

STREETSKILLZ III

KILLER INSTINCT

By Charlie Human • Published 2010

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STORY TEASER

Nathi is on his way to becoming a street soccer star, but can he handle the pressure? When a tough new coach joins Streetskillz, Nathi is forced to decide what comes first: friends or soccer?

CHARACTERS

These are the main characters in Streetskillz:

Nkosinathi 16, or Nathi as his friends call him, is a soccer-mad teenager who plays on the Streetskillz team. His father was also a soccer player and died when he was young, but left Nathi a notebook filled with soccer wisdom.

Rose 15, is Nathi's girlfriend and is a pretty, sassy tomboy who takes no nonsense from anyone. Especially boys. She's good at schoolwork and wants to go to university.

Karl Reinecker 45, is a retired German soccer pro and Streetskillz's new coach. His ideas for training are very different to anything the Streetskillz team has seen before.

Khaya 17, is a striker on the Streetskillz team. He used to be Nathi's worst enemy but is now one of his best friends.

Henry 16, used to live on the streets but is now a Streetskillz midfielder and one of Nathi's best friends.

The Professor 60, is Nathi's soccer mentor and is always there for him. Even when Nathi makes the wrong decisions...

CHAPTER 1

Sweat drips down my dreadlocks and onto my face as I watch Khaya dribble the ball across the hard, dry ground of the patch of land behind Du Noon. The first few hot days of summer have dried the mud and made it perfect for practicing.

My eyes narrow in concentration as I watch Khaya sweep down the field and take aim. He stops, looks up at me and then sends the ball sailing overhead in my direction. It goes slightly wide and I have to scramble to make ground before jumping, swooping in toward the ball headfirst and smashing it between the two bricks that form the goal.

“Laduma!” Khaya whoops as he runs over to me. We touch fists and hug.

“Nice header, Nathi,” Khaya grins.

Despite our newfound friendship, I still feel a bit weird when Khaya compliments me. But I’m slowly getting used to it. He’s turning out to be a good friend, even though he can still be a little rough around the edges - especially when he doesn’t get his way.

“All right, all right!” the Professor laughs, walking over to where we’re still celebrating. “You’d think you two had just scored the winning goal in the World Cup!”

Today the eccentric old man is wearing a check shirt and a cowboy hat.

“We did,” I smile, tapping my forehead, “even if it was only in our imaginations.”

“Imagination is good,” the Professor chuckles, “as long as it doesn’t get in the way of mastering the fundamentals.”

The old man’s brow furrows.

“Nathi you’ve *got* to get more height in your jumps. I want you to work on building more explosive power in your legs.”

“I’ve told him that,” Khaya says with a smirk.

“And you, Khaya,” the Professor says, “You’ve got to be able to pinpoint Nathi in the box. If there had been a defender marking him, Nathi would never have reached that ball.”

Khaya looks like he’s about to argue, but then scratches his head and nods. I can’t help myself from smiling again. My one-time rival may have changed, but he still doesn’t like criticism.

“Right I think that’s enough for today,” announces the Professor.

“What?” I’m totally into the practice and could keep going for hours. “But we still need to work on shooting!”

STREETSKILLZ: KILLER INSTINCT

The Professor smiles. “We’ve already been at it for three hours Nathi. Trust me - don’t overdo your practicing. You must play because you love the game, not because you’re obsessed with it.”

I’m about to argue when out of the corner of my eye I spy a beautiful pair of legs approaching. I look up to see it’s Rose walking towards us, barefoot and in a short summer dress.

“What’s up superstars?” she says, her brown eyes twinkling as her gaze meets mine. “Have you heard the big news? Mr. Naidoo has hired a professional coach for Streetskillz.”

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

Dis is da perfect nd generous stori it gives sence 4rm da start u shuld keep on writing joe 4 real u r 2 much talented gud luck;) **Mamrican**

wel things just be come well with the streetskilz team. nathi and khaya they are best friends now. the proffesor is there for them. a new coach is there. its all brillent newz about it. I think that nithi and khaya since they had become friends, the streetskillz will also success. Why? Because nathi and khaya are the best playas, even though i don't know a lot about socca but seams like wena nathi and khaya unite, thing will be great. Whtever you think will suit ur team, go for it guys! **Gadafi**

Quite enchantng hw 2enemies could bcme best+frndz greast plot. **Delrose**

What do you think?

Streetskillz has a new coach. Who would your ideal coach be? *Our readers recommend this:*
Joachim Löw: 13%, Diego Maradona: 57% Alberto Parreira, 28%.

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

CHAPTER 2

“So give me the scoop! Tell me all about the new coach!” I demand as Rose and I walk along Potsdam Road under the warm sun.

“I will, I will, I’ve just got to do something first,” Rose says seriously.

Then she stops, puts her arms around my neck and pulls me into a delicious kiss.

“There,” she says, “now I’ll tell you.”

“Tell me what?” I say dreamily. I’ve totally forgotten what we were talking about.

Rose smiles mischievously and I grin right back at her.

STREETSKILLZ: KILLER INSTINCT

“Ok, ok, sexy lady, my memory is returning! So before you distract me again, you’d better tell me about the coach.”

Rose is about to answer when we reach Mr. Isaac’s stall on the corner. He’s sitting outside on a lawn chair, listening to the radio.

“Nathi! Rose! How about a cooldrink?”

I nod gratefully - it’s so incredibly hot - and Mr. Isaac hands us each a bottle from the icebox at his feet as we chat and catch up on his news. When he starts listening to the radio again, Rose and I stroll over and sit on a large truck tyre that has been abandoned on the side of the road.

I take off my shoes and dig my bare feet into the soft, warm dirt. Rose slides her small toes through the dirt and touches my feet with hers. I like that I’m getting used to this closeness between us.

“So I hear the new coach is German,” Rose says, “and that he used to be a professional.”

She takes a sip of the cooldrink and sighs, “Mmm, great, that’s ice cold.”

“How did you find that out?” I ask.

Rose smiles. “I have my ways and means. I’m writing a story on street soccer and I interviewed Mr. Naidoo.”

Since I first started going out with Rose she’s wanted to be a lawyer, a doctor, a social worker and an astronomer. I find it fascinating that she’s interested in so many things. Especially since I’ve only ever wanted to play soccer. Her latest passion is for journalism, which is quite helpful considering it’s due to her current obsession that she’s found out the answers to the questions buzzing in my head.

“Hmmm. That’s amazing! But I wonder why Mr. Naidoo wants to hire a new coach,” I wonder out loud.

“He told me it’s because Streetskillz did so well against the Iron Maidens and the Dragons that he thinks you guys can win the street soccer championships,” Rose explains.

“I wonder who this German guy is..” I rub my chin as I mentally scroll through the great German soccer heroes.

“I wrote his name down, but I can’t remember off the top of my head...,” Rose says, “Rinkico, Ranuker...”

“Reinecker?” I gasp, my mouth opening wide in disbelief, “Karl Reinecker?”

Rose snaps her fingers, “That’s it Nathi, Karl Reinecker.”

I shake my head in amazement. Karl Reinecker, top goal-scorer and one of the best strikers Germany has ever had is going to be coaching *me*?

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

It might be good for a committed team and the players will take it as an opportunity to explore and get used to new things such as strategies and formats. **Heart+of+fire**

I don't think it's a good thing because the boys are used to a certain style of playing now they'll have to adapt to another

No it's not Mr Naidoo should have continued coaching the Streetskillz team they were winning games and now Mr Naidoo has hired a coach who knows nothing about South African football that's a bad idea according to my knowledge of football, Mr Naidoo should have continued to coach the team, you can't change a winning mentality of a team. **Mr life**

What do you think?

Is a change of coach good for a team in the middle of the season?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

CHAPTER 3

There's a buzz of excited chatter as the team crowds into our changeroom at the Streetskillz facility. The rumour that Karl Reinecker is our new coach has spread like wildfire and we're all speculating madly about how he'll train us.

"He'll focus on the midfield," Henry says with certainty, "the Germans are famous for their methodical play and we need to make sure that we're strong there."

"Are you joking?" Khaya scoffs.

He doesn't openly mock Henry anymore because I simply won't stand for it, but Khaya still struggles to take anything Henry says seriously.

"He's a striker," Khaya continues, "so he's going to make sure that we can hit goal from any distance."

"He's going to do all of this and more!" a voice booms.

We turn to see a muscular blonde-haired man standing in the doorway of the changeroom. His eyes are dark and fiery and his handsome face looks strangely angry and dissatisfied.

"Boys," says Mr. Naidoo, walking into the changeroom, "gather round."

We jostle and push each other in our eagerness to get to the front.

"As some of you may have heard through the grapevine, I've appointed a new coach. I feel you're playing well and with some professional expertise you'll be a force to be reckoned with in the South African street soccer championships."

STREETSKILLZ: KILLER INSTINCT

Mr. Naidoo looks across to the blonde-haired man with a smile.

“So I’d like to introduce you to your new coach, Karl Reinecker.”

We cheer and clap with excitement until Reinecker raises his hand for silence.

“I’ve watched the tape of you playing,” Reinecker says, “and you are *terrible*.”

There’s a long silence in the changeroom. We look around at each other in shock.

“You have no teamwork, your skills are rudimentary and you lack discipline,” Reinecker continues, his fiery eyes sweeping over us, daring anybody to challenge him.

I feel myself shrink under the gaze of the German ex-pro. I’ve been feeling so good about my position in Streetskillz, but suddenly I’m not sure that my self-confidence is warranted.

“With my help, you have a chance,” Reinecker says, “but without my help, you will be *nothing*. Now suit up and get out onto the pitch. Those not out within three minutes will do laps.”

With that Reinecker spins on his heel and stalks out of the changeroom. As captain, I know I have to speak to Reinecker about the team’s strategy and before this introduction I’d already thought through what I’d tell him. I decide to go ahead as planned, but my palms feel sweaty as I jog nervously after the German, clutching Silver’s book against my chest.

“Mr. Reinecker?” My voice cracks as I call him. How embarrassing.

The new coach stops and turns, “What is it?” he says, glaring down at me.

“I just thought you should look at some of our strategies,” I say timidly, handing the book to him, “so that you can get an idea of how we play.”

Reinecker takes the book and flicks it open. As he turns the pages a cruel smile twists his lips.

“This,” he says, holding the book in front of my face, “is complete rubbish! Typical African soccer, all flourishes and tricks and no real substance.”

With a flick of his hand he sends my father’s book spinning through the air and into the rubbish bin in the corridor of the Streetskillz facility.

“If I see you with that book again,” Reinecker says, “you’re off the team.”

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

Mmm ths chaptr makes me wana read m0re ey.hai ths karl guy neednt b s0 hard. **Dyaya**

This coach dznt seem 2 hv good manners at all. he is jst ful of himself it jst shows hes nt 4rm here he does nt hv da spirit of ubuntu. **ANGEL**

Aoch!the new coach is rude,i dnt lyk the way he talks 2 the players n wht he said abt the book:-(**Lovey dovey**

What do you think?

Not only has the new coach dismissed the Streetskillz strategy, but he's also insulted Nathi's father's book. What should Nathi do? *Our readers recommend this: Quit the team: 5%, Confront Reinecker: 22% Take a deep breath. He's worked too hard to get here to throw it all away: 72%.*

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

CHAPTER 4

As Karl Reinecker exits the corridor and makes his way to the indoor Streetskillz soccer pitch I rush over to the bin, anger coursing through my body like a flash of lightening. I have to pick pieces of disgusting old fruit and dirt off the cover of my dad's precious book.

How dare Reinecker say those things about my dad's strategies! Without them we'd *never* have beaten the Brazillionaires and the Dragons. My fists are clenched into tight balls and I have to take deep breaths to keep my anger under control.

"Quick Nathi," says Henry as he jogs by on his way out of the changeroom, "we've only got a minute left."

I nod and stalk back into the changeroom, carefully placing my dad's book inside my bag before I hastily pull on my kit. The team is starting their warm up as I jog out onto the field.

"You, book-boy," Reinecker growls as I join them. "It's been three minutes and fifteen seconds. You're doing laps."

"What?" I can't actually believe this guy, "but I was just..."

"Laps!" Reinecker screams at me, his face red and spit flying from his mouth.

I'm completely shocked as I jolt into action and start to jog around the edge of the field in disbelief.

"Faster!" Reinecker shouts at me.

I pick up the pace, muttering under my breath and watching as Reinecker begins the practice with the rest of the team. The German is completely changing the setup that had worked so well for us when we played against the Dragons! Instead of continuing to develop our own style, it's already clear that he's forcing the Streetskillz team to adopt a very conservative style of play. I grit my teeth as this all rolls out in front of me. If we play like this the Dragons will kill us.

For the whole practice I have to jog around the field without stopping! Sweat is pouring down my face and after forty-five minutes of continuous running a mean stitch starts to throb in my side. I have to slow down to catch my breath.

"I didn't say stop!" Reinecker shouts from the field.

“How many laps do I have to do?” I shout back. I’ve totally lost my sense of humour, I mean c’mon!

“Until I say stop,” Reinecker shouts with a grin.

I actually can’t believe this guy. I start to jog again, holding my side to contain the pain and watching in disgust as Reinecker rearranges the team yet again.

Eventually the new coach blows his whistle and the team troops off the field to the shower. I can see that everyone is exhausted. I’m grateful that the practice is over as I too walk tiredly back to the changeroom.

“Hey,” Reinecker shouts, “the others are finished. I didn’t tell you to stop.”

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

Nathi must be a good boy and do what the new coach says, since he is the captain he should lead by example. **Heart of fire**

The new coach is stressing hm out, bt he shld jst bear in mind dat ths coach is a pro nd therefore is only doin wats best 4 the team. **BRACKYLICIOUS**

Maybe it wil help nathi in da future i mean da runing bt i think he should talk to mr naidoo. **Sweet gal**

What do you think?

Nathi is exhausted but the new coach is forcing him to run more laps. How do you think he should handle this situation?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

CHAPTER 5

“I’m so stiff,” I groan as I limp miserably down the school corridor, “I can’t *believe* Reinecker made me run a hundred laps.”

“He sounds like a real idiot,” Rose commiserates, reaching her hand out to touch my face as we walk down the school corridor together.

A group of girls giggle as we pass them and I can’t help but feel slightly embarrassed. Rose and I are a real item at school now, and everybody knows we’re together. To be honest we do actually spend most of our time between classes dodging teachers and stealing quick kisses, so its no surprise people have noticed, but still, I can’t help myself blush when they do. But my aching muscles quickly shift my attention back to the problem at hand.

STREETSKILLZ: KILLER INSTINCT

“Reinecker threw my dad’s book in the bin! He had no right to do that. I don’t care if he used to be a pro!”

“You’re totally right,” Rose says, “that’s disgraceful behaviour. Maybe you should speak to Mr. Naidoo about it?”

“Na-ah! No ways! I’m so not going to be the guy who runs to Mr. Naidoo because he can’t take the pace”

Rose sighs and roles her eyes dramatically. “Boys and their egos.”

I grin. “It’s what you love about me.”

“No,” Rose says, stopping me and putting her hands on my shoulders, “what I actually love about you is your lips.”

We sneak in a quick, passionate kiss and then as the bell rings we part to go to our separate classes.

My legs ache as I hobble toward the prefabricated classroom for the Maths lesson. I’ve just made it there when someone runs up behind him and jumps on my back.

“Hey!” I shout, stumbling forward, my legs screaming with pain. “What are you doing?”

Khaya holds his hands up. “Whoa, easy tiger, I was just joking.”

“I can barely walk,” I groan, dropping my school bag and leaning over to rub the backs of my legs to try and ease the burn.

“Reinecker was pretty tough last night, eh?” Khaya comments, scratching his head, “a real hardcase.”

“I don’t like him. I can’t believe Mr. Naidoo is letting him ruin all our strategies and plans.”

Khaya nods thoughtfully, “Not using Silver’s plans is going to be difficult, but maybe it will help us in the end.”

I shoot him a dubious look.

“Well, we’ve got to give it a shot,” Khaya persuades. “He’s here to stay so we don’t really have a choice.”

I sigh and nod. Khaya’s right. I guess I have to try and get along with Reinecker if I want to stay on the team.

“Well at least I have a couple of days to recover.” My voice breaks into an involuntary groan mid-sentence as I bend to pick up my bag.

Khaya looks at me and shakes his head. “Sorry, you must have still been running laps when Reinecker told us.”

“Told you what?”

“Reinecker says we need so much help that we’re going to start having extra practices. Nathi, we’ve got another practice tonight.”

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

Nathi must just try 2 at least ignore dis coach n focus on wat he luvs n knwz best n dat playin SOCCER. **INTROSPECTION**

I thnk he must massage his legs nd get 2 da field in tym so reinecker wnt be hard on hm.

Lee

This is getng vry intrestng. Mmm... M lovng it cnt w8 2 c wts nxt!

What do you think?

What should Nathi do to prepare for another gruelling practice? *Our readers recommend this: Stretch as much as possible: 25%, Massage his legs to get rid of the lactic acid: 61%, Don't go to practice tonight: 13%.*

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

CHAPTER 6

I wince as I stretch my legs out on the bench of the Streetskillz change-room. My legs are still killing me.

“Here, use this,” Henry says as he hands me a jar of ointment with a picture of a tiger on it, “I got it from Mr. Li, he used to let me sleep at the back of his shop when it was cold outside.”

As I open the jar a terrible smell fills the room.

“Sho, you expect me to put this on my legs?”

Henry shrugs, “You need something to help you, or you’re going to collapse on the field.”

I grimace and nod. Henry is right. The practice is starting in five minutes and Reinecker is not going to be happy if I can’t even walk onto the pitch. I dip my hand into the foul-smelling ointment and rub it onto my legs. It makes my legs feel so cold that they burn, but when I pull myself to my feet it’s definitely easier to stand.

“Thanks Henry. Nice one.”

Henry’s small thin face breaks into a wide smile. “You were my first friend at Streetskillz. I don’t want you kicked out because you can’t run.”

STREETSKILLZ: KILLER INSTINCT

I smile back as we walk toward the pitch. “Well I’m not in the clear yet. If Reinecker doesn’t let up a bit, none of us are going to be around much longer.”

As we jog out on the pitch my legs feel better and better. And by the time I’m warming up with the team I’m feeling happy that I’m actually going to get a chance to play today and not just run laps around the field.

Karl Reinecker enters the pitch and walks stiffly towards us. He’s dressed in a black tracksuit, his blonde hair is gelled back and he walks with his arms behind his back, like an army general.

A wave of nervousness washes over me. I really hope Reinecker’s in a better mood today.

“Your performance during practice was poor,” Reinecker begins, “but at least most of you got to the pitch on time.”

I notice that he purposefully lets his intense eyes rest on me for a few moments to drive his comment home.

“You have the qualifiers for the South African street soccer championships on Saturday and I need to make sure that you’re up to the challenge,” he continues gruffly. “So we’re going to play some little one-on-one tournaments tonight while the rest of the team critiques your tackling and shooting abilities.”

He calls out names of the teammates who will be paired up. I wait tensely for my name to be called.

“Nathi,” Reinecker calls eventually, “you’ll be playing against Henry.”

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

He shud try yo concetrate on soccer nd make sure he plays wel 4 karl nt 2 hev a reason 2 bully him. **Thuli**

SMILEY+MOUSE+ON+DA+CANDY says

If Nathi thinks Reinecker is bullying him, he shud think twice, as we grow up we should hv priorities. I knw wat cumz 1st in2 Nathi's mind l8ly is jst hz gf Rose though he has desire 4 soccer. Nathi bru u shud obey th rules, u cnt oways do thngs 2 impress evrybdy if ur coach duzn lyk u, show hm dt u jst wana play d game nt hm, respect hm n gve hm sum tym he'l cum around if he notices ur dedication. Live ur dream boy neva luk bck. **SMILEY MOUSE**

I thnk its stil early 4 nathi 2 do sumthn,i thnk he must wait abit nd c wat reinecker is rily up to or y he is treatin hm lyk dat. **Lee**

What do you think?

Just when Khaya has stopped bullying Nathi, another bully enters his life. But this time it's an adult. How do you think Nathi should deal with Reinecker?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

CHAPTER 7

So I'm still getting shooting pains in my legs as I dribble the ball forward to where Henry is waiting anxiously for it.

"Pick it up," Reinecker calls from the sidelines, "we don't have all day!"

Henry shrugs and smiles at me. Reinecker has paired us up to play one-on-one. We have no other choice but to pit our skills against each other.

I pick up speed and feint to the left before pushing past Henry and kicking the ball into the net.

"Nice goal," Henry says with a smile.

I grin as I fetch the ball from the net and hand it to Henry. Maybe this won't be so bad after all. It's simply playing a friendly game against one of my teammates. No problem.

"I don't think you boys are trying hard enough," Reinecker snarls, his mouth curling at the edges with a mean smile, "so let's make this a bit more interesting. The winner will play in the qualifiers on Saturday. The loser will sit on the bench."

As I look across at Henry I can see that his smile has completely disappeared. This is no longer a friendly match between teammates. This is a competition. And I know just how hard Henry's worked to be on this team and how much he wants to play in the qualifiers. The problem is I feel exactly the same way. I've worked far too hard to let this go easily. Henry and I are friends, but we both instantly know that in this competition it's every man for himself.

Henry dribbles the ball forward and then stops in front of me.

"I have to win this, Nathi," Henry says, his small face lined with concern.

"Me too."

Henry nods. "No hard feelings?"

I'm still shaking my head when Henry responds by shooting forward with the ball. Caught by surprise I swing around to catch him, but Henry back pedals the ball quickly and spins around to catch it. I stumble as I try to change direction, which Henry uses to his advantage, pounding the ball home into the net.

"One all," Henry says.

I wipe away the sweat on my forehead. Henry is small, quick and very agile. This is not going to be easy.

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

I like this competition between da boys course it will make them realise how hard it is out ther. **Miza**

Reinecker is tryna make these boys hate each ada nw hw cn he make em play against each ada 2 be in da qualifiers..nathi must be careful nd find out wat reineckers plan is. **lee**

Cum on guyz!!2 chapterz plzli w8 til 12,2 read d next chapter.dnt u thnk i dsrv mo? **Pretty**

What do you think?

Henry is a small and agile player. What should Nathi do to make sure he wins? *Our readers recommend this: Try to keep up with him: 45%, Foul him: 7% Try to use his superior size to muscle him off the ball: 46%.*

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

CHAPTER 8

I sprint forward, gaining on Henry who has the ball and is streaking forward toward the net.

I challenge hard from the side, knocking him forward as I do so. I'm about to take the ball when a small, hard elbow lashes out, catching me in the solar plexus. I feel sick as the breath is knocked out of me and I drop to me knees, gasping as Henry strikes the ball home.

He actually has the cheek to walk back towards me and offer his hand to help me up. I knock it away in disgust.

"Nice elbow," I scowl, breathing heavily as I pull myself to my feet.

"I'm sorry Nathi," Henry whispers, his eyes wide and his face desperate, "I really didn't mean to hurt you. I just can't lose this."

"Forget it. If you want to play rough then we'll play rough."

"Much better Henry," Reinecker shouts from the sidelines "that's the kind of play I want to see."

We restart. I dribble the ball forward, waiting for Henry to try to tackle me. I'm bigger than him and my weight easily knocks him off his feet, and he's still sprawled on the ground when I score easily.

STREETSKILLZ: KILLER INSTINCT

“Good Nathi,” Reinecker shouts, “very good!”

Henry gets up and wipes away a bit of blood on his mouth from where he bit his lip falling. He looks at me with big eyes.

“I...I don’t want to fight, Nathi,” he says sadly.

I shake my head and say nothing. Henry was the one that started playing like this. Now I’m going to finish it.

“Right,” Reinecker shouts, as Henry is about to restart, “the next goal wins.”

I feel anxiety rise inside me. I can’t bear the thought of sitting out the game on Saturday. I *have* to win this!

Henry sweeps forward with the ball, moving from side to side, trying to wrong foot me. I’m totally focused on the ball, and as Henry moves to one side I charge in with a sliding tackle that drives the ball from underneath his feet and into the middle of the pitch. We both sprint after it, jostling each other for position as we reach the ball. I feel a surge of power suddenly course through me as I take control of the ball and drive it forward to the goal, slamming it home in the top right hand corner. In a moment the Streetskillz team are around me on the field, cheering and congratulating me. Reinecker is smiling and clapping his hands as he walks up to me.

“I underestimated you Nathi,” the tall German says, “you are a much tougher player than I expected.”

I know I’m supposed to be happy, but I can’t help but feel guilty as I see Henry’s small tear-stained face disappearing into the change-room.

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

Becaus Henry is still new in the team so he would like to create a name for himself in the qualifiers. **Heart of fire**

I realy think sometimes you have to think about ur goals not close friends because at the end of the day it is all about you. **BBYLEE**

Nathi should have let henry to win and prove reneicker that he aint that selfish to battle with a best friend. **Lavota**

What do you think?

Nathi won but he doesn’t really feel good about it. Why do you think Henry wanted to win so badly?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

CHAPTER 9

“He hit you with his elbow?” Rose asks in surprise as we get out the taxi at Du Noon and begin the walk up Dumasani Road. We’ve finished school for the day and finally have a chance to talk.

I nod as I take Rose’s smooth hand in mine and as we walk she squeezes it lightly before manoeuvring my arm around her waist.

I replay the moment in my memory, trying to figure it out.

“Weird,” Rose says, “I thought you and he were getting to be such good friends.”

“It’s soccer - everybody wants to win and the game gets a bit rough sometimes.”

“Hmm,” says Rose, “I think there might be something else going on with Henry. This new coach of yours sounds like he’s getting worse and worse.”

“He’s not the nicest guy, that’s for sure. But he doesn’t seem to hate me as much as he did at first.”

“Well I suppose that’s a good thing,” she says doubtfully.

“It is. If I don’t get along with Reinecker I don’t have much hope of staying on the team.”

We stop as we reach Rose’s mother’s shebeen.

“I know how important soccer is to you,” Rose says with a small smile, “but maybe you should go and speak to Henry.”

I shake my head. “If he wants to speak to me he knows where to find me.”

“Boys,” Rose sighs, “you’re all so full of pride it’s a wonder that there’s room for anything else.”

I wrap my arms around her and smile into her eyes.

“There’s definitely room for you.”

We kiss and then I watch her in awe as she walks slowly into the shebeen, turning to wink at me as she disappears through the door.

I walk the rest of the way home, noticing a silver sports car is parked outside my house when I get there. It’s incredible - so slick and shiny. I put my face against the window to get a look at the leather interior. Shew!

“Ma,” I call as I head inside the house, “whose car...”

And then I stop as I see who’s inside.

“Nathi,” says my mother in a pleased voice, “Mr. Reinecker has stopped by to have a word with you.”

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

Nathi is having a tough time but all that negative talk makes him a better person He should learn from other peoples mistakes

How can a street footballer drive a ferrari? Even the p.s.l players will never afford that, get real. **Bloody Swagg**

Nathi has to apologise to hendry and it's wrong 4 reineker to make the boys compete lik dat, also the coach my talk sense and apologise to nathi 4 tosing hs father's BOOK. **Douglas**

What do you think?

Nathi is really impressed by Reinecker’s car. What car do you think Nathi would drive if he became a pro? *Our readers recommend this: Mercedes: 25%, Audi: 25%, Ferrari, 48%.*

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

CHAPTER 10

“Nathi,” Reinecker says with a broad smile, “it’s so nice to get a chance to talk to you away from the pitch.”

He’s sitting, rather stiffly, on one of our floral chairs. His imposing presence makes our little house feel even smaller.

“I’ll let you two talk,” my mother says, “I’ve got to speak to Mr. Isaacs about getting feed for the chickens.”

She pulls her coat on and waves as she leaves the house.

“What...” I begin. I can’t believe Reinecker has come to visit me. What’s going on?

“We didn’t get off to a very good start did we?” Reinecker interrupts.

“No.” Instantly I feel my sense of outrage rise up inside me. “You threw my father’s book in the dustbin!”

Reinecker frowns. “I’m sorry about that. I didn’t realise that book was your father’s book nor how important it was to you.”

I shrug, taken aback by the apology, and sit down in the other chair, facing the German coach.

“It doesn’t matter because you’re not going to use any of the strategies in there are you?”

STREETSKILLZ: KILLER INSTINCT

Reinecker sighs and shakes his head. “No you’re right. I’m not. I’m going to use my own plans and strategies for Streetskillz. Strategies learnt during many years of experience as a player and a coach.”

I look carefully at the tall man perched uncomfortably on my mother’s chair. I’ve disliked Reinecker right from the start, but maybe he has a point. He *is* very experienced and its only logical that he should have his own ideas about how Streetskillz should play.

“I’ve come to see you tonight to tell you that I think you’re the best player that Streetskillz has,” Reinecker continues, “I think you’ve got a chance to go professional soon.”

I can feel my heart suddenly thumping wildly in my chest. Did I hear right?

“You could make it as a pro,” the German continues with a smile, “but only if you listen to my advice.”

I nod slowly, trying to keep my cool. But believe me, right now I’m willing to listen to whatever Reinecker has to say.

“Your game against Henry was good,” Reinecker says, “but it could have been better. You held back because Henry is your friend. “

Reinecker leans forward in his chair and stares at me with his intense blue eyes before he speaks again.

“If you want to make it as a pro you’ve got to develop the killer instinct.”

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

Yes evry playa should hav a killer intsinct...that 1 move or ability that cums out tops

YOZA U RILY ROCK WHEN IM BORED I LOGN 2 YOZA STORIES.. AND I RILY LOVE UR STORIES VERY VERY MUCH KEEP IT UP:D(F)

I dont knw anything about socca bt i thnk its al about dedication,loyalty nd trust bt if am wrong ppl hu knws socca cn answer dat.anyway i enjoy the story guys.;) **BABY BEAR**

What do you think?

Do you think developing a killer instinct is necessary in professional soccer?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

CHAPTER 11

I stop the ball with my foot and quickly survey my options. Khaya is closing in on me fast and he could go either left or right. With a flick of my foot I change the direction of the ball and then chip it into the box where a striker would be waiting if this were a match.

But this is not a match. Khaya and I are just working through drills under the watchful eye of Karl Reinecker.

“Not bad,” Reinecker says, “but I think you could be more aggressive. Nathi, Khaya was boxing you in. You need to create space.”

I nod as Khaya and I swap roles. Now Khaya will attempt to attack while I defend.

Reinecker blows his whistle and Khaya shoots off the mark so quickly he takes me by surprise. I race across to cut him off and manage to get a touch on the ball, but Khaya deftly moves the ball backward and fires it toward the box.

“Good,” Reinecker comments, but I can see he’s not happy. He waves me over.

“Killer instinct, Nathi!” Reinecker hisses. “Unless you have that you’ll get *nowhere*.”

I look across at Khaya.

“He’s good,” I explain, “I just couldn’t get the ball off him.”

Reinecker’s face twists in a scowl.

“Well then you force the ball off him! I’m not interested in the word *can’t*. *Can’t* is a word for losers. You go out there and you take the ball from him!”

He dismisses me with an abrupt wave of his hand.

“I want you boys to do that again,” he calls.

Khaya nods and puts the ball down to start again. Reinecker blows the whistle and again Khaya shoots forward quickly.

“Killer instinct,” I whisper to myself as Khaya comes barreling toward me.

As he reaches me, I charge forward and swing into a sliding tackle that smashes his feet out from under him. Khaya spins in the air and lands hard on the ground. He quickly rolls onto his back, clutching his hand.

“Damn it Nathi!” he exclaims, his face furious. “What the hell was that?”

I stand up, breathing hard. Khaya’s right. That tackle was *way* too hard. In a match I would have been sent off for a crazy tackle like that. My mind is racing as I look guiltily across at Reinecker, expecting him to be as furious as Khaya. But my coach is smiling. He sees me looking at him and raises his hand and gives me a thumbs-up. Reinecker is too far away for me to hear him, but when he speaks, I read his lips.

“Perfect,” Reinecker mouths, as one of the medics rushes across to bandage Khaya’s wrist.

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

This my first tym reading this book and im so impressed espeacialy when its stories about football thankx. **Young solid**

Yho i cn feel this coach z up 2 no good,sumthing z up nd nathi should take a sit back nd look what this coach z doing 2hm and his teammates. **100% Hot babe**

The coach clearly has plans for Nathi bt wat ever it is, it doesnt luk gud if nathi carries on lik ths hs goin to loose hmself and hs friends. he has to mak a dicision either coatch little pupet or a soccer player. **Douglas**

What do you think?

Nathi’s challenge on Khaya was extreme. Who do you think are the hardest tacklers internationally? *Our readers recommend this: The Dutch: 31%, The Spanish 11%, The Germans, 56%.*

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

CHAPTER 12

“What the hell is wrong with you?” Khaya shouts, his eyes blazing with anger as he kicks the bench in the change-room.

“I...” I start to try and explain, but then I stop.

I don’t actually understand why I made such a ridiculously hard challenge on Khaya. I guess I just wanted to prove to Reinecker that I have the killer instinct.

“It was a practice, you idiot,” Khaya storms, sitting down on the bench and glaring across at me. “So much for us being friends, hey? I might have to miss the qualifiers if my hand is badly injured.”

I sigh and sit down, putting my face in my hands. Khaya’s been told he has to go for X-rays on his wrist. If it’s broken he’ll probably have to miss the qualifiers.

“I knew you weren’t worth my time,” Khaya says, standing up and pushing past me. “See you later, Benni Mccarthy.”

Khaya spits out his mean old nickname for me before stalking out of the changeroom and slamming the door behind him, leaving me sitting on the bench feeling like hell.

STREETSKILLZ: KILLER INSTINCT

A few minutes later I hear the door creak open again and look up, hoping Khaya has come back, but instead I see Henry's thin face peering in.

"Oh," says Henry, "you're in here."

I nod. I'm still not exactly sure what to think about Henry these days. He was the one who had started all this violent play in our one-on-one competition, but now I have admit to myself that I've just done exactly the same thing to Khaya.

"I'm just getting my stuff," Henry says, walking across to where his bag is hung up on a peg.

"Henry..." Still, I don't really know what I want to say. It was a competition and I won. Henry will be sitting out during the qualifiers on Saturday, but if he wasn't, it would be me.

Henry grabs his bag and shakes his head.

"I can't talk now Nathi," he says, walking toward the door, "I've got to speak to Mr. Naidoo."

He leaves the changeroom too and I feel more alone than ever. I'm about to leave myself when Reinecker strides in with a grin on his face.

"There he is!" Reinecker booms, sitting down next to me and clapping me on the shoulder.

"Brilliant play today."

"But... Khaya..." My emotions finally bubble over as I speak, "he's injured and now he hates me again, and Henry is also acting weird and doesn't want to speak to me."

Reinecker smiles and squeezes my shoulder painfully.

"You want to know why they're acting like that?"

I look at Reinecker and nod.

"Because," my famous coach says, looking me dead in the eye, "they're jealous. Losers are always jealous."

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

I'm starting to hate this new coach. Making Nathi decide between being rough in order to be better, or playing his usual game but not having this "killer instinct", is just not right!

They are not jealous, its the way nathi played durng the practise. Hes attacks were a bit rough not knowing it might them...but than he didnt do it for him but the coach...which is a bit being mean. **SWINE FLU**

They were a good team but some1 has to pesivier. U cant hold yourself and true potential back coz of your friends. Iv experienced it, later on in life they arent there for u when u

haven't shown ur true potential and haven't succeeded in life. Jealousy is not a nice thing but its human nature... **miSs eXquisiTe**

What do you think?

Have you ever been jealous of someone? Do you think Henry and Khaya are acting like this because they're jealous?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

CHAPTER 13

"If you want to be a champion you've got to start acting like one," Reinecker says, his eyes burning into me like laser beams.

I hold Reinecker's eye but I really don't know quite what to think.

"I want to be a champion," I say, and feel a bit ashamed as my voice wavers, "but I don't want to hurt my friends."

Reinecker bursts out laughing, his harsh booming voice filling the changeroom.

"That's *exactly* what I'm talking about! Do you think a real champion lets the people around him hold him back?"

I'm full of doubt as I peer miserably at the coach.

"No they don't." Reinecker asserts. "Let me tell you a story."

He leans back against the wall of the changeroom.

"When I was younger I was told that I didn't have the talent to play professionally."

I watch his face twist into a grimace at the memory before he continues.

"But instead of just accepting it I fought against it. I played harder than anybody else and I developed the killer instinct."

Reinecker leans forward suddenly and claps his hands together so hard that they echo like a gunshot in the changeroom. I almost jump out of my skin.

"I learnt how to play *hard*, and you know what? People - even my friends and my own family - started to tell me that I was taking the game too seriously and that my ambition was turning me into a bad person."

He laughs harshly again. "They were trying to bring me down. If I'd listened to them I would *never* have achieved what I have in my soccer career."

I nod. Sitting here listening to Reinecker explain, I understand exactly what he means. He's trying to tell me that achieving my dream of becoming a professional soccer player isn't going to be easy and there will be sacrifices I'll have to make along the way. But hurting my friends? That just doesn't seem right.

"This is a very adult decision and one day soon you're going to have to decide whether you want this badly enough to make sacrifices. Your choice is either to develop the killer instinct or to decide that your friends are more important than your soccer career." Reinecker stands up. "I hope you decide well."

Later, as I trudge home along the dusty edge of Potsdam Road my heart is heavy. As I walk I keep on hearing Reinecker's words echo in my ears, while at the same time the memory of Khaya's angry face keeps flashing before my eyes.

My feet drag in the dirt as I wonder what to do. If making difficult decisions like this is what being an adult is all about, then being an adult isn't going to be much fun at all

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

Nathi has a very difficult decision to make and i think because he loves soccer so much the decision is mre difficult. Thanx 4 the amazing stories yoza..its awesome. **Erney**

Nathi mst thnk hard nd mke a valuable decision, hs future nd career r @ stake here bt thn hs stl abit yung 2 b mkn hard decisions lyk these mayb he xuld spik 2 hs prntz or rose nd thn twk 2 hs fwndz nd mke thngz ryt...its nt late yet. **Boot**

Nathi must be patience if he wil becum a pro he wil..he must nt turn his bck on his frand bcoz of wantin 2 be a pro coz wat if he gets hurt and neva plays again wu wil be ther 4 hm. **lee**

What do you think?

As a life lesson, which do you think is the most important? *Our readers recommend this:*
Patience: 17%, Learning what's important to you: 21%, Responsibility for your actions: 60%.

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

CHAPTER 14

"Brilliant! All your answers to my questions were on track, which means that you *have* actually been reading our English set work between soccer practices. Nice one lover boy! I like a talented all rounder," teases Rose as she packs her homework back into her satchel.

I like these question and answer trials Rose puts me through whenever we do our homework together. To be honest I sometimes catch myself feeling as absorbed in the mental challenge as I would in a challenge on the soccer field. And my grades have actually improved too, which is

STREETSKILLZ: KILLER INSTINCT

an extra bonus. As my thoughts drift back to soccer I feel my worry return, and my forehead crease into a frown.

“What’s wrong?” Rose asks. “You seem really stressed out lately, is it that new coach again?”

I sigh. “He’s OK. Sometimes I just don’t know what do to do though.”

Rose smiles again and puts her forehead against mine. “You need to decide what you want in life. It’s all about prioritizing.”

I smile back. “At least I know where you are on the list.”

Rose grins. “Well I’m glad you’re clear on that Einstein. Now don’t you have a practice with the Prof to get to?”

I grab her wrist and look at her watch.

“Oh man, I told Prof I’d be there at four!”

I jump up, grab my bag and then lean down and kiss Rose.

“See you tomorrow,” Rose says, “dream about me.”

I flash her a smile as I turn and sprint towards the field. As I race through Du Noon I dodge around children playing in the road and men moving heaps of scrap metal on shopping trolleys.

“Sorry Prof!” I shout as I reach the field, throw down my bag and run over to where to my mentor is pacing contemplatively with his hands behind his back.

“No problem, Nathi. I know you have better things to do than spend time with an old man like me.”

The Professor’s eyes twinkle and I grin and look down in embarrassment.

“Still you lovebirds can’t spend ALL your time together, so let’s get to work,” the Professor continues, clapping his hands together. “Today I’d like to address some of the weaknesses in your game.”

This is a surprise to me.

“What do you mean?” I ask.

The old man rubs his chin.

“Well, your power for instance,” he says, “you’re still not quick enough off the mark.”

“Reinecker doesn’t seem to think I have a problem,” I retort.

“I’m not talking about brute force,” the Professor says. “When you’ve built up your power you won’t need to rely on sheer strength.”

STREETSKILLZ: KILLER INSTINCT

Our practice begins with the Professor calling out instructions and me following them. I run up and down the field, lifting my knees as high as I can.

I'm trying so hard to focus on the high-steps, but strangely all I can think about are Reinecker's words. 'Develop the killer instinct. Develop the killer instinct.' They run through my head again and again. These basic exercises that the Professor is so fond of are never really going to help me become a pro.

"Focus, Nathi!" the Professor calls.

I'm so absorbed in my thoughts that his voice startles me and I misstep, tripping over my own feet and sprawling on the ground.

The Professor bursts out laughing. "See what happens when you don't focus?"

As I push myself to my feet I can feel my outrage building to explosion point in my chest. Reinecker is so right. I've had enough of this rubbish from people who think they know what's best for me. It's time I start thinking like a star.

"You know what?" I shout in fury as I turn to face the Professor, "I don't need your help with these stupid exercises."

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

It was not nice of him to shout at the prof he was only helping him. **Bonesie-G**

Nathi is overreacting about this,he needs all the help he can get,if he doesnt watch out he will end up loosing the most vital things in his life. **SWEETNESS**

Wat Naty is doin is dumb,dumb,dumb.he needs d profesor,but in tym he wl realise dat.
PORTIA

What do you think?

Is Nathi totally overreacting or is he right to take his destiny into his own hands in this way?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

CHAPTER 15

"Nathi!" the Professor gasps, a surprised look on his face. "Why are you so upset?"

The old man's puzzled expression makes me even angrier.

STREETSKILLZ: KILLER INSTINCT

“I need to develop the killer instinct,” I say as I walk over to my bag and violently throw the strap over my shoulder. “If I’m going to become a pro, I have to put soccer before everything else.”

I turn around and stalk off, ignoring the Professor’s calls to come back.

As I get closer to my house the sun is setting in the distance. There’s a cold breeze blowing and I shove my hands into my pockets as I cut across Dumasani Road. I’m about to turn into my road when a familiar silver sports car pulls up next to me.

“Nathi,” Reinecker calls out, winding down the window, “how are your important decisions coming along?”

I nod seriously. Strangely enough I’m not in the least bit surprised to see him here this time.

“I’ve decided that soccer is the most important thing in my life.”

The German smiles and pounds the steering wheel of his car with the palm of his hand.

“That’s very good news, young man.”

I nod. It is good news. But for some reason I don’t feel very good.

“You look like you’ve been practicing,” Reinecker says.

I shrug. “I was meant to, but it was just a waste of time.”

Reinecker pushes open the door and gets out. A few of the kids from school walk past and I can hear them whistling and talking about the car. I feel a surge of pride standing there next to it.

“If your mom allows it, why don’t you come to the Streetskillz pitch tonight to practice?”

My eyes widen. “Really?”

Reinecker smiles and nods. “Only if your mother allows it.”

We walk across to the house and Reinecker speaks to my mother about the practice. She’s hesitant at first but eventually agrees and soon I’m getting into Reinecker’s sports car. The lighted displays on the dashboard of this baby need to be seen to be believed.

“This practice will teach you essential skills in your career as a soccer player,” Reinecker says over the sound of the car roaring to life, “I’ve got a few secrets to teach you that I used when I was playing for Germany.”

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

Oh god plz hlp nathy. **COOL+KID.**

Nathi is definately losing it,,he is nt thnkn straight..Reinecker is rily up to sumthn bad. **lee**

Nathi shud nt let ths new coach cntrol hm

What do you think?

What secrets do you think Reinecker will teach Nathi? *Our readers recommend this: Shooting skills: 3%, Passing skills: 5%, Dirty tactics: 91%.*

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

CHAPTER 16

“Hit them harder,” Reinecker shouts, holding the boxing pads up.

I’m breathing hard, my face dripping with sweat from all the running I’ve had to do tonight. Reinecker’s methods are like nothing I’ve ever experienced before. Instead of focusing on things like ball skills, Reinecker is teaching me to focus purely on power. It’s not the kind of power development that the Professor was talking about either. Reinecker teaches pure aggression and quite frankly I’m having difficulty keeping up.

“Come on,” Reinecker shouts, “hit them harder.”

I begin dribbling the ball towards where Reinecker is standing with the boxing pads, trying to pick up as much pace as possible. As I reach the German, I turn my shoulder and slam as hard as I can into the boxing pads, just like he’s told me too.

A bright flash of pain blurs my vision as I make contact with the pads and I involuntarily drop to my knees, clutching my shoulder.

“Better,” Reinecker shouts, looming over me, “but it’s still not the killer instinct.”

He holds up the pads again.

“Hit them,” he orders, “with your fists.”

I stand up, still holding my shoulder.

“This is soccer, not boxing,” I say with a frown.

Reinecker curls his mouth in contempt.

“You think they’re so different? Come on, hit them.”

I punch one of the pads half-heartedly.

“Ha,” Reinecker says, “you would be laughed at if you punched like that in a boxing ring.”

I throw another punch, harder this time.

STREETSKILLZ: KILLER INSTINCT

“Harder,” Reinecker barks, his eyes narrowing.

I punch even harder, trying to throw the whole of my weight into the blow.

“Harder!” Reinecker screams, swinging the pad so it connects painfully with the side of my head, knocking me to the ground.

The shock of the impact knocks the breath right out of me and as I lie on the ground it hurts to even try and breathe. I struggle to blink away the little white stars blurring my vision. They eventually disappear, but something unexpected replaces the pain in my chest. Rage.

It propels me to my feet and I begin swinging wildly at Reinecker, not caring if I hit the pads or his flesh with my clenched fists. My arms keep swinging, slamming hard into the pads again and again until, utterly exhausted, I fold, resting my hands on my knees, gasping for breath.

Reinecker laughs, a loud harsh sound that fills the empty pitch.

“Now that,” he says, “is the killer instinct.”

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

Reeeeeeeeeeeeeeeed card for nathi al da way. **Sweet-gal**

I thnk thrz something going on here wth the new coach. if nathi is nt carefull reineker will turn hm in to a monster he wants hm to be,hz destoryn evrythn nathi learned before,bits by bits. **Random freak**

Reineckers training is nt helpin nathi at all,,nathi mus play fair soccer than da rough way reinecker is teachn hm...coz at da end of da day a sport is supsd 2 be enjoyed bt hw wil nathi enjy if his frandz r upset wth hm 4 his behaviour. **lee**

What do you think?

Is Reinecker's training helping Nathi? Why or why not?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

CHAPTER 17

There's an excited hum coming from the crowd packed into the stands at the Streetskillz arena. The smell of fast food fills the air. The qualifiers for the national street soccer championships are a big deal on the street soccer circuit, and people have travelled from all over the country to attend.

As I lace up my boots I'm concentrating on mentally preparing myself for the game, trying to remember everything that Reinecker has taught me.

STREETSKILLZ: KILLER INSTINCT

“Killed anyone lately?” a voice says from the doorway of the change-room.

I look up to see Khaya standing with his bag slung over his shoulder.

My eyes are drawn to his bandaged hand. Khaya holds it up.

“It’s just sprained,” he says, “you didn’t try hard enough to break it.”

I feel so bad and I want to apologise to my friend, but I just can’t find the words.

“Oh, so you’re going to ignore me now too?” Khaya says, “I should have expected that.”

“Look,” I say, as I turn towards the taller boy, “I need to do what’s best for me OK. With Reinecker’s help I can become a pro.”

Khaya stares at me.

“You know, the funny thing is that *I* used to be the idiot around here. You helped me to see that. And now *you’re* the one acting like a complete moron.”

I get up and walk towards the door. It’s so typical that Khaya doesn’t understand.

“I want to be a pro,” I say coldly, “and worrying about what people think of me isn’t going to get me there.”

Khaya shrugs and shakes his head.

“Suit yourself.”

I walk out towards the pitch where Reinecker is standing talking to a mean-looking red-haired boy that I don’t recognise. Which is strange, because he’s wearing a Streetskillz uniform.

“Nathi, this is Harris,” Reinecker says. “He’s going to be playing in Henry’s place.”

I feel a pang of guilt as I look across to where Henry is sitting slumped on one of the benches.

“I’ve taught Harris too,” Reinecker says meaningfully.

The red-haired boy grins evilly as he bounces up and down on the spot, shaking out his arms. I try to smile, but somehow I just can’t seem to generate much enthusiasm for my new teammate. I find myself thinking that things felt much better when Henry, Khaya and I were about to begin a game, all psyched up to work as a unit.

“Snap out of it Nathi,” Reinecker barks, “we need to discuss the game plan.”

I stare at the German standing in front of me.

“Your first opponents are the Dragons,” Reinecker begins.

“That’s OK,” I say with a grin, my confidence seeping back. “We’ve played them before, I know how to deal with Tong. We...”

“You will deal with them how I tell you to deal with them,” Reinecker menacingly interrupts.

I frown.

“What do you mean?”

Reinecker stares me down.

“I’m talking about the killer instinct, Nathi. I want you to take Tong out.”

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

Dis new coach is up 2 sumthing bad nd he is takin advntage wit nathi by trnin him against his frnd nd nathi wil end up in da mess aln

Reinecker is a mad, mad mad guy. Hw duz he expect Nathi 2 d such bad thngs :-e **Smiley babe**

This storie is starting to turn me off weres mr naidoo new players r on da scene its jst chaos. Nath ur boring dat attitude of nt speaking up 4 urself treating ur friends badly wil get u nowhere. U wil loose rose n to play socer grow up sis man. **Sweet-gal**

What do you think?

Reinecker has told Nathi to purposefully injure another player. What should Nathi do? *Our readers recommend this: Ignore him: 24%, Do it. If he doesn't, he'll be off the team: 6%, Refuse. That's not the right way to play soccer: 69%.*

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

CHAPTER 18

I’m standing on the Streetskillz pitch. Our game against the Dragons is about to begin and Reinecker’s words are ringing in my ears. ‘Take Tong out.’ By the look on the coach’s face, those words weren’t meant as a request.

So I’m supposed to injure another player on purpose? To be honest that’s the worst thing I could ever imagine doing. Quite frankly, it’s not something I’ve ever even thought about before. I admit that my challenge on Khaya was very tough, but I didn’t actually mean to hurt him. I just couldn’t do that intentionally.

“Take him out as soon as you can,” red-haired Harris whispers to me.

I feel sick. But maybe it’s not too late...

STREETSKILLZ: KILLER INSTINCT

“I’ve played Tong before,” I whisper back, “we don’t need to hurt him to win. We just need to...”

“Shut it,” Harris says, “you heard what Reinecker said - “Take Tong out’. Now get on with it.”

Harris jogs off to take his position as the referee gestures for Tong to start. The captain of the Dragons takes the kick off and dribbles the ball forward. Its all happening so fast I haven’t had time to decide how to play this, but seeing an opportunity, I run forward and slide in fast with a tackle, instinctively pulling back just before my boots crunch into Tong’s ankle.

The referee blows his whistle. Tong gets up with a furious look on his face.

“What the hell was that?” he shouts at me, “You think you’re some kind of tough guy now?”

The ref walks over to me and raises a yellow card.

“You try another tackle like that and you’re off,” he says sternly.

I nod. The crowd is booing me. I look down at my feet.

“Nice one,” Harris says with a grin as he jogs past.

Reinecker calls me over as the medics run on to the field to check Tong’s leg.

“You pulled back,” Reinecker hisses, “he’s not injured.”

Tong tests his foot and then gives the thumbs up to the medics.

“The killer instinct, Nathi,” Reinecker says, “you’ve got to...”

I turn to look Reinecker straight in the eye.

“You know what Reinecker?” My voice is surprisingly strong and even. “I’ve had *enough* of you and your damn ‘killer instinct’. Ever since you started coaching this team you’ve done nothing but try and turn me into your little robot. Well I’m not that, OK?”

Reinecker’s face turns a deep shade of red as he glares at me.

“You do what I tell you,” Reinecker says dangerously, “or you’re off the team.”

I look at him without flinching.

“You can’t throw me off the team. Because I quit.”

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

I thnk if i was nathi i wud hav done da same thng coz reinecker was pushn nd pushn it..he must also tel mr naidoo wat was hapnin. **lee**

Yes i would with a big smile in my face:-D **Ice princess**

Nyc1 Nathi, u dnt hav 2 b a robot 2 play soccer, but must hav skills and b strong. If i wer u i wud quit and try my luck in anada team. **Lady S**

What do you think?

If you were in Nathi's shoes would you quit the team?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

CHAPTER 19

I can feel Reinecker's fury as I jog away from him. The game is about to restart. And I may have quit the Streetskillz team, but I'm going to play my last game just the way I want to.

I jog over to Khaya.

"Come to sprain my other hand?" Khaya says with a sneer, "why don't you just..."

"I'm sorry Khaya," I say, and I mean it, "I was stupid to listen to Reinecker. He may have played for Germany but he doesn't know what he's talking about."

Khaya frowns. "You're just..."

"Wait," I hold up a hand, "let me finish. I'm really sorry for being such an idiot. You helped me out when Nails and Shorty were after me and we've become friends. I'm sorry I hurt you."

Khaya thinks for minute and then breaks into a smile.

"OK, I forgive you. I know all about acting like an idiot. It was nice to be the good guy for a change."

I smile back at him in relief.

Khaya looks across at Harris. "Now what are we going to do about this mess we're in. Without Henry we can't really run our usual plays, and this Harris kid is mean but his skills suck. "

I think quickly.

"Keep the ball away from Harris. The two of us will just have to work together."

Khaya holds out his fist as the ref blows the whistle for the restart.

"Nice to have you back."

"Good to be back," I say, touching Khaya's fist with my own.

STREETSKILLZ: KILLER INSTINCT

Tong takes the free kick and the Dragons play the ball forward. Harris has an opportunity to tackle but flounders helplessly as the Dragons sidestep him easily. Tong takes the ball into the box and strikes it cleanly into the back of the net.

For the rest of the first half, Khaya and I do our best to work together to try and create opportunities, but we just can't seem to get past the Dragons' powerful defence. Harris gets more and more annoyed with us and storms past in a huff as the whistle blows for the end of the first half.

Reinecker stalks after us into the changeroom.

"What do you two think you're doing?" he storms, slamming his hand into one of the metal lockers. "You're not doing what I told you to!"

"I told you," I say firmly, "I quit."

Reinecker's eyes are ablaze and his face is red as he walks over to me and grabs me by the front of my shirt.

"Well if you quit, you can't play in the second half then can you?"

I can smell that he has really bad breath as he angrily pushes his face right into mine.

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

M hating dis coach day by day ,i clearly dnt knw wat shuld nathi do bt if i were him i wuld nt quit i'd play ma game nt d coach's, im nt a fan of socar bt u turning me into 1 tnx 2 d writer. **Lil nicki minaj**

Thank goodness Nathi quit!

Nathi u r a star bby im glad u came bk to ur senses b4 it ws late

What do you think?

If Reinecker stops Nathi from playing in the second half, what do you think Nathi should do? *Our readers recommend this: Tell Mr. Naidoo: 87%, Quit soccer forever: 1%, Write to the newspaper: 10%.*

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

CHAPTER 20

"Well if Nathi's not playing, then neither am I!" Khaya stands up as he makes his announcement, looking across at the rest of the Streetskillz team.

STREETSKILLZ: KILLER INSTINCT

One by the one team stands up, joining Khaya.

“Never in my life,” Reinecker says, spitting with anger, “have I seen a team act like this to their coach.”

“What’s going on here?” a voice says from the doorway.

Everybody turns to see Mr. Naidoo standing with Henry.

“This team,” Reinecker says acidly, “are refusing to do what I tell them.”

“Because what you’re telling us to do is wrong,” I say. “You’ve told me to injure another player purposefully. I’m not going to do that.”

“Lies,” Reinecker says, “this is who I have to work with, liars and cowards.”

“Karl,” Mr. Naidoo says firmly, “Henry says you told him that if he didn’t tackle Nathi hard in practice, he’d be off the team and back on the street.”

So that’s why Henry has been acting so strangely! Reinecker has been filling his head with lies too. I can’t believe I didn’t figure this out sooner.

“These accusations are very serious,” Mr. Naidoo says, “I know both Henry and Nathi to be honest boys who wouldn’t make this sort of thing up.”

He walks across and points his finger at Reinecker.

“As such I’m relieving you of your position and asking you to leave the Streetskillz facility immediately.”

Reinecker’s face has turned purple and he’s sweating. He glares menacingly at Khaya and I, then turns and walks quickly toward the door.

“Come Harris,” Reinecker says to the red-haired boy.

Harris almost knocks me over with his shoulder as he passes, and then he and Reinecker quickly leave the building.

“I’m sorry Nathi,” Henry says, “I was just so terrified of going back to live on the street.”

I sigh and put my hand on Henry’s shoulder.

“I’m the one that should be saying sorry.”

The sense of relief in the room is immense. It feels like a huge, dark cloud has just vanished. I look across at the rest of the team and suddenly we’re all grinning broadly at each other. It feels like the real Streetskillz is back!

I turn to look at Mr. Naidoo. “So what now?”

Mr. Naidoo smiles and shakes his head. “Well despite the crazy circumstances, Streetskillz still has half a game left to play!”

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

Play 4 fun cz dats wat futbll is 4. **Hovar**

I'd say they are going 2 play like pros.Nice 1 nathi ;-)
Smiley babe

I thnk these boyz will tke the dragons out gud luck bafana. **Bow weezy**

What do you think?

With half a game left to play, what do you think the Streetskillz last-minute strategy should be?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/

CHAPTER 21

We all jog back out towards the pitch, but I stop suddenly when I see a familiar face in the crowd.

“Professor!”

The old man smiles and I run over to where he’s standing at the edge of the field.

“I didn’t think you’d come,” I say, looking down at the ground ashamedly, “not after how I acted.”

The Professor nods sagely.

“I knew something was happening with you, Nathi, and that you must have been facing some tough decisions.”

I nod.

“I didn’t realise it at first, but the people around me - you, my mom, Rose and my friends - they’re actually more important to me than soccer is. I began to believe that I needed the ‘killer instinct’ to get ahead in life, but now I’ve realized that I actually don’t.”

The Professor smiles.

“That’s a very important thing to have learnt. It certainly took me a lot longer than you did to learn that.

“I’m so sorry for the things I said Prof.”

STREETSKILLZ: KILLER INSTINCT

“I knew that you would make the right choice, that’s why I’m here today. Now go and finish your match.”

I flash him a huge, grateful smile before I turn and jog towards my teammates.

“Ok,” Henry says as I reach him. “We’re losing 1-0 and Tong is still furious about your foul. We need to pass quickly and make sure they don’t get possession.”

Khaya and I nod in agreement, and the three of us touch fists.

The ref blows the whistle and Khaya restarts the game, playing a quick ball to Henry who feints to his left to outwit a Dragon player, before making a run up the centre of the field.

Just as he reaches the Dragon’s powerful defenders he back pedals the ball to me, and, holding my breath with the effort of it, I curve a long, winding shot into the bottom left of the net.

The crowd goes wild! I breathe a sigh of relief. At least the spectators seem to have forgiven my foul on Tong.

For most of the rest of the second half, the game is tight as Streetskillz tries to keep the ball away from the Dragons. With only a minute left, Tong takes the ball and tries to muscle his way through the Streetskillz midfield, but Henry steals the ball from him lightly, spinning and passing it out to Khaya who plays a long ball out to me. I race up the wing with the ball, aware that Khaya is moving like lightning towards goal. In one fluid motion I turn and angle the ball into the box. Khaya launches himself into the air like a madman and just connects with the ball, ushering it into the top right hand corner of the net at frightening speed.

The crowd roars with delight as Khaya, Henry and I meet in the centre of the field to touch fists as the final whistle blows.

“I think we showed them we’ve got more than enough killer instinct,” Khaya says with a laugh.

I grin and shrug. “Who needs killer instinct when you’ve got Streetskillz?”

Reader comments

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Gr8 start,gr8 ending....i must say that hard work has been put on writn this story..and the writer sure knowz his work..dats a true talent u'v got ther..i wasn't really into soccer but as i read ths story i liked it n dats a good sign..cant 4 another story like that...big up..love yah..mwah..keep up the good work genius! **Angel**

Fair game n they won well so they dont need that german coach,well the story was wonder full hope we wil have another part

Im glad nathi came 2 his senses and they al played gud 2getha..**lee**

What do you think?

Streetskillz have won their qualifiers and Nathi has learnt a few things about soccer (and life). What else do you think he needs to learn to make it as a pro soccer player? *Our readers recommend this: Trust your own instincts: 42%, Don't forget about your friends: 19%, Admit it when you make mistakes: 38%.*

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/26/