missed the beginning of the match on Sky if you were playing.'

Tara's words did cheer Sarah up a bit. Originally she'd wanted to go and watch Lingerfield, but Owen had given her a call and told her to just spend the day resting and to enjoy the Man City - Crystal Palace game.

It was going to be a tough one for City, but Sarah found herself caring less than usual about their match: all she could think about was the Lingerfield match she'd be missing.

Sunday afternoon City strolled it against Palace, and although Sarah cheered for every goal, she couldn't stop herself from checking her phone every few seconds for news of the Lingerfield game. Tara had said she'd call the moment it was over, but she hadn't yet.

Sarah looked at her phone again.

‘She’ll call. Stop fretting and enjoy the game,’ dad told her.

She had enjoyed the game and was proud of Man City for getting such a good win at a tricky ground like Palace’s with all the pressure surrounding them for the league title and the quadruple. She hoped her Lingerfield teammates would also give her something to be proud of today.

About ten minutes before the Liverpool - Chelsea game, Tara finally called.

‘Sorry Sarah, I left my phone at home charging, then we went for a roast after the game; I’ve only just got home,’ she started. ‘Great result for City, hey?’

‘What about the more important result though?’ Sarah asked bluntly: she couldn’t stand not knowing.

‘A 3-0 romping!’

‘YES!’ Sarah shouted down the phone.

‘Yeah, Owen was really pleased with the performance, Abdul’s in particular.’

‘That’s good, I’m, glad he filled in well!’ Sarah responded still jubilant.

‘Filled in well? He was absolutely brilliant and smashed in all three goals.’

At this point, Sarah stopped smiling.

‘He got a hat trick?’

‘Yeah, he was on fire,’ Tara replied. ‘But don’t worry Sarah: it was against the team at the bottom of the league. I can only imagine how many you would’ve scored if you’d been playing.’

But Sarah hadn’t been playing.

Later that evening, while she lay in bed waiting for sleep, she started to panic. What if she wasn’t recovered properly for next week? What if Owen felt he had to pick Abdul after he played so well and she lost her place? What if Abdul kept scoring hat tricks?

As much as Sarah wanted to sleep, it kept evading her all Sunday night. Winning the league with Lingerfield, and being the star striker who helped them do it was everything to Sarah. What if she was about to lose all that though?

Yonis

Yonis sat on Sunday evening in the waiting room of Harrogate hospital gently sipping at his can of Fanta unenthusiastically. What was going to happen?

Earlier that day, SLS United had beaten Brearton Town 2-0 and it meant a clean sheet for Yonis. Liverpool had also dispatched Chelsea 2-0 earlier in the day, so were still above Man City. On another day, Yonis might’ve described it as a perfect Sunday, but it was nowhere near that.

He took another swig of Fanta and tried to eat a few of the ready-salted crisps his Uncle had bought him from the hospital vending machine. His uncle had gone to find out some more information but hadn’t come back yet. Yonis looked around the waiting room, it was busy, even on a Sunday night. There were lots of

other worried looking faces, all waiting for news of their own relatives or friends which all encapsulated what Yonis was feeling.

The not knowing what was happening was the worst bit and Yonis was having trouble processing what exactly had happened. Dad and him had come back from the SLS United game delighted. Dad had therefore ordered pizza for them (not your normal Sunday food but then dad wasn't much of a cook).

They'd eaten it whilst they watched the end of the Man City game, who annoyingly dispatched of Crystal Palace with relative ease, and then they watched the Liverpool game. Chelsea were a tough opponent, but no match for the Reds. Salah got his second successive goal in the premier league and now Liverpool's run to the title looked relatively easy. City still had Spurs at home and United away, and Yonis was sure they'd drop points to one of them.

Next weekend, SLS United had the big one. Lingerfield F.C. away. It would be their chance to go top again. Yonis was confident as he'd heard from some friends at school midweek that Lingerfield's star striker had been out injured this week, and might not be ready for their match. By this time next week, SLS United and Liverpool might both be top and on course for the league title. After the Liverpool match, this delightful thought had been all that was filling Yonis' head.

Then, he'd heard the plates smash in the kitchen. Dad was out there washing up, and Yonis just assumed he'd dropped one. But, no cry of apology or anything came from dad, so Yonis went into see exactly what had happened.

He'd found dad on the floor, clutching at his left shoulder, and Yonis had immediately known something wasn't right. He didn't panic though. It had been just him and dad in the house for many years now, and he knew what to do in the case of an emergency. Call 911 and then phone his uncle, who lived a few minutes away, to tell him what had happened.

Yonis did exactly that, and little over fifteen minutes later, he found himself following an ambulance in his uncle's car. The ambulance guys hadn't said what had happened to dad, but they'd praised his uncle for the CPR he'd been doing when they arrived and said he'd probably saved his brother's life.

It couldn't be that serious could it? Yonis now thought as he finished off the Fanta and walked over to the bin to throw it away. When mum had gone, Yonis had just assumed it would be dad and him forever. Dad couldn't be leaving him too could he?

No.

Yonis wouldn't think that way. His dad was a fighter. He was strong. He'd been Yonis' rock when mum had passed and got them through it all. Yonis would be lost without him. Getting back to his seat and mindlessly finishing off his packet of crisps, Yonis realised how it was really his dad who was everything to him. Not SLS United. Not Liverpool FC. Not football. It was all his dad.

A single tear slid down his face as he crunched up the empty crisps packet. Everything was going to be alright though wasn't it? Wasn't it?

‘Yonis,’ his uncle’s voice interrupted him mid-thought and Yonis rubbed away the solitary tear on his face. ‘Yonis, come with me...’

Follow-up questions

Sarah

1. Is Sarah’s injury serious?
2. Wtime was Lingerfield’s game on Sunday?
3. Sarah’s dad tells her to stop ‘fretting’. What does this mean?
4. Lingerfield got won with a ‘3-0 romping’. What does this mean?
5. Why couldn’t Sarah sleep Sunday night?

Yonis

1. What did Yonis and his dad do after the SLS United match?
2. Who was Yonis at the hospital with?
3. Why did Yonis sense something wasn’t right when he heard the plates smash?
4. Yonis reacted very maturely and bravely to what happened. Prove this point with evidence.
5. What does this experience with his dad make Yonis realise?

Chapter Four of Chase for the Championship will be published next week.

If you have any comments, questions or suggestions, please email **hello@jamessteptowe.com** or tweet me **@jamessteptowe**

You can also visit my website: **jamessteptowe.com** for more updates on **Chase for the Championship**, and my **debut full-length children’s book: Raid of the Ratskull Rodents coming May 2019.**

Thanks for reading - see the updated table, results and next week’s fixtures on the next page.

Results Sunday 14/4/19

AFC Farnham 2-1 Killinghall United

SLS United 2-0 Brearton Town

Lingerfield F.C. 3-0 Ripley United

Ripley Albion 4-0 South Stainley F.C.

Nidd Rangers 3-1 FC Scriven

Table standing after weekend of 14/4/19 fixtures:

| Position | Teams | Played | Wins | Draws | Losses | Goal Difference | Points |
|----------|---------------------|--------|------|-------|--------|-----------------|--------|
| 1. | Lingerfield F.C. | 14 | 11 | 1 | 2 | +35 | 34 |
| 2. | SLS United | 15 | 10 | 3 | 2 | +29 | 33 |
| 3. | Ripley Albion | 15 | 8 | 4 | 3 | +18 | 28 |
| 4. | Nidd Rangers | 15 | 7 | 5 | 3 | +17 | 26 |
| 5. | Brearton Town | 15 | 8 | 0 | 7 | +3 | 23 |
| 6. | Killinghall United | 15 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 0 | 22 |
| 7. | AFC Farnham | 14 | 7 | 1 | 6 | -9 | 22 |
| 8. | FC Scriven | 15 | 5 | 5 | 5 | -7 | 20 |
| 9. | South Stainley F.C. | 15 | 4 | 6 | 5 | -15 | 18 |
| 10. | Ripley United | 15 | 3 | 6 | 6 | -17 | 15 |

Fixtures for Sunday 21/4/19

Lingerfield F.C. V SLS United

South Stainley F.C. V Nidd Rangers

Killinghall United V Ripley Albion

Ripley United V AFC Farnham

Brearton Town V FC Scriven