

Avatar 1381

Chapter 1381: So It Ends Here?

It wasn't just Li Yihui, Bai Shu's expression turned heavy too.

Adding on a skill with the same effect? It sounded wasteful, but to 301, it was their biggest bane. 301's strategies had been brought back by Bai Shu. He knew better than anyone else how it should be played, as well as all the tricks and techniques involved.

In these strategies, the Knight was undoubtedly crucial. Provoke and Roar, the two Taunt skills, were essential for letting the Assassin complete a Life-Risking Strike and were incredibly valuable for other tactics too. It could be said that these were the two most important skills for their strategies.

These strategies weren't used in China's competitive scene. Bai Shu had confirmed it. And after 301 started using them, they became a force to be reckoned with. Their execution wasn't perfect yet, but 301 had already achieved great results. A major reason for their success was the Alliance's unfamiliarity with these foreign tactics.

However, Happy's Ye Xiu had attached two skills with the same effect onto his weapon, most likely to target Tide's Provoke and Roar. It was enough to say that he had grasped the key points of this set of strategies.

Luring away Yang Cong and his Scene Killer was only a part of Happy's set-up. The other part was restricting the enemy Knight's two Taunt skills.

With a Qi Master, a Cleric, and who knew how many skills Lord Grim had added onto his umbrella, Happy had numerous ways to achieve this goal.

What a guy. He's even better than I imagined.

Bai Shu was shocked.

Ye Xiu had seen through his techniques, his thoughts, and even the strategies he had brought back from outside of the scene.

The Glory Textbook.

Bai Shu had heard of this nickname. Now, he was convinced, truly convinced. Was there anything this guy didn't excel at? He was top-tier at every aspect of Glory? And that weapon his character possessed, Bai Shu had never even heard of it before. The European scene obviously had self-made equipment, but to create one that could transform, wasn't that cheating? Wasn't that changing how the game was supposed to be played? Bai Shu had questioned it at one point.

But now, he had nothing to say.

For such a freakish weapon to appear in such a freakish player's hands, there was nothing he could say.

Lord Grim flickered, avoiding the flying Circle Sweep Kick from Moving Mountain. The scythe form Myriad Manifestations Umbrella arced in the air, drawing out a Rising Emblem, suspending Moving Mountain in the air. Instead of falling down, Moving Mountain shot into the air.

Lord Grim rushed forward, holding a talisman in his other hand, the Exorcist's Meditation Talisman, which could dispel Taunt effects.

No one could be faster than Lord Grim, and no one could block him. Team 301's current team comp had a very obvious weakness: no ranged.

Before 301's sixth player Qian Wenju came onto the stage, 301's starting team comp consisted of an Assassin, a Knight, a Blade Master, a Grappler, and a Paladin, all melee.

An all melee team was a viable team comp though, unlike all ranged team comps. Even though they would have some trouble against ranged attacks, all melee teams had the numbers advantage in melee brawls. This was the goal of all melee teams. Defense first, and then once an opportunity appeared to fight the opponent melee characters, jump at it and never let go.

However, oftentimes, without a long-ranged class, they could meet situations where there was nothing they could do. For example, trying to interrupt a skill was exceptionally difficult. Lord Grim was getting ready to attack, but without long-ranged firepower, they had no suitable ways of stopping him.

Pa!

Lord Grim's Meditation Talisman was stuck onto One Inch Ash. The Roar effect was finally dispelled. Qiao Yifan immediately had One Inch Ash place down a ghost boundary. The timing of the dispel was immaculate. The ghost boundary could continue to remain.

At this moment, Bai Shu turned around and lifted his hands. Ye Xiu's Lord Grim made his way over to him in a single step. Bai Shu was shocked. With just one press of his finger, Tide would have let out a Glorious Provocation, but Lord Grim stood in his way. This was the method that Li Yihui had used to block Lord Grim's Calm and Composed.

Lord Grim moved towards Tide, but was Ye Xiu afraid?

Tide had reached Little Cold Hands. Even if Bai Shu hadn't Provoked him, Ye Xiu would have went over anyways to rescue their healer. Now, with the Provoke, he didn't even need to press any buttons to move. He could focus solely on using skills as he rushed over.

Bai Shu was helpless.

Provoke and Roar had been used, and under Knight's Spirit, their might had even been buffed. However, the opponent had blocked them. Could he still escape?

No tricks would work. His only choice was to brute force his way out. If it was just himself, he could have ran long ago, but the goal was to get the rest of the team to retreat too. One Inch Ash's ghost boundary needed to be put under control. 301's objective hadn't changed.

Just Heroic Leap!

Tide jumped over Lord Grim's head and smashed towards One Inch Ash. Lord Grim was still under Provoke's effects though. The system forced him to follow, so his reactions were perfect. Tide had quickly leaped over his head, but Lord Grim instantly turned around. Ye Xiu followed in his steps and also jumped. His Myriad Manifestations Umbrella transformed into a spear, Circle Swing!

Pu!

Tide was stabbed in mid-air. Bai Shu turned his head in disbelief. To be able to attack in this situation, what were his limits?

Bang!

Tide had been thrown to the ground by Circle Swing. The weight of a fully plated Knight wasn't light. He formed a crater in the ground as the earth trembled. Bai Shu immediately had Tide get up, but his skills were locked. Happy's Cleric had probably thrown down Sacred Fire when Lord Grim threw him, sealing his skills.

In the blink of an eye, Qiao Yifan completed a chain of ghost boundaries. He didn't need to trap all of 301, just a single character was enough. Unless their opponents were crippled, how could they not go rescue their ally?

Gao Jie was unfortunately the one to be captured. He was wildly attacking to stop Fang Rui, but he didn't realize that it was actually him being locked down by Fang Rui. One Inch Ash's ghost boundary chain linked together with him in the center of it.

Gao Jie was dumbfounded. Then, he watched as the rest of Happy rushed over, each of them with sinister expressions.

Not good...

Team 301 could do nothing. They couldn't help but look towards the other side. Their team captain, Yang Cong and his Scene Killer, should be back by now. But, no. Yang Cong was currently fighting with Su Mucheng, who was patiently kiting him. In short, she was doing one thing: stalling.

Yang Cong completely understood Su Mucheng's intentions, but he had no way of resolving the issue. In fact, he was hoping Bai Shu and the others could find a way to come over and group back up. If everyone locked Su Mucheng outside of Paulownia Tower, their tactics would be able to open up. How could he know that Happy had locked up the other four, stopping them from leaving. Both sides were hoping for one another to save them, but right now, neither side could help the other.

In the end, the trapped Gao Jie was unable to be rescued.

When Yang Cong saw Stellar Sword's name suddenly turn gray, his heart sunk.

He knew that the other side had lost, and in the end, he wasn't able to get rid of Su Mucheng and rush back to help. Despite knowing the other side's intentions, he could do nothing but be led around by the nose into a losing situation.

Gao Jie had fallen. Who was next? Yang Cong clearly knew that the death of an ally was the most dangerous moment. The remaining players would instantly feel the pressure multiplied. Before their sixth player arrived, everyone would need to put in even greater effort to hold on in order to last while

their side had a numbers disadvantage. If any teammate was unable to persist, the opponents would utilize their numbers advantage to quickly sweep everyone.

I need to group back together with them. Yang Cong made his decision. Scene Killer tossed Dancing Rain aside to return. Su Mucheng continued to give chase with her Dancing Rain, but this time, Yang Cong's retreat was more decisive. When Dancing Rain entered Paulownia Tower, he didn't even look back.

In this live or die moment, tactics could only be thrown aside for now. To group up, even if they had Su Mucheng above breaking their tactics, it could be considered as a method of intimidation. Afterwards, they could go on the offensive. Either way it was still better than letting Happy lead them around by the nose.

Scene Killer finally grouped together with everyone, and 301's sixth player had quickly arrived as well. But it was too late.

When Yang Cong got closer, he saw that Bai Shu's Tide no longer had much health left. At a numbers disadvantage, he had relied on his sturdy plate armor and his own body to protect the other two members. As a result, he took huge amounts of damage. Their healer, Sun Ming's Paladin 007 had been focused by the other side as well and could not provide any assistance.

Yang Cong was only an Assassin. He wasn't a healer. His return could help relieve some of Bai Shu's burden, but at this point, Happy was trading health for health. At this rate, Tide would certainly be killed.

The Knight Tide was perhaps had the most health out of any Knight in all of Glory, but in order to protect his team, he fell as well.

Boom boom boom!

Dancing Rain had climbed up the Paulownia Tower and was providing help. Yang Cong lifted his head and saw the dazzling yet harsh gunfire.

We lost!

Yang Cong knew that the fight was over.

But was it the end of this match, or the end of their summer?

How bitter! No matter what, losing would always make one feel bitter!

I don't have many too chances left!

Reality was cruel. With this team competition, Happy beat 301, the final score 6-4. Team 301 would have to wait for the results of the two other matches before they could know their final fate.

As for Happy?

"To think they didn't even let me play, or could it be a mark of how much we've improved?" Tang Rou wrinkled her brow in complaint.

Chapter 1382: It's All Over

“Happy and 301 Degrees’ match has come to an end. Happy won.”

In the live broadcast of Samsara and Hundred Blossom’s match, Pan Lin immediately announced the results of the other match once he received them.

“Happy won, huh?” Li Yibo sighed, his tone filled with sorrow. Pan Lin didn’t respond, and let out a sigh of relief as well, before focusing on the match again.

Happy had won. Originally, this was great news for Hundred Blossoms, but unfortunately, they hadn’t managed to grasp their chance this time. In the team competition against Samsara, Hundred Blossoms was clearly at a disadvantage. Currently, it was five against four on the field, with Hundred Blossoms down one person. It looked like they weren’t going to be able to defeat Samsara twice in the regular season after all.

Would they have a chance to turn the tables?

Pan Lin and Li Yibo both silently watched on. If there wasn’t any miraculous save, then there was little need for them to commentate.

“How is Wind Howl’s match going?” Li Yibo suddenly asked.

“It’s not over yet.” Pan Lin was also, in fact, checking up on the other match every now and then. However, the only information he had gotten so far was that the match wasn’t over yet, but no details.

The match continued. With the fall of each Hundred Blossoms character, the hope for a miracle dimmed a little more.

Pan Lin sighed again.

Hundred Blossoms had done everything they could. Even in front of a powerhouse like Samsara, they maintained hope. Finally, they were able to gain two points in the group arena and overtake Wind Howl, grasping the initiative.

But fate had once again played a cruel trick on them. They had gotten the initiative, but it had slipped out of their grasp again. Right now, all they could do was wait for the results of the Tiny Herb and Wind Howl match.

But by the time Samsara and Hundred Blossoms match ended, the results still hadn’t come out.

6-4. To Samsara, this wasn’t any spectacular victory, but the venue had exploded into a sea of cheers.

The thirty eight rounds had finally come to an end. Samsara had obtained a total of 319 points. They had started in the lead and had never once been overtaken. Their entry into the playoffs had been guaranteed four rounds ago. However, out of respect, they didn’t celebrate too much. But now, with all thirty eight rounds over, there was no need to hold back any longer, and this was Samsara’s home stadium as well. They had long since prepared a celebration ceremony, and some hadn’t even managed to wait until the end of the match to start.

Team Hundred Blossoms shook hands with Samsara's members amidst this joyful cacophony. Samsara's members were courteous enough to wait until after these procedures were over to wave their fists in celebration with the Samsara fans in-venue, a celebration of thirty eight rounds of victory.

"We are the champions!"

This classic by Queens blared through the stadium speakers. The fans in the stadium all roared along with this line. This was a truth in the regular season and a beautiful blessing for their playoffs journey.

Team Hundred Blossoms left the stage disappointed, surrounded by this sort of atmosphere. No one would care much about the losers, and it wasn't the first time Hundred Blossoms had been filled with disappointment in a celebratory situation. Their seniors had walked off the stage of the grand finals in disappointment like this thrice.

"Has it ended?" The players that had just finished playing in the match didn't know the results of the other match. After asking, they found out that Tiny Herb and Wind Howl's match was still ongoing.

"Is there any hope left?"

Everyone held hope, but this feeling, how they couldn't grasp this hope with their own two hands, was terrible. They felt like a grounded fish. They could do nothing but wait.

What would it be?

Their eyes held hope and anxiety, and a mess of similar emotions.

All until the news came.

"We're in," The person who obtained the news said.

"Is that so?" Yu Feng gave a long sigh and sat down on the player bench. The tension in him finally drained out.

"We're in?" Some others still needed confirmation.

"Yes, we're in. We're in. Wind Howl lost to Tiny Herb. We're one point in the lead, we're in for the playoffs!" The person who had got the news burst out in excitement.

Hundred Blossoms' members looked at each other.

Excitement? Delight?

They didn't seem to be feeling any of that.

After all that had occurred, all they felt was a sense of relief, like they had managed to escape death.

In the yet unfinished live broadcast, Pan Lin and Li Yibo had naturally also received the news.

"I didn't think it there would be such a dramatic ending to all this," Pan Lin commented.

"Yeah, in the last team competition, the three teams that needed to win didn't manage to win any of them. Thus, the points remain unchanged," Li Yibo said.

“We can’t really say it’s completely unchanged,” Pan Lin laughed, “One round ago, Wind Howl sat at eighth and Hundred Blossoms was at ninth. However, Hundred Blossoms gained four points this round, overtaking Wind Howl and squeezing into the top eight.”

“Unfortunately, Team Wind Howl wasn’t able to enter the playoffs,” Li Yibo lamented.

“But they’re still young. They can try again next year!” Pan Lin said.

Thus, the regular season ended just like that...

Tiny Herb’s stadium wasn’t as lively as Samsara’s. After all, for Tiny Herb, they had merely finished a match that had little to no effect whatsoever on their points. There was no need to celebrate getting into the playoffs either. They acted like this was all a very normal match, with an applause given to the two teams. However, under the applause stood the most disappointed team of the round.

They lost. It was over.

In the moment the match ended, Wind Howl knew that this would be the result. They were the ones who needed to win this round. The team that wouldn’t have any chance whatsoever if they didn’t win. However, in the end, they lost.

Especially knowing that 301 Degrees and Hundred Blossoms had both lost, Wind Howl were even more frustrated. A chance had appeared but unfortunately they weren’t able to make use of it.

With Round 38 of the regular season, Team Wind Howl’s journey for Season 10 had come to an end. They weren’t able to get into the playoffs and, for a team that had set its goal as the championships, this was a complete failure. They had never expected that their summer would end so soon. They didn’t know what they would do next. Everyone felt lost, and silently left the stadium just like that. A season of hard work, a season of their efforts, all dispersed in the wind.

The results of the matches of Round 38 were out one after the other. This would decide the teams final rankings and also the teams’ first opponents in the playoffs.

The live broadcast still hadn’t ended. It was waiting for this moment, the moment the final match results came out. Pan Lin and Li Yibo swiftly organized the materials at hand, giving a simple report on this season’s final results.

Team Samsara was the regular season champions at 319 points.

After them was Tyranny in second with 278 points. They weren’t as impressive as last season, and even began the season under doubt from all sides. However, after thirty-eight rounds, they had silently managed to climb over the other teams into second place.

Blue Rain was third, just a point away from Tyranny. They had switched places several times with Tyranny, and in the last round had ended things with a one point disadvantage.

Team Tiny Herb was at 270 points, placed fourth. Fifth was Thunderclap with 254 points, then it was Happy, 301 Degrees, and Hundred Blossoms, whose places were only confirmed with the last round.

Team Wind Howl, unfortunately, falling short by just one point. Void was tenth and Misty Rain was eleventh. After that, it was Miracle, Royal Style, Parade, Heavenly Swords, Lightly, Conquering Clouds

and Radiant. Bright Green and Seaside were the only two teams of the season whose points didn't manage to reach the hundreds, and they were both relegated.

It's over!

For the teams not in the top eight, Season 10 was done. As for the top eight, they would enter the final war of the season. Considering the matchups the Alliance had always used, everyone could draw the matchup situation of the playoffs from the rankings.

"The ranked first Samsara will be up against Hundred Blossoms in the first match of the playoffs," Pan Lin announced the first set of opponents.

"This... the teams have just finished playing a round against one another, and now they're going to fight two more rounds in the playoffs, or maybe even three," Li Yibo pointed out.

"Then it's Tyranny versus 301 Degrees, Blue Rain against Happy, Tiny Herb against Thunderclap," Pan Lin continued.

"Yup. And then the winner of Samsara and Hundred Blossoms will fight whoever wins between Tiny Herb and Thunderclap, while the victor of Tyranny versus 301 Degrees will go up against whoever wins between Happy and Blue Rain. Then the winners of these two battles will go up against one another in the grand finals," Li Yibo announced the rest of the matchups for the playoffs.

"Coach Li, can you give a prediction of how the playoffs might go?" Pan Lin asked.

"Haha, the results are hard to say. In the playoffs, what's gained from the regular season loses its value, especially with the new rules in place. This makes it even harder to predict from the results of the regular season. For example, for Team Tyranny, they were a subject of doubt in the regular season, but now everyone's realized that they were saving up strength for the playoffs. Under these circumstances, it's hard to say how well Tyranny will perform in the playoffs," Li Yibo replied.

"Then what about Team Happy? What do you think of them, Advisor Li? This team managed to enter the playoffs as a new team. This is something that has never happened before. Where do you think they'll be able to get to, Advisor Li?" Pan Lin inquired.

Li Yibo could feel his insides clench. Happy was a team he didn't dare make predictions about!

"Er, Happy... well, they might count as a new team, but this new bottle holds old wine. Ye Xiu, Su Mucheng, Fang Rui, just the three of them alone have plenty of playoffs experience, comparable or even more than the other seven teams. Apart from that, it's all rookies. Such a conflicting team composition has never been seen before. I'm eager to see how they'll perform, as well," Li Yibo said.

"Haha, Happy's just finished their post match press conference. The reports asked about the playoffs, and guess how Ye Xiu replied."

"How?" Li Yibo asked.

"He said, now that they've gotten here, he won't be thrown off again," Pan Lin said.

"Ha! Let's hope that's true!" Li Yibo laughed.

Chapter 1383: Regular Season Awards

The regular season finally came to a close.

At the Round 38 post-match press conferences, the teams that managed to get into the playoffs were asked questions on how they planned to face the playoffs. Each team's response was rather reserved, at most expressing their determination. No one expanded on it too much.

The first round of the playoffs was set to beginning on June 14, the start of the new week. The playoffs would open with Samsara versus Hundred Blossoms. After resting for a mere eight days, the two teams would once again meet on the battlefield.

Eight days, no team would really spend these eight days resting and relaxing.

After confirming their opponents for the first round, each team entered a high tension state of preparations. It wasn't just the teams that grew busier. The Alliance, the media, and sponsors were all rushing to make arrangements for this season's climax.

The reporters sent out by different media outlets hoped to obtain the situations of each team's preparations. Some teams would use this as a chance to set a smokescreen. The war that was the playoffs had started ever since Round 38 ended, from on the stage to outside the stage, from mental fortitude to mechanics and strategies. This war wasn't just one on the battlefield.

Happy, because of their unique origins, had plenty of people keeping an eye on them. However, the day after the last round, Happy announced that they were going into isolated training. Even the Esports Home reporter Chang Xian, who was the closest to them, was sent away politely.

They weren't the only ones though. Happy's opponent for the first round, Blue Rain, had also closed itself from the outside world. Their PR gave the media a few courtesy words that were common in the playoffs.

The other six teams didn't seem to treating this as solemnly as Happy and Blue Rain.

Samsara openly expressed their determination and confidence in accomplishing a consecutive three championships.

Tyranny kept a low profile like they had the entire season, not revealing anything.

Tiny Herb's roster had undergone great change since their two championships, and captain Wang Jiexi expressed his hopes for Tiny Herb's future. Thunderclap's captain Xiao Shiqin mentioned the awkward situation of how Thunderclap had never succeeded in advancing to the second round of the playoffs. This time, he expressed his hope that they would breakthrough. "We've gotten here, and we only have one goal: the championship!" Xiao Shiqin displayed an ambition that Thunderclap hadn't dared display all season. 301 Degrees had only managed to charge into the playoffs with Bai Shu's arrival in the latter half of the season. They might not have a high point score, but the combative power they had displayed in the latter half of the season was nothing to joke about. Thus, Team 301 Degrees was very confident about the playoffs. "This is a completely new 301 Degrees," was what 301 Degrees expressed in their interview.

In eighth, Hundred Blossoms who had narrowly beaten Wind Howl by one point, first expressed, self-mockingly, that they really were quite lucky. "The playoffs is a new beginning. We won't waste this rare fortune." When Hundred Blossoms talked about luck, it would always make people sigh over it, but now they kept talking about their fortune and good luck; their attitude was most certainly very enthusiastic.

Let's wish them a good luck in the playoffs.

All the reports on the teams were, in the end, about such words. After that, there were analyses and predictions for each team flooding in. Team Samsara was undoubtedly the one people had the highest hopes for. They had managed to leave everyone in the dust in the regular season. Even the Four Heavenly Kings of Tyranny in Season 9 hadn't given such a dominating performance.

All sorts of reports, all sorts of comments, all sorts of debates.

The matches hadn't even begun and the normal players were all in a tizzy, all talking about their reasons and opinions.

The esports sites had also began all kinds of polls, to calculate each each's support ratio.

On June 8, six days before the beginning of the playoffs, the Alliance announced the rewards for the regular season.

King of Dueling, Happy's Ye Xiu.

Arena Star, Samsara's Sun Xiang.

One Hit One Kill, Samsara's Zhou Zekai.

These three were calculated purely through statistical data with no subjectivity. The final results weren't anything that could be argued over anyways. There were people who'd pick out needles in the haystack and even complain that Ye Xiu's flawless record was built on a God, of all players, playing in the individual competition. These people who were just looking for trouble had nothing they could actually use against a record like this. The occasional nitpicker would be ganged up on and insulted into submission.

After the three statistically calculated awards, it was time for the other awards decided by the Alliance. Since different people had different opinions, these awards would elicit an intense debate each year. This year followed that trend, and the argument was the most intense yet because the Best Rookie went to Tang Rou.

The Alliance, in the end, decided to respect the fact that this was a competition of skill. Speaking solely in regards to performance, Tang Rou, a core member of Team Happy, held an impressive record of group arena wins and admirable performance in the team competition. No other rookie in the tenth season had a chance against Tang Rou for this award. The most impactful statement on her report was: a player that has managed to smash through Rookie's Block 1 with her fierce determination.

Unfortunately, Tang Rou's conduct had many people viewing her in a different manner. They were all more willing to point out her flaws and magnify them, using them to make her seem unskilled.

Of course, Tang Rou's performance wasn't flawless, and under such nitpicking, people could find flaws everywhere. After these flaws were magnified, Tang Rou was nothing more than a pretty face who

couldn't do accomplish anything, according to some. Unfortunately for them, Tang Rou's performance clearly rebuked that. Even if they had ignored her strengths, her victories were recorded and noted.

Tang Rou had broken through Rookie's Block without faltering.

This was a spectacular achievement for a rookie, yet those nitpickers completely neglected to consider it.

In these ten years since the alliance had been created, only two people had managed to break through Rookie's Block before without faltering: Wang Jiexi and Sun Xiang. Both were top Gods now. After that, last season's Tyranny's rookie, Qin Muyun had managed to play a stable hand through his debuting season. However, in Tyranny's team, the four gods had drawn a lot of attention and snatched a lot of data. Qin Muyun's statistical data wasn't all that impressive, low profile to the point where people didn't even think any fluctuations in his data were noteworthy. In addition to his rather wallflower like presence, he escaped most people's attention.

This was to the point where, when the alliance was writing up the report on their choice of Best Rookie, they only mentioned Wang Jiexi and Sun Xiang for players who had broken through Rookie's Block and completely ignored Qin Muyun.

However, this was enough to prove how impressive Tang Rou's performance had been this season.

Because of this impressive performance, the Alliance couldn't not give Tang Rou this award for something like "conduct". From a competitive perspective, this definitely wouldn't be fair. Best Rookie: Happy's Tang Rou.

That was the Alliance's final decision, and they weren't surprised by the uproar that it created. However, Tang Rou's powerful performance gave them the confidence that she'd live up to the award she was given.

Compared to this Best Rookie, the other awards had some objections, but it wasn't nearly as intense.

Best Sixth Player went to Blue Rain's Song Xiao.

Most Improved was Hundred Blossom's Zou Yuan.

Best Partners, in the end, was given to Team Samsara's new striking duo, Zhou Zekai and Sun Xiang.

MVP, Happy's Ye Xiu.

With the unspecialized character Lord Grim and his Myriad Manifestations Umbrella, he had managed a spectacular thirty-seven consecutive individual competition wins and led a new team like Happy to the playoffs.

Ye Xiu's return to the Alliance had brought yet another never before seen record.

Samsara's strength, after two consecutive championships, was something everyone was used to now. In contrast, the lack of it would be uncharacteristic and disappointing. Naturally, everyone's expectations rose. As for Happy, a new team like them reaching such heights was downright weird. What did one mean by "valuable"? This was valuable. It was because of his existence that Happy reached such heights. This display of value was the best explanation for the choice of MVP.

A fourth time!

That was when people realized that Ye Xiu had broken yet another record with this award.

Three-time MVP was a record belonging to Ye Xiu. No one would've guessed that after so many years, he would win it again.

Four-time MVP, and the Glory Pro League had only had ten seasons so far.

Behind Ye Xiu, it was the Season 8 and Season 9 MVP Zhou Zekai.

Then, there was Season 7's Wang Jiexi, Season 6's Huang Shaotian, Season 5's Zhang Jiale and Season 4's Han Wenqing. These names, at the top of Glory, had only gained such an achievement once each. The four of them added together was equal to one of Ye Xiu. The true king has returned!

This was what many thought, seeing the number of this greatest regular season award that Ye Xiu had won.

In the prep time for the playoffs, the regular season achievements had caused a small uproar, but this was something everyone was used to already. The regular season awards were distributed at around this time every year, and every year, there would be objections.

However, such an intense argument over a rookie was something completely new. The Alliance had been prepared, clearly stating the reasons for Tang Rou's award in an interview, but many still wouldn't accept it and continued to argue over it. However, they couldn't do much except argue, because they couldn't change the Alliance's decision.

The award winners would all be personally informed by the Alliance. Chen Guo was exceptionally excited over Ye Xiu's and Tang Rou's awards, while in the face of the other awards, Chen Guo became an irrational nitpicker.

For example, for Best Sixth Player, Chen Guo thought Tang Rou performed well and was often fielded as sixth player, so she was definitely worthy of this award.

For example, Most Improved, Chen Guo didn't care that Qiao Yifan only began playing official matches this year, saying that he had shown great improvement since he was in Tiny Herb, so he should get the award. Fang Rui had successfully switched classes, which was an improvement as well, so he should get the award as well.

For example, for Best Partners, Chen Guo had only ever and would only ever accept Ye Xiu and Su Mucheng as best, no debate.

"It should all be ours!" In the end, Chen Guo was very unsatisfied with the Alliance's choices.

Chapter 1384: Too Close

Happy responded to Chen Guo's complaints with a grin.

Naturally, winning these awards were a cause for celebration, but Team Happy didn't have the time for a celebration yet. They still had plenty to do in preparations for the playoffs, especially getting used to their new equipment.

Forty pieces of Pseudo Silver equipment!

In this last week, Happy's R&D worked overtime and managed to finish the last three Silver equipment right after the end of the thirty-eighth round, giving Happy a total of forty pieces of Pseudo Silver equipment.

Compared to proper Silver equipment, Pseudo Silver equipment was disposable, a temporary fix for Happy's lack of proper equipment, but they didn't have any room for improvement. This expenditure pained Chen Guo, but she understood Happy's current situation. Without special methods, it was impossible to improve their hardware so quickly. The other teams had managed to get to where they were through years of cumulative effort. No matter how talented Happy was, they couldn't catch up to the powerhouses in these one to two years of time. So, right now, Happy could only use these short-term solutions.

It was just good that this solution didn't use up too many valuable materials, so it didn't conflict much with Happy's development of proper Silver equipment.

The only proper piece of Level 80 Silver equipment was the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella. For it to be equipped, the umbrella needed a five level reduction to its level requirement. They had finally managed to create this stat and apply it every form of the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella. As a result, each form's base stats were clearly a cut above level 75 Silver equipment, and the bonus stats had gained small improvements as well.

At level fifty, when the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella had been fully developed, it had shield, spear, rifle, taichi, scythe, staff, ninjato, tonfa and estoc forms, as well as having the abilities of a Mechanic's mechanical box.

All the further improvements had maintained these forms. And this time, Guan Rongfei successfully added new forms in the jump from level 70 directly to level 80. Using the tonfa form as a base, the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella could now become Nightwalker's dual swords.

The umbrella ribs that held up the umbrella while opened could now be detached and equipped to the wrists to form a Fighter's claws.

With the umbrella closed, The canopy could open horizontally above the shaft of the umbrella, forming a weird shape like a poleaxe, but this was actually the Swordsman's greatsword. . In addition to the nine old forms of the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella, there were now a total of twelve forms.

To use all low level skills, all they needed was a form for each superclass (Mage, Swordsman, Priest, Gunner, Fighter, Nightwalker). However, more forms meant more variety, and would allow the unspecialized style to become even more unpredictable and complex. Plus, considering how it was possible to set a different skill on each form, three more forms meant three more non-specialized, non-awakening class skills.

In the end, of the twelve forms, there were two Swordsman, one Gunner, two Fighter, three Priest, two Mage and two Nightwalker. It was pretty evenly distributed.

Everyone, including Ye Xiu, were doing their best to familiarize themselves with the new equipment in this limited time given. Esports Home's reporter, Chang Xian, called or came to visit the Internet cafe every now and then. After all, he was a reporter, and his primary work was to gather intel. Though he knew that no team liked to be bothered at a time like this, Chang Xian still had to try and get something out of them.

However, no matter when he came, Chang Xian didn't see anyone except Boss Chen Guo.

The only person he managed to meet in the team was the boss; this was a clear display of Happy's grassroots status. No team's boss was like a receptionist like Happy's Chen Guo, easier to find than any of the team members even. If it was any other reporter trying to interview a team, then they'd probably die of happiness at such a situation.

However, Happy was the exception. Chang Xian snuck into Happy again, only to see Chen Guo looking at him with a smile. He smiled weakly, feeling a little helpless. "Sister Chen..."

"What? Not happy to see me?" Chen Guo asked. She was only just starting to learn how to interact with the media, but the reporter she had the most exposure to was Chang Xian, also a newbie in his field. He was honest and principled individual, not nearly as sly as veteran reporters. Against him, Chen Guo had no problems.

"No no, of course not," Chang Xian hurriedly replied. He didn't dare offend Chen Guo! Though she was almost like a receptionist in how easy it was to get a hold of her, she was still the boss of a team.

"Sister Chen, seeing that I've come over so many times, could you give me some insider info?" Chang Xian was practically begging.

"There really isn't anything to give. It's just that they don't want to be disturbed, so they went into closed-door training for the championships!" Chen Guo said cheerfully.

Chang Xian had heard these words many times already, but he couldn't believe them. Although he was new to the industry, these few years had honed his observational skills. In addition, Chen Guo wasn't someone who was adept at hiding her thoughts. Her cheerful manner of addressing Chang Xian clearly told him that she was hiding something from him.

"Ai, sister Chen, can you let me see brother Ye and the others and ask them about how they feel about the first round?" Chang Xian was close to tears. It might've been plain as day that there were things going on in the team that Chen Guo was hiding, but the problem was that she was hiding them, and hiding them well. Chang Xian didn't have any way of getting her to spill. She was clearly enjoying the feeling of knowing something that he didn't!

"They're pretty busy recently, why don't you wait a couple days?" Chen Guo answered, sounding completely serious.

"Then, sister Chen, what do you think of the first round?" Chang Xian could only make do with Chen Guo. Yes, make do!

For any other team, getting an interview from the boss was no small feat, but over here with Happy, it was “making do”, because it was way too easy to get to see Chen Guo. Chang Xian had seen Chen Guo who knows how many times while eating noodles at the food stall on the street corner. They were familiar with each other like kin, and there was no sense of mystery to it at all. Thus, Chang Xian knew that Chen Guo was a rather unorthodox boss, and it sometimes felt like she was just one in name. Happy’s biggest decision maker wasn’t her. Of course, on the Alliance’s database and Happy’s registration forms, as well as the sponsorship forms, Chen Guo was the sole owner of Happy’s assets, the biggest boss of Happy.

This boss... was a bit of a puppet, but she was more than happy to play the part. If Chang Xian had to describe it, then he’d call her a One True Fan!

Yes, a One True Fan*!

Compared to that young master Xia Zhongtian from Chien Tea Green, she was way more of a true fan. Xia Zhongtian had far greater control of New Excellent Era than Chen Guo had of Happy, and he acted like a typical team club boss. As a City H reporter, Chang Xian had naturally gone to see the current Excellent Era.

Chang Xian really wasn’t sure how to deal with a boss like Chen Guo.

They were friends and that was great, of course. However, as an interviewee, though she had such a high position, her value was low and just thinking of it was frustrating him. He often saw Happy’s boss, but he couldn’t get any information about what was happening with Happy. He’d be considered a joke if word got out!

“The first round? We’ll defeat Blue Rain, of course,” Chen Guo said.

Chang Xian sobbed inside. There was no substance to that! He had been expecting it though, so he hadn’t even bothered to record it.

“Do you have any special strategies planned?” Chang Xian asked.

“That’s a secret, I can’t say.” Chen Guo smiled.

What secret? You don’t even know, do you? Chang Xian felt the mental tears pour.

“Will boss Wei play in the match against Blue Rain? He has history with Blue Rain, after all!” Chang Xian then asked.

“That’ll depend on our strategic needs. We won’t arrange anything for the drama,” Chen Guo informed him seriously.

Damnit, what’s with that serious attitude. That guy told you to say that, didn’t he? Chang Xian looked around subconsciously, as if someone in the Internet cafe had somehow sent her a telepathic message.

“Little Chang, sit for a while and make yourself comfortable. I have to go out to get some supplies,” Chen Guo then said.

Chang Xian nodded helplessly. See! That was Happy’s boss. She never acted like a bigshot or anything. Chang Xian watched as Chen Guo left the Internet cafe and then went into a random tobacco shop,

coming out with a carton of cigarettes not long later. So she was getting cigarettes for Ye Xiu and Wei Chen! Chang Xian was familiar enough with Happy to immediately come to the conclusion.

“Little Chang, sorry to have to ask you to wait a little longer. I have to take this up!” Chen Guo returned, waving the cigarettes at him and then going upstairs.

They were too familiar!

Chang Xian’s mental tears were like a relentless waterfall. They were so familiar with each other that they didn’t think of him as an outsider anymore. Originally, this would be a great relationship to have, getting so friendly with a team would be a great convenience for any team reporter! However, Chang Xian knew that he was too close with Happy now. They were close to the point where he felt rather ashamed to pry into their preparations, like he was desecrating the shrine of their friendship!

He... really hadn’t been very good at drawing the line between professionalism and friendship! It was a little too late now for him to realize this. After a moment, Chen Guo came back down and began chatting casually with Chang Xian as she went through the bookkeeping for the Internet cafe.

Happy’s boss believed that all the regular season awards should belong to Happy...

This was what Chang Xian got from their chat. However... was this something he could write into an article? Was it??? This was just teasing between friends! Of course it wasn’t something he could write.

What was he to do?

The weekly esports issue was going to be a special on the Glory League playoffs. This issue before the matches began was meant to be about the preparations for each team. How was he going to write up an article on Happy?

Nomyummi TLNote Joui*: In China, fan culture is diverse, and people have gone as far as to label different fans. For example, I’ve used One True Fan for 真爱粉 (literally, true love fan), taking inspiration from “OTP/3” One True Pair/Threesome/etc. to mean a fan that feels sincere loyalty and love for their team/idol and is willing to follow them and help them, but generally keeps a clear head. You also have rabid/brainless fans 脑残粉 which has come up before in the novel.

Chapter 1385: Playoffs Special Issue

Chang Xian was worrying over the fact that he might not be able to complete his assigned task. Professionally speaking, the blame was partly on Happy for not being reliable. Other teams, for example Blue Rain, were also in closed training, and weren’t taking interviews, but they had their own public relations team working to provide their reporters with something to report, allowing them to deal with their own work responsibilities. As for Happy? In a single year, they had the core of the team down, but they didn’t have a club system that could deal with all their issues like Blue Rain did!

Public relations?

Happy didn’t have anything of the sort. Chen Guo didn’t have enough experience, while Ye Xiu put everything he had into overseeing his team members’ growth, their strategic arrangements,

improvement of their equipment, accumulation of stored materials. However, he didn't care about things like dealing with the media that had no direct influence of their team's strength. The others wouldn't notice this sort of thing either, so Team Happy really had no understanding of this whatsoever.

Chang Xian once again returned empty-handed. Some of Happy's regulars were now looking at him weirdly. He had heard them mumbling once and almost coughed blood. With him running over to Happy so often and constantly hanging around Chen Guo, he no longer seemed so innocent. In the eyes of outsiders, he seemed like a shameless pretty boy who refused to stop clinging to Chen Guo.

Chang Xian felt like crying himself to death. When he went back and checked their Esports Home reporters' group chat, the other team reporters responsible for the playoffs issue had plenty of material to go on, and even the City G reporter responsible for Blue Rain had a draft that Blue Rain had provided. All he had to do was add some of his own opinions and then he'd be good to go for Blue Rain.

As for him?

This time, he'd better not think of distinguishing himself from everyone else. If he could even get anything in, he'd be content.

Chang Xian could feel his anxiety rising, he pulled on his hair, he couldn't sleep!

He didn't bother hoping for an article draft like Blue Rain had given because he knew very clearly that Happy didn't have anyone to deal with that sort of thing. He couldn't place his hopes on the players, they didn't have the time. Apart from that? Boss Chen? Chang Xian felt cold sweat on his head just thinking about it. His impression of Chen Guo was the furthest it could be from writing this sort of thing.

There was nothing for it. He could only rely on himself. He'll just make it up! He'll show it to them afterwards to make sure it was okay.

Helpless, Chang Xian could only write up draft himself. After struggling over it for two days, he went back to Happy, with a slight hope that he might be able to meet one of their players, only be crushed when he saw Chen Guo downstairs again.

"Sister Chen," Chang Xian greeted.

"Back again!" Chen Guo greeted him, but why did that 'again' sound so piercing? Looking around the Internet cafe, there were quite a few looks of disdain directed at him that were quickly retracted and fixated to computer screens when they noticed Chang Xian looking over.

"I drafted this article on Happy for the playoffs issue. Have a look, how is it?" Chang Xian weakly handed over his substanceless article draft, which had no sources but himself to take from.

"Oh? Alright!" Chen Guo accepted it and looked through it carefully, which made Chang Xian feel marginally better.

"Little Chang! This article is just full of slogans. There's no substance to it!" Chen Guo said.

Chang Xian felt the tears start again.

Of course there wasn't any substance! You always block me at the Internet cafe and never let me interview the players or leak any information to me. Where would I get any substance from?

Chag Xian felt chagrined, to the point of speechlessness. Seeing this, Chen Guo wasn't completely clueless as to why.

"Er... just now I was just speaking from the point of a reader. It's actually pretty good, go ahead and publish it!" Chen Guo said.

"Sister Chen, can't you give me something to write about?" Chang Xian asked.

"There really isn't much I can give you. We Happy only have so much to our name, you know that! And because of this, we have to fully utilize all the time we're given and improve as much as possible in this week," Chen Guo replied.

"Stop trying to fool me, Sister Chen, I know you guys have a trick up your sleeves. I can tell," Chang Xian said.

"Haha. Of course we have something, but we can't say anything about it! Otherwise, how are we going to surprise everyone?" Chen Guo said.

"Alright!" Chang Xian nodded. Chen Guo had personally admitted that they had an ace up the sleeve and that could probably count as something with substance he could write about. As for not knowing the specifics to their ace up the sleeve, that was reasonable! If a team really revealed all the tricks and strategies they were going to use to deal with their opponents, then everyone would probably be suspicious that they were doing it on purpose to fuck with their opponents. Chang Xian was pretty skilled at his job, and upon hearing of this information, the gears were already turning in his head, figuring out how he could use this.

Soon enough, the weekly esports special playoffs issue started publishing. The pre-match articles were, naturally, about predictions and hopes for each team in the playoffs. Apart from articles from the assigned reporters of each team, Esports Home had also invited renowned Glory analysts to write about their views of the playoffs.

For example, famous guest commentator Li Yibo. His special column was of the same style as his commentating this season, careful and cautious, not daring to make predictions. Li Yibo's section was like a replay. He brought up all the most spectacular moments of the regular season; of course, he had been a commentator for all these matches, and his rehash of the events were lifelike and clear. Then, he went on to explain what strengths and flaws each team had, in his opinions, before bringing his article to a close with best wishes to all the teams.

Renown analyst Cha Xiaoxia had announced that he was a brainless fan of Happy's long ago, and had supported Happy plenty throughout the season. However, Cha Xiaoxia's brainless fan comment was just a simple joke. He merely looked more highly upon Happy and thought them more interesting. He merely spent more effort on uncovering Happy's strengths. His praises for Happy were methodical and logical, unlike those Happy haters with Ruan Cheng at their head. They were really brainless crazies and pretty much beyond saving with their delusional talk.

In Cha Xiaoxia's column, he had continued to express his love for Happy, and in his analysis for the eight playoffs teams, Happy took up 70 percent while the other seven teams took up the other thirty.

The editorial department had mixed opinions on if they should invite Zuo Chenrui to write a section or not because this guy was a real brainless maniac when it came to what he loved and what he hated. It would be natural that anything he wrote would lack objectivity. In the end, the editorial department decided to try and get Zuo Chenrui to write a piece not about Blue Rain and Tiny Herb. In the end, they were resolutely rejected by Zuo Chenrui.

Others, like Ruan Cheng, only wrote for Esports Times, so even Esports Home wanted them, they wouldn't be able to invite them.

They had gotten plenty of long and eloquent pieces. Apart from these renowned analysts, they also had a few by pro players, some retired, some still going. The players of the eight playoffs teams naturally didn't have any time for it, but the players of other teams were already on summer break. The media usually invited renowned gods to write for them. This time, they had managed to invite Void's Li Xuan, Misty Rain's Chu Yunxiu and Royal Style's Tian Sen.

The three had more or less recovered from their disappointment of this season, and had their popcorn prepared for the show ahead. They each had different views on how the playoffs would go.

Li Xuan had his bets set on Samsara. This was the most mainstream opinion; there wasn't much more to it.

Chu Yunxiu, on the other hand, was rooting for Happy, and she directly admitted that the main reason was because her good friend was in Happy. Of course, afterwards, she also went and discussed Happy's strengths and flaws from a competitive perspective.

As for Tian Sen, he had his eyes set on Tyranny. He thought that, after holding back for a season, they would meet the playoffs with explosive force. Royal Style, once at the top, was heading towards ruin, and Tian Sen deeply felt that forlorn feeling of feeling himself wither away. Tyranny's veterans were, no doubt, currently experiencing this stage of life. Though Tian Sen was in his prime as a pro player, he had the same feeling as he watched them. His hopes in them was more like well wishes.

The esports weekly issue was comprised of these contents. Afterwards, the reporters they had sent provided more into each of the eight teams. Apart from Blue Rain and Happy, the other six had managed to interview the team players and had plenty of material. Blue Rain's club had provided a draft, and the reporter had, naturally, built off of that. Happy's was a little worse. Chang Xian had more or less written a draft for Happy and then used what little he had gotten from Chen Guo to expand.

Yet, in the end, the six that had managed to interview the team players all seemed rather plain and boring. The severe atmosphere of the playoffs seemed to have already enveloped them. Though they had personally faced the media, the players of those six teams had barely said anything of substance. Blue Rain had provided a draft, so that was even worse. In the end, it was Chang Xian's piece on Happy that was most authentic, stating how boss Chen Guo herself had personally admitted that Happy had an ace up the sleeve for the playoffs.

What was this ace up the sleeve?

This was what Chang Xian had focused on.

Chang Xian's guesses weren't important. After all, anyone could try and guess! Thus, what ace up the sleeve Happy had become the biggest discussion of the issue. Some guessed that it was a new strategy, some guessed that it was a new and never before seen team formation, and some guessed that it was secret weapon in the form of equipment. Either way, there was a limited amount that could be talked about and all sorts of guesses were flying around.

"What do you think?"

Team Blue Rain, Huang Shaotian asked Yu Wenzhou as he set down his newspaper. They were going to be Happy's opponents soon, so they were naturally rather concerned about this. After he asked, Huang Shaotian didn't bother waiting for Yu Wenzhou to answer, immediately expressing his own opinion, "With that guy present, I bet that this is just a smokescreen."

"Really? I don't think so." Yu Wenzhou held a newspaper in hand, too. His gaze didn't leave the page as he listened to Huang Shaotian talk.

"They probably have some sort of trick or ace. If they didn't have anything, then this smokescreen would be rather pointless. Happy's members aren't that immature," Yu Wenzhou continued.

"Then what is it?" Huang Shaotian was confused.

"Don't think. If you think about it, then you'll have fallen for the trap," Yu Wenzhou set the newspaper down as he spoke. "Just pretend you haven't seen it!"

"I'll do my best..." Huang Shaotian didn't sound very confident.

Chapter 1386: Complementary

Was this a smokescreen of Happy's or not? The players were curious and the debate raged on. However, apart from Blue Rain, the other teams didn't concern themselves with it. What tricks did Happy have up their sleeve? Either way, Blue Rain was their lab rat. Once they fought with Blue Rain, then everything would be revealed. It wasn't like the other teams were gonna meet Happy first round, so why should they care?

All the teams were working hard to prepare to take down their respective opponents. On the dawn of the war, everything was quiet. There was no more news or rumors flying about, just each team silently preparing for that fateful moment.

June 14th, the opening match of much anticipated playoffs began.

City K, at Hundred Blossom's home stadium, Hundred Blossom's captain Yu Feng had arrived, alone and too early. He stood in the middle of the field. Here, was exactly here the projections would be, where the characters would tear at one another for victory.

Yu Feng looked up, gazing at the high end projection technology.

Here he was, once more...

Yu Feng looked around the venue.

It had been two years since he had come to Hundred Blossoms, and this was the second time he had stood on the stage of Hundred Blossoms' playoffs journey. Last year, their opponent had been Tyranny and he had personally seen the attitude Hundred Blossoms' fans had towards Zhang Jiale. It looked like hate, but was this hate not born from love? In the end, it was because Zhang Jiale was important to them. Yu Feng hoped to gain such importance, so he always did his best at Hundred Blossoms, and he hoped to bring Hundred Blossoms something they had never had before.

The championship!

Yu Feng had won the championships before, and this made him far more fortunate than many of the other players in their circle. However, that championship bore too many marks from other people. He wasn't primary in that championship. Yu Feng hoped to have a championship that, when people thought of it, they would immediately think of his name.

That was why he stood here, and mercilessly abandoned the team he once loved so deeply, Blue Rain. Because of that, that brainless fan of Blue Rain's, Zuo Chenrui, had dragged his name through the mud and stomped on it, but Yu Feng merely smiled and dismissed it.

In the face of what he pursued, none of this was important. The world was fair. If he wanted to gain something, then he would have to lose something. This was, more or less, the basis of the principle of equivalent exchange. This was what he had done, and wasn't this also what Hundred Blossoms' ex-captain Zhang Jiale had done?

Of course, him and Blue Rain weren't like Zhang Jiale and Hundred Blossoms, and this was one of the reasons he had come to Hundred Blossoms. Yu Feng had even, embarrassingly enough, had a dream where after he left Blue Rain and joined Hundred Blossoms, Blue Rain's fans treated him the same way Hundred Blossoms had treated Zhang Jiale. That wasn't any sort of great situation to be in, and Zhang Jiale's pain was plain to see, but Yu Feng envied him. That was exactly what he sought, after all: to be seen as important!

He knew that his position in their hearts couldn't compare to Zhang Jiale, and probably even fell short of their previous Berserker Sun Zheping, but Yu Feng had confidence because he was already completely a part of Hundred Blossoms. He believed that his efforts would be seen by Hundred Blossoms' fans, and now, what he had to do, was charge through this first stage.

Samsara!

The strongest team, in the eyes of countless. In this matchup, the online polls had 81 percent of people with their bets on Samsara, an overwhelming advantage.

But what was funny was, that in the regular season when the two teams faced off, Hundred Blossoms had won 7 to 3 once, and then lost 4 to 6 last time. If you added the scores, Hundred Blossoms was in the lead 11 to 9! From this, it could be seen that sometimes, statistics really meant nothing. Who would think that they were stronger than Samsara just from the advantage from these two matches between them? None, practically none at all. The 19 percent support that Hundred Blossoms had probably wasn't because anyone thought them stronger, but just that they could win.

Strong and weak, victory and defeat, there was never any certainty in it. Being stronger would increase your chances, but it was never 100 percent. And so long as it wasn't 100 percent, then there would always be a chance for a different ending. Even if it was one in a million, it was still a possibility.

Right now, it seemed, that the general populace believed that Hundred Blossoms only had a 19 percent of victory.

Then let this 19 percent become reality! Yu Feng took a deep breath and glanced at the time. It was still early, nowhere near 8:30 PM. After taking a walk across the competition stage, he decided to leave, but that was when he saw Zou Yuan. This teammate of his had also come to the stadium and was ascending the stairs to the stage.

"You came, too?" Yu Feng asked. Though the two were rather far away from each other, there was no one in the stadium, making it completely silent. Yu Feng barely had to raise his voice to hear it echo throughout the stadium.

"Yeah, I came to get a feel for the atmosphere ahead of time," Zou Yuan replied.

"Get a feel? How?" Yu Feng looked behind him. There was not a single person in the stadium. It was dead silent.

"I'm going to put my imagination to the test, as exaggerated as possible. That way, when the time comes, I'll just think to myself 'Ha, so that's it?' Then, I won't feel the pressure anymore," Zou Yuan said.

Yu Feng laughed. The pressure the team had suddenly piled on top of his teammate had nearly driven his teammate crazy. He was probably thinking of that time as a way to alleviate the match pressure!

He looked towards Zou Yuan, who stood at the edge of the stage staring at the empty spectator seats. Suddenly, Zou Yuan shut his eyes and opened his arms, focusing on his method of relieving the pressure he felt. Yu Feng didn't utter a sound. He simply watched him quietly, not even taking a step.

A short while later, he saw Zou Yuan retract his arms, open his eyes, look at him, and chuckle.

"Done?"

"Done. Would you like to try?" Zou Yuan asked.

"Me? Nah! It doesn't suit me. If the crowd isn't as spirited as I imagine, I'd probably be disappointed," Yu Feng said.

"哈哈,说得是,你和我不一样啊!"邹远感慨道.

"Haha, true. You're different than me!" Zou Yuan sighed.

Yes, the two were different, not alike in the slightest.

The pressure that Zou Yuan had nearly gone mad from was exactly what Yu Feng had always hoped to have.

Zou Yuan feared that pressure, but Yu Feng enjoyed it.

When Yu Feng came to Hundred Blossoms, Zou Yuan didn't hesitate to hand over his responsibilities as the core player and the captain to Yu Feng. After the pressure onto him lessened, Zou Yuan worked hard to learn those responsibilities, to seize the good fortune that had been forced onto him. His efforts gradually paid off, but he didn't regret his decision of giving up his core position. In the end, he couldn't change his personality. The roles with the most pressure, captain and core player, were far more suited for Yu Feng, who would certainly do better at them than he could.

How fun!

Zou Yuan couldn't help but think to himself sometimes. The two of them were opposites, yet they had ended up becoming teammates and partners. Was it because they were different that it was easy for them to complement each other? In this season's evaluations for Best Partners, the two had earned high marks.

Is it the revival of Blood and Blossoms?

Zou Yuan remembered the target the Club had initially given the two of them. Now it looked like they would just have to make do. Blood and Blossoms required a quick connected playstyle. It wasn't as simple as just having the technical portions down. The personalities of the players mattered too. Unfortunately, Yu Feng was no Sun Zheping, and he was no Zhang Jiale. The two were unable to recreate the former Blood and Blossoms. In the end, they created a style that belonged to only them, a different partnership between Berserker and Spitfire.

This was the so-called passing of time.

The past was the past. Trying to force a recreation would always lack a certain flavor. What people reminisced wasn't really Blood and Blossoms, but rather the feelings they first felt seeing Blood and Blossoms. Those feelings could never be replicated because a first was a first. The next time would never be the first, but the second.

Our own style!

Zou Yuan thought to himself. In the beginning, when Zhang Jiale's Dazzling Blossoms had been left with him, he had been terrified. The team called for him to succeed Zhang Jiale's position, so he studied Zhang Jiale like his life depended on it to the point that he had almost started copying Zhang Jiale's habits. But what was the result? He wasn't able to do it as well as the real Zhang Jiale. He couldn't bear the pressure. That season, Hundred Blossoms had relied on the rising Tang Hao to carry them, while he as the core studied and copied Zhang Jiale, throwing the team out of the season.

Afterwards, he knew that he couldn't continue on like this. He needed to find a path that would let him survive. As a result, he was very grateful the moment Yu Feng joined the team. Yu Feng had taken that burden off his shoulders, letting him find his own path without any pressure.

Sure enough, they were a good pair! Zou Yuan recalled the idea of being complementary that he had just thought of.

Then next on the list is winning together!

Zou Yuan was just about to say something, when he heard a loud commotion. He and Yu Feng turned their heads towards the other side of the stadium, where a group of people were pouring into the stadium.

Samsara!

It was Team Samsara!

Team Samsara's members were all present. As soon as they entered, they saw Yu Feng and Zou Yuan standing on the stage. Their footsteps didn't stop because of this though as they walked onto the stage. Yu Feng checked the time and knew that Samsara was here to warm up too. The away team would often come ahead of time to familiarize themselves with the new environment. It was the playoffs right now. Samsara definitely wasn't going to miss even the slightest detail that could give them an advantage.

"It's Hundred Blossom's two leaders!" As everyone knew, Samsara's captain Zhou Zekai rarely took the initiative to greet others. The one to greet Yu Feng and Zou Yuan was Samsara's vice-captain, Jiang Botao.

'Yup, you guys are here to warm up?' Yu Feng responded. He wasn't a stranger to Jiang Botao. Their generation of players had an intimacy from growing up as rookies together. Team Samsara had been formed from Season 5, Season 6, and Season 7 players. Many of them were of the same generation as Yu Feng. For example, the All-Stars Jiang Botao and Lu Boyuan had debuted in Season 6 just like him. Yu Feng had undoubtedly been the most eye-catching. That season, he had won both the title Best Rookie and the championship title with Team Blue Rain. Yu Feng's rookie season had been perfect. The only other one to have garnered such achievements in his first year in the Alliance was Team Tyranny's Zhang Xinjie.

Even so, it didn't change one point: their group of Season 6 rookies had all played supporting roles in their respective teams.

The one to break through that fate was Yu Feng. He had joined Blue Rain and came to Hundred Blossoms, becoming the first among the Season 6 rookies to assume a core position.

Chapter 1387: First Match

There were four players who debuted in Season 6 and went onto becoming All-Stars: Yu Feng, Xu Bin, Lu Boyuan, and Jiang Botao. Apart from Yu Feng, the other three were not core members of their respective team. If even these All-Stars were like so, then the other rookies of that generation were even less important.

The Season 4 rookies were nicknamed the Golden Generation. On the other hand, these Season 6 rookies were nicknamed the "Helper Squad" because of these coincidental happenings. The name pointed at how the Season 6 rookies all held support roles in their respective teams.

The title was just for fun. No one would actually take these words to heart. But still, now that Yu Feng had become the core of Hundred Blossoms, the name "Helper Squad" no longer had the same impact as before. The Season 6 players all joked that Yu Feng had let them down.

They were joking, of course.

Even if Yu Feng became his team's core player, so what?

Jiang Botao and Lu Boyuan were still members of the "Helper Squad", but they stood besides Zhou Zekai, forming the formidable Team Samsara. The "Helper Squad" had helped win the team two championships back-to-back.

Yu Feng didn't envy them though.

Champions? He had already become the champion once. What he wanted was to win the championships not just with the status of a "Helper Squad" member.

That was his personal goal. He didn't care about denying being a part of the "Helper Squad".

"We're not bothering you guys, are we?" Jiang Botao continued to chat with him. This social player could make friends with anyone, even when the two parties were irreconcilable adversaries. But for old players, though their attitudes on stage were very professional, none of them ever showed anger to each other off the stage.

"No problem, you guys go ahead. We'll stop bothering you," Yu Feng said.

Even though both sides could maintain professional relationships on stage, in this sort of life and death battle, they were unlikely to happily chat around under such a tense atmosphere.

"Take care," Jiang Botao said as he watched Yu Feng and Zou Yuan leave the stage together. Samsara's other players didn't regard their encounter as anything serious, and the everyone quickly started warming up.

At 8 PM, no seats in the stadium were empty. For the playoffs, each match was crucial. Thus, playoff matches were much more watched than regular season matches. The stadium had seats specifically for the away-game fans as usual, and Samsara's loyal fans already had their slogan hanging down. The words two-time champions were the most important. After all, three-time champions had yet to happen, and it wouldn't be good to call it too early as their slogan. It could be something that they could yell as a good-luck blessing throughout the entire tournament though.

The two teams finally entered the stadium.

The entrance ceremony wasn't any different than the ones in the regular season. As Hundred Blossom's home stadium, the cheers and claps for them were louder. Although Samsara was the defending champions and the current most popular team, it was still their playoff opponent's home stadium. The fate of the noise from Samsara fans could only be obliteration. Any team that made it to the playoffs were inevitably popular teams.

The broadcast wasn't going to miss out on any playoffs match. The commentators were once again Pan Lin and Li Yibo, the signature duo. The broadcast team had originally wanted it to be a tri-cast like the Happy versus Tiny Herb match. In that match, the program had invited a guest commentator, and since many players wouldn't be participating in the playoffs, the program wanted to invite a well-known player.

For this match, the program had thought of a brilliant figure.

Sun Zheping!

He was a former Hundred Blossoms player, and he would certainly have a lot of things to say as a guest commentator.

But when the program sent an invitation to Sun Zheping, they didn't think he would actually refuse. As soon as they approached him, the door was shut. Their morale had dropped considerably. During that time, they failed to find any other suitable players. In the end, it was still Pan Lin and Li Yibo duo-casting for the first match of playoffs.

After introducing the players on both sides, the two looked for things to say as they waited for the match to officially start.

"These two teams encountered each other in the final round of the regular season. Just another week later and they're back at it again." Pan Lin said.

"With it being a back-to-back match, these two teams must have a deep understanding of each other by now. In this situation, none of them have any secrets. The winner will be decided by how each team is able to execute their plans and adapt to their opponent's plays." Li Yibo said.

"From the regular season records, Hundred Blossoms actually has an 11-9 advantage. However, in the online poll before the playoffs, 81% of players thought Samsara would win!" Pan Lin said.

"It looks like Samsara's outstanding performance this season has helped them earn quite a bit of support and confidence from players!" Li Yibo said.

"I wonder how this match will turn out?" Pan Lin wondered expectantly.

"Hey hey! You guys aren't going to watch the match?"

At Team Happy's meeting room, Chen Guo was keeping the TV under her watch. She saw that the match was about to begin, yet no one was coming over. She rushed out of the meeting room baffled and found everyone focusing on their own computers.

"Of course we will, but not now," Ye Xiu said.

"Then when?" Chen Guo was puzzled.

"We'll watch the VODs," Ye Xiu said.

Chen Guo understood now. Ye Xiu and the others wouldn't be watching to see who would win, or for fun. They would be watching it for the information, so a live broadcast wouldn't be as helpful to them as a VOD.

Since no one would be watching, Chen Guo found it boring to watch it alone. Normally, the playoffs was a time when even players who weren't fans of the participating teams would watch excitedly. However, the current Chen Guo was no longer a pure Glory fan. She needed to consider Team Happy as her first priority for most things. As a result, after hearing Ye Xiu's explanation, she realized that this match wasn't just a brilliant show, but precious information. Thus, watching the VODs would be better.

A bout of shouting could occasionally be heard from the first floor of the Internet cafe. Happy Internet Cafe's match broadcasting tradition never went away. The playoff matches would obviously be played. Chen Guo gently closed the door to the practice room, so Ye Xiu and the other could continue practicing in peace.

Bang!

Just when she closed the door, she heard a loud noise from behind her. She turned around and saw that it was their guild department's Wu Chen.

He looked towards the meeting room. From the not-yet-closed door, he could see the match playing on the projection screen. However, there didn't seem to be anyone there, and Chen Guo had just gently closed the door.

"They're not going to watch?" Wu Chen said.

"They'll be watching the VOD," Chen Guo said.

"Oh!" The former pro-player Wu Chen immediately understood.

"Everyone's really working hard!" Wu Chen sighed.

"Yup!" Chen Guo nodded her head. At this moment, another shout came from down below. Chen Guo couldn't help but look towards the meeting room.

"Boss, you're not going to watch either?" Wu Chen asked.

"I... I'll be watching!" Chen Guo nodded her head. In the end, she was still curious. Samsara, Hundred Blossoms, who would win? Who would be Happy's next opponent? If they wanted a better chance to win the championships, then it would be better if Samsara was eliminated early, no?

Chen Guo and Wu Chen went into the meeting room together. The players on both sides had entered the stage. The climax before the match had ended, and the floor downstairs had quieted down. Pan Lin and Li Yibo were still chattering non-stop. There clearly wasn't going to be any high points until the match finally started.

Thump.

Chen Guo heard a noise from behind her. When she looked back, it was Guan Rongfei. He had somehow sneaked in without a sound and found a seat to sit at.

So I'll be watching the match together with these two today? Chen Guo smiled. It had never happened before!

When the match finally began, Chen Guo, Wu Chen, and Guan Rongfei quietly watched the match.

"Who won?"

Happy had a good work-rest schedule down, and it could not be broken in such a crucial moment like playoffs. When it was around 10 PM, everyone came out of the practice room and watched the broadcast of the match that had ended not too long ago. They went over and asked about it.

“Samsara,” Chen Guo told them the results. She had hoped Hundred Blossoms would make the upset. Because she had wanted it, the match had been more stressful all the way until the end. In their home game, Hundred Blossoms had lost the group arena and team competition to Samsara.

“Points?” Ye Xiu asked.

“11-7.” Chen Guo said.

The playoffs tournament format was based on headcount. Samsara had won the group arena and team competition, so they won the full 11 points. Hundred Blossoms had lasted until the last matchup in the group arena, so they took 4 points. However, they suffered a large defeat in the team competition, only taking down three of Samsara’s players, ending with 7 points total.

“Oh,” Ye Xiu nodded his head.

It seemed to only be a 4 point difference, but from the competitive format, it could be considered a crushing defeat. Lasting until the last matchup of the group arena meant they were equally matched in that area, but losing the team competition with a 3 person deficit was a huge loss.

“Let’s analyze the match tomorrow!” Ye Xiu said.

Hundred Blossoms home stadium.

The audience members had left. The post-match press conference had ended too. Only the janitors were left in the stadium.

Yu Feng once again returned to the stadium onto the stage.

We lost...

They had tried their hardest, yet they still lost.

In the regular season, Samsara had been so fierce and aggressive, but in the playoffs, they became calm and steady to the extent that they couldn’t tell that they were an aggressive team at all.

After winning two championships, this team had been thoroughly refined. In their away game, in such a tense playoffs match, they could still play so calmly. Hundred Blossoms had chosen to be aggressive this match, hoping to show off their power in their home game. But facing Samsara’s calm display, their aggressiveness was like throwing rocks into the sea, silently stifled by their opponents.

Lost!

The loss wasn’t regretful or resentful; the loss was so... proper. It was as if it were inevitable.

This sort of feeling terrified Yu Feng.

Had his fighting spirit been worn away during this match? Had his unconscious already determined that Hundred Blossoms could not win against Samsara?

Yu Feng clenched his fist. I cannot waver. In times like these, I definitely cannot waver!

Chapter 1388: Each Making Their Own Preparations

After the end of the first playoffs match, there was an outpouring of reviews praising Samsara's champion-like performance. As for Hundred Blossoms, they hadn't made any major mistakes worthy of criticism, but it was exactly for that reason that Samsara seemed all the greater.

In the blink of an eye, it was the next day. The first match hadn't even been fully digested when the second match of the playoffs had arrived. Team 301 was playing their home game against Team Tyranny. Tyranny had conserved their energy all through the regular season, so how would they explode now in the playoffs? Because so many were curious about this question, this match received extra attention.

But Happy needed to pay attention to this match for a bigger reason than mere curiosity. According to the playoffs bracket, if Happy eliminated Blue Rain and advanced to the semifinals, then their opponent would be the victor of 301 vs Tyranny. If everything went smoothly, then Happy would be facing one of these two teams.

But on this night, Team Happy hadn't gathered together to watch the match. They weren't watching this match, nor had they watched recordings of the previous playoffs match.

The next day was Happy's match, and throughout this entire day Happy's training had been focused on small adjustments and regulation. After dinner, everyone was free to do whatever they wanted. They could each use their own methods to reduce the pressure of this upcoming life-or-death match.

In the meeting room, Chen Guo once again set up the projection screen to watch the match, and like before, the two who came by were Wu Chen and Guan Rongfei.

The players came onstage, the match was about to begin, but Chen Guo couldn't focus.

What was everyone else doing?

Chen Guo really wanted to know. After dinner, everyone had split up without talking about what they were all going to do, and although she was curious, she ultimately hadn't bothered them. But to be honest, she still had some small hope that one of the players would stay with her, because she was very nervous too! She wished that she could do something with someone who was going to play the match tomorrow.

"Has it started?" At this moment, she suddenly heard Ye Xiu's voice.

"Huh?" Chen Guo turned her head to see Ye Xiu walking through the door.

"You want to watch?" she asked, surprised.

"Yeah, I have nothing to do, so I'll watch," he said, casually finding a seat and sitting down.

Chen Guo looked at him and realized, that's right! This guy didn't need to do anything to relieve pre-match pressure, right? To him, wasn't this all as natural as eating and sleeping? He would just do it however he was supposed to.

"It's just about to start," Chen Guo said. Ye Xiu might not feel any pressure, but Chen Guo was extremely nervous. Still, once Ye Xiu arrived to watch this match with her, she suddenly felt that her heart relaxed quite a bit.

"These guys actually know how to conserve strength," Ye Xiu mused. "I do want to see what kind of match they can play now."

"Mm..." Chen Guo of course knew to whom Ye Xiu was referring with "these guys."

The match began.

Tyranny's first player: Lin Jingyan; 301 sent up Li Yihui.

A face-off between two Fighter class players. The final winner was Li Yihui, with a small advantage.

And then Tyranny sent up their second player, the rookie Song Qiyong. After defeating Li Yihui, who'd only had a small amount of health remaining, he also defeated 301's second player Gao Jie.

"This kid has a bright future," Ye Xiu said, giving his judgment of Song Qiyong. Even though he lost the Best Rookie award to Tang Rou, that was largely because he was in a well-established team like Tyranny, and as a rookie he hadn't had as many chances to play in real matches like Tang Rou had. If not for Tyranny's three old generals rotating out this season, Song Qiyong might have had even fewer chances onstage.

If Song Qiyong had had the same chances as Tang Rou, or if he had been used by Tyranny like Lu Hanwen last season, maybe he would have posed a threat to Tang Rou in the contest for Best Rookie. With a personality very similar to that of Zhang Xinjie, even though he was young, he gave people the impression of being extremely reliable.

But after defeating Gao Jie, Song Qiyong was very quickly sent off by 301's third player Qian Wenju. Then, Tyranny's Zhang Jiale went in and defeated Qian Wenju. 301's Yang Cong came up, but in the end he too died in Zhang Jiale's brilliant Hundred Blossoms display.

"These guys are in pretty good condition today!" Ye Xiu said. Qian Wenju had dealt a good amount of health when Zhang Jiale took him down, and then Zhang Jiale had continued on to defeat Yang Cong's full-health Scene Killer. It was practically a 1v2. After that, however, 301's group arena anchor Bai Shu came onstage. By this point, Tyranny still had three players left, so their advantage was clear. Zhang Jiale played a very relaxed match, and although he didn't complete a 1v3, he still did his job in whittling down Bai Shu for the next player. Tyranny's fourth player was their captain Han Wenqing, and in the end Bai Shu's Tide fell to Desert Dust.

"They all have a lot of spirit!" Ye Xiu exclaimed, after seeing Tyranny take the lead in the group arena, 5 to 3.

Next was the team competition. Tyranny finally revealed how their rhythm was different from what it had been during the regular season. In the regular season, even towards the end when they stopped rotation and come onstage together like this, the focus had still been on maintaining condition for the playoffs. There had always been worries that such rotations that prevented all three from being onstage together would cause their cooperation to become rusty.

Reality proved that for these generals, such concerns were unnecessary. For these experienced players, it was like riding a bicycle – once you learned, then no matter how long you went without riding one, you would be able to pick it up again very quickly.

Three out of the four Tyranny old generals appeared in a match during the regular season, but when they started making their adjustments for the playoffs, they swiftly readapted to working together, and didn't need much time to get used to each other again.

They continued to repress their excitement and save their strength. They were waiting to unleash it at the playoffs.

And now, it was here.

They'd restrained themselves for this season, they'd heard all sorts of comments like "these guys can't keep up anymore." But at last, Tyranny entered the playoffs, and they didn't need to save their strength any longer. They'd endured this kind of talk, and could now launch their powerful counterattack. Of course, however, they weren't doing this because of the talk. This was the rhythm that Tyranny had prepared for this season, since the very beginning.

6 to 2.

In the end, they won a crushing victory. 301's strategy had only been refined through half a season. Now that it had lost some of its newness, it couldn't stand up to this most experienced team in the Alliance.

The final score was 11 to 5, quite a large difference, and this had been 301's home game...

Hundred Blossoms, 301, they had barely clawed their way into the playoffs, only to lose their home games in the very first round.

Some were delighted, some were crying; this was how all competitions were destined to end.

"It looks like Tyranny will win," said Ye Xiu. 11 to 5, this was a large advantage. Not many people would favor 301, who would have to make a comeback on Tyranny's home field.

"Alright, let's head back and rest!" Ye Xiu stood up and announced, as though he were about to go onto a battlefield right now. In his mind, probably, tonight's rest was a very important part of preparing for tomorrow's match.

One after another, they exited the meeting room, only to see that there was still a light on in the training room. Ye Xiu casually pushed the door open, and found that Mo Fan was still inside.

"What are you doing?" Ye Xiu asked.

"Video." Now, finally, Mo Fan wouldn't completely ignore people when they spoke to him. When it was a question, he would at least answer it.

"Oh?" Ye Xiu walked up, followed by Chen Guo. The two of them stood behind him and saw...

"These are all videos of Blue Rain's players!" Ye Xiu realized that Mo Fan was watching the performances of Blue Rain's players in the group arena. Happy of course had all of these match recordings, and they had organized them. Matches that were particularly worthwhile were picked out to

serve as final summary data of Blue Rain. Mo Fan was watching all of Blue Rain's 1v1 battles from the regular season.

And tomorrow, Mo Fan would be appearing in the group arena. Ye Xiu didn't have the habit of waiting until right before the match to announce the roster; typically he'd announce it the day before the match.

The roster they were using against Blue Rain had been announced that morning. This round, Mo Fan would be the second player in the group arena. Now, it was already the night before the match and everyone was relaxing and adjusting their condition. Mo Fan, however, was still stubbornly studying the data on the Blue Rain players.

"Don't stay up too late!" Chen Guo, feeling moved, gave him a heartfelt reminder.

Mo Fan didn't answer, he just nodded his head and continued watching the video intently. The few of them realized that there was no possibility of chatting with Mo Fan, so they didn't say anything else and merely left.

Downstairs, the match had ended, and people should have been dispersing after watching the broadcast in Happy Internet Cafe. But right now, it seemed even more lively than it had been during the match. From the top of the stairs, Ye Xiu and the others looked down and saw that their three players, Qiao Yifan, Luo Ji, and An Wenyi, had been enthusiastically surrounded.

"What's going on?" Chen Guo immediately ran downstairs to ask the manager.

It turned out that these three youngsters had sneakily joined this crowd of gamers to enjoy the match with everyone else, but when the crowd was dispersing, they were accidentally discovered and recognized. Gamers who came to Happy Internet Cafe, did their attitude toward Team Happy even need to be mentioned? They swiftly surrounded them and sent their well-wishes toward these three young players.

"Hey hey!!" Chen Guo directly rushed for the PA system at the front desk of the cafe and shouted to get everyone's attention.

"Let our players rest!" she shouted.

"Ye Xiu!!" In the end, everyone hollered even louder than Chen Guo. Ye Xiu hadn't taken the back door, instead walking down the steps through the Internet cafe. Chen Guo's shout had attracted everyone's attention, and instantly everyone discovered this even more exciting presence.

"Calm down!" Ye Xiu decisively made his way to the front desk and plucked the microphone from Chen Guo's hand.

"Everyone calm down! If you want to cheer us on, everyone is welcome at the stadium live tomorrow!" Ye Xiu shouted.

"Go Happy! Go!" Everyone chanted enthusiastically. They were all fairly in control, actually, because everyone knew that tomorrow was Happy's match, and no one dared harass them too much at this time. If someone was being particularly difficult, then the other gamers wouldn't accept it and would take care of the problem themselves. So, Ye Xiu's simple two shouts were enough to let everyone

understand and settle down. The three youngsters extricated themselves, thanked everyone for the support, and left with Ye Xiu.

Halfway back to their residence, they saw two familiar silhouettes squatting on the curb. One had cigarette smoke curling all around him, while the other was playing with what looked like a bicycle chain in his hands.

The group quietly approached, and heard Wei Chen telling Steamed Bun all about his glory years.

“In those days, I was Blue Rain’s soul and backbone, a person they could never be without!” Wei Chen was saying, his face full of sadness from reflecting on the past.

Chapter 1389: Everyone’s Preparations

After uttering this pensive sentence, Wei Chen actually didn’t say anything else. Everyone thought for a moment, and realized that he had already spoken of the details, and this was just the concluding sentence. They’d been watching the match for over an hour now, and hadn’t seen Wei Chen or Steamed Bun during that whole time. Perhaps the two of them had just been sitting here beside the road, with Wei Chen describing the shining days of his youth?

“Soul, what soul? It was just two years!” Ye Xiu came up and mercilessly exposed him.

“Bullshit!” Wei Chen spun around, but when he saw it was Ye Xiu, he was actually quite calm. “Without me, would there even be a Blue Rain?”

Wei Chen wasn’t exaggerating here. He, like Ye Xiu, entered the Glory circle when the professional Glory Alliance still hadn’t existed yet! In the beginning, they were all simply ordinary gamers. The only way to make a living through gaming was through some transactions in-game. At the time, Ye Xiu’s guild was Excellent Dynasty, but he hadn’t been the one to create that guild. The person who’d created the guild at the time probably had no idea that it would lay the foundation for Club Excellent Era to establish a dynasty.

At the start, Guild Excellent Dynasty was like any other in-game guild, created by an ordinary player who’d pulled together some in-game friends to make a fun group that would allow them to play together. As they played, some groups became larger and larger, and after the Glory Alliance was first established, a few of these guilds became the in-game foundation for clubs and teams. Excellent Dynasty was like this, Blue Brook Guild was like this too. What was different was that the founder of the guild Excellent Dynasty, Tao Xuan, went on to become the boss of the club it formed the basis of. For Blue Rain, there were other investors, but the foundational guild had truly been established by their first captain Wei Chen, when he still played in-game. Without him, there would be no Blue Rain – this statement wasn’t an exaggeration.

“Tomorrow, if you guys can’t even beat my juniors, that would be too embarrassing,” Wei Chen said, glaring at the Happy players.

To leave behind his old team and then have to fight them – for most people, this was a rather sad thing. But Wei Chen had taken eight whole years to complete this process!

Eight years. What feelings did he still have toward Blue Rain?

Even though most of his talk about his glorious days in Blue Rain was nothing more than shameless boasting, everyone could tell from the old guy's voice how he missed the past.

Did he miss his youth? Or did he miss Blue Rain?

No one asked further, because everyone knew, no matter what attitude Wei Chen had toward the past, he was now a member of Happy, and he stood clearly on Happy's side.

"Tomorrow, let's play well," Ye Xiu said.

"Let's go!" Together at the side of the road, the youths cheered and hollered.

"Where's Fang Rui?" After everyone calmed down a bit, Ye Xiu casually asked.

"Haven't seen that guy," Wei Chen said.

Everyone had their own ways of preparing for the match, so what was this master of playing dirty doing? Everyone was curious, but no one would bother him simply out of curiosity.

Upper Forest Park neighborhood.

It was already somewhat late, but there were still a number of people out and about, walking dogs or simply enjoying the night air. Su Mucheng and Tang Rou sat together on a stone bench beside the road, tilting their heads to look at the sky.

"The weather today was really nice, how come there aren't any stars at night?" Su Mucheng said.

"The stars are always there, but sadly, there's just too much air pollution. It's not that there aren't any, it's just that we can't see them. Or it might be because the starlight is too faint, and the lights from the cities are hiding their light!" Tang Rou said.

"Yeah, it's really a shame!" Su Mucheng sighed.

"By the way," Tang Rou suddenly said, "the first time you played in the playoffs, how did you feel?"

"The first time? I was very nervous, very worried. Worried that I couldn't do well enough, worried that I couldn't help him," said Su Mucheng.

"Then what about later?" Tang Rou didn't ask who the "him" was, it was very obvious.

"Later... It was true, I didn't do well. If I'd done better, then that year Excellent Era probably would've been champions again... Han Wenqing lost to Ye Xiu three times in three playoffs. But that time he won, because he gained a good helper at his side. And Ye Xiu didn't..." Su Mucheng's expression became somewhat saddened.

Tang Rou suddenly regretted her words; she'd forgotten that Su Mucheng had won second place the first time she'd participated in the playoffs. This seemed to be a very good result, so close to the championship, but in reality it was extremely painful. That feeling of missing success by just one step, it was enough to make anyone collapse. Regret, self-blame, no result could provoke these feelings as much as a second-place, almost-success could.

"I'm sorry," said Tang Rou.

"Don't worry, it's a long time ago now," said Su Mucheng.

Was it a long time... Tang Rou couldn't help but wonder. That time, the championship had just barely slipped out of Excellent Era's grasp in the finals, and after that, Excellent Era had never entered the finals again. Wouldn't Su Mucheng's sense of guilt only intensify through the years? Had she always felt that she hadn't helped Ye Xiu enough?

"This time we'll win for sure!" Tang Rou said.

"Aren't you nervous?" Su Mucheng asked her with a smile.

"I thought that I wouldn't get nervous, but now, I'm realizing that's not the case," Tang Rou said. Nervousness? What was that? Up until now, the things that made most people nervous would only make Tang Rou more excited, more determined. But this time? Excitement, determination, these were all there, but they weren't enough to completely dispel the nervousness. Tang Rou discovered that her heart still held a sense of fear, and she admitted this.

"Really?" Su Mucheng continued to smile. "Then that might be a good thing! You know, I always thought that you were too lacking in nervousness. Of course, it's not good to be too nervous, but to not feel nervous at all, that doesn't seem very good either!"

"Even Ye Xiu gets nervous?" Tang Rou said.

"Of course he's nervous. In fact, he's been extremely nervous this whole season. If not, then how could he work so hard and put his full effort into everything?" Su Mucheng said.

"I sure couldn't tell," Tang Rou murmured.

"Nervousness can be turned into action! As for you, you should enjoy this rare feeling of nervousness. For you, this isn't an obstacle at all, this is nourishment," said Su Mucheng.

"This is the method of reducing the stress of playoffs? Change your nervousness into medicine, and eat it?" Tang Rou said.

"Is this not a good method?" Su Mucheng said.

"It looks like that's the only way," Tang Rou said. She essentially understood Su Mucheng's meaning.

"Oh, you two were here this whole time!" At that moment, Ye Xiu with the group of old and youth had also returned to the neighborhood. As they walked along the road, they saw the two people sitting on the stone bench.

"Yup!" Su Mucheng and Tang Rou stood up, also prepared to return home.

Now, almost all of Happy had gathered here. They were just missing Mo Fan, who was still watching videos in the training room, and Fang Rui, who they still hadn't seen around.

"Where in the world did that Fang Rui run off to?" Ye Xiu once again wondered.

"Him? He went to sleep!" Su Mucheng said.

“Huh?”

“He came back a bit after eight, and then went to sleep,” said Su Mucheng.

“He slept at eight?” Everyone exchanged glances.

At eight, Ye Xiu, Qiao Yifan, An Wenyi, and Luo Ji had been watching tonight’s match; Wei Chen and Steamed Bun had been sitting beside the road and exchanging bragging stories; Su Mucheng and Tang Rou had been strolling through this neighborhood and chatting. And Fang Rui at that time had apparently already gone to bed.

“Sleeping at eight, how long is that guy planning to sleep?” Wei Chen exclaimed.

“Is this how he’s dealing with the pressure?” everyone wondered.

“Or maybe he’s scared that he’ll be too nervous to sleep, so that’s why he went to bed so early, to have more time to grow tired,” they continued to discuss.

However, no one was so curious that they would check on whether Fang Rui was actually sleeping. This was the pattern of this night before the competition, everyone dispersing before coming back together in the end.

The next morning, when Ye Xiu awoke and came downstairs, he saw none other than Fang Rui. As expected of someone who’d gone to bed at eight, he was full of energy in the living room as he read the newspaper.

“301 lost pretty badly!” Seeing Ye Xiu come downstairs, Fang Rui greeted him and then made this comment. In his hands was today’s edition of Esports Weekly, which he had already gone out to buy this morning. Now that it was playoffs season, the amount of available copies of this newspaper was rather tight, especially since they were near the area of the old Club Excellent Era. If you didn’t go extremely early, you might not even be able to buy a copy.

“Yeah, I saw the match,” Ye Xiu said.

“Those old guys from Tyranny are still working hard?” Fang Rui said.

“Well, of course, how could they not?” said Ye Xiu.

“But the report said that they played kind of defensively,” Fang Rui said.

“Their strategy has a few changes. It’s no longer the fiercely fighting and charging Tyranny of before,” said Ye Xiu.

“They’re going slower?” Fang Rui said.

Ye Xiu nodded.

“They might be our next opponents. It’ll be a hard fight,” Fang Rui said.

Two top-level players didn’t need to say much. A few simple sentences was enough to understand the situation.

Because Tyranny had many old veterans, from an outsider's perspective it would seem that they weren't suited for a fast tempo. Old veterans were more suited for a steady fight to maximize usage of their experience and patience as they dealt with their opponent. But Tyranny had never used such a style before. They had fiercely fought and charged for ten years. Yet in the playoffs of this season, they slowed their pace as a whole.

Tyranny hadn't just been rotating its old veterans to let them preserve their strength! They'd adjusted their strategies from the very foundation, building a new path that suited them better instead of relying on the rhythm they'd always had.

"Those old guys aren't the only ones becoming more fearsome," said Ye Xiu.

"Oh?"

"There's also Zhang Xinjie," said Ye Xiu.

"Him?"

"His style always suited this sort of slow rhythm better. Just looking at playstyle, he and Tyranny don't fit at all, but because of his personality, he could force himself to adapt to tactics that didn't suit him. But now, Tyranny's style is developing in the direction of his true strength!"

Chapter 1390: Team Protection

In the end, Happy only had a chance of facing Tyranny if they made it through this round; it was a little too early to worry about them now. More urgently, Happy needed to focus on playing well in their match against Blue Rain.

In this week, apart from familiarizing themselves with their new equipment, Happy actively prepared to face off against Blue Rain. They didn't think about anything else, preparing themselves with only Blue Rain in mind. And now, it was time to bring all of this onto the battlefield.

During the regular season, Happy had twice met Blue Rain and lost rather miserably, 1 to 9 and 2 to 8. This time, what would Happy use to try and defeat Blue Rain? Today's edition of the Esports Weekly analyzed this question. Esports Weekly, which had become daily issue after the start of playoffs, had its content divided into two topics. One part would focus on the match that had just ended the day before, while the other part would analyze the upcoming match that night. The content was detailed and substantial, and the gamers loved it, but these were busy days for the media workers.

From online polls, it seemed that Blue Rain was much more favored to win. About 73% of voters supported them, while only 27% were for Happy.

But Happy wouldn't shrink back from such numbers. When they faced Excellent Era in the Challenger League, their support rate had been even more pathetic than this, but so what? If votes determined final results, then there wouldn't be any need for the match at all, just give the prize after voting finished.

On the day of the match, there wouldn't be any more heavy training, but the players still had to touch the computers a bit. There was no way they'd wait until the match began to start warming up, after all.

That afternoon, Happy's players all arrived at Happy's training room, each sitting down in front of a computer and opening Glory. Some played rather seriously, while others were more casual and relaxed. They no longer needed Ye Xiu to teach them. Warming up before a match, this was something they all had to do during the regular season, too. After going through this season, everyone knew what methods they liked to use to warm up, and so they each did their own thing.

And as they steadily adjusted their condition, they watched the minutes and seconds tick by.

When it was five o'clock, Chen Guo came over to call everyone to dinner. On match days, they generally ate earlier than usual. Right now, only three hours were left before the beginning of the match, and the atmosphere was incredibly heavy. Chen Guo only ate a few bites before feeling full, struggling to continue the act. In comparison, the players seemed somewhat more relaxed than her.

After they ate, they dispersed to do their own thing, until coming back together at seven o'clock, when it was time to go to the stadium.

Leave Happy Internet Cafe through the back door, cross the road, enter the stadium through the player passageways...

Happy had walked this route for an entire season now, but never as seriously as they did now. It was as though every step they took now would affect the final result of this match.

The preparation room was already ready, the air conditioning already running to bring it to a comfortable temperature. After everyone entered, they found a seat and sat down, and then they were silent.

Too stifling!

Chen Guo deeply felt the pressure in the air. At a time like this, she should really say something! Chen Guo looked at Ye Xiu, looked at Wei Chen. These two seniors among seniors would normally take great care in adjusting the team's attitude and atmosphere, so why weren't they saying anything now? Was it because they were also feeling suppressed by this atmosphere?

Should I say something?

What do I say?

Good luck? Relax?

There was no point in repeatedly emphasizing these sort of mottos! She should have prepared some jokes. Maybe those would have some effect right now.

Chen Guo thought and thought, but she still didn't know what she should say. But at last, Ye Xiu began to speak.

"Everyone remembers the strategies? Do I need to go over them again?" Ye Xiu said.

Everyone exchanged glances and silently shook their heads. No one spoke.

"Mm, the key is just spontaneous changes, we have a large advantage there. In terms of typing, I'm sure I can leave Yu Wenzhou behind in the dust."

There were a few dry chuckles.

“Yu Wenzhou, as a pro player, has a completely insufficient handspeed,” Ye Xiu said. “But he was still able to become an All-Star level player. Do you know why?”

Everyone shook their heads. To be honest, they weren’t much in the mood for guessing things like this right now.

“He plays to his strengths and avoids his weaknesses,” said Ye Xiu.

“Silly, right?” Ye Xiu laughed. “But this is the truth. In this Alliance, there is no one better than him at doing this. This is Yu Wenzhou’s style, and this is the strategic style of Team Blue Rain as a whole. Ever since their soul, the person they could never be without, their previous captain Wei Chen retired, Blue Rain has been on the rise...”

“Fuck off!” Wei Chen had to interject.

Everyone laughed again, and this time it wasn’t as strained as before.

“Since our opponent this round is Blue Rain, I advise you all to learn from our comrade Yu Wenzhou. Avoid your weaknesses and use your strengths. Every one of you, fiercely place your strengths onto this battlefield for all to see. If you can do this, then you won’t have a single regret left in your heart. Don’t worry if it’s not enough. Everyone has their lacking areas, and that’s why we’re a team. Where one person lacks, the other four come to bolster. This is what it is to be a team.

“Everyone protects their teammates’ backs, and so everyone has someone at their back protecting them. So, rest assured, and charge forward boldly!”

“Happy, it’s time to go onstage.”

Just as Ye Xiu finished speaking, a worker knocked at the door of Happy’s prep room, calling them onstage.

“Let’s go!” Ye Xiu called, and everyone stood up and walked out of the prep room. Across the hallway, Blue Rain’s players were also walking out of their room.

The two teams each lined up in the passageway, with the two captains standing at the very front. Because the speech that Ye Xiu had just given had begun with Yu Wenzhou, Happy’s members couldn’t help but take extra glances at this Blue Rain captain whose handspeed wasn’t up to par.

“Did you guess what ace we have up our sleeve?” Ye Xiu, standing at the front of the line, asked Yu Wenzhou.

“We did not,” Yu Wenzhou smiled. He hadn’t even bothered to try and guess.

“I don’t mind telling you now,” said Ye Xiu.

“I’ve been waiting for this moment as well,” said Yu Wenzhou.

“It’s equipment,” said Ye Xiu.

“Oh, your Myriad Manifestations Umbrella isn’t dragging everyone else down anymore?” Yu Wenzhou said. Lord Grim’s umbrella had been Level 70 for the entire season. Right now, never mind the core characters, any character with a Silver weapon would definitely have their weapon upgraded first, so essentially all of them were now at Level 75. For weapons, 70 was practically an extinct number.

“Hehe, I should say that you guys will be dragging me down,” Ye Xiu laughed.

“Would it kill you to stop bragging?” At last, the person standing behind Yu Wenzhou could restrain himself no longer.

“Whoa, how many sentences did we say to each other just now? He actually lasted until now without opening his mouth! Must have been very difficult, huh?” Ye Xiu said to Yu Wenzhou with extreme surprise.

“Haha...” Yu Wenzhou could only laugh. What else could he say!

“Later, when you see it, try not to cry with fear,” Ye Xiu turned and said to Huang Shaotian.

“Try not to cry when you lose, too,” Huang Shaotian retorted.

“How could I lose?” Ye Xiu said loftily.

“Have some shame! You already lost twice.” Huang Shaotian was referring to the regular season.

“I didn’t lose.” At this time, Ye Xiu abandoned the “team” he was always talking about. If just talking about himself, he indeed hadn’t lost. He had thirty-seven consecutive wins!

“That was luck.” Of course, Huang Shaotian stubbornly had to continue.

“How about you get lucky for me to see? I only won thirty-seven in a row. I purposefully left one out. The record’s just begging to be broken!”

“...” No matter how stubborn Huang Shaotian was, he didn’t dare take up that challenge. Fortunately, right then, the workers signaled to the two teams to begin entering.

“Let’s go.” The away team entered first, but Yu Wenzhou didn’t forget to acknowledge Ye Xiu as he left, before stepping into the stadium proper.

For a stadium that wasn’t their home stadium, getting polite applause was good enough. Cheers and whatnot, even if their own fans had followed them here, would definitely be suppressed by the home stadium fans. How would the home fans tolerate the visitors going wild on their turf?

The stadium lit up with a projection of Swoksaar, who did some random movements. The chance to act cool or whatever of course wouldn’t be given to the away team characters; it was good enough that they didn’t bash them. The live announcer gave some cursory introduction for Yu Wenzhou, before calling up the next onstage.

Huang Shaotian immediately came up, and his treatment was about the same as what Yu Wenzhou received. This sort of thing was commonplace, and it happened at everyone’s home stadiums. Blue Rain’s players had seen the world, so of course this wouldn’t bother them. One by one the players came out and up onto the stage. And then when it was time for Happy, the sound was immediately different.

The moment that Ye Xiu walked out of the passageway, the shouting and cheering instantly filled the entire stadium.

In the projection, Lord Grim displayed the many changes of the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella, while Ye Xiu waved to the audience members on all sides. Even the amount of time that was given was different from what Blue Rain got. As for the introduction, they only wished they could describe all of his glorious accomplishments in the most extravagant way possible.

One by one, Happy's players walked onto the stage, and then they shook hands, and parted. Two people were left, undoubtedly the first players of the group arena, too lazy to leave and then come back.

"Ye Xiu, it's Ye Xiu!" Commentator Pan Lin was already shouting excitedly.

Ye Xiu was actually Happy's first player in the group arena. It was already the playoffs, and he still wanted to go on first? Before the match, practically no one had predicted this arrangement. With Ye Xiu's unparalleled 1v1 ability, everyone logically expected that he would be fourth in the lineup.

But now, he was the first one!

As for Blue Rain, the first one up was the Qi Master Song Xiao! Their Mister Clutch was thrown into first slot in the group arena. What sort of plans and hopes were behind that choice?

After greeting each other, the two headed to their own competitor booths.

"Happy actually sent Ye Xiu as the first player in the group arena," Pan Lin marveled. "This is completely unexpected. Coach Li, what do you think about this?"

"Um, I would think that this is mostly to boost Happy's morale! Happy has a lot of rookies, after all, and this is their first time in the playoffs. The pressure is definitely high. If Ye Xiu goes first, he can get a win and raise their spirits, as well as lessen the responsibility of those after him. I think that's Happy's plan," Li Yibo said, doing his best to speculate.