

Formula 1: The GOAT

#Chapter 11: New Challenges - Read Formula 1: The GOAT Chapter 11: New Challenges

Chapter 11 - New Challenges

"What do you mean?" Rûmeysa asked, genuinely surprised. Where had that question come from? And how could he even consider such a thing instead of being happy and welcoming her after her surprise return?

"The people on TV said there was an economic collapse and people are losing their jobs every day," Fatih explained, pointing at the television as he spoke, carefully ensuring his speech matched his age.

His response was met with looks of astonishment from both his mother and grandmother. They quickly covered their faces, trying to stifle their laughter, but failed, bursting into giggles. Fatih's serious, concerned expression only made them laugh harder.

"Nooo, sweetie, Mom wasn't fired," Rûmeysa managed to say, taking deep breaths between words, still recovering from her fit of laughter. "I just resigned because I got a new job here in Istanbul, so I can be with you every day."

"Really?" Fatih's face instantly lit up with a wide smile. "You're not leaving for Germany again?"

"Yes, really. I'll only be leaving for work in the morning and returning in the evening," she answered, finally dropping the bags she was holding near the doorway. She walked to the sofa and sank into it, momentarily devoid of the strength to carry them further.

"Where are you going to be working?" he asked, following her, eager to know. This time, he hoped for a concrete answer, unlike before when she'd cited his age as a reason for her vague replies.

"I'm going to be working here," she said, pulling a chocolate bar from her pocket. She pointed to the familiar logo on the wrapper as she handed it to him.

"Ülker?" Fatih asked. This didn't come as a surprise to the two adults; the brand was so well-known in Turkey that even a young child would recognize the name and associate it with their products.

"Yes. I'm the new Vice Head of Legal there," Rûmeysa said slowly, knowing he likely wouldn't grasp the full meaning of the title.

The moment Fatih received the answer he wanted, his attention shifted entirely to the chocolate. He climbed onto the sofa beside his mother and laid his head on her lap. She gently brushed his hair as he happily ate the chocolate, his previous worries completely vanishing, replaced by the pure joy that his mother would be with him much more, no longer limited to her vacation days.

With Rümeyşa's return, Fatih's daily routine didn't change drastically, other than his mother now taking over the role of pre-mixing his go-kart fuel in the morning before she left for work. His grandmother still handled refueling when he wanted to drive. The most significant change was the evenings; after an initial week of settling in at home, Rümeyşa started spending time with him in the park after she returned from work.

By January 2009, Rümeyşa had acclimated to her new role at Ülker. This month also marked the first major change of the year for Fatih: his mother had taken him to sign up for a karting academy. This made him incredibly happy; it was a clear sign she was recognizing his passion and was even considering supporting him fully if it truly was his dream.

"As you can see, because we have both indoor and outdoor karting tracks, our students can practice all year round, even in winter conditions like we have currently," the academy's receptionist explained, giving Fatih and Rümeyşa a tour of their facilities.

"How are the timetables structured?" Rümeyşa asked, looking around the well-lit indoor track. It was fully covered and heated, and several people were driving rental karts around its twists and turns.

"Since we operate as both a rental karting facility and a professional karting academy, our schedule is structured accordingly," the receptionist elaborated. "On weekdays, from 3 PM to 6 PM is dedicated academy time, with one-hour slots for different age groups and kart types. On weekends, it's the opposite: morning until noon is for the academy, and the afternoons are open to the public for rental karting.

You can choose how many days a week your child attends, and we'll set a timetable based on that. However, we recommend a minimum of two days a week, as our curriculum is quite comprehensive, and it takes time to teach children his age properly."

She continued, her voice enthusiastic, "Once they pass the basic training, we assist them with the application for the appropriate TOSFED (Turkish Automobile Sports Federation) karting license for their level. This license allows them to participate in all motorsport competitions covered by it.

As long as a student continues to develop, we are also responsible for helping them upgrade their license accordingly. And, as one of the reputable academies, we often receive information regarding upcoming competitions a few days ahead of the public announcement, allowing our members to register early for the categories they are eligible for." The receptionist delivered her well-rehearsed speech, making sure to

highlight as many benefits as possible, even hinting at potential future glory. She knew many children who signed up would lose interest within a few months, but that wasn't her concern; her job was to get them signed up.

Rümeysa took a moment to digest the information. Even if only a few of the promises were delivered upon, professional training would still greatly benefit her son if his passion continued – and it seemed more and more likely with each passing day. Barring the winter days when the park was covered in snow, he hadn't missed a single opportunity to drive his kart. In fact, his continuous use over seven straight months had necessitated a complete engine rebuild by a mechanic.

"So, how is the pricing?" she finally asked the most important question.

"Pricing depends on the number of lessons per week and is paid quarterly. An average single day of training is about 50 Lira (approximately (\$30- \$35) USD in early 2009)," the receptionist stated. She inwardly frowned; this was usually the point where she lost most potential customers. She quickly deployed her countermeasure: "But please don't worry if that seems expensive. It's quite competitive compared to other academies, and we also offer scholarships for students who demonstrate exceptional talent. We see it as a way of supporting them, as their success ultimately enhances our academy's prestige."

She had used this approach many times. A child would drive a few laps, a trainer would declare them a "diamond in the rough" needing some polishing, and then they'd offer a ten percent scholarship. More often than not, parents, eager to believe their child was special and acknowledged by professionals, would sign up.

Seeing the hopeful smiles on both Rümeysa's and Fatih's faces, the receptionist knew she had them.

"So, what does the test involve?" Rümeysa asked expectantly, quite sure her son would qualify for a scholarship. If he didn't, who would?

"We'll call our instructor. Your son will be given ten minutes of practice to get used to our karts and the indoor track. After that, he'll be required to drive ten timed laps. His average lap time will determine the level of scholarship he receives. And," she added, pointing to a large board displaying various lap records, "if he breaks the existing lap record for his kart category on that board, he will be fully sponsored and receive his training for free, under the agreement that he races as a student of our academy for the duration of the sponsorship year." The board showed times set by academy instructors for larger karts, and by exceptionally talented former students for smaller categories like the Bambino karts.

"What do you think, Fatih? Do you want to try?" Rümeysa asked her son, who had been gazing intently at the karts circulating on the track.

"Yes," he replied, his answer directed not only to his mother but also to the System mission that had just appeared before him.

[Urgent Mission!]

The truly great often don't pay; opportunities are provided for them to prove their worth. Seize this chance and benefit without financial investment.

Objective: Break the official Bambino Kart lap record for this academy's indoor track.

Rewards: Full Scholarship, 50 SP

Punishment: None

(YES] \[NO])

He mentally selected **[YES]**. How could he deny an opportunity to reduce a potential financial burden on his mother, regardless of her ability to fund it?

"Then please follow me to the waiting room while I brief the instructor and start the preparations for the test," the receptionist said, her widest, most professional smile firmly in place as she escorted them back into the main building connected to the indoor karting track.

Chapter 12 - The Scholarship Test

"Just do the usual," the receptionist murmured to Burak, the driving instructor, as they walked. He had been enjoying a rare moment of rest after his Saturday training schedule, only to be called back to assess another child, likely to tell the parents the kid had "talent." "Teach him the basics, tell his mother he's a fast learner, and then send him out for a timed lap. As long as it's within twenty seconds of the lap record, we can offer her a ten percent discount. If not, we can reduce that to five percent. It's all factored into the initial pricing anyway."

Burak knew better than to complain aloud. Racing was an expensive sport, and running an academy even more so. These parents paid his salary and, more importantly, funded the training for the genuinely talented kids he occasionally found, the ones he knew could go far and make him proud.

"I know, I know," he sighed, a hint of weariness in his voice. He'd just finished a session with some particularly unruly children a few hours ago. "How many times are you going to repeat this?"

"Every single time," she retorted. "I don't want a repeat of the disaster your former colleague caused." She was referring to an incident where a previous instructor had

bluntly told a wealthy father his son had no talent, infuriating the man who was trying to live vicariously through his child, whom he believed was a motorsport genius.

"But that kid was a minute over the lap record," Burak muttered, remembering the boy. "If he had lied, wouldn't it have been worse for us when, despite 'training,' the kid showed no improvement?" He recalled being surprised the boy had even managed to finish a lap without hitting the tire barriers, a frequent occurrence in his previous attempts.

"Anyway, let's focus," the receptionist said, cutting him off as she knocked on the door of the waiting room where she had left Fatih and his mother.

"I've brought him," she announced upon entering, gesturing to Burak. "This is our driving instruc—" She paused mid-sentence, surprised. Fatih was already fully kitted out in his racing gear, his helmet and balaclava neatly placed on the table beside him, clearly ready and waiting.

"Oh, I got his gear ready to not waste too much of your time," Rümeysa explained, noticing the receptionist's expression.

"Oh, okay," the receptionist said, her voice trailing for a moment before she recollected herself. "This is our driving instructor, Burak. He'll be responsible for teaching Fatih the basics and overseeing the test."

"Nice to meet you, my name is Fatih," he responded immediately, getting up from his chair, already picking up his helmet and balaclava, eager to get to the track. This would be his first time driving on a proper, dedicated karting track in the real world.

"Nice to meet you, Fatih," Burak replied, observing the boy carefully. He was correctly and fully kitted out in proper safety equipment. 'All the gear, no idea?' Burak wondered silently, a common cynical thought among instructors for kids whose parents bought expensive equipment for amateur pursuits.

After greeting Rümeysa, he turned back to Fatih. "Since you have all the equipment, we can move to the basics training immediately, if you're ready."

"Yes, we can start," Rümeysa answered, also getting to her feet as they all headed back towards the indoor track.

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"Have you driven a kart before?" Burak asked Fatih, who now stood beside a gleaming red Bambino kart, his balaclava and helmet already on.

"Yes."

"Good. So, you know the basics already? Did you learn at another academy?"

"I know the basics," Fatih confirmed. "But no, I didn't learn it from an academy. My mom bought me a kart last March, and I've been driving it every day in the park, practicing alone."

"Okay," Burak said, sighing internally. 'Kid's probably bragging, been driving crudely around cones,' he thought. "Since you say you know the rules, I'll have you drive a few probing laps first. We'll see what you know and if you need a refresher on anything. Understood?"

"Yes," Fatih replied as he expertly hopped into the kart. Burak powered it on.

"You can go now," the instructor said once the engine was running and Fatih was blipping the throttle, his foot on the brake.

"Shouldn't I wait for the engine to warm up a little?" Fatih asked, genuinely surprised he was being told to go immediately.

"No need, you can go," Burak waved him on, already starting to walk back out of the pit lane towards the observers' room just behind it.

Given permission, Fatih didn't linger. He lifted his foot from the brake and accelerated smoothly out of the pit lane. He had already studied the track layout displayed in the waiting area and memorized it, forming initial racing lines in his mind. Now, he just needed to adjust them based on the actual grip levels.

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While Rümeyisa and the receptionist made small talk, Burak was completely silent, his eyes fixed on the small kart circulating on the track. His initial casual observation had sharpened into keen interest.

'Where did he learn that?' he asked himself, watching Fatih weave gently on the straights to warm his tires, clearly performing a reconnaissance and warm-up lap simultaneously.

This continued for three laps. With each new lap, Fatih subtly altered his lines, exploring different parts of the track, obviously testing for grip. Burak's train of thought was abruptly interrupted as he saw the boy approach the final corner before the main straight. Instead of braking conventionally, Fatih seemed to carry more speed, stepping on the gas early, and letting the kart run wide onto the straight, foot still hard on the accelerator.

'He's starting a flying lap!' Burak realized, instantly grabbing the stopwatch from the windowsill and clicking it the moment Fatih crossed the start/finish line.

The kid braked incredibly late for the first left-hander, hitting the middle apex perfectly before accelerating out. He took the second corner of the following chicane without braking at all, keeping the engine singing on the short straight.

As the lap progressed, the surprise in Burak's eyes grew, widening with each corner. Fatih was employing techniques far beyond what any beginner, let alone a six-year-old with only park experience, should know. He was trail-braking into turns, subtly shifting his weight to the outside on corner entry to load the outer tires for more grip, allowing for higher entry and exit speeds. He even used the brakes to induce a hint of oversteer – a controlled brake-steer – to help rotate the kart in tighter, higher-speed sections. His throttle application was smooth and precise, his steering inputs minimal, maintaining momentum while adhering to an almost perfect racing line, consistently using the areas of maximum grip.

"Oh my god," Burak breathed, unable to contain his astonishment. He glanced at the stopwatch in his hand as Fatih flashed past the start/finish line, completing his first flying lap, but the boy hadn't slowed, immediately launching into a second.

[01:35:276] was the time for the first lap. Burak quickly reset the main timer but kept the lap split.

[01:35:256] on his second lap, Fatih had shaved off two-hundredths of a second.

[01:35:263] a tiny loss on the third, but still faster than his first.

Then the times tumbled:

[01:35:201]

[01:35:196]

[01:35:163]

[01:35:129]

[01:35:087]

[01:35:026]

And finally, on his tenth timed lap: **[01:34:875]**

With each lap, he had consistently refined his lines, pushing closer to the limit, breaking his previous best or matching it. His tenth and final flying lap was nearly half a second faster than his first. He then completed a cool-down lap before smoothly pulling into the pit lane.

"Are you sure he hasn't received any professional training?" Burak asked, his gaze lifting from the stopwatch to Rümeysa, his voice tinged with disbelief. He wondered if he had misheard Fatih earlier.

"No, none at all," Rümeysa replied, a curious look on her face as to why he was so insistent. "He only watches Formula 1 races and drives the kart I bought him alone in the park. That's precisely why I decided to register him here, so he could receive professional training."

"What is it, Burak?" the receptionist interjected, prompting him for the expected "he has potential" speech, internally pleased. The instructor's acting seemed much improved today; he looked genuinely serious.

"Your son," Burak said, turning to Rümeysa, his voice now filled with genuine excitement, "just broke the Bambino lap record for this track by more than seven seconds." He then looked at Fatih, who was still sitting patiently in the kart.

"He's a genius," Burak added, a wide smile spreading across his face, his eyes sparkling. He realized he had just stumbled upon the kind of student instructors dream of, one who could bring glory to both the academy and himself.

"What?!" Both the receptionist and Rümeysa exclaimed in unison, though their reasons for surprise differed. The receptionist was shocked because the boy had just unequivocally earned himself a full scholarship, blowing her usual sales tactics out of the water. Rümeysa, on the other hand, was stunned and overjoyed to hear that her son, so passionate about racing, truly possessed an extraordinary talent for it. What more could a mother ask?

Chapter 13 - A Mentor's Conviction

"As I was saying," Burak continued, his earlier astonishment giving way to unrestrained enthusiasm, "your son is a genius. I'm not saying this just to coax you into having him join the academy, but I'm absolutely certain no one his age – no one I've ever seen – could do what he just did, especially in such a short period. It took him only three laps to get used to both the kart and understand this track's grip levels and racing lines. After that, he immediately started putting in hot laps. Every single one of them was within half a second of each other, and more importantly, they were all more than seven seconds faster than the existing track record for this type of kart! That record, by the way, was set by a kid two years older than Fatih, who had been training on this specific track for over three years. He knew this circuit inside and out. That wasn't the case for your son at all." Burak was on a roll, words tumbling out.

"Calm down, Burak, you're starting to ramble again," the receptionist interjected gently, trying to prevent him from overwhelming Rümeysa. It was a characteristic of his; his passion for motorsport could trigger these enthusiastic, sometimes lengthy, monologues, which could seem adorable or odd to those unfamiliar with him.

"I'm sorry about him," the receptionist said to Rümeysa, offering an apologetic smile. "He's just incredibly excited about the talent your son has shown."

"Ah, apologies," Burak said, scratching the back of his head, a flush of embarrassment rising as he realized he'd been carried away. "I can't hold myself back when I find such a talented child out of nowhere."

"It's quite alright," Rümeysa replied, waving a dismissive hand, though the proud and excited smile never left her face. "Everyone has their own way of expressing excitement."

A brief, slightly awkward silence followed before Rümeysa broke it. "So, is the testing officially done, or was that still considered the practice session it initially was?" she asked, keen to move things forward.

"There's no need for any further testing," the receptionist stated decisively, knowing that if she left it to Burak, he'd have Fatih drive another ten laps just for the pleasure of watching. "He has already met all the qualifications to receive a full scholarship. We can move to the registration immediately if you're still planning to go forward with his application."

She then peeked through the observation room door. "It's done, Fatih, you can come in."

Fatih, who had been patiently sitting in the kart awaiting instructions, nodded, climbed out, and walked into the observation room, taking off his helmet as he went to sit next to his mother.

"Aren't you curious about whether you passed or not?" Burak asked, noticing Fatih calmly joining his mother, their conversation seemingly unrelated to his lap times.

"I broke the lap record," Fatih stated simply.

"How did you...?" Burak began, surprised. While there was a timing board, it wasn't typically used for these initial assessments.

"I counted in my head while I was driving," Fatih replied, delivering a well-practiced fib. The System, of course, displayed his lap times in real-time, and he'd received a notification of mission completion after his very first hot lap.

"..." Burak was momentarily speechless. He just accepted it. The kid was a monster if he had enough spare mental capacity to accurately time himself while learning a new track and pushing the limits.

"Please follow me to fill out his application," the receptionist said, guiding them to a meeting room. "We'll need his health information to show he's fit and able, a passport-

sized picture, a copy of his birth certificate, and a document of parental consent for our license application procedure with TOSFED. As for the rest, we'll be responsible for handling those."

The remainder of the day passed quickly. It only took about an hour to complete the forms and go through all the registration procedures. They agreed on a training schedule of three days a week: Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday. Burak enthusiastically volunteered to be Fatih's primary driving coach, an offer Rümeyza and Fatih gladly accepted. After bidding them farewell, Rümeyza took Fatih shopping as a reward for earning the scholarship before they headed home.

For the following months, Fatih's days settled into a predictable pattern. The main change was his regular attendance at the Karting Academy. He also started subtly requesting a computer from his mother, planting the seed in preparation for his upcoming sixth birthday, which was now just two months away.

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"What? You want to register him for a championship when he only started formal training three months ago?" the Academy Director asked Burak, his eyebrows raised in surprise at the audacious request.

"Yes, Director," Burak affirmed. "In these few months, he has absorbed everything I can possibly teach him at this stage. Most of his academy time is now spent garnering experience, track time, and competing in practice races against other children. And in those races, he's consistently lapping everyone else by more than two laps by the end of the session. I genuinely don't see any benefit in him training at this same level for another year before participating in official competitions." Despite trying to maintain his composure, Burak could feel his usual enthusiastic rambling starting to take over.

"Stop, stop, stop," the Director interrupted, holding up a hand, clearly taken aback. "By more than two laps? Are you absolutely sure about that?"

"Yes, Director! Since the practice races are half an hour long, his speed and incredible performance consistency allow him to lap the entire field within just ten minutes. Depending on track conditions, and assuming no one crashes into him – which he usually avoids as if he has eyes in the back of his head – he will have lapped them at least twice by the end. The results are the same even when I make him start from the very back of the grid in nearly all races. He's in the lead within the first ten minutes and then just extends it, lapping them with the remaining twenty..."

"How old is he again?" the Director asked, trying to recall the details. He remembered being informed about a talented child breaking a lap record and receiving a full scholarship but hadn't focused on the specifics of his age.

"He is currently five but will turn six during the championship season, so he will be permitted to participate as per TOSFED regulations," Burak answered, having meticulously prepared and reviewed the rules beforehand.

"You do realize that participating in these championships costs the academy a significant amount of money, don't you, Burak?" the Director said, his gaze steady. "And since he's a scholarship student, all of those expenses will be coming directly from our budget. You're asking the academy to heavily invest its resources to support a child who isn't even six yet, in a championship category designed for kids aged six to eight."

"I am certain he will be among the top contenders, Director," Burak stated confidently. "And since he will be racing in our academy-branded kart, the amount of positive exposure and prestige we will receive if he performs well should far outweigh our expenditure on him for this championship."

"That's if he actually delivers on your claims. Otherwise, it's a waste of money," the Director countered, still skeptical. "His current records are against other inexperienced children at our academy. You want to take those results and pit him against kids who might be on their third year participating in this national championship, and you expect him to beat them and be among the title contenders?"

"Yes, I do," Burak said firmly. "Normally, I would say he will win it outright. But, taking into consideration factors outside his control, I've conservatively estimated him as a contender. If none of those external factors play a significant role, he will most certainly win the championship by the end of the season."

"Haaaaa..." the Director sighed, rubbing his temples. Common sense screamed at him to disapprove; it seemed like a potential waste of funds and risked putting immense pressure on a young child if he were to be crushed by more experienced competitors after being labeled a prodigy.

"How about we do this?" Burak interjected, sensing the Director's hesitation. This was his trump card. "If he doesn't win the championship and isn't in the top ten overall by the end of the season, I will personally cover all the costs incurred by the academy for his participation. But if he wins, or is in the top ten, the academy will match his prize money, if any, as a sponsorship stipend. How about that? There's nothing for the academy to lose." If this failed, Burak was prepared to enter Fatih as an individual, without official academy backing.

"You would go that far for him?" the Director asked, genuinely surprised by Burak's conviction and personal financial risk.

"Yes. That is how much I believe in his work ethic, his talent, and his passion."

"Alright then, how about this," the Director proposed, offering a compromise. "We will sponsor his entry. However, if after the second championship round he is not ranked

within the top ten overall, you will have him withdraw from the remainder of the championship." He saw Burak about to negotiate further and quickly added, "And if he wins the championship, I will personally double any prize money he receives as his reward from the academy."

"Then please approve his application," Burak said, a triumphant smile spreading across his face as he slid a pre-filled championship funding application document across the desk. Only the Director's signature was missing.

The Director picked up a pen. Just as he was about to sign, he looked up. "Have his parents approved his participation in this championship?"

"Yes," Burak replied, smoothly sliding another document forward – a parental consent form, already signed by Rûmeysa.

The Director looked at Burak one last time, a wry smile playing on his lips. His attempts at delaying had failed. He had no other option but to keep his side of the agreement. He signed the document.

Chapter 14 - New Rules and First Duel

"What is the competition going to be like?" Fatih asked Burak as he emerged from the dressing room, helmet in hand. They walked towards the exit leading to the academy's outdoor kart track, which was finally available for use. It was late March, and the spring season had officially begun.

Since this was the first day the outdoor track was usable after the winter break and it wasn't yet open to the public, Burak had requested it for Fatih's practice. The director had approved, given Fatih's upcoming championship participation. The track itself wasn't scheduled to open to other students or the public until the following week, after the instructors had completed several reconnaissance laps to ensure everything was in order.

"Do you know much about karting competitions and championships beyond what you see in Formula 1?" Burak asked, holding the door open for Fatih before following him out.

"No, not really," Fatih admitted, stopping to wait for Burak to catch up after he closed the door. "My knowledge is mostly F1-related."

"Then take a seat," Burak said, gently guiding Fatih by the shoulder towards some chairs under the shade of an umbrella. "Let me explain everything before we start, as our practice today will be based on that format."

Once they were settled, Burak began. "The championship we've registered you for is called the TOSFED Minik Kart Şampiyonası (TOSFED Mini Kart Championship). It will

run over six rounds, with one round taking place each month, starting in April and concluding in September. The races will be held at different tracks across the country, with the first and final rounds taking place here in Istanbul."

He continued, "The race weekend format is somewhat similar to Formula 1, but condensed, starting on Saturday and ending on Sunday. First, there's a practice session. Depending on the number of participants, this can be divided into groups, with each group typically getting two twenty-minute practice slots. This is followed by a qualifying session. After that, we have the heat races, then a Pre-Final, and lastly, the Final race."

"If the number of participants is large enough to require splitting into groups from free practice, then qualifying will also be done within those initial groups. An overall qualifying list is then compiled by merging the times from all groups, ranking drivers from first to last. This overall ranking is then used to determine the starting positions for the heat races."

"As for what heat races are," Burak explained, "you can think of them as shorter races. Their main purposes are to help set the final grid and, in some cases, to eliminate some drivers if the field is very large. If there are multiple heat groups, each driver will race in a number of heats equal to the number of groups minus one, ensuring they race against all other groups. In each heat, drivers are awarded points, typically zero points for the winner, with the points increasing for lower positions. After all heats are completed, these points are tallied. The drivers with the lowest total points get the best starting positions for the next stage. A pre-determined number of drivers at the bottom of this heat classification might be eliminated."

"Then, those eliminated drivers might be given a last chance in a separate repechage or 'last chance' race to see who can fight their way back into the main event. Finally, there's the main Final race, which will be the longest of the weekend, a twenty-minute race plus one lap.

The winner of the Final receives 25 championship points, followed by 20 for second, then 16, 13, 11, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, down to the fifteenth finisher receiving 1 point. Just like in many other motorsports, the driver with the most championship points at the end of all six rounds wins the championship. The overall champion receives a prize of about 1,500 Turkish Lira (around \$1000 USD in 2009), the runner-up gets 1,000 Lira, and third place receives 500 Lira."

Burak paused, noticing Fatih had been listening intently without interruption. "Did you understand all that, or are you just nodding?"

"I understood," Fatih confirmed with a nod. Internally, however, a wide smile spread across his face. He had finally found a potential source of early funding for his plan to benefit from his future memories! This had been troubling him for some time, making him worry he might miss crucial opportunities due to a lack of capital. This prize money,

though modest, could be a start. Of course, it all depended on whether his mother would allow him to use any money he earned as he desired, or if she'd save it for him, though the latter seemed less likely given her support.

"Good then," Burak said, satisfied. "Let's start practicing. Until the actual competition, you'll be racing against me. I'll be in my own kart, but I'll limit its performance to match yours." They headed to the storage room to retrieve their karts, and Burak grabbed a helmet for himself.

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They both spent about ten minutes on reconnaissance laps. The outdoor track was dusty from its prolonged period of disuse and hadn't been cleaned yet, making some areas quite slippery. Burak wanted them both to identify these patches, and for Fatih, driving this specific outdoor kart for the first time, it was a chance to learn the circuit's nuances.

Once Burak deemed the initial practice sufficient, he slowed down near T14, the final right-hander onto the main straight, waiting for Fatih to catch up so they could begin their mock race.

Just as Fatih was navigating the T9 chicane, a mission prompt flashed in his vision forcing him to slow down:

[Urgent Mission!]

Your instructor is preparing for a practice race. Your karts are matched for power (his is heavier but slightly derestricted to compensate). There is no reason to lose.

Objective: Race your instructor. Take and keep the lead, defending effectively and preventing him from overtaking you until the end of this practice session or until he restarts the race.

Reward: 10 SP

Penalty:

None

(ACCEPT)/[DENY]

Fatih glanced at where Burak was waiting near the end of the lap, then immediately accepted the mission. He instantly started weaving aggressively down the straight between T9 and the flat-out left-hander T10, trying to generate as much heat in his tires as possible, bringing them towards their optimum temperature as he approached Burak, who was now moving at a snail's pace.

"We follow safety car restart procedures!" Burak shouted as Fatih pulled up beside him. "You can only overtake once we pass the start/finish line, okay?"

Fatih nodded. He slowed for T14, tucking in right behind Burak. The moment Burak hit the apex of T14, he accelerated hard. Fatih, thanks to Catlex (Good), reacted almost simultaneously. His lighter kart gave him a slight edge in initial acceleration, and he stayed glued to Burak's gearbox, benefiting from the slipstream. He even brought his head forward and lowered his torso, creating a mini-DRS effect that gave him an additional speed boost, bringing him closer and closer to Burak's rear bumper as they blasted past the start/finish line, officially starting their race.

With the speed advantage from the tow and his aerodynamic tuck, Fatih immediately jinked to Burak's left as they drag-raced towards the braking zone for the first right-hander, T1.

As they neared the braking markers, neither seemed intent on braking early, a test of nerve. Burak looked intent on pushing Fatih wide if Fatih didn't yield.

Fatih was the first to blink, or so it seemed. He braked hard, much harder than optimal for T1, but it was a calculated move. Burak, committed to out-braking him, inevitably ran slightly wide, missing the perfect apex. Fatih, having braked earlier and more sharply, was able to turn in tighter, get on the power sooner, and hit the apex, immediately snatching the lead. He took the following left-hander (T2) smoothly, then set up for the double right-hand chicane (T3 and T4), navigating it precisely and using the kerbs to straighten his line.

He accelerated towards the small left-hander (T5), going through it flat-out as if it were a straight line, hugging the left side of the track, then immediately prepared for the right-hander (T6). He carried good speed through T6, hitting the apex and going wide before taking the right-hander (T7), hitting its apex and going slightly wide on the exit while accelerating earlier and harder, achieving a smooth exit. This led him towards the left-hand hairpin (T8), where he hugged the right side of the track on approach, braked late, rotated the kart sharply, and powered out by taking a very late apex.

He used that late apex exit to attack the T9 chicane (Right-Left-Right) aggressively, then went flat-out through the sweeping left-hander (T10). He trail-braked expertly for the right-hander (T11) that led into the right-hand hairpin (T12), taking a conventional but fast line. He then powered through the flat-out left-hander (T13) before braking precisely for the final right-hander (T14), completing the first racing lap well ahead, with Burak now following, trying to close the gap.

'Oh, my god, his defense is scary!' Burak thought, recalling how Fatih had made that clever braking move into T1 to take the lead, and then how he'd masterfully controlled the kart through every subsequent complex.

This became the pattern for the next laps. Fatih defended as if he had eyes in the back of his head, never once looking back, instead using the sound of Burak's approaching kart to judge his position and speed before executing perfectly timed defensive moves, blocking Burak's attacks.

Since their karts were closely matched in performance, the concertina effect in the corners played a role. Despite all Burak's efforts like late braking, trying to force mistakes by applying immense pressure, even giving Fatih a slight nudge to induce panic while Fatih drove as if he were seasoned driver, defending corner after corner, lap after lap, for the next twenty minutes without a single significant mistake.

'With his racing instincts and tactical acumen, if someone beats him during the actual championship, I don't know what my reaction will be,' Burak mused, feeling it was enough practice for now. He silently peeled off into the pit lane. Fatih realised this as he crossed the start/finish line and heard Burak's engine note fade, looked back and saw his instructor waving from the pit entry. He completed one final cool-down lap before joining Burak in the pit lane, marking the end of their first intense practice session on the outdoor track.

[Mission Complete!!!!]

[+10 SP]

Chapter 15 - Predictions and Preparations

The television commentators' voices crackled with escalating excitement, narrating the drama unfolding on the Albert Park circuit in Melbourne:

Jonathan Legard: {He's got a good run on him now... Oooh, Vettel went very deep into that corner!}

Martin Brundle: {Indeed, he has. He's kept track position, though, and he'll just... Kubica trying to go around the outside... they're side-by-side!}

(On screen, Vettel's Red Bull and Kubica's BMW Sauber were locked in a desperate battle for second place.)

Martin Brundle: (His tone becoming more analytical, almost a warning) {Always brake it early there... It's brake very early for that one...}

Jonathan Legard: (Voice spiking with urgency) {There's gonna be contact there, surely! Yes, there is! They're coming together! There goes Kubica! There goes Vettel!}

The images on Fatih's television showed the two cars making heavy contact, both skittering off the track and into the run-off area, their podium hopes evaporating with just laps remaining.

Jonathan Legard: (Lamenting) {Oh, the last thing they needed to do! Vettel's lost his front wing! And Jenson Button will be romping clear now! That's the last thing Red Bull and BMW Sauber needed.}

Martin Brundle: {So, the Safety Car will be instantly deployed, no doubt about that. And Jenson Button surely is the victor of this Australian Grand Prix! That moves Barrichello up into second place for a Brawn GP one-two! And Vettel... look at him, nursing that car, shredding his left front tire there... and well, that was clumsy stuff from the pair of them, really. A disaster for both Vettel and Kubica who were looking set for a podium.}

Burak, watching the first race of the 2009 season at nine in the morning, had a look of utter disbelief etched on his face. The race had ended exactly how Fatih had predicted it would yesterday. Fatih had forecasted a Brawn GP one-two finish, and until three laps before the race concluded, that had seemed highly improbable. Then, the crash and the subsequent safety car ensured it happened.

Even if the one-two hadn't materialized, another of Fatih's predictions would still have been correct: he had confidently stated that the race winner would be Jenson Button of Brawn GP. This was a team resurrected from the ashes of Honda (who had decided to completely pull out of Formula 1) for the nominal price of one pound, making them the least likely contender for this year's championship. Yet, instead of being backmarkers or even midfielders, they had gone on to win the very first race.

"One correct prediction is luck, but getting two of them right... that's insane luck," Burak muttered to himself as he turned off the TV. He had to get to the academy for his morning driving lessons.

"If I had bet on that outcome, how much would the payout have been?" he wondered as he closed the door of his apartment and walked down the corridor to call for the elevator.

If he had placed bets on both Jenson Button winning and Brawn GP securing a one-two podium, he was sure he would have earned at least a tenfold return. But what intrigued him most wasn't the potential betting returns; it was how Fatih could have possessed such confidence in Brawn GP's performance. Their financial situation was precarious, their engine supply from Mercedes was a last-minute deal (requiring McLaren to forgo their exclusive engine supply agreement), Honda had agreed to finance their year's operations only as part of the exit, and they faced numerous other challenges.

"I'll just ask him during the next practice class," Burak resolved as he boarded the elevator, already looking forward to Monday, Wednesday, and especially the upcoming Sunday – the first race weekend of the TOSFED Minik Kart Şampiyonası. The academy had already ensured everything was in place for Fatih and their other four competitors in the championship. Only Fatih was on a full scholarship while the rest were covered their own participation fees and expenses through the academy, whose prices had risen

slightly this year to discreetly cover Fatih's costs – a measure the academy director had implemented to avoid any financial losses from the scholarship.

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"I told you so," Fatih said, turning to his mother with a triumphant smile as they watched the Brawn GP cars take their one-two finish behind the safety car.

As usual, when his mother had found him in the living room earlier that morning, already awake and waiting for the race to start, she had asked him who he thought was going to win.

Fatih, ever the opportunist, had replied, "Will I get something if I guess right?"

Rümeysa, used to his playful nature, chuckled. "What do you want this time? Let's hear it first," she said, settling down beside him to watch the race together.

"I want a computer as my birthday gift, and I want to use the money from winning the karting championship to buy a camera," Fatih declared, trying to put on a serious negotiating face, which, with his lingering baby fat, came out as nothing but adorable.

"Why are you already thinking of spending money you don't even have yet?" Rümeysa asked, a smile playing on her lips, though she genuinely wondered where his unwavering confidence in winning the championship came from.

"I'm confident that I can win," Fatih stated firmly. "So, does that mean you agree to my terms?"

"Only if you can correctly guess the top three finishers of this race, in order," Rümeysa countered, sure she had him. "If you get even one wrong, you'll only get a computer if you win the championship, and I'll keep any prize money safe for you to use on normal things when you're older. Okay?" She had asked him for winners before, but never the full podium.

"First place will be Jenson Button, Brawn GP. Second place, Rubens Barrichello, Brawn GP. Third place, Jarno Trulli, Toyota," Fatih recited with a serious expression knowing that the third place is going to be very controversial.

"Wait, let me write that down," Rümeysa said, feigning utmost seriousness to not forget, though internally she knew that even if his guess was wrong, she was already planning on buying him the computer for his birthday. She could use it for her work from home, and she recognized that computer literacy was becoming increasingly essential; an early start for Fatih would be beneficial.

"But what do you need the camera for?" she asked as she jotted down the names and their finishing order.

"I want to be a YouTuber!" Fatih exclaimed, his eyes sparkling with excitement at the thought.

"Why? Don't you want to be a racing driver anymore?" Rümeyza asked, surprised that her son was showing such keen interest in something other than becoming a racing driver.

"Because I can be both," Fatih said simply, "and make more money."

But in his mind, there was a deeper reason. He aimed to build an undeniable reputation for his strategic vision in motorsport. By consistently demonstrating uncanny insight into race outcomes and strategy, he would ensure that when he became an F1 driver, his calls wouldn't be met with resistance. Teams would learn from his proven record to trust his judgment most of the time.

This would eliminate the need to force unconventional strategic actions, like pitting when told to stay out and demanding specific tires based on future knowledge of impending rain or other factors, which, while they may be considered legendary later, could easily create a difficult or unreliable impression early in his career before he'd built that pattern of perfect calls.

Furthermore, building a wide audience from social media's infancy would dramatically enhance his appeal to the public and sponsors, making him a highly attractive asset for any team. It would also provide an independent source of funds he could use to exploit his memories further. He was, in essence, killing many birds with one stone.

Chapter 16 - TOSFED Mini Kart Championship Day

The Bambino kart screamed as Fatih, at full throttle, navigated La Conca's sweeping Turn 13. He hugged the left side of the track, preparing for the final right-hand hairpin. Leaning his body outwards to maximize grip on the outer tires, he braked hard, turned in, and clipped the early apex. The rear right tire lifted momentarily as the kart drifted towards the middle of the track. He smoothly reapplied the accelerator, but perhaps a fraction too aggressively; the kart gave a slight twitch on the slick, rain-soaked surface. His Catlex-enhanced reflexes and Invictus-honed sensitivity allowed him to catch the slide almost instantly, his hands a blur on the wheel. He corrected, then pressed the accelerator again, taking the final straight slightly off the drier racing line.

A timing screen flashed in his vision:

[Lap Time: 01:53.846]

Simultaneously, his mission counter updated:

[Rain Mastery Progress: 993/1000]

He didn't lift, pushing straight into another hot lap.

[Lap Time: 01:53.620]

[Rain Mastery Progress: 994/1000]

On the next lap, disaster. He tried to carry more speed onto the main straight by using the conventional dry line through the hairpin, but the moment he accelerated, the rear snapped. He fought it, but the slide was too pronounced, scrubbing off precious time.

[Lap Time: 01:55.323]

The time was outside the mission's required **01:55:000**. No progress.

He refocused, nailing the next two laps.

[Lap Time: 01:53.946]

[Rain Mastery Progress: 995/1000]

[Lap Time: 01:53.106]

[Rain Mastery Progress: 996/1000]

The moment lap **996** registered, he began a cool-down lap. He didn't even complete half of it before his consciousness was abruptly pulled from the Simulation. His allotted time was up, returning him to the peaceful darkness of sleep.

.....

"...atih... Fatih... Fatih!"

Rümeysa's voice gently pierced the remnants of his dreams. Fatih cracked an eye open, finding his mother looking down at him.

"Five more minutes..." he groaned, turning over and burrowing deeper under the covers.

"You can sleep five more minutes," Rümeysa said, a teasing lilt in her voice, "but we'll be late to the track, and you might not be allowed to enter the championship."

Vwhump! Fatih shot upright as if spring-loaded, eyes wide, all traces of sleep instantly banished. He whipped his head towards the bedside clock: **07:19**. He leaped out of bed.

"Good morning, Mom!" he chirped, already halfway to the bathroom, leaving Rümeysa trying to stifle a laugh at his sudden transformation.

"Morning, Grandma," he greeted Güldane, who was preparing the breakfast table, as he passed her on his way to the bathroom to brush his teeth before calling his mother to help him with his bath.

"I really wanted to finish that mission last night," he said with a hint of disappointment that he couldn't complete it when he was so close. He had been at it for over nine months, which might seem like plenty of time to accomplish it. However, more than five thousand of his laps had either not met the minimum lap time or had been abandoned due to mistakes – slides, crashes from carrying too much speed, or being too cautious. These "deleted laps" happened frequently at the start, with the mistakes reducing significantly the longer he practiced. Thanks to his Invictus (Ultimate) and all his other abilities, he had learned and adapted incredibly fast, reaching a point where he sometimes sustained more than twenty consecutive laps in rain and changing conditions, often more than two seconds faster than the minimum required lap time.

Normally, he wouldn't have complained, as he could just complete the remaining laps today. But the sight from the small bathroom window – large raindrops continually pelting the glass – was the reason he was a bit sad he didn't have Aquaman (Good) yet.

"You can just finish the remaining laps on the track if it is wet," Apollo said, interrupting Fatih's thoughts and causing the hand that was brushing his teeth to pause, his face covered in surprise.

"I can do that?" he asked, wanting to be sure.

"Yes," Apollo affirmed, his translucent figure materializing beside the sink, visible only to Fatih. "The mission parameters never stipulated completion solely within the Simulation, nor exclusively at the La Conca circuit. It only specified the lap time benchmark, which was determined by La Conca's layout. The System will adjust the required lap time for the Istanbul Karting Park circuit. Should the real-world track conditions meet the 'wet' criteria, your laps will count."

As Apollo spoke, the relevant lines from the mission text highlighted themselves in Fatih's system interface:

[Objective: Complete one thousand (1,000) laps under these rainy conditions with a lap time of 01:55:000 or below (Benchmark: La Conca).]

The key was "these rainy conditions," not "this specific simulated track."

"Good," Fatih said, spitting and rinsing his mouth before going to call his mother, telling her he was ready for his bath.

Everything from his bath to breakfast was completed in less than an hour. Soon after, he, Rümeyşa, and Güldane descended to the underground parking lot, took their car,

and started heading to Istanbul Park Karting, where the first round of the TOSFED Minik Kart Şampiyonası was to take place on Saturday, April 4th.

Having left home around eight, the journey took nearly an hour and a half.

'Looks like the rain reached here as well,' Fatih thought, peering out the window from his rear seat as they passed through the security gate and drove towards the parking lot. The asphalt was dark and glistening.

"We're not late, are we?" Rûmeysa asked Burak, her voice tinged with anxiety after exchanging greetings. Burak had come to meet them at the parking lot, having received her call about their arrival.

"Still half an hour before Group A's practice starts," Burak reassured them, shaking Rûmeysa's hand and giving Fatih a welcoming wave. "Fatih is in Group B, so he has at least fifty minutes before he's on track."

"Ah, thank God," Rûmeysa sighed, visibly relieved. "I was worried the unexpected traffic and this rain would make us miss the practice session."

"Yeah, the rain hasn't helped anyone's schedule," Burak chuckled as they began walking towards the paddock for Fatih to complete the final verifications.

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Inside a bustling organizer's tent, Fatih stood with Burak and Rûmeysa before a table where a race official meticulously reviewed their documents.

"Parental consent form, check. Racing license, check. Participation type: Academy. Academy registration form, check. Kart scrutineering pass, check..." The official ticked off items on his checklist, his pen scratching against the paper.

"Okay, everything checks out," the official finally declared, signing an approval form and placing it in a dossier marked with a large **'213'**. "His championship number will be 213. Head over there and pick up his number stickers." He pointed to an adjacent tent, handing them a stamped document. "Good luck," he added, offering Fatih a smile and a small wave as they departed.

After collecting a set of ten stickers of various sizes, all bearing the number 213, they made their way to their team's tent. A large banner proclaimed **'FATİH KARTING ACADEMY,'** the academy's name coincidentally matching Fatih's own, as well as the name of the municipality where he lived.

Inside, five brand-new karts stood on stands, gleaming under the tent lights, each bearing the academy's livery and the driver's name. Four already had their number stickers applied; Fatih was the last of the academy contingent to arrive.

"Nice to meet you," Rümeyisa said warmly, joined by Güldane, as she approached the parents of the other four participants. Burak handled the introductions before excusing himself to greet the other young drivers before moving to attach the sticker on Fatih's Kart. Fatih would be meeting his teammates for the first time, as they were in different training classes, and no one else from his specific group was participating in the championship.

Chapter 17 - Race Weekend | Saturday

A look of pure surprise plastered Fatih's face. It was quite the opposite reaction one might expect from a child who had just been subtly belittled by the group of boys he had approached.

"No, I don't have a father," Fatih stated, looking directly at the tallest of the four boys. From their brief exchange, Fatih had already assessed him as the group's leader – arrogant, and clearly believing himself to be the best driver competing today. "So, the answer to your question about whether I'm here because my rich father forced the academy to include me among its representatives is... no."

"So, how are you here? You're just a newbie, aren't you?" the boy, named Selçuk, scoffed, not even bothering to acknowledge Fatih's answer about his father. "Or is your grandfather rich? Or did the teacher just pity you?"

"The teacher recommended me," Fatih calmly replied, pointing towards Burak, who was currently engaged in conversation with the lead instructor for this particular group. "He said I'm talented."

"Talented? You?" Selçuk scoffed, tilting his head back so far that he could barely see Fatih's face without straining.

His lackeys immediately chimed in, finishing his thought. "He came ninth last championship! And he's expected to win this year! And you say you're talented?"

'Hahahahahahahahahahaha,' Fatih heard Apollo's familiar, booming laughter echo in his mind. He pinched the bridge of his nose as his Mentor floated around him, clutching his stomach as if struggling to breathe.

'His parents should have taught him manners by this age, but I'm sure they're the ones encouraging this arrogance,' Fatih thought to Apollo, a sigh escaping him. He quietly turned and started walking towards his kart. As an adult mind trapped in a child's body, he could only handle so much childishness. He wasn't about to engage in a verbal spat.

"Korkak (Coward)!" one of the boys taunted as they saw Fatih turn and leave without a retort.

'Why didn't you fight back?' Apollo questioned, floating beside him.

'Isn't it better to do the talking on the track?' Fatih mentally retorted, a small smile touching his lips. He finally had a clear target, an additional spark of motivation.

But before he could formulate another thought, a massive System screen materialized in front of him, causing him to stop dead in his tracks.

[URGENT MISSION!]

The truly great do not argue; they do their talking on the track.

Objective: Finish every session in this race weekend ahead of SELÇUK as a direct response to his arrogance.

Reward: 15 SP

Punishment in case of failure: -10 SP (It will be deemed their arrogance was warranted.)

He accepted the mission without a second thought, a triumphant grin spreading across his face. 'I should thank them instead!'

'Looks like the System might issue missions related to people's actions around me,' he mentally noted. 'This is something I could potentially exploit for hundreds of additional SP, depending on the scale of future situations.'

"How did the conversation with your new friends go?" Burak asked as Fatih arrived at his kart. Burak had just finished meticulously placing the final number sticker on the side bumper.

"Not well," Fatih replied, touching the kart, which looked completely new, from the chassis all the way to the wheels.

"Yeah, that was expected," Burak said, patting Fatih's shoulder. He'd anticipated that outcome, given the behavior of Selçuk and his clique. 'Thankfully, they're not in my class,' Burak thought. 'I couldn't deal with that behavior. Selçuk's own instructor is far too lenient, probably trying to get closer to Selçuk's father, who owns a lucrative car spare parts business, including go-karts.'

"Do we use new karts for every competition?" Fatih asked, steering the conversation away from the other kids.

"No, we use new kart chassis every two championships," Burak explained. "Once the wear and tear reduces a chassis's performance, we convert it into a rental kart and replace it with a new one for the following championship. This season, we're using new ones because Selçuk's father donated these to the academy. Otherwise, we would have been using last season's chassis."

As they conversed, Rümeysa and Güldane joined them, having finished their conversation with the other parents. They then moved towards the grandstand to watch Group A's free practice, which was about to begin.

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[P1 - Group A FP1 - Lap Time: 01:33.547]The temporary screen displayed the fastest lap time set by the current P1 driver in Group A's free practice, a kid named Jackson.

"He is last season's championship winner," Burak informed Fatih, who was intently watching the other kids' hot laps.

"He is good," Fatih commented, but internally, he completed the sentence: '...for a kid his age.' Although Jackson was currently P1, Fatih noted his apparent difficulty driving on a wet track, forcing him to drive slower than optimal. That was Fatih's assessment, at least, as he had yet to drive on this specific track in wet conditions to gauge the true level of grip.

"You're better," Burak said, adjusting Fatih's race suit collar, which was crooked.

"Thanks," Fatih replied, as both Rümeysa and Güldane watched the interaction with proud smiles.

Time sped by, and before long, Group A's fifteen minutes of free practice were nearing their end, prompting Burak to say, "Our time is approaching, so let's get ready."

"Good luck!"

"I'll be cheering you on from here!"

Both his grandmother and mother enthusiastically wished him well as he acknowledged their cheers, walking towards the garage and pit lane. As he walked, he glanced at the screen one last time to check Selçuk's time, which had just been registered while they were walking.

[P2 - Selçuk - Lap Time: 01:33.924] was Selçuk's lap time, instantly putting him in second place on the screen. Fatih silently acknowledged that Selçuk was indeed good for someone his age, but that didn't deter him from wanting to respond to his arrogance on the track.

Upon arriving at the paddock, only a few minutes remained before Group B's free practice was about to start. Fatih hurried to put on the final pieces of his racing gear, including his rib protector, balaclava, and helmet. He and Burak then walked as they pushed Fatih's kart towards the pit lane for final technical inspections and a headcount.

The inspection was done very quickly, just moments after Group A's free practice concluded. All the Group A participants entered the pit lane but were stopped at the entry point, waiting for Group B to enter the track before they would be allowed to proceed to the rest of the pit lane.

"Get in," Burak said, as soon as he finished placing the kart down for Fatih.

The moment his body settled into the new kart's seat, a massive System screen appeared in front of him.

[YOU ARE ABOUT TO PARTICIPATE IN TOSFED MINIK KART ŞAMPİYONASI]

[A Championship Mission has been generated]

[SEASONAL MISSION: THE FIRST CROWN]

Your journey to becoming the Greatest Of All Time begins not with a single lap, but with a season of unwavering performance. The Minik Kart Şampiyonası is your first arena. Your task is to conquer it.

Mission Objectives:

Milestone 1: **Participate in all of the sessions of the race weekend.**

Milestone 2: **Achieve Pole Position.**

Milestone 3: **Set the Fastest Lap.**

Milestone 4: **Finish the Race (Score Points).**

Milestone 5: **Become Driver of the Weekend (System Award).**

Rewards:

Milestone 1 Completion Reward: **10 SP**

Milestone 2 Completion Reward: **10 SP**

Milestone 3 Completion Reward: **5 SP**

Milestone 4 Completion Reward: **SP equal to points earned in the Race.**

Milestone 5 Completion Reward: **5 SP**

Additional Rewards:

Overtake: **+1 SP**

Brilliant Overtake: **+5 SP**

Defense: **+1 SP**

Brilliant Defense: **+5 SP**

A Perfect Weekend (All Milestones Completed & Consistently Dominant Performance): **Additional 50 SP**

Punishment in case you fail to meet any of the milestones in at least one session of a championship weekend: -100 SP

This mission will continue until the end of the championship, where all rewards will be tallied and a completion rate will be given. Depending on the overall rating, additional rewards will be granted.

Additional SP can be earned if you complete hidden milestones during the championship period.

[ACCEPT] [DENY]

Chapter 18 - Race Weekend | Saturday II | First Practice, First Statement

It was a no-brainer for him to accept the mission. However, a punishment of losing 100 SP if he failed to achieve at least one of the milestones during a race weekend felt brutal, yet understandable. For him to become the Greatest Of All Time, he needed to consistently deliver peak performance.

So, he immediately clicked accept, finally having a mission that could potentially allow him to rake in over a hundred SP per weekend, adding up to nearly a thousand SP over the short championship season.

While Burak was starting the kart, and Fatih waited for it to heat up and for the green flag from the pit lane, he accessed the [Rain Mastery] mission details. He noticed the description had changed slightly.

[Rain Mastery Mission]

All true racing greats excel in the rain. You must master it as well.

Mission Objective: Complete one thousand (1,000) laps under these rainy conditions with a lap time of **01:55.000** or below in **La Conca** Karting Circuit | **01:30.000** or below in **Istanbul Karting Park**.

[Rain Mastery Progress: 996/1000]

'Four laps,' he thought to himself. 'I need to put them in early before the track dries enough that it exits the conditions needed for the Rain Mastery mission.' He revved the kart with his foot on the brake, further warming up the engine. A moment later, the green flag was waved, and the pit lane exit opened. Fatih and nineteen other kids in Group B immediately started entering the track. The very first kid, accelerating too quickly, instantly slid, spun, and ended up facing the wrong way – a stark warning to the others not to be overly ambitious on the damp surface.

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"Come here, I prepared a seat for you," Selçuk's mother beckoned to him. Selçuk had just returned from his Group A practice session, handing over his kart to the academy for cleaning and minor setup checks.

The moment he took a seat, his mother pulled out a bottle of juice, opened it, and handed it to him to rehydrate. As he began drinking, she took out a towel and gently dabbed the sweat from his face and hair, carefully avoiding his mouth.

"So, did you manage to get used to the track?" his father asked him, undeterred by his wife who was still wiping Selçuk's brow.

"Yes, I'm getting more confident," Selçuk replied with conviction.

"You better be, or I would have rented the track last week for nothing," his father stated, his tone matter-of-fact, taking his son's answer as expected.

"Since the track was wet, I could only get P2, but as it's drying, I'm sure I'll be contending for pole position in qualifying," Selçuk said, looking at his father for his reaction. When he saw the look of satisfaction, he felt a warmth, acknowledged by his father.

But the look of acknowledgment on his father's face lasted only a second before he spoke again. "I should expect that you will be a contender for the title this year, and not disappoint me like last year, right?"

"Stop putting pressure on him, or you're going to be the reason he makes mistakes," Selçuk's mother interjected, choosing to defend her son.

"I'm just saying that, if he's not going to bring good results, what's the point of him wasting money and time on this when he can spend it on something he's actually good at?" his father retorted, as if to him, any endeavor was only worthwhile if it yielded significant returns, either financial or emotional.

"But he needs to get past the learning curve before he gets results, and you are putting pressure on him while he is still in the learning phase!" his mother responded, not wanting Selçuk to be put under undue stress.

"I can say the same about that foreign kid, Jackson. He won the championship in his second year, while he's now on his thi—..." But before he could finish his sentence, Selçuk's father paused, his gaze fixed on something in the distance.

This sudden pause caused Selçuk, who had been looking down while listening to the back-and-forth between his parents, and his mother, who had an annoyed expression, both to look up. They followed his line of sight, and what they saw made Selçuk's heart plummet.

There he was: the new kid from his academy, kart number **213**, on his final approach, exiting **T12 (left hander)** and entering the straight flat out. This clearly indicated he was going to start his hot lap after a few laps of track reconnaissance, assessment, and tire warm-up.

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As he passed the start/finish line, Fatih was already at the maximum speed possible, utilizing his mini-DRS effect and carrying full momentum without a tow. He moved and hugged the right side of the track until he neared a few meters before **T1 (Left-hander)**. He braked heavily for a moment as he entered the bend, clipping the apex while he leaned outwards to increase grip on the outer tires. He then powered out of the corner, accelerating onto the longest straight on the track. (Track layout Image Here)

Instead of sticking to the conventional dry racing line, he strategically moved outside of it, seeking the fresh, less rubbered-in tarmac where his tires could find more purchase in the wet conditions. As he did so, he leaned ahead, creating a mini-DRS effect for maximum straight-line speed. Thankfully, the traffic ahead moved out of the way as he neared the heavy braking zone for **T2 (Left-hander)**. He hit the early apex and went wide, smoothly flowing through T2 before accelerating for a moment as he took **T3 (Left-hander)**, which looked like a continuation of T2, requiring only a slight lift.

He entered the following short straight before he took **T4 (Left-hander)**, gaining speed on exit before flowing it into the next straight that came with a significant change of elevation. He drove up a rising slope that carried him over a bridge, experiencing a brief moment of weightlessness at the peak before the track fell away dramatically.

In a show of bravery, despite not knowing if someone was on the racing line on the other side of this falling elevation, he kept his foot flat out. Thanks to the maximum speed of these karts and his weight, he didn't go flying, but he felt a moment of weightlessness when the elevation hit the peak and started falling.

He didn't have time to enjoy the feeling, as the most technical part of the track was immediately ahead. Right after the rise and fall of the elevation, he was instantly met with a double hairpin (**T5 Left-hander and T6 Right-hander**). He had to immediately adjust to the changes in elevation, brake optimally, and precisely enter the T5 left-hand hairpin while setting himself up to take the following T6 right-hand hairpin, before entering a short straight leading to T7, which he knew he could take flat out.

And that is exactly what he did. As if he had practiced it ahead of time, he executed everything perfectly, losing as little speed as possible through the double hairpins and managing to take **T7 (Left-hander)**

flat out, entering the second longest straight on the track. He successfully took **T8 (Wide Left-hander)** flat out, perfectly clipping the middle apex, going wide on exit, and hugging the right side of the track as he set himself for the second double hairpin (**T9 Left-hander and T10 Right-hander**). Like the first, he took them as optimally as possible.

However, he lost a bit of time having to overtake a slow kid who was on his line during the exit of **T10**, the second hairpin, leading to the underpass of the intersecting track parts. He took this underpass flat out, together with **T11 (Wide Left-hander)**. He lifted for a moment on the approach of **T12 (Left-hander)** before accelerating after hitting the apex and moving his head forward for a final mini-DRS run to the start/finish line.

[P1 - #213 Fatih Y - FP1 - Lap Time: 01:28.945] [Rain Mastery Progress: 997/1000]

The timing screen lit up, immediately pushing Fatih to the top of his group, capturing the attention of nearly everyone who had observed him take that lap.

But they could only stare for a moment before they had to turn their heads back to the track, as it seemed Fatih had no intention of stopping. He hadn't even done a cool-down lap and had immediately started his second lap. This time, more people were watching him. With each corner, more and more spectators craned their necks, some even standing, to get a better view of the entire track as he completed his second flying lap, losing as little speed as possible even when encountering slower traffic that sometimes tried to move out of his way to the wrong side.

[#213 Fatih Y - FP1 - Lap Time: 01:29.235] [Rain Mastery Progress: 998/1000]

His second lap was a few tenths behind, but it was understandable as he was met with more traffic than on his previous lap. However, he didn't seem to want to end it there, having started his next lap immediately.

[#213 Fatih Y - FP1 - Lap Time: 01:30.017] (This lap does not count towards the mission, as it is over **01:30.000**)

[#213 Fatih Y - FP1 - Lap Time: 01:28.832] [Rain Mastery Progress: 999/1000]

[#213 Fatih Y - FP1 - Lap Time: 01:28.465] [Rain Mastery Progress: 1000/1000]

[#213 Fatih Y - FP1 - Lap Time: 01:26.537]

By the time he completed his sixth lap, nearly everyone on the track was watching him as he finally lifted for the first time since he started his hot laps and began his cool-down lap. It was understandable, as he had spent nine minutes of the fifteen-minute FP1 session doing hot laps, and only a few seconds remained, making further push laps unnecessary.

Chapter 19 - Race Weekend | Saturday III | The Benchmark

A hush fell over the observers in the grandstand, quickly broken by murmurs that escalated into exclamations of disbelief.

"God damn! Did you see that?!"

"Oh my god! He's unbelievable!"

"He is so good!"

"Is this really his first time participating in a championship?!"

"He did that on a wet track?!"

"His slowest lap time is over three seconds faster than Jackson's fastest! Damn!"

Selçuk sat motionless, his face pale, listening to the cacophony of praise directed at Fatih. He glanced at his father, who was still fixated on the track, his eyes glued to Fatih's kart. His father hadn't spoken or even looked at him for the past ten minutes, making Selçuk wonder what thoughts were swirling in Amir's mind. He lowered his head again, biting his teeth in frustration.

"Who is he?" Amir's voice cut through the air, sharp and demanding.

"He is Fa—" Selçuk started, about to offer an excuse, but he realized the question wasn't directed at him. His father was looking at Adam, Selçuk's teacher, who was sitting at the next table.

"He is Fatih, our new scholarship student," Adam answered.

"New? Scholarship student?" Amir asked, surprise lacing his tone, unsure which detail shocked him more.

"Yes, this marks the start of his fourth month in the academy, and yes, he has the academy's full scholarship," Adam confirmed.

"Three months? Did he transfer from another academy?"

"No. From what I know, this is his first academy. He's only five years old," Adam said, allowing a slight dramatic pause before delivering the last part, a subtle flicker of pride in the academy's student.

"Five years old?! Are you kidding me?!" Amir exclaimed, turning his head to stare at Selçuk for a moment, then back to his wife, Fatma. "Three months of training compared to three years, Fatma! Do you see the difference in talent now?"

Adam, sensing the turn in conversation, quickly interjected. "Mr. Amir, I think he only improved so significantly – the three-second gap – because the track had dried and rubbered in from Group A's free practice. He had an advantage there. I think it would have been even better for your son had he been in Group B." Adam realized Amir's questioning wasn't coming from satisfaction about a chassis he sponsored being in P1; it was rooted in deep dissatisfaction with his own son's performance, even in equal machinery.

"He would still have been behind Jackson anyway," Amir scoffed, slumping back in his chair with a sigh of disappointment. He then added, a frustrated edge to his voice, "I supplied the best chassis, going so far as to sponsor the whole academy, and rented the tracks in the championship a week before the race to get the feel ahead of everyone! But he's still behind a five-year-old kid?!"

"Enough, Amir!" Fatma, his wife, cut in sharply, not wanting her husband to further shatter Selçuk's already fragile confidence.

"Are you going to tell me this is still about the learning curve?!" Amir retorted, unwilling to be silenced. "Three months compared to three years? How long does his learning curve need to be before you accept he has no talent in motorsport?!"

"But he is your son, Amir! And you don't have enough information about this other kid!" Fatma argued, pushing her chair closer to Selçuk and covering his ears with her hands. Selçuk couldn't bring himself to raise his head.

"That's precisely why I'm being critical!" Amir shot back, looking directly at Selçuk, who was now fiddling with his fingernails, head still lowered. "He needs to come to terms with this faster if he's to start looking for something he's actually good at and not waste any more time."

"But I'm sure the entry age requirement was six. How did a five-year-old even get in?" Amir turned and asked Adam, before his wife could retort.

"The regulations allow for those who turn six within the duration of the championship season to participate, provided they have the proper license," Adam explained,

scratching his head. He knew that the more he answered, the more sour Amir would become, but he had no choice.

"How the heck did he—"

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While that tense conversation unfolded, Rümeyşa could be seen jumping, clapping her hands with a wide, radiant smile. She was incredibly happy that her son, despite it being his first time in a championship, was already showcasing such undeniable talent.

Güldane shared her daughter's joy, but due to her age, she couldn't muster the energy to jump. All she did was stand and clap, their enthusiastic celebration attracting the attention of other parents and attendees in their vicinity. They didn't care; they celebrated Fatih's stellar performance as if he had just won the race, not merely a free practice session.

As for Burak, who had been with them throughout the free practice session, he had returned to the pit lane about a minute ago as the session neared its end.

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[MISSION COMPLETED!!!!]

[Aquaman (Good) Unlocked]

Fatih, completing a final cool-down lap, finally saw the System prompt. He had successfully completed the **[Rain Mastery]** mission after more than nine months of relentless effort. The new ability, **Aquaman (Good)**, had immediately gone into effect on his final hot lap of the session, which was nearly two seconds faster than his previous best!

Thanks to **Invictus (Ultimate)**, his senses didn't improve, but his level of dexterity and control on wet surfaces had dramatically increased. He could now not only keep everything even more on edge but could estimate the grip level in real-time. Nine out of ten times, he was right, and when he wasn't, his guess was only slightly off the actual estimate, making significant mistakes far rarer.

He was the last driver to complete the cool-down lap and return to the pit lane. Only then did he realize that nearly everyone in the paddock was looking at him.

"You really went out there and made everyone wary of you," Burak said, extending his hand and pulling Fatih out of the kart before beginning his inspection.

"It's my first time on this track, so I needed to try and see what the limits are, didn't I? Isn't that what free practice means?" Fatih replied, offering a half-truth. While it was a

legitimate reason, the primary motivation had been completing the **[Rain Mastery]** mission, and there was no need for anyone to know about that.

"I can't argue with that logic," Burak chuckled, raising the kart onto its stand. They then started dragging it back to their academy garage tent as the final Group C was finally allowed entry onto the track.

There were a total of sixty participants in the championship divided in three groups **A, B & C**, but in the Final race, only forty will compete. The bottom thirty drivers will be eliminated following qualifying. Those eliminated drivers will then get an opportunity to mount a comeback by participating in a Pre-Final race, with the top ten finishers in it recovering and being able to participate in the Final round with the rest.

"Any setup changes you want for Free Practice 2?" Burak asked.

"No, the current setup is good enough," Fatih said, knowing that only a few minor changes were possible on a Bambino kart. If it had been the **KF1** kart, significant adjustments would be possible, but with his current kart, the basic setup Burak had created (factoring in Fatih's body weight and ballast to meet the minimum weight) was perfectly fine.

"If there are no changes, then we can place the kart and head back to your family and wait there with them, okay?" Burak said as they entered the academy's garage tent.

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Group C's free practice went ahead without much problem, and their times improved even more than Group A's average times as the track was nearing dry conditions. But despite that, no one even got close to Fatih's fastest lap. Jackson only improved on his time in Group A's Free Practice 2 by more than five seconds, thanks to the track now being completely dry.

But before Jackson could smile, believing he was now leading with the fastest lap of a session, Fatih went ahead and once again set the fastest lap of any group in **FP2: [P1 - #213 Fatih Y - FP2 - Lap Time: 01:19.937]**. It was a time over two seconds faster than anyone else in the entire session, proving that his earlier FP1 time was no fluke.

Championship participants who had been watching all this unfold felt a massive wall being erected by Fatih. This feeling intensified for those in the combined FP2 time session, who had come here hoping to win the race, preparing to fight against Jackson, only for a new and even bigger monster to appear who made Jackson look beatable.

As for Selçuk, if he could have sabotaged Fatih's car, he probably would have. He once again had to listen to his father's words of disappointment, despite currently being third overall in both FP1 and FP2 times. Normally, that would have been enough for his father, but not now, when someone from the same academy, on the same chassis, but

with even less experience, was leading his son by more than two seconds. As a child desperately wanting his father's approval, Selçuk's simmering hate was now fully directed at the one acting as a dam to that affection: Fatih.

Chapter 20 - Race Weekend | Saturday IV | The New Apex Predator

The commentator's voice boomed through the grandstand speakers, his excitement palpable as he described the action unfolding on the track:

Commentator 1: "And once again, Jackson, the young Englishman and last year's champion, shows what he is capable of as he takes provisional pole for Group A!"

Jackson's lap time immediately catapulted him to the top of the leaderboard.

Commentator 1: "And as he slows down and starts his cool-down lap, his challenger, last year's top-ten finisher and this year's contender, Selçuk, is showing remarkable improvement in Sector Two as he takes the double hairpin! He goes wide on the entry, using as much space as possible as he sets himself for the second hairpin.

OOOohh! He's impeded! He's forced to take the dirty side of the track, but still recovers as he enters the narrow straight! Is there anyone to hinder his lap? No, the track is clean now! He moves his head to induce a mini-DRS effect, but due to the impediment he experienced on the double hairpin, he's down by three-tenths compared to defending champion Jackson's Sector Two! He brakes, takes Turn eight, hitting the early apex, going wide, hugging the right side of the track on the short straight as he accelerates, moves to the middle of the track, brakes once again as he starts negotiating the second double hairpin, and thankfully the driver in front of him moves from the racing line as he accelerates and passes the underpass, taking T11 straight, going wide before getting the middle apex in Turn Twelve and goes flat out! Did he manage to take pole position from Jackson?"

Both the commentator and all the attendees turned to the screen to see the lap time Selçuk had set.

[P2 - #247 Selçuk A - QL - Lap Time: 01:20.637]

Commentator 1: "Noooooooo! He loses pole position by half a second!" His voice was strained for a moment as he answered his own question, but the excitement in it didn't wane even for a moment, as if he were commentating on a Formula 1 qualifying.

It was then that the co-commentator took over.

Commentator 2: "That impediment on the first double hairpin clearly disrupted his whole rhythm, and he ended up missing pole position by half a second – a very small margin for the current level of karting, but interesting nonetheless. It seems like it's

something that needs to be addressed, but since they are kids and are learning about racing, you can't be too harsh."

Commentator 1:

"Looks like the only chance for Selçuk is to settle this during the Qualifying Heats." He commented, as Selçuk went around the track one more time due to the placement of the pit lane entry being right at the opposite side of **T1**, meaning only those who were near it could immediately enter.

Commentator 2: "Yeah, I agree, but you have to remember there's a new threat at play: Fatih. From the information I received from the officials, this is his first competition, and he's only been training at the Fatih Academy for about three months. He's also the youngest participant in the championship at 5 years, 10 months, and 20 days old – younger than the second-youngest competitor by more than seven months!"

Commentator 1: "He is a very big threat indeed. I just checked my notes, and Fatih's fastest time in Free Practice Two (**01:19.937**) is still fast enough to put him on pole position by two-tenths of a second to Jackson's P1 time in this qualifier (**01:20.149**). So, these three are going to be the most interesting drivers to watch in tomorrow's qualifying heat races to decide the pole-sitter for the Final race, which will take place at 16:00 tomorrow."

Commentator 2: "I can't wait for the race! I'm pretty sure these three will be neck-and-neck tomorrow, and depending on the circumstances, any one of them can win." His words set the perfect entry point for the first announcer to take over.

Commentator 1: "I agree. But first, Fatih needs to take pole position in his group to have an easier route in tomorrow's Qualifying Heat races. So, let's see if he has an easier time dealing with the traffic and doesn't face impediments on the track like Selçuk and Jackson had to navigate around. And it looks like he's very much in a hurry to set a lap time on the screen. With more than thirty seconds still remaining until the start of Group B's qualifying, he is already lining up near the pit exit, waiting for a green flag."

Commentator 2: "It is a smart move. He can use the first lap to immediately bring his tires to optimum temperature before he sets out for a hot lap while the whole group is still doing their first out-lap, which should allow him to have a good gap for a clean run."

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The moment the green flag was waved and the Group B qualifying session began, Fatih immediately hit the accelerator and shot onto the straight. He instantly started weaving like a snake, trying to put in as much heat into the dry compound tires as possible. He repeated this process throughout the track, effectively slowing the pack that had come out with him, making it look as if they were performing a safety car restart by the way they were moving in unison.

As he reached the second hairpin of the second double hairpin, transitioning into the short underpass straight, he immediately got into full power, taking both **T11 (Wide left-hander)** and **T12 (Left-hander)**

flat out. He entered the start/finish straight, immediately starting his qualifying lap.

Commentator 1: "Oh, looks like he's really doing it as you suggested! He's on the power and immediately starts his qualifying lap! This takes us into it!" (He handed over to Zakir, his co-commentator, as Fatih passed the start/finish line.)

Zakir: "For **T1 (Left-hander)**, you need a good exit, as the following straight's maximum speed before **T2 (Left-hander)** and **T3 (Left-hander)** is determined by that exit. And, unsurprisingly, he aced it! He took the apex with a perfect rear-left lift, inducing a slide, allowing him to carry more speed into the corner and have a better exit."

"Into this straight here, the more speed you have, the better, and he knows it! He moved his head forward to reduce drag, and he subtly moves his body back to increase the weight on the rear tire. Now that he's near the corner, he goes wide, trail-brakes while leaning outward into the corner, taking **T2** and **T3** in sequence as he enters a short straight. The track widens here a bit, so you can take the inside line before moving wide for **T4 (Left-hander)** in order to have a good exit leading to the straight with a bridge and elevation. It seems like he timed his lap perfectly as he actually found the track empty, and as expected, he goes purple on Sector One, which is comprised mostly of straights! Let's see how he does on the most technical Sector Two."

"And he brakes, going wide on the entry of the first double hairpin (**T5 Left-hander and T6 Right-hander**). A good exit is necessary to set for the second hairpin. And oooooh god! He is really taking risks as there were mere millimeters between him and the tire wall that would ruin his lap in the narrowest part of the track! But having perfectly placed it, he managed to get a good entry into the second longest straight! And he knows that as he floors it! He brakes a little, hits the early apex, goes wide on exit, but the track allows and encourages it as he heads into the second double hairpin (**T9 Left-hander and T10 Right-hander**)!

He places the car perfectly on the exit of the second hairpin, lighting the screen purple on Sector Two as he enters the straight underpass, taking **T11 (Wide Left-hander)** flat out, goes wide before taking **T12 (Left-hander)** with a slight lift! He enters the final straight! He moves his head forward to reduce drag as he pushes to the maximum on the final straight! And he lights up all three sectors purple! And moves to provisional pole with more than a second to the pole lap time of Group A! **FATIH YILDIRIM SETS THE FASTEST LAP OF THE QUALIFYING SO FAR AND RIGHTFULLY TAKES HIS POSITION TO P1!**"

[P1 - #213 Fatih Y - QL - Lap Time: 01:19.001]

The first commentator immediately took over from the overly excited Zakir, who was practically shouting in excitement.

Commentator 1: "This young boy, in his first qualifying session of his life in an official competition, is showing composure and talent of the greats, and paints a shining future for what he can be! And, unsurprisingly, he doesn't go around for another lap.

He immediately returns to the pit lane, following the waves of his coach, Burak, as there is no need for him to do more laps or waste his tires. He has set the fastest lap across all sessions until now, and until someone breaks that lap time, he will most likely not come back to the track. Wow, we came here expecting Selçuk and Jackson to be the contenders for the championship, but this kid has now turned himself into the most exciting individual of this new championship! And if he keeps this form, then this championship is going to be very, very interesting."