

93:20: The Unsung Heroes

If you're a Manchester City fan (and, in Nigeria, fan of every other club except Manchester United), this number will almost certainly connote the most pleasant of feelings. It's a reminder of the most dramatic final day in the Premier League era, and possibly in the history of top-flight football in England, what with the twists and turns occurring at both ends of the Premier League table. We all know the story by now. Manchester City, having led from the front all season, had clawed back an 8-point deficit to top the table going into the final day, and needed to match or better the result of neighbours Manchester United, to win their first top flight title in half a century. Manchester United, to their credit, did their part, securing a 1-0 victory away at Sunderland. At the Etihad, however, things were not looking good for their crosstown rivals. Having led 1-0, they now trailed 2-1 going into injury time, despite being a man up, with Joey Barton having been sent off for being, well, Joey Barton. They did manage to equalise in injury time, but it wasn't enough. They needed to win. Then Sergio Agüero played a Give-and-go with his strike partner, burst past the desperate challenge of Taye Taiwo, and rifled home past Paddy Kenny.

Cue bedlam, and 48,000 fans erupting in a sea of chaos onto the pitch and its surroundings. Most of us fans can even remember the commentary by both Martin Tyler and Peter Drury on different channels, such has the moment been replayed over and over again.

Which is why when we ask most people about that moment, the first (and sometimes only) name that comes to mind is Sergio Agüero's. For good reason, admittedly, since he'd performed very well that season and scored the goal to win City's first title in ages. That's why today, more than eleven years later, we'll be moving the spotlight a bit to focus on some of those whose names often get shunted to the side when we recall that wondrous moment.

Edin Dzeko:

The Bosnian had begun the season as the striker with the least hype out of City's amazing quarter of himself, Mario Balotelli, Carlos Tevez (Who spent much of the season on striker after falling out with gaffer Roberto Mancini), but played his part. His four-goal haul at Tottenham in a 5-1 drubbing is certainly memorable even today, and he did so in this game by refusing to give up, hassling Rangers centre backs, fighting for every ball, and, most importantly, heading home the goal that tied the match in the 92nd minute. Simply put, without his equaliser, there'd have been no 'Agüeroooooooooo'.

David Silva: The electric Spaniard was at the heart of much of the good City did that season, being the major creative outlet for a plethora of strikers, providing genius touch and calmness in equal degree, and it was his magnificent corner which Dzeko headed home to tie the game in injury time. A class act.

Mario Balotelli: 'Super Mario' was an enigma, even then. When he received the pass from Agüero, he could very easily have tried to swivel away from his marker and taken on the shot himself. And, more likely than not, the ball would've ended up in Row Z, and we'd have been talking of that City team as bottlers, rather than as greats of the English game. However, in a moment of true calmness that seemed few and far between for the maverick striker, he balanced against his marker and played the perfect pass back to Agüero, who took the ball in his stride without having to break it. And the rest, they say, is history.

Paddy Kenny: This choice seems a bit contradictory, given what we've been talking about in this piece, but let us not forget Queens Park Rangers were battling relegation here too. Sure, at the time they conceded the equaliser and the winner, they were already safe, and even joined the celebrations at full time on the Etihad, but they didn't know it yet. Paddy Kenny was a rock, frustrating the City Attackers time and again with truly magnificent saves. But for his heroics, the scoreline might have well come close to double figures and the game would've been a foregone conclusion, with the moment at the end a lot less memorable, if indeed it happened at all.